

## Structural idiosyncrasies in Malaysian English multi-word verbs

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ABSTRACT: This paper analyses data extracted from the *Malaysian English Newspaper Corpus* (5 million words) to determine possible processes of contact-induced change that have resulted in the creation and use of certain multi-word verbs in Malaysian English (ME). A comparison of the contexts of structural variants such as *comprise of*, *demand for*, *discuss about*, *discuss on*, *emphasise on* and *request for* are compared with those of their corresponding single-word verbs *comprise*, *demand*, *discuss*, *emphasise* and *request* in order to uncover possible lexical and structural “templates” that ME users may have relied on in the creation of these multi-word verbs. Substrate and superstrate influences are discussed under a broader notion of nativisation which incorporates not only findings which are in line with “a localised linguistic identity” (Kachru 1986) and “the bilingual’s creativity” (Kachru 1985) but also those which are derived from the field of Second Language Acquisition and language shift (Mesthrie and Bhatt 2008). Schneider’s (2004) and Nesselhauf’s (2009) findings with regard to “particle verbs” and “prepositional verbs” are revisited. Although this study is grounded in language contact theories (Thomason and Kaufman 1988, Thomason 2001, Winford 2003), it also engages with issues related to globalisation (Phillipson 2008) and their impact on the area of English as an International Language (Pennycook 1994, McKay and Bokhorst-Heng 2009) to suggest that there is a very real likelihood of these features becoming entrenched in global English. The importance of the corpus-based approach is stressed, particularly, for enhancing our understanding of the processes and outcomes of language contact that characterise new varieties of English, and therefore for predicting future directions of change.

## Details about Malaysian English

One of Schneider's (2007) Postcolonial Englishes, Malaysian English is characterised by lexical borrowing and structural nativisation that reflect the contact between English and other languages spoken in Malaysia, such as Malay, Hokkien, Cantonese, and to a lesser extent Mandarin, Tamil, Hindi, Iban and Kadazan. Like many other Postcolonial Englishes, Malaysian English comprises a spectrum of varieties that are often described in terms of how far they diverge from inner-circle Englishes. This paper examines what might be called a mesolectal variety of Malaysian English—a variety that has diverged significantly from the original transplanted variety but is still largely comprehensible to speakers of other varieties of English. The map below indicates where Malaysia is relative to the rest of Asia:



Source: <http://www.world-atlas.us/asia.htm>