UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

USE OF MALAYSIAN ENGLISH DISCOURSE PARTICLES IN FACEBOOK AMONG CHINESE MALAYSIAN YOUTH

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USE OF MALAYSIAN ENGLISH DISCOURSE PARTICLES 
IN FACEBOOK AMONG CHINESE MALAYSIAN YOUTH

By

TAY LI CHIA

Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, 
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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my beloved grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Tay Chang Song who supported me to achieve my goals.
USE OF MALAYSIAN ENGLISH DISCOURSE PARTICLES IN FACEBOOK AMONG CHINESE MALAYSIAN YOUTH

By

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January 2014

Chairman: Dr. Chan Mei Yuit, PhD

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The informal variety of English spoken by a large section of society in Malaysia is known as Malaysian English (ME). ME is generally believed to have evolved partly due to the multi-ethnic and multi-lingual composition of Malaysian society as evidenced by the many words and particles from the local languages incorporated into the variety of English that is not considered to be the standard form.

This study seeks to examine the use of discourse particles (DPs) among Chinese Malaysian youth in the context of computer-mediated communication. It aims to investigate the types and frequencies of the DPs used and their pragmatic functions. This study also examines differences in DP use by the Chinese Malaysian youth with that by Singaporeans, taking the study of DPs in Singaporean English by Low and Brown (2005) as the basis for the comparison. The data for the present study consists of 200 Facebook conversations obtained from the wall posts of twenty Chinese Malaysian youth. Ten male and ten female Facebook profile owners and 200 conversations containing DPs were selected through purposive and quota sampling methods. This study is located within the pragmatic framework and the data are analysed using the typology and scheme of DP pragmatic functions adopted from Low and Brown (2005).

In this study, the use of DPs appears to play important communicative functions in computer-mediated communication (CMC). The findings of the study reveal that the DPs ah, eh, hor, lah/ la, lor/ lo, ma/ mah, meh, what, leh, one, de, geh, o, wor, ke/kah, kan, wei, gua, bah, ya, and nah are used by young Chinese Malaysian Facebook users. The DPs lah/ la, lor/ lo and leh are the most frequently used DPs by Chinese Malaysian youth in their Facebook conversations. Besides
that, ME DPs are multi-functional and convey attitudinal meanings such as to soften an order or an advice, to establish rapport, to express resignation, to point out what a speaker deems obvious, to express surprise or disbelief, to soften a warning and so on. It was found that DPs serves to indicate social distance, relationship and attitudes among the interlocutors. This study reveals that ME DPs are used systematically and understood by its speakers in the community. All the Singaporean English DPs from the DP framework by Low and Brown (2005) which are ah, eh, hor, la/ lah, lor, ma/ mah, meh, and what were also used by Chinese Malaysian youth in their conversations, and lah/ la is the most frequently used DP in Malaysia and Singapore. It is interesting to note that more types of DPs were found in the Malaysian data, probably due to a more diverse population in Malaysia. Further research could focus on comparing the use of DPs in face-to-face and computer-mediated communication among Chinese Malaysian youth.
Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah master Sastera

**PENGGUNAAN PARTIKEL WACANA BERBAHASA INGGERIS MALAYSIA DALAM “FACEBOOK” DALAM KALANGAN REMAJA CINA MALAYSIA**

Oleh

**TAY LI CHIA**

Januari 2014

Pengerusi: Chan Mei Yuit, PhD

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Jenis bahasa Inggeris tidak formal yang diucapkan oleh sebahagian besar masyarakat di Malaysia dikenali sebagai Bahasa Inggeris Malaysia (BIM/ME). Pada umumnya BIM dipercayai berkembang sebahagiannya kerana komposisi masyarakat Malaysia yang pelbagai etnik dan pelbagai bahasa. Ini terbukti dengan adanya banyak perkataan dan partikel yang berasal daripada pelbagai bahasa tempatan dimasukkan ke dalam jenis bahasa Inggeris yang tidak dikira sebagai bentuk yang standard ini.


Dalam kajian ini penggunaan PW dilihat memainkan peranan penting dalam komunikasi menggunakan komputer. Hasil kajian menunjukkan PW ah, eh, hor, lah/ la, lor/ lo, ma/ mah, meh, what, leh, one, de, geh, o, wor, ke/kah, kan, wei, gua, bah, ya, dan nah digunakan oleh pengguna ‘facebook’ remaja Cina Malaysia dengan PW yang paling kerap digunakan dalam perbualan mereka ialah lah/ la, lor/ lo dan leh. PW dalam BIM mempunyai pelbagai fungsi dalam meyampaikan makna sikap seperti melembutkan nada sesuatu arahan atau nasihat, membina hubungan baik, menyatakan kekesalan, menjelaskan lagi apa yang dinyatakan penutur, menyatakan rasa terkejut atau tidak percaya, melembutkan nada amaran dan lain-lain. PW didapati menunjukkan jarak sosial, perhubungan dan sikap dalam kalangan interlokutor. Hasil kajian menunjukkan PW digunakan secara sistematik dan difahami oleh remaja Cina Malaysia. Semua PW bahasa Inggeris Singapura daripada kerangka kerja PW Low dan Brown (2005), ah, eh, hor, la/ lah, lor, ma/ mah, meh, dan what juga digunakan oleh remaja Cina Malaysia dalam perbualan mereka. Lah/ la adalah PW yang paling kerap digunakan di Malaysia dan di Singapura. Perlu diambil perhatian bahawa terdapat lebih banyak lagi jenis PW yang ditemui dalam data pengguna Malaysia yang mungkin disebabkan oleh populasi yang lebih pelbagai. Kajian selanjutnya boleh difokuskan untuk membandingkan penggunaan PW dalam komunikasi bersemuka dengan komunikasi yang menggunakan komputer dalam kalangan remaja Cina Malaysia.
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I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on 28th January, 2014 to conduct the final examination of Tay Li Chia on her master’s thesis entitled “Use of Malaysian English Discourse Particles in Facebook among Chinese Malaysian Youth” in accordance with the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U.(A) 106] 15 March 1998. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the degree of Master of Arts.

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