English in Malaysia: Current Use and Status offers an account of the English language used in present-day West and East Malaysia and its status anchored in different linguistic, social and educational domains. After an Introduction giving a bird's eye view of the status of English in Malaysia, the eight main chapters offer case studies revolving around four themes: 1. linguistic features, with special focus on pronunciation and language contact; 2. language attitudes; 3. English in on-line discourse; and 4. English and language policies.

The chapters cover original data and topics, seeking to draw an accurate portrait of Malaysian English, a non-native variety of postcolonial English that is currently developing its pronunciation, grammar, lexis and distinct identity.

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Preface

The use of English in postcolonial countries such as Malaysia is a fascinating topic for scholars from diverse disciplines as well as for teachers and professionals with a keen interest in the English language. The main title of this book, *English in Malaysia*, reflects the pervasive role of English throughout Malaysian society. This is especially the case in urban areas, where the presence of English originated from the arrival of British administrators from the East India Company in the late 18th century, but in fact English is a second or foreign language for the majority of Malaysians. Indeed, the linguistic landscape of contemporary Malaysia cannot be fully described without substantial reference to the presence of English due to its sociohistorical, political, sociocultural and linguistic significance.

The subtitle of the book, *Current use and status*, signals that its main focus is on describing how the language is used in everyday life and also its status in present-day Malaysia. For this reason, no single theoretical framework has been adopted across the entire volume. After the introduction, which provides an overview of the status of English in Malaysia, the book is divided into four sections focusing on four central themes (linguistic features, language attitudes, Malaysian English online, and education); finally, an afterword offers a prognosis for the future of English in Malaysia. Overall, the eight main chapters seek to draw an accurate portrait of Malaysian English (ME), a non-native variety of English that is currently developing its own pronunciation, grammar and lexis but whose development is at the same time constantly subject to global influences.

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CHAPTER 3

The New [t] in Malaysian English

Toshiko Yamaguchi and Magnús Pétursson

Introduction

One salient characteristic feature of the pronunciation of ME is the replacement of the dental fricatives [θ] or [ð] with the stop [t]. This stop, or more precisely, dental stop, which is dubbed ‘the new [t]’ in this chapter, is a voiceless sound emerging from a voiced or voiceless dental fricative that differs acoustically from the ordinary alveolar stop [t]. The non-fricative realisation of [θ] or [ð] has been extensively reported in studies on different varieties of New English (Mesthrie, 2008, p. 338). In ME, it occurs sporadically; not all dental fricatives are transformed into the new [t], and their realisations vary among individuals and even within a single utterance by an individual. There seem to be several factors, thus far largely unexplained, which govern the new [t]’s robust appearance. The first part of this chapter summarises the highlights of two acoustic experiments we have conducted in recent years, parts of which have been reported in two papers (Yamaguchi & Pétursson, 2012; Yamaguchi, 2014). The tool employed to verify the stop consonants is the VOT, which refers to the time lag between the release of the stop closure and the onset of the voicing of the following vowel. As stated by Lisker and Abramson (1964) in their seminal work, VOT is the most important feature in the production of voiceless stop consonants, and its relevance has since been confirmed by a number of phoneticians (Cho & Ladefoged, 1999; Bijankhān & Nourbakhsh, 2009, among others). We measured the VOT values of the four voiceless stops ([p], [t], [k] and the new [t]) in two positions: word initial and medial. In the absence of a vowel, final positions were taken into account only when the substitution occurred. We employed Fougeron and Keating’s (1997) ‘articulatory strengthening’ to explain why <th> is substituted with the new [t], why substitution with [d] is rare and why substitution almost exclusively occurs in the initial position. In the second part, we seek to explain how the new [t], whose presence is acoustically consistent, can be situated in the concept of nativisation, the central and most vibrant stage in the evolution of a language (Schneider, 2007, p. 40). In his 2003 paper focusing solely on ME, Schneider

1 The new [t] is also presented graphically as [θ→t] in this chapter.
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