

The Phonological Features of Malaysian English (ME)

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Abstract

The study of Malaysian English (ME) has gained significant attention due to its emergence as a distinct variety of World Englishes. However, while its lexical, phonological, and syntactical features are well recognised, the research still lacks scholarly attention, empirical exploration and longitudinal study. This paper focuses on the phonological features of Malaysian English described by previous researchers through comprehensive library research. The findings suggest that the phonological features of Malaysian English encompass three main areas which are vowels, consonants, and suprasegmentals. Nevertheless, this research also investigated the country's diverse ethnicities on the standardisation of Malaysian English as a unique World Englishes and its influence on the phonological features. Thus, several research endeavours have delved into the segmental and suprasegmental aspects of Malaysian English. These investigations have revealed that the accents' characteristics vary notably based on factors such as the speaker's cultural and linguistic background, as well as the specific variety of English they are acquiring.

Keywords: Malaysian English, Phonological Features, World Englishes, Vowel, Consonant, Suprasegmental

Introduction

Background of Study

The English language has become part of Malaysian culture since the first colonisation by the British, leading to the development of a distinct variety known as Malaysian English (ME). ME has gained attention from language researchers since 1965, and numerous studies have been conducted to describe its features. ME was named as one of the New Englishes by Baskaran (2005), and standardising it is seen as a great contribution to the numerous World Englishes

(WE) (Yunus, 2013). The demographic of Malaysia is contributed by several factors such as the regional dialect, age, education level, and media influence from outside of Malaysia which have facilitated the phonological features of Malaysian English.

Few studies have shed light on the evolving phonological features of Malaysian English, indicating that the phonological features of Malaysian English are in the state of identifying and fully understanding its features and nativisation can lead to the standardisation of ME. This standardisation will strengthen the status of ME as the distinct variety of New Englishes and at the same time it can help to establish Malaysian English formally and officially. This study was done to identify the phonological features of Malaysian English and its relevancies throughout the years in terms of usage. The growing body of research on ME highlights the importance of recognising the diversity of Englishes worldwide and the need to promote linguistic diversity in the global community.

Objective of the Study

The study was done to meet the objectives as follows

- 1) To analyse the phonological features of vowels represented in ME.
- 2) To analyse the phonological features of consonants represented in ME.
- 3) To analyse the phonological features of suprasegmentals represented in ME.

Research Question

The study was conducted to answer the following question

- 1) What are the phonological features of vowels represented in the ME?
- 2) What are the phonological features of consonants represented in the ME?
- 3) What are the phonological features of suprasegmentals represented in the ME?

Literature Review

Malaysian English (ME) is classified as ESL (English as a Second Language), which is considered as important as the primary language (Thirusanku & Yunus, 2012). Historically, the English language was introduced by the colonisers from the United Kingdom to Malaysia, and it has now become an integral part of the Malaysian education system and the medium of communication (Abu Bakar et al., 2021). Therefore, it has created its own variety from the Standard English (Kennerknecht, 2018) and due to its uniqueness, ME has its forms and features (San & MacLagan, 2009). One of the significant features of Malaysian English is phonology which comprises distinct pronunciation patterns that differentiate it from other English varieties.

Malaysia is constructed from different races and ethnicities, such as Malay, Chinese, Indian, Melanau, Iban and others. Due to Malaysia's diverse racial composition, a supplementary form of English was developed in Malaysian schools to facilitate communication among different ethnic groups (Thirusanku & Yunus, 2012). This variant is defined by incorporating elements from the students' native dialects, particularly those with Malay, Chinese, and Indian roots, which established Malaysian English and its phonological features (Thirusanku & Yunus, 2012). A study by Kamarudin and Kamal (2021) demonstrated this phenomenon by investigating the mispronunciation of English monophthongs and diphthongs among Malay native speakers from Johor who spoke the standard Malay language without any regional dialects. The study revealed that due to the assimilation of the speakers' mother tongue, Malay, it had affected the pronunciation of certain English words, specifically the monophthong /u:/ and the diphthongs /əʊ/ and /ɪə/. Essentially, the pronunciations made by

Malay speakers were not incorrect; rather, they are part of the nativisation process that occurs when the Malay language is assimilated into English, resulting in the formation of Malaysian English.

This nativisation of the English language, as mentioned earlier, is also widely used in the entertainment industry. In fact, a study by Nasir and Abdul Rahim (2021) investigated the phonological nativisation of Malaysian English in the cartoon animation series 'Upin and Ipin: The Helping Heroes'. The study revealed seven categories of phonological features used in the movie which are: (1) voiced dental fricatives /ð/ replaced with voiced alveolar stops /d/; (2) voiceless dental fricative /θ/ replaced with voiceless alveolar stops /t/; (3) the omission of single coda consonants; (4) the omission of final consonant clusters; (5) the omission of morphological markers in final clusters; (6) the lengthening of vowels in unstressed syllables; and (7) the shortening of vowels in stressed syllables. These phonological categories essentially reflect the acceptance of Malaysian English by its speakers. Moreover, they aid in identifying the distinctive features of Malaysian English, thereby reinforcing its existence.

Contrary to the earlier notion of nativisation of English language by Malay speakers who speak standard Malay, Sulong (2016) conducted research on the monophthong production among male and female Malay speakers who spoke regional dialects from Kelantan and Terengganu. The study revealed that the speakers could not differentiate the vowels because the mechanism of equivalence classification prevents the creation of a new category when each pair of vowels is thought to be "similar" to a Malay phoneme. For instance, the speakers could not differentiate [ʊ] to [u:] and [ʌ] to [ɑ:]. The earlier study of monophthong was conducted by Pillai et al (2010) in instrumental analysis of vowel contrast in Malaysian English and English vowel monophthongs produced by the Malaysian speaker.

Malaysian English is a unique variety of English that has been shaped by various historical, social, and linguistic factors, as noted by (Lim, 2016). One of its significant features is phonology, which comprises distinct pronunciation patterns that differentiate it from other English varieties. This literature review aims to explore current research on Malaysian English phonology.

Methodology

This study used a qualitative approach in conducting a library research methodology to identify the phonological features of Malaysian English. The data collection process involved three primary sources: books, online journals, and linguistic experts. The figure below illustrates the data collection process.

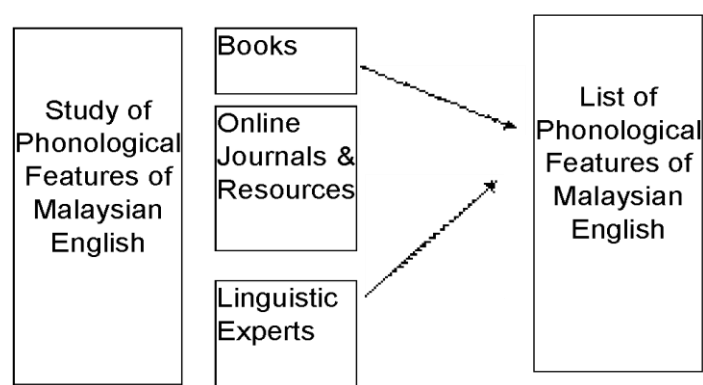


Figure 1

The study of the phonological features of a language is an important aspect of linguistics. It involves analysing the sound patterns of a language, including the pronunciation of vowels, consonants, and intonation patterns. One way to study the phonological features of a language is through a qualitative approach, which involves gathering resources, consulting linguistic experts, identifying phonological features, and interpreting and analysing the data.

The first step in a qualitative approach to studying the phonological features of Malaysian English is to gather relevant resources. This includes books, online journals, and other linguistic resources that provide information about the language. These resources may include descriptions of Malaysian English pronunciation, intonation, stress patterns, and other phonological features.

The second step is to consult with linguistic experts who have knowledge and experience in studying the phonological features of different languages, including Malaysian English. These experts can provide valuable insights and guidance on how to approach the study. They may also be able to provide resources or recommend specific phonological features to analyse.

Once the resources have been gathered and linguistic experts consulted, the third step is to identify the phonological features of Malaysian English. This involves analysing the gathered resources and information from experts to create a list of these features and describe their characteristics. For example, one phonological feature of Malaysian English may be the use of a particular intonation pattern in questions.

The final step in a qualitative approach to studying the phonological features of Malaysian English is to interpret and analyse the identified features. This involves examining the data to draw conclusions about the language. For example, an analysis of the use of intonation patterns in Malaysian English may reveal that they are influenced by the speaker's native language.

In conclusion, a qualitative approach is a useful method for studying the phonological features of Malaysian English. It allows for a detailed analysis of the language through the gathering of resources and consultation with experts. This approach provides a structured way to identify and analyse the features of the language, allowing for a more thorough understanding of its unique characteristics. Ultimately, this understanding can help to inform language teaching and learning, as well as contribute to our broader understanding of the diversity of language around the world.

Formulation of Phonological Features

Based on the analysis of the data collected from the books, online journals and resources, and linguistic experts, a list of phonological features of Malaysian English was formulated. The list included the most commonly identified features in each category, such as the unique vowel quality, consonant cluster reduction, glottalization, and intonation patterns of Malaysian English.

In conclusion, this methodology used a library research approach to collect and analyse data from books, online journals and resources, and linguistic experts to identify the phonological

features of Malaysian English. The methodology ensured the relevance and reliability of the data collected and provided a comprehensive list of the key phonological features of ME.

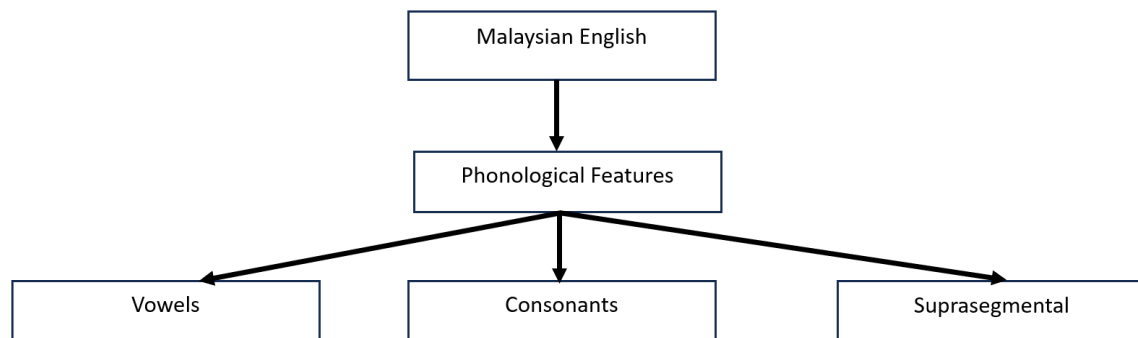


Figure 2: Baskaran's Phonological Features Framework

Results and Findings

This chapter will cover the findings from the library research method used in this study. Focusing on phonological features of Malaysian English, the result will be divided into some categories of features which are vowels, consonants, and suprasegmental. The findings were sourced from the three main sources of library research used which are books, journals, and people. The features will be explained into a few sub categories which are vowels, consonants, and suprasegmental.

Malaysian English: The Phonological Features

The phonological features of Malaysian English were discovered as early in 1980 by Platt and Weber. At that time, they divided Malaysian English speakers into two categories in which each category was determined by which schools they are coming from. Those who were from English medium schools were called Malaysian English Type I (ME I) speakers while Malay medium schools originates were called Malaysian English Type II. At the early discovery of Malaysian English, ME II speakers were the pioneer group that marked the phonological features of Malaysian English.

Years by years, the research on phonological features of Malaysian English is more focused and the initiative to standardize it also has been initiated. This research presented the combination of features found by (Baskaran, 2004; Phoon and Maclagan, 2009; Don, 2000; Rajadurai, 2006; Bautista and Gonzales, 2011; Yamaguchi, 2014; Phngh, 2017).

Based on the findings, the phonological features of Malaysian English have slight variation prevalent and internationally intelligible. The features of Malaysian English are the main reason why Malaysian English is considered as of the distinctive World Englishes. In this research, the features of Malaysian English can be divided into two categories, in which, each will be explained at the following sections. The features can be marked at vowel category, consonant category, and suprasegmental category.

Malaysian English: Vowel

Baskaran (2005) has listed out the phonemic inventory of the vowels production in Malaysian English. The data was also supported by the findings from (Phoon and Maclagan, 2009). The phonemic inventory of Malaysian English was compared to Received Pronunciation phonemic inventory of vowels by (Wells, 1982). The inventory is hoped can be a basis of future work on

standardizing Malaysian English. The list of phonemic inventories of Malaysian English vowels are shown below

KIT	i	FLEECE	i > i:	NEAR	iə > i:
DRESS	æ > ε > e	FACE	e > e	SQUARE	æ > ε
TRAP	æ > ε	PALM	ɑ > ü	START	ɑ > ü
LOT	ɔ	THOUGHT	ɔ	NORTH	ɔ
STRUT	ɑ	GOAT	o > o:	FORCE	ɔ
FOOT	u	GOOSE	u > u:	CURE	ɔ
BATH	ɑ > ü	PRICE	ai	happY	i
CLOTH	ɔ	CHOICE	ɔi	lettER	ə
NURSE	ə	MOUTH	au	commA	ə > ʌ
horSES	ə	POOR	uə		

Figure 4: Baskaran’s phonemic inventory of ME

Based on Figure 4, there are 29 phonemic inventories of the vowels production in Malaysian English. At this stage, we only focused on the general vowel description of the Malaysian English. The item that has ‘>’ remarks the changes that happen in Malaysian English vowels. For example, in the word ‘TRAP’, the /æ/ is sound like /ε/.

In 2009, Phoon and Maclagan have used the inventory and managed to come out with the result as shown in Figure 5

Key Word (Wells, 1982)	RP Phonemic Symbols (Wells, 1982)	MalE Phonemic Symbols	Key Word (Wells, 1982)	RP Phonemic Symbols (Wells, 1982)	MalE Phonemic Symbols
FLEECE	i	i or ɪ	NURSE	ɜ	ɜ or ə
KIT	ɪ	ɪ	STRUT	ʌ	ʌ or a
DRESS	ε	e or ε	PRICE	aɪ	aɪ
TRAP	æ	æ	MOUTH	aʊ	aʊ
GOOSE	u	u or ʊ	CHOICE	ɔɪ	ɔɪ
FOOT	ʊ	ʊ or u	FACE	eɪ	eɪ or e
THOUGHT	ɔ	ɔ or ɒ	GOAT	əʊ	o or ʊ
LOT	ɒ	ɒ or ɔ	NEAR	ɪə	ɪə
START	ɑ	a or ʌ	SQUARE	εə	εə or ε
COMMA	ə	ə	CURE	ʊə	Not tested

Figure 5: Phoon and Maclagan’s phonemic inventory of ME

The result showed clearer pictures of the phonemic inventories of Malaysian English phonological features. If we compare between these two versions, Phoon and Maclagan only focused on 20 inventories, missing out another nice from the original features of Baskaran. There was a significant difference when we compared between these two figures, the inventory done by was only validated the inventory done by Baskaran.

Vowel Qualities

Vowel quality refers to the position of the tongue, lips, and lower jaw when producing vowel sound. The preliminary study done by Platt and Weber (1982), did discover some phonological features in Malaysian English. However, they did not mention about the vowel quality. This was realized by Phoon and Maclagan (2009); Don (2000), and also (Rajadurai, 2006). They suggested that vowels in Malaysian English have slightly different quality from equivalent vowels in the Received Pronunciation of British English. Pillai *et. al* (2004) also stated that like neighbouring varieties of English, Malaysian English vowels occupy a smaller vowel space than those of British English. The lack of contrast in vowel quality between vowel pairs was more apparent for /i/ - /ɪ/, /e/ - /æ/. Likewise, Baskaran (2005) did mention that vowel quality could be seen in the back vowels. The examples are shown in the table below

Table 1

Vowel quality of ME

Vowel	Example Word	Quality
/ɑ:/	start	Produced further front and shorter
/ɔ/	core	Produced lower but more fronted
/ʌ/	up	A half-open and more central vowel

Vowel length

The vowel length in Malaysian English has the tendency to shorten and lengthened the vowels. The features were found in (Platt and Weber, 1982; Phoon and Maclagan, 2009; Don, 2000; Baskaran, 2005). Baskaran also mentioned that this kind of features might happen due to the influence of Bahasa Malaysia (national language) which lack of long vowels. In the case of shortening the long vowels, it usually occurs mainly in medial position. The examples of the shortening the long vowels are shown below (taken from Baskaran, 2005):

/i:/ realised as [i]	e.g.	[fɪld] 'field' [pɪl] 'peel'
/ɑ:/ realised as [ʌ]	e.g.	[hʌf] or [hʌf] 'half' [pʌk] or [pʌk] 'park'
/ɔ:/ realised as [ɔ]	e.g.	[wɔtə] 'water' [bɔn] 'born'
/u:/ realised as [u]	e.g.	[fud] 'food' [muv] 'move'
/ɜ:/ realised as [ə]	e.g.	[gəl] 'girl' [wəd] 'word'

Figure 6: Long vowel shortening of ME

Based on Figure 6, the long vowels are replaced with the shorter form of the vowels. For instance, the 'field', /i:/ is shortened into /ɪ/ (/fɪld/).

On the other hand, in the case of lengthening the short vowel, it is also usually happened in medial position. It is also frequently happened before the sound /n, l, r, s, ʃ/. The examples of the lengthening the short vowels are shown below (taken from Baskaran, 2005).

/ɪ/ realised as [i:]	e.g.	[fi:ʃ] 'fish' [pi:n] 'pin'
/ʌ/ realised as [a:]	e.g.	[ra:n] 'run' [da:s(t)] 'dust'
/ɒ/ realised as [ɔ:]	e.g.	[sɔ:ri] 'sorry' [gɔ:n] 'gone'
/ʊ/ realised as [u:]	e.g.	[wu:d] 'would' [fu:l] 'full'
/ə/ realised as [ə:]	e.g.	[sælə:d] 'salad' [brekfə:s(t)] 'breakfast'

Figure 7: Short vowel lengthening of ME

Likewise, Phoon and Maclagan (2009) also discovered the distinction of the vowel length in Malaysian English. They found that vowel /i/ and u/ are realized with a short and tense vowel. Similarly, Ahmad (2001), also found that the vowel /ɒ/ was sounded longer and /u:/ was sounded shorter. These supporting findings proved that the phonological features of Malaysian English are constantly used by Malaysian speakers.

Based on Figure 7, the short vowels are replaced with longer form of the vowels. For example, /u/ is sounds as /u:/ as in /wu:d/. The other example is the /i/ sounds as /i:/ as in /pi:n/.

Use of unreduced vowels

Normally, in Received Pronunciation sound, the full phonetic realization of the orthographic representation of the vowels is normally realized by the unstressed schwa (/ə/). For example, the word around (/ə'raʊnd/), assess (/ə'ses/), upon (/ə'pɒn/), and conceal (/kən'si:l/). Findings from Baskaran (2004) stated that, in Malaysia English, the schwa is replaced by the full vowel as follows

Table 2

Schwa replacement of ME

Word	Received sound	Pronunciation	Malaysian English sound
around	/ə'raʊnd/		/ʌ'raʊn(d)/
assess	/ə'ses/		/æ'ses/
upon	/ə'pɒn/		/ʌ'pɒn/
conceal	/kən'si:l/		/kɒn'si:l/

In Table 2, the schwa is replaced by the other phonemic items. In addition, Malaysian English speakers tend to pronounce the stressed version of the vowel in unstressed position, for instance, the word around is pronounced with the stressed /d/ at the end of the sound.

Diphthongs

Diphthongs is a sound formed by the combination of two vowels in a single syllable, in which the sound begins as one vowel and moves towards another. For example, in the word coin (/kɔɪn/), loud (/laʊd/), and tile (/taɪl/). Malaysian English does not have full range of diphthongs. Therefore. Some diphthongs are experiencing reduction of vowel or we call it 'monophthongisation process'. Phoon and Maclagan (2009) also clarified that simplification of diphthongs was found in Malaysian English as well as Phng (2007). The examples of diphthongs reduction are shown below (taken form Baskaran, 2005)

/eɪ/ realised as [e]	e.g.	[meɪ] 'mail'
		[relweɪ] 'railway'
/əʊ/ realised as [o]	e.g.	[fɔ:tɔ] 'photo'
		[slɔ:] 'slow'
/ɛə/ realised as [ɛ]	e.g.	[ðɛ] 'there'
		[hɛ] 'hair'

Figure 8: Diphthongs reduction of ME

Baskaran also added that in Malaysian English, /ʊə/ is usually monophthongised as /ɔ/. This situation is quite different from the examples from the Figure 8. Normally the diphthongs are reduced into one vowel but for the case as in cure and pure, the diphthongs are monophthongised into another vowel. Yet, monophthongisation will never happen in Malaysian English for the word before /r/ as in serious (/ˈsɪəriəs/), material (/məˈtɪəriəl/), and experience (/ɪksˈpɪəriəns/).

Aside from monophthongisation, Malaysian English also features the identical diphthong sequence. It is usually happened when the diphthong /iə/ occurs recurrently in a single word, it is reduced to the long vowel /i:/ in the first occurrence. For example in word serious (/ˈsɪəriəs/) it sounds like /ˈsɪ:riəs/. The /iə/ is substituted into /i:/, The other example also can be seen in word experience (/ɪksˈpɪəriəns/), it sounds like /ɪksˈpɪ:riəns/ in Malaysian English.

Malaysian English: Consonant

Aside having some distinctive features of vowel, Malaysian English also have some unique features of consonants. Some of the popular studies on Malaysian English's consonants were done by (Platt and Weber, 1980; Baskaran, 2005; Phoon and Maclagan, 2009; Don, 2000; Rajadurai, 2006; Yamaguchi, 2014). Platt and Weber as well as Baskaran found the features from Malay respondents while Phoon and Maclagan, Mohd Don, and Rajadurai, did a study on Chinese and Indian. Thus, by synthesising all the findings from their study, some consonants features have been described in Malaysian English

Consonant Cluster Reduction

Consonant cluster reduction is normally also happened in native English, especially dialects in English. However, Malaysian English has shown some particular characteristics of the reduction. Commonly, it is happened in medial and final position clusters. Moreover, the reduction also usually happens in clusters involving stops, fricatives, and lateral.

This feature is also found in (Platt and Weber, 1982; Baskaran, 2004 & 2005; Phoon and Maclagan, 2009). The cluster reduction is quite obvious in Malaysian English as some of the phonemic inventory does not exist in Bahasa Malaysia. Therefore, local speakers tend to reduce the cluster into simpler form. There are three types of consonant cluster reduction in Malaysia English namely tri-consonantal reduction, two consonants reduction, and loss of final consonant.

Tri-consonantal reduction happens when three phonemes are reduced into two phonemes. This type of reduction can happen medial and final position. The examples are shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Tri-consonant cluster reduction of ME (medial position)

Medial position reduction word	Received Pronunciation sound	Malaysian English sound
syndrome	/ˈsɪndrəʊm /	/sɪnrəʊm/
hunter	/ˈhʌntsmən /	/ˈhʌnsmən /
umbrage	/ˈʌmbriɪdʒ/	/ˈʌmriɪdʒ /
hundred	/ˈhʌndrəd/	/ˈhʌnrəd /
symptom	/sɪmptəm/	/sɪmtəm/

As shown above, three phonemic units in the medial position are reduced into two phonemic units and the reduction usually involves stops, fricatives, and lateral sound. For instance, based on the Table 4, the reduction involves /d,t,b, and d/.

Table 4

Tri-consonant cluster reduction of ME (final position)

Final position reduction word	Received Pronunciation sound	Malaysian English sound
patient	/ˈpeɪfnt /	/ˈpeɪfn /
prompt	/prɒmpt/	/prɒmt /
midst	/mɪdst/	/mɪst /
thousand	/ˈθaʊznd/	/ˈθaʊzn /
glimpse	/glɪmps/	/glɪms/
length	/lɛŋθ/	/lɛŋ/
exempt	/ɪgˈzɛmpt/	/ɪgˈzɛmp/

In Table 4, the three phonemic units in final position are reduced into two phonemic units. Likewise, the reduction usually happens at stops, fricatives or lateral sound (/t,p,d/). The omission is also happened at morphological markers in final clusters such as the word jumped (/dʒʌmpt/ > dʒʌmp/) as mentioned by (Phoon and Maclagan, 2009).

On the other hand, the two consonant reduction happens when two phonemic unit are reduced into a single phoneme. Similar to tri-consonantal reduction, two consonant reductions also happen at medial and final position of the word.

Table 5

Two consonant cluster reduction of ME (medial position)

Medial position reduction word	Received Pronunciation sound	Malaysian English sound
elbow	/ 'ɛlbəʊ /	/ 'ɛbəʊ /
always	/ 'ɔ:lweɪz /	/ 'ɔ:weɪz /

Table 6

Two consonant cluster reduction of ME (final position)

Final position reduction word	Received Pronunciation sound	Malaysian English sound
result	/ rɪ'zʌlt /	/ rɪ'zʌt /
self	/ sɛlf /	/ sɛf /

In Table 5 and Table 6, the two consonantal reductions at lateral sound (/l), and this agreed with the early findings by (Platt and Weber, 1980; Baskaran, 2005). It is also frequently deleting the first consonant for the reduction. In addition, as mentioned by Phoon and Maclagan (2009), the final reduction of two phonemes to one phoneme also happen at morphological markers such as the word kicked (/kɪkt/ > /kɪk/).

The last type of reduction is loss of final consonant. Usually the reduction involves /t/, /d/, or /θ/. The examples are shown in Table 7

Table 7

Loss of final consonant of ME

Word	Received Pronunciation sound	Malaysian English sound
except	/ ɪk'sɛpt /	/ ɪk'sɛp /
stand	/ stænd /	/ stæn /
fifth	/ fɪfθ /	/ fɪf /

Fricatives: Devoicing, Voicing, Avoidance of Dental Fricatives, Glottalization, and Consonant Substitution

Devoicing

Fricatives in Malaysian English are modified in terms of voicing. According to Platt and Weber (1980), also is mentioned in Baskaran (2004), there is a common tendency to devoice fricatives so that voiced fricatives occur as voiceless fricatives, which called devoicing.

Devoicing usually occurs at sound /v, z, ð, and dʒ/. Devoicing also occurs in final and medial position. The examples are as follows (taken from Baskaran, 2005)

[gɪf] 'give'	[ɪs] 'is'
[mu:f] 'move'	[dʌs] 'does'
[weɪf] 'wave'	[nɔɪs] 'noise'
[wɪθ] 'with'	[ru:ʃ] 'rouge'
[beɪθ] 'bathe'	[beɪʃ] 'beige'
[smu:θ] 'smooth'	

Figure 9: Devoicing at final position of ME

Based on Figure 9, the /v/ becomes /f/ as in give and move, / ð/ becomes / θ/ as in bathe and smooth, and / dz/ becomes / ʃ/ as in rouge and beige. Phoon and Maclagan (2009) also found the same features of devoicing of intervocalic and final voiced consonants.

[i:si] ‘easy’	[juʃuəl] ‘usual’
[hʌsbən] ‘husband’	[pleʃə] ‘pleasure’
[θaʊsənd] ‘thousand’	[riviʃən] ‘revision’

Figure 10: Devoicing at medial position of ME

To note, there is also evidence of occasional devoicing of /z and ʒ/ as stated in Figure 10. The examples of devoicing /z/ can be seen in easy, husband, and thousand, while the devoicing of / ʒ/ can be seen in usual, pleasure, and revision.

Voicing

In contrary, aside from devoicing, Malaysian English also do have voicing of voiceless fricatives. The alveolar and palate-alveolar voiceless fricatives /s and ʃ/ are quiet often voiced in certain lexical items. Similar to devoicing, it is also happened at final and medial position. The examples are as follows (taken from Baskaran, 2005):

[naɪz] ‘nice’	[puʒ] ‘push’
[fiəz] ‘fierce’	[wɔʒ] ‘wash’
[ɪnkri:z] ‘increase’	[fiʒ] ‘fish’

Figure 11: Voicing at final position of ME

[speʒl]	‘special’
[preʒə]	‘pressure’
[neiʒn]	‘nation’

Figure 12: Voicing at medial position of ME

Based on Figure 11 and Figure 12, the voicing occurs at final position happens at /s and ʃ/ while for medial position it only restricted to /ʃ/. The voicing of /s/ to /z/ can be seen in nice, fierce, and increase, while the voicing of / ʃ/ to / ʒ/ can be seen in special, nation, and fish.

Avoidance of Dental Fricatives

Other than devoicing, there is another feature of Malaysian English that involves fricatives. It is the avoidance of dental fricatives (/θ and ð/). The dental fricatives are often substituted by the corresponding alveolar stops /t/ and /d/ respectively. This feature was also done by Yamaguchi (2014), investigating the pronunciation of 'th' in word-initial position in Malaysian English. This feature is also a common feature in all three positions which are initial, medial, and final.

Table 8

Initial position of dental fricatives avoidance of ME

Word	Received sound	Pronunciation	Malaysian English sound
thick	/ θɪk /		/ tɪk /
the	/ ði:/		/ də/
thought	/ θɔ:t/		/ tɔ:t/

Table 9

Medial position of dental fricatives avoidance of ME

Word	Received sound	Pronunciation	Malaysian English sound
anthem	/ 'ænthəm /		/ 'æntəm /
father	/ 'fɑ:ðə/		/ 'fɑ:də/

Table 10

Initial position of dental fricatives avoidance of ME

Word	Received sound	Pronunciation	Malaysian English sound
breath	/ brɛθ/		/ brɛθ/
worth	/ wɜ:θ/		/ wɜ:θ/
fourth	/ fɔ:θ/		/ fɔ:θ/

In final position of dental fricatives avoidance, /ð/ is not really substituted by /d/, but it is devoiced to /θ/.

Glottalization

Glottalization is the complete or partial closure of the glottis during the articulation of another sound. Glottalization of vowels and other sonorants is most often realized as creaky voice. It is said to be recurrent in Cockney English. In Malaysian English, glottalization does occur but are not often used. Usually, the final stops are frequently replaced by glottal stops, especially in lower sociolects or during speaking broken English. The examples of glottalization are shown below (taken from Baskaran, 2005)

[həʊʔ] 'hope'	[mʌʔ] 'mud'
[rʌʔ] 'rub'	[ɔʔ] 'shock'
[kʌʔ] 'cut'	[frɔʔ] 'frog'

Figure 13: Glottalization of ME

Consonant Substitution

Malaysian English features are commonly influenced by the native language of the Malaysian speakers. Due to the low educational levels and social status, Malaysian English has this unique feature called consonant substitution. The substitution is happened due to the influence of the mother tongue of different races in Malaysia such as Malay, Chinese, and India. To note, the consonant substitution occurs when they attempt to sound close to their original sound system.

For Malay speakers, they often substitute /f,v, and z/ with /p, b, dʒ/ respectively. The examples are as follows

[pæn] 'fan'	[bitəmin] 'vitamin'
[pilm] 'film'	[dʒibrʌ] 'zebra'
[beri] 'very'	[dʒi:rɔ] 'zero'

Figure 14: Malay consonant substitution of ME

On the other hand, for Chinese speakers, /r/ usually turns into /l/ and /z/ usually turns into /dʒ/. The examples of word are shown below:

[flaɪd] 'friend'	[dʒi:rɔ] or [dʒilɔ] 'zero'
[læn] 'ran'	[dʒibra] or [dʒibla:] 'zebra'

Figure 15: Chinese consonant substitution of ME

For Indian who are Tamil speakers, they substitution happen at /v/ sound and change it into /w/ sound. Besides, they also delete the /h/ sound. The examples are shown below:

[wæn] 'van'	[aus] 'house'
[new] 'never'	[ʌŋgri] 'hungry'

Figure 16: Indian consonant substitution of ME

Such substitution often produced by the older speakers. As English has emerged into the local community, the elderly also get affected by it. Therefore, consonant substitution occurs in Malaysian English. The other factor that contributes to this feature in Malaysian English is the phonotactic constraints in speakers' first language. For instance, in Malay, most of the words use /p/ sound compared to /f/ while for Chinese community /l/ sound does not exist in Chinese sound system. Therefore, their attempt to reach the actual sound are being influenced by their phonotactic constraints, yet it is still acceptable.

Suprasegmental Features

In speech, suprasegmental refers to a phonological property of more than one sound segment. Also called non-segmental. Suprasegmental information applies to several different linguistic phenomena (such as pitch, duration, and loudness). After describing the physical features of Malaysian English in terms of vowels and consonants, thus study also found the

suprasegmental features of Malaysian English. The features can be divided into four categories which are stress, rhythm and intonation and pitch.

Stress

Compared to Received Pronunciation, Malaysian English stress position is quite similar. The stress-patterns of educated speakers are actually similar to Received Pronunciation. Yet, there is a certain degree that the stress position in Malaysian English is quite different in terms of position and quantity.

In terms of position, Malaysian English tends not to produce different stress positions from the same root words. For example, in Received Pronunciation, the word import (noun) and import (verb) carry different stress positions. However, in Malaysian English, noun-verb derivatives words like that are considered as homophonous. The examples are as follows (taken from Baskaran, 2005):

Malaysia produces a lot of rubber which is the import of many industrialized countries

The word Received Pronunciation of produce (/ˈprɒdju:s /) and import (/ɪmˈpɔ:t/) are different as they denote to different word category. The stress position of the word ‘produce’ is at the initial, while for the word ‘import’ is in the middle.

In Malaysian English, the stress position of ‘produce’ remains the position but the word ‘import’ becomes /ˈɪmpɔ:t/.

In terms of quantity, Malaysian English usually does not same number of stresses in polysyllabic words. Malaysian English stress quantity is either more or less compared to Received Pronunciation. Furthermore, in some situation, the primary and secondary stresses are treated equally in Malaysian English. The examples of stress quantity are shown below:

Misunderstand - / ˈmɪsʌndəˈstænd/

Interrupt - / ˈɪntəˈrʌpt/

Manufacture - / ˈmænjʊˈfæktʃə/

Rhythm

There is not much information about the rhythm in Malaysian English. Rhythm in Malaysian English is more often one of a syllable-timed nature. It means that all syllables, which are stressed and unstressed occur at equal intervals of time. This applicable formal way if speaking, however, for casual conversation, a syllable-timed is depending on the mood of the conversation.

Intonation and Pitch

In Malaysian English, there are not many patterns of intonation involve in producing it. Intonation and pitch also do not perform so much functions in Malaysian English. Besides, pitch direction also does not change within the accented word. However, there are some markers that shows questions, emotions, or attitudes that might probably consider as intonation substitution in speaking Malaysian English.

Other Phonological Features

Based on our library research, there are some other features that has not been described in (Baskaran, 2005). The Baskaran's phonological features of Malaysian English is considered as the most perfect that covers most part of phonological aspect. However, still, some features are not included because of lack of exploration in that element.

Rhoticity in Malaysian English has been discussed by the Malaysian English researchers like (Ramasamay, 2005; Phoon and Maclagan, 2009; Pillai, 2014). Rhoticity refers to English speakers' pronunciation of the historical rhotic consonant /r/ and is one of the most prominent distinctions by which varieties of English can be classified.

Baskaran (2005) did not emphasize rhoticity in Malaysian English phonological features as the current findings were not strong enough to consider it in his phonological features. Ramasamy (2005), firstly discovered that there is a tendency to produce rhotic sound in word with /r/ such as bird, lard, mart, and sort. Rajadurai (2005); Pillai (2014) also found that rhoticity among Indian speakers while Phoon and Maclagan (2009) found it from Chinese speakers.

Apart from this, aside from Baskaran (2005), some other researchers also has listed out the general phonological features of Malaysian English but not as details as he did. Phoon and Maclagan (2009) described phonological features of Malaysian English as follows

1. Glottalization of final stops

E.g., BED /beʔ/, BOOK /bʊʔ/ DOG /dɒʔ/

2. Devoicing of intervocalic and final voiced consonants

E.g., WEB /wɛp/, EYES /aɪs/, BRIDGE /brɪtʃ/

3. Reduction of final consonant clusters

E.g., ELEPHANT /æɪfən/, PRESENT /prezən/, LIFT /ɪf/

4. Flapping of intervocalic /t/

E.g., BUTTERFLY /bʌʔəflaɪ/, CATERPILLAR /kæʔəpɪlə/, COMPUTER /kɒmpjuʔə/

5. Substitution of labiodental fricative /v/ for bilabial glide /w/

E.g., VASE /vas/, VEST /wɛst/, OVEN /ʌwən/

6. Avoidance of dental fricatives

E.g., BROTHER /brʌdə/, TEETH /tɪf/, NOTHING /nʌtɪŋ/

7. Omission of dark /ɪ/

E.g., BALL /bɔʊ/, MILK /mɪʊk/, HOSPITAL /hɒspɪtəl/

8. Rhoticity

E.g., FOUR /fɔr/, MOTORCYCLE /motəsaɪkʊ/, BIRD /bɜrd/

9. Affrication of TR, DR, and STR

E.g., TREE /ʔri/, DRUM /dʒʌm/, STRAWBERRY /ʔtrɒberi/

10. Omission of morphological markers in final clusters

E.g., JUMPED /dʒʌmp/, KICKED /kɪk/, LAUGHED /laf/

Besides them, Bautista and Gonzales (2011) also found a similar phonological feature of Malaysian English. The list is featured below

1. merger of /i:/ and /ɪ/: feel – fill, bead – bid all have /i/;
2. merger of /u:/ and /ʊ/: pool – pull, Luke – look all have /u/;
3. merger of /ɛ/ and /æ/: set – sat, man – men all have /ɛ/;
4. merger of /ɒ/ and /ɔ/: pot – port, cot – caught all have /ɔ/ ;
5. variant realizations of /ə/ : schwa tends to get replaced by a full vowel, the quality of which frequently depends upon orthography ;
6. monophthongisation of diphthongs: e.g., coat, load with /o/, make, steak with /e/ ;
7. shift in the placement of accents
8. omission of final voiceless stop or its replacement by a glottal stop in monosyllabic words with CVC structures ;
9. reduction of word-final consonant clusters, usually dropping the alveolar stop ;
10. replacement of dental fricatives by stops.

These are some of the examples of features that found by other researchers. However, some of them also referred to Baskaran (2005); Platt and Weber (1980) work as a guidance on Malaysian English.

To recapitulate, recent studies have illuminated the intonation patterns of Malaysian English and pinpointed several distinctive characteristics. Unlike other English dialects, Malaysian English speakers frequently use different rhythms, stress patterns, and pitch contours. These variations might result from the impact of other tongues, cultural considerations, or Malaysia's particular history and evolution of English. Further investigation is advised to fully examine these elements and comprehend the phonological characteristics of Malaysian English. Similarly, more research is required to ensure the consistency of ME's phonological features, which is a step toward standardisation.

Further Research

This study highlights the need for further research to standardize Malaysian English, as previous studies mainly focused on Malay English speakers. More research is needed on Sabah and Sarawak ethnicities and suprasegmental factors of phonological features. Malaysian English has become more stable, but challenges such as American media influence and local education level need to be considered. The consistency and reliability of Malaysian English depend on how local speakers treat it in daily conversations. Further studies are needed to address gaps in this research.

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