Structural Nativisation in Malaysian English: Prepositional Verb Idiosyncrasies

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Introduction

In Malaysian English (ME), nativised prepositional verbs (PrVs) – typified by the ubiquitous *discuss about* – are the bane of the purists. Textbook and workbook writers routinely flag them as erroneous and "redundant" (Lee 33), while newspapers devote entire sections to educating the public about the ungrammaticality of these and other such features. The extracts below reflect the concerns that some Malaysians have about their prevalence:

> I'm writing to suggest that someone in *The Star* look for flaws in the publication itself. ... I've noticed glaring errors like *discuss about/voice out.* I've used these as examples for "Error Identification" and poor English in our newspapers. (Noreen Retnam)

> In some cases, people make the mistake of saying "*discuss about* our health" when "*discuss*" already means "talk about." The correct grammar is "*discuss* our health." (Ooi)

> The teacher may not be a good model of the language ... When an English language teacher uses a preposition when it is not needed, as in "Now let us *discuss about* the unemployment problem among graduates for writing your essay," it would not be surprising if the students write "I am going to *discuss about* the causes and effects of unemployment in my essay." (Haja Mohideen bin Mohamed Ali)

In spite of the attention that these PrVs have received, they continue to thrive in the speech and writing of many Malaysians. What inner-circle speakers of English recognise intuitively (see, for instance, Fraser 15 – that one does not say *discuss about* simply because the meaning of *about* is already encapsulated in *discuss* – is clearly a lot more complicated for ME speakers.

This paper is an attempt to find out how innovative PrVs such as *comprise of, demand for, discuss about* and *discuss on* have become so deeply ingrained within the linguistic system of written ME. Using a corpus-based approach, this study compares how these PrVs and their corresponding single-word verbs (SWVs – *comprise, demand* and *discuss* – are used in Malaysian English newspapers. It is hypothesised that there are systematic structural differences between the PrVs and their corresponding SWVs which reveal certain aspects of structural nativisation in ME.

Language contact, group SLA and Malaysian English

Located within Winford's (235-47) framework of group Second Language Acquisition (group SLA), this study emphasises the importance of interpreting nativised features of outer-circle Englishes within their sociolinguistic contexts. According to Winford (242), in countries where the transplantation of English was a result of British and American colonisation, the language often spread through English-medium education (see also Mesthrie, and Bhatt 156). Such varieties inevitably exhibit linguistic changes that are similar to those "variable and ephemeral" (Winford 236) changes that occur as individuals acquire or learn a second language—a phenomenon he refers to as individual SLA. However, as many of these local varieties eventually become everyday vernaculars of the local populations, some of these individual SLA features go on to become "fixed and permanent" (*ibid.*) changes which, in many cases, index ethnic and national identities of the speakers of these new Englishes.

In group SLA, what leads to the selection and institutionalisation of some SLA features and the abandonment of others is often neither a formal nor a deliberate process, but one which is manifested as the continuing use of the second language in a sociolinguistic milieu shaped broadly by "the demographics of the groups in contact, the power relationship between the groups, their attitudes towards each other, and so on." This on-going "competition" among different SLA systems within the community is "eventually resolved into a shared communal system" (Winford 236).

In Malaysia, English is in intense and continuing contact with a range of diverse, typologically-distinct languages that include at least four Malay dialects; Sinitic languages such as Hokkien, Cantonese and Teochew; Indic languages such as Tamil, Telegu and Malayalam; languages spoken by diverse indigenous groups of Peninsular Malaysia and Borneo; and creoles such as Baba Malay and Kristang

(Asmah Haji Omar 55-64). Of these languages, Malay, Cantonese, Hokkien and Tamil have been the most influential in contributing to changes in the linguistic system of ME. Widespread bilingualism in various combinations of these languages among people who have acquired English as a second language and, in some cases, maintain the use of the language in many everyday domains has produced numerous types of contact-induced changes in ME. Studies on ME in the last three decades[1] have greatly enhanced our knowledge of the linguistic system and the sociolinguistic context of ME.

More recently, Schneider's "Postcolonial English" illustrates how the transplantation of English into diverse "colonial-contact setting(s)" (29) has resulted in patterns of linguistic changes that are governed fundamentally by how English-speaking colonists and indigenous residents construct and rewrite their identities. His study on ME, reported in "Evolutionary Patterns of Malaysian English," highlights some of the contact-induced changes that have affected ME during its various stages of evolution. His account of the structural nativisation of ME (56-9) includes a comprehensive list of phonological, morphological and syntactic features. Nevertheless, much remains to be learned about how structural nativisation has impacted ME, especially with regard to the specific processes that have led to the creation and widespread use of innovative PrVs. This paper attempts to address this lacuna.

Method

Unlike most of the previous investigations of ME which have analysed random examples of language use, the present study derives evidence of linguistic change from a corpus of Malaysian English newspaper articles (herein named the *Malaysian English Newspaper Corpus,* or the MEN Corpus[2]). It has been argued that this method is far more rigorous as it allows for exhaustive extraction of authentic use of the features targeted (see, for instance, Kennedy's [88-203] "Corpus-Based Descriptions of English"). More crucially for this study, this approach makes it possible for the contexts of the PrVs to be systematically compared with those of their corresponding SWVs. This greatly facilitates the tracing of possible structural idiosyncrasies of the four PrVs, which in turn allows for a more rigorous examination of the mechanisms that promote this type of structural nativisation in ME.

Following Sinclair's groundbreaking "Corpus, Concordance, Collocation," this study adopts a lexico-grammatical approach to: (1) investigate whether there is any semantic or syntactic difference between the nativised PrVs (*comprise of, demand for, discuss about* and *discuss on*) and the 'standard' SWVs (*comprise, demand* and *discuss*) in ME; and (2) propose competing substrate and superstrate structures that might have increased the collocational strength of *comprise* and *of, demand* and *for, discuss* and *about,* and *discuss* and *on* in ME. The findings are used to shed some light on the underlying processes that have led to some aspects of structural nativisation in ME.

In order to extract the data from the MEN Corpus, Mike Scott's corpus-analysis software package *WordSmith Tools* 5 was utilised. Altogether, seven concordances were extracted semi-automatically[3] from the MEN Corpus using the concordance tool of Wordsmith. These lists comprised: (1) 799 instances of the SWV *comprise*; (2) 29 instances of the PrV *comprise of*; (3) 257 instances of the SWV *demand*; (4) 15 instances of the PrV *demand for*; (5) 796 instances of the SWV *discuss*; (6) 7 instances of the PrV *discuss about*; and (7) 26 instances of the PrV *discuss on.* These entries include not only finite verbs, but also non-finite verbs functioning as a noun, an adjective, or an adverb.

Capturing all instances of each PrV was a little more involved than the description thus far might suggest. Due to the occasional non-contiguity of the verb and the preposition (see lines 1, 6-15 and 19-26 of the concordance for *discuss on* in Figure 1), *it was often necessary* to refer to the wider context of these PrVs (see Baldwin, and Villavicencio, "Extracting the Unextractable" for a fuller account of the difficulty of extracting "verb-particles" from corpora). Only by doing so was it possible to extract all instances of the four PrVs, regardless of the number of words intervening between the verb and the preposition.

Fig.1. Concordance for *Discuss on* from the MEN Corpus

	Left context	Node	Right context
1	The alternative to unilateral action is for all countries to	discuss	and decide collectively, under the United Nations, on
2	"Our plan in this first phase is to get everyone to	discuss	on a blueprint for motorsports, which my Ministry has
3	one-stop centre for writers, literary figures and culturist to	discuss	on the identity of Malays by looking at a global point
4	and Nadzmi) will meet the coaches first next week to	discuss	on the programmes. After that, we will bring the matter
5	ranking system," he said. The IBF are expected to	discuss	on the current world ranking system at their executive
6	each problem. "I will look into every problem and then	discuss	with Europlus or the related local authority on the
7	with his employers). Once Kah Yew joins us, we will	discuss	with him on whether action will be taken against Watson.
8	programme geared towards the qualifying rounds. We will	discuss	with Jalani Sidek (the Nusa Mahsuri president) and
9	witness Alex's debut." Hishammuddin said he will also	discuss	with Stoddart on how to further develop motorsports in
10	service at Kuala Lumpur International Airport, is going to	discuss	with the Entrepreneur Development Ministry on the effect
11	the remaining shooters in the Games' list. "We will have to	discuss	with the coaches on this but I don't think this is a
12	that such issue did not exist and that Siemens would	discuss	with the new board of Sepang Power on the fate of its
13	needed by the village was a multi-purpose hall. "I will	discuss	with the council on ways to solve this matter as we want
14	the technical aspects and marketing strategies and we will	discuss	with the state government on the number of units and
15	the code, by reducing overtime or working hours and	discuss	with union officials on possible measures before
16	in Iran, especially at the border with Afghanistan. "We also	discussed	on the need for an Afghan government with
17	them to power." Dr Mahathir also said that the council	discussed	on the reported underground anti-government activities
18	an eye on the late teens to mid-20s group. They are already	discussing	on how packages can be customised to suit their budget.
19	to society," he said. Mustafa said his department was	discussing	with a semi-government institution of higher learning
20	KUALA LUMPUR: The Human Resources Ministry is	discussing	with labour unions and the employers' federation on
21	Dr Ling Liong Sik on Tuesday said the Government was	discussing	with Malaysia Airlines' management on potential financial
22	house here yesterday. Samy Vellu said that he would be	discussing	with PLUS soon on ways to prepare for a smooth balik
23	young budding athletes in Noraseela and Saiful. We are	discussing	with the NSC on whether we should send them oversees
24	KUCHING: Sarawak is	discussing	with the US National Cancer Institute and the Coral
25	for the Minardi team next season, said the ministry was	discussing	with the team on how it could help promote the count
26	cases. "The Pahang Foundation is in the midst of	discussing	with the relevant quarters on the quantum to be give

Although frequently observed in ME, the four innovative PrVs are far less well-represented compared to the 'standard' SWVs in the MEN Corpus. This is not meant to give the impression that the PrVs are merely the lesser variants of the SWVs, because, as shall be demonstrated in the section below, there are subtle but significant semantic and syntactic differences between the two. From evidence of usage, it is clear that while every occurrence of a PrV can be replaced by its corresponding SWV without any loss of meaning or structure, the converse is not true. That is to say, there are instances of a SWV that cannot logically be replaced by a nativised PrV, and it is this that accounts for the continuing relevance of the latter in ME. The two sections that follow describe the semantic and syntactic idiosyncrasies of the four PrVs. Extracts[4] from the MEN Corpus are included where appropriate.

Semantic idiosyncrasies

As mentioned earlier, this study views creative PrVs in ME as manifestations of lexico-grammatical changes that can only be fully explored if they are compared with their corresponding SWVs. Contrasting how these PrVs and the 'standard' SWVs are used by ME speakers reveals the superstrate and substrate influences at work in the nativisation of the former.

In order to compare the meanings of the PrVs and their corresponding SWVs, it was necessary to analyse and deduce the meaning of every single occurrence of these verbs in the MEN Corpus. The results of this exercise are presented in Tables 1, 2 and 3, which show the range and distribution of meanings of the PrVs and their corresponding SWVs. Of the four PrVs, three (excepting *demand for*) are strongly idiosyncratic – that is, they do not have the same range of meanings as their corresponding SWVs.

Table 1: Meanings of *Comprise* and *Comprise of*

comprise (n=799)	1.	"to consist of" (n=762) The team *comprising* [undergraduates Chan Sheau Peng, Euzanin Yaacob, Lee Fui Feng and Norazinali Sham, all from the Accounting Faculty], walked away with the challenge trophy.
	2.	"to make up" (n=22) To say that this is applicable to a majority would be unfair to our civic conscious citizens, who, thankfully, *comprise* [a fair portion of our society].
	3.	"to include" (n=7)
	4.	"to mean," "to be equal to" & other minor senses (n=8)
comprise of (n=29)	1.	"to consist of" (n=29) According to our analysis, the voters *comprise of* [297 Malays, 469 Chinese, 39 Indians and four from other races].

Table 2: Meanings of *Demand* and *Demand for*

demand (n=257)	1. "to ask for something in an urgent, imperious manner" (n=123) The woman was alone in the toilet at about 1.30pm when the man, armed with a knife, barged in and *demanded* [her purse]. 2. "to require, to have a need of" (n=55) The motorist will also *demand* driving pleasure in the form of maximum driving stability and .... 3. "to claim what one is legally entitled to" (n=22) Downtown, near the site of the tragedy, troops of the National Guard now *demand* IDs at random. 4. "to ask to be informed of something" (n=2) We *demand* to know why land given to them long ago were still not developed. 5. "requiring a lot of effort" (participial adjective *demanding*) (n=46) 6. "to require as just or right" (n=9)
demand for (n=15)	1. "to ask for something in an urgent, imperious manner" (n=8) She said that the thugs then turned violent when they learned that she was not aware of his (cousin brother's) whereabouts and *demanded for* [his contact number]. 2. "to require, to have a need of" (n=2) There is a growing need as people are beginning to *demand for* alternative choices to commercial counter brands. 3. "to claim what one is legally entitled to" (n=4) 4. "to ask to be informed of something" (n=1)

Table 3: Meanings of *Discuss, Discuss about* and *Discuss on*

discuss (n=796)	1. "to talk over something" (transitive) (n=766) PAS is seeking a meeting with the Home Minister to *discuss* [the ban on political ceramah].
	2. "to hold a discussion" (intransitive) (n=30) The entrepreneur has *discussed* with me and I agreed in principle to have joint programmes with him.
discuss about (n=7)	1. "to talk over something" (n=7) The symposium stemmed from the desire to act and not merely *discuss about* [the social ills that plague the society].
discuss on (n=26)	1. "to talk over something" (n=26) They are already *discussing on* [how packages can be customised to suit their budget].

Based on the analysis of 799 instances of *comprise* and 29 instances of *comprise of* (see Table 1 for a summary of the findings), it was discovered that while the SWV *comprise* is polysemous, capable of representing at least three main meanings—"to consist of," "to make up," and "to include" – and several other minor ones, the PrV *comprise of* is used only to denote "to consist of."

The distinctiveness of the PrV *comprise of* is hard to qualify primarily because of the lack of consensus, even among inner-circle speakers, on the 'proper' usage of the word *comprise,* and in fact on the exact definition of the word. The *Oxford English Dictionary Online* lists nine discrete definitions for the verb *comprise* although many of these are either obsolete or very rare. Most dictionaries give the main definition of *comprise* as "to consist of, to be composed of," with the implication that an exhaustive list of the parts that make up the subject will follow the verb (e.g., The country *comprises* twenty states. [*Oxford Dictionaries Online*]). There is, however, a second increasingly common usage of *comprise* which has led some dictionaries to allow another related definition – "to make up, to compose" (e.g., These essays together with those contained in this volume *comprised* the total of C. S. Lewis's essays on literature. [*Oxford English Dictionary Online*]).

The use of the SWV *comprise* in ME is, by and large, in agreement with the inner-circle prescriptions summarised above. The divergence comes in the form of the PrV *comprise of,* which occurs 29 times in the MEN Corpus, or in roughly 4% of the contexts in which inner-circle speakers would probably have used the SWV *comprise*. This is widely regarded as an error (Turton, and Heaton 76). In contrast to the diverse meanings of *comprise,* the PrV *comprise of* is associated with only one meaning – "to consist of." The following is a clear example:

1. According to our analysis, the voters *comprise of* [297 Malays, 469 Chinese, 39 Indians and four from other races].

The SWV *discuss,* as evidenced in the MEN Corpus, is equally polysemous, having two main meanings – "to talk over something," and "to hold a discussion" (see Table 3). The first meaning, which occurs in 766 of the 796 instances of *discuss* requires a "verbiage"—the subject matter of the discussion (Butt *et al.* 57). Hence, in active constructions, the SWV *discuss* takes a direct object (enclosed in square brackets below) and is clearly transitive, as demonstrated in the following example:

2. PAS is seeking a meeting with the Home Minister to *discuss* [the ban on political ceramah].

The intrinsic transitivity of this meaning of *discuss* is also observed in non-finite clauses and passive constructions. In the following examples, the verbiage emphasises the inherent transitivity of *discuss*:

3. The report said Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar had met US Secretary of State Colin Powell to *discuss* [a meeting between the two leaders].

4. [All aspects of FDI] will be *discussed* in earnest by the leaders, Government senior officials and members of the private sector.

In contrast, the second meaning, which occurs in the remaining 30 concordance lines, is intransitive. The verbiage is not explicitly stated though it can often be inferred from the context. The following example illustrates how *discuss* can occur without a direct object:

5. The entrepreneur has *discussed* with me and I agreed in principle to have joint programmes with him.

Discuss on and *discuss about* are never used to express this second meaning. All instances of these PrVs in the MEN Corpus are used to express the first meaning "to talk over or to consider":

6. The symposium stemmed from the desire to act and not merely *discuss about* [the social ills that plague the society].

7. They are already *discussing on* [how packages can be customised to suit their budget].

The semantic idiosyncrasies of *discuss about* and *discuss on* suggest a possible link between the prevalence of these PrVs and the semantic adaptation of the SWV *discuss* in ME. In inner-circle Englishes, the verb *discuss* is strongly transitive. The use of *discuss* intransitively to mean "to hold a discussion," a fairly

common occurrence in ME, would be regarded as unusual – erroneous in fact (Turton, and Heaton 101) – by most inner-circle speakers. It seems likely that the semantic adaptation and the resulting polysemous nature of the word *discuss* in ME have contributed to the relevance of the PrVs *discuss about* and *discuss on*. The use of the PrVs *discuss about* and *discuss on* is thus a strategy, albeit unconscious, to emphasise that the speaker is using the verb in a transitive sense

The case of the PrV *demand for* is less clear-cut as it has many meanings in common with the SWV *demand* (see Table 2). *Demand* and *demand for* appear 257 times and 15 times respectively in the MEN Corpus. Unlike the three PrVs discussed so far, the range of meanings that *demand for* is able to express in comparison with *demand* is largely unremarkable. Both *demand* and *demand for* have the same principal meaning – "to ask for something in a manner that is urgent, imperious, etc." This meaning accounts for 123 of the 257 concordance lines of *demand*, and 8 of the 15 concordance lines of *demand for*. The following are typical examples of this use of *demand* and *demand for*:

8.   The woman was alone in the toilet at about 1.30pm when the man, armed with a knife, barged in and *demanded* [her purse].

9.   She said that the thugs then turned violent when they learned that she was not aware of his (cousin brother's) whereabouts and *demanded for* [his contact number].

Besides this main meaning, five other definitions of *demand* were found in the MEN Corpus. Three of these were also expressed by *demand for*: "to require, to have a need of," "to ask for something authoritatively, to claim what one is legally or rightfully entitled to," and "to ask to be informed of something".

In short, the data from the MEN Corpus suggest that, of the four PrVs studied here, three are semantically idiosyncratic in that they are not exact semantic equivalents of their corresponding SWVs. The importance of these findings for our understanding of the broader notion of structural nativisation in ME will become clearer in the next section when the syntactic idiosyncrasies of these nativised features are discussed.

Syntactic idiosyncrasies

Besides obvious semantic differences, the four PrVs are also syntactically different from their corresponding SWVs. Analysis of the seven concordance lists revealed that they consistently behave like other more established or 'standard' PrVs, and can furthermore be syntactically distinguished, not only from their corresponding SWVs, but also from other types of multi-word verbs.

Like most 'legitimate' PrVs, comprise of, demand for, discuss about and discuss on take a prepositional object, which is typically realised by a noun phrase (NP). The main structural pattern for these nativised PrVs, based on their contexts of use as represented in the MEN Corpus, is NP + verb + preposition + NP. As illustrated below, this pattern occurs in both finite and non-finite clauses:

10. We also *discussed on* [the need for an Afghan government with representatives from all ethnic groups in Afghanistan].

11. He said he would meet the barge operator to *demand for* [compensation].

Besides noun phrases, the prepositional object can also be realised by two types of nominal clauses—*ing*-clauses and *wh*-clauses, as demonstrated below:

12. Omar said the leaders would be *discussing about* ["enhancing the climate for foreign direct investment through smart partnership"].

13. They are already *discussing on* [how packages can be customised to suit their budget].

These examples might give the impression that other than the relational meaning conveyed by the preposition, there is no real difference between these nativised PrVs and their corresponding SWVs. This perception is conceivably reinforced by the fact that the prepositional object which follows a PrV is semantically similar to the direct object which follows a transitive SWV in that they both refer to a person or a thing, and answer *wh*-questions formed with *who* or *what*. Syntactically, however, there are certain nominal clauses that can function as a direct object but not as a prepositional object. Cases in point are *that*-clauses and ellipted *that*-clauses. Examples 14 and 15 below demonstrate the use of a *that*-clause and an ellipted *that*-clause as the direct object of the verb *demand*. The use of these clauses as the prepositional object of *demand for* is intuitively unlikely (examples 16 and 17):

14. The nation will *demand* [that the Government explains itself on certain issues].

15. His voice was muted by the heckling from some delegates who *demanded* [he be replaced by his deputy].

16. The nation will *demand for* [that the Government explains itself on certain issues].*

17. His voice was muted by the heckling from some delegates who *demanded for* [he be replaced by his deputy].*

A distinct characteristic of PrVs is their flexibility where adverbials are concerned. Adverbs and prepositional phrases functioning as adverbials can occur,

not only before (e.g., The authority is merely *demanding for* [explanations].) and after the PrV (e.g., ... to *discuss about* [the news network] before its launch the next day.), but also within it, as in:

18.   The Brunei team comprise mostly of [players who featured in Premier II of the M-League this season].

19.   Hishammuddin said he will also *discuss* with Stoddart on [how to further develop motorsports in Malaysia] during his visit.

A feature which distinguishes PrVs from their closest relatives, the phrasal verbs, is the latter's tolerance of particle movement. Most transitive phrasal verbs[5] allow the "particle" (used by Quirk *et al.* [1150] to refer to the preposition or the spatial adverb in a multi-word verb) to be placed either before or after the object noun phrase. This characteristic is reflected in the following examples of a nativised phrasal verb, *raise up*, extracted from the MEN Corpus:

20.   They *raise up* [the issue on the New Poor] but when asked to define the concept, they do not even know how to categorise or explain its exact meaning.

21.   It is better for him to do the right thing and *raise* [her] *up* to the status of wife.

PrVs do not allow particle movement. This is to say that, with PrVs, the particle always comes before the object noun phrase. This pattern is adhered to in all 77 instances of the nativised PrVs examined in this study, even when there is an intervening element, such as an adverb or a prepositional phrase, within the PrV:

22.   They *demand for* [full attention] from the adults around them.

23.   Perak has been unable to complete some RM2mil worth of projects, *comprising* mainly of [community halls and food stalls] before the Dec 31 deadline.

24.   We will *discuss* with Jalani Sidek (the Nusa Mahsuri president) and Misbun Sidek (the chief coach) on [how we can work together].

The four PrVs discussed here are what Biber et al. (413 and 482) would have classified as single-object PrVs – they do not take a direct object, requiring only a prepositional object. In contrast with transitive SWVs and two-object PrVs,[6] single-object PrVs rarely occur in the passive voice (*ibid.*). This tendency to take the active voice has certainly been substantiated by this study. Of the 77 instances of nativised PrVs analysed, only one occurred in the passive:

25.   It is refreshing to see Jones portray a character who is *comprised of* morality and susceptibility.

In comparison, the SWVs *demand* and *discuss*[7] readily take the passive:

26. [The role of the family in strengthening young children] will be *discussed* by Ruth Liew, from the Malaysian Child Resource Institute.

27. [What] is *demanded* by a bank is usually respectfully obeyed by the borrower with no questions asked.

It is thus clear that although the four PrVs studied here are often associated with 'non-standard' English, they maintain remarkably stable patterns of use. Clearly, their perceived lack of grammaticality is rooted in the fact that they occur where inner-circle speakers would have used the corresponding SWV, because there is certainly no evidence to suggest instability or irregularity in their contexts of use.

Group SLA and structural nativisation in ME

Based on the semantic and syntactic differences between the four nativised PrVs and their corresponding SWVs, several inferences regarding the underlying processes that led to the creation of these PrVs can be drawn.

First, substrate influences appear to play a role. The duality in the meaning of *discuss* bears a strong resemblance to how the Malay equivalent, *bincang*, is used. Depending on the affixes surrounding it, *bincang* can be either a transitive (*membincangkan*) or an intransitive (*berbincang*) verb (*Kamus Lanjutan Bahasa Malaysia-Bahasa Inggeris* 76). The semantic adaptation of *discuss* in ME could be the result of this influence from Malay (and perhaps other indigenous languages). ME speakers who are confronted with the duality in the meaning of the verb *discuss* thus, in some circumstances, rely on the prepositions *about* and *on* in order to reinforce the link between the verb and the object when the transitivity of the verb is strongly indicated. The fact that *discuss about* and *discuss on* are used exclusively to mean "to talk over (something)" in ME goes some way in providing support for this observation. Substrate influence could also be a factor in the creation and maintenance of the PrV *comprise of.* The Malay equivalent of *comprise* is the multi-word form *terdiri daripada* (literally, "is formed of"), which may have been the model for the PrV *comprise of.*

Another potential underlying process in the nativisation of the four PrVs is the generalisation of 'legitimate' noun + preposition combinations. The fact that the choice of preposition in the formation of the PrVs analysed in this study is non-arbitrary suggests that constructions such as *discussion on*, *discussion about* and *demand for* may have a role to play in validating the use of the PrVs *discuss on, discuss about* and *demand for* in ME.

Regardless of the bad publicity these nativised features often attract, an aspect of nativisation that is difficult to discount is its inherent logic. The creation of *discuss about* and *discuss on,* for instance, must be assisted, at least in part, by the intrinsic properties of *on* and *about* which dispose these prepositions to co-occurrence with a wide range of communication verbs to produce collocational combinations such as *ask about, brag about, comment about/on, complain about, debate about/on, enquire about, gossip about, inquire about, lament about/on, lecture about/on, rave about, speak about/on, talk about/on, touch on, write about/on,* and so on. The preposition in these forms typically links the verb to an object, and emphasises that the noun phrase that comes after the preposition is the verbiage of the process represented by the verb. That these prepositions might be equally fruitfully paired with the verb *discuss* seems an eminently logical conclusion to arrive at. The relevance of the PrV *demand for* can similarly be linked to how *for* is frequently used in English. The preposition *for* is very often used to reinforce the link between diverse communication verbs and their object, and to foreground the transitivity of the construction. There are countless semantically-related PrVs which allude to this specific function of *for,* such as *appeal for, ask for, beg for, call for, clamour for, fight for, opt for, plead for, pray for, press for, push for* and *yearn for.*

The fact that innovative PrVs such as those studied here have also been observed in many other outer-circle Englishes, such as Standard Nigerian English (Bamgbose 155), and Philippine English (Gonzales 160), suggests that it is this inherent logic together with the existing structures of English, more than substrate influences, that make these features so transmittable.

Conclusion

Kachru, and Smith (99) associate this type of structural nativisation with the intricacy of English prepositions. According to them, the fact that "the use of prepositions is determined partly by their meaning and partly because of their formal grammatical requirement with no reference to their meaning" (Kachru, and Smith 99) presents difficulty for outer- and expanding-circle speakers. The present study found no evidence of arbitrary verb and preposition combination that could point to such difficulty. On the contrary, the syntactic environment of the PrVs analysed here suggests their users' mastery of English prepositions and PrVs. The semantic complexity of certain SWVs is certainly a factor which contributes to the relevance of these PrVs for ME users. This, coupled with the non-arbitrary choice of preposition in the formation of these PrVs, suggests a systematic attempt by ME users to adapt the structure surrounding particular verbs in order to achieve semantic accuracy.

Such processes of adaptation are not restricted to ME. Sinclair (53-65), for instance, demonstrates the interaction between the different meanings of the word *yield* and the patterns that it takes using data extracted from the central corpus of the Birmingham Collection of English Texts. He found six instances of *yield up* where *up* is apparently used to emphasise the transitivity of *yield* in the sense of "to give way, submit or surrender, as through force or persuasion" (Sinclair 54). He notes that "*up* appears to be acting semantically as a completive, but syntactically it appears to be acting to make a transitive structure sound normal" (Sinclair 57).

Based on evidence of usage, it could reasonably be deduced that the four PrVs analysed in this study are the results of ME users' need to achieve "maximum transparency" and "maximum salience" (Williams[8] qtd. in Mesthrie, and Bhatt 174). The need to be as transparent as possible is likely contributed by the polysemous nature of the SWVs comprise and discuss, which in turn is attributable, in some cases, to substrate influences. Clearly, the semantic complexity of these SWVs places the onus on ME users to exercise more control "in keeping track of their own production," (ibid.) and hence the 'redundant' prepositions. These prepositions also allow ME users to maximise salience by emphasising the transitive relationship between the verb and the object. To regard them as redundant and to perceive these PrVs as errors simply because they diverge from inner-circle usage would call into question the very notion of grammaticality and how it has been applied to the English language.

Notes

[1]   See, for instance, Baskaran ("New Englishes," and "Malaysian English Primer"); Hajar Abdul Rahim, and Harshita Aini Haroon ("Native Lexical Items"); Lowenberg ("Singapore-Malaysian English," "Malay Archipelago," "Sociolinguistic Context and Second Language Acquisition," "Variation," and "Marking of Ethnicity"); Morais ("Lectal Varieties"); Newbrook ("Status, Norms"); Tan ("Melaka or Malacca"); and Wong ("Structural Aspect," "Native-Speaker English," and "Simplification Features").

[2]   The MEN Corpus is a five-million-word corpus of newspaper articles sourced from two of the most influential English language dailies in Malaysia—*The Star* and the *New Straits Times.* The articles were published between 1 August 2001 and 30 January 2002.

[3]   The MEN Corpus is untagged, and as such, it was not possible to generate the concordance lists automatically. Instead, they had to be manually extracted from the results of wildcard searches. So, for example, in order to generate the lists for *demand* and *demand for,* a search for *demand** was initially executed. This yielded 1034 entries comprising not only instances of finite and non-finite verb phrases deriving from the search word but also the noun forms *demand* and *demands*, and

terms like *letter of demand, in demand* and *on demand.* For the purpose of the present study, only instances of finite and non-finite verb phrases deriving from *demand* were retained. The rest were deleted. In this way, all instances of the SWV *demand* and the PrV *demand for* were captured in a single list comprising 272 entries. To facilitate the comparison of the contexts of *demand* with those of *demand for,* their concordance lines were separated. The result was two lists, one comprising 257 entries for the SWV *demand* and the other comprising 15 entries for the PrV *demand for.* Collectively, these lists formed the raw data in the investigation of the nativisation of the PrV *demand for*.

⁴   All the examples quoted in this paper are expressed in complete sentences rather than in concordance lines to maximise comprehensibility. To avoid inordinately long sentences, it has been necessary to shorten some of these sentences. In such cases, all efforts have been made to preserve the meaning and main structure of the sentence.

⁵   For exceptions, see Biber *et al.* (405).

⁶   Two-object PrVs take a direct object in addition to the obligatory prepositional object (Biber *et al.* [414] and Quirk *et al.* [1158]). As noted in Biber *et al.* (414), their structural pattern is NP + verb + NP + preposition + NP. The following examples illustrate the use of the PrVs *accuse of* and *said to* (see *ibid.* for a more comprehensive list of examples):

• No, they like to *accuse* [women] *of* [being mechanically inept].
• He *said* [farewell] *to* [us] on this very spot.

⁷   The SWV *comprise* does not occur in the passive in the MEN Corpus. This is not unexpected given the semantic and syntactic instability of this word even in inner-circle Englishes.

⁸   Williams, Jessica. "Non-native Varieties of English: A Special Case of Language Acquisition." *English World-Wide* 8.2 (1987): 161-99

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