

## **The Phonology of Malaysian English: A Preliminary Study**

Hooi San Phoon and Margaret Maclagan  
*Communication Disorders Department*  
*University of Canterbury, New Zealand*

### **Abstract**

Malaysian English (MalE) has gained recognition as one of the New Englishes in South-east Asia. MalE is undergoing nativization and is gradually developing into a stable variety with its own pronunciation features. This study aims to identify characteristics of the consonant and vowel inventories of MalE as well as phonetic realizations of phonemes, by investigating the speech production of ten educated speakers of MalE, who were ethnically Chinese. This study goes beyond previous studies of MalE phonology by using a quantitative auditory phonetic analysis. The characteristics observed were first categorized according to their frequency of occurrence and then further grouped into categories based on the possible influences of British English (BrE) or American English (AE) as well as local Malaysian languages and dialects. An understanding of the characteristic phonetic realizations of MalE phonemes is important for linguists, speech-language pathologists, English language teachers and policy makers in their respective fields of work.

Phoon, H. S., & Maclagan, M. A. (2009). *The Phonology of Malaysian English: A Preliminary Study*. In L. J Zhang, R. Rubdy & A. Lubna (Eds.) *Englishes and Literatures-in-English in a Globalised World: Proceedings of the 13th International Conference on English in Southeast Asia* (pp. 59-73). Singapore: National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University.