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INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF
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EMBRACING CHANGE: EMANCIPATING THE LANDSCAPE OF RESEARCH IN LINGUISTIC, LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

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LEARNED – SPOKEN: MANGLISH

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ABSTRACT:

Malaysian English or Manglish is one of many good examples of a creole language; where the base language, English, is integrated and mixed with several local languages such as Malay, Hokkien, Mandarin, Cantonese, and Tamil, creating a new English that is nativised. Through the birth of Manglish, a language barrier was formed between Manglish speakers and native English speakers. Through this, it was found that in Malaysia, the English that is learnt and taught in formal education differs greatly with the English that is spoken. In the form of flashcards, this paper strives to uncover these differences, and shed light on the likely derivations behind each ‘Manglish’ term. Despite being a creole of many different languages fused within English, this particular paper focused mainly on Malay influences.

Keywords: Malaysian English, New English, Manglish, Nativisation, Sociolinguistics

1. INTRODUCTION

The roots that set the growth of Learned-Spoken: Manglish into full bloom, the reason behind the birth of this project, lies in the experiences of acquiring a new language. In pursuing the acquisition of a new language, it was discovered that what is formally taught in schools through books and language guides, was a far cry from what was actually being spoken by native speakers of said language. In determining whether this was also the case with English that is spoken in Malaysia; where native English speakers with proper English knowledge and application are bound to face language barriers due to the form English has taken in this Southeast Asian country. Hence, this observation was what essentially gave rise to Learned-Spoken: Manglish, a witty and humorous, but insightful comparative guide between what is learned and what is spoken for English in Malaysia. Also known as Manglish, Sufi et al (2020) described the longer forms of Manglish as ‘Mangled English’ or ‘Malaysian English’, stating that it is a creole language that is heavily integrated and serves contributory functions for a large majority of the multi-ethnic locals in Malaysia. Additionally, Gill (2005) touched on the advances by the government at establishing Malay as an official language, to be used by Malaysians in all government functions and as the medium of instruction at all levels after its independence in 1957—this eventually saw a reverse in policy in 2002 wherein the government announced that a shift would take place with English being the new medium of instruction at all levels. Despite that being the case, the locals of Malaysia have seen to assimilate their own Malay language into the English language.

Learned-Spoken: Manglish takes the shape of physical flash-cards donning simple and stylistic designs with the primary motif being the national flower of Malaysia, the Hibiscus, or the ‘Bunga Raya’. Its contents touch on popular and commonly used Manglish words or phrases and their proper English counterparts, definitions, applications in sentences, et cetera. In essence,

Manglish is a creole language, or a language with many other languages infused into it. With Malay and English being the base, Bernhardt and Davis (2007) states that in the vocabulary of Manglish, variations of words with derivations from English, Malay, Hokkien, Mandarin, Cantonese, Tamil can be seen in its day to day usage. In addition, Tan (2005) emphasised Manglish as a language by Malaysians, for Malaysians—one that is made for local consumption. As such, the larger portion of Learned-Spoken:Manglish will only look at words that are bound to be mind-boggling to native English speakers, saving the mix of the many other languages for a potential future addition to the Learned-Spoken series.

1.1. Project Objective / Purpose

The general purpose and aim of this project is to enlighten people on the differences between what is learned and what is spoken in a language, to show that as much as it applies to Manglish, it may very well apply to other languages. The more specific purpose of this project is to create a small, convenient, and humorously insightful comparative guide for foreigners/international students in Malaysia. With foreigners and international students in Malaysia being the primary target, the physical product of this project is designed to also be appealing to a secondary target; locals who would like to have or gift this as a lasting memento or keepsake. In garnering attention and interest in the physical product of this project, an Instagram account is also to be created for the sole purpose of obtaining a large enough following so as to be able to proceed with marketing the physical product. With all these purposes in mind, the objectives of the project are:

- i. to find a minimum of TEN (10) words/phrases in Manglish.
- ii. to create an Instagram account to promote the project.
- iii. to upload a minimum of FIVE (5) posts on the Instagram account.
- iv. to gauge interest in a physical product via an Interest Check (IC) form.

1.2. Entrepreneurial Opportunities

In gauging the scale of the attention brought to Learned-Spoken: Manglish through the Instagram account, approximately 82 followers were able to be garnered over the span of two months. In relation to that, a total of six posts were uploaded, achieving one of the objectives of having a minimum of five posts. On top of this, the Instagram account for Learned-Spoken was created as a professional business account. This way, any and every posting that takes place on the account is given data in the form of insights. These insights give a deeper look into what kind of profiles the audience is made up of, the number of views, likes, comments, shares, and saves a post has.



Pictured above is the profile for Learned-Spoken: Manglish on Instagram. And according to the 'insight' feature on Instagram, the Instagram account for Learned-Spoken: Manglish has an average of 400 views on each post; with 40% of said views being from the audience that

follows the account, and the remaining 60% being Instagram profiles that do not follow the account. Through this, we are able to see that despite not having the biggest following, the Instagram account is successful in garnering a sufficient amount of attention and interest in the topic, which in turn would reflect in equal or more interest being shown in the physical product, the flashcards.

2. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Learned-Spoken: Manglish is a project that was inspired by the differences between what is learned and what is spoken in a language, namely English that is used in Malaysia; otherwise known as Manglish. The concept of humorously visualizing said differences through a physical form factor in the shape of flashcards is the primary focus, with an Instagram account being used to first garner attention towards the idea that there are a lot of things about Manglish that native and/or proficient English speakers would find mind-boggling but fascinating at how English has undergone a process of nativisation; where the language is spoken by people with different mother tongues as it is mixed about and swirls into a language of its own. The sole motif that was used for design of both the flashcards as well as the posts on the Instagram account centre around the national flower of Malaysia, given the fact that the language that is focused on is one that is largely used in Malaysia. Having gone through various channels and filters, the words, phrases, clauses, and sentences are carefully examined and selected on the basis of how widely it is seen being used. Another factor that went into consideration into finalizing the content was from a more linguistic aspect. For instance, how certain words and phrases undergo changes of word class, semantic shifts, slight syntactic changes/simplifications, and morphologically.

2.1 Versions/Sizes

Going back to the primary form factor for Learned-Spoken: Manglish, the physical flashcards are set to come in a variation of two sizes, each with their own content and designs. The first version is the small, pocket, or '*kocek*' sized flashcards. In this version, the cards will introduce the most commonly used words. They will be limited to words and not phrases, as a longer phrase would call for a longer explanation, which in turn would be somewhat difficult to read on small, pocketable flashcards.

Additionally, the second version will be the normal, '*biasa*' sized flashcards. This version will be a slightly more in-depth set as it will be able to hold longer phrases and even example sentences for commonly used words and phrases in Manglish. Situations or scenarios will also be provided to see if consumers can correctly pinpoint what word or phrase the said scenario is mentioning.

2.2 Costing

Learned-Spoken: Manglish involves costing in a number of aspects. Some of these aspects include printing, material, shipping, as well as hidden costs such as transport to printing location, internet used to conduct designing of the product, to name a few. However, as plans for production and selling of the physical flashcards are only set to take place after completion of the ELS304 code, the more specific numbers looking into the printing and material costs have yet to be determined as of now.

On account of the Instagram account used to promote and gain traction for the project, it is a zero-cost procedure throughout every step. First, the creation of the Instagram account, of which only required a username, a password, as well as contact details like an email address and/or a phone number in the off chance that we were to forget our passwords. Moving on, the

process of designing the logo as well as the posts were all conducted on Canva, a graphic design platform that is used to create social media graphics, presentations, posters, documents and other visual content. The app includes both free and paid templates for users to use.

In short, it can be concluded that the aspect with most, if not all of the costs is the production of the physical flashcards themselves, with the online platforms such as Instagram and Canva both being free-to-use platforms with optional paid features.

2.3 Project Scheduling

Weekly Task	Week															
	W0	W1	W2	W3	W4	W5	W6	W7	W8	W9	W10	W11	W12	W13	W14	W15
Discussion of Project Planning	█															
Preparation of Idea Pitching		█														
Project Presentation (consultation 1)			█													
Commencement of Designing				█												
Listing of Content					█											
Consultation on Content and Design (consultation 2)						█										
Creation of Instagram account							█									
Readjustment on Design (consultation 3)								█								
Finalisation of Content									█							
Research on Costing										█						
Finalisation on Versions											█					
Uploading of Posts on Instagram (consultation 4)												█				
Finalisation on Design for Physical Flashcards													█			
Progress update on Portfolio (consultation 5)														█		
Consultation with Medan Sumarni for Linguistic Input															█	
Create and Spread Interest Check Form																█
Submission of Portfolio																
Preparation of Presentation Video																
Submission of Presentation Video																
Symposium																

Table 1: Gantt Chart of the Project Planning for Learned-Spoken: Manglish

3. OUTCOMES AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Instagram Account

The Instagram for Learned-Spoken: Manglish was created for the primary purpose of essentially promoting the topic of learning about the differences between what is learned and what is spoken in a language, as well as promoting the physical product for Learned-Spoken, a set of flashcards that come in two sizes. Based on audience interaction on Instagram, the attention that was brought to Learned-Spoken: Manglish saw a climb in numbers from the initial below 10, to an impressive 89 over the course of the semester.

In addition, the layout of the Instagram posts were arranged in such a way that the first three posts would focus on a more academic aspect without as much emphasis on entertaining. Whereas the later three posts would be in the form of ‘reels’ or short videos where short skits will be seen depicting the amusing struggles one may face in encountering the English that is spoken in Malaysia, especially those who are proficient in proper English.

3.2 Interest Check (IC) via Google Forms

An interest check form is a survey form with the sole purpose of literally ‘checking’ and gauging interest for a certain product or service. The platform that was used in creating and spreading the form was conducted through Google Forms. The questions to be asked were in relation to what the audiences’ budget ranges were, which version they would likely purchase, as well as any comments or feedback for improvements.



3.3 Purchasing of physical flashcards via Group Buy (GB)

A group buy is essentially a ‘pre-order’-style process wherein the money that is used to produce the items would be directly from the buyers themselves. A group buy is a process through which consumers can collectively purchase goods at a reduced price. Some Group Buys take advantage of price breaks to offer products to the market at a more desirable price, often at the cost of the seller’s time/efforts. Other group buys simply give us the ability to make something happen that otherwise would have too much cost/risk associated with it for a vendor or company to buy into it and bring it to market themselves.

4. CONCLUSION

To summarize, Learned-Spoken: Manglish has received somewhat satisfactory responses from the general public, namely those who use Instagram. The aim and objectives of the project were laid out surrounding the research conducted prior. A country and its speakers are an integral part of what gave rise to this project. As such, this project was conducted in order to essentially immortalize the studies, observations, and stories while also educating the public, especially the younger generation on the topic of language differences between what is learnt and what is spoken.

However, there are a wide variety of options and routes that can be taken in furthering the scale or quality of the project as a whole. Some recommendations that can be considered for the future of the project would be versions of the Learned-Spoken series covering different languages, or conducting a study of the topic, while being more inclined towards the academic side but also in hopes of retaining the humour and light-hearted factor.

The first recommendation would be attempting to expand the Learned-Spoken series by covering other languages such as Japanese, Chinese (Mandarin, Cantonese, Hokkien, Beijing, etc.) or even the Hawaiian language, Pidgin. Through this, consumers would be able to look forward to learning more about the differences between what is learned and what is spoken in many different languages and countries. However, as previously stated in the limitations, the problem with this recommendation would be the lack of knowledge and proficiency on the creator’s part. As such, one solution to that would be to find collaborators who are proficient in their respective languages so they will be able to give native-level insight into each language that is focused on in the next Learned-Spoken flashcards.

The second recommendation would be to conduct an extensive research study on the more linguistic and academic side of Learned-Spoken. Through this study, one could hope to find a more definitive reason as to why the language of English has evolved and undergone nativisation (Wahida, 2021). In conducting the study, one could also look to study for any patterns or cues that may hold meaning, or to study how the people in a country have the power to change a language that they speak.

Over the course of this project, an abundance of valuable lessons as both a creator and an e-creator was present. The first lesson is in relation to the pre-execution planning of the project. The importance of management is largely overlooked among students as a big chunk of them do not make a habit of understanding the very essence of project planning. On top of which, time management in itself is one of the most crucial soft skills that must be practiced at all times as it is one of the many marks of an efficient student and future employee in the workforce. As an e-creator, lessons such as design languages, compatibility, complementary design cues, as well as overall aesthetics were experienced.

Finally, Learned-Spoken: Manglish touches on the prospect of shedding light on how a country and its speakers can essentially change a language; resulting in slight variations, semantic alterations, and an increase in layers of subtleties. The project wishes to highlight that

while these subtle differences in Manglish may appear baffling and downright cryptic for a lot of native or proficient English speakers, it all ultimately adds to the richness and depth of the language.

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