

The Choice of Suffix Variants for Participial Adjective in Corpus of Malaysian e-Newspapers

Chai Jian Mei* and Christina Ong Sook Beng

Department of Languages and Linguistics, Faculty of Arts and Social Science, Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman, Bandar Barat, 31900 Kampar, Perak, Malaysia

ABSTRACT

In view of the dubiety caused by the concurrent use of suffix -t and -ed among Malaysians in forming the participial adjective, local newspaper texts were analysed in order to identify the preferred suffix variant used by Malaysian writers. Using corpus-based methodology, 12 predetermined words that can take suffix -t and -ed were generated from the selected e-newspaper prior to analysing them using WordSmith Tools 5 (WST5). The 12 words that belong to the adjective word class were categorised in accordance with the word form (-t and -ed) before comparison between both suffix variants was made. Findings revealed that while both suffix -t and -ed were used by Malaysians, the overall figure for the -t form is higher, thus indicating that Malaysians generally prefer to use the suffix -t to form the participial adjective. Nevertheless, the insertion of suffix -ed and -t to irregular verbs as a means to reflect adjectival function could possibly be deemed as a form of linguistic explicitness exhibited by a local variety. Because language is constantly evolving, pedagogically, educators should consider adopting the descriptive grammar and be flexible in accepting the use of both suffixes.

Keywords: Frequency, participial adjective, suffix, word form

INTRODUCTION

Both American English (AmE) and British English (BrE) are generally accepted as standard references to emerging New Englishes. This is reflected by the recognition and endorsement given to BrE especially in countries where the British have had a colonial influence (Holmes, 2013), for example, Malaysia, Singapore, India, Hong Kong and Africa. It is a widespread

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received: 03 January 2017

Accepted: 30 November 2017

Published: 24 December 2018

E-mail addresses:

jianmei9316@gmail.com (Chai Jian Mei)

ongsb@utar.edu.my (Christina Ong Sook Beng)

* Corresponding author

belief that British colonies have not only adopted BrE as a means of communication but also in many important domains such as business, public administration, mass media and education. The diversion from BrE to AmE cannot be disregarded because Tottie (2002), as cited in Alfberg (2009), recorded that the majority of English native speakers are Americans, leading to the domination of AmE in English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings (Hernando, 2010). Although both are standard-providers of English (Berns, 1995), AmE and BrE exhibit distinct differences in terms of grammar, lexical use, vocabulary, idioms, spelling and pronunciation (Sanyal, 2013).

In Malaysia, it is claimed that Malaysian English bears a close linguistic resemblance to BrE due to the earlier British colonisation (Schneider, 2011) of the country. Despite having BrE as the pedagogical model in Malaysia (Ooi, 2001), the concurrent use of both AmE and BrE among Malaysians is apparent (Amin, 2012) because, as Durmuller (2008) stated, AmE has become more dominant than BrE worldwide. This has brought about debate on the need to conform to only one English variety due to the confusion it brings in the education domain. For instance, the alternate use of both words, *petrol* and *gas*, has brought about perplexity among readers (Hau, 2010). Moreover, in a study conducted by Botley and Dillah (2007), the use of American spelling among Malaysian students was unacceptable and was marked as spelling errors. This phenomenon mirrors

the torn between incorporating local features or championing one Standard English in the teaching of English in multicultural settings as highlighted by Groves (2010). Efforts to not treat all deviations from Standard Englishes as errors have been taken by many researchers. For instance, Groves (2010), and Deshors, Gotz and Laporte (2016) distinguished errors from innovations or acceptable features of New Englishes by defining their characteristics en route to describing the use of English among non-native speakers.

Instead of exploring lexical variation in Malaysian English as has been done rather extensively by Tan (2014), Ooi (2001) and many more, this study focusses on the morphological aspect of language use, specifically the addition of the suffix -ed and -t to a verb not as inflectional i.e. changing present tense to past tense but for derivational purposes. In this study, 12 predetermined words were chosen that are irregular verbs in nature, and that undergo a change in word class when either suffix -ed or -t is added, given that a suffix is capable of forming a derivative (Greenbaum & Nelson, 2013). For instance, adding suffix -ed and -t to the verb *spoil* can turn it into a participial adjective as in 'a *spoiled* brat' or 'a *spoilt* brat'. The participial adjective, as defined by the Merriam Webster Online dictionary, is a past participle that has an adjectival function. Because it has the same ending as verb participles, it is called a participial adjective. It must be noted that the suffix -ed is commonly used by Americans, whereas the suffix -t is preferred

by the British (Greenbaum & Nelson, 2013), as Hundt (2009) mentioned, there is a tendency for the -t suffix to hold on to life in BrE to avoid “treating the regular forms as a morphological Americanism” (p. 25). Nevertheless, although both AmE and BrE are well received by Malaysians, a clear-cut choice between suffix -ed and -t should be evident (Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad, & Finegan, 1999, as cited in Vanderlinden, 2014). Therefore, with the aim of eliminating the recurrent dubiety caused by the use of suffix -ed and -t among Malaysian writers, this study aimed:

- (i) To find out the occurrences of 12 irregular verbs when paired with suffix -ed and -t in an online news portal
- (ii) To find out the preferred suffix variant (-ed or -t) when forming the participial adjectives.

While it is undeniable that the use of suffix -ed or -t may connote the influence or preferred choice of variety of English i.e. either AmE or BrE among Malaysians, language variation as mentioned by Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999) “manifests most often in gradient rather than absolute, judgements of acceptability” (p. 9) This is especially true when lexicogrammar is concerned; therefore, this study hoped to provide a basis for deciding the use of the suffix form for the purpose of coherency. Schneider (2003) concurred by stating that both applied linguists and educators should be informed of the norm they are required

to adhere to in any given situation. Hence, findings of this study could also keep teachers, textbook writers and curriculum designers informed of the preferred choice of suffix when forming the participial adjective.

Past Studies on Affixation

Affixes, as defined by Plag (2003), refer to the bound morphemes attached to the base, root or stem of a word. Apart from suffixes, affixes can also be subdivided into prefixes and infixes. According to Fromkin, Rodman and Hyams (2011), prefixes are usually inserted before other morphemes, while infixes are joined along with other morphemes. In contrast, suffixes are attached after the central elements. Derivational affixes and inflectional affixes are the two common types of affix. Bauer (1983) stated that inflectional affixation alters the word forms (grammar) of a particular lexeme, whereas derivational affixation turns a lexeme into a new word.

Studies done by Yasin (2013), Karlsson (2015), and Gurbuz (2015) focussed on the acquisition of derivational morphemes and inflectional morphemes among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. In studying the acquisition of negative morphemes among Jordanian EFL learners, Yasin (2013) mentioned that knowledge pertaining to phonology, morphology, semantics, frequency of suffix occurrence and language exposure does play a role in helping learners to acquire negative morphemes. It was found that there was a

strong correlation between the frequency of suffix occurrence and morpheme acquisition, whereby negative morphemes that were largely used by these EFL learners had actually been those that appeared most in the English textbook (Yasin, 2013). While Karlsson (2015), who also conducted research into the mastery of suffix among advanced students whose L1 and L2 were Swedish and English, respectively agreed with the latter view, she discovered that the complexity of a suffix did not affect students' mastery of suffixation and students did not use any default suffix when they could not figure out the correct derivative form. Conversely, it was found in Gurbuz's (2015) study that Turkish EFL learners were able to make use of their knowledge of inflectional morphemes on unfamiliar words. Nevertheless, he noted that the findings to the study could not be linked to the mastery of suffix among L1 learners, although both L1 learners and EFL learners did possess some similarities when assigning inflectional morphemes to words of which they were uncertain.

To summarise, the studies above indicated the importance of providing aid in the acquisition of affixes among English language learners. Nevertheless, focus was not much centred on the mastery of suffixes, especially in the ESL context, and this includes the use of suffix -ed and -t, as both are able to form the participial adjective. Therefore, this study intended to fill the gap as well as to make way for the emergence of new research.

Factors Affecting Verb Regularisation

According to Crystal (2011), regular verbs are defined as verbs governed by rules, whereas irregular verbs are verbs that cannot be predicted in nature. For instance, *want*, *call* and *use* are common regular verbs, whereas *burn*, *dream* and *learn* are irregular verbs. While irregular verbs such as *spoil*, *dwell*, *spill*, *spell* usually take the -t ending to either form the past tense or past participle, Greenbaum and Nelson (2013) noted that these irregular verbs can also be predicted by rules, meaning that they can be spelt like other regular verbs (*spoilt/spoiled*, *dwelt/dwelled*, *spilt/spilled*, *spelt/spelled*). To date, there are several studies done to identify the factors that affect verb regularisation.

The study done by Lieberman, Michel, Jackson, Tang and Nowak (2007) delved into the English verb regularisation and the number of verbs that have not been regularised. It was found that only 98 irregular Old English verbs remain today. In their research, they also found that there was indeed correlation between the rate of regularisation and how frequently a word is used, which is in accordance with the term 'conserving effect' as proposed by linguist Bybee (2006). The conserving effect happens when the morphosyntactic structure alongside frequently appearing sequences is preserved. In other words, less frequently appearing irregular verbs tend to regularise by resorting to the -ed form, whereas irregular verbs that have been

appearing frequently to readers are prone to conform to the -t suffix in order to maintain their irregularity (Bybee, 2006).

Supporting Bybee (2006) is research done by Geeraert and Newman (2011), in which the British National Corpora (BNC), the World Wide Web (WWW) and the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) were used to study the use of the English past tense verb form to replace the past participle verb. The findings indicated that Past Tense Spreading (PTS), which is the use of a past tense verb as a non-standard past participle, was resorted to in verbs that were used less frequently. For instance, the non-standard past participle, *have rang* was used instead of the standard past participle *have rung* due to its low frequency of use (Geeraert & Newman, 2011).

Nevertheless, Logghe (2014), and Vanderlinden (2014) in studying verb regularisation across different varieties of Englishes to validate the key reason ideated by Bybee (2006) and Lieberman et al.

(2007) showed contrasting outcomes. Their findings could not confirm the relationship between frequency of verb occurrence and verb regularisation. The studies reviewed above pertaining to verb regularisation have been closely associated with the past tense and past participle, while research into participial adjectives with suffix -ed and -t have been sidelined. Therefore, this study was needed to fill the gap.

METHODS

As the objective of this study is to identify the choice of suffix among Malaysian writers while forming the participial adjective, the corpus-based methodology was adopted. In its aim to better reflect the linguistic patterns of Malaysian writers, the data obtained were made up of a self-built corpus comprising articles from an online news portal, “The Star Online”. Newspapers, according to Rademann (2008) as cited in Tan (2014) possess the “characteristic of the respective period and society they are published in.

Table 1
The 12 predetermined words that take both suffix variants

Words	-t	-ed
Burn	Burnt	Burned
Learn	Learnt	Learned
Dream	Dreamt	Dreamed
Dwell	Dwelt	Dwelled
Lean	Leant	Leaned
Spill	Spilt	Spilled
Smell	Smelt	Smelled
Spoil	Spoilt	Spoiled
Spell	Spelt	Spelled
Bless	Blest	Blessed
Kneel	Knelt	Kneeled
Leap	Leapt	Leaped

Launched in 1995, “The Star Online” originated from “The Star”, the print edition of the newspaper, which is one of the oldest English newspapers in Malaysia. “The Star Online”, as rated by Huang (2015), is Malaysia’s top visited news portal. Despite their effort to conform to international standard, newspapers, as pointed out by Crystal (1994), are always reflective of linguistic identity to a certain extent.

Table 1 shows the 12 predetermined words that can take both suffix -t and -ed, adopted from Vanderlinden’s (2014) study; prior to that, such words were picked from the list of irregular verbs found in the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English. However, a check of these 12 irregular verbs in the Macmillan English Dictionary showed that only *burned*, *spoilt/spoiled*, *learned* and *blessed* belong to the word class, adjective.

Newspapers articles, specifically the nation genre that comprised a total of 42,144,788 words, were extracted using Spyder, a programming software, prior to being transferred and analysed using the WordSmith Tool version 5.0 (WST 5). The nation section with approximately 110,000 articles extracted from “The Star Online” archive dated from 1 January, 2006 to 31 December, 2012 was chosen as the source of the data used in this study. Unlike the sport, business and entertainment genres, which are mainly produced by international news agencies such as Reuters, Associated Press (AP) and Agency France-Press (AFP), national news is written by Malaysians, so this corpus made up of online national

news was designed to represent Malaysian English. Software created by Mike Scott, WST 5, helps examine how words behave in a text (Scott, 2010). WST 5 offers three applications, namely Wordlist Tool, Concordance List and Key Word List. However, in this study, only the first two applications were used. The Wordlist tool helped identify the 12 irregular verbs with -ed and -t suffix after scrutinising the frequency of each word in the word list. Analysis of words with regard to the context, on the other hand, was done using the concordance list.

Categorisation of words into their respective word forms was done before comparing the frequency of occurrence for each suffix variant. The final results were then tabulated, followed by analysis and discussion.

RESULTS

Prior to focussing on the 24 predetermined word types, a total of 180,521 word types were generated using the word list programme. The findings consisted of two parts, which are tabulated and presented according to the research questions in this study.

In answering the first research question, the frequency of occurrence of the 12 words with -ed ending and -t ending is presented in the table below.

Table 2 shows the frequency of occurrence of 12 predetermined words with suffix -ed and -t, arranged in descending order. The words were *learn*, *burn*, *bless*,

Table 2
Frequency of the 12 predetermined words with *-ed* and *-t* ending

Words	Total	<i>-ed</i>		<i>-t</i>	
		Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Learn	6035	778	42.65	2527	75.8
Burn	1296	243	13.32	1053	15.18
Bless	468	468	25.66	0	0
Spoil	246	21	1.15	225	3.24
Spell	180	56	3.07	124	1.79
Spill	163	139	7.62	24	0.35
Dream	125	29	1.59	96	1.38
Smell	119	50	2.74	69	0.99
Leap	65	12	0.66	53	0.76
Kneel	31	6	0.3	25	0.36
Lean	17	17	0.93	0	0
Dwell	14	5	0.27	9	0.13
Total	8759	1824	100	6935	100

spoil, spell, spill, dream, smell, leap, kneel, lean and *dwell*, which occurred 8,759 times in total. Generally, the three most commonly used words were *learn, burn* and *bless*, contributing to 89% of the total word occurrence. Similarly, *spoil, spell, spill, dream, smell* and *leap* constituted a relatively significant figure, and they altogether made up 10.25% of the total sum. The words that appeared the least were *kneel, lean* and *dwell*, each occurring within the range of 0.16% to 0.3% only.

Nevertheless, when comparison was made between the *-ed* ending and the *-t* ending, it was observed that the total frequency of occurrence of suffix *-t* was relatively higher than its counterpart, *-ed*. Words that leant towards the *-ed* ending were *bless, spill, lean* and *dwell*, whereas words that took the *-t* ending were *learn,*

burn, spoil, leap, kneel, dream, smell and *spell*. While it was noted earlier that these 12 predetermined words were capable of taking both suffix *-ed* and *-t*, both *bless* and *lean*, however, skewed completely towards the former, as there is no occurrence for *bless* and *lean* with *-t* ending.

The second part of the findings deals with research question two regarding the preferred choice of suffix used by Malaysian writers when forming the participial adjective. Because this study focussed only on participial adjectives, a total of 7,810 words belonging to the word class, verb (i.e. past tense and past participle verb with *-ed* and *-t* ending) were eliminated from the concordance list. Table 3 shows the frequency of words in participial adjective form in accordance with suffix *-ed* and *-t*.

Table 3
 Frequency of participial adjectives with *-ed* and *-t* ending

Words	Total	<i>-ed</i>		<i>-t</i>	
		Frequency	%	Frequency	%
*Burn	444	40	9.93	404	73.99
*Bless	207	207	51.36	0	0
*Spoil	137	8	1.99	129	23.63
*Learn	133	133	33	0	0
Spill	22	12	2.98	10	1.83
Spell	5	2	0.5	3	0.55
Smell	1	1	0.25	0	0
Lean	0	0	0	0	0
Dwell	0	0	0	0	0
Dream	0	0	0	0	0
Kneel	0	0	0	0	0
Leap	0	0	0	0	0
Total	949	403	100	546	100

Based on Table 3, the total frequency of words with *-ed* ending and *-t* ending occurring as participial adjectives is 949, where *burn* records the highest frequency count at 444, followed by *bless*, *spoil*, *learn*, *spill*, *spell* and *smell* with their occurrence of 207, 137, 133, 22, 5 and 1, respectively.

In general, the findings showed that out of the 12 words, only seven words were used by the Malaysian writers as participial adjectives. Except for the word *spill*, *spell* and *smell*, the results obtained in this study were in line with those codified in the dictionary, whereby *burn(ed)*, *learn(ed)*, *spoil(ed/t)* and *bless(ed)* indicated by asterisk in Table 3 could act as the participial adjective. The three words, namely *spell*, *smell* and *spill*, which were seen to be used by Malaysian journalists as adjectives, albeit insignificantly in terms of the figures shown, could possibly be deemed as a form

of grammatical innovation by Malaysian writers. Despite occurring in the *-ed* and *-t* ending; the absence of *lean*, *dwell*, *dream*, *kneel* and *leap* used as participial adjectives could be due to the nature of the word itself (i.e. action verbs), and therefore it can be safely deduced they are not commonly used to reflect adjectival function by writers in Malaysia. Moreover, the data used in this study comprised mainly hard news articles, which favour a writing style that is usually straightforward and thus, involved the use of fewer descriptive words like adjectives.

The total frequency of occurrences for *-ed* ending was 403, whereas the *-t* ending showed a total occurrence of 546, which was 143 words more than its counterpart. While this could be an early presumption as to the preferred choice of suffix variants among Malaysian writers, further observation showed otherwise.

Narrowing down to a comparison of individual words, it was observed that out of the seven words that occurred as participial adjectives, only *burn* (404), *spoil* (129) and *spell* (3) took the -t ending when forming the participial adjective. On the contrary, writers seemed to favour the -ed ending for forming the participial adjectives for *bless* (207), *learn* (133), *spill* (12) and *smell* (1). An interesting finding was that although the

total number of occurrences for the -t suffix was higher, the distribution of the figures, however, was not even and was limited to only four words, which were *burn*, *spoil*, *spill* and *spell*, with *burn* constituting the highest percentage (73.99%) of the total occurrence for suffix -t. This was contrary to the finding for -ed suffix, for which, all seven words that appeared as participial adjectives recorded at least one occurrence.

Table 4
Concordance list for participial adjectives

N	Concordance
8	Jin wishes Christian readers a Blessed Christmas. May we all..
29	Youth is gathered here in this blessed morning to meet our..
55	.. so that they could have a blessed pilgrimage and return..
N	Concordance
19	Ruth Madoff, though scorned by burned investors, will likely..
195	.. the high temperature within the burned tanker, three teams of..
344	.. to compensate thousands of burned victims who have filed..
N	Concordance
24	.. only 92 votes. There were 447 spoilt votes. "This is the..
33	Ink, as it could create many spoilt ballot papers smudged..
42	.. and play. They may be labelled spoilt brats. Misunderstood..
N	Concordance
6	.. remove whatever remained of the spilled cargo.
22	And it's useless to cry over spilled milk. We are looking..
57	Wednesday July 7, 2010 Title: Spilled oil blamed for Tour..
60	.. a handful of sand lies spilled oil. Oil powers this..
62	.. mangrove roots drip black from spilled crude. There are no..

Table 4 shows the concordance list of four participial adjectives. A participle in nature, the participial adjective functions to describe a noun or to classify an attribute. As such, the participial adjective usually precedes a noun, for instance, *blessed* (participial adjective) pilgrimage, *burned* (participial adjective) tanker (noun) and

spoilt (participial adjective) votes (noun). One interesting finding was the word *spilled*, which was not included under the word class, adjective, in the dictionary. However, suffix -ed was added to the root word *spill* to form an adjective describing three different nouns, namely oil, milk and cargo as shown in the last group of concordance lists.

Table 5
 Summary of the suffix choice by Malaysian writers

Suffix	-ed	-t
Total	403	546

Table 5 summarises the total frequency of occurrences of each suffix variant by Malaysian writers. Although the represented figures are rather small to generalise the preferred suffix variant used by locals in forming the adjective, the results obtained could act as a preliminary assumption that Malaysian writers prefer to use the -t form, which, according to Greenbaum and Nelson (2013), is very much favoured by the British. Nevertheless, this does not rule out the fact that AmE is playing an influential role among Malaysians, as claimed earlier by Hernando (2010), since the frequency of occurrence for both suffixes varied by 143.

DISCUSSION

The overlap use of both varieties of English among Malaysians when forming participial adjectives has shown that despite having BrE as the standard model, AmE is indeed playing an impact in ESL settings (Hernando, 2010). Although the difference in number of the suffix -ed and -t varied only by 143 occurrences, the higher frequency of occurrences of suffix -t has concurred with the findings of Biber et al. (1999, as cited in Vanderlinden, 2014) that there was a preferred choice when it came to using these suffixes. Nevertheless, due to the small volume of data analysed, the relationship between high frequency items and the acquisition of suffixes, as well as

the tendency to conform to regularity as proposed by Bybee (2006) could not be confirmed.

The interchangeable use of -ed and -t suffixes to form participial adjectives evidently proves that Malaysian English, similar to the outer circle countries of Kachru's "Three Circles Model", as claimed by Groves (2010) and Schneider (2003), is undergoing the nativisation process. Schneider's (2003) claim of how similar Malaysian English is to that of her mother country is reiterated in this study by the strong preference for -t. Despite the fact that the dictionary provides that only *burned*, *learned*, *spoiled/spoilt* and *blessed* belong to the word class, adjective, the findings obtained, which show the use of some verbs (i.e. *spell*, *spill* and *smell*) in the adjectival function, and the alternate use of both suffixes could be possibly deemed as a form of linguistic explicitness, as proposed by Jenkins (2003). To prescriptive grammarians, they are errors but many such as Schneider (2003), Groves (2010) and Deshors et al. (2016) deemed these as innovations leading to grammatical nativisation. Moreover, raising the issue of whether or not these forms should be accepted as correct increases the readiness to accept them (Schneider, 2003).

Pedagogical Implications

While the concern is that confusion may occur among students if both varieties of English are accepted (i.e. suffix -ed and -t), educators may opt for the overt approach when teaching English. The overt approach,

which is in contrast to the covert approach, involves teaching students the rules of grammar as a separate entity. It works by dividing the parts of speech into smaller elements prior to introducing them to students. By doing this, students will better understand and eventually understand the complete picture of the language they are studying (Abdullah & Shah, 2015). As for both suffix -ed and -t, teachers could consider adopting the top-down approach, where students will be introduced to both regular and irregular verbs prior to being exposed to the rules and generalised pattern for forming a specific word class. An alternative approach would be the bottom-up approach, where teachers will educate students on the generalised pattern of a regular or irregular verb for them to notice prior to giving step-by-step guidance and conclude with the rule that governs both suffixes. Despite the fact that the covert approach has been practised since the introduction of the Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Rendah (KBSR) syllabus in the mid 1980s, students have not shown improvement in the English Language subject (Abdullah & Shah, 2015). According to Abdullah and Shah, the overt approach involves the system, elements of linguistic structures as well as analysis of text. Chung (2005) concurred that the individual's communication proficiency can be easily achieved only when he or she has mastered the grammar of a language.

Under such circumstances, teachers should be more accommodative in the use of Standard Englishes by accepting the alternate use of suffix -ed and -t among students. In fact, educators ought not to limit

themselves only to prescriptive grammar, because as mentioned by Hung (2003), cited in Bourke (2005), "the grammar of a language resides not in books but in the minds of its speakers" (p. 86). Moreover, language is also said to be a living entity that is constantly evolving, and this has always been overlooked by traditional grammar (Bourke, 2005). As such, teachers should adopt descriptive grammar by which language, in contrast to prescriptive grammar, is described according to the way it is and not how it ought to be.

Since this study has proven that Malaysian writers use both suffix -ed and -t, educators could perhaps eliminate their constant act of "glorifying" the Queen's English and welcome the use of Standard Englishes among students. It is high time Malaysian language teachers followed the language politicians' use of more established varieties of English such as Indian English and Singapore English where "adhering to native target norms is not propagated and it will be unnatural to ESL speakers" (Deshors et al., 2016). A distinction between error and innovation, that is, the acceptability of the extent of deviation from the norm (Kachru, 1982, as cited in Deshors et al., 2016) should be made clear among Malaysian educators, language politicians and stakeholders. When new grammar forms like "*spilled* milk and *spilled* oil" are accepted as the local linguistic norm and not error, production of dictionaries, grammar books and usage guides signalling the codification of a new variety of English (Schneider, 2003) is inevitable. With that, Malaysian English will gain official recognition eventually.

CONCLUSION

This study focussed on identifying the preferred suffix variant among Malaysians when forming the participial adjective. Using the corpus-based method, this study hoped to contribute pedagogically, since educators, as mentioned by Gorlach (1999), McArthur (2001) and Gnutzmann (2005), are always concerned with the acceptance of linguistic variation as well as the variety of Englishes that should be taught to non-native learners.

While results from this study showed that Malaysian writers are indeed using both suffixes (-ed and -t), the higher frequency of occurrence of the -t variant indicated that BrE is still playing an influential role in the country. Reiterating Crystal's (1994) statement that English newspapers are reflective of linguistic identity albeit their tendency to conform to the international benchmark, the inclusion of both suffixes by Malaysian writers in news articles that has received the green light from their editors suggest that they could be conventionalised. Results from this study, unfortunately, can only be taken as a preliminary assumption because news articles ranging from 1995 to 2005 as well as from 2013 onwards were excluded as they were not made available in the online archive.

That being said, although varieties of English, as claimed by Trudgill and Hannah (2002), differ the least at the level of grammar, students' exposure to both BrE and AmE is still deemed important as through this, awareness with regard to

linguistic diversity can be developed and this, according to Bieswanger (2008), will eventually help lay the foundation for lifelong learning. As such, curriculum designers and textbook writers as well as teachers ought to realise that language is constantly evolving together with globalisation and cultures. The inclusion and use of BrE and AmE is one way to realise this; this would definitely help to accommodate and cater for the ever changing linguistic topography facing many countries, including Malaysia.

REFERENCES

- Abdullah, H. I., & Shah, P. (2015). Enhancing competency in English: The covert approach a complementary to the overt approach in teaching grammar. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics & English Literature*, 4(1), 191–197. doi: 10.7575/aiac.ijalel.v.4n.1p.191
- Alfberg, A. K. (2009). *British or American English: Attitudes, awareness and usage among pupils in a secondary school*. Gothenburg, Sweden: GUPEA.
- Amin, F. (2012, March 6). British or American English? *The Star Online*. Retrieved January 12, 2017, from <http://www.thestar.com.my/Lifestyle/Viewpoints/Mind-Our-English/Profile/Articles/2012/03/06/British-or-American-English/>
- Bauer, L. (1983). *English word formation*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Berns, M. (1995). English in the European Union. *English Today*, 11(3), 3–11.
- Biber, D., Johansson, S., Leech, G., Conrad, S., & Finegan, E. (1999). *Longman grammar of spoken and written English*. London, England: Pearson Education Ltd.

- Bieswanger, M. (2008). Varieties of English in current English language teaching. *Stellenbosch Papers in Linguistics*, (38), 27–47.
- Botley, S., & Dillah, D. (2007). Investigating spelling errors in a Malaysian learner corpus. *Malaysian Journal of ELT Research*, 3, 74–93.
- Bourke, J. M. (2005). The grammar we teach. *Reflections on English Language Teaching*, 4, 85–97.
- Bybee, J. (2006). From usage to grammar: The mind's response to repetition. *Language*, 82, 711–733.
- Celce-Murcia, M., & Larsen-Freeman, D. (1999). *The grammar book: An ESL/EFL teacher's Course* (2nd ed.). Boston, USA: Heinle ELT.
- Chung, S. F. (2005). A communicative approach to teaching grammar: Theory and practice. *The English Teacher*, 34, 33–50.
- Crystal, D. (1994). *What is standard English?* Retrieved January 12, 2017, from http://www.davidcrystal.com/DC_articles/English52.pdf
- Crystal, D. (2011). *Internet linguistics*. London, England: Routledge.
- Deshors, S. C., Gotz, S., & Laporte, S. (2016). Linguistic innovations in EFL and ESL: Rethinking the linguistic creativity of non-native English speakers. *International Journal of Learner Corpus Research*, 2(2), 131–150. doi: 10.1075/ijlcr.2.2.01des
- Durmuller, U. (2008). Towards a new English as a foreign language curriculum for continental Europe. In J. A. Fishman (Ed.), *Standards and norms in the English language* (pp. 239–254). New York, USA: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Fromkin, V., Rodman, R., & Hyams, N. (2011). *An introduction to language* (9th ed.). Boston, USA: Cengage Learning Wadsworth.
- Geeraert, K., & Newman, J. (2011). I haven't drank in weeks: The use of past tense forms as past participles in English corpora. *Language & Computers*, 73(1), 13–33.
- Gnutzmann, C. (2005). Standard English and world standard English: Linguistic and pedagogical considerations. In C. Gnutzmann & F. Intemann (Eds.), *The globalisation of English and the English language classroom* (pp. 107–118). Tübingen, Germany: Narr.
- Gorlach, M. (1999). Varieties of English and language teaching. In C. Gnutzmann (Eds.), *Teaching and learning English as a global language* (p. 321). Tübingen, Germany: Stauffenberg.
- Greenbaum, S., & Nelson, G. (2013). *An introduction to English grammar* (3rd ed.). New York, USA: Routledge.
- Groves, J. (2010). Error or feature? The issue of interlanguage and deviations in non-native varieties of English. *HKBU Papers in Applied Language Studies*, 14, 108–129.
- Gurbuz, A. (2015). Grammatical morphemes in EFL context. *International Periodical for the Languages, Literature and History of Turkish or Turkic*, 10(7), 489–502.
- Hau, B. L. (2010, October 1). British or American? *The Star Online*. Retrieved January 12, 2017, from <http://www.thestar.com.my/Lifestyle/Features/2010/10/01/British-or-American/>
- Hernando, C. (2010). A corpus of American and British English: A case study on slang. *AngloGermanica Online*. Retrieved January 12, 2017, from <http://anglogermanica.uv.es:8080/Journal/Viewer.aspx?Year=2009-10&ID=hernando.pdf>
- Holmes, J. (2013). *An introduction to sociolinguistics* (4th ed.). London, England: Routledge.
- Hundt, M. (2009). *Colonial lag, colonial innovation or simply language change?* Retrieved January 12, 2017, from [http://www.govtedu.com/wp-content/uploads/ebooks/english/one language-two-grammars.pdf](http://www.govtedu.com/wp-content/uploads/ebooks/english/one%20language-two-grammars.pdf)

- Hung, T. T. N. (2003). How linguistics can contribute to the teaching of grammar. In J. E. James (Ed.), *Grammar in the language classroom* (pp. 41–61). Singapore: SEAMEO Regional Language Centre.
- Jenkins, J. (2003). *World Englishes: A resource book for students*. London, England: Routledge.
- Kachru, B. B. (1982). Models for non-native Englishes. In B. B. Kachru (Ed.), *The other tongue: English across cultures* (pp. 48–74). Chicago, USA: University of Illinois Press.
- Karlsson, M. (2015). Advanced students' L1 (Swedish) and L2 (English) mastery of suffixation. *International Journal of English Studies*, 15(1), 23–49.
- Lieberman, E., Michel, J. B., Jackson, J., Tang, T., & Nowak, M. A. (2007). Quantifying the evolutionary dynamics of language. *Nature*, 449(7163), 713–716.
- Logghe, S. (2014). *Language variation and change: A closer look at varieties of English and the use of regularized irregular verbs* (Masters dissertation), Ghent University, Belgium.
- McArthur, T. (2001). World English and world Englishes: Trends, tensions, varieties, and standards. *Language Teaching*, (34), 1–20.
- Huang, Z. (2015, July 24). MDA and ComScore Release rankings of top web entities in Malaysia for May 2015. *ComScore*. Retrieved January 12, 2017, from <https://goo.gl/hDAQnX>
- Ooi, V. B. Y. (2001). *Evolving identities: The English language in Singapore and Malaysia*. Singapore: Times Academic Press.
- Plag, I. (2003). *Word formation in English*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Rademann, T. (2008). Using online electronic newspapers in modern English-language press corpora: Benefits and pitfalls. *ICAME Journal*, 22, 49–72.
- Sanyal, D. (2013). A comparative analysis of lexical variation in American and British English with special reference to a few selected words. *Rupkatha Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities*, 5(3), 177–188.
- Schneider, E. W. (2003). The dynamic of new Englishes: From identity construction to dialect birth. *Language*, 76(2), 233–281.
- Schneider, E. W. (2011). *English around the world: An introduction*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Scott, M. (2010). *Wordsmith tools version 4*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.
- Tan, S. I. (2014). Exploring the Malaysian English newspaper corpus for lexicographic evidence. *Kajian Malaysia*, 32(1), 167–185.
- Tottie, G. (2002). *An introduction to American English*. Oxford, England: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.
- Trudgill, P., & Hannah, J. (2002). *International English: A guide to the varieties of standard English* (4th ed.). London, England: Arnold.
- Vanderlinden, E. (2014). *Language variation across varieties of English: A corpus-based exploration into the use of regularised irregular verbs*. Retrieved January 12, 2017, from http://lib.ugent.be/fulltxt/RUG01/002/162/264/RUG01-002162264_2014_0001_AC.pdf
- Yasin, A. (2013). The acquisition of negative morphemes by Jordanian EFL learners. *Arab Journals for the Humanities*, 32, 127–265.