Abstract

Singapore is a multi-cultural society where different races mingle and interact with one another. Cultural contact results in influences from other languages. Therefore, when Chinese and Malays interact, what are the characteristics of the Malay loanwords in Singapore Mandarin (SgM)? What is the extent that they have entered into SgM? Why did they enter SgM? In order to answer the above questions, this paper aims to explore and analyze Malay loanwords in SgM.

166 Malay loanwords were collected from published materials and Internet websites. The paper will first look into the distribution and extent of integration of Malay loanwords into SgM, followed by analysis of possible reasons behind the emergence of Malay loanwords.

Findings indicated that content words, namely nouns, from Malay language were frequently borrowed. Names of food (especially those originating from Malay or Southeast Asia) were the most prominent.

Although 121 Malay loanwords appear in “Lianhe Zaobao”, most loanwords did not have a written Chinese form and were pure phonemic loanwords. This suggests that Malay loanwords had yet been fully incorporated into SgM.

Reasons behind the emergence of Malay loanwords may be attributed to Malay language being Singapore’s national language, as well as the characteristics of the Singapore society.