

# English in paradise: the Maldives

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English is rapidly establishing itself as a second language in a society transforming from fishing to tourism and trade

## Introduction

The spread of English has reached almost every corner of the world, and the Republic of the Maldives<sup>1</sup> is no exception. Following the nation's opening to the outside world, the introduction of English as a medium of instruction at secondary and tertiary level of education, and its government's recognition of the opportunities offered through tourism, English has now firmly established itself in the country. As such, Maldives is quite similar to the countries in the Gulf region (cf. Randall & Samimi, 2010; Boyle, 2012). The nation is undergoing vast societal change, and English is part of this.

Studies of English in Maldives are non-existent to date (with Bernaisch, Gries & Mukherje, 2014 and Gries & Bernaisch, 2016 mentioning it but providing no further description or data), and the indigenous language Divehi has only recently been described in some detail (Fritz, 2002; Gnanadesikan, 2017). However, given its fascinating population make-up, Maldives lends itself to theoretical discussions of how English takes shape in a rapidly transforming society, in which English is fast establishing itself as a second language in large parts of the population. This article introduces the functions of English in Maldives today and provides a first description of some of its features.

## From unheard-of fishing communities to tourists' paradise: Maldives' society today

Maldives is an island state consisting of approximately 1192 coral islands, which are grouped into 26 natural atolls, covering approximately 100,000 km<sup>2</sup> and extending over 823 km in length and 133 km in width. For administrative reasons, these natural atolls form 21 units, one of which is the capital,

Malé, located in Kaafu atoll (see Figure 1). Of these islands, 188 were inhabited islands (i.e. islands settled by the local population) at the time of the most recent census (2014). In addition, there were 109 resort islands<sup>2</sup>, i.e. islands home to a hotel, and 128 islands set aside for industry or other purposes – e.g. Dhoonidhoo prison island; the airport island, Hulhulé; the fuel storage island, Funadhoo; Aarah, the retreat island of the President of Maldives; and 81 islands leased for agricultural purposes (National Bureau of Statistics, 2015e: 13).

In 2014, Maldives had a total population of 407,660. This figure comprises a resident population of 402,071 and 5,589 Maldivians living abroad. The population of Maldives is a young one (in 2014, 27% were under 15 and just 5% over 65), and heavily characterised by migration.

Historically, Maldives' economy heavily depended on fishing and had very little contact to the outside world. From 1972 onwards, however (Phadnis & Luithui, 1985: 62), the economy has increasingly been dominated by the tourism sector



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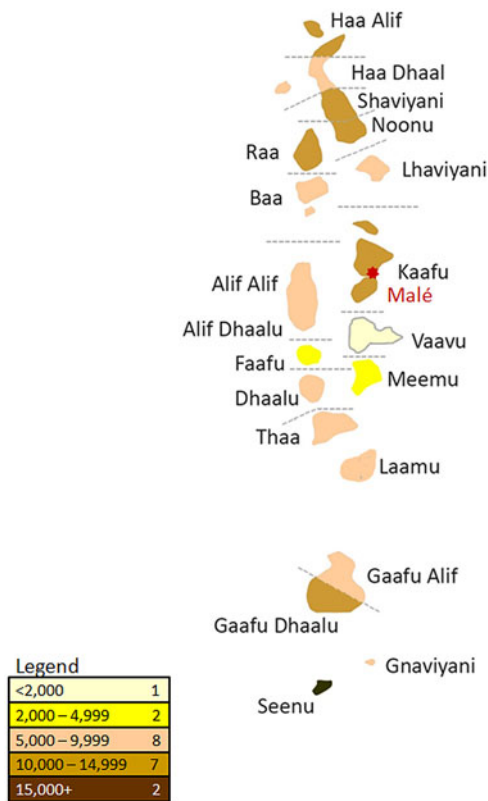


Figure 1. Map of Maldives, indicating population density

and Maldives has been a fast changing society over the last decades. With the economy being mainly based on Malé as the centre of commerce and administration and on the resort islands, it does not come as a surprise that Malé is the region with the nation's highest development index (cf. Ministry of Finance and Treasury and the United Nations Development Programme in the Maldives, 2014). Remote atolls, and particularly those where tourism does not support the economy, rate considerably lower in terms of human development, educational choices and income. As a result, internal migration between the atolls abounds in Maldives. Many households have family members working either in the capital, Malé, or in one of the resorts, and a share of 37% of the population lived in the capital Malé at the time of the 2014 census.

Furthermore, like many other island states, Maldives has a limited labour force, and Maldives has witnessed a steady increase of migrant workers (De Mel & Jayaratne, 2011: 210). The resident population, in the 2014 census, included 63,637 – i.e. 15.83% – foreigners (National Bureau of Statistics,

2015a: 13). Most of these originate from South Asian countries, particularly Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka. In 2008, 43% of the expatriate workers were employed in the construction sector, 21% in tourism, 11% in finance, insurance and real estate, and 4% in the education sector (cf. De Mel & Jayaratne, 2011: 212–3). Fewer work in manufacturing, fishing, trade and transport. Given the aforementioned differences between the atolls, most expatriate workers live on the resort islands, on Malé, or on one of those islands that have recently opened up to tourism, such as Maafushi or Rasdhoo.

Whilst Maldives today is thus clearly a multilingual society, the native population's main first language and national language of Maldives is Divehi, a language that has until very recently received very scant attention only (see, however, Cain & Gair, 2000; Fritz, 2002; Gnanadesikan, 2017, and the studies mentioned therein), and one that is, as Gnanadesikan (2017: 17) remarks, frequently still held to be a dialect of Sinhala, the dominant first language in Sri Lanka.

The addition of English to the linguistic ecology of Maldives is a fairly recent development.

### Maldives' history and the place of the British and of English therein

The Maldives were initially settled by Aryan immigrants from the Indian subcontinent, around 500 BC, and the people at the time were Buddhist (Fritz, 2002: 6). However, not much is known about this early history of the Maldives prior to the nation's conversion to Islam in 1153, which 'is traditionally credited to a Muslim saint from the Maghreb (or, in some variants of the story, from Tabriz, in Persia)' (Gnanadesikan 2017: 15). Islam was introduced as the state religion, and the Maldives became an independent sultanate. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Portuguese ruled the Maldives for a period of 15 years (1558–1573), brutally aiming to convert its population to Christianity. Later, maybe in reaction to these events, the Maldives voluntarily placed themselves under the protection of diverse European colonial powers, as a protectorate, and from 1645, they were a Dutch protectorate, together with Ceylon (Fritz, 2002: 3) until the British took over Ceylon.

In 1796, the Maldives became a British protected area, and then a formal British protectorate in 1887. However, the British did not get involved in internal matters (apart from having to consent to matters of succession to the throne of the sultan) and had deployed no personnel to the islands.

Given the low-key approach of the British to their protectorate, there has not been a settler population in the sense of Schneider (2007), with the exception of Addu: in 1941, a military base for the Royal Navy was established on the island of Gan in this Southern atoll.<sup>3</sup> The base on Gan was further developed for use by the Royal Air Force in 1942, and when the base in Sri Lanka could no longer be used from 1956, it became the sole staging post in the area.

From that year onward, personnel was stationed and most of the local population was eventually employed at the British base: 'The base had around 600 personnel permanently stationed here, with up to 3000 during periods of peak activity' (Masters, 2009: 164). In fact, '[a]bout 900 Maldivians and 100 Pakistanis are employed there, but not housed, they come over each morning from neighbouring islands in support of RAF personnel' (The Guardian, 1975). As a result, Maldivians in the area 'spoke good English and had experience working for Westerners' (Masters, 2009: 164). In 1965, Maldives became independent. The British airbase however, being based on an agreement for a special lease contract, was kept until 1976.

For the major part of Maldives and its inhabitants, however, English was introduced with the development of the education sector, in which British English has been the norm, but just one of many varieties spoken by teachers.

## Functions of English in Maldives today

Given the fact that the sole national and official language is Dhivehi, English is not used in many of those domains that it typically dominates in post-colonial contexts, i.e. the administration, law courts and politics. This section investigates its use in the education sector, the media and in the nation's main industry: tourism.

### English in Maldives' education system

Traditionally, education had been via Qur'anic community schools (called *edhuruge* or *kiyavavage*), more formal Qur'anic schools (*makthab*), and the *madhrasa*, and focused on literacy in Divehi, reading the Qur'an and arithmancy. In 1960, a modern, state-run, English-medium education system was introduced in Malé and paved the way for large-scale changes towards a national curriculum in 1984. In 1961, schools in Malé initiated the use of English as the medium of instruction (MOI), and by the end of the 1990s, all schools

had switched to English as the MOI (UNESCO, 2012). English is introduced in pre-school (at 3 years of age), where children also learn to recite the Qur'an. Grades 1–5, the primary level, are English or Dhivehi-medium, the latter used for lessons in Dhivehi, Qur'an and Islam. An additional two years (grades 6 and 7) complete the 'basic education cycle'. In the secondary years, 8–10 and 11–12, the use of Dhivehi as MOI is restricted to Dhivehi and Islam.

To meet the resulting demand for English-language teachers, the education system has relied on an expatriate labour force, but this has been gradually decreasing: whilst in 2006, 75% of secondary school teachers still came from other countries, they made up only 27.78% (Ministry of Education, 2015) in 2015. However the share of expatriate teachers rises to 51.14% and 50.86% for lower secondary and higher secondary schools respectively. As a result, there is now a fair share of teachers using a local variety of English, particularly in pre-primary and primary school (where local teachers make up 96.05% and 83.26% respectively), and the local variety may make a significant impact in these early years of learning (in English). In secondary schools, students are exposed to a variety of Englishes. The exact origins of teachers are not documented, but individual statements of expatriate teachers indicate that the majority originate from India, and websites of individual schools allow for an, albeit not representative, assessment (see above). For example, a 2015 job advertisement for Ahmadhiya International School, Malé, states that 'the school is open for teachers from United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, America and the Philippines', and Billabong High EPS International school states on its website<sup>4</sup> to 'have teachers from India, Turkey, Sri Lanka and Maldives.' In the future, this might change, as the government has decided to replace expatriate teachers with locals, whenever possible.<sup>5</sup>

Maldives currently has one university, Maldives National University, as well as nine colleges, offering a variety of diploma and BA courses, ranging from education via multimedia design, computing, security and law enforcement, business administration and accountancy to sharia law and information technology. All courses are offered in English. As is the case in the schools, staff frequently originate from outside Maldives: Mandhu College, for examples, states that it receives assistance and also staff from universities in Singapore, Malaysia, China, India, New Zealand, Australia and the United Kingdom, which indicates that students will continue to be exposed to the various

Englishes spoken in these countries. Natural sciences, technology degrees and medicine cannot be studied in Maldives, and the fact that the non-resident Maldivian population, i.e. Maldivians living outside of the country, is predominantly 20–24 years old (1,446 or 25.87% of all non-residents, National Bureau of Statistics, 2015b: 85) seems to indicate that many migrate to other countries to obtain tertiary education degrees.

In sum, then, particularly younger Maldivians are exposed to English from a very early age onwards, in the education sector, and encounter a variety of accents. With expatriate teachers currently being replaced by Maldivians, nativisation seems imminent. English is, however, not merely acquired through formal instruction in institutionalised educational contexts: ‘Many students are increasingly learning more of their knowledge, attitudes, and values from new media such as television, internet, and other forms of mass media than from their experience in schools’ (Latheef & Gupta, 2007: 113–4).

#### **English in newspapers, on radio, television and the Internet**

Maldives has both state owned and private media, offering print publications (newspapers and magazines), TV and radio channels, and online services. *Public Service Media* (PSM) operates *Television Maldives* (TVM), the youth, entertainment and sports channel *Yes TV*, and the parliament channel *Majlis* and *Munnaaru*, an Islamic television channel. In addition, the BBC (2016) mentions four private TV stations: *DhiTV*, *Raajie TV*, *Sangu TV* and *VTV*. At present, there is no Maldivian English language channel, but TV from outside Maldives is widely available.

The state-owned PSM furthermore operates three radio channels, *Dhivehi Raajjeyge Adu*, *Dhivehi FM* (largely music) and *Dheenuge Adu* (an Islam-based channel). Sun Media Group operates *Sun FM* radio in Dhivehi. *HFM. Capital Radio 95.6*, according to the BBC (2016) offers some of the BBC’s World Service programmes. PSM also publishes the Dhivehi and English weekly magazine *Maldeeb*, which covers social issues, development, sports, travel etc. To the best of our knowledge, this is the only local print medium in English, whilst all others are in Dhivehi.

Besides television, radio and print media, the Internet has played an increasingly crucial role in the dispersion of Englishes in the country. Regular Internet access is available throughout the country via Dhiraagu and Ooredoo telecommunications systems, making influence of those

Englishes found on the Internet, particularly American English, highly likely. According to the BBC (2016), ‘[t]here were 270,000 internet users as of June 2016 (Internetworldstats.com).’ These are 67% of the resident population. Thus, if young children and elderly people are disregarded, basically everybody uses the Internet.

Not surprisingly, then, all the above-mentioned media maintain online news portals in both Dhivehi and English, as do *Raajie MV* (raajie.mv), *Mihaaru* (en.mihaaru.com) and *Miadhu* (www.miadhu.com/). The online newspaper *Dhivehi Observer* used by Bernaisch et al. (2014) no longer exists and *Minivan News* is now *Maldives Independent* (maldivesindependent.com).

Crucially, besides what is the case in education and on the Internet, English is also used widely at the workplace, in interaction with very diverse speakers of English. Yadav (2014: 79) finds that ‘[a]s a second working language, English is widely used in Government officers (sic).’ Furthermore, he states that ‘[o]ther foreign languages, however, are widely used within the tourism industry, Foreign [sic] languages, mainly English, are also frequently used in commerce.’ The tourism sector made up for 25.3% of the nation’s GDP as per census 2014 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2015e: 20) and employed 20.12% of the resident population. Other sectors in which English is likely to be used are ‘Wholesale and retail trade’ (9.84%) and ‘Education’ (8.47%) (cf. National Bureau of Statistics, 2015d). It is in the tourism sector where English is used by an increasing number of Maldivians of very diverse social backgrounds.

#### **A case in point: Tourism**

According to the 2014 census, 13,555 Maldivians resided on one of the resort, agricultural or industrial islands (National Bureau of Statistics, 2015b: 15). Of these, 77% (i.e. 10,437) lived (i.e. were employed) on either of the resort islands. In addition to what has been said above about expatriate workers in general, the enormous growth of the tourism sector, particularly of the guest-house sector (see below), requires additional work force both for the construction and maintenance of the buildings as well as for the administration and operation of the hotels and guest houses (room attendants, cooks, etc.). Despite efforts by the government to train Maldivians for the various professions in the tourism industry, and although a total of 2,243 have graduated from The Maldives National University’s Faculty of Hospitality and Tourism Studies (Ministry of Tourism, 2016) between 2011 and 2015, the nation relies on expatriates to



meet the growing demand. 'Indeed, there is a dearth of qualified Maldivians to fill technical, middle and senior management positions in the tourism sector' (May, 2016: 7). This is probably for two reasons: lack of trained manpower for the high-profile jobs, and lack of incentive for the lower paid jobs of e.g. cleaners. Also in 2014, the census reports 23,110 foreigners on non-administrative islands, which means that 63% of the staff in these islands are foreigners (National Bureau of Statistics, 2015a: 19).<sup>6</sup> For example, on the resort island of Milaidhoo, staff members are from 18 nations, e.g. Maldives, Philippines, Kenya, Namibia and India (Luig-Runge, 2017). As a result, a lingua franca is needed, which is English, spoken by Maldivians, Sri Lankans, etc. depending on the precise origins of the staff. Interactions at the resort will, obviously, take place across various Englishes. To those spoken by members of staff, the ones used by the guests will add.

The Ministry of Tourism publishes annual data on tourist arrivals, broken down by nationalities. According to the *Tourism Year Book 2016* (Ministry of Tourism, 2016), the latest available at the time of writing, 1,234,248 tourists visited Maldives in 2015, 51.4% of whom came from Europe, 23.4% from Asia & the Pacific, 16.1% from the Americas, 4.5% from Africa and 4.6% from the Middle East. The top ten countries were China (30.2%), Germany (8.2%), the United Kingdom (7.4%), Russia (5.5%), Italy (4.8%), France (4.2%) and India (3.8%).<sup>7</sup> The largest part of tourists thus come from non-English-speaking countries, and whilst individual resorts cater specifically for Italian or Asian tourists and secondary schools in Malé offer Mandarin as a foreign language, English is the lingua franca of tourism.

This situation is no longer characteristic of resort islands only. Since 2009, inhabited islands have been allowed to accommodate foreigners, and at the end of 2016, 16 hotels on inhabited islands were registered. Even more importantly, there is currently an enormously growing guest-house scene on the inhabited islands, which 'contributed nearly 14% to the total bed capacity of Maldives in 2015' (Ministry of Tourism, 2016: 1).<sup>8</sup>

As a result, interactions in English between guest house owners, but also other Maldivian locals operating dive schools and excursions companies, producing handicrafts, selling food at supermarkets or stalls or renting beach chairs, and tourists of various backgrounds continue to increase. Thus, English is also spreading as a second language at what has been called the 'grass roots'

(Meierkord, 2012; Schneider, 2016) and is clearly not restricted to the elites of Maldives' society.

## The shape of English in Maldives

School attendance rates in Maldives are high, on average 97% in the age group of five to 15 years olds, i.e. until the end of lower secondary education (National Bureau of Statistics, 2015c: 16), which means that the young population in general has a decent command of English. Lower and upper secondary (years 8–10 and 11–12) finish with the University of London General Certificate of Education Ordinary Level and Advanced level. However, attendance rates drop sharply in upper secondary, to 49% at the age of 18, when students typically sit for the Advanced level exams. This is due to the location of higher secondary schools in the capital Malé. Students from other atolls thus need to move to Malé, which is affordable only to more affluent families, creating a cline of English proficiency that correlates with socio-economic status and place of residence. Given these ratios of school attendance, English proficiency is strongest in the younger generations, but as Yadav (2014: 104) points out, 'English is spoken widely at a rudimentary level, a tribute to the tourist boom in the last decade and local schooling.' The 2014 census documents a high literacy in English for the resident population in general. This varies considerably across age groups, however, being highest in the 15–19 years olds (97.2%) and dropping sharply from the age of 35 onwards, especially outside of Malé, to only 4.8% in the 65+ group (National Bureau of Statistics, 2015c: 13).

Despite the fact that almost all Maldivians have some command of the language, English

is still not commonly used in everyday communication, with a stigma of snobbery being attached to it. However, its use is becoming more popular with the advent of technology: for email communications, on social networks and for text messaging; but a prevalence of code mixing between English and Dhivehi has become increasingly evident, especially among the younger generation. (Mohamed, 2013: 188)

Besides code-mixing and code-switching, Divehi has also increasingly borrowed from English (see Gnanadesikan, 2017: 55), particularly in the field of technology. As English is clearly establishing itself as the nation's second language for many Maldivians, language contact between Divehi and English is a regular process in Maldives that has shaped the local form of English.

The examples below are taken from Maldivian documents or websites, either governmental ones or those maintained by guest house owners. They allow for a first impression of what English as used in Maldives looks like as regards grammar, the lexicon and pragmatics.

## Local flavours of English grammar in Maldives

Not unlike many other second-language varieties of English, Maldivian English displays grammatical features that differ from the standard Englishes, relating to the clause, the noun phrase and the verb phrase.

At the level of the clause, lack of concord (subject-verb agreement) can frequently be observed, as is the case in (1) and (2):

- (1) As per the definition of usual residents, these are people who have lived or *intends* to live in Malé for a period of one year or more. (National Bureau of Statistics, 2015b)
- (2) Only a few resorts have daily commuting means available, while most resort workers only *gets* to visit the islands where their family reside and which they considered as their home islands, only a few times a year during their annual leave. (National Bureau of Statistics, 2015b)

The noun phrase often exhibits (non-)uses of the definite and indefinite article that differ from standard Englishes (as in 3 and 4), pluralisation of mass nouns (example 5) and the use of *me* instead of *I* in coordinate subjects (in 6).

- (3) Among the population in Malé who are registered in other islands, *highest number* of people are those registered inn Addu (S) at 7 percent. (National Bureau of Statistics, 2015b)
- (4) *Majority* of the usual residents of the Atolls (95 percent) are registered in the islands in the respective Atolls. (National Bureau of Statistics, 2015b)
- (5) The administration of the college is handled by a dean along with *the staffs*. (Ministry of Education, 2017)
- (6) However, my family *and me* have always consulted doctors at the hospital and have had mixed experiences. (ADK Hospital, team talk, 2012)

All of these features have also been attested for varieties of English spoken on the Indian subcontinent, i.e. Indian English, Pakistani English and Sri Lankan English, albeit to varying extents (see e.g. *The Electronic World Atlas of Varieties of*

*English*, eWAVE, available at <http://ewave-atlas.org/>). Similarities with these varieties can also be found as regards verb phrases in Maldivian English in the form of an extension of the progressive (in examples 7 and 8), the use of the present perfect where standard Englishes would prefer the simple past (as in 9 and 10), and different uses of phrasal verbs (in 11 to 15).

- (7) He also said that the ring in the pot *is having* something like a diamond, but he says that he is not sure whether that is a diamond or not. (*Sun.mv*, 14 July 2011)
- (8) Maldives *is having* lot of adventures to explore. (Liveboat association of Maldives, 2017)
- (9) ‘Ozone, Climate and Media: Communicating for Survival’ National Workshop targeted for the Media *has commenced yesterday* at Sineco Radio Maalam, Voice of Maldives. (Ministry of Environment and Energy, 28 February 2013)
- (10) As part of the government’s programme to improve the standard of education in the country, President Mohamed Nasheed *has yesterday launched* the smart school programme. Kudafari School was yesterday inaugurated as the first Smart School under the programme. (The Presidency, 30 June 2011)

Particularly, uses of phrasal verbs often diverge from those in the Standard Englishes and do so in two different ways: Whilst in example (11), the preposition *to* is used instead of *for*, a preposition is entirely missing in (12). Whilst *cater to* is not completely uncommon in British and American English, with British English preferring *cater for* and American English *cater to*, it is attested as particularly frequent in varieties of English spoken in India, Sri Lanka and Singapore, as a search in the *Corpus of Global Web-based English* (GloWbE, available at <http://corpus.byu.edu/glowbe/>) shows.

- (11) Maldives colleges & universities *cater* higher education *to* the individuals and they are controlled by the Ministry of Education. (Ministry of Education, 2017)
- (12) Research activities in various fields are *carried* in Maldives College of Higher Education and they provide training and education in the necessary areas. (Ministry of Education, 2017)

Particularly, prepositions are also added where standard Englishes would not use them, as in (13)

to (15). In (13) the insertion of the preposition *up* gives the idiom an entirely different, probably not the intended, meaning.

- (13) Birthday & Special occasions: A complimentary tasty flavored cake will be provided. We can also *throw up* a party (all expenses payable direct to the boat). (Blue Horizon guesthouse website, 2017). (Also note the use of American spelling in *flavored*.)
- (14) It is *considered as* a developing countries, but is among countries with the highest literacy rate. (Blue Horizon Guesthouse website, 2017)
- (15) A meeting has been held today at Nasandhura Palace Hotel to *discuss about* the ways of accrediting National Implementing Entities (NIE). (Ministry of Environment and Energy, 14 May 2013)

The object complement construction with *as* in (14) extends the use of *as* following the complex transitive verb *consider* with the semantics of ‘take under consideration’ to its semantics ‘to regard as’. Such use of ‘intrusive *as*’ as Nihalani, Tongue, & Hosali (1979) called it, has recently been shown to be a common feature, particularly in Indian English, but also in other South Asian varieties of English (cf. Lange, 2016). *Discuss about* is most frequent in Bangladesh English in GloWbE. These uses have also been observed with other varieties of English, particularly L2 and foreign language varieties. As has been suggested by e.g. Widdowson (2016: 220), one reason for the added prepositions seem to be the fact that there is a corresponding noun which requires the pronoun, e.g. in *a discussion about*, and other verbs that are complemented by *about*, e.g. in *to think about*, so that speakers ‘exploit the regularity within English.’

The above features all indicate similarities with the other varieties of English found in South Asia, but also some differences, e.g. from Indian English. In fact, Bernaisch et al. (2014) subsume Maldivian English under the heading of South Asian varieties, together with the Englishes spoken on the Indian subcontinent. Whilst this is at the level of grammar, where similarities might be expected due to the closeness of Dhivehi to Singhalese, the lexicon shows a pronounced influence from Dhivehi and makes Maldivian English special.

### Maldivian-infused English lexicon

As is the case with all other second-language varieties of English, the characteristic features of the

lexicon of Maldivian English are most clearly visible in the form of borrowings from the speakers’ first language, in this case from Dhivehi. These pertain particularly to cultural items and concepts not existing in English (in examples 16 to 20) and to food (in examples 21 to 24).

- (16) Fake 500 *rufiyaa* bill of new banknote series spotted (*Maldives Independent*, 30 January 2016).
- (17) We hear being said on the *holhuashi*, that others have benefitted from this. (*Maldives Independent*, 27 February 2016)
- (18) Unoosha looked radiant wearing a traditional *kasabu libaas*. (*vNews.mv*, 29 October 2015)
- (19) The photograph you submit must: – have a plain white background (people with white hair and people wearing white *buruga* may use an off-white or cream background. (Department of Immigration & Emigration, 2017).
- (20) A fishing *dhoni* which had gone missing while out fishing has been found. (Maldives Police Service Media Website, 2009)

In the examples, *rufiyaa* is the local currency, a *hulhuashi* a meeting and resting place on the local islands (see Figure 2), *kasabu libaas* the traditional dress worn by females on special occasions, the *buruga* the specific type of veil worn by women in Maldives (which is a loose fitting type), and a *dhoni* is a particular type of boat, frequently used in the Atolls.

- (21) Then me and my family started cooking. We made *gulha* and *boakibaa* made from bread. (*Purple Gazette*, 2012)
- (22) Stop by a local cafe to sample traditional *hedika* – Maldivian savoury and sweet short eats served with black tea. (*Secret Paradise*, 2017)
- (23) Avoid rice and noodle at night, take two *atta* (wheat) *roshi* or two pieces of brown bread. (Azmi-Naeem Medical & Diagnostic Centre, 13 January 2014).
- (24) [ ... ] and the aromas of local coffee and out-of-the-oven ‘*roshi*’ infuse with freshly caught fish and tropical fruit. (The Somerset Hotel website, 2017).

Here, *gulha* is a small ball-shaped dumpling stuffed with a mixture of tuna, onion, grated coconut, and chili, *boakibaa* is a condensed-milk cake, *hedika* are finger-food snacks, *roshi* is the Maldivian flat bread.

Besides such borrowings, Maldivian English also reveals semantic shift, as in the case of *short eat* (in 25), reduplication (as in 26) and lexical

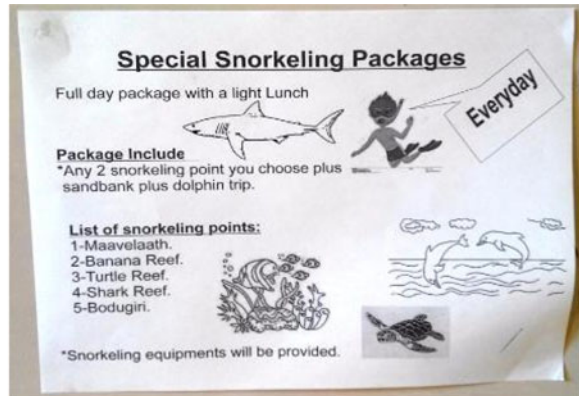


Figure 2. Pictures of a *hulhuashi* and local signage on Maafushi

items that are, today, somewhat archaic in British and American English (examples 27 and 28).

- (25) [ . . . ] they may be utilized as toilets, changing rooms, showers, *short eat venders* or a place to sells drinking water. (*Sun.mv*, 21 January 2013)
- (26) MDPs always say that they are always protesting peacefully!! but look at what they have done to our *small small* city. (Chweety's blog reply to *Sun.mv*, 1 March 2012)
- (27) While the challenge has only taken place *thrice*, Goidhoo won the title for the first competition held as well. (*vNews.mv*, 10 December 2014)
- (28) Highlighting the steps being taken to develop the health sector, the President clarified that *the needful* was being done to train personnel to work in the field, and to acquire the adequate facilities that were needed to provide sufficient services to the people. (The Presidency, 16 August 2015)

*Short eats* are finger food snacks, such as samosas or other filled pasty items, typically eaten with tea. Interestingly, *short eats* has recently been adapted by tourist restaurants to denote 'starters'<sup>9</sup>, such as Vegetable Spring Roll, Tuna Sandwich Served With French Fries, or Omelette. Note that generally the menu at these restaurants is multicultural, including Maldivian but also Asian and European dishes. Note also the spelling of *vendor*, which is *vender* in the above example.

As is the case with grammar, these particularities are not unique to Maldives. Archaic items have been documented in numerous post-colonial Englishes, particularly Indian English, and the same is the case for reduplication. In sum, Maldivian English shares several features with those Englishes spoken on the Indian subcontinent, but clearly is developing features that set it apart from them.

## Conclusion

English in Maldives currently presents itself as occupying two very prominent domains, education and business, leading to its being acquired and regularly used by large parts of the local population and thus establishing itself as the nation's second language. Given that Maldives is currently replacing expatriate teachers with locals, a nativised variety is on the verge of development, showing characteristic features of its own. Further research is clearly required to establish e.g. how English is making inroads into the daily lives of people from different social backgrounds, ages, genders and occupations and what characterises its uses at a more basilectal level. Besides deserving attention in its own right, studies of Maldivian English will also be illuminating at a more theoretical level. Maldivian English in its present state allows research to tap directly into those processes that shape second-language Englishes at such early stages of nativisation. Furthermore, Maldivian English makes possible not only



comparisons with the other varieties on the Indian subcontinent but also with those varieties that have developed in other post-protectorates.

## Notes

- 1 The nation's official name today is The Republic of Maldives, or Maldives. By contrast, 'the Maldives' refers to the islands in their geographical sense.
- 2 As of 26 December 2016, the Ministry of Tourism reports 122 resort islands (<http://www.tourism.gov.mv/facilities/resorts/?lang=resorts>). (The Tourism Yearbook 2016 reports 115 resort islands for 2015.)
- 3 The British were also stationed in Dhoonidhoo near Malé and in Haa Alif Kela in the very North.
- 4 See [www.billabonghigh.mv/working-at-billabong](http://www.billabonghigh.mv/working-at-billabong).
- 5 See [en.mihaaru.com/maldives-seeks-to-replace-expat-teachers-with-locals/](http://en.mihaaru.com/maldives-seeks-to-replace-expat-teachers-with-locals/).
- 6 The 2014 Census reports 63,637 foreigners residing in Maldives, i.e. 16% of the resident population. Of these, 88% are Malé and 40% live in Malé and 36% in non-administrative islands. The nationalities that dominate are Bangladeshi (58%), Indian (20%) and Sri Lankan (11%). This is different from what was the case a couple of years ago, both in terms of the overall number of expatriate workers and their origins. In 2008, expatriate workers made up 80,839, i.e. approximately 25% of the country's population. Until 2006, the highest number of expatriates came from India, but in 2008 (De Mel & Jayaratne, 2011: 212–3) workers from Bangladesh made up 48%, from India 28%, from Sri Lanka 12%, from Nepal 4% and 2% were from Indonesia.
- 7 As the monthly updates, also available from the Ministry of Tourism, reveal, figures vary across months: In January 2017, a total of 125,336 visited Maldives, of which 51.1% came from Europe, 40.7% from Asia, 0.7% from Africa, 4.4% from the Americas and 3.2% from the Middle East. From these areas, individual countries stand out, particularly China which accounts for 24.5% of all arrivals in the month, followed by Italy with 9.6%, the United Kingdom 6.9%, Germany 6.2%, Russia 5.5% and India 4.8%.
- 8 By 13 February 2017, the number of guest houses had risen further, to 396. (<http://www.tourism.gov.mv/facilities/guest-house/?lang=guest-house>).
- 9 See [www.eat.mv/roadha-menu/palace-sichuan-chinese-restaurant/](http://www.eat.mv/roadha-menu/palace-sichuan-chinese-restaurant/).

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