Slangs on Social Media: Variations among Malay Language Users on Twitter

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ABSTRACT

Twitter, a social media application and a popular microblogging platform, has become a compelling subject in linguistics. The nature of the communication on Twitter is informal, colloquial, and non-standard; and it is likely to contain slangs which is the interest of the modest research embodied in this paper. This study explored the variations of slangs employed by Malay language users through tweets that contained the Malay language keyword '*makan*' (eat). Primary Qualitative Content Analysis was the research tool employed in this study. Slangs were categorized using an adapted scheme. The analysis found that Malay language users on Twitter implemented a variety of slangs in their online communication, such as shortenings, onomatopoeic spellings, phonetics replacements, inanities, leetspeak, cacography, and emoji. The findings of this study can be useful for developing a lexical database for Malay language slangs.

Keywords: Internet language, language variations, slangs, social media, Twitter

INTRODUCTION

The internet has brought huge impacts on our life, especially our communication. Through the internet, social media emerged and are widely used by millions of people worldwide (Cheung et al., 2011; Heer & Boyd, 2005). This computer-mediated-communication has driven significant changes to the nature of written language. This was emphasized by Gee and Hayes (2011) who argued that digital media was an interesting hybrid of the properties of oral and written language. Social media is seen as an informal platform of communication with extensive use of slang (Crystal, 2011, 2008, 2006).

A slang referred to as the city's language (Green, 2015), is a type of language consisting of words and phrases that are

very informal, more common in speech than writing, and are typically restricted to a particular context or group of people (New Oxford American Dictionary as cited in Adams, 2012). Slang is also used as a synonym for the terms cant, flash, or argot in reference to the 'language of rogues and thieves' (Zoltan, 2009). However, contrary to the traditional definition of slangs, internet slangs are mostly used in writing (Crystal, 2010). Other terms associated with internet slangs are netspeak, chatspeak, cyber-slangs, internet-jargon, cyber-jargon, and social-slang (Barseghyan, 2013; Teodorescu & Saharia, 2015). In this study, the expression 'internet slang' is used to indicate all these terminologies.

The topic of slang is an under-discussed and not adequately addressed; there is poor documentation of slang in the Malay language (Coleman, 2012; Green, 2015; Hoogervorst, 2015). A considerable amount of literature has been published on internet slangs used among members of the community of English language users by analyzing their chatroom conversations (Ecker, 2013; Merchant, 2001), gaming forums (Kelley, 2012; Kalima, 2008), or Facebook status (Mosquera & Moreda, 2012). However, researchers have not evaluated Malay language internet slang in much detail.

Recent studies on the subject of slang in Malaysia have particularly focused on teenage or youth slangs (Namvar, 2014; Namvar & Ibrahim, 2014; Rusli et al., 2018; Shamsudin, 2006). According to Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commissions [MCMC] (2017), the highest broad age group of internet users in Malaysia is 20-34 years old, and the second-highest broad age group is 35-49 years old. In contrast with previous research subjects, these age groups are not specifically teenagers. Therefore, this gap reveals that there is a need for further investigation of the use of slangs among internet users in Malaysia.

Research Objective

Set in the context of an electronic medium of social media, the main purpose of this research is to analyze the variations of internet slangs used by Malaysian Malay language users on Twitter. 'Variations' of conversation can be divided into formal and informal categories (Wolfram & Schilling, 2015), and slangs fall into the informal category (Harared, 2018; Kenwood, 1969; Zhou & Fan, 2013). Variations in the informal context usually occur in non-standard languages, which also may consist of formal words being used in informal situations, and it may occur in a single word, a group of words, or a sentence (Wolfram & Schilling, 2015; Zhou & Fan, 2013). In the words of Crystal (2006), "to study language change is to study people change; and change means variations". Data on language variations are useful for linguists to address social and educational concerns (Wolfram & Schilling, 2015). In the present study, 'variations' refer to the extended categories of the different forms of slang used on Twitter.

Literature Review

Slangs, Internet Slangs, and Twitter. During its early days of documentation, slang was regarded as "low, vulgar, and unmeaning" (http://webstersdictionary1828. com). However, Reves (1926) argued that slangs could never be unmeaning, as they always had arbitrary meaning. Halliday (1976) continued to define slang as 'antilanguage', the secretive codes of transgressive or deviant subcultures. Today, scholars have acknowledged the functions of slangs such as its role towards social and psychological development (Moore, 2004), and its function in the construction of identity through language (Monaghan et al., 2012).

Slangs are words and phrases that are used in informal situations; it is something that nearly everyone uses and recognizes, but nobody can define precisely; compared to ordinary language, slangs are metaphorical, playful, elliptical, vivid, and shorter-lived (Asmah, 2008; Fromkin et al., 2017). Although various definitions of slang have been proposed by previous scholars, Nunnally (2001) stated that these definitions were circular and imprecise, and there was no widely accepted model of slang.

Internet slangs, in particular, are words or phrases that are regularly used in online conversations. Throughout this study, the term internet slang is used in reference to a variation of orthography on the internet, as well as the use of lexicon or linguistic habits situated outside the domain of standardized Malay. As it is considered as an informal platform of communications, Twitter is a reliable source to gain insights in regard to slangs.

Twitter (http://www.twitter.com) is a real-time information exchange network that offers microblogging services (Lomicka & Lord, 2012). It is also an online news and social networking site where people communicate in short messages called tweets up to 280 characters. Twitter offers the opportunity to gather large amounts of informal language from many individuals (Nguyen et al., 2013). Social media has also prompted a subtler revolution in the way we communicate. We share more personal information, but also communicate with a larger audience. Our communication styles consequently become more informal and more open, and this seeps into other areas of life and culture (Reed, 2014). Malay is among the top five most used languages on Twitter (Semiocast, 2011), making it a relevant platform for an exploration of the use of internet slang in the Malay language.

Internet slang is believed to be originated back in 1975 when Raphael Finkel at Stanford compiled a Jargon File of hacker slang from technical cultures, and words such as 'flame' and 'loser' were recorded (Raymond & Steele, 1996). More slang words emerged ever since, and a long register of internet slangs was made, mainly focusing on the online chat slangs used by teenagers in America (Jones, 2006) and slangs used by groups of gamers (Kalima, 2008; Sherbloom-Woodard, 2002; Zisa, 2016).

Craig (2003) identified four types of slang in instant messaging conversations namely phonetic replacements, acronyms, abbreviations, and inanities. An example of phonetic replacement is the incorporation of number 1 into everyone, turning it into 'every1'. Popular examples of acronyms are 'omg' and 'lol'. While the first one means 'oh my god, the latter means 'laugh out loud'. According to Craig (2003), abbreviations include vowel-drop shortenings and drastic shortening, such as from 'people' to 'ppl' and 'because' to just 'bc'. Quoting Craig (2003), inanities refer to "neologisms, compositions of several slang categories, or simply nonsensical transmogrifications of another word", and one common example is 'lolz'.

Similar to Craig's identification of slangs, Barseghyan (2013) listed some types of internet slangs that included letter homophones, punctuation, capitalisations and other symbols, onomatopoeic spellings, keyboard-generated icons and smileys, leet (leetspeak), flaming (also known as bashing), shortening (acronyms and abbreviations), clipping, compounding, and derivation. Tables 1 and 2 below display a summary of the categorization of slangs listed by previous scholars, along with their examples of use.

Table 1
Craig (2003)'s classification of slangs

Craig (2003)	Example
Phonetic replacements	Ur, every1
Acronyms	OMG, LOL
Abbreviations	Ppl, bc
Inanities	lolz

Table 2
Barseghyan (2013)'s classification of slangs

Barseghyan (2013)	Example
Letter homophones, punctuation, capitalizations and other symbols	Lol, !!!!!
Onomatopoeic spellings	*hahaha*
Keyboard-generated icons and smileys	:)
Flaming	(the act of bashing)
Shortening (acronyms and abbreviations)	srsly (seriously)
Leetspeak	w1k1p3d14
Clipping	exam (examination)
Compounding	line, name, down,
Derivation	cyber-, de-, en-, giga-

This study adapted the classifications of slangs as displayed in both Tables 1 and 2. The components of these two schemes appear to be overlapping with each other. There are schemes that will be merged and treated as one component, such as acronyms and abbreviation.

In a recent study that has focused on internet slangs among Malaysians, Namvar (2014) reported that Malaysian university students used English-based slang words in their internet communication. Words such as yup, baby, cool, and chicken are among the frequent ones. In another study in the Malaysian context, Hoogervorst (2015) had focused on slangs used by Malay language youth in West Malaysia consisting of Malaysians and Indonesians. The study reported that slang or informal words appeared to be the most widely used.

These past studies focused on slangs used among teenagers and youth, mainly in the English language. However, this current

study aims to fill the gaps left by previous studies by diverging the analysis of the trend of internet slangs among Malay language users. It is essential to note that in this study Malay language users' age group was out of the scope of the study.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study applied the digital ethnography method (Garcia et al., 2009), where a 'virtual fieldwork' was done in order to collect research data. Tweets were manually collected using Twitter Advanced Search feature by setting it to show only tweets with *makan* as the selected keyword. The Malay lexical *makan* (eat) was chosen in an effort to make this research more focused. *Makan* is a very popular greeting word in Malaysia where food consumption is a cultural symbol (Tong, 2011). When two Malaysians meet, they do not greet each other with "how are you?", instead, they greet each other with "have you eaten?" (Sardar & Yassin-Kassab, 2013). *Makan* is also a part of Malaysian's favourite leisure activities (Aman et al., 2007). This *makan* culture of Malaysians justifies the suitability of the keyword to be used for the purpose of the present study. It should be noted that this research does not consider the semantic aspects of *makan*.

There has never been a language corpus as large as the one on the internet (Crystal, 2011). Therefore, for the purpose of this research, the collected tweets were limited to the ones containing *makan* as part of the tweet to increase the possibility of collecting tweets relevant to the Malaysian context and to reduce unnecessary online data noise. Additionally, irrelevant tweets such as spam tweets with extensive links (Yardi et al., 2010), tweets that contained less than one word, and repeated tweets were also discarded.

Content analysis was used as a primary method because it was widely used for the analysis of content generated by existing and naturally-occurring repository information. In this study, naturally generated tweets from Twitter users were collected first. This was followed by the classification of these tweets into (but not limited to) their types of slangs as conceptualized by both Barseghyan (2013) and Craig (2003).

A total of 2500 tweets that utilized the keyword *makan* were retrieved using the Twitter Advanced Search and Twitter Archiver plugin. The tweets were then filtered through a manual elimination process by expelling spams and irrelevant tweets using the clustering method. Relevant and irrelevant tweets were clustered until the relevant group of tweets reached a reliable level of data saturation. The final number of tweets were then labelled into their slang categories through the extraction method. It should be noted that one tweet might contain more than one type of slang.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The analysis of data revealed that Malaysian Malay language Twitter users showed an interesting use of internet slangs. More specifically, the study showed that most

Malay language users applied code-mixing and code-switching in their tweets, particularly between Malay and English. Although code-mixing and code-switching are not of interest in this current study, the samples of data presented here are inclusive of those tweets written in Malay and English. The categorization of internet slangs was carried out according to the discussions by Barseghyan (2013) and Craig (2003). However, some more additional slang categories were reported in this current study. The variations of internet slangs and their samples of use by Malaysian Twitter users are discussed as follows.

Shortenings

This category of internet slang is seen to be useful in simplifying texts due to the nature of Twitter that only allows 280 characters per tweet. *Yg,* a Malay preposition that stands for [*yang*]*,* was the most frequent shortened word used in the data with the occurrences of 46 times, followed by *nk* (32 times) and *org* (22 times). Referring to Craig (2003), *yg* and *org* were drastic forms of shortening because both vowels and consonants were eliminated in them.

Meanwhile, *org* and *ckp* were vowel-drop shortened Malay words. ***Org* [*orang*]** and ***ckp* [*cakap*]** meant 'because' and 'say', respectively. The shortening occurred through eliminations of all vowels, leaving only the first, third, and last consonants. Readers could understand this type of shortening due to the phonetic nature of the consonant; Malay language spelling is in the v, cv, and cvc patterns. Removal of supporting vowels from the words seemed to help Twitter users saved their typing time.

Samples of tweets that incorporated shortenings are as displayed in Table 3. Samples (iv) and (v) presented a type of shortening that requires the omission of the first letter of the first syllable of the word. The word ***rumah*** (house) is shortened to ***umah*** by omitting the first letter, while the first syllable in the word ***macam*** (like, such as) is omitted, leaving only the shortened version ***cam.*** However, there is no particular rule in shortening words in terms of eliminating vowels or omitting letters and syllables. Different users seemed to develop different styles, and even the same users tended to develop different styles.

Table 3
Shortenings

No.	Shortenings	
i.	*I tk faham kenapa ada org **yg** makan creampuff tapi taksuka cream banyak?*	***yang***
ii.	*Tringin **nk** makan cheesee nuggetttt*	***nak***
iii.	*Sorry ahh sis kalau tengok **org** mmg macam nak makan org tu*	***orang***
iv.	*Rela tak makan kalau takde housemate masak kat **umah**. Tak*	***rumah***
v.	*Tadi pergi kaunter nak bayar makan, sebelum ni minta bill je kan, pastu tetiba **cam** rajin nak gerak kaunter*	***cam***

Acronyms and Abbreviations

Lol, **omg,** and **idk** which were all English abbreviations are equally the most frequent form of acronyms found in the data, with the occurrences of 18 times. There was consistency when it came to using acronyms and abbreviations online. For example, **lol, omg,** and **idk** were all the combination of the first letters of common phrases such as [laugh out loud], [oh my god], and [I don't know]**. Lol** is often used to indicate a funny situation or thoughts, and it is also sometimes used in a sarcastic manner. Meanwhile, **omg** is often used to express surprise, excitement, or disbelief (Lexico, 2019). **IG,** found 4 times in the data, is also a commonly used abbreviation referring to Instagram, a photo-sharing social media application. This particular finding is consistent with Eble's (2009)

statement regarding slangs that function as a trendy language. Samples of tweets for this category are displayed in Table 4.

Onomatopoeic Spellings

The use of onomatopoeic spellings can be seen in Table 5. In the first sample, the user typed a long **hahahahahhahahah** to indicate long laughter. A total of 47 variety of onomatopoeic spelling of laughter were found in the data, including **haha, hahaha,** and **hahahaha.** According to Larson (2015), a different amount of **ha** indicated different responses to the content of a conversation. **Haha** indicates a genuinely amused response, while **hahaha** signals that someone is really amused. **Hahahaha** or other longer forms of **ha**, on the other hand, are used in response to truly funny humour, or to laugh at something that is not meant to

Table 4
Acronyms and abbreviations

No.	Acronyms and Abbreviations	
i.	Are those nutritional supplements sachet that they keep consuming good for your body? *Kalau kat Malaysia kene kecam la retis2 ni* promote *makan* supplement **lol**	**laugh out loud**
ii.	I am deadly hungry, last *makan 25 jam yang lepas* **omg** #iamdead	**oh my god**
iii.	**Idk** how to describe *muka* happy *deena dapat ayam goreng. Satu zura ni memang suka beli mcd for 3pax lepastu acah je makan tu*	**i don't know**
iv.	*Mashallah sedapnya tengok orang makan kat* **ig** *ni ya ampun*	**Instagram**

Table 5
Onomatopoeic spellings

No.	Onomatopoeic spellings	
i.	*sedappp laaa. makan mcm tu ja. kalau makan ngan nasik maybe tak sedap hahahahahhahahah aku nak p* try *nanti*	***hahahahahhahahah***
ii.	*kenyang makan* popcorn *burpp hm*	***burpp***
iii.	*akibat makan asam dalam botol terlebih protttt protttt dari tadi*	***protttt protttt***
iv.	*sempat makan apa je?? soto? ke mee udang banjir??* family *kak asma jarang makan luar so tak tahu sangat pun apa yg* special *kat sini sobs*	***sobs***
v	my *husband keluar g cari makan,* but i miss him already. *huhu*	***huhu***

be funny in the first place. Arbitrarily, a short *haha* may also be used in a sarcastic manner as a reaction towards something that is not humorous or funny or to show no further interest in the conversation.

Referring to the other sample of tweets, an onomatopoeic spelling of a burping and farting sound is used instead of just using the Malay words *sendawa* (burp) or *kentut* (fart). Meanwhile, for the samples that contained **sobs** and **huhu,** the spellings helped the users to express a somewhat sad feeling, as those onomatopoeic spellings resemble the sound of a person crying or sobbing. This type of spellings seemed to provide colours to the tweet, besides helping Twitter users to express their emotions or situations.

Phonetic Replacements

Phonetic replacements are found in the combination of letters and numbers that links to multiple sounds or meanings. Based on observations made, phonetic replacements created by Malaysian Malay language users are a more 'advanced' and complex level compared to English-based phonetic replacements, as the actual meaning behind each word is not limited to only one language, but two. In Table 6, **2r2** is a combination of two numbers and one letter. In this newly formed word, the numbers are pronounced as **"two",** which is an English word, while the letter **'r'** is pronounced as **"ar"** - a result of an even more colloquialized pronunciation of **"lah",** a common tag word in Malay. Therefore, the overall combination of the words results in the creation of a Malay phrase **"itulah tu",** a colloquial phrase commonly used to show agreement. The same phonetical concept is applied to the second example, **21ku,** where the number **1** carries the phonetic of the morpheme **a** (pronounced with a diphthong) in the word **tuanku.**

In sample (iii), the letter **x** was used to carry the meaning of **tidak** (no). By far, this is the most popular phonetic replacement symbol that has appeared throughout the whole data with the occurrences of 26 times. The use of letter **x** is also commonly accompanied by other words such as **yah**, to contribute to creating a whole new phrase which is **tak payah** (unnecessary). Other examples of the use of **x** are **xpe** [*tidak mengapa*] (it is okay) and **xkisah** [*tidak kisah*] (I don't mind). Sample (iv) shows the use of **aq** to resemble the word **aku** (I), however, the phonetics of the letter **q** and **ku** are not exactly homogenous. Phonetic replacements involve a certain level of creativity to be understood and to

Table 6
Phonetics replacements

No.	Phonetic replacements	Actual spelling
i.	**2r2** *camne tah makan banyak boleh kurusz.* Jealous *ter0kx*	**itulah tu**
ii.	*Ada makan-makan tak* **21ku**	**Tuanku**
iii.	*trus* **x** *berselera nak makan...*	**tidak**
iv.	**aq** *harap satu hari nnty bile makan kat kedai dgn* family, **aq** *yg keluar duit*	**aq**

be created in the first place, as they integrate morphemes and phonetics rule to generate symbols that carry a certain meaning of an actual word or phrase.

Inanities

Referring to Craig (2003), inanities refer to neologisms, compositions of several slang categories, or simply nonsensical transmogrifications of other words. Inanities may also include completely new words or expressions, combinations of several slang categories, or simply nonsensical variations of other words. In the first three samples of tweets in Table 7, the users added nonsensical spellings in their tweets, such as ***ksksjskkazksksjjskaokskaka*** and ***hsjdjsjdjs.*** Although they carry no meaning, they serve as emotional expression. In sample (ii), it can be seen that the user might be expressing his/her feelings by emphasizing

the words ***lapar*** (hungry), ***nak*** (want), ***makan*** (eat) and ***gemuk*** (fat) by duplicating the last characters of each word several times. Drawing on Craig (2003), these are the matching examples of nonsensical transmogrifications of words.

A similar linguistic phenomenon can also be seen in the third sample where the user repeated some letters in the word **yes (**spelled as **yezza)** to emphasize the intensity of a certain emotional expression. Another type of inanities is the frequent use of **iolls**, **uolls,** and **weolls** which simply mean **I**, **you**, and **we**, respectively. This type of inanity which is applied to pronouns often occurs in a Malay structured sentence, but with the insertion of transmogrified English words. The transmogrification occurred in addition to a root word such as **I, you,** and **we.** The use of this type of inanities can be seen in samples (i), (ii), and (iii) listed in Table 8.

Table 7
Inanities

No.	Inanities	
i.	*laparrr nakkk makannn tapiiii dah gemukkksss ksksjskkazksksjjskaokskaka*	***laparrr nakkk makannn tapiiii ... gemukkksss ksjskkazksksjjskaokskaka***
ii.	*dia tak pernah makan shihin. hsjdjsjdjs but every malay mom is like that "ko nampak tu tulisan cina tu mesti tak halal"*	***hsjdjsjdjs***
iii.	*Dad: so u tak makan after 6pm? Me: yezzzzzaaaaa Dad: ok you eat now*	***yezzzzzaaaaa***

Table 8
Inanities (in addition to root word)

No.	Inanities (in addition to root word)	
i.	*Selamat petang, saya tengah makan karipap, **uolls** makan apa tu?*	**you**
ii.	*Bila nak dtg singgah rumah **iolls** ni jom lah kita makan mcd ke apa*	**i**
iii.	*first time makan kafe brothers ni **weolls** tak biasa*	**we**
iv.	*Takde yg nk teman ke. **Pishang** nya makan sorang2*	**pisang**
v.	*Untung ah dah **masyuk**. Aku dah tiba masa utk makan nasi bujang*	**masuk**

Based on the researcher's observations and understanding, inanities that occurred in addition to Malay based root words such as in tweet samples (iv) and (v) carry the meaning that is expanded from the original semantic meaning. In sample (iv), the slang *pishang* is meant to refer to the word *pisang* in Malay, which dictionary-wise means **banana**. Internet slang-wise, *pishang* refers to the state of being **bored**. A similar explanation applies to sample (v), where the transmogrification of the Malay word *masuk* (enter) into *masyuk* no longer carries the initial meaning, but has been expanded to 'having more money' or 'having just received one's salary'. In addition to users' creativity in transforming words, subconscious knowledge of metalinguistic is probably one of the reasons that can explain the derivation of these slangs. This

is because patterns vary among users. This type of inanity is being widely used and these inanities occurred 29 times in the data of this study.

Cacography

Cacography is a deliberate comic misspelling (Watkins, 1994), which is also a type of humour. In this study, most of the instances of cacography occurred in Malay and English. Clearer examples can be seen in Table 9 and Table 10.

Cacography used in Malay involved the respelling of words in an illogical yet creative way. This can be attributed to the nature of the Malay language which is usually phonetical, whereby most words are pronounced exactly the way it's spelt. However, in the case of Malay cacography such as those displayed in Table 10, it shows

Table 9
Cacography (Malay)

No.	Cacography (Malay)	
i.	*malam ni taktau nak makan **aperw***	***apa***
ii.	*Dey **hakak** makan skali berkali2 laaaaa* diet *kelaut..*	***kakak***
iii.	*Wuh lega dpt makan kat kedai FRIM tu . Ayam goreng **boek** dia hahah*	***boek***
iv.	*Eksited nak makan* meatball ***lettew***	***lah tu***
v	*Nape sayang? Kenyang makan durian **kerw** tu?!?*	***ke (-kah)***

Table 10
Cacography (English)

No.	Cacography (English)	
i.	*pebenda bubuh **setabak** dalam list tempat makan terbaik ni nak kena pukul ke*	**Starbucks**
ii.	*how can he look that good ??? even bila tengah makan ????? aaaaaa **boi**, ure unreal*	**boy**
iii.	*aku pantang betul gi kedai makan then budak2 nangis pastu makbapak dia biar je. pls la **bij***	**bitch**
iv.	*Laparnya. Macam nak makan **Mekdonel** je.*	**McDonald's**
v.	*I **kenod** makan laksa yg jenis bau ikan dia kuat wey*	**cannot**

that most words are respelled with the purpose of making them sound humorous and to provide 'attitude' to the person posting the Tweet, without considering the actual pronunciation of the words. This particular finding is in relevance to Eble's (2009) argument which states that slang is a 'language with attitude'. In sample (iii), the word *baik* is spelled as *boek*, which does not sound familiar in Malay daily speech, therefore making it awkward and somewhat humorous at the same time.

For cacography that occurred in English, some of the words are localized into a Malay C-V-C-V pattern of spelling, such as the slang for example (i) where **Starbucks** is spelled as *setabak*. Cacography that occurred within the English language also happened in a way where the users not only respelled the words to imitate the actual pronunciation but rather colloquialized it into their own style of pronunciation. Based on the examples, it can be seen that the letter **s** in **McDonald's** is fully eliminated in *Mekdonel* which is the newly created spelling.

For example (v), the user spelt **cannot** as *kenod,* which not only mimicking their way of pronouncing it but also stressing on the sound of the last letter, **t,** which is replaced by **d.** Referring to the earlier part of this section, cacography is seen to have similarities with phonetic replacements. However, these two can be distinguished by the 'attitude' carried in the meaning (Eble, 2009). Phonetic replacements are usually used to respell an English word to fit the Malay spelling systems without

changing the semantic meaning, while cacography is used to exaggerate a message and to highlight playfulness by inserting a humorous or probably cynical hint through its spellings.

These adjustments which were done on English words are believed to happen because users are used to speaking English with a Malay accent in their daily speech. Subsequently, in order to convey their daily speech into writings *phonetically*, modifications of spellings of those English words are made. Based on observations, cacography is applied to their tweets depending on the users' creativity, but it also seemed to help in reducing the number of characters used in order to abide by Twitter's character limit.

Repetition

After shortenings, repetition that occurs through word elongation is among the most frequent types of slangs found in the data. Repetition mostly occurred in the last letter of each word, or in some cases, the middle letters. Samples of tweets are displayed in Table 11.

O'Connor (2013) mentioned that there were reasons behind word elongation or repetition like these, such as acting as an iterative intensifier. O'Connor listed subcategories like 'reluctant interruption' that was portrayed in the sample (v) through the repetition of the conjunction *tapi - tapiiii* (but). Another example of iterative intensifier under the 'keening' subcategory can be seen in the sample (ii) through the elongation of the interjection *wah - waaa*

Table 11
Repetition

No.	Repetition	
i.	*mcd's manager for **monthssssss**. perut buncit sebab hari hari makan patties*	***monthssssss***
ii.	***Waaa** alhamdulillah haaza min fadhli robbi Sempat makan apa je??*	***waaa***
iii.	*Kenapa fikir lunch dekat penang hello later lunch nak makan **apaaaa** ugh*	***apaaaa***
iv.	*kakak dah besar, nanti umi bagi duit minyak dgn makan semua" **ohmannnn** i wanna **cryyyyyyy** nak **ikuttttt***	***ohmannnn, cryyyyyyy, ikuttttt***
v.	*Laparrr nakkk makannn **tapiiii** dah gemukkksss*	***tapiiii***

(wow). Sample (iv) signals a pleading tone through the repetition of the interjection **oh man - *ohmannnn*** and the verb ***cry - cryyyyyyy*,** while samples (i) and (iii) are acting as iterative intensifiers, which are very much alike to 'screaming' online.

Punctuations and Capitalisations

Punctuations and capitalizations are commonly used for emphasis or stress. Periods or exclamation marks may be used repeatedly for emphasis. Examples of this are displayed in the sample of tweets given in Table 12.

Samples (i) and (ii) display the use of exclamation mark and question mark repeatedly. In sample (i), the context of the tweet shows that the user is expressing a strong emotion by adding multiple exclamation marks and question marks. In samples (iii), (iv), and (v), the use of all capital letters (or *caps lock*) carries different purposes. Samples (iii) and (iv) show that the users are expressing enthusiasm, while sample (v) displays a stronger emotion. The use of all caps resembles screaming or yelling, and have the tendency to make the words seem 'louder'. The use of all caps is also helpful in conveying "grandeur," "pomposity," or "aesthetic seriousness", as stated by Luna in Robb (2014).

Emoji

Emoji is a word originating from Japanese to describe a type of ideogram used as a form of pictorial communication in

Table 12
Punctuations and capitalisations

No.	Punctuations and Capitalizations
i.	Parents that couldnt control their little kids would be the death of me. *Anak kau diri atas* counter *makan kau masih buat bodoh*. Omg**!!!** I cant even**?!!????????**
ii.	Omg stop harassing me *abg cafe gatal**!!!!!** Stop ajak me makan* kfc**!!!** I dont want kfc i want A&W**!!!**
iii.	*Aku* enjoy *tengok org makan tapi mostly aku paling* happy *tengok* girls *yg* so into the food and they look so excited to eat like that's so adorable **YESS BBY EAT A LOT!! YOU EAT THAT FOOD AND BE HAPPY!!**
iv.	***TAK SABARNYAAA NAK MAKAN KUIH RAYAAAA AAAAA***
v.	*Kau nak* complain *macam macam kata* waiter *tu bodoh ke apa* just because they are indian, ***TOLONGLAH MAKAN DEKAT RUMAH SENDIRI***

electronic messaging on mobile telephones and internet web pages. Deriving from the kanji for 'picture' and 'character', the word emoji is a contraction which can be roughly translated as a pictograph. In the topic of *makan*, the use of emojis is very helpful in helping users to express their thoughts and feelings more accurately, such as in the examples below. In Table 13, example (i) shows multiple food emojis being used in a single tweet. The food emojis include **poultry leg, hamburger, French fries, pizza, hot dog, taco, burrito,** and **popcorn**. While in example (ii), the user mentioned the word cookies in his/her tweet and continued to further express the tweet by attaching a **cookie** emoji at the end of a tweet. Example (iii) is also a tweet with food-related emoji, which includes the use of **'face savouring food'** emoji. The use of that particular emoji helped the user to express their current mood, in addition to the written tweet. The user in Example (iii) wrote that he/she is going to eat, therefore the 'face savouring food' emoji helped to express his/her mood in regard to the activity.

Emojis used in online communication among Twitter users are not specifically 'linguistics', as it is general and does not belong to any language is specific. However, due to the absence of intonation and prosody in written texts, emoji serves as an additional function to help users express their tweets alongside language more accurately.

DISCUSSIONS

This study aimed at investigating the variations of slangs used by Malaysian Malay language users in online communication. It was found that the language used by Twitter users had transformed the nature of written Malay. Some of the transformations resembled daily speech written down, while some transformations were found to have been exaggerated. This finding coincides with Crystal's (2001) description of written speech because it is mainly written although it reflects the features of informal speech.

Twitter users make the most of their 'writing skills' to be as creative as possible in order to ensure that their messages reach the audience exactly the way they want it to be. Although some internet slangs might not make sense at first, each of the slangs serves a certain purpose, and it is mainly to ease communication among 'those who understand', namely, the community of Twitter users. This finding supports Eble (2009) who stated that slang was a "linguistic expression of social affiliation".

Internet slangs provide rooms for users to express themselves more colourfully through short texts, such as through the use of onomatopoeic spellings. To convey messages in short form and quickly, abbreviations or acronyms have come into use. These slangs help users to save

Table 13
Emoji

No.	Emoji
i.	*Nah, jgn lupak baca doa makan*
ii.	can't stop *makan* cookies
iii.	Stress?? Dont worry *jom makan*

typing time, and to provide instant replies to the other party they are communicating with. The room for self-expression also emerged through the use of cacography, where they altered real spellings to the spellings that they think will help to portray how they actually speak in real life and to convey emotional nuances more accurately compared to the 'boring' correct spellings.

Meanwhile, as much as 'transferring' daily speech into writings helped to 'colour' their conversations, inanities, and leetspeak seem to appear exclusively in online communication, as they emerged due to users' creativity in modifying spellings. These spellings are almost impossible to be articulated in real speech. Apart from all the modifications made to written language, the emergence of emoji also helped Twitter users to convey their messages more accurately. Technically, emojis are similar to keyboard generated smileys as listed by Barseghyan (2013). However, emojis are a more recent invention that contains a richer variation of expressions, including families, buildings, animals, food objects, mathematical symbols, and more.

The current study found two more variations of slangs that are popular among Twitter users, namely cacography and emoji. These findings also support Crystal's opinion in an interview with Young (2013) that people are prepared to create new words, which is a good development. By integrating the initial classifications of slangs with the classifications found in this study, a new list of internet slang classification that is relevant to the study was designed, as given in Table 14.

This study revealed that perhaps the word *makan* itself was a slang word after all, although it might not be an internet slang exclusively. Tweets analyzed in this study showed that although the users constructed a full English sentence, they tended to replace the word *eat* with the Malay word *makan*. Based on this observation, it shows that some Malaysian Malay language users

Table 14
Internet slang classification

Categories of slangs	Examples
Shortenings	*org (orang)*
Acronyms and abbreviations	omg (oh my god)
Onomatopoeic spellings	Huhu (the sound of a person sobbing)
Phonetic replacements	*2r2 (itulah tu)*
Inanities	Hsjdjsjdjs (to indicate laughter)
Inanities in addition to the root word	iolls (i)
Cacography (Malay)	*aperw (apa)*
Cacography (English)	*kenod (cannot)*
Repetition	*laparrrr*
Punctuations and capitalisations	!!!!!!, *TOLONGLAH*
Emoji	😋

might be more comfortable using English in their Twitter conversations. However, they may be comfortable in expressing themselves as a Malaysian by interjecting the word *makan* in their English tweets, making it a unique kind of Malaysian slang. This revelation also seemed to clearly reflect the *makan* culture of Malaysians as discussed earlier in this paper.

CONCLUSION

Looking back at its definition, slang is invented to serve the important function of identifying people as members of a group. Twitter is a subculture in its own class, drawing a distinction between the internet and the 'real world'. Therefore, the Twitter community itself is identified as a group of people with similar interests, regardless of their age groups. Social media have evolved the way people use language. It is considered a big contributor to the evolution of our language. Some slangs might be temporary, but the linguistic creativity behind the people who created and use slang will probably continue to grow as new internet users will try to assimilate into the subculture. The current study has served as preliminary research on the slangs used by Malaysian Malay language users. Further studies involving a larger corpus and a wider group of internet users are suggested to uncover more unambiguous findings of internet language.

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