ABSTRACT

This thesis aims to examine the characteristics of English and Malay loanwords in unique lexicons in Singapore Mandarin. The characteristics can be accounted by the distinct cultural, geographical, economic and political factors in Singapore.

Loanwords were collected from Times Dictionary of Singapore Chinese by Wang HuiDi and Lianhe Zaobao. Their frequency in Lianhe Zaobao and China Youth Daily, two major newspapers in Singapore and China respectively, were used to determine if the loanwords are unique lexicons. Among the 260 loanwords collected, 197 are English loanwords and 63 are Malay loanwords.

The characteristics are compared through forms of borrowing and their distribution in different fields. The loanwords can be classified into four forms of borrowing, namely Transliteration, Calque, Transliteration+Senseloan and Adoption of Acronym. Majority of the Malay loanwords are transliteration (84.1%) while majority of the English loanwords are calques (67.5%). Chinese immigrants flocked to Singapore in the 14th century. The constant intercourse and mutual influence
between the Chinese immigrants and native Malays inevitably resulted in linguistic borrowing. Transliteration is the most popular and direct way to borrow new ideas. English is the official and working language in Singapore, most policies and are first named in English before they are translated semantically into Chinese, thus accounting for the difference in forms of borrowing.

The loanwords can also be classified into two main aspects, namely Lifestyle and Social aspect. Lifestyle consists of five fields: Apparel, Food, Housing, Transportation and Daily life; whereas the social aspect consists of six fields: Education, Law, Medicine, Economics, Work and Politics. In lifestyle, most of the Malay loanwords words are from the field of food and apparel (58.7%), while most of the English loanwords concern daily life and transportation (46.2%). In social aspect, there are English loanwords from all six fields, but there are no Malay loanwords pertaining to education, law and medicine. This is because the cultural interaction between Chinese immigrants and native Malays are mostly related to food and apparel. Singapore used to be a British colony. After independence, Singapore continues to use the education and legal
framework during the colonial times, however the government spares no effort to revise and construct a system unique to Singapore.