

For Review only

Aiseh! Malaysians talk one kind one, you know? You also can or not? If cannot, don't worry, you can learn how to be terror at Manglish by just going through this book. The authors Lee Su Kim and Stephen Hall have come up with a damn shiok and kacang putih way for anybody to master Manglish. Nohnid to vomit blood. Some more ah, this new edition got extra chapters and new Manglish words. So don't be a bladiful and miss out on this. Get a copy and add oil to your social life.

– Kee Thuan Chye, author of *The People's Victory*

Now back after 20 years with brand new words, expressions and idioms, this hilarious classic remains packed with humour, irreverence and loads of fun. It bids all Malaysians to lighten up, laugh at ourselves and revel in our unique, multicultural way of life.

Forget about tenses, grammar, pronunciation, and just relek lah ... Aiyoh. Manglish or Malaysian English is what Malaysians speak when we want to connect with each other or just hang loose. Borrowing from Malay, Chinese, Indian, Asli, British English, American English, dialects, popular mass media and plenty more, our unique English reflects our amazing diversity. Like a frothy teh tarik or a lip-smacking mouthful of divine durian, Manglish is uniquely Malaysian.

Manglish is an entertaining, funny and witty compilation of commonly used Malaysian English words and expressions. Whether Malaysian, expat, visitor or a fresh-off-the-plane Mat Salleh, you'll never be at a loss for words when conversing with Malaysians.

visit our website at:
www.marshallcavendish.com/genref

mc Marshall Cavendish
Editions



LEE SU KIM & STEPHEN J. HALL

MANGGLISH

Marshall Cavendish Editions

The classic bestseller now in a brand new edition



MANGGLISH

MALAYSIAN ENGLISH
AT ITS WACKIEST!



LEE SU KIM & STEPHEN J. HALL
CARTOONS BY ZUNAR

For Review only

Aiseh! Malaysians talk one kind one, you know? You also can or not? If cannot, don't worry, you can learn how to be terror at Manglish by just going through this book. The jambu Lee Su Kim and the bargger Stephen Hall have come up with a damn shiok and kacang putih way for anybody to master Manglish. Nohnid to vomit blood. Some more ah, this new edition got extra chapters and new Manglish words. So don't be a bladiful and miss out on this. Get a copy and add oil to your social life.

– **Kee Thuan Chye**,
author of *The People's Victory*

Language changes all the time, so this new edition of *Manglish* is most welcome for bringing us up to date. It also reminds us that Manglish is not just a random rojak of bits and pieces but an emerging language system with its own unique ways of expressing things. There are items, relationships and nuances of the Malaysian identity which standard English cannot express. So bully for Manglish! And Boleh for you!

– **Alan Maley OBE**, former Professor of English,
author of over 60 books and series editor of
Oxford University Press's *Resource Books for Teachers*

This second edition of *Manglish* has even more words and phrases to make you laugh out louder. Faint-hearted language purists, be warned! This book illustrates how Manglish has developed into a new variety of English with cheeky irreverence to standard varieties of English. I say man, don't get angry lah. Just enjoy!

– **Stefanie Pillai**, Professor, University of
Malaya's Faculty of Languages and Linguistics

Reading the first edition of *Manglish* had serious implications on my life, especially my visits to the coffee shops. Manglish took on a different perspective – I started studying the variations in the exchanges, matching them with those within the confines of that fascinating book. My morning coffee never seemed to be the same

For Review only

again. This second edition is a most timely update. Manglish is dynamic (it grows within you!) I speak it so well these days I almost want to believe it has usurped English as my second language!

– **Jayakaran Mukundan**,
Professor, Universiti Pertanian Malaysia

Manglish is pure pleasure. Laugh, cry and relish the heartwarming joy of knowing that Manglish in all its colourful glory will live on. Definitely a book to treasure for generations to come.

– **Evanna Mohamad Ramly**, writer

Nonstop laughter, revelations, enlightenment. The authors deserve kudos for the fun and effort put into a timely, worthy and really helpful digest of the multilingual evolution of the diaspora in Malaysia.

– **Mano Maniam**, actor

This book contains the very essence of being Malaysian. A joy to read, it is an honest and humorous compendium to help understand us Malaysians better. I speak Manglish everyday. It's my culture. It's our Malaysian Culture. In a way, this book is an invitation, so you can speak like us and enjoy the Malaysian way of life. It doesn't matter if you are a local who lost the slang or an ang moh who is baffled by our English. Enjoy the book lah.

– **Jessie Ng**, curator,
TEDxPetalangStreet

Colloquially elegant and internationally relevant. This book Damn Shiok!

– **Jason Leong**, comedian

MANGLISH

MALAYSIAN ENGLISH
AT ITS WACKIEST!

LEE SU KIM & STEPHEN J. HALL

CARTOONS BY ZUNAR

For Review only

© 2019 Lee Su Kim and Stephen J. Hall

Illustrations by Zunar

First published in 1998 by Times Books International
This edition published in 2019 by Marshall Cavendish Editions
An imprint of Marshall Cavendish International



All rights reserved

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright owner. Requests for permission should be addressed to the Publisher, Marshall Cavendish International (Asia) Private Limited, 1 New Industrial Road, Singapore 536196. Tel: (65) 6213 9300
E-mail: genref@sg.marshallcavendish.com Website: www.marshallcavendish.com/genref

The publisher makes no representation or warranties with respect to the contents of this book, and specifically disclaims any implied warranties or merchantability or fitness for any particular purpose, and shall in no event be liable for any loss of profit or any other commercial damage, including but not limited to special, incidental, consequential, or other damages.

Other Marshall Cavendish Offices:

Marshall Cavendish Corporation, 99 White Plains Road, Tarrytown NY 10591-9001, USA • Marshall Cavendish International (Thailand) Co Ltd, 253 Asoke, 12th Flr, Sukhumvit 21 Road, Klongroey Nua, Wattana, Bangkok 10110, Thailand
• Marshall Cavendish (Malaysia) Sdn Bhd, Times Subang, Lot 46, Subang Hi-Tech Industrial Park, Batu Tiga, 40000 Shah Alam, Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia

Marshall Cavendish is a registered trademark of Times Publishing Limited

National Library Board, Singapore Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

Name(s): Lee, Su Kim. | Hall, Stephen J., 1953-, author. | Zunar, illustrator.

Title: Manglish : Malaysian English at its wackiest! / Lee Su Kim & Stephen J. Hall ; cartoons by Zunar.

Description: Singapore : Marshall Cavendish Editions, 2019. | First published in 1998.

Identifier(s): OCN 1083132625 | 978-981-4841-42-9 (paperback)

Subject(s): LCSH: English language--Spoken English--Malaysia. | English language--Spoken English--Malaysia--Humor. | English language--Malaysia--Usage. | English language--Variation--Malaysia.

Classification: DDC 427.9595--dc23

Printed in Singapore

*Affectionately dedicated
to all Malaysians*

For Review only

CONTENTS

Preface	9
Ah Bengs, Mat Rempits and Chilli Padis	13
Aiksy Only! So Atas!	30
One Word Only	43
Cannot Tahan! Let's Cabut	48
Oredi, Afturds: Time Manglish-Style	60
Giving Directions the Manglish Way	63
From Cooling to Suspenders: Colloquialisms	66
Doing the 'Can Can'	73
Questioning in Manglish, Izzit?	76
Idioms	84
Got Some More: Phrases and Expressions	93
Don't Play Play	102
Face	104
Adoi! Exclamations!	106
To Lah Or Not to Lah: Tail Words	110
It's Rojak: Portmanteau Words	114
Makan Time! Eat, Drink, Eat	120
The Way We Are: Found in Malaysia	128
Victorianisms: Manglish Gets It Write	135
Short Cuts	140
Conversations	142
Acknowledgements	146
About the Authors	147

For Review only

PREFACE

Why do Malaysians sing when they speak? Visitors are puzzled to hear a strange sounding word in conversations with Malaysians, which sounds like a musical note. This of course is the “lah” that Malaysians use all the time. Unless there are some unknown tribes yet to be discovered, it is safe to say that apart from Malaysia and Singapore, this tail ender is unique to this region. “Lah” was not brought over by the British during colonial rule but is very much a part of the vernacular languages in multicultural, multilingual Malaysia. “Lah” is part of the English spoken by Malaysians – Manglish – in all its colour, charm and what may appear to be for visitors, confusion.

Manglish or Malaysian English is a distinct variety of the English language. The spread of English throughout the world meant an inevitable evolution in the way we use it in our own communities. Today we have World Englishes or varieties of English such as Spanglish (Spanish English), Franglais (French English), Poglish (Polish English), Singlish (Singapore English), Chinglish (China English), Konglish (Korean English), Indian English and Taglish (Tagalog English). Even where English dominates, there are spoken varieties such as

For Review only

American English, Ebonics (Black English), Strine (Australian English) and New Zealand English.

Much time and effort have been spent studying and researching Malaysian English. Doctoral dissertations and postgraduate theses can be found on library book shelves, read by a few. With its creativity and complexity, the unique English which we fondly call Manglish shouldn't be relegated to the halls of academe but should be enjoyed by all. In 1998, the first edition of *Manglish: Malaysian English at Its Wackiest* (Lee Su Kim) was published. The book, a compilation of words and expressions presented in a humorous way, made the fun and complexity of this variety accessible to all. It was a bestseller with nine reprints. It now returns, two decades later, as a new edition with many more words, phrases and expressions, mirroring in its own way, continuity and change in Malaysia over the last 20 years.

Somewhere along the way leading up to the Malaysian general elections on 9 May 2018, an increasingly oppressive atmosphere with restrictive laws, limited freedom of speech and expression (including political cartoons, yellow T-shirts or tossing balloons). Some lost touch with the joy of being Malaysian, fearful of even laughing at ourselves. We hope this book lets us all laugh and relek lah.

In a book of such a nature, it is not possible to exercise political correctness. In compiling the entries, we can only observe and record and cannot be held guilty if anyone's sensibilities are injured. Therefore we do hope the sensibilities and feelings of the buayas, big shots, Ah bengs, mak neneks, cili padis and kay poh chees are still intact and that if anything, this

book has been able to make us laugh at ourselves and appreciate the diversity in Malaysian life.

Manglish is a combination of the words Malaysian and English. It does not mean that Malaysians speak 'mangled' English. Most English-speaking Malaysians know when to use the international style and be perfectly intelligible. The issues of standards of international comprehensibility are not part of this book. The focus is on Manglish, a social communicative norm which Malaysians embrace. Manglish is a language choice (academics term it as a register of speech) and speakers choose where and when to use it. Clear or not?

When does one speak Manglish? When we are in an informal setting and wish to converse in a relaxed, casual manner. Then it seems natural to just switch lah and no need to bother about present tense, past tense, whatever kind of tense ... so one kind one. Teruk only, must worry about grammar, pronunciation ... Some more ah if everybody is speaking Manglish and you speak in 'English' English, you feel one kind ... that's when you switch to Manglish lah. So nice one.

For Manglish is also a mood. And a feeling. One sometimes just feels like rattling away in Manglish. Becos why? Because just like a glass of frothy teh tarik or a whiff of durian, shiok only to be able to speak in Manglish, our very own special English – like really connecting, being truly Malaysian.

Best!

For Review only

Chapter 1

AH BENGS, MAT REMPITS AND CHILLI PADIS

What's in a name?

That which we call a rose

By any other name

Would smell as sweet.

– William Shakespeare

Manglish names come from the various languages we speak in Malaysia and cover the whole gamut from Cantonese, Hokkien, Tamil, Malay, English and more, including hybrid combinations of several languages. Some names are given for convenience's sake, some in mock scorn or disgust, some out of affection. In an increasingly politically correct world, Manglish names have survived and continue to evolve, often irreverent, refreshing and most colourful.

Ah Beng – A bit of a nerd, sticks out with his gauche and awkward behavior and lack of social graces. Likes to dye his hair blonde or ginger. Very good in Maths and Chinese Chess, tends to blurt unusual opinions occasionally. Ah Beng's girlfriends are known as Ah Lians.

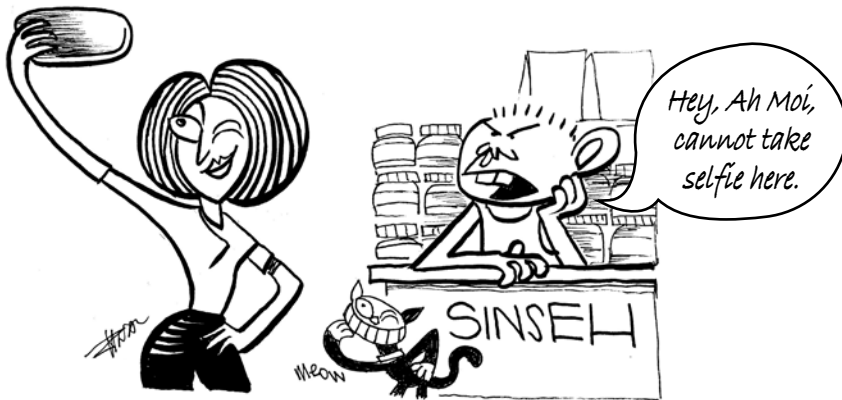
Ah Kwa – A male with very effeminate manners. Talented in the feminine arts such as beauty, hairdressing and fashion. Also good in design and cuisine.

Friend: “Who’s doing your make-up for your wedding?”

Bride-to-be: “My Ah Kwa friend. She ... I mean ... he’s very good. He’s doing my hair too.”

Ah Moi – A friendly name for a young girl. Of Cantonese origin but used by Malaysians in general. Similar to ‘Miss’.

“Hey, Ah Moi, cannot take selfie here, okay?”



Ah Pia – In the 70s, engineering students were popularly known as ‘Engine Ah Pias’ in campus. Whenever they came around to the other faculties to chat up the girls, they would get teased, “Eh, Ah Pia, smelling ah?” ‘Smelling’ was the campus lingo for sniffing around, trying to ‘tackle’ members of the opposite sex.

Ah Pia is also used to describe appearance or ‘dressing’, as in:

“Her boyfriend – real Ah Pia type lah!”

or

“Why your dressing so Ah Pia today?”

Ah Soh – A polite term for a middle-aged woman or an elderly lady. Equivalent to an aunt. If an Ah Soh is called a Lenglui (sweet young thing), she will be very pleased but not the other way around!

“Yeeeee, why she behave like an Ah Soh ah?”

or

“She’s only in her twenties but oredi so Ah Soh!”

Auntie – Used by younger Malaysians for women, whether blood relative or not, who are senior to them, and require, as custom dictates, the honorific of ‘Auntie’.

Sales Assistant: “Excuse me, Auntie, you forgot your change.”

Lady: “Don’t call me Auntie lah! Cheh! Make me feel old only!”

Bargger – Used for friend or foe, affectionately or with great disgust.

“That Bargger, every time we meet, late one.”

or

“That bloody Bargger, take all our money and can still smile and smile.”

Barsket – A swear word spat out in anger or annoyance. Used to substitute ruder words such as ‘bastard’.

Angry Malaysian driver cursing another driver: “Barsket! Your grandfather’s road ah! Simply cut into my lane!”

Big shot – A very important person. Also used sarcastically for small shots who think they’re big.

“Police outrider signaling lah. Some Big shot coming.”

or

“Take your legs off my table, will you? You Big shot ah?”

Bladibarsket – An even more extreme version of Barsket.

Malaysian driver cursing on the road: “Bladibarsket! *%&#!
Want to die ah?!”

Bladiful – Manglish for ‘bloody fool’. Not just confined to swearing, sometimes it’s used playfully or with affection.

Phone rings. Anna answers call.

Anna: “Hello. Aww, you ah? Bladiful. So long never hear from you.”

Boss – You could be one and called such with affection by your colleagues. Outside of the workplace, you could be just the customer, or you could just be getting your car washed.

At the office: Hello Boss! Eaten oredi Boss?”

or

At the car wash: “Boss, Boss! Long time no come. Rainshine you want? Very good, Boss!”

Botak – Bald (Malay). Also used to describe situations where one isn’t bald yet but OTW (on the way).

“Haven’t seen you since primary school! Wah, you all botak oredi.”

or

“My wife forever nagging me ... I’m going botak!”

A little ditty on Botaks:

Botak head

Went to school so late.

Teacher said,

Why you come so late?

Because my mother cut

My botak head!



Brudder – You can have a few of any kind without having the same Aunties or Uncles. Manglish equivalent of the Aussie “mate”. Also used in a sales pitch where you find you’re suddenly related.

“Hey Brudder! Come in, Come in, come see. Buy one, get one free!”

Buaya – A male hunter of the opposite sex. From the Malay idiom ‘buaya darat’ (land crocodile).

“Don’t let him go near your daughters, man. He’s a real buaya.”

Also used among golfers (usually in jest) for a golfer who returns a score much lower than his handicap.



Chinaman – A loud, rough and uncouth man whose pursuit of the dollar overrides everything else.

“Cannot stand him lah ... real Chinaman! Always talking about making money!”

Cili padi – Used for females who are tiny but real hot stuff. Like dynamite. Named after the tiny, lethal chillies used in Malay, Thai and Nyonya cuisine.

“His girlfriend ah, real cili padi man!”

Also refers to any small person who can do wonders despite his/her size.

Doongu – A stupid person, a real bodoh (Malay word for stupid), a dumbkoff. Usually used affectionately, teasingly, with no malice intended.

“Tell you so many times still cannot follow, real doongu lah you.”

Fut/Small fut – If you are called a small fut, it means you are a small, inconsequential thing, nothing to do with flatulence. Not necessarily used in malice, it is used to tease friends or family members sometimes.

“You small fut! What you know? Don’t try and tell me what to do!”

Goondu – Same meaning as doongu.

Hantu – Incurably naughty, a real devil. Hantu is ‘devil’ or ‘ghost’ in Malay.

Overheard at a five-star hotel where a mother was looking for her little son: “Where’s that Hantu gone again? Can’t take my eyes off him for one minute!”

Hengtai – Groomsmen (Cantonese). In many Chinese weddings today, the bridegroom, accompanied by his hengtai



For Review only

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are grateful to the many friends, students and colleagues who have contributed words or assistance. We have enjoyed compiling the list of words very much, especially the collecting of data – sitting at our favourite cafes, kopitiam and mamak shops listening to the way Malaysians speak.

We'd like to thank Christine Chong of Times Editions who encouraged the writing of the first edition of *Manglish* and Tan Jin Hock as editor. Thank you to Lee Mei Lin and She-reen Wong of MCIA for following through to this edition, for your continuous support and being such a pleasure to work with.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Lee Su Kim is a Malaysian author, educator and cultural activist. A sixth generation nyonya from Kuala Lumpur, she is the author of a trilogy of short stories on the Peranakan Babas and Nyonyas. These are: *Kebaya Tales: Of Matriarchs, Maidens, Mistresses and Matchmakers*, *Sarong Secrets: Of Love, Loss and Longing* and *Manek Mischiefs: Of Patriarchs, Playboys and Paramours*. *Kebaya Tales* won first prize in the Popular-Star Readers' Choice Awards 2011 (Fiction).

Su Kim has published 10 books of nonfiction. Her books, *Malaysian Flavours: Insights into Things Malaysian* and *Manglish: Malaysian English at its Wackiest* are bestsellers and have sold more than 10,000 copies. *A Nyonya In Texas: Insights of a Straits Chinese Woman in the Lone Star State*, written in Texas where she did her doctoral degree, uses humor to highlight cross-cultural encounters.

Su Kim was Associate Professor of English Language Studies at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia where she lectured and researched for more than 30 years. She holds a Doctorate in Education from the University of Houston, a Masters and Diploma in Education and a Bachelor of Arts in English from University Malaya, Kuala Lumpur.

She is a founder member and the first President of the Peranakan Baba Nyonya Association of Kuala Lumpur & Selangor. She is also a public speaker and has given many talks and presentations all over the world. An invited speaker at the Ubud Writers festival and the Singapore Writers festivals, she has a 2017 TEDx talk, sharing her love for writing and her nyonya heritage at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=zyI5AZVJ-48
Website: www.leesukim.com

Facebook: www.facebook.com/Lee-Su-Kim/Author

Stephen J. Hall is a multilingual New Zealander who has lived and worked in Singapore and Malaysia since 1991. He is currently Professor and Head, Centre for English Language Studies, Sunway University, Malaysia, where he has worked for over ten years. Earlier he managed a Malaysian national teacher education project, which took him to very remote districts. His Doctorate from Leicester University analyses interaction in the early phases of Malaysian rural in-service teacher education.

Stephen has been a corporate trainer and managed his own consultancy, working with airport customer services and transnational companies. He trained ASEAN teachers and has worked in a range of Southeast Asian settings.

Stephen has taught university, secondary and primary levels in the Asia Pacific region and has over 45 publications, including 7 books. He was once an interpreter for a Singapore dragon boat team competing in Indonesia and is fluent in Solomon Islands Pijin. Stephen is passionate about batik, plurilingualism, percussion and sharing languages.

Website: www.stephenjhall.com