Phonological Nativisation of Malaysian English in the Cartoon Animation Series "Upin and Ipin: The Helping Heroes"

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ABSTRACT

In Malaysia, "Upin and Ipin: The Helping Heroes" is considered one of the most popular cartoon animations recently being previewed in its main channel on YouTube. This animation series presents several distinguishing features, including basic English as its primary instruction medium. Through much observation, however, this research discovers that subtle phonological nativisations of Malaysian English (ME) seem to be visible in the cartoon, which brings to the question of whether Malaysians can accept the learning of the English language with ME phonology. The identification and examination of phonological nativisation in the study were employed through a phonological analysis. These sounds' characteristics were then categorised into existing phonological features of ME based on previous literature. Findings of the study show that overall, a number of seven categories of ME's phonological nativisation were identified, including; (1) voiced dental fricatives /ð/ replaced with voiced alveolar stops /d/; (2) voiceless dental fricative /θ/ replaced with voiceless alveolar stops /t/; (3) the omission of single coda consonants; (4) the omission of final consonant clusters; (5) the omission of morphological markers in final clusters; (6) the lengthening of vowels in unstressed syllables; and (7) the shortening of vowels in stressed syllables. Thus, it can be concluded that based on a large number of viewers, the identification of phonological nativisations of ME in the cartoon clearly reflects that the variety is gradually and unconsciously becoming accepted by Malaysians despite disagreements on the damages it may cause towards English language development.

1. INTRODUCTION

Language development is a critical part of a child's upbringing. Apart from receiving formal education at school, numerous studies have proven that children can also acquire language through exposure to cartoon animations (Lodhi, Ibrar, Shamim, & Naz, 2018). In this new world, the impact of globalisation has allowed this exposure to become greater than before as the increase of telecommunication infrastructures enables children to watch their favourite cartoons not just through the screens of their television but through other various technologies such as cellphones and tablets as well, which indirectly increases the number of time children spends watching and learning through these cartoons per day. In Malaysia, the growth of new media has played a tremendous role and influence on society in many aspects, including mental and emotional development (Alivi, Ghazali, Tamam, & Osman, 2018). With children having more accessibility towards the media in Malaysia, there is a great responsibility upon local animation companies and societies to uphold decent socio-cultural values within these cartoons so that younger generations can inculcate virtuous principles. Among some of the legendary cartoon animations in Malaysia is the *Sang Kancil* Series created during the 1980s, *Keluang Man*, *Anak-Anak Sidek* and *Usop Santorian* in the 1990s (Muthalib, 2004).

Later on, with the help and support of the Malaysian government, agencies such as the Multimedia Development Corporation (MDC), the Malaysian Animation Creative Content Centre (MAC3) as well as non-profit, governmental organisations such as the Animation Society of Malaysia (ANIMAS) have all contributed in improving the quality and performance of today's cartoon animations in Malaysia, producing outstanding, award-winning international animations such as the *Upin* and *Ipin* Series from Les' Copaque Production, *Ejen Ali* from WAU Animation and *Boboboi* from Animonsta Studios (Muthalib, 2010). All three cartoon animations above have won many children's hearts in Malaysia, each showcasing its distinctive storylines and attractions. However, despite the differences, much observation shows that there seems to be a similar trend of the language features. Apart from Bahasa Malaysia being used as the main medium of communication in these cartoons, considerable emphasis on English words and phrases is also clearly present. According to a study by Krishnan and Yunus (2018), English-based animated cartoons is said to have a positive impact on second language learning in Malaysia, especially in terms of developing vocabulary knowledge, pronunciation, and enhancing listening skills.

In a way, the selection of English words and phrases in these cartoons not only can promote Malaysian children in acquiring the language, but it also portrays how powerful the media can be in shaping and influencing language use in society (Thorne, Black, & Sykes, 2009). Thus, with English becoming such a high command in Malaysia, the animation production company Les' Copaque recently premiered its newest cartoon series through its main channel on YouTube on the 22nd of May 2020 entitled "*Upin* and *Ipin*: The Helping Heroes", highlighting basic English as its main medium of instruction. According to the company, their newest animated production features a slight difference in terms of the appearances of the main characters, who are *Upin* and *Ipin*, where the twins are presented with cutting-edge superhero costumes as well as the inclusion of several new, catchy songs. Moreover, the decision to promote basic English in the series was intentionally made in order to help little kids develop the language as the company was much aware that their major viewers consist of young children.

It is claimed that the series was such as success, even its 32-second trailer received more than 200 hundred thousand views, with more than 4000 thousand likes, and by the end of 2020, "*Upin* and *Ipin*: The Helping Heroes" reached over 10 billion subscribers on YouTube,

making it the first YouTube channel in Malaysia to achieve such success (Daud, 2020). Since this much-loved cartoon animation is perceived as immensely influential to young children and toddlers, this study, therefore, believes that there is a need to explore its linguistic features so that researchers are able to understand certain language trends in which the new generation are comfortable and familiar with. Through much observation, this research discovers through the method of phonological analysis that subtle phonological features of Malaysian-English (ME) seems to be visible. Thus, the main objective of this research is to identify and examine phonological features of ME in the cartoon animation series, "*Upin* and *Ipin*: The Helping Heroes".

The purpose of conducting this study is also due to the fact that existing literature of ME's linguistic features show a lack of investigation upon current cartoon animations in Malaysia. Numerous research studies in the field of animation show that more focus is directed towards the study of Standard English and its impact on language learning, pedagogical and cultural values, as well as media literacy (Lodhi, Ibrar, Shamim, & Naz, 2018; Vitasmoro, Jatmiko & Candra, 2019; Chopra & Trehan, 2019; Supri, Shidiq, & Awwali, 2020).Thus, the result of this study is believed to be beneficial for many parties, including sociolinguists, educators, the mass media and especially those working in the world of cartoon animation, so that a clear picture of young children's English language level and preference for the purpose of language development in Malaysia can be understood.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In Malaysia, Bahasa Malaysia is frequently used as the main medium of instruction for both high varieties and low varieties. Nevertheless, English is also another popular language of communication used by various age groups, both for formal and informal domains. In fact, according to Muniandy (2010), English is the most important foreign language in Malaysia as it is regarded as a familiar language, widely practised and appointed as the country's official second language. Yet, in many cases, the nature of language is that it slowly adapts to the needs of its users by absorbing local elements, causing the language to develop its own variety (Kachru, 2006). This includes English in Malaysia, where the process of nativisation has developed a new variety known as Malaysian English (ME) which is widely used within the Malaysian socio-cultural context. It is claimed that ME not only has developed to become a preferable vernacular language as the means of communication, but it has also been marked as the country's unique social and national identity (Mavić & Abram, 2013). However, for some time, this phenomenon is said to be unacceptable, and some linguists have even regarded this process as 'heretical' because of its deviations from the language (Nair, 2017).

Until now, the issue of New Englishes remains a debatable topic even among Malaysians where prior studies have shown that matters arising the growth of ME is mainly due to the fear that this variety could harm Standard English language developments as well as the decline in the usage of Bahasa Malaysia (Lin, Choo, Kasuma, & Ganapathy, 2018). Besides that, several studies by Lee and Gir (2015) on the impact of English towards identity construction in Malaysia found that there was resentment in certain localised contexts among the Malays towards English as their respondents perceived the use of English as an attempt to show off and as a betrayal of the Malay cultural identity. Thus, the issues above further invite questions on the purpose and significance of ME in Malaysia. Buchstaller (2008) explains that the phenomenon of language change in Malaysia or any other country is mainly due to the existence and effects of globalisation as the increase of localisation is parallel with the increase of global developments. This is agreed by Hajar and Manan (2014,) who perceives ME as undergoing a similar process described by Buchstaller. They explained that in

Malaysia, while Standard British English is still being emphasised, signs of increased localisation through various studies show that the variety is developing even greater than before because of globalisation.

This circumstance can be further understood through a study conducted by Kirkpatrick (2012) explaining that before, the goal of English language learning amongst Asian countries was to primarily achieve the native-like competency. Although this still remains as a realistic ideology, the rise of English varieties in Asia has led to the belief that multilinguals do not have to necessarily sound and talk like native speakers. Instead, while users remain appreciative of the importance of Standard English, this does not mean that they need to assimilate and imitate the exact grammatical forms and accent of the native language in their speech.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Phonological Development

In the systems of a language, besides morphology, syntax, semantics and pragmatics, phonology is often regarded as one of the essential components in which concerns the rules governing the structure, distribution and sequencing of speech sounds and syllables (Owens, 2007). The term also refers to the sound system of any particular language or variety related to syllables, onset and rime, as well as articulatory gestures and features, structured to convey linguistic meanings (Brentari, Fenlon, & Cormier, 2018).

When studying the field of phonology, researchers often transcribe sounds using phonetic symbols. While phonology is described as the way, sounds function within a given language, phonetic concerns the physical production, acoustic transmission and perception of the sounds of speech (Carr, 2003). Furthermore, phonology also relates to topics such as phonotactics, phonological alternation, prosody, and suprasegmental aspects such as stress and intonation. Phonological development, on the other hand, refers to how children learn to organise sounds into meaning or language during their stages of growth (Hoff, 2009). For any child, the process of language learning starts with sound, and in order to acquire words and sentences, children must learn to distinguish different sounds into meaningful units (Hoff & Naigles, 2002). Before that, however, researchers believe that children are only able to produce speech through instinctive and intelligent imitations of the sounds (Mercado, Mantell, & Pfordresher, 2014).

Empirical research on phonological development among young children have shown that the act of imitating sounds helps toddlers to firm up their language knowledge as language is held within the way sounds and symbols are combined (Owens, 2007). Nevertheless, knowledge of a certain language or variety can be bound by socio-cultural norms of a speech community which is why for most children in the Asian regions, phonological development involves the process of learning to recognise and pronounce the sounds of language as spoken in the community (Ferguson & Garnica, 1975). Besides that, phonological development is also said to be largely dependent on the background or sociolinguistic accents of a child's family (Schneider, 2007). This can be seen in Malaysia, where ethnicity plays a vital role in how a speaker uses ME and how it affects speakers' pronunciation upon the variety (Pillai, 2013). However, although one cannot assume that all Malaysians sound alike when they speak in English, many phonological features of ME show common similarities among the major ethnic groups of the country (Phoon, Abdullah & Maclagan, 2013).

Based on the literature above, it can be concluded that the surroundings and socio-cultural context of a child's upbringing clearly affect the development of their phonological awareness and performance. It is during this time that language acquisition is determined by the number of words heard from a child's everyday environment by stimulating cognitive memories on how the words are being pronounced (Hoff & Naigles, 2002). Hence as nowadays, children around the world between the ages of 4 to 15 spend and an average of 85 minutes per day watching YouTube videos (Kanozia & Jindal, 2019), the new media is perceived as an influential source that could mould the way children practice language use, including the way words, are pronounced (Hanson, 2017).

3.2 Malaysian English (ME) Phonology

The study of New Englishes was pioneered by Braj B. Kachru, a scholar who wrote the book "The Indianization of English", which describes the non-native varieties of English (Crystal, 2003). The term New Englishes refers to regional and national varieties of the English language used in places where it is not the mother tongue of the majority of the population. Examples of New Englishes are Nigerian English, Indian English, Singapore English and Malaysia English in which all have their own identity and characteristics, differing from the original British or American Standard English (Mollin, 2006).

Some past research on the topic of ME language development can be seen from Thirusanku and Yunus (2012), who investigated the history and development of English varieties and confirmed that ME went through the phase of nativisation or also called phase 3 in terms of sociolinguistic status and domains of usage around the 18th century. This could be reflected by the distinct phonology influenced by local ethnic tongues, grounded lexical items and syntactic structures in the Malay form. In fact, Thirusanku and Yunus (2012) stated that English in Malaysia had changed so much it can be seen in all levels of language organisation, including phonological features such as vowel merges, accent shifts, suprasegmental features like intonation and syllable-timed rhythm, the omission of single coda consonants, and final consonant cluster reduction.

For Malaysian English (ME), the variety includes components of British English, American English, Malay, Chinese, Indian, Arab and other languages in its vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar (Yamaguchi & Deterding, 2016). Furthermore, ample research reveals that ME show differences from other New Englishes in terms of simplification in its grammar and pronunciation, such as the switching of diphthongs and monophthongs, frequent stops instead of dental fricatives as well as the simplification of consonant clusters (Azirah & Tan, 2012). In some instance at the phonemic or sub-phonemic level, ME is manifested in the introduction of an additional sub-system such as labiodental fricatives /f/ and /v/ in the Malay phonemic inventory, which is said to exist due to an interference speech phenomenon from speakers with the knowledge of Arabic or English language as well as the distribution of the *shwa* sound due to the emergence of English loan-words (Omar, 1982).

In terms of segmental phonological features, ME has a tendency of reducing sound clusters to one or two elements less than is necessary, especially in clusters involving stops and fricatives and the lateral element, as well as the tendency to devoice fricatives so that voiced fricatives such as /v, ð, z, ʒ/ occur as voiceless fricatives (Baskaran, 2004). Besides that, dental fricatives like /θ/ and /ð/ are often substituted by the corresponding alveolar stops /t/ and /d/ and stressing on other syllables in the English words is also a usual practice (Mavić & Abram, 2013). Other phonological features of ME also includes; devoicing of intervocalic and final voiced consonants, flapping of intervocalic, omission of dark /l/, rhoticity, omission of

morphological markers in final clusters, a distinction of vowel length, long tense vowel and short lax vowel, as well as realisation of full vowels in unstressed syllables (Phoon, Abdullah & Maclagan, 2013).

4. METHOD

To identify and examine nativised phonological features of ME in the cartoon animation series "*Upin* and *Ipin*: The Helping Heroes", a phonological analysis was employed through attentive listening and observation skills by the researcher. In order to do so, quality headphones were used to obtain clear phonological sounds from the speeches and constant pauses and repetitions over the dialogues were also made and examined extremely carefully so that the researcher was able to confirm the production of the sounds. Once the phonological sounds were confirmed, findings on the characteristics of these sounds were then categorised into the existing features of phonological nativisation of ME based on previous pieces of literature from Omar (1982); Baskaran (2004); Thirusanku and Yunus (2012); Mavić and Abram (2013); Phoon, Abdullah and Maclagan (2013); and Yamaguchi and Deterding (2016) where each word taken from the excerpts were then transcribed into phonetic forms in order to show differences between the Standard English pronunciation and the ME pronunciation. All ten series of the cartoon animation

5. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Voiced Dental Fricative /Ð/ Replaced with Voiced Alveolar Stop /D/

i)   Episode 1: …yes, yes, yes toge<u>th</u>er…

At the very beginning of this cartoon animation, this research identifies the character *Ipin* pronouncing the word 'together' as [təˈge<u>d</u>ə(r)] instead of [təˈge<u>ð</u>ə(r)].

ii)   Episode 1: …help is on <u>th</u>e way…

In the same episode, *Upin* and *Ipin* pronounce 'the' as [<u>d</u>ə] instead of voicing out the dental fricative as [<u>ð</u>ə]. This is repeated continuously for all other episodes as well.

iii)   Episode 2: I am *Upin,* and <u>th</u>at is my twin, *Ipin*…

In the second episode, *Upin* repeats the same practice of replacing the voiced dental fricative by pronouncing the word 'that' as [<u>d</u>æt] instead of [<u>ð</u>æt]. Similar to the word 'the', this action is repeatedly done with other words of 'that' in the cartoon animation.

iv)   Episode 2: …we love to help o<u>th</u>ers…

Again, in episode two, the twin character pronounces the word 'others' as [ˈʌ<u>d</u>ə(r)z] rather than [ˈʌ<u>ð</u>ə(r)z] as the standard English pronunciation.

v)   Episode 4: Hello <u>th</u>ere, uhhh are you okay…

In the fourth episode, *Upin* is detected pronouncing the word 'there' as [<u>d</u>eə(r)] instead of [<u>ð</u>eə(r)]. The word is pronounced similarly with other episodes as well.

vi)   Episode 5: …can you help <u>th</u>is tiny plant to grow…

In episode five, *Ipin* asks a favour from Mr. Sun to help his friend, the plant. He is heard pronouncing the word 'this' as [d̲iːs] instead of [ðɪs], which is perceived quite far from the native English pronunciation.

vii)   Episode 5: What's the wea<u>th</u>er like today…

In the middle of episode five, *Upin* and *Ipin* sing together a song about the weather. In the song, it can be heard many times that the characters pronounced the word 'weather' as [ˈwɛd̲ə(r)] instead of [ˈwɛð̲ə(r)].

viii)   Episode 6: Yeah! We got <u>th</u>em all!

Near the end of episode six, when the twins have completed their task, *Upin* is heard shouting out the word 'them' as [d̲ɛm] instead of [ð̲ɛm]. The same pronunciation is also heard for other words of 'them' in other episodes.

5.2 Voiceless Dental Fricative /Ө/ Replaced with Voiceless Alveolar Stop /T/

i)   Episode 5: <u>Th</u>ank you, Mr. Wind…

An example of the replacement of the voiceless dental fricative /θ/ with the voiceless alveolar stop /t/ can be heard in episode five where both *Upin* and *Ipin* is heard pronouncing the phrase 'thank you' as [t̲æŋk juː] instead of [θ̲æŋk juː]. Similar pronunciations were also heard in several other episodes.

ii)   Episode 6: …now we have <u>th</u>ree emotions!
iii)   Episode 7: The bees are buzzing <u>th</u>ree by <u>th</u>ree hurrah, hurrah…

In episode six and seven, the twins are heard using the word 'three' and pronouncing it as [t̲riː] instead of [θ̲riː], showing the replacement of the voiceless dental fricative /θ/ with the voiceless alveolar stop /t/.

5.3 Omission of Single Coda Consonants

i)   Introduction: We'<u>re</u> gonna help everybody…

In *Upin & Ipin*: The Helping Heroes' introduction song, the twins can be heard omitting the single voiced alveolar trill consonant /r/ from the phrase 'we are' making them sound like they are saying [wiː] 'We gonna help everybody' instead of [wɪə̲(r)] 'We're gonna help everybody'.

5.4 Omission of Final Consonant Clusters

i)   Episode 3: …ne<u>xt</u> is Mars at number four…

The omission of a final consonant cluster was identified in episode three. When the twins sang the planet song for their friend who lost his way home, they pronounced the word 'next' as [nɛk̲s] rather than [nɛk̲st] in which the final voiceless alveolar consonant /t/ should have been clearer.

ii)   Episode 4: A triangle has three si<u>des</u>…

Another example of the omission of a two-sound final consonant cluster can be heard in episode four where during *Upin* and *Ipin's* shape song, the word 'sides' is pronounced as [saɪd] instead of [saɪdz]. Here, it can be seen that the voiced alveolar fricative consonant /z/ is missing. In the same song, this particular word is heard being repeated again and again by omitting the /z/ sound.

iii)   Episode 6: If you're angry and you know it stomps your feet…

In episode six, when *Upin* and *Ipin* sang the emotion song together with their friend Annie, they mentioned the word 'stomp'. However, in the song, the particular word is heard pronounced as [stɒm] instead of [stɒmp], revealing the omission of the voiceless bilabial stop /p/ in the final consonant cluster /mp/.

5.5 Omission of Morphological Markers in Final Clusters

i)   Episode 3: …it sounds like something crashed!

Besides the omission of single coda consonants and final consonant clusters, another category of sound reduction is the omission of morphological markers in final clusters where in this case, *Ipin* is heard pronouncing the word 'crashed' as [kræʃ] instead of [kræʃt].

ii)   Episode 3: …like a red ball to be explored…

In the same episode, the twins repeat the same action for the word 'explored' where the omission of morphological markers in final clusters can be heard once again. Instead of pronouncing the particular word as [ɪksˈplɔː(r)d], the twins are heard pronouncing it as [ɪksˈplɔː(r)].

iii)   Episode 6: …let us find out what happened!

Similarly like the previous words, *Upin* once again omits the morphological markers in final clusters for the word 'happened' as he was heard pronouncing it as [ˈhæpən] rather than [ˈhæpənd].

iv)   Episode 10: Someone kidnapped my friend, Mr. Sun!

In the last episode, the omission of morphological markers in final clusters is heard from Mr. Moon as he cries for help from *Upin* and *Ipin*. Instead of pronouncing the word 'kidnapped' as [ˈkɪdnæpt], Mr. Moon is heard pronouncing it as [ˈkɪdnæp].

5.6 Lengthening of Vowels in Unstressed Syllables

i)   Introduction: We are the helping heroes…

In each and every opening scene for this cartoon animation, *Upin* and *Ipin* would introduce themselves as the helping heroes. The word 'heroes' is often heard, putting more stress in the first syllable instead of the second syllable. Therefore, rather than pronouncing the word as [ˈhɪəɹəʊz] or [ˈhɪɹoʊz] for American English, the word is now heard as [ˈhiːɹoʊz].

ii)   Episode 1: Hye everyone, I'm Upin, and this is my twin, Ipin…

The word 'this' in *Upin* and *Ipin*: The Helping Heroes is indeed heard several times. Besides replacing the dental fricative /ð/ with /d/, the particular word is also heard having long vowels in the syllables in which it is not supposed to be stressed upon. For example, instead of pronouncing the letter 'i' as /ɪ/ so that less stress is being put and a short vowel is pronounced, the letter is now heard as a long vowel, putting more stress and making the letter sound like the tense high front unrounded vowel /i:/. Thus, the particular word is pronounced as [di:s] instead of [ðɪs].

iii)   Episode 2: …and on the farm, there <u>is</u> a chicken…
iv)   Episode 10: The sun <u>is</u> shining bright, bright, bright! It <u>is</u> the day!

In many times during *Upin* and *Ipin's* conversation, such as the example from episode two and during their songs as well such as the example from episode ten, the twins are heard stressing the lax high front unrounded vowel /ɪ/ sound in the word 'is' longer than it should be. Thus, the particular word is pronounced as [i:z] rather than [iz].

v)   Episode 3: …of course! An alien l<u>i</u>ves in space!

Another example of the lengthening of vowels in unstressed syllables is heard in episode three when *Ipin* figures out that aliens live in space. In his speech, the word 'lives' is heard as 'leaves' as once again, and the lax high front unrounded vowel /ɪ/ sound is being stressed upon, causing the word to have a long vowel. So instead of saying 'an alien life [lɪvz] in space', Ipin is heard saying 'an alien leaves [li:vz] in space'.

vi)   Episode 3: …<u>i</u>t needs something else…

Such as the previous examples of vowels being lengthened in unstressed syllables, the word 'it' is also frequently heard pronounced as [i:t] rather than [it].

vii)   Episode 6: If you're <u>ex</u>cited, and you know it, shout hooray…

Besides the lengthening of the lax high front unrounded vowel /ɪ/ sound, another interesting finding is detected in episode six when the twins pronounced the word 'excited' as [ˈɛkˈssaɪtɪd] instead of [ɪkˈsaɪtɪd]. Here it can be seen that not only the /ɪ/ sound is replaced with a lax mid front unrounded vowel /ɛ/, but more stress is also being put on the voiceless alveolar fricative /s/ sound in the first syllable, making it appear longer than usual.

viii)   Episode 9: Hahahahaha, you look sill<u>y</u>!

Once again, in episode nine, this research identifies the stressing of the lax high front unrounded vowel /ɪ/ sound, making the second syllable appear longer, similarly like the tense high front unrounded vowel /i:/ sound. In this case, instead of pronouncing the word 'silly' as [ˈsɪli], the research detects Ipin pronouncing it as [sɪli:].

5.7 Shortening of Vowels in Stressed Syllables

i)   Episode 5: Sure, l<u>ea</u>ve it to me!

Interestingly in episode five, the identification of shortened vowels in stressed syllables is also found. Although a lot of the instances show that the lax high front unrounded vowel /ɪ/ sound is often replaced with the tense high front unrounded vowel /i:/ sound, the case in episode five

shows that the words 'leave' and 'live' may occasionally interchange as this time Mr. Sun is heard pronouncing the word 'leave' as [lɪv] instead of [liːv].

6. CONCLUSION

Overall, a number of seven categories that featured ME's phonological nativisation were identified in the latest Malaysian cartoon animation, "*Upin* and *Ipin*: The Helping Heroes". These categories include; (1) voiced dental fricatives /ð/ replaced with voiced alveolar stops /d/ with a number of eight excerpts; (2) voiceless dental fricative /θ/ replaced with voiceless alveolar stop /t/ with three excerpts; (3) the omission of single coda consonants with one excerpt; (4) the omission of final consonant clusters with three excerpts; (5) the omission of morphological markers in final clusters with four excerpts; (6) the lengthening of vowels in unstressed syllables with eight excerpts; and (7) the shortening of vowels in stressed syllables with one excerpt.

Among all seven categories, the highest number of excerpts can be seen under; (1) voiced dental fricatives /ð/ replaced with voiced alveolar stops /d/ as well as (6) the lengthening of vowels in unstressed syllables. In a way, both these categories are possible indications that certain distinctive features of phonological nativisations are being practised more than other phonological features in this particular variety. This was clearly mentioned in a study by Mavić and Abram (2013), who stated that in ME, dental fricatives like /θ/ and /ð/is often substituted by the corresponding alveolar stops /t/ and /d/ and stressing on other syllables in the English words is also a usual practice.

Thus, it can be concluded that based on a large number of viewers, the identification of phonological nativisations of ME in the cartoon clearly reflects that the variety is gradually and unconsciously becoming accepted by Malaysians despite disagreements on the damages it may cause towards English language development. This could also mean that for Malaysians, even though pronunciations of the words may seem inaccurately similar to Standard English, it is still acceptable as long as the vocabulary and grammar are correct. Moreover, with the success of this cartoon animation's tremendous reception among little children, parents, and teachers of different backgrounds and race, it is evident that today, Malaysians are becoming more open in the idea of publicly displaying features of ME's phonological nativisation for English language development purposes through the new media.

This current situation is definitely in parallel with the statement from Kirkpatrick (2012), who explained that before, the goal of English language learning amongst Asian countries was to achieve the native-like competency primarily, and although this remains as a realistic ideology, the rise of English varieties in Asia has led to the belief that multilinguals do not have to sound and talk like native speakers necessarily. Instead, while users remain appreciative of Standard English's importance, this does not mean that they need to assimilate and imitate the exact grammatical forms and accent of the native language in their speech.

Hence, as this particular study only focuses on the identification and examination of ME's phonological nativisation in "*Upin* and *Ipin*: The Helpling Heroes", further recommendations suggests that more research should be conducted in exploring the various linguistic features of ME from other local cartoon animations in Malaysia and also from other sources of the new media as it is obvious that the variety is growing towards an endonormative stage of language stabilisation. Other suggestions include extensive studies on Malaysian parents' perspectives towards the use of ME's phonological nativisation in local cartoon animations in Malaysia

and the impact of ME's phonological nativisation in local cartoon animations towards English language development among children in Malaysia.

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