Modelling Variation in Singapore English

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A thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Trinity 2009

Abstract

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D.Phil English Language

Trinity 2009

THIS thesis seeks to shed light on the issue of sociolinguistic variation within the English spoken in Singapore. The variable usage of the co-existing Standard English and the localised vernacular, often called 'Singlish', has been explained in two major ways. The continuum hypothesis first formulated by Platt (1975) describes it as a seamless succession of sociolects, ranging from the standard to the basilect, Singlish. Speakers have at their disposal a given span of this continuum, depending on their position on a scale of educational attainment. In contrast to this approach, Gupta (1989, 1994, 2006b) views the situation as one of classic diglossia, where Standard English is H and Singlish is L. Alternative models have been proposed, usually based on either of these two approaches.

The empirical part of this thesis aims to provide quantitative data with which to select the model most appropriate for the Singaporean case. Thirty-six informants (average age 17.5 years) were drawn from three post-secondary schools stratified by academic requirements, and came in equal numbers from the country's three majority ethnic groups (Chinese, Malays, Indians). They were interviewed in four settings designed to trigger decreasing levels of formality: an individual interview, a dialogue recording, a task-based group recording, and an unmonitored radio-microphone recording. The variables investigated are Singlish's ubiquitous discourse particles, substrate-influenced aspect markers, existential constructions with *got*, and properties of the verb (inflexions, modals, and the copula).

Findings from the quantitative analysis show the need for a more qualitative-based approach, which in turn suggests that the traditional frameworks within which Singapore English was analysed, typically as consisting of two (or more) individual codes between which speakers alternate, need refinement. A model based on indexicality (Silverstein 2003, Eckert 2008) is shown as providing a better way of explaining the high levels of variation observed. Rather than alternating between homogeneous codes, speakers are seen as selecting features associated with a code 'Standard' and 'Singlish' in order to index social meanings. This approach, novel in the Singaporean context, provides a new and unparalleled explanatory power for variation in Singapore English.

For Marie

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Acknowledgements

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List of abbreviations and symbols used in this thesis

THE following is a list of abbreviations used in this thesis, excepting conventionalised ones such as *e.g.*, *i.e.*, etc. Glosses follow the conventions established by the Leipzig Glossing Rules[1] — those used herein are listed below, together with some that are not part of the Rules' original list. In accordance with the Rules, small capitals are used.

Abbreviations

C .... Chinese
CSE . Colloquial Singapore English
dia .... dialogue interview
i .... junior college
ii .... polytechnic
iii .... vocational training school
I .... Indian
ind .... individual interview
ITE .... Institute of Technical Education

JC .... junior college
M .... Malay
p.c. ...... personal communication
rm .... radio-microphone recording
RP .... Received Pronunciation
SgE .... Singapore English
SSE ... Standard Singapore English
StBE .... Standard British English
StdE .... Standard English

Glosses

1 .... first person
2 .... second person
3 .... third person
ACTL .... actual aspect
CLF .... classifier
COMPL .... completive aspect
DET .... determiner
DUR .... durative aspect
EXI .... existential aspect
EXP .... experiential aspect

HAB .... habitual aspect
INC .... inchoative aspect
NUM .... numeral
PFV .... perfective aspect
PL .... plural
PROG .... progressive aspect
Q .... question particle
RVC . resultative verbal complement
SG .... singular
TEN .... tentative aspect

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[1]Available from the website of the Linguistics Department at the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology (http://www.eva.mpg.de/lingua/resources/glossing-rules.php).

Symbols and transcription tags

* . . . . ungrammatical

? . . . . . questionable grammaticality

(***) . . . . indecipherable passage

(*. . .*) . . . . . . tentative transcription

<!. . .> . . . . opening tag

</. . .> . . . . closing tag

<!R> . . . . interviewer turn

<#> . . . . informant turn

<!ML> . . . . . . metalinguistic element

<!CO> . . . . comment

<!SC> . . . . code-switch to Mandarin

<!SM> . . . . code-switch to Malay

<!ST> . . . . code-switch to Tamil

<!RN> . . . . research notes

<!P> . . . . note on pronunciation[2]

Informant/recordings coding system

Each informant was assigned a code of the format 'ii.M.3.f', consisting of four elements:

ii=school (i=junior college, ii=polytechnic, iii=vocational school)

M=ethnic group (C=Chinese, M=Malay, I=Indian)

3=chronological number within the group of four

f=sex (m=male, f=female)

Thus the above identification code can refer to either the informant, or the recording of the individual interview with that informant. Codes for dialogue interviews indicate the school, the ethnic group, the type of recording, and the participants' numbers: 'ii.M.dia.23'. Group and radio-microphone recordings follow the same pattern: school, ethnicity, recording type — 'i.C.gr' (group), 'iii.I.rm' (radio-microphone).

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[2]In X-SAMPA. See footnote 18 on page 272 for more details.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Variationist models used to explain the interaction, in Singapore, between Standard English and the localised colloquial variety ('Singlish') have, over the years, included systems based on continua (of the type proposed by DeCamp 1971, e.g. Platt 1975, Platt and Weber 1980, Ho and Platt 1993, Pakir 1991) and on diglossia (in its classic form introduced by Ferguson 1959, see Gupta 1989, 1994, 2001); chapter 4 gives an overview of these approaches. Each of these models is based on empirical data collected in various ways. The aim of this thesis is to examine the two major types of models proposed for Singapore English (henceforth SgE), the continuum hypothesis and diglossia, and to find, by means of fieldwork *in situ* presented in chapter 2, empirical evidence for either of them. The outcome of the data analysis (chapter 5) shows the need for a different approach, taken in chapter 6, which relies on the more recent concept of indexicality (Silverstein 2003, Eckert 2008). Chapter 7 concludes by formulating a new indexical model that adequately explains SgE variation.

This first chapter gives the historical background against which the investigated variety emerged. A picture of the current linguistic ecology follows, as well as an account of previous research in the fields of phonology, lexicon and

grammar. I conclude this introduction with an overview of past and current models of sociolinguistic typology, applied to the Singaporean case.

1.1 A historical overview

1.1.1 Early and colonial history

Present-day Singapore is an island-state of approximately $680\,\text{km}^2$ located at the southern tip of the Malay Peninsula. Early written records name it *Pu Luo Zhong* (蒲羅中, from Malay *Pulau Ujong* 'island at the end [of the Malay Peninsula]', Savage and Yeoh 2005; 3rd century, Turnbull 1996), *Temasek* (from Javanese *Tumasik* 'sea town'; 14th century, Prapañca 1995:14.2, l. 3), and finally *Singapura* (from Sanskrit सिंह *siṁha* 'lion' and पुरम *puram* 'city'; 16th century, Brown 1983). This latter name became established and the island changed hands repeatedly, belonging in turn to the Śrivijaya thalassocracy, to the Javanese Majapahit Empire, to the Thai Kingdom, and to the Malacca Sultanate, when it was destroyed by the invading Portuguese in 1613 (Brown 1983:41, Turnbull 1996:4).

In the early nineteenth century, the Johor Empire founded a village on the site of Singapura. Aboriginal Malays (Orang Kallang and others) lived scattered over the island, but had limited interaction with the ruling classes. In early 1819, Singapore had around 1 000 inhabitants, among which were some 30 Chinese (Turnbull 1996:5).

On 28 January 1819, Sir Stamford Raffles, investigating possible locations for an East India Company station, anchored near Singapore. A treaty with the Sultan of Johor was signed on 6 February, leasing the island to the Company: modern Singapore was born. After disputes with the neighbouring Dutch were resolved, Singapore became a permanent British settlement under the direct
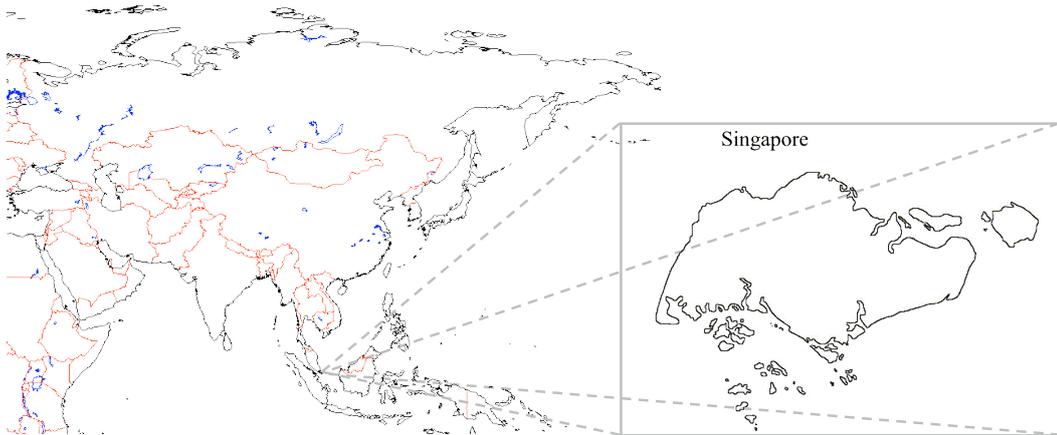
Figure 1.1: Map showing the location of Singapore within Asia. The city-state is located at the southern tip of the Malay Peninsula; it is sandwiched between Malaysia to the north and Indonesia to the south and south-west. The island is just 1°22′ north of the equator.

administration of Calcutta (Turnbull 1996). Before the Anglo–Dutch Treaty, colonial administrators in Singapore appealed to the existing colonies Malacca and Penang[1] for settlers and traders, promising a tariff-free port. A great many Chinese arrived early on, and by 1821, of the 5 000 inhabitants, 3 000 were Malays and over 1 000 Chinese (Turnbull 1996:13). Malays flocked in from the entire archipelago. Indians were mostly soldiers in the British Indian Army, but there were a few businessmen too, some from Penang and Malacca (1996:14). The first official census of 1824 reported 11 000 inhabitants, with the Malays still in the majority — three years later they were overtaken by the Chinese.

Between 1827 and 1836 the population almost doubled (Turnbull 1996:36) and in 1860 it stood at 81 000. The Chinese, representing 65 % in 1867, came predominantly from the southern provinces of Guangdong and Fujian. The Hokkien (Fùjiān) were the largest group and dominated commerce, followed by the closely-related Teochew (Cháozhōu). Cantonese and Hakka (Kèjiā)

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[1]Previously-established British dependencies on the west coast of the Malay Peninsula.

came mostly as labourers and craftsmen. More Indians arrived in this period, mainly from southern India, but also from Panjab, and at this time they formed the second largest group (Turnbull 1996:39–40). The Malays came third, and the Europeans formed a tiny minority, with fewer than 300 British, nearly all men who, however, held key positions in the civil service and business.

Singapore became a Crown Colony in April 1867, and in 1911 numbered over 185 000 inhabitants, of which almost three quarters were Chinese. Immigration continued, Europeans increased their numbers slightly; the Indians were the only ethnic group to see their number decline: most had used Singapore as a transitory port to seek employment in the neighbouring Malay States (Turnbull 1996), which had come under British rule with the Anglo–Dutch Treaty of 1824.

Under colonial rule, Singapore saw its education system develop slowly. At first, the authorities were only interested in providing teaching in Malay, which was seen as the only viable means of communication in the region — Chinese was divided into too many dialects,[2] and the Indians spoke many different languages. Leading positions in politics were reserved for Europeans anyway, and the few Chinese who became Justices of the Peace or members of the Legislative Council were wealthy and spoke English well, and consequently sent their sons to Britain for their studies. A number of privately-run schools offered classes in Hokkien, Cantonese and Tamil, but they had no government backing. English-medium instruction was largely the responsibility of Christian missionaries. Only the Raffles Institution provided secondary education

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[2]On the question about the dialect/language status of the various Chinese varieties, see DeFrancis (1986:53–67) and Ramsey (1987:16–17, 28–29), among others. Although speakers normally refer to them as dialects, they are often mutually unintelligible (Cheng 1996), and some (such as Cantonese) have their own standardised writing system. Ultimately, such naming issues are of a social, rather than linguistic, nature (Trudgill 1995). Therefore, and in accordance with linguists specialising in the field (Bao 2001, Tan 2003, among others), varieties of Chinese are herein called dialects. Although significantly different at the surface level, they share a core lexicon as well as a common grammar, and, therefore, 'form a homogeneous substratum' (Bao 2001:284).

in English; but the few Malay and Chinese classes it offered had to be closed down due to lack of funds and interest in 1894 (Wijeysingha 1963:97). It was only after the First World War, which left Singapore unaffected except for a quickly-subdued mutiny of its only regiment,[3] that education became more important, and by 1939, of the 550 000 inhabitants, 72 000 children were enrolled in school, of which 38 000 were in Chinese, 27 000 in English, 6 000 in Malay and 1 000 in Tamil schools (Doraisamy 1969:38).

The Japanese invasion on 15 February 1942 resulted in 3 years of occupation and the death of some 30 000. When Commonwealth troops retook Singapore and Malaya in 1945, it was a devastated city and although British rule was welcomed back, confidence in the colonial masters had been shattered. In April 1946, civil administration being restored, Singapore was again a Crown Colony, and Peninsular Malaysia became the Malay Union. The latter was modified into the Malay Federation in 1948.

At that stage, Singapore's population of 941 000 consisted of 78 % Chinese, 12 % Malays and 7 % Indians (Turnbull 1996:229, 234), a situation that roughly prevails today. The Singapore Improvement Trust was established — the future Housing Development Board — to better the situation for the thousands that were left in precarious housing conditions after the war. Education was stepped up, with the government finally acknowledging the demand for English-medium primary education. The University of Malaya was created in 1949, and a Teacher Training College was also founded. In 1954, the English-medium primary school intake was higher than the Chinese-medium one.

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[3]The Indian Army 5th Light Infantry, consisting solely of Panjabi Muslims, 'were bitter that the British were fighting against Muslim Turkey' (Turnbull 1996:126).
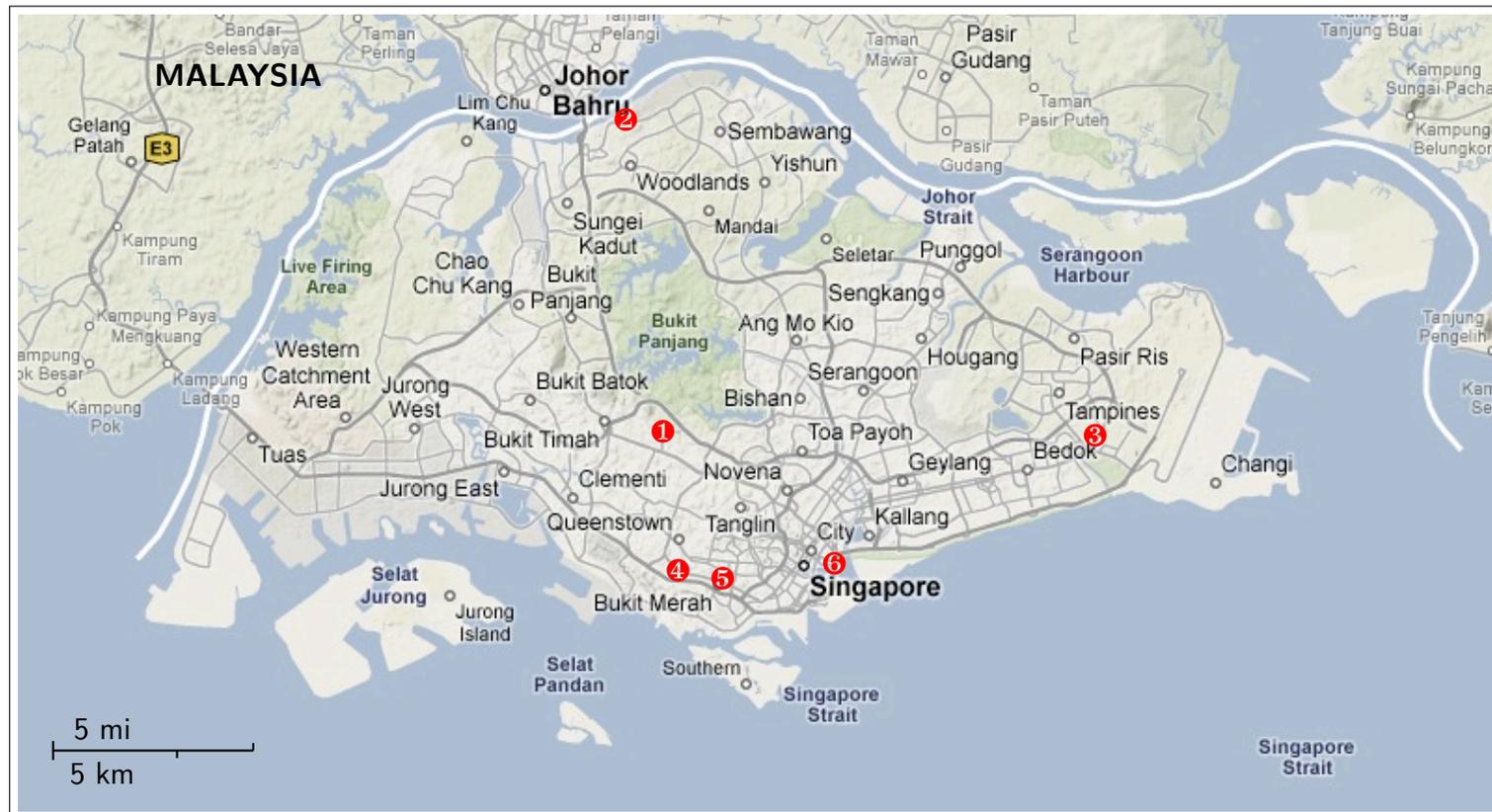
Figure 1.2: A map of Singapore, showing major highways and residential areas, as well as the three schools participating in this study (marked by ❶, ❷, and ❸). The Central Business District (❻) is just east of Chinatown. The highest population density is found in the CBD and adjoining areas, although settlements (Housing Development Board 'New Towns') exist all over the island. A nature reserve and water catchment area is located in the geographical centre of the country. For *Chao Chu Kang*, read *Choa Chu Kang*; the island labelled *Southern* is Sentosa. (Source: Google Maps 2009)

1.1.2 Self-government and independence

When the first elections were held in 1955, Lee Kuan Yew's People's Action Party (PAP) formed a coalition government which had to tackle a number of strikes and internal political and racial turmoil. After almost four years of agitation and negotiation, self-government was effective from 1959, with the PAP winning 43 of Parliament's 51 seats (Turnbull 1996:263).

In a referendum held in September 1962, Singapore voters agreed to the government's proposal for a merger with the Federation of Malaya. This was a short-lived experiment, which ended on 9 August 1965, when Singapore was ejected from the Federation and became independent again. Initial distress caused by the shock of being left alone, without an economic hinterland and natural resources, was overcome by successful policies, which soon attracted foreign investors. Singapore flourished, and the Malaysian episode was soon put behind.

The education system was developed, strongly emphasising pragmatic disciplines rather than the humanities. Racial relations were an issue, especially after serious riots in the sixties. Various schemes were introduced, among them an annual Racial Harmony Day which aims to promote mutual respect and understanding, and a quota system for public housing. The government introduced a massive public housing construction scheme, which now houses over 80 % of the population. Tenants own their flats which they buy at subsidised rates. Living conditions further improved with strong economic growth (averaging 8 % yearly between 1960 and 1999 (Singstat 1999)). This situation prevails, and thanks to efficacious policies, the Asian Crisis of the late nineties had only a minor impact on Singapore's growth. In 2005, real economic growth was still at 6.4 %, and GDP per capita (2004) at SGD 42 871 (GBP 15 012), which is second only to Japan in East Asia (IMF 2006).

1.2 Linguistic ecology

The aboriginal language, if Singapore can be said to have one, is Malay. Widely spoken in the area, Malay is the sole official language of Malaysia, and its dialectal and mutually intelligible sister Indonesian is Indonesia's official tongue.[4] Given the regional predominance of Malay (over 30 million speakers in the two neighbouring countries (Gordon 2005)), it may come as a surprise that in the 2000 Census, only 16.8 % of Singapore's population declared literacy in it (Singstat 2000c).

Singapore's Constitution gives Malay a special place: the Malays are regarded as 'the indigenous people of Singapore', and, therefore, their language deserves particular support and encouragement (Constitution: §152). Furthermore, Malay is officially designated as the 'national language' (§153A), which is different from the official language status that it also holds. In practice, this status as a national language means that Malay is the language of the national anthem and of drill commands in the army and other marching bodies. It is also part of the national coat of arms, which bears the motto *Majulah Singapura* or 'onwards Singapore' — and of the President's residence, which is called the *Istana*, 'the palace'.

'Malay, Mandarin, Tamil and English [are] the four official languages of Singapore' (Constitution: §153A). Technically, they all enjoy the same constitutional status, §53 also stating that they may all be used for debates in Parliament. Simultaneous translation during sittings is provided, but English as the working language of the government is used overwhelmingly.[5] All government websites are in English without any translation — except for some

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[4]The names given to the different varieties of Malay eloquently reflect their socio-political, rather than linguistic, difference: *Bahasa Malaysia* 'Malaysian language' in Malaysia, *Bahasa Indonesia* 'Indonesian language' in Indonesia, and *Bahasa Melayu* 'Malay language' or simply *Melayu* in Singapore and Brunei.

[5]Between 11 February 2006 and 20 September 2007, there were 641 questions asked in Parliament. Of these, 34 (5.3 %) were in Malay, 81 (12.6 %) in Mandarin, and just a single one (0.2 %) in Tamil (Parliament of Singapore 2007).

important information leaflets.[6] Unlike other countries with more than one official language, Singapore's legislation is entirely in English. The other three official languages are known as 'mother tongues'. Every ethnic group has one assigned to them, and they are taught it as a second language at school — since 1987 English has been the only medium of instruction for all groups. Thus all Chinese are taught Mandarin, all Malays Malay and all Indians Tamil as a second language[7] — in English.

Socially, Tamil plays a minor role: the fourth official language is used along with the others in warning signs on buses, in the information booklets mentioned above (MOH 2005b,a) as well as in announcements on MRT[8] platforms to 'stay behind the yellow line'. It is the main home language of only 3.15 % of the population (Singstat 2000a) and its fate seems sealed: since 1911, these figures have been dropping (Bao 2001:281) and nothing seems to indicate a change in this trend. One of the problems for Tamil is that the Indian community is fragmented. It encompasses linguistic and ethnic groups as diverse as Tamils, Telugus, Malayalees (Dravidian), Panjabis, Bengalis and Sinhalese (Indo–Aryan). Together, they amount to 8.26 % of the population; but their linguistic background makes Tamil a non-native language for a high proportion of them.

The Chinese, who represent over three quarters of the republic's population, are also a fragmented population, although less so. Most are of southern Chinese extraction, the majority originally hailing from Fujian Province (Hokkien, 福建) and Guangdong. Linguistically, the most sizeable dialect group is Hokkien (48 % of the dialect-speakers in Table 1.1), which is mutually

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[6]For instance the information booklets on measures to counteract infectious diseases (avian flu, SARS, dengue fever), which are made available in the four official languages (MOH 2005b,a). Generally, information pertaining to far-reaching government schemes is available in all four languages as well.

[7]Recently, this has been somewhat relaxed, with parents allowed to enrol their children for 'mother tongue' classes other than their assigned ethnic language.

[8]Mass Rapid Transit, Singapore's underground train system.

Mandarin	Other Chinese dialects	English	Malay	Tamil
34.99 %	23.80 %	23.03 %	14.08 %	3.15 %

Table 1.1: Language most frequently spoken at home (adapted from Singstat 2000a).

intelligible with Teochew (Cháozhōu, 潮州), the third largest group (21 %). These are both varieties of the Southern Min (閩南) dialect group. Other varieties include Cantonese, a sizeable community (24 %) which forms a distinct dialect group (Yuè, 粵), as well as Hakka (Kèjiā, 客家) (Bao 2001:282). Ancestral Mandarin speakers, however, have never been represented in any significant number (but see next paragraph). This has changed in recent decades, with the increasing immigration of Chinese professionals, but northern Chinese of the Mandarin dialect group still make up only a negligible proportion of the community.

Malay and Tamil, besides their status as official languages and as educational 'mother tongues', have received little encouragement from the government. The same cannot be said of Mandarin: launched in 1979, the 'Speak Mandarin Campaign' aims to promote the use of Mandarin among the ethnic Chinese. First directed at speakers of Chinese dialects, it later expanded to address English-educated Chinese too and encouraged them to use Mandarin in their everyday transactions (Speak Mandarin Campaign 2004). Critics have argued that in an attempt to unite the Chinese and to preserve their cultural identity, the campaign has actually severed cross-generational communication, with young Singaporeans having increasing difficulties communicating in dialect with their grandparents. Proponents of the shift point to the enhanced cross-dialectal communication, and not less importantly, to the improved position in commercial dealings with the emerging super-power China.

The campaign has been a success. The majority of Chinese have embraced Mandarin, and in the 2000 Census, 34.99 % of Singaporeans indicated it was

their dominant home language, outnumbering the other dialects which stood at 23.8 % (Table 1.1). Besides the emphasis on Mandarin in education (some schools offering bilingual programmes), many parents are generally supportive of the movement and speak Mandarin to their children. Mandarin has also replaced Hokkien as the lingua franca for everyday intra-Chinese transactions. This means that Mandarin, despite not being the language of immigrant Chinese, has become a native (or nativised) variety in Singapore. This shift within Chinese does however not entail a shift towards Mandarin culture (of course dialect groups, being much more than simple linguistic entities, each exhibit their own traditions and culture). Typically, the traditional[9] is now associated with 'the dialects', as opposed to Mandarin, a new variety, associated with modernity and openness (communication). Young Chinese tend to overlook differences between dialects, with which they are no longer familiar, using instead Mandarin and English, and a whole body of traditions is in danger of being forgotten — even where the awareness of these traditions is still present, uncertainty prevails as to the reason behind individual customs (Marie Koh, p.c. 18 March 2006).

1.2.1 The place of English

Ever since Raffles' arrival, English has had a privileged place in Singapore. As the language of the colonial masters, it was remote from the populace, who used Bazaar Malay (a pidgin form of Malay) as a lingua franca, and their own varieties within their community (Hokkien within the diverse Chinese). Provision for education was poor, and it was only slowly that schools, mainly in Malay and English, were opened by the government (Erb 2003:20). After the Japanese Occupation, however, enrolment in English-medium schools in-

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[9]'Traditions' in this setting refers to a wide array of cultural practices, including religious customs, associated with weddings, funerals, etc., as well as more everyday concerns such as superstitions based on dialectal homophony or age-old legends.

creased every year, reaching 50.4 % in 1962 (Platt 1975:366). In 1987, English was made the only medium of education, with the three mother tongues effectively taught as second languages. This move was a logical consequence of the fact that enrolment in Malay-medium schools had diminished substantially over time, and the last Tamil-medium school had closed three years earlier due to a lack of pupils (Gupta 1994:145–146). Recent calls for a return to providing Chinese-medium education have so far met with little action from the government (Gupta 1994:147), but various schemes for more advanced mother tongue training are seeing some success.

English, therefore, can be considered a main language in Singapore. As the language of politics, the courts and of education, its status is such that non-proficient speakers are significantly disadvantaged. It does not come as a surprise, therefore, that 23 % claim to use it as their dominant home language (Table 1.1). And this cannot be a result of interethnic marriage alone, which stands at 12.9 % of marriages (Singstat 2004). There must therefore be parents, who speak the same mother tongue, but who decide to use English with their children or between themselves. And this is not surprising, seeing that all the years they spent in schools meant daily conversation in English. Furthermore, many parents see English as an important language, and rightly so: as the medium of education and a central subject in schools, it is crucial to pupils' performance. This presents a further motivation to use English at home, at least with the children. One example of the position of English with young speakers is given by one of my informants (i.M.3.m), whose hobby is poetry writing on a blog. As a Malay, he has had Malay as a second language since starting compulsory schooling. Nonetheless, he prefers to write in English, for obvious reasons:

> 'I don't think in Malay. [. . .] My thoughts are mostly in English, so when I write [in Malay], when I want to associate words with my ideas, they tend to come out English first, then I translate into

> Malay. And so it's hard to get the smooth flow kind of writing in
> Malay. So I write my poems in English.'

The predominance of English over the other local languages can also be seen in less obvious domains. The Singapore Post, for instance, expects addresses to be written in English (more appropriately, in the Latin script — see below). Nonetheless, in a test carried out in summer 2005, Chinese-addressed letters reached their destination, notwithstanding Singaporeans who told me they would not have expected this (whether the same would work with the Tamil script is left for future research). A similar point can be made about the translation of place-names. All languages have contributed something to Singapore's toponymy: the aboriginal nature of Malay is apparent in its references to geographical features (*bukit* 'hill', *sungei* 'river', *telok* 'bay', *pulau* 'island', etc.), the many Chinese immigrants named their settlements in their dialects (Ang Mo Kio 'rambutan bridge' (Hokkien); Yew Tee 'oil pond' (Teochew)), and the British used 'imperial' names (Queenstown, Canberra Road, Victoria Crescent, Dover Road, Commonwealth Avenue, etc.). Few Indian toponyms remain, Dhoby Ghaut.[10] being a famous exception (Savage and Yeoh 2005:passim)

Translations or transliterations of place-names also show an interesting pattern. Every street in the Singapore Street Directory (Singapore Land Authority 2003) has been transliterated into Chinese. Translations of English place-names are usually quite consistent, with an accurate semantic rendering: Redhill Road is 紅山路, each character bearing the exact semantic content of the three English morphemes, and they are even in the same order. This is obviously to the detriment of phonemic resemblance, the Chinese being Hóngshān Lù. Jalan Mata Ayer is a road in northern Singapore with a Malay name (*jalan*

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[10] *Dhoby* means 'launderer' and a *dhoby ghaut* is the location where washing would take place (Savage and Yeoh 2005). Today it is the name of a major MRT interchange and its immediate surroundings.

'road'; *mata ayer* 'spring', lit. 'eye water'): its Chinese transliteration is *rĕlán mădá yàyì*, which may well display some phonemic similarity, but which bears no semantic content relevant to the original Malay word — *rĕlán*, which is consistently used for Singapore's *jalan*, does not refer to a road, path, or anything of the sort, other than by its phonetic closeness to the Malay original,[11] and *mădá yàyì* is equally nonsensical, *spring* being *quán* in Mandarin.

Perhaps the most striking example, however, is that of Redhill Road (Hóngshān Lù, marked by ❺ on the map on page 6), which lies not far off Jalan Bukit Merah (❹ on the same map). This latter road's Malay name means Redhill Road (*jalan* 'road', *bukit* 'hill', *merah* 'red')! It is translated into Chinese as Rĕlán Hóngshān. It would appear, then, that if in the 'English' (or rather, Latin-spelling) road name, there is a distinction between *redhill* and *bukit merah*, but in Chinese, both are translated as the same, then their equal semantics is highlighted in Chinese, but left opaque in 'English'. The Malay *bukit merah* thus becomes little more than a loanword in an otherwise SSE construction,[12] its meaning restricted to those with some knowledge of Malay.

The hierarchy of languages in Singapore is, therefore, quite clear. The language of international business, English, comes first, closely followed by Chinese, the 'mother tongue' of the majority and the language of economic potential. The national language Malay comes third: it enjoys a united speech community[13] (Singstat 2000c,a,b) but few real advantages from its exceptional

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[11]Pinyin ⟨r⟩ represents the phoneme /ɻ/, which is, arguably, similar to the Malay affricate /d͡ʒ/, spelt ⟨j⟩.

[12]It should be noted that while *jalan* is indeed Malay, it is found, in Singapore, as a 'classname' (Pullum 2007) combined with a multitude of languages: Jalan Kayu (Malay), Jalan Bukit Ho Swee (Malay and Hokkien), Jalan Seaview (English), etc.

[13]There are many ways in which this is true: 91.57 % of Malays speak Malay as their main home language, whereas only 45.1 % of Chinese use Mandarin and 42.95 % of Indians Tamil (Singstat 2000c). More strikingly, an incredible 99.55 % of Malays are Muslims: this is in stark contrast to the fragmented Indian and Chinese communities with 55.43 % Hindus and 53.58 % Buddhists, respectively (2000a).

Furthermore, and this is a somewhat delicate issue, a close analysis of the occupational categories listed in Singstat (2000b) reveals that while Chinese, Indians and the 'others' group all have more than one quarter of their workers in the two highest-ranking categories ('senior officials and managers' and 'professionals'), only 7 % of the Malay group do. Con-

legal status. Tamil fares worst, as it has a small base of speakers and does not benefit from government incentives as much as the other three.

1.3 Singapore English

This section outlines the genesis of Singapore English and a number of features typical of the variety. The inherent variation of SgE warrants a separate section (cf. page 28), in which I will consider various typological models that have been applied to it.

1.3.1 Genesis

English arrived in Singapore with the British East India Company in 1819. Singapore, at this stage, was nothing more than a tiny Malay trading settlement (cf. page 2). The modern city, therefore, is in fact English-founded. The colonial administration was conducted in English, but little was undertaken to increase English proficiency amongst the population. In fact, the mostly British civil servants were taught Malay throughout much of the early settlement days (Turnbull 1996:84). It was only after World War II, and more importantly after independence, that instruction in English became available to an increasing number of Singaporeans (cf. page 5).

Ho and Platt (1993) see the education system as the main contributor to the emergence of Singapore English.[14] In its early stages, English-medium education relied on teachers brought in from around the Empire: a few British

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versely, in the three lowest-ranking classes (manual labour and production), the Malays represent 38 % of the workforce, whereas the other three groups all feature with less than one quarter of theirs.

[14]Ho and Platt prefer the term *Singaporean English* rather than *Singapore English*, which is 'sometimes used in a pejorative manner to suggest a "substandard" variety of English' (1980:1). The inflected form is seen as more appropriate since it follows the style of native varieties (Australian English, British English, etc.). With due respect to these considerations, 'Singapore English' will be used herein, as it seems to be the accepted term in this field of study.

and Irish, but also an important number of Indians and Ceylonese (Ho and Platt 1993:6), which are still well represented in the profession. This might account for some of the Indian English features found in Singapore English, to which I shall turn later. The standard used in English-medium education was obviously British English, which is reflected in, for example, SgE's non-rhoticity.

Further and more fundamental influences on the education medium were the languages of those learning it: early on, few Malays were sent to English schools, with the result that few of its structural features were carried over into the emerging variety. Those lexical items that were transferred had their origin in Bazaar Malay, the pidgin which was used for inter-ethnic communication in the colony, and which itself had strongly Chinese-influenced structures (Ho and Platt 1993:8), or indeed in Baba Malay (Pakir 1986). This latter variety emerged among the first Chinese settlers in Malacca, probably where they intermarried with the local Malays. Their Hokkien-based, Malay-lexifier pidgin creolised to become the language of the descendants of these mixed marriages (Lim 1975:8, cited in Ho and Platt 1993:9). These Babas or Peranakans were among the first to embrace English as a home language, and very often also educated their children in English (Gupta 1994:41, Gupta 1998:108–113), which brought them into wealthy and influential positions (former Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew is a Peranakan).

The Indian influence, apart from that of the teachers mentioned above, was limited. Lexical loans are rare and limited to culture-specific terms, and substratal grammatical influence was nearly non-existent. A major reason for this is simply the number of speakers. Chinese and Malays greatly outnumbered Indians, and, therefore, the cross-ethnic variety that emerged was more highly Chinese-based.

1.3.2 Features: Phonology

The phonology of SgE differs across its sub-varieties (cf. page 28). At its most basilectal level, SgE has a regular system of five vowels plus schwa (Bao 1998:154–155). Length distinction is absent. This gives the repertoire illustrated in Table 1.2.

	Front	Central	Back
Close	i		u
Mid	ε	ə	ɔ
Open		a	
Diphthongs	ɔi ai au iə uə		

Table 1.2: Vowel system of Colloquial Singapore English (adapted from Bao 1998:154–155).

Length, as already noted, is not phonemic, but conditioned by the phonological environment: vowels are 'relatively short, except in open syllables' (Bao 1998:156). Thus *beat* and *bit* are both /bit/, but *bee*, being /bi/, is realised as [biː]. This can change when moving 'up' the mesolectal scale, though: /ε/ may split into /ε/ (for RP[15] /e/ and /æ/), /e/ (for RP /eɪ/) and /æ/ (for RP /eə/). Similarly, /ɔ/ may give rise to an additional /o/ (RP /əʊ/) (Bao 1998). SgE's five diphthongs (cf. Table 1.2) are phonologically identical to RP's, but phonetically much narrower, the two centering diphthongs particularly so.

In terms of consonants, the SgE repertoire is essentially the same as that of RP. Differences lie in the realisation of plosives, which are never aspirated in the basilect. Recent research has shown a correlation between sociolect and aspiration, with higher mesolects showing higher rates of aspiration (Leimgruber 2005:59). Final consonant clusters are usually reduced and single final consonants unreleased or glottalised (2005:59). SgE is generally non-rhotic, lacking linking and intrusive /r/ (Trudgill and Hannah 1994:135). Conversely,

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[15]The exogenous Received Pronunciation (Roach 2000, 2004) is used here for convenient comparison.

Tan and Gupta's (1992) research suggests a different picture, with a possible change in progress: some of their informants used non-prevocalic /r/, and more so when formality increased. Age correlated very closely with rhoticity, leading to their conclusion that a 'change [. . .] may be in progress' (Tan and Gupta 1992:39–40), at the expense of the non-rhotic variant.

The lateral approximant /l/ is often velarised throughout ([ɫ]), sometimes vocalising to [ʊ]. This can have consequences: by regressive assimilation, it can monophtongise the /aɪ/ in aisle, for instance, into [a]. When preceded by a nasal, /l/ tends to be deleted and /n/ palatalises to [ɲ] when the following segment is /i/ or /j/: thus *only* /onli/ > [oɲi] (Bao 1998:165) and *mainly* /mɛnli/ > [mɛɲi] (Leimgruber 2005:11). Word-final consonants are often devoiced, fricatives most consistently. Bao (1998:154) notes that dental fricatives are pronounced as labiodentals when word-finally (as in British th-fronting), but as dental stops pre-vocally: *health* is, therefore, [hɛlf], but *healthy* is [hɛl̪t̪i].

1.3.3 Features: Lexicon

A major feature of basilectal SgE is its stock of substrate-derived lexical items. Chinese languages have provided the strongest input, but Malay has also contributed significantly, due to its original status as a lingua franca in the colonial era (cf. pages 11 and 15). The Indian languages, however, have only left limited traces — and words designating cultural artefacts and practices or religious holidays, such as *Deepavali* (the Hindu Festival of Lights, of Sanskrit etymology), cannot be said to be restricted to CSE, or, indeed, SgE. Conversely, Malay borrowings designate items of everyday usage: *roti* 'bread', *barang-barang*[16] 'belongings, luggage', *makan*[17] 'food, to eat', *bodoh* 'stupid', etc. The same holds for Hokkien, which contributed *ang moh* 'Westerner' (lit. 'red hair'), *sh-*

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[16]Reduplication of nouns in Malay marks the plural.

[17]'In Malay "food" is makanan; makan means "to eat"' (Platt et al. 1983:15). In SgE, *makan* is both verb and noun.

iok 'exceptionally good', *kiasu* 'characterized by a grasping or selfish attitude arising from a fear of missing out on something',[18] *jia lat* 'terrible' (lit. 'sapping strength'), and many more. Cantonese had a lesser influence, but provided *sap sap sui* 'insignificant' (lit. 'water drops').

Another feature of CSE's lexicon is the use of English lexical items with a semantic field different to that of Standard British English.[19] These include *send* in 'I'll send you home' (to mean 'I'll give you a lift home'), *follow* in 'Can I follow your car?' (for 'Can you give me a lift?'), *keep* in 'keep the glasses, please' (for 'put away the glasses, please') and *on* and *off* as verbs in phrases such as 'on the light, please' or 'off the fan'. The verb *to renovate*, in SgE, refers to the action of furnishing, decorating, etc., an empty flat one has just acquired, and which may be brand new. The British meaning of this verb is found again in SgE *to upgrade*. *Upgrading* refers to government-funded renovation schemes in public housing estates, which can include the adding of lift shafts, and sometimes even additional rooms, to existing blocks of flats.

A third subset of the SgE lexicon is derived from English words which have since lost some currency in StBE: *spectacles* for *glasses* and *alight* as used in everyday conversation. Similarly, *to patronise* (a shop, etc.), is frequently used across the continuum of SgE, whereas in StBE it is much less used, and when then mostly in its condescending sense.

There is variation between CSE and SSE[20] with regard to the use of these lexical items. While the English items above are usually found in both, borrowed words are normally replaced: *makan* is unlikely to appear in any SSE utterance. This does not apply without exception, however: thus *blur* 'ig-

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[18]Definition from the *Oxford English Dictionary* (Simpson and Weiner 2000, draft entry March 2007, sense B.). Notwithstanding the order of the *OED* entry, the adjective is more common than the noun.

[19]I will use Standard British English (henceforth StBE) as the original exonormative model for ease of reference and comparison. Certainly in the early stage of SgE formation, this was the superstrate variety involved, and until very recently, any non-British Standard English was seen as 'mistakes' (Gupta 1986:80).

[20]Colloquial Singapore English and Standard Singapore English. See page 31.

norant, confused' is restricted to CSE, whereas the Hokkien *ang pow*, which would only be partially rendered by the English *New Year's gift*,[21] is perfectly acceptable in SSE.

1.3.4 Features: Grammar

As for phonology, the discussion on SgE grammar will be based on a comparison with StBE grammar. While we are indeed in the presence of a unique and rule-governed variety in its own right, it is a fact that SgE emerged from contact with British English, which functioned as the lexifier and as the exogenous norm aimed at in education. That said, there is wide variation across speakers and sociolects (a major point of enquiry in this thesis). I will, therefore, give an assessment of basilectal grammar here, as reported in previous research.

Tense

Tense, as the basic temporal distinction between past, present and future, is expressed in StBE by a modified verb form. CSE has its own rules for tense marking, and they typically involve the adverbial phrases *last time* and *next time*, marking the past and the future, respectively. The verb itself remains invariable.

Diachronically, it is unclear whether this occurred due to the loss of final *-ed* through the sound change introduced above (cf. page 17) or to a process of simplification during the initial period of contact, with tense inflexion never having been introduced into CSE. Both are plausible hypotheses, although when faced with the presence of past forms of irregular verbs, the latter loses some ground. For regular verbs, Deterding (2003:33) notes that 'we cannot tell

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[21]The *ang pow* (紅包, lit. 'red packet') is part of the Chinese New Year tradition. The small red envelopes contain money and are given to relatives to celebrate the Lunar New Year.

if this [loss of inflexion] is for syntactic reasons, because of the use of a present tense instead of a past tense, or for phonetic reasons, because of the omission of a final plosive'. However, the deletion of final alveolar plosives, being common even in careful BBC English (Deterding 2006), should perhaps be regarded as unsurprising. Whatever its origin, the fact remains that sociolects without inflexions need a way to distinguish tense: adverbials are the resource fulfilling this purpose.

The parallels with Chinese are striking. Chinese verb forms are invariable, and temporal clues are provided solely by context and, crucially, adverbs. Similar to English adverbs (*before*, *later*, *in future*, etc.), they are placed pre-verbally and give a relative time reference to the action/state/etc.

(1)   Wǒ yǐqiān lái   zhèlǐ.
       1SG before come here
       'I came here (before).'

Example (1) shows the use of *yǐqiān* to express the anteriority of the event. Similarly, in (2), we find *yǐhòu*, which indicates the future (where English has an auxiliary):

(2)   Tā yǐhòu yě   lái.
       3SG later also come
       'He/she will also come.'

SgE, then, uses adverbs with very similar results: verb forms remain (mostly) in their base form, and the adverbial phrases mark the tense. Compare the examples below.

(3)   I often come here last time.

(4)   Last time, in kampong, we are very poor, that's why we play with these
       stones. (Referring to a traditional game consisting in throwing stones
       in the air and catching them again, from Leimgruber 2005:16.)

While (3) is clear, albeit slightly odd, to the non-native speaker, (4) might result in misunderstandings for addressees unaware of the local context. The mention of *kampong* (Malay for *village*) explicitly puts the utterance into a historic context: there are very few villages left in Singapore, as most have been gradually replaced, since the 1960s, by public housing estates. They now only survive in the most rural areas of the island, as well as in the form of toponyms. In everyday discourse, they are often invoked as the setting of a romantic past, albeit often a less affluent one. *Last time*, therefore, admirably works as a past tense marking device.

(5)   Next time, when I grow up, I want to be a teacher.

Next time, as a future marker, is equally productive. Both it and *last time* refer, in StBE, to a discrete event that happened at least once prior to the utterance. Thus (5), while ungrammatical in StBE, is perfectly acceptable in CSE — the speaker only growing up once.

Aspect in Singapore English

Aspect, representing 'different ways of viewing the internal temporal constituency of a situation' (Comrie 1981:3), is used in an intriguing way in SgE. It has received some attention (Bao 1995, Bao and Wee 1998, Bao 2005), although general textbooks (Platt and Weber 1980, Ho and Platt 1993, Alsagoff and Ho 1998, Low and Brown 2005, Deterding 2007a) give a less thorough account, instead focussing on the English lexical items that have taken on aspectual values. The most recent account by Bao (2005) explains the SgE situation as one whereby the Chinese aspect system was transferred into the emerging variety, the lexifier filtering out those constructions that were not compatible with English surface grammatical rules.

		Chinese	**[SgE]**	**English**
(a)	Perfective			
	i. Completive	V *le*	S *already*	V-*ed*, V-*en*
	ii. Experiential	V *guo*	*ever* V	≈ *ever* V-*en*
(b)	Inchoative	S *le*	S *already*	-
(c)	Imperfective			
	i. Dynamic	*zài* V	V-*ing*	V-*ing*
	ii. Stative	*V zhe…*(*ne*)	≈ V-*ing*	≈ V-*ing*
(d)	Tentative	V-V	-	-

Table 1.3: Aspectual categories of Chinese, SgE, and English (adapted from Table 38 in Bao 2005:251).

As illustrated in Table 1.3, aspectual categories from Chinese are transferred into SgE, except in instances where the resulting construction would be ungrammatical in English: thus verbal reduplication is not productive in SgE, and in the completive, the aspect marker is sentence-final rather than postverbal. This, however, enables constructions to be transferred, which although grammatical in English, are not used with the Chinese aspectual meaning. Thus SgE features the inchoative and the experiential, which English lacks.

Attention is drawn to the fact that the lexical items functioning as aspect markers in SgE, while mostly used in accordance with the semantics of their English counterparts, reflect aspectual categories from Chinese rather than from English. The predominance of the substrate system's influence over the lexifier's is striking (notice the similarity to tense marking, cf. page 20).[22] Example (6) illustrates the case of the experiential.

(6) a. Wǒ dù-guo   zhè běn shū.   [Mandarin]
        1SG read-EXP this CLF book
        'I have read this book.'

     b. I ever read [riːd] this book.   [CSE]

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[22]The situation is somewhat complicated by the fact that Chinese complex aspectual categories are not accounted for in this model. It seems that the lexifier filters these out since the Chinese system of suffixation of directional morphemes (Xiao and McEnery 2004) is incompatible with English grammar.

    c.   I have read this book.   [SSE]

Thus the transferred categories, which will serve as linguistic variables in this study, are the six following aspectual categories: completive (SgE *already/finish/got*, Chinese *le/wán/yǒu*), experiential (*ever*, *guo*), delimitative (reduplication), inchoative (*already*, *le*), progressive/dynamic (V-*ing*, *zài*), and habitual (*always*). Their exact distribution will be investigated in sections 2.2.1 and 3.1. For now, suffice it to say that these variants are the CSE equivalents to SSE constructions. In the course of data analysis, situations expressed aspectually will be assigned to either one or the other of these sub-varieties, on the basis of the aspectual construction used.

Copula deletion

BE-deletion has been investigated in a number of varieties (DeCamp 1971, Baugh 1980) and is thought to be common in creoles (Sebba 1997), although many non-creole languages also exhibit this feature (such as Chinese and Japanese, to name but two). In SgE, variable BE occurrence was given a whole chapter in Ho and Platt (1993). Their findings suggest strong environmental influence. Favouring the insertion of BE are preceding 1SG and 3SG (cf. (7)), and following nominals and locatives. Copula deletion was most prominent after pronouns (1PL, 2, 3PL) and nominals, as well as before adjectives and V-*ing* (Ho and Platt 1993:53–55).

(7)   He so clever one.

(8)   I still sleeping. (Ho and Platt 1993:64)

This is relevant in that it co-occurs significantly with progressive constructions (as in (8) above), where StBE requires BE. As we will see in section 2.2.1, there are situations where SgE uses V-*ing* to mark aspectual categories that would

not take the progressive in StBE, making the use or non-use of the copula a diagnostic marker of the utterance's location on the lectal scale.

Plural marking

Creoles, it is well known, do generally not mark plurals inflexionally. The same holds true for Chinese (cf. (9) below), where plurality is expressed by means of numerals (followed by classifiers) — the noun remains in its base form regardless of the number associated with it.

(9)   a.   Tā yǒu liú běn shū.
           3SG own six CLF book
           'He/she owns six books.'

      b.   Tā yǒu yī běn shū.
           3SG own one CLF book
           'He/she owns one book.'

      c.   Tā yǒu de shū hěn duō.
           3SG own DET book very numerous
           'He/she owns many books.'

Plurals in SgE are variably marked, least so if 'it is clear from the context, from shared knowledge, or from general knowledge that several items are being referred to' (Ho and Platt 1993:20). The semantic-syntactic environment plays a major role, too: the highest marking rates occur 'where there is a quantifier which co-occurs *only* with count nouns' (Ho and Platt 1993:23, emphasis in the original). The English rule of plural-marking, noted by Bickerton (1981:149) as 'a straightforward distinction — one/more than one', needs to be put into perspective: many determiners that can be applied to both count nouns and mass nouns (*all*, *some*, *most*) 'are sometimes followed by nouns marked for plurals and sometimes not' (Ho and Platt 1993:24). The mere existence of

mass nouns, which do not take the plural morpheme even though they refer to more than one item (e.g. *luggage*, *furniture*), complicates the seemingly simple picture, and this makes it more difficult for language acquirers to internalise the rule.

Notwithstanding the semantic-syntactic environments mentioned above, research by Ho (reported in Ho and Platt 1993:24–26) indicates that the level of education has the most effect on marking rates, with almost consistent marking for tertiary-level educated informants. A third element conditioning plural marking was the preceding phonetic environment: a word like *months*, for example, is much more likely not to be marked than others ending in a vowel — a fact that is not limited to SgE (Roach 2000:142–143).

Topic-prominence

Topic-prominent languages feature the object of the sentence at the beginning of the sentence. In other words, they exhibit an OSV syntax. This is the case with Chinese and Malay (Tan 2003), as well as with SgE (Alsagoff and Ho 1998). According to Tan (2003:6), this word-order 'cannot be viewed as being derived from other sentence types; rather, topic-comment sentences should be regarded as basic'. He gives (10) as an example of Chinese topic-prominence, and (11) as an example from SgE:

(10)   Zhè běn shū   wǒ qú nián dú-guo.
        this CLF book 1SG last year read-EXP
        'I read this book last year.'

        (Tan 2003:6)

(11)   Stories I can't remember. (Tan 2003:8)

This latter example is an outright calque on the Chinese structure. The topic is established first, and subsequent elements refer to this initial topic. This

emphasis on the topic can also be further exploited if, in a subsequent turn, the topic can be elided: thus an afterthought to (12) could well be 'But I like', with no object. This is found in Chinese, too, where a rule of topic NP deletion applies, which 'operates across discourse to delete the topic of a sentence under identity with a topic in a preceding sentence [resulting in] a topic chain' (Huang 1984:549). Thus topic-prominence can be seen as operating at both utterance and discourse levels: it comes first, and once it is established, it remains the default topic referred to.

From personal observation, however, it seems that most CSE speakers who exhibit topic-prominent structures insert a break or a discourse particle between the topic and the SV clause. This sets the topic apart from the sentence, and puts it into a truly prominent position. Often the topic ends with a rising intonation.

(12)   Christmas — we don't celebrate because we are not Christians. (adapted from Tan 2003:8)

Discourse markers

Sentence-final particles are widely used in CSE, but due to their salience, they are not generally part of SSE speech. Their function is of a pragmatic nature, and misuse by non-native speakers is often a source of hilarity to Singaporeans. Wee (2004:125–126) gives a summary of the most widely recognised particles, of which the most salient are *lah*[23] (the most stereotypical; expresses the speaker's mood or attitude and appeals to the addressee to accommodate to this mood, as in (13)), *what* (indicates contradiction and obviousness,

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[23]The spelling of the particles is subject to controversy, some authors preferring the more phonemic ⟨la⟩ rather than ⟨ah⟩, which seems to be the Singaporeans' favoured version. Attention is drawn to the non-rhotic spelling of *lor*. See section 2.2.2 (page 53) for a discussion of these spellings.

see (14)), *meh* (scepticism), *leh* (tentative suggestion or request), *lor* (obviousness or sense of resignation) and *hah* (question marker).

(13)   Don't go to work, lah. (Low and Brown 2005:177)

(14)   A: Can I have some pins ah?

         B: Notice board got pins what.

         (Wee 1998:192)

CSE speech draws heavily on them, as they add useful pragmatic content to an utterance. It is often suggested, for example, that a flat refusal 'no' is much ruder than a mitigating 'no lah' (Wee 2004:113). There are conflicting views on the sources of the various particles — *what* seems clearly English (in phonetic form and spelling, at least); *lah* could have counterparts in both Malay and Hokkien, the others are generally attributed to Hokkien (Wee 2004) or Cantonese (Lim 2007). Discourse particles will be dealt with more extensively in section 2.3 (page 60).

There is an invariant question tag in most of SgE's continuum, *is it.* It is used in much the same way as the British English *innit*, as exemplified in (15), although differences exist (Wong 2008).

(15)   They went home, is it?

1.4   Variation and typological issues

Since the first book published on SgE (Tongue 1974), it has been apparent that the speech community under investigation is not a homogeneous one. Initial descriptions of variation were of a prescriptive nature (basilectal speech being decried as 'frequent sub-standard forms' in Tongue 1974:lll), but subsequent researchers took a more enlightened approach. The seminal article by Platt

(1975) on the nature of this variation introduced the important concept of the continuum that is still being used today. More recent researchers (Gupta 1989, 2001) see Singapore's speech community as diglossic, whereas others regard variation as reflecting language learning proficiency (Pakir 1991).

1.4.1   Platt's creoloid hypothesis

Platt (1975) introduced the term *creoloid*, which is to be applied to a variety that matches the following criteria:

1. It has similar structural variables to post-creoles based on the same 'standard' language.
2. It did not develop from a pidgin but by some other process.
3. It developed from the transference of features into the 'standard' language from the languages of several (sometimes unrelated) ethnic groups.
4. The superordinate language is usually only one of the official languages.
5. It is used as one of several 'native' languages by the speech community.
6. It is usually also used as lingua franca in inter-ethnic group communication within the speech community where it is one of the sub-varieties.

(Platt 1975:372)

A 'multilingual society,' Platt continues, 'where an attempt has been made to tolerate or even further the existence of several national languages side by side' (1975:372–373), would provide the ideal setting for such a variety to emerge — in short, a place like Singapore.

In his analysis of variation within the variety, Platt sees SgE as consisting of a number of lects, positioned on a continuum ranging from a basilect to an acrolect. As in Jamaica (DeCamp 1971), different lects may be used by
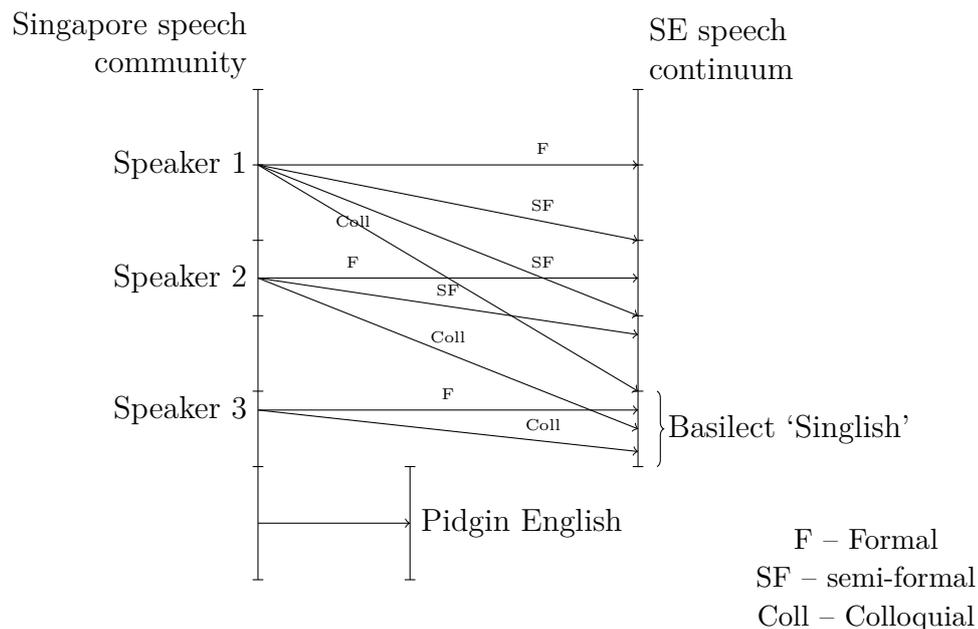
Figure 1.3: 'Relation between socio-economic factors and the usage of sub-varieties of [SgE] available to a speaker' (Platt 1975:369).

the speaker to interact in different social environments. The speaker's 'position on the continuum, coupled with socio-economic and educational factors, [determines] the number and types of sub-varieties which are at his disposal' (Platt 1975:369) (see Figure 1.3). The 'higher' a sociolect the speaker achieves, the wider his range of available lects: while not everyone masters SSE (the acrolect), all SgE speakers are assumed to be able to use CSE (the basilect) when deemed appropriate. The example Platt gives is that of university students who converse in SSE with their lecturers, but use CSE to address a waitress, the latter only having CSE at her disposal.

This model accounts well for variation within SgE: SSE speakers do not indeed stick to their acrolect when conversing about mundane matters, and the idea of the speaker sliding up and down the sociolectal scale according to the situational setting is particularly well-suited to explain the large variation found within SgE. Its shortcomings are that not all speakers of SgE are, in fact, proficient in the basilect. This may be a recent development, but reports

of English-educated Singaporeans struggling to understand it (Hussain 2006) point to the weaknesses of this model.

1.4.2 Diglossia

Anthea Fraser Gupta applies 'Ferguson's use of diglossia' (1994:7) to Singapore: Charles Ferguson (1959) uses the term *diglossic* for a speech community in which there is a superposed (H) variety, which is learned through formal education rather than acquired natively. This H variety is used in written and formal contexts and is in complementary distribution with the everyday L variety, which is the normal code for communication in the community. In Gupta's model (2001), Standard Singapore English (or SSE) is H, and Colloquial Singapore English (CSE, or 'Singlish') is L. While she does not assume that everyone speaks H, she accounts for variation as a function of switching between H and L, the speaker being aware of doing so and exploiting it for functional purposes.

This explanation is attractive, firstly because it shows variation as a matter of personal choice (Low and Brown 2005), rather than as a function of a speaker's educational level (cf. Platt 1975), and secondly, this is how Singaporeans typically perceive SgE themselves: 'Singlish' versus 'Good English'. Equally, it stresses the fact that SgE is acquired natively, rather than via the school system, as used to be the case. However, explaining variation as the result of mixing of two codes is problematic: diglossic speech communities do not normally code-switch between H and L intrasententially, the two codes being distributed functionally. Ferguson's definition, on which Gupta (1994) bases her analysis, states clearly that H 'is not used by any section of the community for ordinary conversation'[24] (Ferguson 1959:435).

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[24]This is certainly true of speech communities such as those of Czech and Swiss German, for instance.
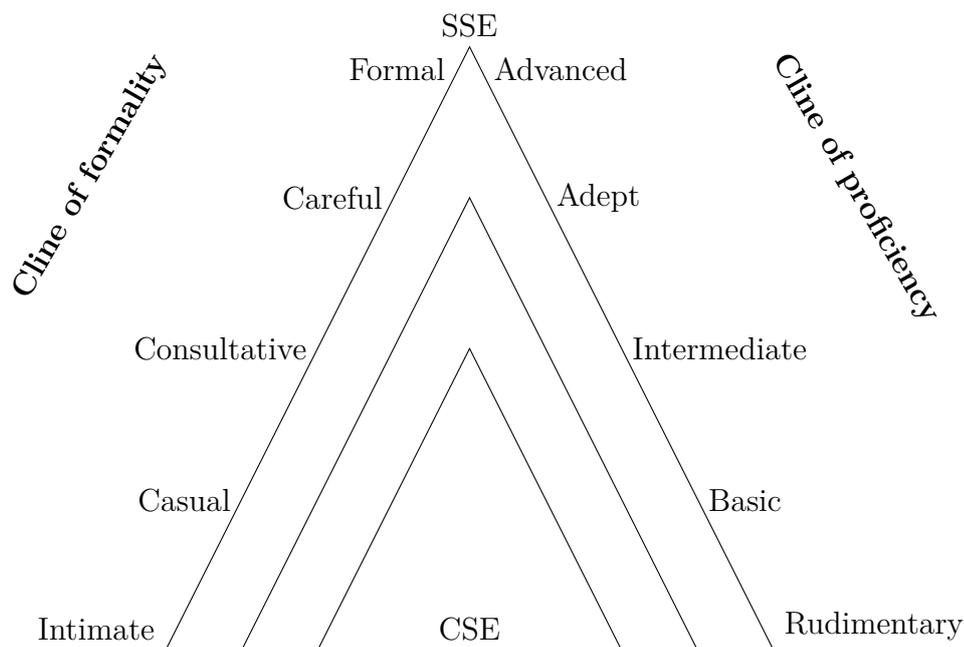
Figure 1.4: 'Expanding triangles of English expression' (Pakir 1991:174).

1.4.3 Alternative models

Pakir (1991) proposes a different model to describe the English of 'English-knowing bilinguals'. She sees SgE varying in two dimensions: formality and proficiency. In Figure 1.4, Standard (Singapore) English is at the top, CSE at the bottom. The triangles reflect that speakers who are more proficient in English have a wider array of styles at their disposal. Speakers with the largest triangles will be able to shift 'downwards' and use CSE for various purposes. Speakers with fewer years of education (Pakir's diagnostic indicator of proficiency) will have access to a smaller range of stylistic variation. In other words, ability to style-shift is again tied to education. This is in fact not very much different from Platt (1975), except that she calls his 'lectal continuum' a 'cline of proficiency' — education remains the main diagnostic feature.

Poedjosoedarmo (1995) modifies Pakir's (1991) triangles model, and uses the labels acrolect, mesolect and basilect. However, (see Figure 1.5) she places the triangles in such a way that their bases do not match, which prevents

RP Pronunciation [media & some professionals in formal daily speech]

American Pronunciation [media announcers on game shows and some sports & music shows]

ACROLECT

Syntactically & lexically standard with local pronunciation features

Cline of formality

Cline of proficiency

Stylistic range for educated speakers

Colloquial style for many educated speakers. Primary code in English for secretaries, some taxi drivers, etc. Distinctive syntactic & lexical as well as pronunciation features

MESOLECT

BASILECT

Pidgin form: uneducated speakers of other languages use this for inter-ethnic communication

Figure 1.5: Modified triangles (Poedjosoedarmo 1995).

acrolectal speakers having the full range of the mesolect. Her basilect, which she puts on the same level as a 'pidgin form' used by speakers of other languages, directly connects, with its summit, to the mesolectal triangle's base. Low and Brown (2005) recognise that this is problematic in that it suggests that neither acrolectal nor mesolectal speakers ever use the basilect, which, however, they seem to do, if only for humorous purposes.

1.5 Conclusion

This introductory chapter has given background information that will be of importance with reference to the issues central to this thesis. The historical approach taken in the first half of the chapter sets the variety under investigation into socio-historical perspective; this is important for chiefly sociolinguistic research. The diachronic account of SgE and its defining features provide

a background against which the more detailed investigation of the following chapters will be more easily discerned. Finally, the variety of models proposed for the definition of SgE already point to the main endeavour of this thesis: the selection of one of these based on the outcome of empirical research.

Chapter 2

Methodology

Tʜᴇ methodology used for this study has a lot in common with previous studies of SgE, primarily in its reliance on the education system as a source of informants (see e.g. Pakir 1991, Chew 1995), where others relied on corpora (Deterding 2003, Bao 2005, Bao and Hong 2007) or on observation in informants' homes (Kwan-Terry 1991, Gupta 1994, Bokhorst-Heng et al. 2007). Similarly, the use of sociolinguistic interviews in the Singapore context is not new (Platt and Weber 1980, Ho and Platt 1993, Bokhorst-Heng et al. 2007). The internal structure of the interviews, however, is (see section 2.1.5 below), even though they use, of course, a lot of the methods pioneered in early sociolinguistic works (Labov 1966, Trudgill 1974).

The chapter is divided into three main sections: the first deals with the methodological context of the data collection, including the criteria of selection for informants, and the recording process. The second section investigates the variables under investigation, explaining which linguistic variables were chosen, and why it became necessary to include some that were not covered by the initial project. The chapter concludes with an account of how the data was collected, how cooperation with participating schools developed, and how the individual informants reacted to the whole process.

2.1 Methodology

2.1.1 Evolution of the methodological framework

This section deals with changes in procedure that occurred in the initial stages of the fieldwork. The plan for data collection had to be revised after a number of problems arose: administrative issues were a prime factor, which slowed down the interview process, delaying its completion by almost a year. I here outline the extent of these problems and the nature of the modifications undertaken.

The initial plan

The initial methodological framework proposed for the fieldwork to be carried out in the second half of 2006. It consisted of a series of interviews with some 36 secondary school pupils, distributed equally over three educational groups and the three major ethnic groups (Chinese, Malays, and Indians). Pupils would have been gathered from the penultimate secondary class (locally known as Sec 3, age range 14–15), in order to avoid exposing them to undue pressure during the examination-loaded last year (which features the GCE 'O' Levels examinations). Socio-economic background, considered by many a central factor affecting linguistic variation (in particular for the SgE case; see Platt 1975, Bokhorst-Heng et al. 2007), was taken to be reflected in academic achievement (an assumption shared with e.g. Pakir 1991, Poedjosoedarmo 1995, Alsagoff 2007, see 2.1.2 on page 39): some sort of ranking was, therefore, necessary to identify which school the informants were to be drawn from. Since league tables do not exist as such in Singapore, I gathered the average PSLE results of the secondary school intake of 2005 (being that of the student population under scrutiny), also termed the average PSLE aggregate, from the MOE website. This enabled a simple ranking of all 156 secondary schools of the country,

which was then divided into three bands of 52 schools. From each band, one school was randomly chosen.

But no fieldwork goes without its share of hiccups. Poor planning meant that I trusted information from local researchers, who assured me I simply needed to approach principals and ask them to let me interview their pupils. Once on site, numerous e-mails were sent out to the various schools chosen. Some did not reply, others were noncommittal, others rejected the idea outright. It was only after several weeks of persistent e-mails and telephone calls that one principal kindly pointed out that the project needed an official endorsement by the Ministry of Education. The latter, once contacted, asked me to fill in an application form, which, once submitted, was rejected on the basis that their quota for studies in their schools had been reached for that year. At this point, it was clear that I needed a new plan in order not to completely waste my half-year's stay in the country.

The new plan

'Government schools', therefore, were out of bounds for the rest of 2006. The Singapore system recognises a number of 'independent' and 'government-aided' schools existing side by side with the schools which are under the complete authority of the Ministry of Education (henceforth MOE). They all share certain aspects of the curriculum, 'government' and 'government-aided' schools having no say in curriculum layout (the latter enjoying less official funding). 'Independent' schools are totally independent in that they can hire the teachers they want, receive no government funding, and have a large share of autonomy in curricula design. To conduct research in these latter schools, no MOE approval is required. They have, however, a more exclusive character, and tend to attract the more able students: in the PSLE aggregate ranking discussed

above, all independent secondary schools fell into the upper third. This was not a viable alternative.

It was, therefore, decided to focus on post-secondary students: there the share of MOE involvement is less drastic. After secondary school, a number of options are open to Singapore pupils: they can join the workforce, do vocational training, enrol at a polytechnic, or go to junior college (which teach the GCE 'A' Levels[1]). Of these, only junior colleges (henceforth JCs) are under direct MOE management, and require ministerial approval for research conducted within their school.

The rationale for the choice of three types of schools, to represent three socio-economic classes, is explained in more detail in section 2.1.3 on page 41. The three types of institutions selected for the study were the national vocational training institute (known locally as the Institute of Technical Education or ITE, which comprises three colleges), one of the five polytechnics, and one of the seventeen junior colleges. These institutions include the vast majority of secondary school graduates (83.8 %, MOE 2006). Ministry clearance was sought for recordings in junior colleges the following year, and granted a month later (see section 2.1.2 on page 39 for implications in informant selection). A number of polytechnics were contacted, as well as an ITE college, and soon enough, two institutions agreed to let me in.

The interviews were conducted on 20 and 21 September and 31 October 2006 in the ITE in Simei (east, ❸ on the map on page 6), and on 7, 8, and 10 November 2006 in a polytechnic in Woodlands (north, ❷). Once I was back in Oxford, junior colleges were contacted for recordings in the summer of 2007, and after seven refusals, one (located centrally, ❶) agreed to take part in the study. Interviews there took place on 25 July and 1 August 2007.

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[1]Singapore–Cambridge General Certificate in Education, 'Advanced' level.

Prior to embarking on the fieldwork, the research project had had to be subjected to approval from the Oxford Central University Research Ethics Committee (CUREC). All materials (questionnaire, methods, and consent form, see Appendices I–III) were deemed appropriate and clearance[2] was given before the beginning of fieldwork.

2.1.2 Informants

Informants were selected from a population that represents a cross-section of the speech community in terms of socio-economic group (reflected by the type of school attended), ethnicity and family background: students in post-secondary institutions. By selecting a single age-group (16–17 years, i.e. 1st post-secondary year), a more easily comparable sample could be obtained, by removing the age variable so important in Singapore (Ho and Platt 1993, Low and Brown 2005, Alsagoff 2007). English being the medium of education and the language generally associated with school, students of this age range, who have had nine or ten years of schooling in the language, and who will probably have more, are at a stage where their use of the variety peaks, and adolescents are generally accepted to be influential actors in language change (Rampton 1995, Kerswill 1996, Aitchison 2001). Furthermore, I hoped that at this age, there would be fewer inhibitions about speaking openly, even to a stranger.

A question arose when it came to grouping informants: with an equal distribution in terms of ethnicity, would it be better to use mixed groups or groups based on race?[3] The advantage of mixed groups would be a lower

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[2]CUREC (Social Sciences Subdivision) clearance ref. SSD/CUREC1/06–031.

[3]The term *race* does not have, in Singapore, the negative connotations it has in other parts of the English-speaking world, and is used as an interchangeable synonym with *ethnicity* or *ethnic group*. These latter two, although occasionally used in this thesis, are not very common in Singapore; the respective information on ID cards, passports, and all official documents is invariably termed *race*. One's race, as defined by the Immigration and Checkpoints Authority (the bureau issuing inter alia birth certificates and passports), is determined by paternal ancestry: thus a child with an Indian father and a Malay mother is Indian, even if all women in her ancestry are non-Indian. Four racial categories are de-

likelihood of observing code-switching; this is however offset by the slightly artificial setting of inter-ethnic communication, likely to result in more formal speech. Single-ethnic groups, on the other hand, would be more prone to code-switching; conversely, speakers might feel more at ease with peers from their own ethnic group, thus reducing formality. Avoiding code-switching was seen as important, largely because this study focuses on Singapore English and not on the other official languages. Switching is a central aspect of Colloquial Singapore English (cf., inter alia, Chua 2001, Lee 2003), as it is of most contact linguistic situations (Myers-Scotton 2002, Siebenhaar 2006); indeed, as a local researcher puts it, 'if you don't switch, something's wrong with you' (Aman, p.c. 26 June 2006). However, despite the fact that switching is extremely common and very much the unmarked code, this is not true in the school setting, and it would be very surprising to observe much of it, at least when I am present (Bao, p.c. 20 July 2006). Even during the unmonitored recordings, there would be awareness of the microphone, and, therefore, little switching would be expected (Bao, p.c. 20 July 2006). The one group–one ethnicity principle was thus retained, as it creates a more familiar setting, which, again, might help to make the situation less formal.

Another problematic point was encountered when it emerged that data collection was going to be taking place over a period of two years: the question was whether to carry on, in summer 2007, with recordings of students from the same cohort as those that had been recorded in 2006, who would now be in their second year. This would have meant that the age variable and the stage of schooling were less important than the year of birth, and by extension the year of the start of schooling. However, it has been pointed

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fined: Chinese, Malay, Indian, and Others. Second-level racial categories include Hokkien, Teochew, Cantonese, etc. (under 'Chinese'), Javanese, Indonesian, Boyanese, etc. (under 'Malay'), Tamil, Panjabi, Bengali, etc. (under 'Indian'), and Eurasian, Arab, Japanese, etc. (under 'others'), the latter category applying to anything not covered by the other three (Singstat 2001:191–192). Eurasians present an interesting case: they are the descendants of the mixed European (primarily Portuguese) and Asian marriages of early colonial times; currently however, only children of Eurasian fathers are considered as such.

out (Platt 1975, Pakir 1991, Poedjosoedarmo 1995, and many others) that the education system plays a vital role in the formation of Singapore English, correlating academic achievement with socio-economic status[4] and proficiency in the variety. It was thus decided to maintain school year as the primary variable of informant selection: students from their first year of junior college would be compared with students from their first year in vocational training school and polytechnic, even if these were one school year apart. Conveniently, this choice prevented clashes with institutions' and students' interests, as it focussed on first-year students rather than finalists, who might have been too busy preparing for their 'A' Levels to oblige me.

2.1.3 Selection of institutions

The educational landscape of the Republic makes a three-tiered post-secondary selection simple. After secondary school, 83.8 % of students carry on with some sort of training. They have three options: the top 26.1 % (MOE 2006:xii) proceed to junior college, a pre-university institution that awards the Singapore–Cambridge 'A' Levels after two years of study. The second option is one of the five polytechnics: they are chosen by 34.9 %, and offer three-year diploma courses, with the possibility of pursuing higher degrees afterwards. The third option is the Institute of Technical Education (ITE), the vocational training institute: it awards a certificate after a two-year course, and is subdivided into three Colleges; 22.9 % of secondary-school leavers take this option.[5] This distribution of students can be further subdivided according to the proportion of post-secondary students per type of school. Thus junior colleges make up for

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[4]According to Wendy Bokhorst-Heng (p.c. March 2006), there is a very clear, statistically significant correlation between socio-economic status and academic achievement. Research results are available but currently embargoed by the MOE.

[5]An important advantage of the Singapore system is that it is highly permeable: students almost always have the possibility to further their studies, if they fulfil certain requirements. Thus an ITE graduate may proceed to polytechnic, and a polytechnic student to university, if the necessary grades are achieved.
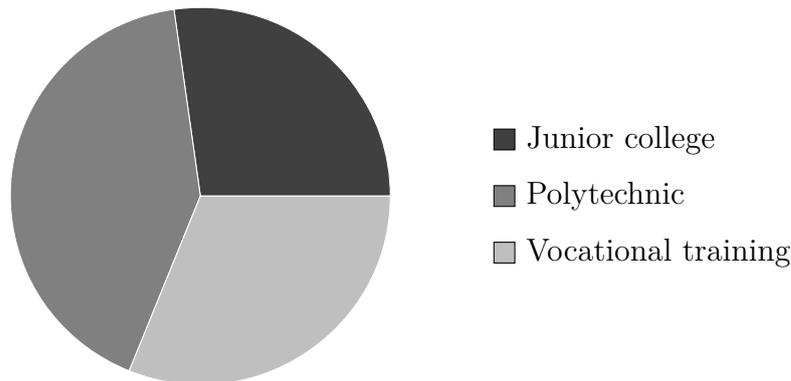
Figure 2.1: Post-secondary enrolment in 2005 (data from MOE 2006:xii).

31.1 %, polytechnics for 41.6 %, and the ITE for 27.3 % (see Figure 2.1). This near-equal distribution (with a standard deviation of 7.4) just about justifies the use of equally-sized samples from these three categories.

There is obviously some variation from one individual institution to the other: certain courses are only offered at certain polytechnics, for instance, and higher certificates are not available at every ITE campus. Junior colleges, in particular, can be ranked according to their performance, in a similar fashion to primary and secondary schools. Because of their varying results, certain colleges are more highly regarded than others: Raffles Junior College is the most selective and widely revered, while others are less exclusive, and viewed less favourably. Nonetheless, most students (and parents) would see any kind of junior college as the best choice, since it leads to the internationally-recognised 'A' Levels, a set of exams initially based on the British system and still administered by the University of Cambridge.

Entry requirements to these institutions offer further information on the competence of their students. Admission to any post-secondary institution is decided during the yearly Joint Admissions Exercise, during which every student's 'O' Level results are computed into different types of aggregates. Junior college requires an aggregate taking into account English and five other

subjects relevant (abbreviated to L1R5, MOE 1995) to the course chosen (e.g. students wanting to take the chemistry option in junior college will have their 'O' Levels chemistry results in the aggregate). Polytechnics use an aggregate based on English, two subjects relevant to the course chosen (e.g. geography for business-related courses), and the two subjects where the best marks were obtained (ELR2B2) at 'O' Levels. The Institute of Technical Education simply requires passed 'O' Levels. This system gives an indication of the kind of student competence one might expect in each of these schools, and, by extension, of English language proficiency: clearly the academic standard is highest for junior college and lowest for vocational school.

2.1.4 Materials used

Following the Oxford CUREC guidelines, all participants were given a detailed description of the study (Appendix I), outlining the research questions, the format of the recording, information about data protection, and contact details. They were also given a consent form (Appendix II), which pointed out that they were free to withdraw at any point; informants had to sign this form and return it to the researcher in order to participate. A questionnaire (Appendix III) was also used, which collected six demographic variables: month and year of birth, ethnicity, father's and mother's occupations, and father's and mother's medium of education. These were collected at the start of the individual interviews, and stored in a secure location (in line with CUREC guidelines).

Recordings were made with a Sony® Hi-MD 'Walkman' MZ-NH700 minidisc recorder, using a Sony® ECM-MS907 'Electret Condenser' stereo microphone. For the radio-microphone recordings, a K&K® AT-668 'Super Professional' wireless microphone was used. The resulting recordings were of a high quality, although certain radio-microphone recordings suffered from vari-

ous electromagnetic interferences, such as mobile phone signals. The data on mini-disc was then transferred onto a computer using the Sony® 'SonicStage' software (version 4.0.00.05080). From there, it was exported and converted into Microsoft waveform audio format (`.wav`) for easy accessibility. With one file per recording session, this resulted in 72 `.wav` files, totalling over 16½ hours (16:32:12) of recording time and 9.78 GB of disk space (see Appendix IV.1 for a breakdown of these figures).

2.1.5 Interview structure

All recordings were done with each group of informants in a single day: each group consisted of four students of the same ethnic group within the same school. Each group required about two hours of recording time, which technically would have meant less than three hours of presence in school. Various unexpected events, such as the illness of one informant, who then had to be replaced by another, who in turn was not available at the specified time, ensured that more often than not, I spent up to four hours on site. Table 2.1 below shows the structure of the recordings, within a typical schedule for one group: time is allowed between each recording session for informants to move in and out of the room, for the researcher to give instructions, and for the re-initialisation of the recording device.

Different types of interviews were deliberately chosen in order to create different levels of formality. It was assumed that the individual and dialogue recordings would involve more formal English than the group and radio-microphone recordings, due in part to the heavy involvement of the researcher in the first two. A closer look at each situational setting is given here:

- *Individual interview:* each informant was singly interviewed for 15 minutes by me. We both sat in a (ostensibly) sound-proof room, facing each

Time	Recording
10.00–10.15	Individual interview Student A
10.20–10.35	Individual interview Student B
10.40–10.55	Individual interview Student C
11.00–11.15	Individual interview Student D
11.20–11.35	Dialogue interview Students A+B
11.40–11.55	Dialogue interview Students C+D
12.00–12.15	Group recording
12.20–12.35	Radio-microphone recording

Table 2.1: Typical schedule of a day's series of interviews with one group of four.

other. The setting was deliberately formal, with the informant being asked open-ended questions. While it was made clear to them beforehand that they were expected to be doing most of the talking, in some cases this proved problematic: one young woman (iii.I.2.f), for instance, had problems overcoming her shyness and more often than not, resorted to smiles and single-word replies to evade talking too much. Of course this could also be explained by my inability to make her feel at ease.

Questions asked were of a general nature, and it was hoped that they would elicit as many of the variables under investigation as possible (see section 2.2 on page 48). Priority was given to topics that it was hoped would be informal, such as holidays, which, fortunately, were always within a few weeks before or after the recording dates. Questions about the students' activities in their free time, their hobbies, and part-time job experience were also used, as well as the question about their career plans.

More school-related topics were co-curricular activities,[6] relationships within the class, and course content.

- *Dialogue interview:* Once all four members of the group had been interviewed individually, informants paired up (they decided with whom), and were interviewed. The format was that of a debate, with the two sides defending opposing views. The topic was, again, set by the researcher such that it was hoped that it would not be overly formal. Holidays seemed, again, a good choice. The initial task was, therefore, for one of the informants to defend the point of view that it is best to stay within Singapore during the holidays, while the other was to defend the opposing view that going abroad[7] was the better choice.

In most cases, this topic proved interesting enough to keep informants talking for the required fifteen minutes. Certain dyads, however, found it a less than appealing topic, and asked for a different one. The alternative I gave them was far from exciting, but produced some valuable results: the question whether marriage was a desirable goal in life. This gave some interesting comments where male informants were concerned; in the case of females the situation was more awkward: one woman, iii.I.3.f, pointed out to me that it was not so much a question of whether marriage was ideal, but whether it was better to marry at an early age or marry at a later one. I adapted this formulation of the question for subsequent interviews, when this question was used.

In the polytechnic, a popular topic for debate (requested by the participants) was the teaching system that is being pioneered in this particular institution: the polytechnic selected is unique among Singaporean poly-

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[6]In the Singapore context, *co-curricular activities*, or *CCAs*, are extra-curricular activities such as participation in school-based sports teams, marching bodies, or music groups. While they do not form part of the curriculum as such, they are compulsory and organised by the school.

[7]*Overseas* was the preferred term in all contexts, with 101 occurrences (78.3 %) compared to 28 (21.7 %) for *abroad.*

technics in adopting a problem-based learning approach in all its courses. This system was evaluated differently by students, and provided an interesting topic for lively discussions.

- *Group recordings:* Here all four informants from the ethnic group were asked into the recording room, and given a task. I would then leave them to their discussion, physically leaving the room, and returning fifteen minutes later. In line with the topics addressed in earlier interviews, the task also focussed essentially on holidays. Informants were asked to formulate a plan for the following holiday, given a budget of three hundred Singapore dollars per person, involving a trip to a place where none of them had ever been. They were told to plan travel, accommodation, and activities.

  The only physical clue to the unusual nature of the situation was the presence of the recording device and the microphone, to which some allusions were made (ii.C.gr), and maybe the situation of finding oneself in a room where one would not normally encounter one's classmates.

- *Radio-microphone recordings:* The last fifteen minutes were recorded with the use of a radio-microphone, in a location that was meant to be less formal: usually a cafeteria or a school canteen. While informality was indeed achieved in this way, background noise and interference (particularly from mobile phones) were a major factor in diminishing the quality of the recordings. In this setting, informants were not given any particular topic or task, they were simply asked to talk among themselves. I was sitting nearby, usually within their field of vision but far enough not to overhear them — it would have been possible to listen to the recording as it went on, but doing so would certainly have attracted their attention and thereby falsified the very premise on which this recording was based.

I therefore mostly took notes about the previous recording sessions and pretended to be busy with my notepad.

The very first of these recordings (iii.C.rm) took place during lunch-break and was skewed in that the participants were joined by some of their friends, and asked me, in an attempt to be friendly when they saw me sitting down at a table far away from theirs, to join them too and partake in their meal. In a foolish decision, I gave socialising precedence over methodological rigour, which resulted in a number of dialogues with single informants (mostly iii.C.3.m, but also iii.C.1.m). Sometimes, when the informant who was wearing the radio-microphone (iii.C.3.m) talked to some friends who had joined them, he switched to Mandarin. Therefore, this particular recording is different in many ways (as will become obvious in chapter 5 below) from other radio-microphone recordings.

The rationale behind this structure of four different types of recordings was to proceed from a formal setting (individual interview), through a less formal one (dialogue interview) and a more informal one (group recording), to an informal setting (radio-microphone recording). It was thought, and later confirmed, that informants would feel initial unease at the situation, with doubt about what was expected of them, giving rise to more careful speech: it was therefore only natural to begin with the more formal setting, working my way through to the less formal ones. Once they had grown accustomed to me, more spontaneous speech would occur — particularly once I left them alone to talk during the last two kinds of recordings.

2.2 Variables

The variables under investigation fall into three categories: aspect markers, discourse particles, and existential constructions. This section introduces each

of these individually, explaining why they were chosen, and what sort of insight can be gained from their analysis. There will be a certain amount of overlap with the respective sections in the theory chapter (chapter 3), but the focus here is on their methodological value and their operational elicitation.

2.2.1 Aspect markers

Aspect markers, being the major component of the original plan for this thesis, account for six variables, each of which having two possible realisations: a 'standard' one, labelled SSE, and a substrate-influenced one, labelled CSE. In this section I refer to individual aspect markers as originating in the main substrate, according to the systemic substratist hypothesis briefly introduced in section 1.3.4 (page 22). Section 5.2 (page 171) will deal with this particular dimension in more detail.

Completive

There are three aspect markers for the completive in CSE: *already* (Bao 1995) is the unemphatic marker, and V+*finish* and V+*got* are the emphatic counterparts (Bao 2005). These have their origin in the Chinese actual aspect marker V-*le*, and in the resultative verb complements V-*wán* (Xiao and McEnery 2004) and *yǒu*-V respectively. Their SSE variant would be the StBE perfective aspect.

The emphatic *finish* is restricted in that it can only occur with activity verbs, whereas *got* is much freer. Co-occurrence of either of these with *already* may happen, except in statives where *already*'s function is the inchoative (Bao 2005). Such conditioning factors need to be kept in mind when dealing with aspectual categories that cover multiple CSE variants, even more so since the latter may also fulfil multiple aspectual functions (such as *already*).

Due to the nature of completive aspect, this variable was expected to occur very often, as it denotes events' and activities' completions, which are very common. This has been the case in my personal experience, and it was indeed the case in this study. Any description of a completed activity should yield a completive. Little active elicitation was needed on my part.

Experiential

The experiential is a perfective aspect and is marked with the verbal suffix *-guo* in Chinese. This has been transferred into CSE as *ever*-V (Bao 2005). A typical sentence like *Wǒ dù-guo zhè-běn shū* would be translated into CSE as *I ever read* [riːd] *this book*. The SSE alternative would be *I read* [rɛd] *this book*, where no indication of experientiality can be given due to the lack of a separate, grammatically encoded experiential aspect.[8] Therefore, realisation of *ever*-V will be classified as CSE (except in interrogatives, of course), while other adverbial markers, such as *before*, will be regarded as SSE.

Experiential constructions will need more prompting, as they refer to informants' personal experiences. One way to achieve this is to ask them about their previous experiences, for example holidays, or particular dishes they might have tried. Gearing the discussion towards particular activities they might have indulged in in the past is likely to trigger the use of the experiential aspect when replying that 'yes, they have ever been to Hong Kong', for instance.

Delimitative

The Chinese delimitative aspect is realised by reduplicating the verb. According to (Bao 2005), this process is not productive in CSE, where formulaic

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[8]Except in interrogatives, of course, where *ever* is required in StBE: 'Have you ever been to Russia?'.

reduplication occurs sparingly and gives a tentative reading. However, as this view is not universal (Fong 2004, Wee 2004), any instances of verbal reduplication will be recorded and classified as CSE.

Inchoative

CSE marks the inchoative aspect, which is not the case in SSE. The inchoative describes the beginning of an action (Bao 1995). This is also marked by *already*, for the good reason that its Chinese counterpart is a sentence-final *le*, (where its function is described as 'change of state' *le* by Xiao and McEnery 2004). *Already*, however, only occurs sentence-finally, which can lead to ambiguity between inchoative and completive readings (possibly triggering the transfer of the 'emphatic completive' (Bao 2005)). Therefore, instances of *already* will have to be classified as CSE inchoative, CSE completive, or SSE (where it fulfils its StBE role). In CSE, *already* with statives gives an inchoative reading. Contextual meaning will also provide clues to this discrimination.

The inchoative should be an easy enough target if the informant is asked to recount parts of his past life: whenever a state is described as beginning, there will be an inchoative. Little prompting will be needed.

Progressive

The progressive (or 'dynamic' according to Bao 2005) requires V-*ing* in CSE, making it identical with SSE. However, as Alsagoff and Ho (1998) point out, sometimes the lexical item *still* is inserted before the VP, as an additional aspect marker. It is optional, but limited to CSE (Chinese has a preverbal progressive marker *zài*). Another point is the omission of the copula, which is common in CSE, but not in SSE. Qualifying a copula-less and *still*-less progressive construction as SSE would be fallacious. In the work that fol-

lows, sentences of the forms below will be classified as colloquial or standard according to the following (examples (1) and (2) are from Alsagoff and Ho 1998:143):

(1)   They still studying.   [CSE]

(2)   They are studying.   [SSE]

(3)   They studying.   [CSE]

The progressive, too, was expected to be easy to elicit. Progressive or continuous processes occur frequently enough to be appearing freely and relatively spontaneously in informants' speech.

Habitual

Again according to Alsagoff and Ho (1998), there is in CSE a marker for the habitual aspect, namely *always*-V (as in (4a) below). Oddly enough, neither Chinese nor English seem to mark the habitual overtly. Chinese uses adverbial phrases (4c), while English conveys it with the simple present, or the modal would or used to for past habits (4b). Both (4a) and (4b) are from Alsagoff and Ho (1998:143).

(4)   a.   My brother always jog every morning.   [CSE]

      b.   My brother jogs every morning.   [SSE]

      c.   Wǒ de   dìdi   měi tiān zǎoshàng màn-pǎo.   [Chinese]
           1SG POSS brother every day morning slowly-run

      d.   Saudara lelaki saya selalu lari-pagi   (setiap hari).   [Malay]
           sibling   male 1SG HAB   run-morning (every day)

The origin of this marker could lie in the Malay habitual marker *selalu* (4d), or simply be a CSE innovation (see section 3.1 on page 66). In terms of elicitation, it may need a bit more support. Asking informants to describe a typical day

when they were in primary school, for example, ought to give some tokens at least.

Summary

Table 2.2 below recapitulates these aspectual variables and their different variants.

Variable	CSE variants	SSE variant
1) Completive	*already*/*finish*/*got*	perfect
2) Experiential	*ever*	*before*, periphrastic
3) Delimitative	V-reduplication	∅ or periphrastic
4) Inchoative	*already*	∅ or periphrastic
5) Progressive	(BE) *still* V-*ing*	BE V-*ing*
	∅ V-*ing*	BE *still* V-*ing*
6) Habitual	*always*	*used to* V/*would* V
		Simple present/periphrastic

Table 2.2: Aspectual variables and their variants.

2.2.2   Discourse particles

Discourse particles are a stereotypical feature of Singapore English (cf. introduction on page 27). Variously called *pragmatic particles* (Gupta 1992), *discourse particles* (Wee 2004), or simply *particles* (Wong 1994), the category covers a range of monosyllabic items used to convey the speakers' attitude or mood, to establish solidarity, or to emphasise the obviousness of a statement (Gupta 1992), among other functions. The literature on discourse particles is extensive, as will become apparent during their theoretical discussion in section 3.2.2 on page 81. As far as this study is concerned, the following particles proved of particular interest:[9]

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[9]As noted in the preceding chapter, there is disagreement about the adequate orthographic rendering of these particles. Phonologically enlightened authors tend to use one letter per phoneme, as in ⟨la⟩ for *lah*. This is however the minority choice among speakers of Colloquial Singapore English, who prefer, when writing their variety, to use the more

Lah

This is the most stereotypical particle, with a high level of awareness on the part of speakers. The following meta-linguistic use illustrates this point: when asked by an acquaintance of my host family what my research was on, my answer 'Singlish' prompted the simple reply 'lah!'. It is extremely common in everyday speech, used primarily sentence-finally. Classified as 'assertive' by Gupta (1992:37), it 'indicates [the] speaker's mood/attitude and appeals to [the] addressee to accommodate [to that mood]' (Wee 2004:125). It is pronounced [lɑ] and usually spelt ⟨lah⟩, although some older scholarly works, including Gupta (1992), use ⟨la⟩. Its origins are disputed, and Lim (2007:464) mentions Malay, Hokkien, or Cantonese as equally likely sources.

Ah

Used more frequently than *lah*, *ah* is, however, much less overtly commented on in public discourse on 'Singlish'. Scholarly accounts, of course, abound (Gupta 1994, Low and Brown 2005), and it is used for diglossic/stylistic purposes. While Ho and Platt (1993:10) call it a 'Y/N question particle', Gupta (1992:37) calls it a 'tentative' particle and situates it at the bottom end of her 'scale of assertiveness' (see section 3.2.2 on page 81). *Ah* also serves as an important prompt when confirming a question, as exemplified in (5).

(5)   R: What did you do?

       3: What did I do ah?

       R: Yeah.

       3: Basically, I watch TV.

       (iii.I.3.f)

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conservative, StBE-influenced variants (including syllable-final ⟨r⟩, which of course is phonologically null, Singapore English being non-rhotic).

The same uncertainty as for *lah* exists with respect to *ah*'s etymology: any one of the three languages Malay, Hokkien, or Cantonese are possible candidates (Lim 2007:464).

Leh

Situated in the middle field of Gupta's (1992) 'scale of assertiveness', *leh* 'marks a tentative suggestion or request' (Wee 2004:125). It can, however, also be used non-pragmatically, as an anaphoric reference in 'x-interrogatives without wh-words' (Gupta 1992:36), thus taking on the function of StBE 'what about'. Such instances will have to be identified, as they will not count towards the pragmatic particle *leh*. In example (6) below, the group is attempting to name a type of boat used at their holiday destination. Unconvinced by the previous guess, iii.C.2.f makes a tentative suggestion, using *leh*.

The spelling with ⟨h⟩ presumably indicates a long vowel (an unnecessary indication, vowel length being non-phonemic, see section 1.3.2 on page 17) — alternative renderings include ⟨lei⟩ (Gupta 1992), ⟨le⟩, and sometimes ⟨ler⟩, possibly by analogy with *lor*. Lim (2007:463) stipulates a Cantonese origin for *leh*, where a similar *le55*[10] exists that 'indicates "what about?"' (2007:461).

(6) 3: Bamboo boat.

  2: That's not bamboo boat <u>leh</u>, but very small.

  4: Sampang.

  (iii.C.gr)

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[10]Non-IPA tone marking scheme: 5 = high tone, 1 = low tone; thus 35 = high rising, 55 = high level. See Chao (1930).

Meh

Meh indicates scepticism (Wee 2004:121), and is highest in Gupta's 'assertive' category (1992:37), just before 'contradictory' particles. Like most other particles, it occurs clause-finally, and more often than not, utterance-finally. A spelling variant is ⟨me⟩, and, if irony is intended, ⟨mare⟩ (the pronunciation of all of these, of course, is [mɛ], see description in section 1.3.2, page 17). The source of this particle, according to Lim (2007:463), is the Cantonese particle *me55*, used to indicate surprise in a question and as a marker of rhetorical questions. It is unrelated to the American English *meh* described in Zimmer (2006).

Lor

At the other end of Gupta's 'assertive' category, we find *lor*, which 'indicates obviousness or a sense of resignation' (Wee 2004:125), see example (7) below. Alternative spellings are ⟨lo⟩ and ⟨loh⟩. Here two substrate particles, both from Cantonese, may have triggered its emergence in CSE: Cantonese *lo33* 'indicates obviousness, inevitability and irrevocability', while *lo55* 'points out what appears to be obvious' (Lim 2007:461). While the former seems to more closely match the function of the CSE particle, the existence of the latter in the substrate may have helped the emergence of the new CSE *lor*.

(7)   Because she wants to sing <u>mah</u>. So she want to use, she want to join to sing, so we just groom her <u>lor</u>. (ii.C.4.m in ii.C.rm)

Hor

According to Wee (2004:125), *hor* 'asserts and elicits support for a proposition', nicely exemplified by (8) below. Gupta (1992:37) places it among her 'tentative' particles. Again, Lim (2007:463) argues for an origin in Cantonese.

(8)   Then there's another issue, if you marry later, er, woman tend to have more complicated pregnancies <u>hor</u>. (iii.I.3.f in iii.I.dia.23)

Mah

Unrelated to the Mandarin question particle *ma* (嗎), *mah* is at the top of Gupta's (1992:37) 'scale of assertiveness', one of two 'contradictory' particles. Wee, who uses the spelling ⟨ma⟩, notes that it 'indicates information as obvious' (2004:125), which is certainly what *mah* achieves in (7) above. Its likely source is Cantonese (Lim 2007:462), where a homophone particle fulfils the same function.

Hah

Another 'tentative' particle (Gupta 1992:37), *hah* (sometimes spelt without final ⟨h⟩) is described by Wee (2004:125) as a 'question particle'. It can occur as a stand-alone utterance in its own right, where it becomes a request for clarification, or an invitation to repeat a previous utterance.

What

The second of Gupta's 'contradictory' particles (1992:37), *what*, has nothing to do with its English homograph, neither etymologically, nor functionally. To underline this fact, many authors commonly use a variety of alternative spellings, including ⟨wot⟩, ⟨wut⟩, ⟨wo⟩, and ⟨wat⟩ (my choice of using ⟨what⟩ herein is motivated by it being native speakers' spelling of choice). Pragmatically, it contradicts a preceding utterance, and, to paraphrase Wee (2004:125), implies obviousness. Here Lim (2007:464) does not identify a single substrate particle as the likely source, but postulates a calque on a Chinese particle *ma* which occurs in Cantonese and Hokkien as well as in Mandarin.

(9)   4:   Wait wait wait. No money, wanna go everywhere.

        3:     No, thousand two convert to Thai Baht is quite a lot <u>what</u>, in a
               way, really. . .

        1:     Yeah, is about millions.

        (ii.I.gr)

Example (9) shows this process at work in a conversation. The group had been listing activities which they would enjoy doing during their holiday in Thailand, when ii.I.4.m interrupts and reminds them of the existence of a budget. The retort by ii.I.3.f contradicts this by explaining that the exchange rate will multiply their budget, thereby obviously expanding their possibilities. Factual inaccuracies aside (purchasing power ought to be taken into consideration too), the statement implies obviousness. The next turn, by ii.I.1.f, reinforces this with agreement and further (slightly exaggerated) information.

2.2.3   Existential constructions

By existential constructions I mean sentences of the type exemplified in (10), which can be rendered, in CSE, by deleting the expletive subject and using *got*, as in (11). Also included in this category are locative utterances (see (12)), which use the same *got*.

(10)   Sometimes [. . .] if there is a competition outside, we try to take part
        in the competition.
        (iii.M.4.m)

(11)   Tomorrow got lesson or not? (iii.I.rm)

(12)   I think got waterfall what. You will get to watch waterfall if you go
        hiking.
        'I think there *is* a waterfall. You will get to see the waterfall if you go
        hiking.'
        (iii.C.gr)

Therefore, the variants used are threefold: firstly, the SSE constructions of the type in (10), consisting of *there*+BE, can be of an existential or a locative nature. The second category encompasses CSE constructions (both existential and locative) with *got*, where both the expletive[11] and the copula are missing. A third, 'mixed' category can also occur, with *there*+*got*, as in (13a) below, where speaker 2's turn is a confirmation of speaker 3's. This happens only in locative constructions (with *there* performing deixis, substitutable, if appropriate, with *here*). Rather than outright copula-deletion, as it often occurs in SgE (Ho and Platt 1993:30–69), the copula here is only replaced by *got* — in fact, a sentence like (13b) would be ungrammatical. On the other hand, (13c) would be acceptable, but it would become existential, rather than locative.

(13)   a.   3:   I think is better if you go East Coast, I don't want Changi.

           2:   There got ghost ah.

           (iii.I.gr)

    b. *There is got ghost ah.

    c. Got ghost ah.

Table 2.3 below gives a summary of these variants, with an indication of how their occurrence will be interpreted in the diglossic framework. Of the five variants, two are indicative of SSE, and three mark the CSE sub-variety.

Construction		SSE	CSE
a)	Existential		
	i. *There*+BE	×	
	ii. *got*		×
b)	Locative		
	i. *There*+BE	×	
	ii. *got*		×
	iii. *There*+*got*		×

Table 2.3: Classification of the (got) variable's variants.

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[11]In locative constructions, *there* could also be regarded as a deictic.

2.3 Data collection

The materials used in the process of data collection, as well as the structure of the individual interviews, were presented in sections 2.1.4 (page 43) and 2.1.5 (page 44) respectively. Here I describe the process of data collection *per se*, giving an account of the reactions encountered from the various parties involved.

2.3.1 Contacting and cooperating with schools

As outlined in section 2.1.1 (page 36), communication with the various educational institutions did not go without its fair share of problems. Initially, first contact was normally established by an e-mail to the only available address: the generic one displayed on the MOE website's school directory. The impersonal style this entailed meant that very few schools actually replied to this. Weeks were wasted waiting for replies from various institutions.

As a result, I then decided to use telephone calls to establish first contact, usually directly asking for the school's principal. In a very limited number of cases, I was allowed to talk to the principal, but in most, I was asked to send an e-mail to the school's generic address. In all cases, more e-mails were required to explain the nature of the research as well as the structure of the interviews. Explaining everything in one short phone call did indeed prove exhausting.

The first positive signals came when I shifted my attention to post-secondary institutions. Once I could talk to the person in charge, usually someone within the English department, I encountered considerable interest in the study and assurances that they would look into the matter — once they had more information, sent by e-mail, of course. Two polytechnics reacted in this way, before deciding that they were too busy after all. The vocational training college con-

tacted, however, was immediately interested, and quickly delegated a teacher for the organisation of the interviews. Shortly afterwards, I was presented with a timetable for the interviews, complete with a room booked for the relevant dates. The same happened in the polytechnic, which organised the interviews of all three groups within the same week.

After the disappointments of the initial phases of the study, the efficiency and friendliness of all teachers and personnel involved in the data collection process was refreshing. Communication was excellent, and it was remarkable to witness how teachers went out of their way to ensure a seamless running of the operation. In one instance where an informant was indisposed, a substitute was immediately organised by telephone — although it was during the school's official holidays. A reiteration of my gratitude to all involved staff and students is in order (see page iii).

2.3.2 Reactions from informants

As outlined above (section 2.1.4, page 43), participating students were issued, via the teacher in charge, with a letter explaining the purpose and the format of the study (Appendix I). In addition to it being a requirement of CUREC, it was felt that it was important to prepare informants for the non-negligible task that awaited them: being at the disposal of a researcher for over two hours (section 2.1.5, page 44), in addition to regular school hours, was deemed imposing enough to have them forewarned, and thus to enable them to make a fully informed choice. The consent form they signed (Appendix II) also stated that they understood what the study involved.

It may be surprising, therefore, that notwithstanding these precautions, a number of comments were heard on tape about the length of the whole operation. The radio-microphone recording iii.M.rm, for instance, features a

number of interferences from mobile phone calls received by iii.M.3.m. As he then explains to his group, the recordings have delayed him and his plans for an afternoon's fun at the beach, and his friends were getting impatient. Similarly, in ii.I.gr, participants discuss how they came to be in the situation they found themselves in: apparently one was told 'to help out with some English interview', but he 'didn't think it was this' (uttered by ii.I.1.m). When it came to the end of the lengthy interview series, therefore, some informants seemed, understandably, a bit tired; in general, however, few complaints were heard.

In the individual interviews, when first contact was established, various kinds of reactions were observed. Many were unsure about what was to come, to the point of intimidation (iii.C.4.m, iii.I.4.f), which resulted in less than fluent turns and numerous single-word utterances. Others put on a bolder front (such as iii.C.3.m, who invited me to the restaurant he was working in), which was of course more productive, linguistically. Some discussed topics that were relatively personal (e.g. ii.M.2.f, who 'used to be the introvert [type of] person', or ii.C.1.f, who elaborated in detail on her passion for hamster-rearing), while others remained relatively superficial (ii.I.4.f, iii.M.4.m). One of the more intriguing informants was ii.C.4.m, who, I suspected, was putting on a particularly acrolectal (one might even say exonormative) accent. My suspicions were confirmed when ii.C.2.m reprimands him during ii.C.rm, asking him with little decorum to 'stop with that slang'. Throughout all recording sessions, he exhibited a high awareness of being recorded, as evidenced by his frequent references to the microphone (3 times *microphone* in ii.C.gr, and even once in ii.C.dia.34, in my presence) and his attempts at a humorous imitation of a television news speaker in ii.C.gr and ii.C.rm. The microphone obviously had a deep impression on him, and if this thesis were to focus on phonological rather than grammatical variables, ii.C.4.m would stand out rather oddly.

Dialogue interviews were often slightly more awkward, as the task required them to take on roles that they did not necessarily identify with. This meant that certain discussions collapsed very early on (iii.M.dia.12, iii.C.dia.34) — others, however, showed more involvement and managed to uphold the conversation throughout the required 15 minutes (ii.C.dia.34, ii.M.dia.23). The introduction of new topics sometimes helped, and although some of them had depleted their repertoire after 11 minutes, others talked for well over 18 minutes.

The group recordings, which were task-based but unmonitored, were, as expected, more relaxed. This is where the group was together for the first time (and where some of them met for the first time, cf. introductions in ii.I.gr and iii.C.gr). The flow of discussion was often very smooth, even though less so in some groups (iii.I.gr, with iii.I.3.f lamenting 'don't tell me fifteen minutes is so long'). When the task of planning a holiday (see section 2.1.5 on page 44) was deemed uninspiring, other conversations took place, and few periods of silence were observed. Thus one can hear gossip about the researcher ('he's actually quite nervous', ii.M.gr, immediately followed by 'he will edit it lah'), comments about the unusual nature of the situation ('if this was a normal scenario', iii.I.gr), as well as some criticisms ('he want to see how we all talk, normally [. . .] — Serious? So dumb', ii.M.gr). In terms of adherence to the guidelines provided, most groups discarded the requirement that their destination needed to be one where none of them had ever been. One group (ii.C.gr) conveniently took the liberty to interpret the three hundred dollars' budget as expressed in US dollars rather than Singapore dollars, which, undeniably, had the effect of improving their choice of destination.

The informal atmosphere thusly created during the group recordings was not always replicated during the radio-microphone recordings. This may be due to the fact that I was often within their field of vision, albeit beyond

overhearing distance. Another factor may be that they were left totally alone without instructions other than to 'speak normally'. This sometimes resulted in the overt search for a topic (ii.M.rm, ii.I.rm), or in more playfully structured forms such as in ii.C.rm, where ii.C.4.m, still impressed by the radio-microphone, took on the role of an interviewer. In all cases (excepting iii.C.rm, to which I shall come back later), however, casual conversations took place, with the participants sharing views and experiences on a variety of topics including National Service health check-ups (iii.M.rm), co-curricular activities (ii.C.rm), television song contests (iii.I.rm), and part-time work salaries (ii.M.rm), to name but a few.

The case of iii.C.rm, which I mentioned briefly in section 2.1.5 (page 48), deserves a little more clarification. It is hard to view this recording in the methodological framework of other radio-microphone recordings, where conversations took place without outsiders' interference. In this case, quite clearly, the informants were fascinated by the stranger who had been interviewing them for the day, and were eager to get to know him better in a less formal setting. Discussions over lunch, therefore, centred mostly on me and the countries that I represent (which, to my amazement, apparently included Australia) — topics were as diverse as social welfare systems, traditional food, housing, and iii.C.3.m's desire for emigration. Undeniably, the atmosphere was less rigid and much more relaxed than in the previous interviews, but the results obtained during this recording diverged significantly, as we shall see in chapter 5, from other radio-microphone recordings.

2.4 Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the methodological approach taken in this thesis: after an account of the evolution of the framework during the initial phases

of fieldwork, a description of the informants and their background was given. Interview techniques were introduced, including the materials used as well as the structure of the recording sessions. A second major part described the variables under investigation, which included aspect markers, discourse particles, and existential constructions. Finally, it gave an account of the actual collection of data, reporting on the fruitful cooperation with the schools and the teachers in charge, as well as on the informants' reactions and acceptance of the recording process.

The results from the data collection described here will be discussed in chapter 5. The following two chapters will be concerned with the theoretical background of the issues at stake. Chapter 3 will review the literature on the three variables introduced herein, and chapter 4 will focus on the sociolinguistic typological models proposed for SgE.

Chapter 3

Theory

T HIS chapter, together with chapter 4, explains the theoretical context of this thesis, and reviews the literature associated with the issues it addresses. The following three sections describe the background of the three variables used in the empirical part of the thesis — aspect markers, discourse particles, and existential constructions. The various issues associated with the proposition of a sociolinguistic typological model for Singapore English are explored in chapter 4.

3.1   Aspect

According to Comrie (1981:3), aspect expresses 'different ways of viewing the internal temporal constituency of a situation'. This distinguishes it clearly from tense, which serves a purely temporal deictic purpose. This section is divided into three subsections: the first two deal with the aspect system in English and Chinese[1] respectively, while the third explains aspect in SgE as a result of system transfer (Bao 2005).

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[1] See footnote 2 on page 4 about the distinction between different varieties of Chinese and the considerations behind using Mandarin as representing Chinese grammar in general.

3.1.1 Aspect in English

The aspect systems of European languages have been given much attention. They have often been analysed from a typological point of view (Croft 1990, Dahl 2000), contrasting, for instance, languages that feature a continuous aspect with other closely related ones, which do not (Comrie 1981, Dahl 1985). As far as English is concerned, analyses have focussed, for instance, on modality (Dowty 1977), evidentiality (Comrie 1981, Fleischmann 1989), and transitivity (Croft 1990), to name but a few (Michaelis 1998).

Michaelis, whose framework will be used here, argues that there are three subsystems of aspect, or 'aspectual classes' (Michaelis 1998:58): viewpoint aspect, situation aspect, and phasal aspect. Her classification is shown in Table 3.1. Viewpoint aspect, which is realised grammatically and distinguishes events and states, is the category that encodes the aspectual sub-categories imperfective and perfective. She regards the progressive as a phasal aspect (see below), rather than an imperfective one. The distinction is one of conceptual basis (see Table 3.1): while viewpoint aspect is primarily concerned with the event-state distinction, phasal aspect refers to 'perspectival shift involving the conceptual categories *event* and *state*' (Michaelis 1998:59, emphasis in the original). The term 'viewpoint aspect' refers to the position of the speaker vis-à-vis the situation: if the speaker's location is within the situation, ignoring beginning and endpoint, it is a case of imperfective aspect, whereas if the speaker is without the situation, considering it as a whole (including endpoints), it is a case of perfective aspect.

Secondly, 'situation aspect' distinguishes *Aktionsarten* on the primary telic/atelic scale and the subsequent split into accomplishments (temporally extended, telic), achievements (temporally non-extended, telic), homogeneous and heterogeneous activities (temporally extended, atelic) and semelfactives (temporally non-extended, atelic). Thirdly, Michaelis includes a 'phasal aspect', which

Aspectual class	Conceptual/ functional basis	Direct encoding	Morphological realisation (e.g.)
Viewpoint aspect	event-state distinction / expression of attention to endpoints	yes	perfective aspect (as in Latin)
Situation aspect	ontology of idealised situations	no	N/A
Phasal aspect	conversion operations involving event and state classes / expression of speaker perspective	yes	progressive phase (as in English)

Table 3.1: 'Three aspectual subsystems' (Michaelis 1998:58, Table 1.1).

distinguishes between prospective, progressive and perfect states, and inceptive and terminative events of a reference situation.

A different approach is taken by Xiao and McEnery (2004), who see aspect as divided up into two main subcategories: viewpoint aspect, which is language-specific and rendered by their individual grammars, and situation aspect, which is universal and on a semantic level. For this latter category, they stipulate five features which determine situation types: [±dynamic] (events vs states), [±durative], [±telic] (presence or absence of a final spatial endpoint), [±result] (presence or absence of a changing point where a final endpoint starts holding) and [±bounded] (presence or absence of a final temporal endpoint).

3.1.2 Aspect in Chinese

Xiao and McEnery (2004) is probably the most extensive work on aspect in Chinese. They take Smith's (1997) model and modify it to accommodate their own theory. Previous research (Chao 1968, Li and Thompson 1981), they find, is not accurate enough. Their model, as described above, splits aspect into two subsystems: a universal situation aspect and a language-specific viewpoint aspect. They develop Li and Thompson's Chinese version. A distinction is

Simplex ┬ Perfective – Actual (*-le*)
         │   – Experiential (*-guo*)
         │   – Delimitative (VV)
         │   – Completive (RVCs)
         │
         └ Imperfective – Durative (*-zhe*)
                        – Progressive (*zai*)
                        – Inceptive (*-qilai*)
                        – Continuative (*-xiaqu*)

Viewpoint
aspect

Complex – Actual delimitative (V-*le*V)
        – Actual completive (V+RVC+V)
        – Actual inceptive (V-*le-qilai*)
        – Actual continuative (V-*le-xiaqu*)
        – Progressive durative (*zai* V-*zhe*)
        – Progressive inceptive (*zai* V-*qilai*)
        – Progressive continuative (*zai* V-*xiaqu*)

Figure 3.1: Viewpoint aspect according to Xiao and McEnery (2004).

made between simplex and complex aspect, the former then being subdivided into perfective and imperfective. This is illustrated in Figure 3.1: this diagram gives a comprehensive overview of Chinese viewpoint aspect. One might criticise the unusual name of the 'actual' aspect, which is called 'completive' in Bao (2005) and 'realised' in Yang and Bateman (2002). Actual aspect, marked by the verbal suffix *-le* (了), should not be confused with sentence-final *le*, which indicates 'change of state' (COS, termed 'current relevant state' (CRS) by Li and Thompson 1981) and which, confusingly, is represented by the same character, both originating from a single etymon, the verb *liǎo* 'to finish' (diachronically *liǎo* > COS *le* > actual *-le*). This actual aspect, then, presents a completed situation, seen as a whole. It marks actualisation, but not an endpoint.

Experiential aspect, marked by *-guo* (過) denotes an action that has been experienced — from a perfective and external viewpoint. Again, *guò* also functions as a resultative verb complement (RVC) to indicate completiveness (where it is interchangeable with *wan* (完)). Experiential situations express egressive dynamicity (as opposed to actual ones, which are ingressive).

The delimitative aspect is rendered by verbal reduplication and expresses some sort of transitory situation. When reduplicated, durative verbs are reduced in duration (as in (1a)), and non-durative ones have their iterative frequency reduced (see (1b)). Only verbs with [+dynamic] and [−result] can be reduplicated. Individual-level states and achievements do not take the delimitative aspect felicitously. Durative verbs, when reduplicated, also have their dynamicity strengthened (as in (1a.ii)).

(1)　　a.　(i)　Tā kàn-zhe wǒ.
　　　　　　　3SG look-DUR 1SG
　　　　　　　'He/she is/was looking at me.'

　　　　　(ii)　Tā kàn-kan wǒ.
　　　　　　　3SG look-look 1SG
　　　　　　　'He/she had a look at me.'

　　　b.　(i)　Tā dǎ wǒ.
　　　　　　　3SG hit 1SG
　　　　　　　'He/she hit me.'

　　　　　(ii)　Tā dǎ-da wǒ.
　　　　　　　3SG hit-hit 1SG
　　　　　　　'He/she hit me. (in a tentative manner)'

Resultative verb complements (RVCs) are markers of the completive aspect. These can be of various types, such as causal (e.g. *lā kāi* 'pull open'),

achievement (e.g. *xiě qīngchǔ* 'write clearly'), directional (e.g. *tiào guòqù* 'jump over') and phasal (e.g. *yòng wán* 'use up'). Directional RVCs include *shànglái* 'come up', *shàngqù* 'go up', *húilái* 'come back', and *guòqù* 'go over', among others.

Examples (2) to (5) below illustrate these four perfective aspects (Xiao and McEnery 2004).

(2)   Tā hóng-le   liǎn.
        3SG red-ACTL face
        'He/she blushed.' (focus on becoming red)

(3)   Tā hóng-guo liǎn.
        3SG red-EXP   face
        'He/she had blushed before.' (focus on having done so previously)

(4)   Tā hóng-hong liǎn.
        3SG red-red   face
        'He/she was blushing.' (focus on the process of reddening)

(5)   Tā hóng-wan liǎn.
        3SG red-RVC   face
        'He/she was done blushing.' (focus on the completion of the event)

These quite clearly show the various aspectual distinctions discussed so far. In (2), the actual aspect emphasises the ingressive dynamicity of the situation, whereas in (3) this same situation is presented experientially. The reduplicated verb in (4) stresses a process taking place over some period of time and (5) exemplifies the use of RVCs to express completive aspect.

In terms of the imperfective, Xiao and McEnery distinguish four aspects: durative, expressed by *-zhe* (著), progressive, realised by *zài* (在), inceptive, marked with *-qǐlái* (起來), and continuative, expressed by *-xiàqù* (下去). The durative aspect in (6a) indicates durativity of a continued dynamic or static situation, (6b) expresses, with the construction V_1-*zhe* V_2, a situation (V_2) taking place, overlapped by a background situation (V_1), and (6c) and (6d)

denotes locative inversions and existential status. The examples in (6) illustrate these usages (Xiao and McEnery 2004).

(6)   a.   Tā kàn-zhe wǒ.
               3SG look-DUR 1SG
               'He/she is/was looking at me.'

        b.   Nà háizi kù-zhe yào bàba.
               that child cry-DUR want daddy
               'While crying, that child called for his/her father.'

        c.   Shānpō   shàng zhàn-zhe yī ge rén.
               hill/slope on   stand-DUR one CLF person
               'Someone was/is standing on the hill.'

        d.   Tā zài fáng lǐ zuò-zhe.
               3SG at house in sit-DUR
               'He/she is/was sitting in the house.'

The progressive is most felicitous with activities, while semelfactives with *zài* have an iterative reading. The Chinese progressive denotes only purely dynamic situations. The inceptive with *-qǐlái* is distinct from the inchoative, which is achieved by COS *le*. While the latter focuses on the change of state, the former is concerned with its inception. Interestingly, when qualifying a transitive verb construction, the complement is infixed to the aspectual suffix (or vice-versa), as in (7) (Xiao and McEnery 2004).

(7)   Tā chàng qǐ ge lái.
        3SG sing   INC$_1$ song INC$_2$
        'He/she started/starts singing.'

The continuative, finally, conveys a temporal meaning of continuation, of 'going on', and can, therefore, only be used with [+durative] verbs. The focus is on the point of resumption of a situation that had been going on before the

(a) Uninterrupted continuation.　　(b) Interrupted continuation.
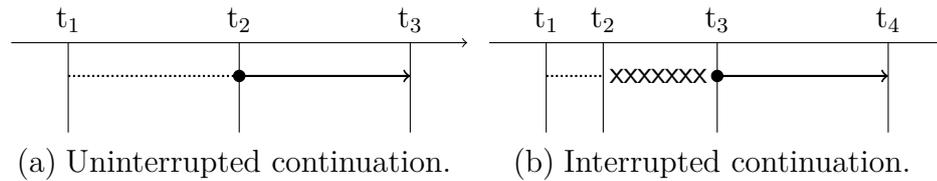
Figure 3.2: The completive aspect (Xiao and McEnery 2004).

said point (as in Figure 3.2(a)). It can also stand for the point of resumption of a situation that was interrupted (Figure 3.2(b)). Xiao and McEnery (2004) illustrate this with Figure 3.2: in (a), it is the continuation of the situation that prevailed before t_2 that is the focus, so that in (8a), it is the fact that the subject has been reading before the point of reference (t_2), and is *continuing* to do so afterwards, that is under consideration. Likewise, in (8b), it is the interruption of talking between t_2 and t_3, followed by its resumption at t_3, that is in focus (as illustrated by (b) in Figure 3.2).

(8)　　a.　Tā bā zhè ge shū kàn xiàqù.
　　　　　3SG BA this CLF book read CONT
　　　　　'He/she is/was still reading the book.'

　　　　b.　Tā tíng shuō le　yǐhòu hái　kāishi xiàqù
　　　　　3SG stop talk ACTL after again start CONT
　　　　　'After having stopped talking, he/she starts/started[2] again.'

3.1.3　System Transfer

Aspect in Singapore English has been widely analysed in scientific articles (Bao 1995, Wee 1998, Bao 2005). General textbooks usually give a less in-depth account (Platt and Weber 1980, Ho and Platt 1993, Alsagoff and Ho

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[2]The tense of the main verb in the translation is unclear, since it is unspecified in the original. We are dealing here with aspect alone (see beginning of section 3.1 on page 66).

1998). Bao Zhiming is clearly the leading figure on CSE aspect. While his previous publications focussed primarily on single aspect markers (Bao 1995, Bao and Wee 1998), his most recent (Bao 2005) is that of CSE's aspect system being the result of system transfer and lexifier filter.

Bao (2005:Table 38) provides us with a comparative summary of aspectual classes for CSE, English and Chinese,[3] showing which Chinese aspect markers have been transferred and relexified in CSE (reproduced here as Table 3.2). Thus completive/inchoative/inceptive *le* becomes *already*, experiential *guo* turns into *ever*, emphatic *yǒu* and *wán* are transferred as *got* and *finish* respectively. The imperfective *zài* V (dynamic) and V-*zhe* (stative) correspond to V-*ing* in CSE. The delimitative (called tentative by Bao), which in Chinese is rendered by reduplication, is, according to Bao, not transferred into CSE.

			Chinese	**[CSE]**	**English**
(a)		Perfective			
	i.	Completive	V *le*	S *already*	V-*ed*, V-*en*
	ii.	Experiential	V *guo*	*ever* V	≈ *ever* V-*en*
	iii.	Emphatic	*yǒu* V	*got* V	-
			V *wán*	*finish* V	-
(b)		Inchoative	S *le*	S *already*	-
(c)		Inceptive	S *le*	S *already*	-
(d)		Imperfective			
	i.	Dynamic	*zài* V	V-*ing*	V-*ing*
	ii.	Stative	*V zhe*…(*ne*)	≈ V-*ing*	≈ V-*ing*
	iii.	Stative	*V zhe* V	≈ V-*ing*	≈ V-*ing*
(e)		Tentative	V-V	-	-

Table 3.2: Aspectual categories of Chinese, CSE, and English (adapted from Table 38 in Bao 2005:251).

Bao's subdivision of viewpoint aspect differs in a few ways from Xiao and McEnery's: he puts the inchoative/inceptive and the tentative at the same level as the perfective and the imperfective, whereas Xiao and McEnery treat the inceptive as an imperfective aspect, and the tentative ('delimitative') as

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[3]Bao takes the Mandarin system to stand for Chinese in general. See footnote 2 on page 4 for a discussion on the uses of the term *Chinese* in this thesis.

Simplex viewpoint aspect ──┬── Perfective ── Actual (*already*)
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　── Experiential (*ever*)
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　── Delimitative (no trsf)
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　── Completive (*-finish*)

　　　　　　　　　　　　　　└── Imperfective ── Durative (*-ing*)
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　── Progressive (*-ing*)
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　── Inceptive (*already*)
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　── Continuative (*?*)
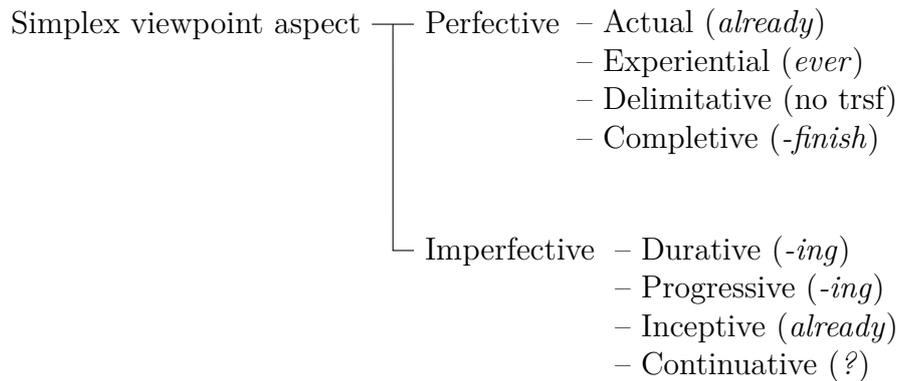
Figure 3.3: Applying Bao (2005) to Xiao and McEnery (2004).

perfective. The renaming of COS (change of state) to 'inchoative' also adds to the terminological confusion surrounding Chinese aspect. I here follow Bao's terminology, since references to his work will occur throughout the thesis. Taking Bao's (2005) model and applying it to Xiao and McEnery's (2004) aspect classification, we obtain Figure 3.3. Unfortunately, Bao only provides us with enough information to tackle simplex aspect. The complex viewpoint aspect of Chinese, shown in Figure 3.1, has not been given attention and would qualify for further research.

> (i) Ràng wǒ kàn-kan néi-ben shū.
> (ii) Wǒ kàn-guo néi-ge rén.

relexification

> (i) *Let me read-read that book.
> (ii) *I see-ever that man.

filter

> (i) Let me read that book.
> (ii) I ever see that man.
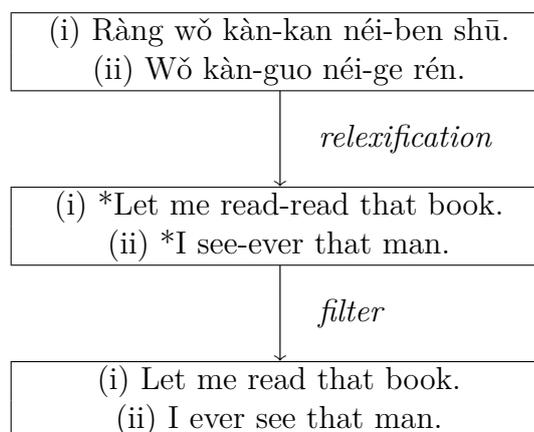
Figure 3.4: Lexifier filter. Example (i) is from Bao 2005:24.

Bao's analysis of system transfer is tempting. According to this theory, the whole of the substrate's grammatical subsystem of aspect is transferred into the new variety. The lexifier then provides not only the new forms for the transferred morphemes, but its grammar also acts as a 'filter': the surface grammatical requirements of the lexifier language exert pressure on this transfer and thereby condition the use and transfer of these 'new' morphemes, a process illustrated in Figure 3.4. This results in a 'morphosyntactic exponence of the transferred system [which] conforms to the (surface) structural requirements of the lexical-source language'[4] (Bao 2005:257). Thus for example 'stative imperfective' and 'tentative' (Xiao and McEnery's 'background' imperfective durative and delimitative respectively) are not transferred into CSE, since it would not meet the requirements of English grammar (verbal reduplication being absent in English). This convincing analysis, resulting in a fairly clear correspondence between the substratal and the CSE aspect systems, prompted its adoption as the framework within which this thesis' aspectual variables are considered.

3.2 Discourse particles

So-called discourse particles are used in all languages, and come in various forms: English has an elaborate system of question tags (*isn't it*, *can we*), hesitation markers (*erm*, *y'know*), and many others such as markers of mitigation (*I mean*, *you see*). Stereotypically, Canadian English has a sentence-final *eh* (Ferguson and Ferguson 2003:65–68), and Swiss varieties of French an equivalent *ou bien* (Poirier 2008). They share a number of features, first among others that of not being essential to the immediate semantic content of the utterance: the truth value of the utterance is not influenced by the presence

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[4]Bao further observes that his Lexifier Filter can be seen in other properties of contact languages, such as word order, which tends to be dictated by the lexifier (2005:258).

or absence of these items. They are syntactically optional. More often than not, these particles are also associated, by the speech community in general, with the variety in which they are used: *like* is (or used to be, at least) a shibboleth of teenage speech[5] (Siegel 2002), *ou bien* is jocularly commented on by French speakers as being Swiss and, consequently, provincial, and overuse of question tags (particularly with first person referent) is typical of Estuary English (Crystal 1995:327). This element of public awareness plays also an important role in the case of particles in SgE.

3.2.1 Terminology and definition

When discussing what I call here *discourse particles*, a number of different terms are used in the literature, sometimes even by the same author. These terms, *discourse markers*, *discourse particles*, *pragmatic markers*, *pragmatic particles* are all used relatively interchangeably (Wouk 1999, Beeching 2002). The ambiguity is also observed in studies of SgE (Lim 2007:446): Ho and Platt (1993), Ler (2006), and Gupta (2006a) use *discourse particles*, whereas Gupta (1992) and Low and Brown (2005) use the term *pragmatic particles*. In all cases it is clear what is being discussed, but these terminological differences need to be addressed before proceeding to a more precise definition.

The reason for this variety of terminology is that it does not automatically follow that the interchangeable use of *particles* and *markers*, *pragmatic* and *discourse*, enjoys universal approval. Aijmer and Simon-Vandenbergen (2006:2–3), for instance, use *pragmatic marker* as a 'broad term', encompassing *discourse marker* which is reserved for coherence relations, but also covering markers of other dimensions of communication beside discourse, such as any part of an utterance that 'does not contribute to [its] propositional,

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[5]There are different uses for *like*; the one referred to here is that in 'She was like "Get out of here"' (Siegel 2002:37).

truth-functional content' (Aijmer and Simon-Vandenbergen 2006:2). The term *pragmatic* itself conveys the idea of a wider field than simply *discourse*. The relation between the two can be expressed in (9) below, where PM is the set of pragmatic markers and DM the set of discourse markers. In other words, PM is a proper superset of DM.

(9)   PM $\supsetneq$ DM

(10)   PM − DM

The elements in (10), i.e. those that are not members of DM but members of PM, comprise markers that are not primarily associated with discourse, but are 'signals in the communication situation guiding the addressee's interpretation', such as 'adverbial connectors and routines' (Aijmer and Simon-Vandenbergen 2006:2).

The other terminological point of contention is that of *particle* versus *marker*. Fischer (2006b:4) says that *particle* 'suggests a focus on small, uninflected words that are only loosely integrated into the sentence structure, if at all'. She further establishes that *particle* has the advantage of distinguishing between these items and larger strings, such as 'phrasal idioms, that fulfil similar functions' (2006b:4). Figure 3.5 below is from Fischer (2006b:7) and shows the extent to which *particles* and *markers* overlap. The diagram combines two approaches: a functional one (pragmatic vs discourse) and a formal one (lexicalised vs non-lexicalised items, with particles a subset of the former). Using set-theoretic notation, this illustration can provide a definition of *particle* and *marker*. In (11) below, DP stands for the set of discourse particles, DM for that of discourse markers, P for the set of particles, D for the set of 'items fulfilling discourse functions', and LI for the set of lexicalised items. In the words of Fischer, 'discourse markers may be both lexicalised, including particles, and non-lexicalised items that fulfil discourse functions' (2006:6), which
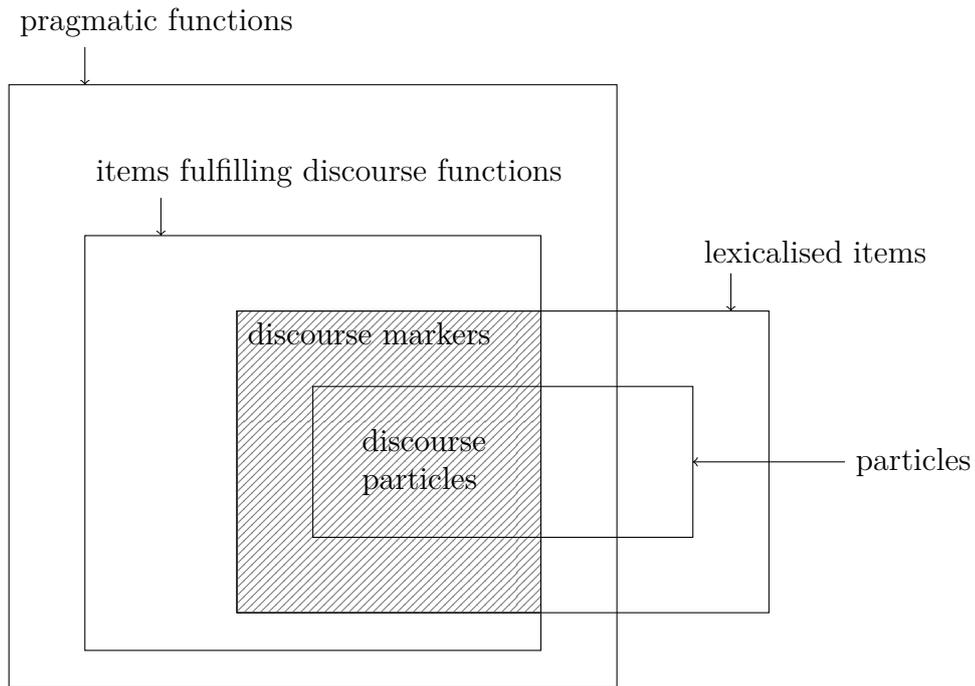
Figure 3.5: Discourse particles and discourse markers (adapted from Fischer 2006b:7).

is tantamount to saying that D is equal to DM. From this it follows that DP is a subset of DM, as formalised in (12).

(11)   DP = P ∩ D

         DM = D

         ⟹ DP = DM ∩ P

(12)   DP ⊊ DM

Discourse particles, in this analysis, are, therefore, lexicalised items that fulfil discourse functions, and which have the additional functional property of being particles, while *discourse markers* is the term used for any item fulfilling discourse functions, lexicalised or otherwise (thus including particles). Although not explicitly stated in Figure 3.5, *pragmatic markers*, in this view, would comprise all items fulfilling pragmatic functions (including all discourse

markers), whereas *pragmatic particles* would be all particles except those not fulfilling pragmatic functions. Table 3.3 below attempts to present these four terms in a more orderly manner.

Pragmatic markers	**Discourse markers**
Any item, lexicalised or otherwise, that fulfils pragmatic functions	Any pragmatic marker, lexicalised or otherwise, that fulfils discourse functions
Examples: Discourse makers but also adverbial connectors, reformulations, hesitations, restarts (Fischer 2006b:5)	Examples: Discourse particles but also Eng. *you know*, question tags, Ger. *nicht wahr*, Fr. *pour ainsi dire, tu vois comment*
Pragmatic particles	**Discourse particles**
Small, uninflected lexicalised items that fulfil pragmatic functions	Small, uninflected lexicalised items that fulfil discourse functions
Examples: Discourse particles but also Eng. *like*, Fr. *enfin* (Beeching 2001)	Examples: Eng. *well, like*, Ger. *eben, ja*, Fr. *donc, hein*, It. *cioè*

Table 3.3: Definitions of the various terms of *pragmatic/discourse markers/particles* (based on Aijmer and Simon-Vandenbergen 2006, Fischer 2006b).

While Table 3.3 brings some sort of order into what seemed a terminological muddle, it does not eliminate confusion completely: 'pragmatic functions' and 'discourse functions', for instance, are not explained. However, the four-way classification in Figure 3.5 takes into account that discourse particles are a subclass of both pragmatic particles and of discourse markers, and discourse markers are a subclass of pragmatic markers. (13) illustrates these relations in terms of sets, with the same abbreviations as above:

(13)   PM $\supsetneq$ DM   *pragmatic marker* encompasses *discourse marker*

      PP $\subsetneq$ PM   *pragmatic particle* is a subset of *pragmatic marker*

      DP $\subsetneq$ DM   *discourse particle* is a subset of *discourse marker*

      and DP $\subsetneq$ PP   *discourse particle* is a subset of *pragmatic particle*

For example, a lexical item such as English *well* is not only a discourse particle, but also a pragmatic particle, a discourse marker, and a pragmatic marker. This is a causal relationship that is illustrated in (14): here it is stipulated that if *well* is a member of the set of discourse particles, then it will also be a member of the set of pragmatic particles by virtue of the fact that the set of discourse particles is a proper subset of that of pragmatic particles. Similarly, *well* is a member of the set of discourse markers by the same implication. It is also a member of the set of pragmatic markers because this set is a proper superset of the set of discourse markers.

(14) $well \in \mathrm{DP}$

     $\Longrightarrow well \in \mathrm{PP}$ because $\mathrm{DP} \subsetneq \mathrm{PP}$

     $\Longrightarrow well \in \mathrm{DM}$ because $\mathrm{DP} \subsetneq \mathrm{DM}$

     $\Longrightarrow well \in \mathrm{PM}$ because $\mathrm{DM} \subsetneq \mathrm{PM}$

In view of the preceding analysis, and considering the status of SgE particles as members of DP (see next section), I shall follow in this thesis the practice that the majority of scholars on the variety (e.g. Ho and Platt 1993, Wee 2004, Gupta 2006a, Ler 2006) have established, and use the term *discourse particles*. It seems to be the one most suited in light of their discourse function and their syntactic properties, and also follows the definition given in Table 3.3: they are lexicalised, monosyllabic items fulfilling discourse functions.

3.2.2 Discourse particles in Singapore English

An overview of selected particles used in the empirical part of this thesis was given in section 2.2.2 (page 53). The point of this section here is not to repeat what was said there, but to give an overview of how the phenomenon has been analysed. Various approaches have been taken to analyse the grammatical class of what I termed earlier *discourse particles*. Thus Lim (2007)

analyses their structural and sociolinguistic etymology, while Ler (2006) takes a relevance-theoretic approach. Other approaches work within the frameworks of semantics and pragmatics (Gupta 1992, Wee 2004), Natural Semantic Metalanguage (Wong 1994), epistemic modality (Gupta 2006a), epistemic/deontic authority and illocutionary force (Kim and Wee 2009), language acquisition (Kwan-Terry 1991), or even cultural studies (Wong 2004). More general introductory works (such as Ho and Platt 1993, Wee 1998, Low and Brown 2005) usually limit themselves to a list of particles with their general semantic/pragmatic scope.

The discourse particles investigated here are of a special kind. While the English ones referred to above (*well*, *like*, etc.) are also part of the SgE system, they are not the ones that authors usually refer to when discussing SgE. (Even though at least Gupta (1992:38) explicitly acknowledges their presence, they are often overlooked.) Those particles that are of interest here are those that have their origin in a language other than English (for a list of particles, see Table 3.4 below) — for this reason they are treated here as a separate category. Gupta explains their different theoretical status with the fact that the first group (English-derived particles) exhibits different usage patterns across sociolects: these particles are not markers of either SSE or CSE, unlike the second group (substrate-derived particles). 'Thus,' she says, 'varietal distinction (as well as historical origin) justifies their separation' (Gupta 1992:38). Indeed, discourse particles such as the stereotypical *lah* (but also *lor*, *leh*, *ma*, etc., see Table 3.4) do not appear in SSE, and they are very obvious markers of CSE.

While sections 1.3.4 (page 20) and 2.2.2 (page 53) have already given a number of examples of particles, the ones in the examples below are given for easier reference and to illustrate them in context. In (15), *hor* is used to suggest a possible explanation for a given social pattern, and tries to elicit

support from the addressee. The exchange in (16) illustrates the use of *what*:
speaker 4's statement is contradicted by highlighting the perceived obviousness
of speaker 3's reasoning. This is then confirmed by speaker 1. Finally, (17)
exemplifies both *mah* and *lor*: *mah* is pointing to the obviousness of the reason
provided, and *lor* to the similarly straightforward information about grooming.
A mild sense of resignation is palpable.

(15)   Then there's another issue, if you marry later, woman tend to have
        more complicated pregnancies *hor*. (iii.I.dia.23)

(16)   4:   Wait wait wait. No money, wanna go everywhere

        3:   No, thousand two convert to Thai Baht is quite a lot *what*, in a
             way, really

        1:   Yeah, is about millions

        (ii.I.gr)

(17)   Because she wants to sing *mah*. So she want to [. . .] join to sing, so
        we just groom her *lor*. (ii.C.rm)

The origins of the particles (as they shall henceforth be called) lies undoubt-
edly in the substrate languages involved in the emergence of CSE (primarily
southern varieties of Chinese). While this view is now generally accepted (Lim
2007), some sources put forward alternative origins for individual particles —
sometimes, as Gupta puts it (1992, 1994), those varieties the researcher hap-
pens to know best (*lah* from Malay (Platt and Weber 1980), *ah* from Tamil
(Baskaran 1988), among others). The problem is, of course, that more than
one substrate language features particles similar in form and function. In an
attempt at a comprehensive account of the particles' history, Lim (2007:460–
461) gives a thorough overview of their counterparts in substrate languages,
noting similarities in form (such as CSE *lah* — Bazaar Malay *la* — Mandarin

la — Cantonese *la55/la33*,[6] or CSE *lor* — Hokkien *lo* — Cantonese *lo33/lo55* — Mandarin *luo*, etc.) and in pragmatic function (such as 'softens command', 'slightly exclamatory', 'indicates emphasis', 'marks a question with expectation of agreement', etc.). She further distinguishes segmental from suprasegmental form (tone). Her conclusion is that while at a superficial level, many similarities can be observed between substrate particles and CSE ones (Cantonese, in particular, appears to have a counterpart for all her eight CSE particles, but Bazaar Malay only two), at the suprasegmental level things are less straightforward: while the CSE particles carry tone (or are, at least, stressed), this is not the case for either Hokkien or Mandarin. She illustrates this with the example of *lor*, which has in Cantonese *lo33* a perfect counterpart in both tone and function (Lim 2007:463). The same can be said for *hor*, *leh*, *meh*, and *mah*. As far as the stereotypical *lah* is concerned, however, her analysis remains noncommittal and she acknowledges that Malay, Hokkien, and Cantonese are all 'likely sources' (Lim 2007:464) — which might have played an important role in re-enforcing the emerging CSE *lah*. Lim's is a much more careful approach than that taken by Kwan-Terry, who notes that 'a substantial proportion of the particles [used by her informant] in speaking Cantonese were also used when he spoke English, and for similar functions[, which] points clearly to the Chinese origin of these particles' (Kwan-Terry 1991:175). This slightly unsubstantiated claim is then somewhat put into perspective when she later concedes that 'one cannot conclude from this that [he] must have transferred these particles from the Cantonese he spoke to his English' (Kwan-Terry 1991:180). Nonetheless, she reaches the conclusion that her informant's order of acquisition of, in particular, the particle *hor*, 'definitely points to transfer from Cantonese to English' (1991:180).

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[6]Non-IPA tone marking scheme: 5 = high tone, 1 = low tone; thus 35 = high rising, 55 = high level. See Chao (1930).

The least obvious CSE particle is *what*, which, despite its phonetic and orthographic form,[7] is clearly unrelated to StBE *what* (even in its archaic form as an interjection, cf. 'Nice day, what?',[8] Gupta 1992:42), but has a correspondence in form in Cantonese *wo21* — the problem here is that the functions only partially overlap: in Cantonese it signals a noteworthy discovery, and in CSE, contradiction with a preceding statement (Gupta 1992:42, Lim 2007:464). A more satisfactory solution, Lim argues, would be to regard it as a calque on *ma* as used cross-linguistically in Chinese varieties, where it 'gives emphasis as well as reflects an enhanced degree of disapproval or even annoyance on the part of the speaker' (2007:464), thus having the same pragmatic qualities as CSE *what*.

A closer look at the semantic and pragmatic definitions of these particles is now warranted. The wealth of research published on the topic (see, inter alia, Platt 1987, Gupta 1992, Wong 1994, Wee 2004, Wong 2004, Gupta 2006a, Ler 2006, Lim 2007) makes for difficult choices as to which is the most appropriate. Despite Wong's valid objection about the less than ideal use of 'obscure metalanguage' (2004:749), Table 3.4 below nonetheless tries to summarise the major definitions given by a selection of authors (without necessarily endorsing them). There is of course a lot of overlap, but many authors have tried to find new ways in which to define them: while Gupta (1992) and Wee (2004) follow the traditional practice of using adjectives such as *assertive*, *obvious*, or *tentative*, Wong rejects this as imprecise and calls these definitions 'obscure metalinguistic statements' (2004:749), and provides definitions in Natural Semantic Metalanguage,[9] which, he claims, explains the actual semantic dimension of

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[7]See page 57 for alternative spellings, including the more phonemic ⟨wot⟩.

[8]In sense B.I.3. of the *Oxford English Dictionary* (2nd edition 1989).

[9]Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM), first developed by Wierzbicka (1972), is a minimalist metalanguage using a limited (but growing as the theory evolves) number of semantic primitives (or semantic primes) used for semantic analysis. These primitives, currently numbering around 60 and thought to be universal, constitute an 'irreducible core' which can be used to 'understand all complex thoughts and utterances' in a given language (Wierzbicka 1998:113). The way in which the primitives are combined follows precise rules, thus giving rise to something 'like a natural language in miniature' (Thornsteinsson 2008).

each particle more accurately. This is relevant in that it departs from seemingly subjective formulations such as 'more persuasive' (Lim 2007:460) and 'solidarity' (Wee 2004:125), or clumsy ones such as '*meh* signals to the hearer that an assumption recently manifest in the external environment challenges an existing one in the cognitive environment of the speaker' (Ler 2006:164).

The overview given in Table 3.4 also highlights the vast differences in scope of the various authors describing CSE particles. For example, Gupta (1992) lists eleven particles, Lim (2007) seven, and Ler (2006) only three. Not all of these studies purport to be exhaustive, and neither does this one: while Gupta's was primarily concerned with proposing a systemic analysis of all particles, Lim's is a much more diachronic account focussing on a smaller set. Ler, too, restricts herself to three particles, but subjects them to extensive analysis.

Part.	Platt (1987)	Kwan-Terry (1991)	Gupta (1992)	Wee (2004)	Wong (2004)	Ler (2006)	Lim (2007)
ah	a24 marks a question where the speaker is uncertain about the answer a22 marks a question with a definite answer/echo question	a21 in interrogatives: seeks confirmation (echo-questions)	1) punctuates an utterance, occurs mid-clause or between main and dependent clause in complex narratives 2) tentative, checking truth value of a statement				a24 signals continuation (in narratives or explanations) and keeps interlocutors in contact; softens command; marks a question expecting agreement a21 marks a question requiring response
geh			assertive; expresses a commitment that an interlocutor is expected to act upon				
hah		ha24 in declaratives/ imperatives: emphatic marker	question marker	1) marks wh or declarative question 2) asks for repetition of previous utterance			
hor	hŏ24 marks a question where the speaker is uncertain about the answer	hoh24 in interrogatives: solicits agreement or support	asserts and elicits support for a proposition	assertive; garners support		marks a question asserting a proposition and trying to garner support for the proposition	

Part.	Platt (1987)	Kwan-Terry (1991)	Gupta (1992)	Wee (2004)	Wong (2004)	Ler (2006)	Lim (2007)
lah	*la24* when the matter discussed is known to the addressee *la22* friendlier than *la24*, indicates information assumed to be new; of which the speaker is certain	*la33* in declaratives/imperatives: persuasive, 'convey[s] an attitude of acquiescence or concession' 1991:176	assertive; indicates the speaker's mood/attitude and appeals to addressee to accommodate	solidarity marker	*1) impositional* 1. I think something now 2. I think you don't think like this 3. I don't want this 4. I want you to think like this 5. I think if I say something, you can think like this 6. I say it now *2) propositional* 1. I think something now 2. I think you don't think like this 3. I think you could have thought like this before 4. I think it will be good if you think like this 5. I think if I say something, you can think like this 6. I say it now *3) persuasive* 1. I think something now 2. I think you don't think it is good to think like this 3. I don't want this 4. I think it will be good if you think like this 5. I think if I say something, you can think like this 6. I say it now	Any one of the following: 1) solidarity 2) emphasis 3) obviousness 4) persuasion 5) friendliness 6) hostility	draws attention to mood or attitude and appeals for accommodation; indicates solidarity, familiarity, informality *la24* is more persuasive *la21* is more matter-of-fact

Part.	Platt (1987)	Kwan-Terry (1991)	Gupta (1992)	Wee (2004)	Wong (2004)	Ler (2006)	Lim (2007)
leh	*le22* indicates disagreement with a suggestion; conveys information assumed to be new *le55* equivalent to 'what about'	*le33* in declaratives/imperatives: emphatic marker *le55* in interrogatives: turns an NP or a VP into a question	marks a tentative suggestion or request	tentative; softens a request or a command			marks a question involving comparison
lor	*lo22* used to 'put down' the addressee *lo55* indicates obviousness	*loh55* in declaratives/imperatives: indicates obviousness, concession	indicates obviousness or a sense of resignation	indicates obviousness or a sense of resignation			indicates a sense of obviousness as well as resignation
mah	*ma22* interchangeable with what; 'speech group marker' (basilectal/Chinese)	*ma33* in declaratives/imperatives: obviousness	indicates information as obvious	indicates obviousness			indicates obviousness
what	*what22* objection to an action or point of view of the addressee		indicates information as obvious	indicates obviousness and contradiction	1. something happened now 2. because of this, I think you think something 3. I say: you can't think like this 4. I can say why you can't think like this 5. I say it now		indicates that information is obvious, contradicting something previously asserted

Part.	Platt (1987)	Kwan-Terry (1991)	Gupta (1992)	Wee (2004)	Wong (2004)	Ler (2006)	Lim (2007)
meh			indicates scepticism	indicates scepticism	1. at a time before now, I thought something 2. something happened now 3. because of this, a) I think I can't think like this anymore b) I think I have to think like this (anaphoric component) 4. I don't know 5. I want to know 6. because of this, I want you to say something about it to me now	Various functions: 1) questions a presupposition 2) expresses surprise 3) means the opposite of what was thought to be true	marks a question involving scepticism
na			used for rebukes				

Table 3.4: Definitions of CSE particles by various authors.

Notes:

- particles are listed alphabetically based on the spellings given in section 2.2.2

- spellings within the table follow those used by the respective author

- verbatim NSM definitions from Wong (2004:passim)

- verbatim definitions from Lim (2007:460–461)

- shaded areas indicate particles not addressed by the author in question

Another way of looking at CSE particles is given in Gupta (1992), where she analyses them as a system. The particles are displayed on a 'scale of assertiveness' (1992:37), hierarchically progressing from least assertive ('tentative') to most assertive ('contradictory'). Her scale is reproduced here in Figure 3.6: *ah*, *hah*, and *hor* are the tentative particles, *lor*, *lah*, *na*, *leh*, *geh*, and *meh* the assertive ones. Together, they form the group of 'directive' particles. Finally, *what* and *mah* are contradictory particles.

This latter group of contradictory particles are used to 'explicitly contradict something a prior speaker has said' (Gupta 1992:37), while the assertive particles 'express speakers' positive commitment to what they are saying', and the tentative ones 'offer a less positive commitment'. While this approach has again the drawback of using relatively undefined metalanguage, having a scale of only four terms makes it a workable system. Similarly, the hierarchical placement on a single scale of assertiveness is enlightening in that it puts forward an inherent relationship between the particles themselves: rather than being randomly borrowed from substrate languages, they seem to fulfil, in the view proposed here, the purpose of a complete set of discourse particles. This would link Gupta's (1992) scale with Bao's (2005) system transfer (in his case with regard to the aspect system), but also to Lim (2007:463), who sees in at least some of the particles (cf. page 83 above) the 'wholesale importing [of] an entire functional category'. Gupta however does not make any such claim, and limits herself to providing a framework within which the particles can be analysed as part of a coherent system. It should be noted here that she is also the only one to mention the particle *geh*, which is classed, together with *leh*, as 'maximally assertive' (1992:42). This typically Cantonese particle does not seem to enjoy wide currency among CSE speakers (Koh, p.c. March 2008), and it did not occur in this study.
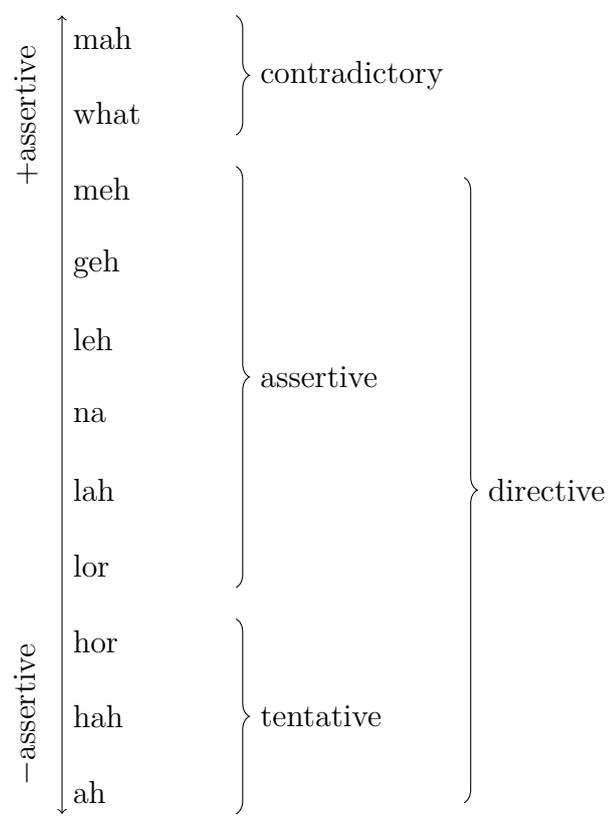
Figure 3.6: Gupta's scale of assertiveness (1992:37).

The hierarchical arrangement of Figure 3.6 does not mean that there is no overlap between particles. *Lah*, for instance, 'covers the full range within the assertive continuum (Gupta 1992:42). Similarly, *mah* and *what* are not distinguished functionally. This analysis is similar to those of others (Wong 2004, Ler 2006, Lim 2007) who regard particularly the particle *lah* as fulfilling different semantic and pragmatic functions (see Table 3.4). While Lim considers various tone patterns to account for these different functions, she acknowledges (2007:463) that tonal distinctions may be lost over time 'as they become more fully assimilated into' SgE. This will ultimately result in the picture presented by Ler (2006) and Wong (2004), where *lah* is simply treated as a single particle taking on various functions.[10] With regard to *mah* and *what*, however, Gupta (1992) fails to make the distinction that other authors do (Wee 2004, Lim 2007), who tend to note an additional dimension to *what*: while *mah* simply marks information as obvious, *what* is said to contain an element of contradiction in addition to marking obviousness.

The approach of Platt (1987) also merits some scrutiny. He identifies a three-way tone distinction — rising (24), high (55), and low (22) — and has many of his particles take on two tones. These are then used to explain the various functions they fulfil. As with Gupta (1992), there is some overlap in the particles' functions: *a24* and *ho24* are said to be equivalent, as are *ma22* and *what22*. In this latter case, however, he considers *ma22* to be a marker of the basilectal varieties, as well as an ethnic marker in that he only found it in ethnic Chinese speakers of CSE (a finding that was not replicated in this study: Indians used it as well). At a phonetic level (and in agreement with Gupta (1992)), he defines *hor* as being [hɔ̃] (as reflected in his spelling ⟨hõ⟩). Certainly the degree of nasalisation of this vowel is not as high as its French equivalent, but a slight nasal quality to it can clearly be perceived.

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[10]Even though usually considered void of tone, which is not phonemic in SgE, the final particles are clearly subject to overall prosodic patterns, and can be seen as continuing the utterance intonation.

Whether this warrants a different spelling than the more usual ⟨hor⟩ is, of course, debatable.

This section has addressed a number of points about the nature of discourse particles in SgE. After the terminological issues addressed in the preceding section were resolved, it set out to discuss, above all, the semantic and pragmatic functions of the particles, and gave an overview of how the phenomenon has been approached by various authors. Before a short summary, it should be noted that the second paragraph of this section already identified a key feature of the particles: as far as this thesis is concerned, the fact that discourse particles in SgE are part of CSE rather than SSE is of much higher importance than their actual pragmatic dimension, since they will serve as diagnostic features of the colloquial variety. Notwithstanding the arguments of Platt (1987) regarding *mah* and *what* as marking different sociolects — a point that no other author addresses, and not completely borne out in this study either — they can be treated as a single sociolinguistic variable, at least with regard to the stylistic variation this thesis is investigating. In view of these points, and as a reminder of what has already been established in section 2.2.2 (page 53), this thesis retains nine of the eleven particles listed in Table 3.4: *ah*, *hah*, *hor*, *lah*, *leh*, *lor*, *mah*, *meh*, and *what*. *Geh* is not considered because of its questionable status as a CSE particle (see above), and *na* could not be used because it did not appear anywhere in the recordings.

3.3 Existential constructions

Existential constructions are constructions which stipulate the existence or non-existence of something: a typical example is the English [*there*+BE](x), as exemplified in (18) below. Its semantic meaning is one of existential quantification, phrased 'there exists x', or $\exists x$ in predicate logic notation. Similar

constructions occur in French (*il y a*), Italian (*c'è*), German (*es gibt*), or Welsh (*mae 'na*), where in each case an expletive pronoun (*il/c'/es/'na*) co-occurs with a copular verb (French *avoir* 'to have', Italian *essere* 'to be', German *geben* 'to exist', Welsh *bod* 'to be') to form an existential construction which takes the NP following it as its argument (cf. (19)). This is by no means universal; other languages operate differently (see next section specifically for Chinese), and simply use a verb denoting existence, as in the examples in (20). This may be due to the pro-drop properties of the languages affected.

(18)   a.   There's a problem.

       b.   There are no problems.

(19)   a.   Il y a un problème.   [French]

       b.   C'è un problema.   [Italian]

       c.   Es gibt ein Problem.   [German]

       d.   Mae 'na broblem.   [Welsh]

(20)   a.   wilik-∅   xunlax ri-haʔlak'un.   [Poqomchí]
            exist-3SG eleven 3SG.POSS-child
            'He has eleven children.', lit. 'There exist eleven of his children.'

       b.   Yǒu wèntí.   [Mandarin]
            have problem
            'There is a problem.'

       c.   Ada masalah.   [Malay]
            be   problem
            'There is a problem.'

       d.   Obstaja-∅   problem.   [Slovenian]
            exist-N.3SG problem
            'There is a problem.'

The main function of the expletive pronoun + copula construction, in those languages that have it, is to provide a subject and a verb for the statement. It is generally accepted that the expletives under consideration here are non-argumental ('pure expletives' in Lasnik's (1995) terms): *there* (and *il, c'*, and

es) does not add to the truth value of the sentence, and is non-referential in that there is no antecedent with which it would be in anaphoric relation. The copula too appears to 'do little more than host tense and agreement' (Cann 2007:13). Nonetheless, both are necessary constituents of the construction. A simple way to test this is to delete *there*+BE in the examples in (18) and (19): the resulting strings in (21) are not felicitous.

(21)   a. *∅ a problem.

        b. ?∅ no problems.

        c. *∅ un problème.

        d. *∅ un problema.

        e. *∅ ein Problem.

        f. *∅ problem.

(22)   [There is]/*∅ no satisfactory solution to the problem at hand.

The special case of (21b), which is acceptable in colloquial speech (also in other languages: *kein Problem*, etc.), seems to stem from two points: firstly, it is the predicate nominal of a negated existential construction (cf. *no idea*), and secondly, there is an idiomatic dimension to it. These do not pose a serious problem to our analysis here. A good way of showing the limited validity of examples of this kind is to test it with a longer string, as in (22), which results in ungrammaticality. This then goes to show that the only reason for the presence of *there* is to function as an overt subject for the sentence. It is the copula which stipulates existence (particularly apparent from the Poqomchí example in (20a)), and except in some rare cases denoting negative existence, it cannot be dropped. The formulation in (23) below summarises the way this thesis looks at constructions of this kind.

(23)   [PRONOUN_EXPLETIVE + COPULA (NEG)] + PREDICATE_NOMINAL

This same construction is also used for locative expressions in many languages. Here, however, the cross-linguistic examples from (19) above cannot be fully reproduced: while certain languages (such as those in (24a–d) and (24f–g)) employ the same construction in both existentials and locatives, Standard German can use *geben* 'to give' only in pure existentials, and not in locatives, as illustrated in (24e). (A different verb *haben* 'to have' for locatives can be used in certain regional varieties such as Southern German dialects and Swiss German.) This is of no consequence here (since English, Chinese (cf. next section), and SgE all have the same construction for both meanings) other than to underline the semantic difference between the two.

(24) a. There's a book on the table. [English]

   b. Il y a un livre sur la table. [French]

   c. C'è un libro sul tavolo. [Italian]

   d. Mae 'na lyfr ar y bwrdd. [Welsh]

   e. (i) *Es gibt ein Buch auf dem Tisch. [German]

      (ii) %Es hat ein Buch auf dem Tisch.

      (iii) Da ist ein Buch auf dem Tisch.

   f. wilik-∅   ši:w' ri-haʔlak'un   pan ri-pa:t. [Poqomchí]
      exist-3SG three 3SG.POSS-son in 3SG.POSS-house
      'There are three of her children in the house.'

   g. Ada sebuah buku di meja. [Malay]
      be   a   book on table
      'There is a book on the table.'

3.3.1 *Yǒu*-constructions in Chinese

In Mandarin there is no expletive in existential constructions. (25a) illustrates such a construction (being the interrogative form of the statement in (20b) above), and (25b) possible responses to it.

(25) a. Yǒu wèntí ma?
          have problem INTERR
          'Is there a problem/are there any problems?'

      b. (i)   Yǒu.
                have
                'There is.'

          (ii) Méi yǒu.
                NEG have
                'There isn't.'

The Chinese verb *yǒu* 'to have' takes on the function of establishing existence,[11] similar to the *there*+BE construction in English. The same can then be reused in answers, either alone for affirmation (25b.i), or negated (25b.ii). Tsai (2003) identifies three types of combinations in which *yǒu* can occur: on its own introducing an NP (see (26a)), with an attached determiner preceding the NP (as in (26b)), and with an adjoined classifier (optionally preceded by a numeral) to achieve specific plurality (see (26c)).

(26) a. Yǒu rén lái le.
          have person come INC
          'There is someone coming./There are people coming.'

      b. Yǒu de rén lái le.
          have DET person come INC
          'Some of the people are coming.'

      c. Yǒu (yī) xiē rén lái le.
          have one CLF person come INC
          'Some people are coming.'

      (adapted from Tsai 2003:161)

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[11]Note that *yǒu* is also used to mark the perfective (see section 3.1.2 (page 68) and Bao 2005), in which case it is followed by a VP rather than an NP.

In each of these cases, *yǒu* 'to have' opens the sentence and serves to assert the existence of its sister node. In the presentational type (26a) it 'counts as a sentential unselective binder' (Tsai 2003:162), which essentially means that it works as an operator topicalising the existence of the NP following it. In the partitive function of (26b) and in the specific plural construction of (26c), however, *yǒu* is treated as a determiner (Tsai 2003:162). This syntactic distinction is important to explain the shift in meaning in the examples in (26): as is apparent from the glosses, *yǒu* on its own has quite a different scope from *yǒu-de* or *yǒu-*(NUM-)CLF. While in the first case it simply states existence of *rén lái le*, in (26b) the focus is on the fact that there exist at least two *rén* who *lái le* (as indicated by the quantifier *some* in the gloss). In (26c), *yǒu* is followed by an optional numeral and a classifier: here the existence of a certain number of *rén lái le* can be asserted. Tsai analyses this as 'specific plurality' (2003:161), since *xiē* (些) is always plural. This need however not be the case: example (27) shows a sentence where the numeral used is again *yī*, but the classifier has been changed to *ge*. From this it is clear that there is one and only one *rén* that *hěn xǐhuan nǐ*. Similarly, substituting *yī* for *liù*, for instance, would mean six and only six persons.

(27) Yǒu yī ge rén   hěn xǐhuan ní.
      have one CLF person very like   you
      'There is a person who likes you very much.'

      (Hu and Pan 2007:133)

As far as locatives are concerned, Chinese follows the pattern established for English and other languages in (24). Example (28) shows the use of *yǒu* to this effect: this mirrors the usage of *there*+BE in English and as discussed above, the boundary between locatives and existentials is fuzzy. In fact, (28) would be a perfectly grammatical existential if the locative element was dropped. This raises the question whether a distinction between the two is warranted, at least

in Mandarin. As will become apparent in the next section, the similarities between existentials and locatives (in both English and Chinese) have had a deep impact on their counterparts in SgE.

(28) Zhuō shàng yǒu yī běn shū.
      table on   have one CLF book
      'There is a book on the table.'

      (Hu and Pan 2007:133)

3.3.2 *Got*-constructions in Singapore English

Consider the examples in (29), which show the use of *got* in existentials (29a) and locatives (29b) in SgE.

(29)   a.   Got problem.
       b.   Got a book on the table.

There is here a striking resemblance to the *yǒu* construction of Mandarin: except for the syntactic placement of the locative element in (29b), both examples appear as nearly perfect calques of (20) and (28) respectively, with *yǒu* becoming *got* in SgE. On the other hand, it is perfectly possible to analyse (29) as based on English: *got* could well be seen as an equivalent of *there*+BE. The occurrence of this construction did not escape the notice of early scholars (such as, among others, Tongue 1974, Platt and Weber 1980), but in-depth investigations were limited to later theses such as that of Teo (1995), to whose analysis I shall return. First, however, a distinction must be made between *got* as the past tense of SSE *get* and *got* as the CSE lexical verb: while the former fulfils possessive functions (as in StBE), the latter can fulfil both possessive and existential-locative functions. This multiplicity of functions for the same phonetic form makes an analysis difficult, yet eminently necessary.

With regards to *got* in CSE, Teo (1995:20–22) identifies the following functions: possessive (30a), existential (30b), past tense of SSE *get* (either 'received' (30c.i) or 'purchased' (30c.ii)), passive (30d), emphatic marker (30e), auxiliary in questions and as pro-form in answers (30f). I will present each of these in the rest of this section.

(30) a. That cat got so many babies!

    b. This place got so many people, we go somewhere else lah.

    c. (i) I got a letter from my friend in Australia.

       (ii) I got a new car just yesterday!

    d. I got cheated by that man.

    e. A: You never study for your exam, hah?

       B: Who say I never? I got study!

    f. A: You got do your homework?

       B: I got.

    (all from Teo 1995:20–22)

Existence and possession

In the case of *got*+NP, Teo (1995:27) treats existential and possessive functions as broadly equivalent for three reasons: firstly, they share the same syntactic structure, secondly, *got* is not used as the past tense of *get* — and is thus a distinct lexical verb — and thirdly, in both cases, something is claimed to

exist. Take the examples in (31) below, which illustrate this equivalence in form and function:

(31) a. [$_{\text{LOCUS}}$ That car] got [$_{\text{REFERENT}}$ no owner]

  b. [$_{\text{LOCUS}}$ That man] got [$_{\text{REFERENT}}$ two dogs].

In both cases, the subject NP is the locus of the expression, and the object NP is the referent. However, (31a) is existential in nature, and (31b) possessive: it is clear that in the first case, the non-existence of the owner is stipulated, whereas in the second case, the two dogs are in a relation of possession with *that man.* Teo (1995:27) explains this with the position of the locus on a scale of animacy: *got* is existential in (31a) because *that car* is inanimate, and (31b) is possessive because *that man* is animate. In the case of a referent NP that is animate as well, as in (31b), the possessive prevails if the locus is 'higher' on the animacy scale than the referent (with the assumption that [+human] entails higher animacy than [−human]). Additionally, in the case of loci and referents that have the same [±animate] value, the result is a possessive. This can be formalised as follows:

(32) $\text{LOCUS}_{[+\text{animate}]}$ got $\text{REFERENT}_{[-\text{animate}]} \longrightarrow$ possessive

  $\text{LOCUS}_{[-\text{animate}]}$ got $\text{REFERENT}_{[+\text{animate}]} \longrightarrow$ existential

  $\text{LOCUS}_{[+\text{animate}]}$ got $\text{REFERENT}_{[+\text{animate}]} \longrightarrow$ possessive

  $\text{LOCUS}_{[-\text{animate}]}$ got $\text{REFERENT}_{[-\text{animate}]} \longrightarrow$ possessive

That this analysis works well can be shown by means of permutation tests. In the examples below, (33a) and (33b) are the same as (31a) and (31b) respectively, and show their outcomes in terms of the nature of the utterance; (33c) features a [+human] locus and a [+human] referent, which results in a possessive, as does (33d), which has two [−animate] arguments. These outcomes are according to the generalisations made in (32).

(33) a. That car$_{[-animate]}$ got no owner$_{[+animate]}$. $\longrightarrow$ existential

   b. That man$_{[+human]}$ got two dogs$_{[-human]}$. $\longrightarrow$ possessive

   c. That man$_{[+human]}$ got two daughters$_{[+human]}$. $\longrightarrow$ possessive

   d. That car$_{[-animate]}$ got three wheels$_{[-animate]}$ only. $\longrightarrow$ possessive

In a related case of *got* usage, but this time followed by an AP, Teo (1995:30) notes that while it cannot act as a copula (as in (34)), it can occur in interrogatives challenging a previous statement, as in B's rebukes in (35). Here it fulfils an existential function: the post-*got* AP's existence is questioned. Note that *where got*, as explained in a later subsection, does not carry any locative meaning.

(34) *That girl got pretty.

(35) A: Your skirt is so red!

   B: Where got red? *or* Got red meh?

   (Teo 1995:30)

Auxiliary *got*

Got in SgE can also work as an auxiliary verb, in which case it functions primarily either as an emphatic marker (when followed by a verb in its base form), or as a marker of the passive (when followed by a past participle). An example of the first use is given in (36a), and one of the passive usage in (37). Teo (1995:36) notes that in the case of the emphatic, *got* can only be used in contradicting replies to polar interrogatives, such that the reply in (36b) is ungrammatical. A similar constraint applies for the passive marker, which cannot collocate with *before*, an 'experiential marker'.

(36) a. A: You didn't do your homework, right?

      B: I got do my homework!

     b.   A: Did you hate pop music?

          B: *I got hate pop music!

(37)   I got beaten by that man. (1995:36)

Got does fulfil other functions as an auxiliary verb (Teo 1995:44–46): with dynamic verbs, it can indicate the present habitual (38a), a specific past reference (38b), or the past habitual (38c), whereas with stative verbs, only the past habitual (39) reading is felicitous (provided a specific time reference is given).

(38)   a.   You got play the piano every day?

        b.   You got see your supervisor yesterday?

        c.   Last year, you got swim every day?

        (Teo 1995:46)

(39)   When you were young, you got like cats? (Teo 1995:44–45)

Got as pro-form

When *got* is the main verb, it can stand as PRO for the VP that contains an NP: in other words, when *got* is the main verb, its object NP can be dropped. In these cases, Teo (1995:53) considers *got* a pro-form. However, this can only happen in given contexts, namely in possessives (40a), existentials (40b), and in cases when *got* carries the meaning of 'received' (40c). If *got* is used to mean 'purchased', the construction cannot be subjected to this (40d).

(40)   a.   I got a car leh! You got (a car) or not?

        b.   A: Got keys inside the drawer or not?

   B: Got.

   c.   A: You got a letter from the department, is it?

        B: Ya, I got.

   d.   A: You got the car yesterday, is it?

        B: Yes I got it yesterday./*Yes I got.

(Teo 1995:53–54)

However when *got* is an auxiliary verb, it can work as PRO for the entire VP, including the main verb: example (41a) can stand for any of (41b–d). On the other hand, *got* as pro-form is impossible for passive constructions (as in (42)).

(41)   a.   I got.

       b.   I got swim every day.   [present habitual]

       c.   I got swim yesterday.   [specific past reference]

       d.   I got swim every day, last year.   [past habitual]

(42)   A: You got beaten, is it?

       B: Ya, I got beaten./*Ya, I got.

       (1995:36)

Got in wh-expressions

There are two distinct types of *got* usage in wh-expressions. The first is unremarkable and simply involves putting any of the previously-discussed instances of *got*-constructions into a wh framework. The examples below illustrate this for the existential (43a), possessive (43b), passive (43c), and emphatic (43d). They illustrate the same process of wh-formation as found in StBE.

(43)   a.   When got holiday?

          b.   Who got computer?

          c.   The man when got killed?

          d.   Who got eat the cake?

          (Teo 1995:56–58)

The second type involves the collocation *where got*, which has a number of possible readings. Teo (1995:59–61) lists three of them: (i) formation of a genuine question (least frequent; equivalent to the first type illustrated in (43)), (ii) expression of a challenge or a difference of opinion (in response to a proposition), and (iii) expression of a difference of opinion coupled with a question (thus a combination of (i) and (ii)). The first of these implies an existential/locative reading of *got*, as exemplified in (44a). In passives, the construction is possible only with an embedded subject: (44b.ii) would be ungrammatical. As Teo points out, this reading of *where got* is least common (1995:59).

(44)   a.   A: Where got books on painting?

                B: I don't know. In the library, perhaps?

          b.   (i)   Where you got beaten? [i.e. physical location on body]

               (ii) *You where got beaten?

          (Teo 1995:60)

The second reading of *where got* is that of a challenge or an expression of a difference of opinion, with respect to a previous proposition. *Where got* must here be analysed as a single constituent: '*got* is not a verb' (Teo 1995:61). As is apparent from (45) below, a possible analysis could be that *where got* questions the existence of its argument; if anything, however, the question is

rhetorical — in (45c), there is no sense of an enquiry about particular features of the object.

(45) a. A: I do my homework already.

  B: You where got do?/*Where you got do?

  b. A: Why don't you go and do some volunteer work?

  B: (I) where got time?/*Where I got time?

  c. A: That girl is pretty.

  B: Where got pretty?

(Teo 1995:61)

A combination of the first two readings of *where got* can be achieved, and results in a challenge or an expression of scepticism, coupled with a request for information. Teo (1995:61) gives the examples in (46) to illustrate this. The rebuke of B in (46a) carries both a degree of scepticism ('What do you mean, it's dirty?'), and a genuine question ('Where so?'). Similarly, in (46b), A's alleged sighting of a local TV actress provokes in B both scepticism and enquiry.

(46) a. A: Your shirt is so dirty.

  B: Where got dirty?

  b. A: Look! Zoe Tay's over there!

  B: Where got?

(Teo 1995:61)

Summary

At this stage it is useful to summarise the different uses of *got* in SgE. They are listed in Table 3.5 overleaf according to their occurrence in SSE or CSE.

Possible origins

Before closing this section on *got*-constructions in SgE, I shall briefly consider Teo's (1995:67–76) cross-linguistic investigation into their possible origins. There are three languages which need attention: English, the lexifier, and Chinese (Hokkien) and Malay, the main substrate languages. It is probably uncontroversial to say that those constructions classified as SSE in Table 3.5 above have their origin in English. It is the CSE ones that pose some interesting challenges. In the case of the possessive, Teo (1995:67) notes that the English construction [S HAVE *got*], often shortened to [S'VE *got*], may have been reanalysed as [S *got*] — possibly because of the weak phonetic value of the 'VE element.[12] This valid point explains well how 'I've got a car' could become 'I got a car'. English may also have had some influence in the case of the *got*-passive: *got* is a possible passive marker in StBE, albeit only in non-stative verbs. Consequently, BE-passives in StBE cannot be rendered in CSE with *got*, as illustrated in (47). This explains why *got*-passives in SgE are always in the realm of SSE.

(47)   a.   John was liked by everyone.   [StBE]

        b.   *John got liked by everyone.   [CSE]

        (Teo 1995:69)

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[12]Consider:

I have got	$\longrightarrow$	I've got	[aɪv gɒt]
you have got	$\longrightarrow$	you've got	[juːv gɒt]
he/she/it has got	$\longrightarrow$	he's/she's/it's got	[hiːz/ʃiːz/ɪts gɒt]
we have got	$\longrightarrow$	we've got	[wiːv gɒt]
they have got	$\longrightarrow$	they've got	[ðeiv gɒt]

SSE	CSE
A. Past tense of *get* 'I got him a glass of water.'	A. Possessive 'He got three cars.'
B. Receive 'He got a first for his essay.'	B. Existential 'Got more than one solution to this problem.'

C. Purchase 'I got myself a new car.'	C. In questions: auxiliary
	(i) with dynamic V
	    a. present habitual (38a)
	    b. specific past reference (38b)
	    c. past habitual (38c)
	(ii) with stative V: past habitual (39)
	In non-questions: emphatic (36)

D. Passive marker 'That man got beaten badly.'	D. *where got*:
	(i) genuine question
	    a. *where got*+NP: questions the location of the NP (41–42a)
	    b. *where got*+V-*en* (embedded subject): location of the action (42b)
	(ii) challenge to a proposition (45)
	(iii) combined challenge and question (46a–b)

Table 3.5: Summary of *got*-constructions in SgE.

The Hokkien influence on *got*-constructions is of course much more important. *Got* in CSE has a lot in common with Mandarin *yǒu* (see previous section) and Hokkien *wu*. The examples below show the Hokkien and Mandarin constructions for possessives (48a), existentials (48b), auxiliaries (48c), and the emphatic (48d).

(48)   a.   Waʔ wu   tsʰia.[13]
            Wǒ   yǒu   chē.
            1SG   GOT car
            'I have a car.' (33b)

     b.   Tsitdao wu   tsin tsuei laŋ.
            Zhèli   yǒu hēn duō   rén.
            here   GOT very many people
            'There are a lot of people here.' (33a)

     c.   Lu   wu   paʔ madzoŋ bo?
            Nǐ   yǒu   wán májiàng ma?
            2SG GOT play mahjong Q
            'Do you play mahjong?/Did you play mahjong?' (38a)

     d.   (i)   Lu   wu   tsuo lu-ei   koŋkʰo   bo?
                  Nǐ   yǒu zuò nǐ-de   gōngzuò   ma?
                  2SG GOT do   2SG-POSS homework Q
                  'Did you do your homework?'

        (ii)   Waʔ wu   (tso).
                 Wǒ   yǒu   (zuò).
                 1SG   GOT   (do)
                 'I did (do).' (30f)

     (Teo 1995:71–73)

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[13]In the absence of a standard system for the transcription of Singapore Hokkien, examples here are transcribed as in Teo (1995).

The fourth line of each of the above examples contains a reference to similar constructions in CSE, introduced in previous sub-sections. All Hokkien/ Mandarin examples but those in (48d.ii) seem to have exact calques in CSE. There is little doubt that the substrate was heavily involved in providing the structure for the emerging variety. The *yǒu/wu* element, here glossed as GOT (and usually translated as 'to have', in recognition of its possessive and existential function), behaves in a strikingly similar way to *got* in the CSE examples earlier on. A look at equivalents of the *where got* construction confirms this first impression: the Hokkien *doloʔ wu* seems to be the origin of the CSE construction.

(49) a. Yiʔ doloʔ-wu tsʰia.
          3SG WH-GOT car
          '[I] don't think he/she has a car.'

      b. *Doloʔ yiʔ wu   tsʰia.
          WH   3SG GOT car

      (Teo 1995:74)

The sentence in (49a) is reminiscent of (45c): *doloʔ wu* indicates scepticism, and certainly has no locative reading to it. Note too how the element is a single entity and cannot accept embedded subjects (49b), as in CSE (45b).

The other main substrate language, Malay, can also be shown to have similarities with CSE at a structural level. Here the verb *ada* 'to have' fulfils possessive functions (50a), existential functions (50b), and works as an auxiliary (50c). Unlike *got*, however, 'ada cannot refer to specific past in the absence of adverbials' (Teo 1995:76). It also cannot occur with stative verbs, which leads Teo to conclude that the influence of Hokkien might have been a more likely source, at least as far as the auxiliary is concerned.

(50) a. Saya ada dua adek.
          1SG GOT two sister
          'I have two sisters.'

      b. Ada banyak orang.
          GOT many   people
          'There are many people here.'

      c. Awak ada main tenis.
          2SG   GOT play tennis
          'Do you play tennis?/Did you play tennis?'

      (Teo 1995:75–76)

Malay also has a parallel to *where got* and *dolo? wu*, namely *mana ada*, which translates as 'where+HAVE', and works in exactly the same way as the other two (51) except that it is never used for genuine questions (Teo 1995:76). Teo also reports some Hokkien speakers using *mana wu* interchangeably with *dolo? wu*.

(51) Harga mana-ada naik?
      price WH-GOT rise
      'I don't think the price has risen.'

As a final note, an interesting difference occurs in emphatics: while both CSE *got* and Hokkien *wu* (and Mandarin *yǒu*) fulfil this function (see page 103 above), *ada* does not. This seems to result in an ethnically diverse treatment of the CSE emphatic: in Teo's study, Malay informants were less willing than Chinese ones to use *got* for emphatic responses (1995:76).

In conclusion, the evidence presented by Teo (1995:67–76), and reinforced by Bao (2005:247), seems to clearly suggest an origin of the various CSE usages of *got* in the substrate languages, first and foremost Chinese (Hokkien), but also, to an only slightly lesser extent, Malay. Unsurprisingly, *got* as used

in StBE is also found in SSE usage. In the light of this evidence, and leaving Malay aside for now, one is reminded of the system transfer affecting CSE's aspect system (cf. Bao 2005 and section 3.1.3 on page 73): all instances of *yǒu/wu*-constructions in Mandarin/Hokkien seem to have been carried over into CSE, and to have been relexified as *got*. *Got* then took on these CSE functions in addition to the meaning it brought with it from the lexifier, resulting in the inventory given in Table 3.5.

Chapter 4

Sociolinguistic typology

SOCIOLINGUISTIC typology has been primarily concerned with describing the nature of language use within a given speech community. Its aim is the classification of speech communities (itself a problematic concept, see Gumperz 1982, Hymes 1972, Romaine 1994, Holmes and Meyerhoff 1999, inter alia) into various categories defined, for example, by the number of languages used, their function, their distribution, or their relative importance within the speech community. The scale at which these descriptions take place is usually the nation-state, as a convenient entity within which to observe linguistic variation. For example, Ferguson (1966) and Stewart (1968) focus mostly on the definition of somewhat arithmetic formulæ to show the multilingualism of a given country, emphasising, more often than not, post-colonial situations. Ferguson (1966:310–312), for instance, defined a number of characteristics for each of the languages used in a particular polity — language size ('major', 'minor', and 'of special status'), language type ('vernacular', 'standard', 'classical', 'pidgin', and 'creole'), and language function ('fulfilling a group function', 'official use', 'wider communication', 'educational', 'religious', 'international', and 'school subject') — these terms would then be abbreviated and strung together to give the complete sociolinguistic picture of the nation-state or polity under

investigation. In an example reprinted in Fasold (1984:63), Ferguson gives the formula for the country of Paraguay as (1), the reading of which is rendered in (2).

(1)   Paraguay: 3L = 2Lmaj(So,Vg)+0Lmin+1Lspec(Cr)

(2)   'Paraguay has three languages, of which two are major languages, one a standard language fulfilling the official function and the other a vernacular fulfilling the group function, none are minor languages, and one is a language of special status, a classical language fulfilling the religious function.'
(Fasold 1984:63)

These formulæ were then revisited and extended by Stewart (1968:537–541), who found Ferguson's inventory of language types insufficient. He adds two language types (which he calls 'dialect' and 'artificial language') and three language functions ('provincial', i.e. official at a sub-national level, 'capital', i.e. dominant in the nation's capital, and 'literary'). His language types are formally defined by means of what he calls *attributes*, of which there are four:

1. Standardisation: 'the codification and acceptance of a designated set of norms for correct usage',

2. Autonomy: 'the status of a linguistic system as independent — one that does not have to be referred to in connection with another language',

3. Historicity: 'the acceptance of the language variety as one that developed normally over time', and

4. Vitality: 'the existence of an unisolated community of native speakers of the language variety'.

   (Stewart 1968:534–536)

These attributes are then used to define language types, as illustrated in Table 4.1. Stewart (1968:542) replaces Ferguson's 'major' and 'minor' languages with 'classes', which give a more accurate impression of the number

Standardisation	Autonomy	Historicity	Vitality	Type
+	+	+	+	Standard (S)
+	+	+	−	Classical (C)
+	+	−	−	Artificial (A)
−	+	+	+	Vernacular (V)
−	−	+	+	Dialect (D)
−	−	−	+	Creole (K)
−	−	−	−	Pidgin (P)

Table 4.1: Attributes used to define language types (adapted from Stewart 1968:537).

of speakers of individual languages: if a language is in 'Class I', it is spoken (natively or otherwise) by over 75 % of the population, and if it is in 'Class VI', it is spoken by less than 5 %. By way of an illustration, (3) is how Stewart (1968:544) typifies the linguistic ecology of the island of Curaçao (Netherlands Antilles) in this system: Papiamentu is a creole (K) spoken by over 75 % of the population (Class I) which is in a diglossic relationship (d) with its H counterpart, Spanish. Spoken by 10 %–25 % of the population (Class IV), Dutch is an official (o) standard (S), and English is an exonormative standard (S$_x$) fulfilling functions as an international language (i), as a 'specific sociocultural group['s]' language (g) (Fasold 1984:63), and as a school subject language (s). Spanish, which is in a diglossic relationship with Papiamentu, is spoken by 5 %–10 % (Class V), and is a standard (S) used for international communication (i), as a school subject (s), and as the main literary language (l). Used by less than 5 % of the population (Class VI), Hebrew and Latin are classical languages (C) used for religious purposes (r), Latin also being a school subject (s).

(3) Curaçao (Netherlands Antilles)

Class I	Papiamentu	K	(d: H=Spanish)
Class IV	Dutch	So	
	English	$S_x$igs	
Class V	Spanish	Sisl	(d: L=Papiamentu)
Class VI	Hebrew	Cr	
	Latin	Crs	

These approaches have been criticised (e.g. by Fasold 1984:65) for failing to capture the full spectrum of complex linguistic ecologies. For instance, there is little in the definition of classes to account for multilingualism — we would expect a considerable number of speakers fitting into several classes. The sum of classes would, therefore, be higher than the country's population. We should bear in mind, however, that *a model*, by definition, implies a certain amount of simplification and abstraction from a complex reality. These processes of abstraction need to be clearly stated as part of the model. Only then can a model be tested against a multiplicity of sociolinguistic realities. With this in mind, the Stewart model can be applied to a variety of polities to try to describe their linguistic make-up. (Limitations occur in nations where multilingualism reaches figures rendering the model impractical: while Curaçao in example (3) has six languages (and the model, therefore, six lines), one can only imagine the cluttered appearance of the same model for Papua New Guinea, with its 820 living languages (Gordon 2005).) Applying Stewart's model to Singapore results in (4) below.

Note that only seven of the twenty-one languages listed in Gordon (2005) feature in this model — non-Mandarin varieties of Chinese fall under the popular heading 'Dialect', and several minor languages were left out for convenience (such as Orang Seletar (884 speakers) and Sinhala (882 speakers)). Arabic, which has a small number of speakers too, was however included because of

its religious significance for the Muslim Malays, and CSE, absent in Gordon
(2005), was added because of its relevance to this thesis.[1]

(4)   Singapore

Class I	Mandarin	$S_x$osgi	(d: L='Dialects')
	CSE	Kg	(d: H=SSE)
Class II	SSE	$S_x$oeirl	(d: L=CSE)
	Other Chinese dialects	Vgr	(d: H=Mandarin)
Class IV	Malay	VS_xosgr	
Class V	High Tamil	$S_e$osg	(d: L=Low Tamil)
Class VI	Low Tamil	Vg	(d: H=High Tamil)
	Arabic	Cr	

But even with a reduced inventory of languages — eight instead of twenty-
one — the list in (4) is still somewhat clumsy: indicating the functions of
each language, while helpful in some cases, seems tedious in others — and at
the same time not precise enough, since CSE can have what Ferguson calls a
'group function' among speakers when being spoken outside of the country, for
instance. The relationships between diglossic Hs and Ls is also obscured by
their sheer number (and would be even more so if the 'other Chinese dialects'
were broken down into its constituents). A more significant flaw, however, is
the failure of the model to allow for a more detailed analysis of each variety's
characteristics: domains of use, relationships with other varieties (e.g. diglossia,
code-switching, etc.), and degree of actual switching for individual speakers.
While the functions and the approximate number of speakers is known, the
way in which they interact is much less clear. Thus the model shows the
number and nature of the official languages, but does not reveal to what ex-
tent speakers of non-official varieties use the official counterpart (beyond the
diglossia pairings). It does not, for instance, say anything about the amount
of colloquial SgE usage among speakers of Malay. This was rectified by Platt

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[1]This selection highlights a terminological issue with Stewart's use of 'language' rather
than the more neutral 'varieties' — while varieties of Chinese are sometimes called 'lan-
guages' and sometimes 'dialects' (see footnote 2 on page 4 for a discussion on this distinc-
tion), there is no suggestion that CSE is a different language from SSE.

(1977), who proposed a way of capturing the very complex interplay between various speech varieties.

4.1 Platt: 'creoloid' and continuum

In his seminal 1975 article, John T. Platt introduces two important concepts into the way in which SgE is viewed. Firstly, he applies the concept of a post-creole continuum, championed by DeCamp (1971), to the SgE speech community. His is a much more dynamic model than Ferguson and Stewart's formulæ. Secondly, he introduces the term *creoloid* to describe a particular type of contact variety. I will first examine the concept of the post-creole continuum, before explaining the reasons for Platt's choice of the term *creoloid*.

4.1.1 The Jamaican continuum

Much of Platt's inspiration for the post-creole continuum analysis comes from DeCamp's work on Jamaican English, which considers 'post-creoles', i.e. creoles that 'gradually merge with the corresponding standard language [that is, their lexifier]' (1971:349). This is not always the case, similar situations may result in quite different outcomes: Haitian Creole French, for instance, has continued co-existing with Standard French in a diglossic situation without any sign of merger (Ferguson 1959, DeCamp 1971:351). DeCamp (1971:350) defines a post-creole situation as one where he says there is 'no sharp cleavage between creole and standard'. Rather, 'there is a linguistic continuum, a continuous spectrum of speech varieties ranging from [. . .] "bush talk" or "broken language" [. . .] to the educated standard' (DeCamp 1971:350). This continuum, made up of its extremes, the basilect and the acrolect, and the intervening mesolects, presents a seamless succession of sub-varieties: it is in fact so fine-grained that it cannot be subdivided into discrete lects. Speakers,

and this is crucial, use a span of the continuum, rather than a single lect. The 'breadth of [this] span depend[s] on the breadth of [the speaker's] social contacts' DeCamp (1971:350).

In defining DeCamp's continuum, Rickford (1987) characterises it by (i) non-discreteness and (ii) unidimensionality. The first of these, non-discreteness — the impossibility of subdividing the continuum into identifiable lects — is, by its very nature, in direct conflict with the diglossia approach also proposed for some creoles, such as Haiti (Ferguson 1959).[2] Patrick (1999) gives a good review of the major question this raises, namely that of the nature of the grammar or grammars of the acrolect and the basilect in such a continuum: it can either be two discrete ones, distinct from each other, or two grammars linked by variation. Rickford (1987:15) argues that there are two grammars that are 'polar varieties between which there is continuous variation', whereas Winford (1993:8–11) sees the two grammars as 'two systems' with 'radically different (and competing) grammars' where there is 'code-switching'. Winford seems to have difficulty accepting the idea of a continuum: his view is largely reminiscent of diglossia, and in no way reflects the non-discrete character observed in continua. Patrick calls the concept of creole speech communities as consisting of 'separate, self-contained linguistic systems' (1999:9) a 'structuralist idea', and according to him, therefore, 'weak'. The kind of code-switching advocated by Winford is by necessity unsystematic 'since no grammar apparently contains rules governing proper alternation with a separate grammar' (Patrick 1999:9). He thus refutes the generative approach taken by DeCamp (1971), arguing that only if the 'basilect or acrolect prove to be homogeneous and invariant, structuralist or generative approaches are useful' (Patrick 1999:9–10)

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[2]DeCamp (1971:368) notes that many speakers of Jamaican Creole 'persist in the myth that there are only two varieties: the patois and the standard', i.e. essentially a diglossic situation. He refutes this by pointing to the varying types of 'patois' and 'standard' used by different speakers.

— variationist linguistics, according to Patrick, is the key to heterogeneous speech of this kind.

The second of Rickford's characteristics is unidimensionality: the variation in the continuum 'can be ordered in terms of a single dimension' (Rickford 1987:22). This is very much what DeCamp argues for when he rejects 'the pigeonhole technique[s]' (1971:355) of sociolinguistics: in his data, he finds variation along the lines of 'age, sex, occupation, ethnic group' relatively insignificant (1971:357). When such variation happens, he brings it down to his continuum of features: the example is that of children and older speakers, who 'tend more towards the creole end of the continuum than do young adults' (DeCamp 1971:357). Geographical variation is the only exception which DeCamp allows, but he is quick to confine this to the lexicon, and says it does 'not seriously interfere with the analysis of the linear continuum' (1971:357). Unidimensionality, however, is criticised by Le Page and Tabouret-Keller (1985), and also by Patrick, who questions this theory by suggesting that it 'seems unlikely to do justice to the complexity of Caribbean social life' (Patrick 1999:15; a statement reflecting his insider knowledge of the Jamaican speech community).

The conditions listed by DeCamp for the emergence of a post-creole continuum are twofold: firstly, the dominant official language must be 'the standard corresponding to the creole' (1971:351), i.e. the dominant language must be the lexifier. This condition would seem an obvious one. It is clear that an unrelated standard language could not act as a catalyst towards a continuum of sub-varieties leading from the creole to the standard. Consider the case of Sranan Tongo, an English-lexifier creole spoken in Surinam, where the official language has been Dutch for the last 300 years (Sebba 1997:146–155). The presence of a related lexicon in the official language would certainly have helped such a continuum emerging there; as it is, no such continuum exists in Surinam.

Secondly, the social stratification so typical of early creole speech communities must have '*partially* (not completely) broken down' (DeCamp 1971:351, emphasis in the original): there needs to be the possibility of at least some upward social mobility in order for intermediate varieties to emerge. According to these criteria, therefore, communities where post-creole continua are most likely to emerge are ones that allow a fair amount of social (upward) mobility, and, crucially, where the lexifier is in continued contact with the creole, acting as the standard (possibly the official) language of the polity. Unsurprisingly, Jamaica fits these conditions, as does Singapore (Platt 1975).

It should be noted that this approach presupposes an initial stage where only the lexifier and the creole were in existence, and the mesolects came about later, when speakers of the creole started having access to the standard by such means as education, and access to occupations that would previously have been the sole preserve of speakers of the superstrate. These are assumptions that have been challenged (Alleyne 1980, Rickford 1987), and the current view seems to be that where a continuum exists, it grew naturally together with the creole itself. In other words, rather than a simple two-way segregation of lexifier- and creole-speakers, there were a number of intermediaries between the two, who would have had varying exposure to the lexifier (Alleyne 1980:184). The distinction between domestic and field slaves, for instance, would have helped with the emergence of a hierarchy of lects within the substrate population.

I now turn to the actual nature of DeCamp's continuum. Table 4.2 shows six features used to grade the continuum. Each one (A–F) has two antithetical categories, a standard ([+A], [+B], …) and a creole ([−A], [−B], …) variant. A, B, and E are lexical variables (where the standard has *child*, the creole has *pikni*), C and D are phonological (the standard has a contrast between *thick* and *tick*, the creole does not), and F is morphosyntactic (the standard negates

the past auxiliary verb *have* morphologically, the creole does so syntactically).
While the acrolect would have the standard variant for each of these, the
basilect would have the creole variant for all of them. It is the intervening
lects, which combine standard and creole variants, that make up the continuum
linking the two. An illustration of these can be seen in the column 'speakers'
in Table 4.2.

Features				Speakers	
+A	child	−A	pikni	1.	+A +B +C −D +E +F
+B	eat	−B	nyam	2.	−A +B −C −D +E +F
+C	/θ ∼ t/	−C	/t/	3.	−A +B −C −D −E −F
+D	/ð ∼ d/	−D	/d/	4.	−A −B −C −D −E −F
+E	granny	−E	nana	5.	+A +B +C +D +E +F
+F	didn't	−F	no ben	6.	+A +B −C −D +E +F
				7.	−A +B −C −D +E −F

Table 4.2: Continuum 'of seven speakers, each of which differs from the other
six by one or more of six features' (DeCamp 1971:355, Table 1).

Speaker 5. is using only standard variants, and speaker 4. only creole vari-
ants. All other speakers use a combination of standard and creole variants.
These data can be handled in two different ways. First, speakers can be ranked
according to their use of one or the other variants, effectively resulting in a
continuum of sociolects (illustrated in Table 4.3): the speaker with six acrolec-
tal variants (5.) appears at one end, the speaker with five next, and so forth
down to speaker 4., who has no acrolectal variants. The features themselves
can also be ranked in terms of their co-occurrence: for instance, it appears
that feature D has [+D] only once, namely when all other features are also
present, while [−F] only occurs where all of A, C, and D also have the [−]
variant. This can be replicated for all features, giving rise to the implicational
ranking given in Table 4.4.

This procedure enables an implicational ranking of linguistic features: when
a speaker makes a distinction between *there* and *dare*, he/she will also make

	Ranking	+	−
5.	+A +B +C +D +E +F	6	0
1.	+A +B +C −D +E +F	5	1
6.	+A +B −C −D +E +F	4	2
2.	−A +B −C −D +E +F	3	3
7.	−A +B −C −D +E −F	2	4
3.	−A +B −C −D −E −F	1	5
4.	−A −B −C −D −E −F	0	6

Table 4.3: Speakers from Table 4.2 rearranged by variants used.

	Ranking	+	−
5.	+B +E +F +A +C +D	6	0
1.	+B +E +F +A +C −D	5	1
6.	+B +E +F +A −C −D	4	2
2.	+B +E +F −A −C −D	3	3
7.	+B +E −F −A −C −D	2	4
3.	+B −E −F −A −C −D	1	5
4.	−B −E −F −A −C −D	0	6

Table 4.4: Speaker ranking from Table 4.3 with features rearranged by variants used.

the distinction between *thought* and *taught*, and use *child*, *eat*, *granny*, and *didn't* rather than *pikni*, *nyam*, *nana*, and *no ben*, i.e. only standard variants. If on the other hand *pikni* and *didn't* are used by the same speaker, the data in Table 4.4 predicts that the speaker also has *eat* and *granny*, but no distinction between interdental fricatives and alveolar stops. We are thus presented with a true scale of sub-varieties, co-defining one another by the realisation of a particular variable: once the list of variables is established, and the variables are ranked ($[\pm A]$, $[\pm B]$,...$[\pm n]$), one can formulate a rule 'whereby the presence of any index feature implied the presence of all other index features of lower number' (DeCamp 1971:353).

4.1.2 The Singaporean continuum

This model, developed for Jamaica in the 1970s, has been applied to several other speech communities by subsequent authors (see, inter alia, Bickerton (1973) for Guyana, Chaudenson and Carayol (1979) for La Réunion, and Rickford (1977) for African-American Vernacular English). The model is also 'on the whole' accepted for Singapore by (Platt 1975:366) four years after its inception by DeCamp. Unlike DeCamp's data, however, which suggests that speakers are 'normally distributed' (1971:358) along the continuum, with a complete absence of the possibility of identifying sub-varieties, Platt's data does seem to suggest a lesser degree of non-discreteness, with a certain amount of what he calls 'bunching — particularly at the [basilectal] end of the continuum' (Platt 1975:366). The lack of an explanation of this 'bunching' does however not stop him from postulating the existence of an identifiable basilect ('Singlish').

Grammatical variables used by Platt include noun plural marking, copula-deletion, past tense marking, and reduplication (Platt 1975:370, also in Ho and Platt 1993), but here the emphasis is on phonological variables, which

are 'the most distinctive qualities of [SgE]' (1975:370). While these variables too come in the binary form introduced above for DeCamp's features (e.g. for copula-deletion: (be) = [∅], [BE] and for word-final consonant deletion: (C#) = [∅#], [C#], i.e. one CSE, the other SSE), they do not display the implicational hierarchy that was illustrated in Table 4.4. It is therefore not possible, as in Jamaica according to DeCamp (1971), to predict the behaviour of a given variable by that of another.[3] A large sample of the speaker's speech is required in order to establish the occurrence rates of CSE and SSE variants, and by that figure place the speaker's variety on the continuum.
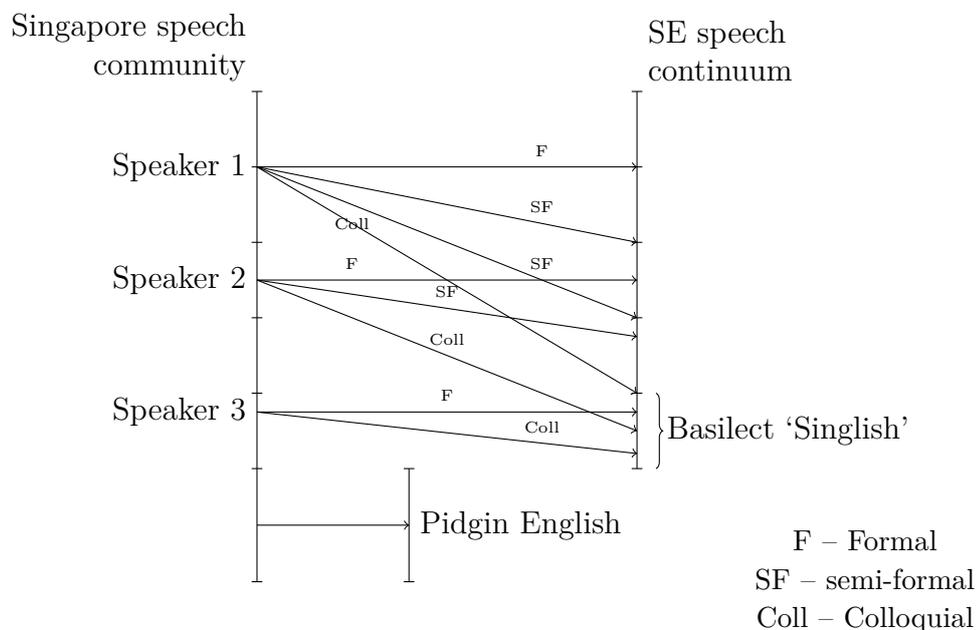
Figure 4.1: 'Relation between socio-economic factors and the usage of sub-varieties of [SgE] available to a speaker' (Platt 1975:369).

This is perhaps less of a concern for Platt, since his model is mostly concerned with speakers' abilities to use a certain span of the continuum for functional and stylistic purposes. The model (illustrated in section 1.4.1 on page 29 and reprinted here as Figure 4.1 for ease of reference) shows an increase in the

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[3]Except for the variable (be), which can be analysed as sub-varieties according to environment (e.g. pre-adjectival, pre-locative, post-pronominal, clause-final, and ten others (Ho and Platt 1993:31–32, 40–52)).

number of sub-varieties available to a speaker the further up the speaker is on the socio-economic scale. As a working hypothesis, the three speakers in Figure 4.1 can be taken to be representative of three broad social classes: upper, middle, and lower. All three have in common their colloquial sub-variety: the basilect, the lower end of the speech continuum. The lower-class speaker has, in addition to his colloquial sub-variety, a formal sub-variety, which is, however, only slightly less basilectal than his/her colloquial one — in fact both fall within the span of the continuum defined by Platt as 'Singlish'. The span or range of sub-varieties available to this speaker is, therefore, quite narrow. The middle-class speaker, on the other hand, has an already much wider range of sub-varieties at his/her disposal: in addition to the colloquial form ('Singlish'), there is an intermediate 'semi-formal' one, and a 'formal' sub-variety that corresponds to his/her position on the socio-economic scale. This speaker's span would appear to be more than three times as wide as that of the lower-class one. Finally, the upper-class speaker commands a range of sub-varieties spanning almost the complete continuum: a formal sub-variety (presumably SSE), a colloquial one (a form of 'Singlish' of a nature comparable to the lower-class speaker's formal sub-variety), and two semi-formal intervening lects, which are distributed roughly equidistantly between the formal and colloquial extremes.

The model seems to suggest that from a continuum of a technically infinite number of sub-varieties, speakers at different levels of socio-economic position have at their disposal a fixed number of lects: certainly Figure 4.1 shows the speaker I have called 'upper-class' as speaking an acrolect, a basilect, and two mesolects, whereas the lower-class one speaks two basilects (a formulation which is in itself unfortunate). It is not immediately obvious how the width of the span influences the number of sub-varieties commanded: in the case of a discrete hierarchy of sub-varieties, this would not pose any problems (the

speaker commands an individual high,[4] an individual low, and all intervening lects), but if there is a non-discrete continuum (as proposed in DeCamp 1971 and taken on board by Platt 1975:366), then it is hard to see how discrete sub-varieties are selected from that continuum to form part of the speaker's repertoire.

One could of course interpret the sub-varieties illustrated in Figure 4.1 as abstractly standing for a range of sub-varieties, resulting in a speaker being able to 'slide' up and down the span delimited by his/her individual high and low. Platt's formulation, however, leaves little doubt that this was not his intent: there is reference to 'the number and type of sub-varieties' (suggesting distinct, identifiable sub-varieties), and to 'drop[ping] comfortably [...] into the basilect' (1975:369) (suggesting discreteness of the continuum). A similar point is made in Platt and Weber (1980:109), where four sub-varieties (acrolect, upper and lower mesolect, and basilect) are identified by means of educational achievement. This is unlike the Jamaican continuum, where there is no lectal 'grouping' and which is defined as non-discrete (DeCamp 1971:350, 358, Rickford 1987:15). A related point where Platt's continuum differs from the Jamaican one is in the nature of the basilect: the 'bunching' (1975:366) at the lower end of the continuum can be seen in Figure 4.1, where several sub-varieties group to form what Platt labels 'Singlish'. This he considers a sub-variety in its own right, which 'warrants particular attention' (1975:370) due to its resemblance to creoles (see below). Again, the illustration given seems to suggest variation within this range, despite it being called the basilect — which would suggest a uniform variety.

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[4]The terms *high* and *low* are herein taken to mean 'SSE-oriented' and 'CSE-oriented' respectively, and do not carry any value-judgements.

The second dimension[5] of the model in Figure 4.1 — its left-hand, socio-economic scale — is defined in terms of social class and education: it is 'the speaker's social status and educational background' (Platt 1975:368) that define his/her position on the social scale. Throughout his article, however, as well as in Ho and Platt (1993) and Platt (1977), the emphasis is very much on the level of education achieved by his informants, ranging from primary to tertiary (i.e. the highest educational qualification obtained). This is then taken as the sole social variable used to define their position on the scale labelled 'Singapore speech community'. This position, Platt found, was closely correlated with 'the highest point [they] could reach on the continuum' (Platt 1975:368). In Figure 4.1, the two scales (social and linguistic) are linked by arrows, standing for the various sub-varieties at the disposal of the speaker. The scales are arranged in such a way that the speakers' highest lect on the continuum and their position on the social scale are at the same horizontal level,[6] underlining the importance of the highest lect in determining a speaker's repertoire. An individual's lowest lect, as part of the model, is the basilect: notice the arrow labelled 'colloquial', which in every speaker points to a sub-variety located within the span of the continuum designated as 'basilect ("Singlish")' — the

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[5]This departs from the unidimensional model proposed by DeCamp, who argues that social variables have a relatively insignificant correlation with his continuum (1971:357, see also page 121 above).

[6]This is an important point of abstraction in the model: while it is straightforward to have these two points coincide for any individual speaker (illustrated in (i) below), a system with two speakers may already necessitate a readjusting of the two continua's scales (c.f. (ii)). As soon as more than two speakers are involved, however, this readjustment may no longer work since it would also have to take into account the relative social and linguistic positions of subsequent speakers — at which point the system might collapse, as in (iii) below. Platt does not address this issue, which must mean Figure 4.1 stands for a much more abstract model than what might have been.
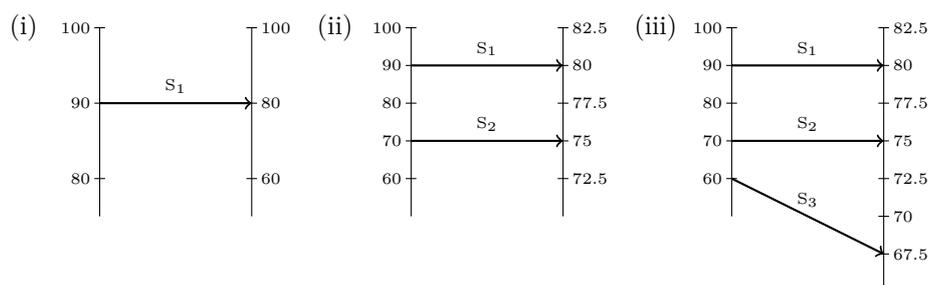
'bunching' Platt refers to (1975:366) — with the implication that every speaker of the speech community is proficient in the basilect. It is unclear how true this assumption still is nowadays. Certain members of the speech community's upper social classes have expressed intelligibility concerns when confronted with the basilect: Hussain (2006), for instance, reports on an 'upper middle-class, English-speaking' Singaporean who was first exposed to CSE during his National Service, and 'often [. . .] could not understand his platoon mates'. While this may be a recent phenomenon — and certainly not a widespread one — the fact that the said Singaporean has since set out to create his own online dictionary (Lee 2004) further weakens objection, since it is primarily a lexical issue,[7] with minor phonological examples: grammar is not considered at all. It would therefore seem that every member of the speech community does indeed have at least passive knowledge of the basilect (barring certain lexical items, particularly highly socially marked ones).

Turning now briefly to the diachronic element of Platt's (1975) paper, he considers Singlish not to have developed out of a pidgin 'although it shares many features with a creole' (1975:366). The emphasis is on 'the transference of certain features' from the substrate into the English taught at schools, which were then stabilised by the variety being used in informal contexts outside the classroom (Platt 1975:366). Platt argues that CSE, despite its resemblance to creole varieties, does not fit this category, based on the attributes defined by Stewart (1968:534–537) in his matrix (see Table 4.1 on page 116). It is in particular the attribute 'vitality' that he considers a problem, as illustrated in Table 4.5 below: Stewart's (1968:536) criterion is that a vital language type be used by 'an unisolated community of native speakers' (see also page 116) — while this is the case for creoles but not for pidgins (the absence of native

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[7]Furthermore, many of the lexical items in Lee's (2004) dictionary are (predictably) from the military register, and would, therefore, only be known actively to that segment of the population subjected to it (roughly, men older than 16.5 (age of enlistment) and younger than 58 (age of the first cohort), crucially excluding all but a minority of women).

speakers being part and parcel of the generally accepted definition of a pidgin, and vice-versa for creoles), CSE presents an inconclusive case where for some speakers it is indeed a native language, but 'for a considerable number of Singaporeans it is [. . .] still the second language' (Platt 1975:370).

Standardisation	Autonomy	Historicity	Vitality	Type
−	−	−	+	Creole (K)
−	−	−	−	Pidgin (P)
−	−	−	±	CSE

Table 4.5: Attributes used to define language types (adapted from Platt 1975:371, based on Stewart 1968:537).

While this view may reflect the situation in the 1970s, English has gained a lot of ground since, and if the statistics presented in Table 1.1 (page 10) are to be believed, and 23.03 % of Singaporeans use it as their primary home language, then this is hardly an inconsiderable number anymore[8]. Furthermore, the phasing out of non-English media of education at all school levels since 1987 (Gupta 1994:145–146) has meant a whole new generation of English-educated Singaporeans, using the language not only in school, but in everyday interaction with family, friends, and workmates. With all this in mind, it is hard not to consider CSE as [+vital], and, therefore, as a creole in Stewart's typology. Platt's objections, however, lead him to define a new language type, which he calls 'creoloid', in order to capture several differences from ordinary creoles and post-creoles (e.g. the lack of a pidgin ancestor, its use as a lingua franca, and the fact that it is one of several native languages,[9] and the fact that its 'superordinate language' (i.e. its lexifier) is an official language (1975:372)). This 'creoloid' has the following characteristics:

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[8]This is certainly the case if we consider this tantamount to being a *native language* — vitality is certainly not diminished by the fact that one's most frequently used language is not one's native language.

[9]There is a contradiction here where Platt first notes that CSE is [±native] and on the following page, it suddenly is [+native], like creoles (Platt 1975:371–372).

1. It has similar structural variables to post-creoles based on the same 'standard' language.

2. It did not develop from a pidgin but by some other process.

3. It developed from the transference of features into the 'standard' language from the languages of several (sometimes unrelated) ethnic groups.

4. The superordinate language is usually only one of the official languages.

5. It is used as one of several 'native' languages by the speech community.

6. It is usually also used as lingua franca in inter-ethnic group communication within the speech community where it is one of the sub-varieties.

(Platt 1975:372)

Only the second of these characteristics makes an unambiguous departure from ordinary creoles: certainly 1 and 3 are common to contact languages, the latter bearing resemblance to what has been called *tertiary hybridisation* (see e.g. Whinnom 1971 in Sebba 1997:103–105), the reinforcement of contact features due to several substrate languages. Item 4 requires more than one official language: this situation is not unusual in modern creole-speaking societies (e.g. English and Hawaiian in Hawai'i (for Hawaiian Creole English), French and English in Cameroon (for Cameroonian Creole), Filipino and English in The Philippines (for various Spanish creoles), etc.[10]), although in the initial prototypical situation (Thomason 1997:76), there is usually a single official language (the lexifier) — this would certainly have been the case in early Singapore (with English as the *de facto* official language of the colonial administration), although it has to be remembered that Malay did have an important status then (as the language of the local nobility, see section 1.1.1 on page 2, as well as Turnbull 1996). The 5th criterion stipulates that a creoloid be spoken natively, but in conjunction with other native languages. While this was and

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[10]Not forgetting polities where the contact language itself has gained official status, e.g. Tok Pisin in Papua New Guinea and Bislama in Vanuatu.

still is the case in Singapore, it is hard to see how complete societal mono-lingualism would be achieved, at least in early creole societies — particularly if there is contact with the lexifier, as in post-creoles, such multilingualism is expected (e.g. Jamaican Creole English and Standard English in Jamaica, c.f. DeCamp 1971). Finally, item 6 stresses that the creoloid functions as a lingua franca, allegedly something that 'a creole does not, as a rule' (Platt 1975:374) — although there is a caveat stating that 'one could conceive of certain situations where this is a possibility'. It is worth noting that there is little in the definition of a creole that would prevent it from becoming a lingua franca: as a language variety that emerged from the need to communicate between speakers of mutually unintelligible languages (as pidgins, and, by extension, creoles did; see Sebba 1997:36, Winford 2003:208–267, 268–273), it would on the contrary be well suited for 'inter-ethnic group communication', particularly in light of the tertiary hybridisation discussed above. Certainly Tok Pisin is used in such situations, and serves to facilitate communication between speakers of various languages (Romaine 2001:753, Romaine 2006:737), in addition to being spoken natively.

Platt's approach is described by Ansaldo (2004:129) as 'obsolete' since on the one hand, the concept of the creoloid is 'rather controversial' and incompletely defined, and on the other hand, because a pidgin ancestry is no longer seen as necessary. Furthermore, the validity of the category *creoloid* is questioned, since, much like *creole*, it does not constitute a structurally definable class, but 'is purely sociohistorical and political in nature' (2004:129–130). While Ansaldo recognises that there is no clear evidence for a Pidgin English in Singapore, ascribing this to the pre-colonial presence of Bazaar Malay as a vital lingua franca throughout the archipelago, with the result that even Europeans were fluent in this variety (Ansaldo 2004:141–142, a point previously made by Gupta 1994:38), he also agrees with Gupta (1994, 1998) in stressing

the importance of two ethnically mixed groups: the Babas and the Eurasians. The former, also called Peranakans (see section 1.3.1, page 15) are descendants of Chinese (typically Hokkien) men and Malay women, and the latter of European (typically Portuguese) men and Asian (mostly Indian and Malay) women (2004:142, see also Gupta 1994:41, Ansaldo and Matthews 1999, and Rappa 2000). While the Babas traditionally use a contact variety of Malay known as Baba Malay (Pakir 1986), and the Eurasians a Portuguese-based creole called Kristang (Baxter 1988), these groups, originally hailing from pre-existing settlements such as Malacca (Gupta 1994:41, Ansaldo 2004:142), were among the first to use English for purposes of social advancement, enrolling their children in English-medium schools, where they were available (Gupta 1994:37). It is, therefore, in these groups that one must look for an ancestor to modern SgE: the Peranakans and the Eurasians had their own, typologically converged English, long before the emergence of widespread English-medium education and the ready availability of Standard English (Ansaldo 2004:143–144).

To sum up, this subsection outlining Platt's (1975) take on SgE discussed two major points: the model used to explain the variation between the Standard English used as a target language in education, and the basilect 'Singlish'. The model takes into account intervening varieties on a continuum linking the two extremes, much in the way that has been suggested by DeCamp (1971) for Jamaican English. It also offers an explanation of speakers' usage of these sub-varieties, linking their social status with the number of lects at their disposal for stylistic use. The second point discussed is that of CSE's typological status as a contact language; Platt introduces the concept of the *creoloid* — in essence, a variety that has creole-like features but lacks a historical pidgin stage. The relevance of this term is questionable, due to its many assumptions (discussed on pages 131–133 above) which have been shown to be outdated.

	Diglossia	Bilingualism
1)	+	+
2)	−	+
3)	+	−
4)	−	−

Table 4.6: Proposal of a sociolinguistic typology linking diglossia and bilingualism (adapted from Fishman 1972:75).

4.2 Platt: 'polyglossia'

Two years after his article describing SgE as a continuum (see section 4.1, page 119), Platt (1977) proposed a model for polyglossia, based on Singapore English, with substantial reference to Malaysian English. He was referring to Fishman's (1972:75) proposal of a typology that linked diglossia and bilingualism, which included one category where both diglossia and bilingualism exist (see Table 4.6). Considering cases where this situation applies, Platt argues that there are speech communities that 'are not cases of mere *bi*lingualism and that a division into H and L only, or even one H and several Ls may not be sufficient' (1977:362, emphasis in the original). Such multilingual speech communities, as his examples of Singapore and Malaysia show, exhibit numerous 'subcodes within each of the separate codes' and an important 'interaction between the bi-(and often multi-)lingualism [sic] of the individual [...] with particular spheres of social activity and particular social attitudes' (Platt 1977:362). He calls this situation one of *polyglossia*, where several speech varieties are distributed functionally across the community (in a comparable way to H and L in diglossia). This can be illustrated in the form of a table listing the speech varieties involved on one axis, and their respective polyglossic function on the other, as in Table 4.7.

Listed in the leftmost column are the speech varieties in use within the community: in the Singaporean case, illustrated in Table 4.8, there are eight

Speech varieties	Order of status		
	H_1–H_n	M_1–M_n	L_1–L_n $L-$
SV_1			
SV_2			
SV_3			
$\vdots$			
SV_n			

Table 4.7: 'A model for polyglossia with multilingualism' (Platt 1977:367).

	H_1	H_2	DH_1	DH_2	M	L_1	L_2	$\cdots$	L_n	$L-$
Formal S[g]E	×									
Mandarin		×								
Standard Malay			×							
Tamil				×						
Colloquial S[g]E					×					
Hokkien/Cantonese						×				
Other Chinese dialects									×	
Bazaar Malay										×

Table 4.8: Verbal repertoire of an English-educated Chinese of Singapore (Platt 1977:375).

(one of which, 'Other Chinese dialects', comprises several[11]). These varieties can then be assigned to any of the statuses listed at the top of the table: Platt allows for several levels of H(igh), M(edium), and L(ow). $L-$ is a Low variety which is used as such by all speakers and has no associated H. DH stands for 'Dummy H' — a variety that is given a high rating because it is recognised by some segments of the population as carrying prestige (in Singapore the government, the media, etc., see Table 4.8), but that is not widely used in the community (again, in the case of even educated Chinese Singaporeans, Malay, and especially Tamil, are hardly used at all).

The ranking of these varieties along the H–M–L scale is based on two major criteria: domains of use and speaker attitudes. Domains include 'family, friendship, employment, religion, education, government, media' (Platt 1977:368),

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[11]Teochew, Hakka, etc. See pages 3 and 10.

and can be subdivided into sub-domains: in Singapore, the family domain typically involves generational sub-domains, so that in the case of a Chinese family, grandparents would use the native Chinese dialect, parents the dialect and CSE, and children CSE (Platt 1977:369). This example of Platt's would need some updating to match the current situation, where Mandarin has become an important addition to the repertoire. Nonetheless, it highlights the complexity of the situation and the relation between the choice of speech variety and the level of publicity of the domain. Platt argues that varieties used most often in the public domain are highest on the scale, and those associated with private, informal domains would be among L. Varieties used in 'semi-formal/semi-public domains' (Platt 1977:370) are M.

Several types of attitudinal factors were considered. Departing from the more mainstream model of accommodation theory (Giles et al. 1973), Platt (1977:371) confines himself to the speaker's choice of a variety based on his/her previous experience of the addressee's repertoire, and to the speaker's elicitation of said repertoire. Another attitudinal factor is the speaker's 'polyglossic reasons' (1977:371), i.e. attitudes towards the individual varieties and their appropriateness to the domain at hand. These attitudes are: (a) emotive (like–dislike), (b) linguistic (vocabulary range, etc.), (c) pragmatic (usefulness in communicating, gaining better treatment, financial gain, etc.), (d) custom or policy (established practice, government policies), and (e) appropriateness (Platt 1977:371–372).

Taking these two criteria, domains and attitudes, into account, Platt was able to classify the speech varieties of Singapore along the H–M–L scale illustrated in Table 4.8. In this example, the speaker, a Chinese Singaporean, has SSE (or 'Formal S[g]E') as his/her H_1, and Mandarin as the H_2: SSE is the variety used in education, in politics, in the workplace, and in dealings with the authorities, while Mandarin, a co-official language, also features

prominently in the curriculum and may present advantages at the workplace. Standard Malay and Tamil, as noted above, are DH_1 and DH_2 respectively: while the speaker, ethnically Chinese, is unlikely to use either of them very much if at all, they are nonetheless considered H because of their co-official status. Malay is DH_1 because of its additional status as a national language — in fact, the speaker, if male, will have had at least minor exposure to Malay during his National Service (see page 8). CSE is an M variety: it is lower than SSE and standard varieties of the official languages, but higher than other varieties, such as the officially discouraged, non-Mandarin Chinese varieties, and it is used in a variety of semi-public domains, particularly in inter-ethnic communication. If the speaker is proficient in Hokkien and/or Cantonese, then Hokkien/Cantonese will be L_1: L because of their non-official status and because they are the target of official disapproval in favour of Mandarin, they are nonetheless higher within the Ls because of their currency as the variety of a dominant ethnic group (see pages 3 and 10). Any other Chinese variety in the speaker's repertoire would be L_{1-n}. Bazaar Malay, less used nowadays than it was at the time of Platt's work, would have been an L−, considered as carrying the lowest prestige and restricted to the domain of transactions (e.g. at the market, whence 'Bazaar', from Malay *pasar*, 'market').

An interesting aspect of this model is that it lists the repertoire of a given speaker but couches it in the speech community's language ecology. It is also more complete than other attempts (Platt 1975, Gupta 1994, 2001) in that it takes a holistic view of the speech varieties involved: it is not just the diglossia between SSE and CSE that is considered, it also accounts for other, unrelated varieties. After all, as is evident from the list of domains given above, English (in its H and L forms) is but one component of the speech community's resources.

Notwithstanding this latter point, I now turn to analyses of the variation observed within a subset of the varieties enumerated in Table 4.8. The following subsections will look at the interaction between the sub-varieties of English used by the speech community. The list in (4) already mentions diglossia between CSE and SSE, and Table 4.8 lists Standard and Colloquial varieties of SgE. What follows, then, is a review of how the interaction between these two has been analysed.

4.3 Gupta: diglossia

Another approach is taken by Anthea Fraser Gupta, who proposes a binary system where Standard Singapore English (SSE) and Colloquial Singapore English (CSE, 'Singlish') are in a diglossic relationship (Gupta 1989, 1994, 2001). Diglossia is a term first used by Rhoïdis (1885), who used it to mean a 'type of collective bilingualism, among other possible types' (Mackey 1993:xv)[12] — writing about the Greek situation, he says 'on souffre aujourd'hui de *diglossie*'[13] (Rhoïdis 1885, quoted in Psichari 1885:211, cited in Fernández 1993:309). In the same year, Psichari (1885:267), citing Rhoïdis, uses the term to qualify the relationship between two contemporary varieties of Greek (Mackey 1993:xv). Several years later, Marçais (1930), describing the language situation in the Arab world, extends the term to cover cases of bidialectalism. It is Ferguson (1959) who was the first to use it in English-speaking academia. His definition has been very influential and many subsequent ones draw on his (Mackey 1993:xv).

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[12]The word used by Rhoïdis, $\delta\iota\gamma\lambda\omega\sigma\sigma\acute{\iota}\alpha$, is Greek for *bilingualism* (Mackey 1993:xv), a point which may have contributed to his definition.

[13]'it nowadays suffers from *diglossia*'.

Gupta describes the Singaporean case as one of 'diglossic English [. . .] in terms of Ferguson's use of diglossia' (Gupta 1994:7). The original definition of Ferguson's diglossia, which I shall explore next, is given here in full:

> Diglossia is a relatively stable language situation in which, in addition to the primary dialects of the language (which may include a standard or regional standards), there is a very divergent, highly codified (often grammatically more complex) superposed variety, the vehicle of a large and respected body of written literature, either of an earlier period or in another speech community, which is learned largely by formal education and is used for most written and formal spoken purposes but is not used by any section of the community for ordinary conversation.[14]
> (Ferguson 1959:336)

Ferguson's definition is a very precise one, and is often called 'classic' or 'narrow' (Fasold 1984:53, Wardhaugh 2002:93, Winford 2003:112–113). The emphasis is clearly on H, which is described in structural, cultural, and functional terms, as opposed to L, which is the 'primary' code, and, therefore, something of a default — it is H that is restricted in use, and limited to 'written and formal spoken purposes' (Ferguson 1959:336). Furthermore, the definition is limited to situations where H and L are 'varieties of the same language', with the 'analogous situation where two distinct (related or unrelated) languages are used side by side' being expressly exempted from it (1959:325).[15] Diglossia characterises a 'language situation' (1959:336), i.e. a property of the speech community, typically exemplified by those of Haiti (H: French, L: Haitian Creole), German Switzerland (H: Standard German,[16] L: Swiss German dialects),

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[14]The first of these, the vernacular, is called the 'low' variety, or L, and the latter, 'high' or H.

[15]This is a point revisited by Fishman (1967), who argues that there is nothing preventing unrelated languages from being in a diglossic relationship. In fact, he stresses that in the case of related languages, these need to be 'sufficiently different from one another that, without schooling [H] cannot be understood' by L speakers (attributed to Fishman 1980:4 in Wardhaugh 2002:94). This has been referred to as 'broad' diglossia (Fasold 1984:53, Winford 2003:112–113, see below), two flagship examples being those of Alsace (H: French, L: German) and Paraguay (H: Spanish, L: Guaraní).

[16]Switzerland's Standard German is however endonormative, in that it differs from Standard High German in several ways (much in the way that SSE does from StBE): examples in phonology (initial devoicing), the lexicon (*wischen* for *fegen* 'to sweep'), and spelling (⟨ss⟩ for ⟨ß⟩) abound (see e.g. Rash 1998:150–179).

and Egypt (H: Classical Arabic, L: Egyptian Arabic). Important components of Ferguson's definition include the stability of the situation (unlike in other language contact situations, diglossia typically does not give rise to language shift (1959:327, 340)), and more importantly, the functional distribution of H and L: they are in complementary distribution, so that where one is used, the other is not, 'with the two sets overlapping only very slightly' (1959:328). Ferguson (1959:329) gives a list of situations with their associated variety, reproduced in Table 4.9. Practically all conceivable situational settings call for a clearly defined variety, and a speaker using the wrong one 'is an object of ridicule' (Ferguson 1959:329). The ones in Table 4.9 are fairly predictable, with anything remotely formal (religion, education, media) being assigned H, and the less formal ones (conversation, soap operas), L. Worth pointing out is the use of H in all writing (except restricted uses in folk literature, but including 'personal letters') — the absence of a standardised orthography for L being a prime motive (together with any 'descriptive and normative studies[, which are] either non-existent or relatively recent and slight' (Ferguson 1959:332)). L is however the default language for conversation, so that after a lecture in H, or reading an article in H, one can then 'proceed to discuss the contents in L', even 'with the speaker [or author] himself' (1959:329). This points to a final and important defining factor of the Fergusonian diglossia: its 'democratic' distribution of H–L usage. As illustrated in the Greek[17] name for its L variety (*δημοτική*, '[language] of the people'), there is 'no segment of the speech community' that 'regularly uses H as a medium of ordinary conversation' (1959:336–337).

Ferguson lists other attributes that characterise diglossic communities: prestige (H is always regarded 'as superior to L', or at the very least 'better able to

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[17]The Greek diglossia (H: καθαρεύουσα, L: δημοτική), which was used by Ferguson (1959) as one of his examples, has now broken down due to a variety of factors widely reported in the literature (Trudgill 1995:103–104, Frangoudaki 1992, inter alia): the new official language (the erstwhile L) shows however substantial admixture from καθαρεύουσα (Kazazis 1993).

Situation	H	L
Sermon in church or mosque	×	
Instructions to servants, waiters, workemen, clerks		×
Personal letter	×	
Speech in parliament, political speech	×	
University lecture	×	
Conversation with family, friends, colleagues		×
News broadcast	×	
Soap opera		×
Newspapers, caption on picture	×	
Caption on political cartoon		×
Poetry	×	
Folk literature		×

Table 4.9: Use of diglossic varieties for selected situations (adapted from Ferguson 1959:329).

express important thoughts' (1959:329–330)), a literary heritage in H (shared with another speech community or another era), aspects of language acquisition (L is always acquired first, H learned formally), H standardisation (as opposed to L, which is described, if at all, 'first and chiefly by scholars from *outside* the speech community' (1959:332, emphasis in the original)),[18] stability of the language situation over time, significant grammatical differences in the two varieties (with H typically less regular and more complex than L), the presence of lexical doublets (which instantly mark an utterance as either H or L), and divergent phonologies (the L phonology being the basic one and H diverging from it to form a subsystem (1959:335)). All these are important features of diglossic communities; the most important role, however, is played by the functional distribution seen in Table 4.9 — the restriction of use for each variety to particular situational settings is certainly the prime factor defining this particular language situation.

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[18]Ferguson does allow for situations where L becomes a local standard: his example is that of Cairo Arabic, which serves as an Egyptian Standard Arabic (1959:332).

4.3.1 Diglossia in Singapore

Motivated by Platt's (1975) outdated treatment of SgE as a non-native variety, Gupta (1994, 2001) sees the Singapore speech community as diglossic 'in terms of Ferguson's use of diglossia' (Gupta 1994:7). She posits the existence of an H variety, which is called Standard Singapore English (SSE): as outlined in section 1.3 (page 15), SSE is mostly indistinguishable from other standard Englishes around the world (see e.g. Trudgill and Hannah 1994), although it bears a closer resemblance to StBE than to other exonormative standards (Gupta 1986), as its genesis would predict.[19] The only noteworthy points of difference between SSE and StBE lie within the lexicon, with some loanwords from substrate languages, as well as in some aspects of semantics.[20] This H variety is used in 'formal circumstances, in education, and in all writing' (Gupta 1994:7), except in restricted contexts (such as online writing, see Gupta 2006b). The L variety, Colloquial Singapore English or 'Singlish', is radically different from H, and of the form described in section 1.3 above. Unlike H, it is used in everyday conversation and generally in situations deemed informal, as well as in some writing (e.g. in instant text messages and informal computer-mediated communication). The difference between the two varieties is such that members of the speech community are aware of them, and can exploit them for stylistic purposes.

Gupta (1994:10–13) uses a number of features to differentiate between the two varieties, four for H and four for L (given here in Table 4.10). While they are not an exhaustive list of features, they are 'analytically straightforward' and salient (1994:9), covering morphology, syntax, and lexis. Many of these are '*required* in [SSE] but *optional* in [CSE]' (Gupta 1994:9, emphasis in the

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[19]This is one of the reasons why Gupta uses *Standard English* (StdE) for H most of the time, whereas this thesis uses SSE. Since the former encompasses the latter, this is not deemed a major issue.

[20]E.g. the use of *slippers* for the footwear called *sandals* in StBE, or SSE *bath* for StBE *shower*.

SSE (H)	CSE (L)
Inversion in interrogatives (except with BE and CAN): 'Where <u>do you</u> live?'	Use of pragmatic particles: 'This place very noisy <u>leh</u>.'
Presence of verbal inflexions: 'He live<u>s</u> here.'	Verb groups without subjects (PRO-drop): '∅ go where?'
Noun inflexions (genitive and plural): 'My brother<u>'s</u> flat<u>s</u> are big.'	Conditional clauses without subordinating conjunction: '∅ you go there, sure can see.'
Certain complex verb groups: 'I <u>have been</u> there several times.'	V-*ing* as finite verb and verbless complements (copula-deletion): 'This one ∅ very cheap.'

Table 4.10: Features of diglossic SSE and CSE (adapted from Gupta 1994:10–13).

original). For instance, nominal and verbal morphology can be variably realised in CSE; this optionality is of course absent in SSE. Similarly, inversion can occur in conjunction with CSE features. The only SSE feature that escapes this is the last one: complex verb groups (modal auxiliaries other than CAN, and uses of HAVE and DO) 'are associated with [SSE] only' (Gupta 1994:13). The reverse does however not hold true: the CSE features in Table 4.10 are restricted to the L variety, and using them instantly marks the utterance as 'Singlish': the simple presence of a particle within an otherwise H sentence turns it into an L utterance. One could easily conclude from this that CSE is simply anything that is not SSE, which is clearly fallacious:[21] the features provided, while unidirectional (in the sense that SSE features, with the above caveat, can occur in CSE but not vice-versa), are nonetheless called for to identify a particular SgE utterance as H or L — they form a working basis on which such decisions can be made, even if these features 'are not the *only* differences between the two varieties' (Gupta 1994:9, emphasis in the original).

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[21]Consider the wealth of non-standard Englishes outside of Singapore, which are by definition not CSE.

Gupta concedes that there might not be a 'hard division between H and L' but rather 'degrees of aim at H and L' (1994:8). In an earlier paper discussing written SgE, she also notes that 'speakers [are] using a wide span on the scale of standardness in speech' (1986:77), which seems to run counter to the basic assumptions of Fergusonian diglossia. Gupta nonetheless feels that it is possible, with the above features, to draw a line between one and the other, since 'in practice [they] tend to constellate' and result in identifiable varieties (1994:8), i.e. to members of the speech community, it is always clear wether H or L is being used. As Gupta notes, Pakir (1991) felt able to clearly mark strings of her discourse data as H or L, based on Gupta's features. Willemyns (1987:37) reports a similar situation from Belgium where, despite the presence of a continuum of varieties between the archetypal H and L, speakers 'experience a clear gap' between what he calls [−dialect] (H, Standard Dutch) and [+dialect] (L, Westflemish).

To account for this heterogeneous component of SgE's diglossic varieties, Gupta (2006b:22) calls the Singaporean diglossia 'leaky', a term introduced by Fasold to qualify diglossic situations where 'one variety "leaks" into the functions formerly reserved for the other' (Fasold 1984:41).[22] This leakage clearly brings the two varieties closer, and code-switching becomes more frequent. While it is certainly the case that in Gupta's data (1994, 2006b), there is substantial switching between H and L, sometimes within the same sentence, it is difficult to see how a situation such as this can felicitously still be called 'diglossia'. It might be that Fasold's definition of 'broad diglossia' is more appropriate here; in this much less restrictive use of the term, it is 'highly valued segments' of the continuum that are reserved 'for situations perceived as more formal and guarded', and 'less highly valued segments [. . .] for situations

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[22]Leaky diglossia is at the origin of the situation described as 'bilingualism without diglossia' by Fishman (1972:75) — see situation 2) in Table 4.6 on page 135. This would seem to spell impending changes for the Singaporean case, since bilingualism without diglossia has two possible outcomes: a new, mixed (H & L) variety, or a shift towards H at the expense of L (Fasold 1984:41).

perceived as more informal and intimate' (Fasold 1984:53). As in Fasold's words, such a redefinition of diglossia, which eliminates the binary nature of the Fergusonian diglossia[23] (viz. the plural reference to 'segments'), which also specifies that H and L can be 'of any degree of linguistic relatedness, [...] from stylistic differences to separate languages' (Fasold 1984:53), and which, crucially, removes the strong, almost deterministic functional/situational element of Ferguson's definition (see Table 4.9 above) and replaces it with an H–L distinction on grounds of perceived levels of formality, almost removes the necessity for a separate term — the only reason for keeping it being historic and that 'it would be a shame to give it up' (Fasold 1984:53). While it is certainly the case that the wealth of research that has sprung forth from Ferguson's article has diluted the concept somewhat, particularly with regard to the more restrictive elements of the definition (relatedness of H and L, language acquisition), it nonetheless remains a convenient benchmark from which a language situation can be described, if anything, as more or less divergent.

In the case of SgE, it might be useful to test Gupta's (1994, 2001) claim of Fergusonian diglossia by comparing the Singaporean situation with the original definition itself (Ferguson 1959:336, see page 140). Table 4.11 below takes each assertion from the definition and shows its applicability to SgE. Stability (criterion (a)) has been marked as [±] since despite the posited prevalence of the situation nowadays, a diglossic situation cannot have existed in the early stages of contact: the number of English speakers was very small indeed in the 19th century (Ho and Platt 1993, Gupta 1994, 1998, Ansaldo 2004), and an English diglossia could only have emerged with the appearance of

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[23]The binary nature of diglossia had previously been questioned by the application of the term to situations in Khalapur (Abdulaziz Mkilifi 1978) and Tanzania (Gumperz 1964), which were termed 'double nested diglossia' and 'double overlapping diglossia' respectively: in the first case, H and L are different languages, each with their respective 'nested' H and L, resulting in four interacting varieties, whereas in the second case, there are three varieties (hence 'triglossia' in Gumperz' terminology), one of which, spoken by the whole community (Swahili in Gumperz' example), functions as an H for lower socio-economic and educational groups (the local vernaculars being L), and as an L for the higher classes (where English is H) (see Fasold 1984:44–50 for an overview of these).

CSE as a distinct variety (see section 1.2.1 on page 11). Diglossia among English speakers in Singapore can, therefore, only be described as a relatively new phenomenon, hardly a century old. Criterion (b) refers to the 'primary dialects of the language' in Ferguson's (1959:336) definition. Clearly this raises a number of issues, and perhaps the reformulation in Table 4.11 is not the best, but it seems intuitive that both H and L are dialects of English, if one takes Trudgill's (1999) definition of the term: their differences include phonology and grammar, but these are not great enough to render the two mutually unintelligible — they are, therefore, (b) [+dialects] but also (c) [+divergent].

Fergusonian criteria		**presence in SgE**
(a)	Stability of the situation	±
(b)	L and H are dialects of the same language	+
(c)	Linguistic distance	+
(d)	Codification of H	+
(e)	H more complex	+
(f)	Literature in H	+
(g)	H used in another speech community	+
(h)	H learned formally	±
(i)	H used in writing	+
(j)	H used for formal speech	+
(k)	H not used for ordinary conversation	−

Table 4.11: Ferguson (1959:336) applied to SgE.

That H is codified (d) warrants no further explanation, and neither do criteria (f) and (g). H is also the default variety for writing (i), despite the recent move towards vernacularisation with examples of written L (Gupta 1986, 2006b). Criterion (j) is a very basic one, and it is certainly the case that in Singapore, as in any diglossic situation, H is the variety of choice for formal speech.[24] Complexity (e), however, is a much less clear-cut term. While, for instance, the rules governing the syntax and semantics of the discourse particles (see section 3.2 on page 76) are by no means simple, certain features

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[24]It is however possible to have discussions on formal *topics* in L (as also e.g. in Swiss German, see Trudgill 1995:182–183).

of H, as previously established (see e.g. section 1.3 (page 15), or Table 4.10 on page 144), such as plural marking and tense inflexions, are obligatory in H but optional in L. Inversion rules and variable question tags are also arguably complex elements in H that have no counterpart in L (for the former) or an invariant one (for the latter). A reduction of the level of complexity in grammatical structure is, of course, also an expected outcome of contact languages (see Sebba 1997, Winford 2003), whence the decision on [+] for (e). The formal nature of H acquisition (h), i.e. via the education system, is marked here as [±] for the reason that it might well be the case for a majority of the speech community, but it is not true that there are no exceptions to this rule. This is strongly related to criterion (k), the use of H for ordinary conversation. While this is not the case in traditional diglossia, and at the origin of the equations 'L=acquired, H=learned', it seems that in some sections of the speech community, H *is* used informally — this, at least, would explain certain speakers' difficulties with L (see Hussain 2006)[25] — a usage which would enable its acquisition as a first language. It would not be surprising at all to see such a development: SSE is a highly valued asset in terms of educational performance, and educated Singaporean parents have been known to try and provide their children with 'useful' linguistic exposure (consider for instance the success of the Speak Mandarin Campaign, which saw parents forsaking 'dialects' in interaction with their offspring (see e.g. Bokhorst-Heng 1998, Simpson 2007:382–384)). Furthermore, in terms of domains of use, at least two of the situations listed in Table 4.9 (page 142) need to be reevaluated for SgE: after some English soap operas in Singapore were aired in CSE, which sparked wide public discussion and resulted in a ban on 'ungrammatical English' in the media, all are now in SSE for reasons of language policy (Simpson

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[25]It is safe to assume that this represents a socio-economically advantaged minority, which may still have some passive knowledge of L — it is hard to imagine a situation where an active member of the speech community would be completely sheltered from contact with L.

2007:387). Conversations with colleagues are not invariably L either, as the topic involved can skew usage towards H (Koh, p.c. June 2008). (h) is, therefore, marked as [±], because of the heterogeneity of the speech community: both H and L can be acquired natively; (k), however, is given [−], because it would imply that H is not used 'by any section of the community for ordinary conversation' (Ferguson 1959:336), which is not the case in this categorical form.

The features of Table 4.11, therefore, suggest that Singapore does not present a clear-cut example of Fergusonian diglossia. On an individual performance level, however, as well as in terms of language attitudes, there is a strong sense in which diglossia cannot be wholly dismissed: as will become apparent from the data presented in chapter 5, there are quantifiably different linguistic features in various situational settings, whereas in terms of speakers' perception of things, it has already been established above that speakers 'are conscious of these differences' (Gupta 1994:8, see also Willemyns 1987:37), and it is certainly the case that in public discourse, 'Singlish' and 'Good English' are often-used terms. Importantly, DeCamp also notes that 'on the level of performance', the 'verbal behaviour of the individual may turn out to be discrete, even though the composite behaviour of the community [...] is continuous' (1971:368). This distinction between individual and societal diglossia, as it were, alludes to chapter 7, which will discuss this issue in more detail.

4.4 Pakir: triangles of English proficiency

As briefly outlined in section 1.4.3 (page 32), Anne Pakir (1991) suggests a different model, based on the interaction between two dimensions: the 'cline of formality' and the 'cline of proficiency' (see Figure 4.2). The first of these

ranges from 'formal' to 'intimate', and has SSE and CSE as its extremes.[26] Choices along this cline are based on situational setting, topic, interlocutor, etc. Its five subdivisions are arbitrary and based on standard Labovian techniques (Pakir 1991:173, see also Labov 1966:90–135). The second cline, that of proficiency, is also subdivided into five levels: Pakir equates the highest, 'advanced', with 'educated' and 'standard variety', and the lowest, 'rudimentary', with 'pidgin-like' (1991:173). Her gauge for the cline of proficiency is 'the number of years of contact with English, usually in an institutional setting like the school' (1991:173).

The interaction between the two stems from a primary position on the proficiency scale: speakers have a particular proficiency level, and are able to use a certain formality range corresponding to that level of proficiency. Rudimentarily proficient speakers, for instance, are limited in that for all formality levels, their variety will be CSE-like or, in Pakir's unfortunate term, 'substandard' (1991:174). Adept and advanced speakers, however, are able to differentiate between formal, casual, consultative, etc. styles. Speakers perform 'triangulations' (1991:174) between their position on the proficiency scale and the formality required. These triangles increase proportionally with proficiency levels, and highly educated speakers have at their disposal a wide range of sub-varieties, which they exploit in a 'fluid and far-ranging [way] compared to others who are less proficient' (Pakir 1991:174).

As previously noted (section 1.4.3, page 32), these 'expanding triangles' are in fact not hugely different from Platt's (1975) post-creole continuum. In both cases, education is taken as the prime factor determining speakers' position on the 'cline of proficiency' (Pakir) or the speech community's socio-economic scale (Platt). This position correlates closely with the range of sub-varieties

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[26]Pakir quotes Gupta (1989) in calling SgE diglossic in a Fergusonian way, and even uses the term 'diglossic continuum' (1991:174). This terminological choice is slightly confusing without extensive discussion of the kind found in Willemyns (1987), since diglossia is prototypically binary, whereas a continuum is not. This discussion is absent in Pakir (1991).
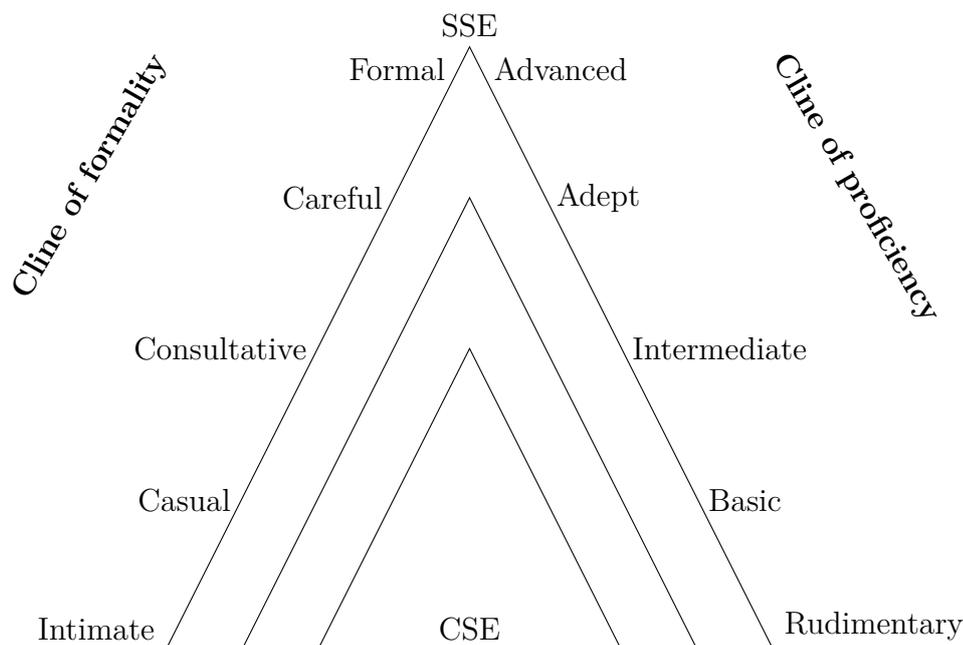
Figure 4.2: 'Expanding triangles of English expression' (Pakir 1991:174).

available to the speakers (represented on a scale by Platt and as a surface by Pakir), with those speakers with the highest educational level commanding the widest span (Platt) or area (Pakir) of the continuum. Likewise, in both cases the sub-varieties available are exploited for stylistic purposes: Pakir integrates the stylistic continuum into her model, whereas Platt represents them, arguably more segmentally, by several individual sub-varieties labelled as 'formal', 'semi-formal', and 'colloquial'. One ostensibly major point of difference is the composition of the speech community: while Platt's model simply refers to the 'Singapore speech community', Pakir's is targeted at 'English-knowing bilinguals'[27] — this is important in that only members with at least a rudimentary command of English are captured by her triangles. In Platt's case, this is more ambiguous, and the term 'Pidgin English', used for speakers at the lower end of his social scale, is 'confined to older members of the speech community'

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[27]This term introduced by Kachru (1982:42, cited in Low and Brown 2005:47) is used by Pakir (1991) to designate speakers who are bilingual in English and another language. The term is particularly relevant for Singapore, since it captures well the situation brought about by the education system, which has pupils share a first language (English) and a second language (any of the 'mother tongues', see section 1.2.1 on page 11).

(Platt 1975:367), while Gupta (1994), on the other hand, marks a clear break from the treatment of SgE speakers as non-native speakers, and reserves her diglossia expressly for native speakers of SgE. Another, perhaps more important point, is Pakir's rationale for the model, which emphasises the stylistic shifting of proficient speakers. This was lacking in Platt's model, whose 'static depiction [. . .] obscures the fact that speakers switch back and forth all the time' (Pakir 1991:174) — indeed, Platt (1975) clearly locates his speakers on the speech continuum, and only really considers switching to 'lower' lects when speakers interact with interlocutors further down on the social (and linguistic) scale. Pakir's triangles account for such switching for stylistic purposes, while relating it to the speech continuum presented by Platt.

In sum, Pakir's triangles are a useful and much-cited model to explain the variation in SgE. Certainly the inclusion of a cline of proficiency greatly enhances it compared to Platt's social continuum based on education alone, and to Gupta's diglossia, which presupposes at least partial competence in both diglossic varieties. However, while accounting for proficiency is a good thing, the fact that this variable is computed by means of correlation 'with number of years of contact with English, usually in an institutional setting like the school' (Pakir 1991:173), diminishes its impact and puts it on a par with similar models that take education as a measure. In the absence of another method (for instance a standardised proficiency test, with all the methodological issues ensuing), however, Pakir's is a very valuable contribution towards a model for SgE variation.

4.5 Poedjosoedarmo: modified triangles

Gloria Poedjosoedarmo[28] (1995) combines Platt's (1975) continuum and Pakir's (1991) triangles, superimposing them to produce the model in Figure 4.3. Her model is based on questionnaire-based data collected among her trainee teachers. Pakir's triangles are modified in such a way that there is one for the acrolect, one for the mesolect, and one for the basilect — and crucially, the bases of the triangles do not coincide. This suggests that the basilect is not used by acrolectal and mesolectal speakers, and conversely, that 'basilectal speakers cannot use the mesolect or acrolect at all' Poedjosoedarmo (1995:56). Basilectal speakers, in this model, have other first languages, and use English (the basilect, here equated with 'pidgin English') only for inter-ethnic communication. Some lower mesolectal speakers are unable to use the 'stylistic range for educated speakers', i.e. the lower acrolects mastered by higher mesolectal speakers.

The model carries a lot more information than previous ones. For one, each group of lects is given the profile of typical speakers. The basilect is used by 'uneducated' speakers for whom English is not a first language, whereas the mesolect is used either by mesolectal speakers as a 'primary code' or by educated speakers as a 'colloquial style', and the acrolect is used by educated speakers. Pronunciation is given special attention, with the acrolect being subdivided into three distinct accents: local, RP, and American.

One shortcoming of the model is the absence of a clear linguistic definition of the three triangles. While the mesolect is labelled as having 'distinctive syntactic and lexical' features, these are not explained — an informed discrimination between the three groups of lects is, therefore, impossible. The rationale for the non-coinciding triangle bases is equally problematic: while

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[28]The Dutch-influenced Indonesian spelling ⟨Poedjosoedarmo⟩ is approx. /pud͡ʒosuˈdarmo/.
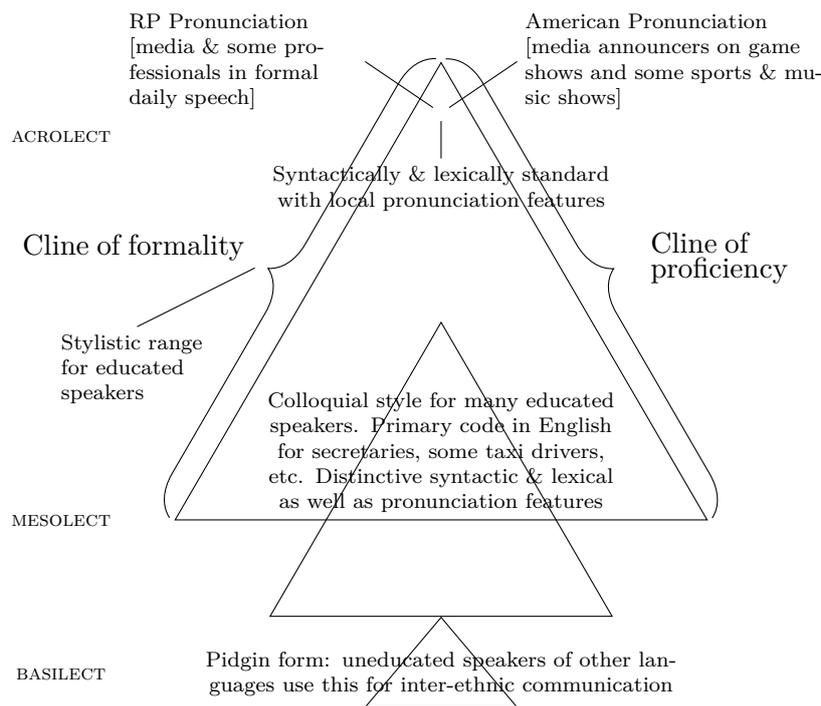
Figure 4.3: Modified triangles (Poedjosoedarmo 1995:55).

there might be some truth in the assumption that basilectal speakers are unable to reach even the mesolect, the suggestion that mesolectal and acrolectal speakers do not use the basilect 'at all' appears to be founded on speakers' 'claim[s]' (Poedjosoedarmo 1995:56). The basilect would seem the obvious choice in acrolectal–basilectal interaction, as well as in very informal situations (Low and Brown 2005:39). Furthermore, the fact that the mesolectal and basilectal triangles connect suggests that a similar lect is possible (the lowest mesolect being equal to the highest basilect) — unlike for the acrolectal speakers, whose triangle does not extend to the basilect.

With all its shortcomings, the model, acknowledged by Poedjosoedarmo (1995:56) as 'sketchy and not entirely accurate', is interesting in its attempt to combine two influential approaches to SgE variation. The superimposition of Pakir's (1991) triangles of proficiency with Platt's (1975) lectal continuum is innovative and a good way of bringing together two approaches that have a lot

in common. The polar varieties SSE and CSE of Pakir's model have sensibly
been left out to accommodate the continuum, which makes it a firmly non-
diglossic model. Sadly, despite Poedjosoedarmo's assurance that the model is
'preliminary' (1995:63), little has been done to develop it further. As it stands,
it has only benefitted from this one attitudinal study among her students,
whereas it would have been interesting to see it redefined in a more rigorous,
feature-based way.

4.6   Alsagoff: cultural orientation model

Lubna Alsagoff (2007) sees the need for a new approach to SgE variation, ar-
guing for 'a more culturally grounded perspective' (2007:25), which essentially
treats variation as a result of cultural forces pulling SgE in two opposing direc-
tions: globally and locally. The emphasis on culture and identity is something
of a departure from the previous models, which focus primarily, as established
above, on educational achievement (as a measure of language proficiency). For
instance, the implication of Platt's model, Alsagoff argues, is that 'Singlish is
not borne out of choice but of a lack of education', thus branding it as 'undesir-
able' (2007:27) — certainly the continuum suggests a dichotomy between the
exonormative 'Good English', StBE, and the substrate-influenced, uneducated
'creoloid'.[29] Her major target, however, is the diglossic model, since it does not
account for those members of the speech community who do not speak En-
glish natively — there is still a sizeable group that 'continue[s] to use English
as an "other" language, often as a lingua franca' (Alsagoff 2007:30–31). This
exclusion of 'learners' of English from the diglossia model effectively precludes
proficiency-based variation. Alsagoff thus settles on Pakir's (1991) triangles as

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[29]Alsagoff (2007:28) acknowledges Platt's (1975) efforts in providing a purely descriptive
analysis of CSE, highlighting his use of 'non-standard' rather than the previously-used 'sub-
standard' (e.g. Tongue 1974:lll).

the least flawed model, since it includes both proficiency and formality as its variables. The only problem is its incorporation of diglossia.

Alsagoff struggles with Gupta's data, which suggest that L features occur in domains where H is predicted. She observes that 'such pervasive inclusion of [CSE] features in almost all speech appear to be endemic [. . .] even in formal contexts' (2007:32). Since diglossia does not have the explanatory power needed to characterise the kind of variation observed in SgE, Alsagoff turns to a wider perspective of the situation, considering the concept of 'culture' and the way in which English contributes to two distinct ends. *Culture*, here, refers to 'a macro-culture' related to 'notions of citizenry, and nationalist identity based on a collective disposition and history' (2007:34). This culture is externalised in the two main roles of English in Singapore: English is, firstly, a global language, the language of international trade and commerce, that of finance and technology. Secondly, English is the lingua franca used for inter-ethnic communication between the various ethnic groups in Singapore. The first of these roles is intrinsically external; the second is unambiguously internal to the speech community as such. Alsagoff's argument is that the variation in SgE is a direct result of the opposing forces of these two roles, the first of which is directed towards globalisation, and the second towards localisation; variation is a result of this 'conflict between "being global" and "being local"' (2007:34).

As far as the 'global' target of SgE is concerned, the discussion is always formulated in pragmatic and primarily economic terms. Its necessity is advocated by political leaders on grounds of 'trade, science and technology', which renders English 'essential as Singapore becomes a leading financial and banking centre' (Minister of State Prof. Jayakumar, *The Straits Times*, 19 August 1982, cited in Bokhorst-Heng 1998:290). This concern for competitiveness on the international market is probably further strengthened by the potentially

small economic weight of the island-state: the characterisation of Singapore as a 'little red dot'[30] by Indonesian President Habibie (*Wall Street Journal Asia*, 4 August 1998) left a deep impression and 'entered the psyche of every Singaporean' (MITA 2003). The widespread awareness of vulnerability (economic and otherwise) has its share in the pursuit of economic growth and of an internationally (rather than regionally) oriented public image (Alsagoff 2007:35). In order to achieve this, English is needed, but an English that is exonormative, i.e. the acrolect of Platt (1975), the SSE of Pakir (1991), and the Standard English of Gupta (1994, 2001) — in short, a *global* English. This Alsagoff (2007:35) calls 'International Singapore English (ISE)', the global brand of English as used in Singapore.

This ISE is part of a discourse on the global nature not only of the economy that Singapore thrives on, but also of its citizens' achievements: while the first of these was and is crucial in bringing foreign investment into the country, the latter has recently become more important with important numbers of Singaporean entrepreneurs 'going global', thereby 'bringing Singapore to the world' (Alsagoff 2007:35), e.g. by creating global brands, and thus effectively acting as ambassadors of Singapore in the global arena. These interactions naturally take place in ISE, and are actively encouraged. However, and this is an important point, ISE is always referred to in economic terms, and is stripped of any cultural and ethnic associations. Culturally, language planners had to further ISE without encouraging 'corrupted Western values' (2007:36, see also Alsagoff and Ho 1998): English is a global, not a Western[31] language. It is the 'mother tongues' that have the prerogative of being vehicles of local[32]

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[30]Referring to the cartographic symbol for capital cities (e.g. ◉), which in the Singaporean case, at a given scale, would cover the entire island due to its small surface area of ca. 680 km^2 (see page 2).

[31]The term *Western culture*, in the Singaporean context, is often taken to mean British or American culture, rather than any other 'Western' one. Many Singaporeans, for instance, find it hard to understand that there are 'Westerners' (*ang mohs*, see section 1.3.3, page 18) who do not speak English (Gupta, p.c. 28 November 2007).

[32]Or rather ancestral cultures, i.e. one for each recognised ethnic group, and not the local, *Singaporean* culture *per se*.

culture(s). Ethnically, too, English is seen as 'neutral' with respect to the 'mother tongues'. In the government's ideal view, every Singaporean is of a given ethnicity (Chinese, Malay, Indian), speaks ISE for global and economic purposes, and uses their 'mother tongue' (Mandarin, Malay, Tamil) for cultural and local identity.

This is of course far from reality. The lingua franca that is English has evolved to become a vehicle of inter-cultural communication and cohesion, and as the only language common to every Singaporean (at least for the younger generation), it takes on cultural meaning in a local, national sense. Alsagoff (2007:36–37) explains this by the contact-induced change that saw the emergence of CSE: contact of English with the several cultures (Chinese, Malay, Indian) is at the origin of the 'enculturation' of the new variety. She continues by saying that Singlish 'is used by people, so it becomes part of the cultural history of Singapore' and 'shapes the culture which it serves' (2007:37). While seemingly circular (culture shapes language which shapes culture, a point acknowledged by Alsagoff (2007:37)), the argument essentially underlines the interaction between the two, and their mutual reinforcement. Using Singlish *has* become 'a means of expressing local identities' (2007:37); it is this *localism* that prompts her to rename Singlish 'Local Singapore English (LSE)'[33] — a variety which is used to express local and national identity, reflecting a uniquely Singaporean culture.

The two varieties serve two opposing cultural orientations: the first is global, outward-looking, and requires ISE, whereas the second is local, inward-looking, and requires LSE. In the first case, ISE is devoid of cultural elements, stresses similarities with the rest of the world, and emphasises standardisa-

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[33]It may be appropriate at this stage to summarise the various appellations used to describe the two varieties. Based on the diglossic model, H has been called 'Standard English', 'Standard Singapore English (SSE)', 'acrolect', 'International Singapore English (ISE)', and, by non-linguists, 'Good English'. L, on the other hand, has been referred to as 'Singlish', 'Colloquial Singapore English (CSE)', 'basilect', and 'Local Singapore English (LSE)'. 'SCE' is sometimes used for CSE in the literature, but this has been standardised in this thesis.

tion — Alsagoff (2007:37) uses Bakhtin's (1981) concept of *centripetal force* to describe ISE, which enables Singapore and Singaporeans, as it were, to interact with the outside world. LSE, on the other hand, is highly associated with Singaporean culture, thus setting it appart from the rest of the world, and emphasises differentiation from exonormative standards: Bakhtin's (1981) *centrifugal force* is appropriate to describe LSE's function of uniting Singaporeans among themselves while at the same time setting them appart from the outside world (Alsagoff 2007:37). For Alsagoff, variation within SgE is, therefore, the negotiation between these two orientations (globalism and localism), which results 'in English being "pulled" in two different directions' (2007:38) — it is this interaction between two macro-cultural perspectives (embodied linguistically by LSE at the local end and ISE at the global end of the spectrum) that account for the various types of English found in Singapore. Uses of either, or shifts towards either of these, indicates a shift towards the respective cultural orientation; 'the degree or extent' of linguistic shift 'can be seen as a measure of the strength of the orientation' (Alsagoff 2007:38). Proficiency-based variation is also accounted for, again grounded in cultural terms: 'a speaker who is more proficient in English is also likely to have a wider macro-cultural repertoire' (Alsagoff 2007:39) — there is, therefore, a correlation between use of ISE and English proficiency, which is, again, 'equated with educational attainment' (2007:39). Alsagoff calls this approach the 'cultural orientation model', sensibly abbreviated COM.

The two orientations within COM are characterised by the features reproduced in Table 4.12 above (Alsagoff 2007:39, Table 1). These dichotomous features are vaguely reminiscent of diglossic H–L in that they assign certain situational settings to one or the other variety. Thus for instance situations where authority is important, such as in the ticking off of a pupil in the classroom, ISE will be used, whereas when camaraderie is stressed, i.e. friendliness,

	ISE	**LSE**
	Globalism	*Localism*
(a)	Economic capital	Socio-cultural capital
(b)	Authority	Camaraderie
(c)	Formality	Informality
(d)	Distance	Closeness
(e)	Educational attainment	Community membership

Table 4.12: 'Features of the two orientations in the cultural orientation model' (Alsagoff 2007:39, Table 1).

etc., LSE is the norm. Similarly, dyad (d) is closely related to this, in that authority is almost inherently associated with distance (albeit not vice-versa), and camaraderie with closeness (idem). Dyad (c), however, while being equally straightforward, harks back to previous models' stylistic variation (Platt 1975, Pakir 1991, Poedjosoedarmo 1995), rather than to the diglossic model: while all features present a certain degree of continuity, it is probably fair to say that formality is much less binary than, say, authority.

Dyad (e) is a central part of the model since, as described above, it is the one that accounts for English proficiency — the ISE used by speakers reveals their level of educational attainment, as reflected in their English (ISE being the variety used in education, and LSE the one acquired natively or otherwise). The choice between ISE or LSE at this level, however, is again one of orientation, stressing either one's educational attainment (ISE) or one's membership of the community (LSE) — an important fact which will be discussed in more detail below. Similarly, in (a) the model presents two poles of orientation towards economic and socio-cultural capitals.[34] The economic capital is

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[34]Alsagoff (2007) uses Bourdieu's (1986) definition of capital in its economic, social, and cultural form: the first refers to 'richesse matérielle sous la forme d'argent, de biens et de valeurs mobilières [material riches in the form of money, goods, and transferable securities]', while cultural capital constitutes of 'savoirs, de compétences, et d'autres acquisitions culturelles [knowledge, competences, and other cultural acquisitions]', such as educational qualifications (Bourdieu 2001:26–27). Social capital, similarly, is held to be that capital mobilised within the field ('champ' in Bourdieu's terminology, see 1981:113–120) of social interaction, e.g. networks, relationships, etc., but excluding what is termed 'symbolic capital', which includes 'prestige, réputation, renommée' (2001:295).

undeniably embodied in ISE, which is constantly championed as the medium that enhances Singapore's economic standing, whereas LSE has socio-cultural capital, namely a connection to local culture and identification with Singaporean (as opposed to foreign) society. Speakers can decide, on this scale, which of the two orientations is more appropriate in a given setting (and to what extent), and opt for the associated sub-variety.

This element of choice is central to COM. Alsagoff (2007:40) notes that the two poles, ISE and LSE, can be exploited within the same speech, where for instance authority is necessary, but local features are incorporated 'in order to stress membership in the community'. The use of L features in contexts where H would be required in a diglossic framework can, therefore, be reanalysed as the insertion of 'local' features into speech that would be characterised, overall, as 'global', thus enabling speakers to mark themselves as insiders to the society — an ability which can have tangible advantages (think, for example, of a political speech), since it underlines 'community membership alongside educational attainment' Alsagoff (2007:40). Alsagoff equates these possibilities with style-shifting, a term that she prefers to *code-switching*, since the latter suggests 'a binary movement between two varieties' (2007:40), as opposed to the more fine-grained shifting implied by a stylistic scale.

Lastly, the community membership feature of LSE allows users to 'bridge educational differences' (Alsagoff 2007:41): while in Platt's (1975) model (and to a lesser extent in Pakir 1991), speakers could use a 'lower' lect to communicate with speakers of a different educational level, COM stresses the localism of the variety chosen rather than its association with low proficiency. This incorporates a diachronic dimension into the variation experienced in SgE: Singlish, decried as 'uneducated', 'poor' English, is the result of having to 'accommodate a wide range of grammaticality', thereby acknowledging the important

'group of the poorly educated' (Alsagoff 2007:41–42).[35] This 'structural inclu-
sivity' (2007:42) of LSE accounts for the wide variation observed in LSE, since
it extends not only to proficiency, but also to ethnicity (with LSE being able
to accommodate various ethnic sub-varieties; c.f. Alsagoff 2007:41, but also
Deterding and Poedjosoedarmo 2000). Much of this can be subsumed under
the label 'community membership' (LSE feature of dyad (e) in Table 4.12),
but certainly the other features play a significant role too.

In conclusion, Alsagoff's (2007) COM analyses variation in SgE as being
the result of opposing cultural orientations. One is globalist, serves economic
ends, represents authority, formality, and distance, and also signals educational
attainment; it results, linguistically, in ISE. The other is localist, serves socio-
cultural ends, represents camaraderie, informality, and closeness, and signals
community membership; its outcome is LSE. In so doing, COM presents
a significant improvement over diglossia, in that it does take into account
functional distribution, but at the same time accounts for the 'leaks' in Gupta's
(1994) data more satisfactorily than by code-switching. The importance of
culture in the model also recasts speakers as acutely aware of their orientation
when choosing between ISE and LSE as their target: users of SgE are now
'agents of culture, not merely bearers of culture'; a fact that has effected
the changes of LSE to accommodate this function (Alsagoff 2007:43). This
inclusiveness of LSE increases its value and endows it with the local cultural
capital of which it is often stripped off in policy-making discourse.

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[35]Alsagoff (2007:42) does however point to the fact that LSE is not entirely to be equated
with learner varieties and Pidgin English. She cites Chew (1995:165) who argues that the
two, while similar, are not the same in that 'an educated English speaker speaking informally
[is distinguishable] from an uneducated speaker'. These differences, however, have not been
clearly investigated to date.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter has presented various attempts to explain the variation observed in SgE. The difficulty of the task is apparent in the number of models proposed: of the six given in this chapter, each was trying to improve on previously-presented ones. Platt's (1975) was the first to attempt an inclusive model to capture the complete speech community's behaviour; his continuum model, while generally considered outdated (Ansaldo 2004), has become an influential starting point for other models. His later work on polyglossia (1977) was similarly groundbreaking, and has the merit of being the only model to capture the multilingual element in Singaporean society: the other models either ignore the presence of other languages (Platt 1975, Pakir 1991, Poedjosoedarmo 1995), or acknowledge their presence but do not integrate them into their model (Gupta 1994, Alsagoff 2007). This gives the polyglossic model a certain edge over the others in recognising an added level of complexity that often escapes analyses which focus on SgE alone. However, since it is built essentially on a complex diglossic framework, it suffers from the same shortcomings associated with diglossia (outlined in section 4.3). The diglossic model (Gupta 1989, 1994, 2006b) also has its merits, firstly because it explicitly casts SgE speakers as native speakers of English, having at their disposal two sub-varieties of the language, used in different situations in accordance with diglossic rules (Ferguson 1959), and secondly because it reflects the speakers' perception of the situation. This tempting application of diglossia, termed 'leaky' (Gupta 2006b:22, Fasold 1984:41) because of the non-categorical (Chambers 2003:26–38) distinction between H and L, has been called into question due to its breaches of several of Ferguson's (1959) criteria (see page 147). I concluded section 4.3 by arguing that while Singapore may not present a case of classic Fergusonian diglossia, a two-way distinction between a perceived H and L in a situation that is, linguistically speaking, a continuum, is not unheard of (c.f. Willemyns 1987, but

also DeCamp 1971:368), and might, therefore, have some merit. This will be further explored in chapter 7.

Of the last three models presented, Pakir (1991) and Poedjosoedarmo (1995) are related in both shape and target, the latter being based on the former. Pakir formalises proficiency as one of her primary variables, a component that was only hinted at in Platt's (1975, 1977) continuum and barely considered by Gupta's (1994) diglossia. Her formulation of an interaction between said level of proficiency and formality gives rise to her triangles and sheds an important light on the resources used by SgE speakers for style-shifting. Poedjosoedarmo (1995) expands on this by combining the triangles and superimposing Platt's (1975) continuum over them. Hers is an ambitious model, accounting for various lectal groups who use various, potentially identifiable sections of the continuum (each represented by a triangle). It is also slightly controversial in its assumption that the basilect is out of acrolectal speakers' reach.

Finally, Alsagoff (2007) proposes a model that takes cultural orientation as its main element. COM takes a markedly different approach from the other models by taking a step back from the more narrowly linguistic analyses to a more macro-level view, which takes in account issues normally not captured in variationist sociolinguistics. The interaction between two antithetical orientations (global and local) result, at the linguistic level, in the variation observed in SgE between the poles ISE (target of the globalist orientation) and LSE (its localist counterpart). Within this model, cultural orientation explains also style-shifting, issues of power and solidarity, and negotiates the thorny issue of language proficiency. This presents a very satisfying alternative to the diglossic framework and its reliance on 'leaks' or code-switching, and to the continuum model and its quasi-deterministic slant regarding socio-economic factors.

Having considered the existing models of variation in SgE, the following chapter will present the data collected in this study, later (in chapter 7) used to assess the suitability of either model.

Chapter 5

Data analysis and discussion of results

THIS chapter is divided into three main sections: the first deals with the analytical framework within which the data collected will be analysed, the second is a presentation and analysis of the results obtained for each variable, and the final section will discuss the significance of these results in the context of this thesis.

5.1 Analytic framework

Chapter 2 gave a substantial overview of the methods used to collect the data under investigation: it addressed issues such as the evolution of the methodological framework (section 2.1.1, page 36), the materials used in the course of the study (section 2.1.4, page 43, see also Appendices I–III), and the structure of the interviews themselves (section 2.1.5, page 44). Section 2.2 (page 48) then defined the linguistic variables central to this thesis, and illustrated their usage with examples from the recordings. The same variables were then given in-depth treatment in the following chapter (sections 3.1–3.3 on pages 66–113).
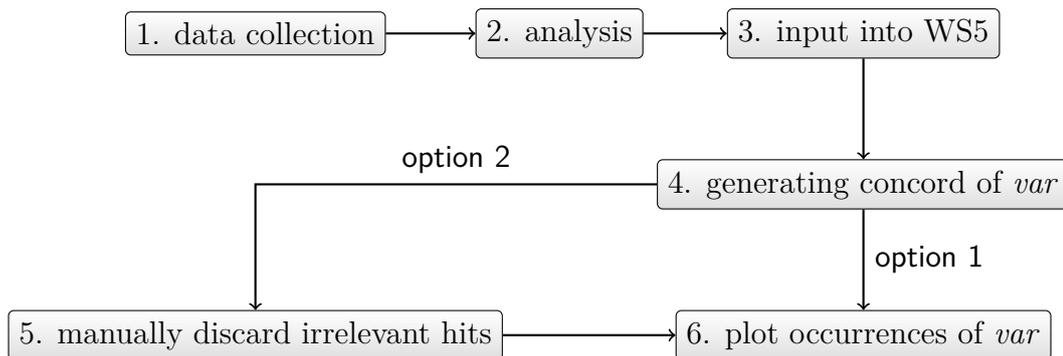
Figure 5.1: Operational flowchart for the identification of a generic variable (*var*) in WordSmith Tools 5.0.

Chapter 2 did not go beyond considerations of how the data were collected, nor did it go into any detail as to how the data were going to be used. This is what this section sets out to do. The subsequent sections 5.2 to 5.4 (pages 171–192) will then investigate each of the variables' results within the analytic framework presented here.

Once the recorded data had been transferred onto the computer (see section 2.1.4, page 43), each recording was transcribed into plain text, resulting in 72 `.txt` files and a total of 110 422 words (excluding the interviewer's turns) — a detailed breakdown of these figures is given in Appendix IV.2, and one example transcription from each situational setting is reproduced in Appendix VI. These files were then processed using WordSmith Tools 5.0, creating word lists and concordances for each of the variables under consideration: in the case of the discourse particle *lah*, to take a useful example, the procedure outlined in Figure 5.1 was followed.

The 5th step is important in the case of variables that have both CSE and SSE uses, as, for instance, in the case of *got*. *Lah*, due to its basilectal properties (explained in section 2.2.2 on page 53), does not require this manual sorting. Step 6. then lists the texts which feature the variable in question, and indicates the number of hits per text. This is returned in the form of a table, of the kind illustrated in Figure 5.2. Only the first three columns are of immediate

Figure 5.2: Screenshot of a Concord output window in WordSmith Tools 5.0 for variable *lah*.

interest here: the name of the file concerned, the number of words in the file, and, under 'hits', the number of occurrences of *lah* in each of them.

These first steps use WordSmith Tools as the primary programme for analysis. Once these occurrences of *lah* had been counted, however, the list generated was then transferred into MS Excel XP for further analysis. The numerous formulæ abounding in Excel made for a relatively straightforward computation of the WordSmith data: a simple copy–paste of the values in columns 'words' and 'hits' (see Figure 5.2) into the correct place in the spreadsheet not only instantly generated values for [hits per thousand words], [words per interview type], [words per minute], or [hits per thousand words by interview setting], but also drew line graphs of the relevant data in a matter of seconds. Figure 5.3 shows the Excel worksheet into which the WordSmith results were copied: a simple insertion of values into column M, for instance, immediately computes column N and updates column H and I. Table 5.1 overleaf illustrates

Figure 5.3: Screenshot from the input sheet `Counts` of MS Excel XP work-book `Analysis.xls` containing all results. Shaded areas are automatically computed by formulæ, e.g. cell I2, which would read `=H2/$G2*1000`.

how these numbers are then processed according to the speakers' specification (ethnic group, school type, ID, etc., see section 2.1.2 on page 39).

Once these results were computed,[1] it was relatively simple to create graphs to illustrate the results more clearly. With Excel's help, these graphs were easily created on a separate worksheet of the same document, and updated automatically when, for one reason or another, the original data was modified. A graph illustrating the behaviour of the particles for each school type in Table 5.1 is reproduced in Figure 5.4.[2] The graphs were subsequently used for

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[1]Note that usage rates are typically expressed in terms of occurrences per thousand words (in *per mille*, ‰). This is the standard unit in corpus linguistics, and makes eminent sense in this study, where results were sometimes fractions of a single *per mille.*

[2]Line graphs are used despite the fact that the lines themselves do not represent any-thing in particular. In fact the X axis clearly shows four independent variables, and none in between them: there is no continuum, as the line that connects them may seem to suggest. Bar graphs would have been more appropriate, but in keeping with standard sociolinguis-

Particles	Count	per 1 000
i.C	66	6.23
i.M	80	6.10
i.I	92	7.41
ii.C	96	5.69
ii.M	371	24.15
ii.I	121	9.80
iii.C	235	19.66
iii.M	90	10.33
iii.I	68	7.49
Junior college	238	6.59
Polytechnic	588	13.19
Vocational training	393	13.21
Total	**1 219**	**11.04**

Table 5.1: Automatically-computed results for all particles, by group and school type. Here the formulæ used were slightly more complex, since they represent not simple counts, but conditional ones. For example, the cell containing the result for the Chinese group of school type i (66 particles) reads `=SUMIF(Counts!$A$2:$A$73,"i.C*",Counts!$H$2:$H$73)`.
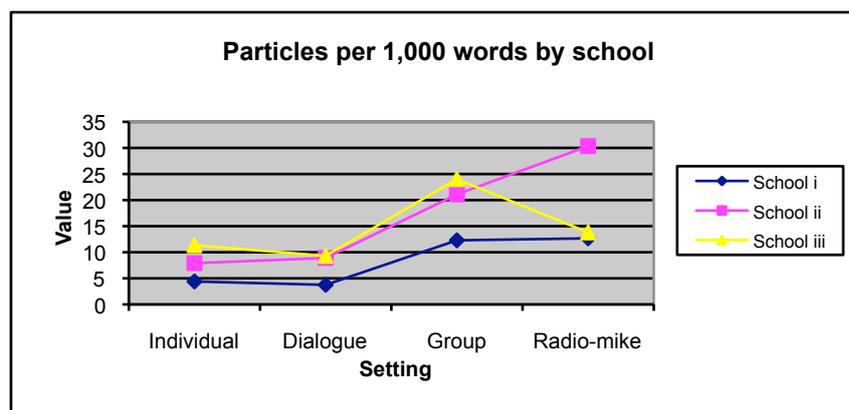
Figure 5.4: Particle usage in ‰ by school type. Automatically generated graph on the basis of previously computed results presented in Table 5.1.

illustrations in publications and conference posters, with only slight formatting changes. In this thesis, the Excel titles above the graphs will be dispensed with, as the captions will provide the necessary information. The data itself was re-imput into LaTeX 2$_\varepsilon$, and, with the use of Ti*k*Z, a more visually appealing format was achieved.

With these basic premises established, the next step is now the analysis of individual variables. In each case, the results will be presented in numerical (tabular) form, before being illustrated by graphs such as the one in Figure 5.4. The results will also be subjected to significance tests in order to ascertain the degree to which they can be used to draw meaningful conclusions. Finally, section 5.5 (page 192) will consider all previously-presented results and discuss them extensively.

5.2   Analysis of aspect markers

The aspect markers investigated in this study, as outlined in section 2.2.1 (page 49), are the completive, the experiential, the delimitative, the inchoative, the progressive, and the habitual. The following section treats each of these individually, providing examples and detailed results.

5.2.1   Results

Completive and inchoative

These two aspectual classes are here analysed under the same heading, because of the particular challenge posed by the adverb *already*, which marks both. Careful examination of *already*'s environment was necessary in order to identify its meaning, which could potentially be any one of the three possibilities:

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tic practice (Chambers 2003:24–25, Wardhaugh 2002:165–167), this thesis uses line graphs throughout.

N	Concordance
7	yeah. No plans so far since next week *already* start of the fasting month so I'm
8	that is not part of the budget food *already* will come up to three hundred
9	three hundred. The cruise ah, the ticket *already* over three hundred Who's bright
10	the haze pollution no way In Singapore *already* the haze is like that, means we
11	How mah Like.. Malaysia No cannot *already* How about Thailand, because
12	that... it would take too long if I start already.
13	. Open the door. I tell you *already* you got interview by him just now
14	no after that day we are going home *already* don't sleep lah, since we're going
15	(***) shopping after that the day spend *already* ah think we spill over the budget
16	no hotel, resort lah, tell how many time *already* (***) then sleep I didn't even talk
17	and it would be we're going to Malaysia *already* Langkawi OK ah ok (*I know
18	the entrance fee is *already* about a few hundred buck a
19	or all those places I go already <3>*already* yah, so boring there. Everything
20	Mount Favour or all those places I go *already* already yah, so boring there.
21	will also get to go overseas ah, but you *already* say yourself, (***) depending on
22	kids there they will come back for them *already* - even if they worry they won't

Figure 5.5: A few lines from the output for *already* in a WordSmith Tools 5.0 concordance.

completive marker, inchoative marker, or simply SSE use. It was therefore necessary to manually sort the WordSmith Tools results in order to retain only those of interest (see step 5. in Figure 5.1). An important basis for distinguishing between categories is the type of verb *already* is used with. *Already* with a stative verb marks the inchoative. A typical output window from Concord is illustrated in Figure 5.5.

As previously established (see section 2.2, page 48), there are three markers of the completive aspect in CSE: S+*already* is unmarked, V+*finish* and V+*got* are emphatic (Bao 1995, Teo 1995, Bao 2005). The least controversial, least used, and easiest to analyse is *finish*: the word itself is used 24 times in the whole corpus, and only one instance of these is unambiguously non-standard, namely that in 4's turn in (1) below. Her polar interrogative ends with a negated VP where the verb is suffixed by *finish*, which is here an emphatic completive marker. *Already* would have been similarly felicitous in this case,

but the use of *finish* renders it emphatic: the fact that this is a rhetorical question is underlined by the emphasis on the completive.

(1)   3:   By going abroad you will know different culture, yeah, as in compared to say in Singapore, you just know the, know the ethnic culture

       4:    (***) you stay in Singapore four culture already you haven't understand <u>finish</u>? Want go abroad and understand other people's culture?

       (ii.I.dia.34)

Already occurred more frequently, and required manual discrimination, as with *finish*. There were 105 occurrences in total: 28 SSE uses, 46 completive uses, and 31 inchoative uses. Table 5.2 shows their distribution by group of informant, ethnicity, and school type; Table 5.3 shows the cumulative counts for completive and inchoative *already* distributed by situational setting. It is obvious from these figures that they have little to tell us about actual language use: considering that these are numbers of occurrences rather than usage rates, they are very low. A quick look at the rates of cumulated *already* (from the last line in Table 5.3) yields 0.44 ‰ for the individual interviews, 0.67 ‰ for the dialogues, 1.03 ‰ for the group recordings, and 1.12 ‰ for the radio-microphone recordings. These rates themselves suggest a low level of statistical significance, and a one-proportion Z-test confirmed this.[3]

Finally, the completive variant *got* also required painstaking manual sorting, since *got* can also have existential/locative uses (see section 5.4) as well as SSE uses. It was found that of the 62 non-standard occurrences of *got* in the corpus, not a single one was fulfilling the role of an emphatic completive marker. In sum, then, the completive was marked 46 times by *already* and once by *finish*, and the inchoative 31 times by *already*.

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[3] $Z = \frac{\hat{p}-p}{\sqrt{\frac{p(1-p)}{n}}}$, e.g. for radio-microphone recordings: $\frac{\frac{1.12}{1000}-110422}{\sqrt{\frac{110422(1-110422)}{17}}} = 174.12, \implies p \approx 1$.

Already	Completive	Inchoative	SSE
i.C	0	2	0
i.M	11	1	3
i.I	4	3	4
ii.C	9	8	5
ii.M	10	10	3
ii.I	4	1	3
iii.C	4	3	5
iii.M	2	2	3
iii.I	2	1	2
C	13	13	10
M	23	13	9
I	10	5	9
Junior college	15	6	7
Polytechnic	23	19	11
Vocational training	8	6	10
Total	**46**	**31**	**28**

Table 5.2: Counts for the three functions of *already*, by group, ethnicity, and school type.

	Setting				
Already	**Individual**	**Dialogue**	**Group**	**Radio-mike***	***Total***
i.C	0	1	0	1	*2*
i.M	1	4	2	5	*12*
i.I	0	4	3	0	*7*
ii.C	10	2	2	3	*17*
ii.M	3	10	2	5	*20*
ii.I	2	0	2	1	*5*
iii.C	1	2	4	0	*7*
iii.M	1	0	1	2	*4*
iii.I	1	0	2	0	*3*
C	11	5	6	4	*26*
M	5	14	5	12	*36*
I	3	4	7	1	*15*
JC	1	9	5	6	*21*
Polytechnic	15	12	6	9	*42*
Vocational	3	2	7	2	*14*
Total	**19**	**23**	**18**	**17**	**77**

Table 5.3: Counts for CSE *already* (completive and inchoative, cumulated) for each interview setting, by group, ethnicity, and school type.

*For reasons of space and legibility, 'radio-microphone' is abbreviated to 'radio-mike' in graphs and tables.

As such, these figures are of little use. A computation of usage rates in ‰ of CSE variants for both the completive and the inchoative is given in Table 5.4. It is obvious that as for *already* above, such low occurrence rates have little to offer, particularly at a more detailed level of analysis. For example, completive markers in the individual interviews with students of the junior college are 0.07 ‰ of the words in these interviews (a single occurrence of *already*). This is hardly significant at all, with $p > 0.4903$.

	Setting				
	Individual	**Dialogue**	**Group**	**Radio-mike**	*Total*
Completive					
JC	0.07	0.60	0.51	0.82	*0.42*
Polytechnic	0.60	0.44	0.45	0.50	*0.52*
Vocational	0.00	0.11	0.99	0.46	*0.27*
Total	**0.28**	**0.41**	**0.63**	**0.59**	***0.44***
Inchoative					
JC	0.00	0.17	0.34	0.41	*0.17*
Polytechnic	0.22	0.44	0.45	1.00	*0.43*
Vocational	0.27	0.11	0.40	0.00	*0.20*
Total	**0.16**	**0.26**	**0.40**	**0.52**	***0.28***

Table 5.4: Occurrence rates in ‰ of CSE variants for the completive and the inchoative for each interview setting, by school type.

Experiential

The marker for the experiential in CSE is *ever*+V. There are of course a number of SSE uses for *ever*. These had to be manually sorted out: example (2) below shows a typical experiential marker, but (3a) illustrates the same lexical item in a standard construction (past tense construction AUX=NEG+*ever*+V — albeit couched in a slightly non-SSE sentence, cf. *before*), as does the question in (3b), which does have an experiential reading despite its SSE status.

(2)   He ever been to KL.[4]

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[4]Kuala Lumpur.

(3)   a.   We haven't really ever lived there before. (iii.M.dia.12)

       b.   Have you ever been to Adam Road? (i.M.dia.34)

Of the 14 recorded instances of *ever* in the corpus, only one can be reckoned to fulfil the CSE function of experiential. The exchange in (4) took place during the radio-microphone recording of the Malay group at the vocational training school. The discussion is about iii.M.4.m's recent physical examination for his upcoming National Service training.

(4)   4:   Mm, yeah. Starting you have to take a photo of yourself. Wearing a army shirt.

       2:    Serious?

       3:    Army shirt?

       2:    That's (***)

       4:    Yeah photo, then. . .

       3:    (***) <!ML>mobile phone interferences</ML>

       4:    Yeah, for your (***) card

       3:    You <u>ever</u>?

       4:    No. Not ready yet.

       2:    He's not in yet, for God's sake.

       (iii.M.gr)

Delimitative

Bao (2005) says that verbal reduplication is not productive in SgE. In this study too, verbal reduplication was only observed thirteen times. Of these, five were discarded because they consisted of interjections such as *wait* (i.M.gr, ii.C.gr) and *stop* (ii.C.rm), which can be reduplicated felicitously in the standard (although not with a delimitative or tentative reading). The remaining eight cases of reduplication had the verb repeated twice (as in (5) below) or

even four times (three instances in ii.M.gr). There is only one example of a simple repetition, in iii.I.rm (7).

(5)   A regular day? Erm get up in the morning, come to school, <u>study study study</u>, head home, wash up, and go to work. Yeah, that's my regular day. (ii.I.3.f)

(6)   4:   My auntie went there [Bangkok], she went shopping and she wants to go back just to shop.

       2:    My mum also. She had a good time over there.

       4:    <u>Shopping shopping and shopping</u>, right?

       2:    <u>Shopping shopping shopping</u>, nothing else but <u>shopping</u>!

       (ii.I.gr)

(7)   No that means she talks is like an old lady, like that, <u>read read</u> and talk. (iii.I.rm)

Certainly (5) is an example of CSE reduplication, but delimitative it is not. It is much more a case of triplication indicating continuity (Wee 2004:111): studying is here a durative activity which lasts throughout the day. The same can be said for (6), although here it is a construction that could arguably also be found in SSE. Only (7) presents a genuine example of tentative reduplication, and is therefore unambiguously CSE.

The problem with these isolated instances of verbal reduplication (or triplication, etc.), such as in (6), is that they stand disconnected from other sentential elements that could give a clear indication of the intended meaning. In (8), for example, the second and third instances of quintuplication occur in complete isolation, as replies to the first instance 'buy'. While it is safe to assume that as replies, they fulfil the same function as the first, there is no formal syntactic evidence to prove it. Incidentally, the quintuplicated verbs in (8) are not delimitative either. Rather, they mark the activity as rapid, continuous over a short period, and quantitatively reinforced: the intended

meaning is that a lot of buying (shopping, eating) will be done quickly and in a short period of time.

(8)   4:   All right, but, you go there you say where, you <u>buy buy buy buy buy</u> and go back.

        3:    Yeah, <u>shop shop shop shop shop</u>. <u>Eat eat eat eat eat</u>.

        2:    I want to shopping only.

        (ii.M.gr)

The recorded instances of reduplication are not, with the exception of (7), delimitative in nature. However, with the exception of (6) which was found to be too close to SSE, all instances of non-standard reduplication (triplication, etc.) were counted as CSE. A detailed quantitative analysis for these seven uses is not possible due to their small number. Their distribution is given in Table 5.5.

Recording	Reduplicated string	Aspect
ii.M.gr	shop shop shop shop shop eat eat eat eat eat buy buy buy buy buy	continuative (see above)
ii.I.3.f	study study study	
ii.I.dia.34	and listen and listen and listen	continuative
iii.I.dia.14	work work work	
iii.I.rm	read read	delimitative

Table 5.5: Observed instances of reduplication.

Reduplication occurs in all four settings, but only in two schools (*wait* was reduplicated once in i.M.gr, but this was considered SSE). Interestingly, only Malays and Indians used it in this study — this is particularly significant because Chinese is often cited as a possible source for CSE reduplication (Bao 2005, Wee 2004). Malay is, however, the one substrate language where verbal reduplication can mean continuity (as opposed to just attenuation in Mandarin, Wee 2004:114–115). The low occurrence rates for this phenomenon,

however, are not conclusive, since, from personal experience (and previous research, see Bao 2005, Wee 2004) reduplication *is* used by Chinese Singaporeans.

Progressive

The CSE progressive is generally indistinct from its SSE counterpart, except in cases featuring a preverbal *still* — this is optional, and only 6 occurrences were observed out of 178 instances of *still*. Other instances of non-SSE *still* did occur, however: consider (9), where the adverb *still* does not mark the progressive in either case. Such instances, while CSE, do not belong to the aspectual variable under consideration, and were therefore discarded.

(9)   Yeah, when I <u>still</u> young, I <u>still</u> play with er cars and modify it, yeah try to make it faster. (iii.C.4.m)

The 6 instances of progressive aspect marking with *still* occurred in the junior college and in the polytechnic. Three occurred during individual interviews (i.M.4.m, i.I.4.m, ii.C.2.m), two during dialogues (ii.C.dia.12, ii.C.dia.34), and one in a group recording (i.M.gr).

Habitual

This is marked with *always*+V (Alsagoff and Ho 1998:143). As predicted in section 2.2.1 (page 52), the strategy of asking informants to describe a typical day at school triggered a number of uses of *always* — most of them, however, were indistinguishable from SSE use, with the result that only a single occurrence (given in (10) below) was unambiguously identified as CSE.

(10)   I hate talking to her. She <u>always</u> mean one. (ii.M.dia.23)

In addition to the deleted copula and the sentence-final predicate marker *one*, *always* is a further CSE marker in this utterance. Its absence would result in non-habitual aspect.

5.2.2 Conclusion

In sum, there were 95 instances of CSE aspect markers. The large majority were made up of the item *already*: it marked the completive 46 times, and the inchoative 31 times. The other markers had the distribution given in Table 5.6: there was one use of the experiential and one of the habitual, six of the progressive, and 7 instances of reduplication.

Aspect	Count
Completive	49
Experiential	1
Reduplication	7
Inchoative	31
Progressive	6
Habitual	1

Table 5.6: CSE variants observed for each aspect marker.

The distribution over the various recordings is shown in Table 5.7. Even when cumulated into a single variable, aspect markers still present a very low level of significance: in the individual interviews, they occurred at a rate of $0.53\,\text{‰}$, in the dialogue setting at $0.84\,\text{‰}$, in the group recordings at $1.37\,\text{‰}$, and in the radio-microphone recordings at $1.25\,\text{‰}$. While these figures follow the same trend than those for other variables, they refer to the total of uses per setting — for individual groups (such as e.g. i.M or ii.I) these are even lower ($0.15\,\text{‰}$ and $0.23\,\text{‰}$ respectively), making comparison difficult.

One such comparison, for example, is the usage by the three schools of the variable in the four different settings. The graph in Figure 5.6 shows their behaviour. The junior college and the polytechnic follow the kind of pattern
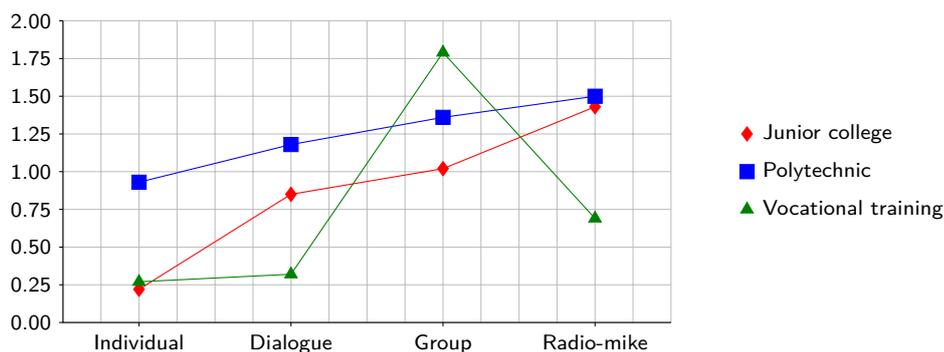
Figure 5.6: Usage of aspect markers per 1 000 words, by school type.

that was expected: the use of CSE aspect marking is inversely proportional to the level of formality. The vocational school, however, exhibits a pattern that is encountered in other variables as well: the spike in the group recording (predicted) is followed by a dramatic reduction of use in the radio-microphone recording (unexpected). This might well be a consequence of my unplanned presence during recording iii.C.rm. As explained in section 2.1.5 (page 48), I was persuaded by my enthusiastic informants to join them for lunch during which the recording took place. This decision had a significant effect on every variable used by the group, and not a single CSE aspectual variant was used.

In sum, aspect markers occurred just too sparsely to be of much statistical use. Despite the fact that in all three schools, the CSE variants were used more with decreasing formality (with the caveat about iii.C.rm above), the rate of this increase is below significance levels. For the combined aspect markers, it is only when the first two settings (individual and dialogue) and the last two (group and radio-microphone) are combined into two settings ('formal' vs. 'informal') that a χ^2-test gives their behaviour as statistically significant. This recombination of the four settings into two larger ones is something that will become clearer in a later section.

	Setting				
	Individual	**Dialogue**	**Group**	**Radio-mike**	*Total*
i.C	0	1	0	1	*2*
i.M	2	4	3	5	*14*
i.I	1	5	3	1	*10*
ii.C	11	4	2	3	*20*
ii.M	3	11	5	5	*24*
ii.I	3	1	2	1	*7*
iii.C	1	2	5	0	*8*
iii.M	1	0	2	2	*5*
iii.I	1	1	2	1	*5*
C	12	7	7	4	*30*
M	6	15	10	12	*43*
I	5	7	7	3	*22*
JC	3	10	6	7	*26*
Polytechnic	17	16	9	9	*51*
Vocational	3	3	9	3	*18*
Total	**23**	**29**	**24**	**19**	***95***

Table 5.7: Results in absolute numbers for aspect markers (cumulated) by interview setting, ethnicity, and school type.

5.3 Analysis of discourse particles

This variable proved substantially more interesting than the aspect markers: at a total count of 1 219 particles, occurrence rates were markedly higher, and every single particle occurred at least once. The particles retained for this study are *lah*, *ah*, *leh*, *meh*, *lor*, *hor*, *mah*, *hah*, and *what* (see section 2.2.2, page 53). Their semantic/pragmatic definitions were given in section 3.2.2 (page 81), so this present section will not deal with this. As shown previously, all of these particles are diagnostic of Colloquial Singapore English, and, therefore, proved very straightforward to process using WordSmith Tools: a simple concordance search with the particle as a string immediately gave the results needed. (Only *what* required manual sorting, because of my decision to use the same spelling as for English *what* — retrospectively, it would have been easier to transcribe this particle with one of the alternate spellings given on page 57, such as ⟨wot⟩, for an unambiguous concordance search.) Table 5.8

	Setting				
Particle	Individual	Dialogue	Group	Radio-mike	*Total*
mah	0	0	6	1	*7*
what	1	21	19	13	*54*
meh	0	1	3	0	*4*
leh	0	1	5	3	*9*
lah	85	78	90	74	*327*
lor	1	2	5	6	*14*
hor	0	2	2	7	*11*
hah	0	2	4	10	*16*
ah	244	144	199	190	*777*
Total	**331**	**251**	**333**	**304**	***1219***

Table 5.8: Results in absolute numbers for each discourse particle, by interview setting.

	Setting				
Particle	Individual	Dialogue	Group	Radio-mike	*Total*
mah	0.00	0.00	0.34	0.07	*0.06*
what	0.02	0.61	1.08	0.85	*0.49*
meh	0.00	0.03	0.17	0.00	*0.04*
leh	0.00	0.03	0.29	0.20	*0.08*
lah	1.97	2.26	5.13	4.86	*2.96*
lor	0.02	0.06	0.29	0.39	*0.13*
hor	0.00	0.06	0.11	0.46	*0.10*
hah	0.00	0.06	0.23	0.66	*0.14*
ah	5.66	4.17	11.35	12.47	*7.04*
Total	**7.68**	**7.26**	**18.99**	**19.95**	***11.04***

Table 5.9: Results in ‰ for each discourse particle, by interview setting.

gives an overview of the counts for each particle, and Table 5.9 shows their rates in terms of particles per thousand words of text.

The differences between the results of individual particles are quite large: looking at the overall picture (right-hand column in Table 5.9), it appears that only two particles occur in important numbers: *lah*, with 2.96 ‰, and particularly *ah*, with 7.04 ‰. The others reach barely half a *per mille* (*what* is the next most common at 0.49 ‰). When considering particular settings, this impression changes somewhat: the highest rate is observed again for *ah*,

Particle	Junior college	Polytechnic	Vocational	C	M	I
ah	157	360	260	226	465	175
lah	57	181	89	115	170	80
what	5	23	26	22	21	11
hah	8	7	1	5	7	4
lor	4	8	2	10	2	2
hor	0	7	4	7	1	3
leh	6	1	2	5	2	2
meh	0	1	3	2	0	2
mah	1	0	6	5	0	2
Total	**238**	**588**	**393**	**397**	**668**	**281**

Table 5.10: Counts for all particles, by school type and by ethnic group.

with 12.47 ‰ in the radio-microphone recording, but now we also have other peaks: 5.13 ‰ *lah* and 1.08 ‰ *what* in the group setting, and 0.66 ‰ *hah* in the radio-microphone setting, for example.

When looking at the distributional patterns of these particles, it appears that in the case of the less frequently used particles (i.e. excluding *ah* and *lah*), *what* — which occurs 54 times (0.49 ‰) — is used more by informants from the vocational training school (26 hits) and least by those from the junior college (5 hits). Chinese used them most (22 hits), and Indians least (11 hits). The particle *hah* (16 hits, 0.14 ‰), on the other hand, shows the opposite trend: junior college informants used it 8 times, polytechnic students 7 times, and vocational training students just once — here the Malays lead with 10 hits, and the Indians, again, use it least with only 4 hits. The least used particle *meh* (4 hits, 0.4 ‰) is used once in group ii.I.gr, twice in group iii.C.gr, and once again in iii.I.dia.14. The full extent of these results is illustrated in Table 5.10, where counts are given by school type and by ethnic group.[5] Table 5.11 then gives the same information but with proportionate counts (i.e. occurrence rates in ‰).

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[5]C = Chinese, M = Malay, I = Indian.

Particle	JC	Poly	Vocational	C	M	I
ah	4.35	8.08	8.74	5.73	12.51	5.17
lah	1.58	4.06	2.99	2.92	4.57	2.36
what	0.14	0.52	0.87	0.56	0.56	0.33
hah	0.22	0.16	0.03	0.13	0.19	0.12
lor	0.11	0.18	0.07	0.25	0.05	0.06
hor	0.00	0.16	0.13	0.18	0.03	0.09
leh	0.17	0.02	0.07	0.13	0.05	0.06
meh	0.00	0.02	0.10	0.05	0.00	0.06
mah	0.03	0.00	0.20	0.13	0.00	0.06
Total	**6.59**	**13.19**	**13.21**	**10.07**	**17.97**	**8.31**

Table 5.11: Results in ‰ for all particles, by school type and by ethnic group.

However, as explained in section 3.2.2 (page 81), all discourse particles are here taken to be diagnostic features of CSE, and can, therefore, be treated as a single variable (see also Gupta 1992, 1994). To this end, the particles above will be collapsed into a single linguistic variable, resulting in much more useable data: only the final lines ('Total') in Tables 5.8–5.11 above will be dealt with for the remainder of this thesis.

A graphic illustration of particle usage has been given in Figure 5.4 on page 170, where usage rates were plotted against interview settings for each of the schools. A slightly different picture is revealed when considering ethnicity: Figure 5.7 shows reasonably similar results for the first three settings, with differences appearing in the radio-microphone recording. The Chinese use the fewest particles in this final setting, a result that cannot be reduced to the problematic nature of recording iii.C.rm: the rate for all Chinese radio-microphone groups is at 12.55 ‰, and if iii.C.rm is discarded, this rate increases to only 14.61 ‰, well below the other two ethnic groups.
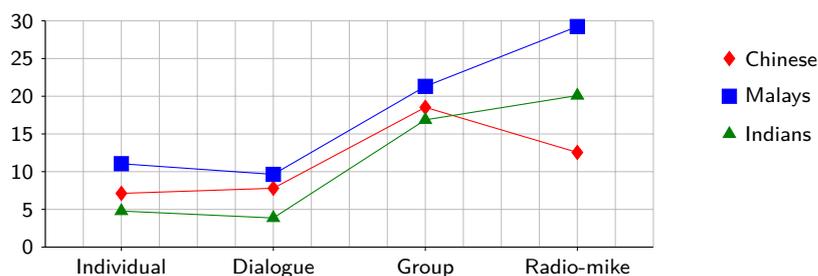
Figure 5.7: Particle usage in ‰ by ethnic group.

5.3.1 Statistical testing

In order to identify what might be individual lects, it is important to establish which of the observed differences in behaviour are statistically significant. It is possible, for instance, that the use of particles during the dialogue recordings by the Malays and the Chinese is very much the same — visually, this is what Figure 5.7 suggests — but numerical proof is needed. This is done with a χ^2-test. In order to assert the statistical significance of, say, the difference between the particle usage of the Chinese and the Malay informants in individual interviews, the following steps have to be followed:

1. We need to formulate a working hypothesis. In our case, H_0: 'there is no difference in the rate of particle usage by Chinese and Malays in individual interviews'. The χ^2-test will confirm or reject this hypothesis.

2. The number of particles in each group is substracted from that group's total number of words. In our case, $x_C = 104$ and $x_M = 160$, where x_i is the number of particles used in individual interviews by the Chinese and the Malays respectively, and $n_C = 14\,602$ and $n_M = 14\,474$, where n_i is the total number of words in individual interviews by the same groups. Thus,

   (a) $n_C - x_C = 14\,498$

and

(b) $n_M - x_M = 14\,314$

3. The number of expected particles e_i is then computed for each group. This is achieved by multiplying n_i with the sum of observed particles in both groups $(x_C + x_M)$, and dividing it with the sum of the total words of both groups $(n_C + n_M)$. Two values are thus obtained:

   (a) $e_C = \frac{n_C \cdot (x_C + x_M)}{n_C + n_M} = \frac{14\,602 \cdot (104 + 160)}{14\,602 + 14\,474} = 6.16$

   (b) $e_M = \frac{n_M \cdot (x_C + x_M)}{n_C + n_M} = \frac{14\,474 \cdot (104 + 160)}{14\,602 + 14\,474} = 6.22$

4. The χ^2 value is the sum of the two e_i: $\chi^2 = e_M + e_C = 6.16 + 6.22 = 12.38$.

5. A statistical table[6] is used to determine χ^2's critical value. At $p = 0.05$ (i.e. a confidence level of 95 %) and one degree of freedom,[7] this value is 3.84.

6. If the calculated χ^2 is larger than the critical χ^2, H_0 is rejected: the difference is statistically significant and unlikely to be the result of chance. In our case, $12.38 > 3.84 \implies \chi^2_{calculated} > \chi^2_{critical}$, so the H_0 established in step 1. can be rejected: the Chinese and the Malays do in fact use particles in a significantly different way during individual interviews.

Ethnicity

By applying this method to all binary relationships between ethnic groups, we obtain the results in Table 5.12. Of the twelve possible combinations,

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[6]The table used is the one at http://www.ento.vt.edu/~sharov/PopEcol/tables/chisq.html.

[7]The number of degrees of freedom is determined by writing the data out in table form and by counting the number of rows and columns:

	x_i	$n_i - x_i$
C	104	14 498
M	160	14 314

The formula is (number of rows -1)·(number of columns -1), which here equals $(2-1) \cdot (2-1) = 1$.

eight have a $\chi^2_{calculated}$ that is larger than $\chi^2_{critical}$. Their particle usage is, therefore, statistically significantly different. The other four combinations have a $\chi^2_{calculated}$ that is smaller than $\chi^2_{critical}$, which means that their differences are not significant.

Group 1	Group 2	χ^2	Significant
ind.C	ind.M	12.38	Yes
ind.C	ind.I	6.55	Yes
ind.I	ind.M	35.15	Yes
dia.C	dia.M	2.33	No
dia.C	dia.I	14.50	Yes
dia.I	dia.M	26.63	Yes
gr.C	gr.M	1.21	No
gr.C	gr.I	0.44	No
gr.I	gr.M	2.78	No
rm.C	rm.M	37.28	Yes
rm.C	rm.I	9.23	Yes
rm.I	rm.M	7.74	Yes

Table 5.12: χ^2 values and significance results for particle usage by ethnic group and interview setting. ind=individual, dia=dialogue, gr=group, rm=radio-microphone, C=Chinese, M=Malay, I=Indian.

These results show the necessity for statistical means to decide borderline cases. A simple visual analysis of graphs such as the one in Figure 5.7 would not necessarily yield the same conclusions: while it is obvious, for instance, that the radio-microphone recordings are all relatively dissimilar, the differences between the three sets of dialogue recordings are much less straightforward. The Indian dialogues are significantly different to those of the Chinese and the Malay; the two latter are not significantly different.

Ethnicity can be said not to have an effect on particle usage in the group setting, and only a limited effect in the dialogue setting. In the cases of individual interviews and radio-microphone recordings, however, the differences between all three ethnic groups are statistically significant.

School type

The same statistical tests can be applied to decide on the significance of differences observed across schools. Figure 5.8 shows the proportional counts of particles in the four settings for each school. Instead of again listing the χ^2 for all twelve combinations, I will limit myself to report that they are all statistically significant, except for three: the dialogue and group recordings of the polytechnic and the vocational school, and the radio-microphone recordings of the junior college and the vocational school. This is not unlike the visual impression given by the graph.
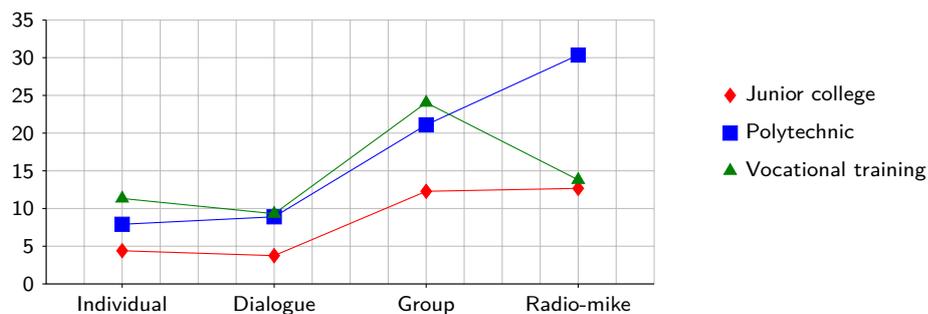
Figure 5.8: Particles in ‰ for each setting, by school type.

5.3.2 Conclusion and revision of situational settings

Particles are the numerically most important variable of this study, and provide solid evidence for the variation between several factors. As shown above, both ethnicity and the type of school have an impact on particle usage rates, although ethnicity distinctly less often. The overall use of discourse particles, disregarding ethnicity and school type, reveals a highly significant ($p < 0.0001$) difference between dialogues (7.26 ‰) and group recordings (18.99 ‰), whereas the differences between the first two ($p = 0.5023$) and the last two ($p = 0.5354$) settings are not significant. Based on this, it was thought best to collapse the first two settings, individual interviews and dialogues, into a new

meta-setting called 'formal', and the other two, group and radio-microphone recordings, into another called 'informal'. The two new meta-settings, for want of a better term, are defined not only by a subjective, unaccounted-for notion of formality, but also by the very objective notion of the presence of the researcher in the first (and absence in the second) of these two meta-settings.

Meta-setting	Total words	Particles	Ratio (‰)	P-value
Formal	77 647	582	7.50	
Informal	32 775	637	19.44	$p < 0.0001$

Table 5.13: Particle usage in two newly-formed meta-settings.

Statistically, the difference between the two is now even more important. The p-value in Figure 5.13 is now based on a χ^2 of 297.63 (as opposed to $\chi^2 = 142.73$ for the difference between dialogue and group recordings) which is so high that, particularly with only one degree of freedom, the two usage rates are dissimilar with a certainty well beyond $p < 0.0001$. There is a very low probability that this is due to chance. We are, therefore, in presence of two clearly distinct ways of using discourse particles.

5.4   Analysis of existential constructions

As far as existential constructions[8] are concerned, the variable *got* had to be manually sorted in much the same way as the aspect markers: only instances where *got* has existential or locative meaning are considered here. Examples (11) and (12) illustrate these uses:

(11)   In Malay culture group there's a lot of branches like that, er dance, then <u>got</u> silat, which is martial arts. (ii.M.4.m)

---

[8]The term *existential construction* is used here to refer to both existential and locative constructions formed with *there*+BE in SSE and *got* in CSE. The distinction will be made explicit when it is necessary to do so.

(12)   Do we look serious? No, already <u>got</u> this mike in front of us. (ii.M.rm)

Once sorted, 62 instances of *got* were found to be CSE, with 35 existential markers and 27 locative markers. Their distribution is shown in Table 5.14. Even when combined into a single variable, occurrence rates were very low indeed: overall 1.44 ‰, and as little as 0.09 ‰ in the dialogue setting.

Got	**Setting**				***Total***
	Individual	**Dialogue**	**Group**	**Radio-mike**	
Existential	5	2	16	12	*35*
Locative	4	2	18	3	*27*
Total	**9**	**4**	**34**	**15**	***62***

Table 5.14: The two uses of CSE *got*, by setting.

It is, however, more interesting to compare the *got*-construction with its SSE variant, *there*+BE. The latter was used 436 times (87.56 % of existential constructions), and was the preferred choice in all settings (see Figure 5.9). There is a more pronounced use of the CSE variant in the informal meta-setting (31.61 %) than in the formal setting (3.79 %), and this difference is statistically significant with a χ^2 of 15.98.
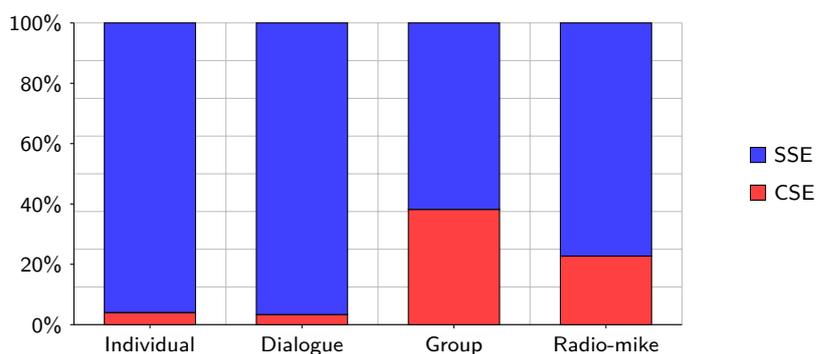
Figure 5.9: Use of the two variants for existential constructions across settings. SSE: *there*+BE, CSE: *got*.

In terms of ethnicity, the Chinese were found to use *got* for 9.95 % of their existential constructions, while the Indians were the highest users at 17.21 %.

The Malays used it for 12 %. The differences between these percentages are significant, with $0.0133 < p < 0.0337$. It is therefore safe to reject the hypothesis that ethnicity is irrelevant in the choice of one or the other variant of existential constructions.

As far as the three schools are concerned, the differences between their overall use of particles are generally significant, except between the junior college (9.30 %) and the polytechnic (9.77 %). However, the three schools' behaviour cannot be compared in either the four settings or the two meta-settings: *got*-usage is so low that the differences at this level of analysis produce very low χ^2 values, so that p-values are only significant in the vocational school ($p < 0.0004$). The conclusion must be that the school type has little effect on informants' choice to use the *got* variant.

5.5 Discussion of results

5.5.1 Settings

As mentioned above, the four settings fall into two categories: the individual interview and the dialogue recording are termed 'formal' primarily because of the researcher's presence during the interviews, and the group and radio-microphone recordings are termed 'informal' due to my absence during the recording.

Statistical evidence for the need for what I have called above 'meta-settings' is given in the case of all three variables, albeit in slightly different ways. Table 5.15 shows how the particles present the best case for a clear distribution into two settings rather than four: the only statistically significant difference occurs where there is a major change in the nature of the recordings, namely in the presence/absence of the researcher. The variation *between* these two sets

of recordings is significant, whereas the variation *within* them is not. In the case of aspect markers, none of the settings makes a significant difference, but the extent of this insignificance is least between dialogue and group recordings (where the change in interviewer supervision occurs). After the creation of the meta-settings, usage rates are significantly different with $p = 0.0009$.

Variable	ind/dia	dia/gr	gr/rm	formal/informal
Aspect markers	0.1023	0.0733	0.7611	0.0009∗
Particles	0.5023	< 0.0001∗	0.5354	< 0.0001∗
Existentials	0.4812	0.0003∗	0.0001∗	0.0001∗

Table 5.15: P-values for the differences between the original four settings and the newly-formed meta-settings. An asterisk (∗) marks combinations that are statistically significant.

Existential constructions are the only variable where the distinction between the group and radio-microphone recordings is statistically significant. In this case, the necessity for a regrouping of the four initial settings into the two meta-settings is absent — there could be a three-way distinction between a formal setting (with the interviewer present, individual and dialogue recordings), the task-based group recording, and the unmonitored radio-microphone recording — but if carried out, this would result in a statistically significant distinction between meta-settings ($p = 0.0001$). It therefore makes sense to keep the newly-formed meta-settings, and to shift the analysis to them away from the initial four. This is the approach taken in the remainder of this thesis.

5.5.2 Ethnicity

Differences between ethnic groups were found to be significant in the case of overall usage of discourse particles ($0.0132 > p > 0.0001$) and existential constructions ($0.0337 > p > 0.0179$), but not for the aspect markers ($0.8844 > p > 0.1652$). When taking the two meta-settings into account, the picture is more complex. In the case of (got), ethnic differences were significant in
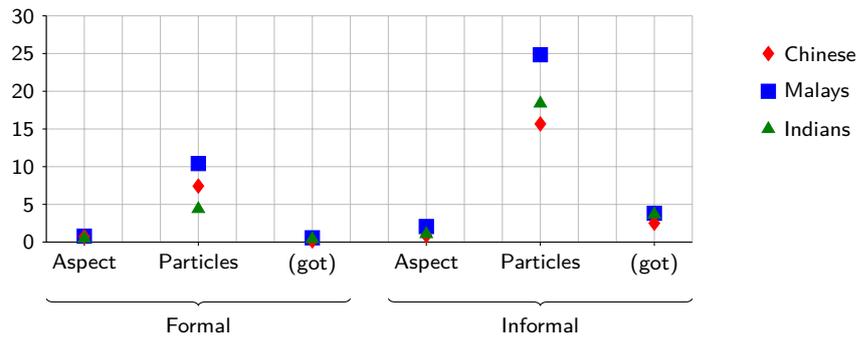
Figure 5.10: Usage rates of the three variables by ethnic group, for both meta-settings. Rates are in tokens per thousand words of text for aspect markers and particles, and in number of [got] variants out of 10 existential constructions.

the informal meta-setting $(0.0021 > p > 0.0007)$, but not in the formal one $(0.6945 > p > 0.4474)$. All ethnic differences in particle usage were significant $(0.0019 > p > 0.0001)$, except those between Chinese and Indians in the informal setting $(p = 0.1245)$. Conversely, all ethnic differences in the use of aspect markers were insignificant $(0.7282 > p > 0.0738)$, except for the gap between Chinese and Malays in the informal setting $(p = 0.0160)$. The results are represented graphically in Figure 5.10: here the occurrence rates of all three variables are compared. While not entirely categoric, it appears that in the informal meta-setting, ethnic distinction is more pronounced. This is in line with previous findings using phonetic and phonological variables (Lim 2000, Deterding and Poedjosoedarmo 2000), which report that the ethnicity of SgE speakers can be identified only in informal speech.

When considering each ethnic group and their use of particles across settings, it appears that the Indians are the only group that fails to use all three variables in significantly different ways in the two meta-settings. The (got) variable is the only variable that is not used differently by any ethnic group $(p > 0.0529)$. The Malays make a distinction in particle usage $(p = 0.0153)$, and the Chinese in both particle $(p < 0.0001)$ and aspect marker $(p = 0.0056)$ usage. In sum, as far as the variables in this study are concerned, of the three

ethnic groups, the Chinese show the most substantial contrast between the two meta-settings, the Malays come second, and the Indians do not use the variables in any statistically significantly different way across settings.

5.5.3 School type

When considering the type of school attended, results differ from one variable to the other. Overall, it was found that the junior college and the polytechnic were less alike than the other two pairings. As shown in Table 5.16, only the particles were used significantly differently in the first two schools, whereas when comparing the junior college with the vocational school, both particles and (got) were used significantly differently. A similar picture emerges when comparing the vocational school with the polytechnic, where it was aspect markers and existential constructions that were used in significantly different ways.

Schools	Aspect markers	Particles	Existentials
JC vs. Poly	0.0524	< 0.0001∗	0.0751
JC vs. Vocational	0.5709	< 0.0001∗	0.0103∗
Poly vs. Vocational	0.0181∗	0.9803	0.0061∗

Table 5.16: P-values of the differences between pairs of schools for each of the three variables.

When comparing the three school's behaviour across settings, two observations can be made. Firstly, discourse particles present the most uncontroversial case of different usage rates. In all three schools, the distinction in use of particles in the two meta-settings is statistically significant, at a confidence level of 95 %, at a very low $p < 0.0001$. This reinforces the impression of the particles as being a clear stylistic marker. Secondly, the vocational training school (iii) is the only school to show a significant distinction for all three variables. In

fact, it is the only one of the three schools to show a distinction in the use of the (got) variable between formal and informal meta-settings.

The data show a clear picture (see Table 5.17): the vocational school makes the most significant distinction between the two settings, and the polytechnic the least significant (the particles being the only variables where the difference in usage is significant). The junior college makes a distinction for aspect markers and particles, but not for existential constructions. This leads to the conclusion that the differences between the varieties used in each meta-setting are more noticeable in the case of informants from the vocational school.

School	Aspect markers	Discourse particles	Existentials
Junior college	0.0242∗	< 0.0001∗	0.1150
Polytechnic	0.2714	< 0.0001∗	0.0813
Vocational	0.0013∗	< 0.0001∗	0.0003∗

Table 5.17: P-values of the differences between the two meta-settings, by school and variable. P-values below 0.05 are marked with ∗.

However, this picture is somewhat modified when considering the actual occurrence rates, as shown in Figure 5.11. When weighing the three variables equally, it appears that it is the polytechnic students who make the greatest difference between the two meta-settings. This is due in part to the large difference in their usage of particles (8.33 ‰ vs. 25.48 ‰). Vocational training students come second, and the junior college students make the least noticeable distinction between the two settings. This ranking holds true even when discarding the variables whose difference in occurrence rates were below $p = 0.05$.

Discourse particles, then, are the most reliable variable, both in terms of occurrence rates and statistical significance in usage differences across meta-settings. In Figure 5.11, the gaps between all three schools' usage of particles, in both the formal and the informal meta-setting, are statistically significant.

Thus, there is a crossover of particle usage by the polytechnic students, who are the lead users in the informal setting, but who come second (after the vocational training students) in the formal setting. The greatest difference in particle usage between the formal and informal meta-settings is among polytechnic students (with a difference of 17.15 *per mille* points (pmp[9]), as opposed to 8.36 pmp for the junior college and 8.87 pmp for the vocational school).
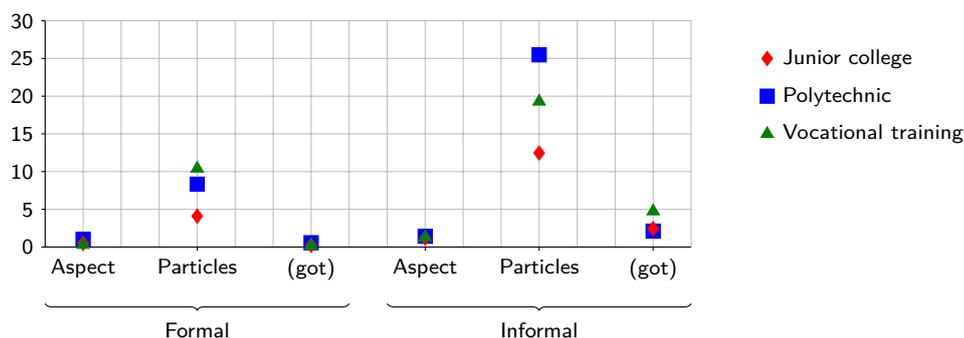
Figure 5.11: Usage rates of the three variables by school type, for both meta-settings. Rates are in tokens per thousand words of text for aspect markers and particles, and in number of [got] variants out of 10 existential constructions.

Upon closer inspection, Figure 5.11 reveals another correlation: the vocational training students' particle usage in the formal meta-setting ($10.41\,‰$) appears to be close to the junior college's particle usage in the informal one ($12.46\,‰$), and a χ^2-test confirms this. With $p = 0.1039$, we can conclude that there is no statistically significant difference between the two. In other words, it would appear that vocational training students use discourse particles in formal settings at the same rate as junior college students in informal settings. This is of particular relevance in choosing a model to describe this variation: the following chapter will consider this in more detail.

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[9]I use the abbreviation *pmp* for '*per mille* point', a unit of measure which is to the *per mille* what the percentage point is to the percent.

5.6 Conclusion

To summarise, the main findings of this chapter are that situational setting has the strongest influence on the use of one sub-variety over the other, followed by the type of school attended by the informants. Ethnicity does not seem to have a strong influence. As far as the variables are concerned, discourse particles, due to their frequency of occurrence, were found to provide the most reliable results. This was also the variable that showed the highest level of variability, with a range of 12.27 pmp. Overall, the usage rates of all variables showed greater use of the L variant in the settings where this was expected, pointing to their suitability in discriminating between these.

	Aspect	**Existentials**	**Particles**
	‰ words	% L variant	‰ words
Individual	0.53	4.02	7.68
Dialogue	0.84	3.36	7.26
Group	1.37	38.20	18.99
Radio-mike	1.25	22.73	19.95
Junior college	0.72	9.30	6.59
Polytechnic	1.41	9.77	13.19
Vocational training	0.50	18.83	13.21

Table 5.18: Summary of all results.

Table 5.18 summarises the results, and shows a number of trends. Firstly, all three variables broadly confirm the initial hypothesis: situational setting has a strong influence on the choice of one sub-variety over the other. Thus, for instance, there are statistically significant differences in the use of discourse particles in the individual interviews and in the group recordings. Secondly, it is now clear that some variables were a better choice than others: as pointed out earlier, aspect markers were not nearly as useful, in this quantitative approach, as discourse particles.

This chapter thus highlights problems with the choice of variables. While aspect markers are an often-reported feature of CSE, the data collected does not reflect this in actual numbers, with the potential conclusion that regardless of their theoretical description in works on CSE, they are not used by speakers in actual conversation to a degree that warrants their inclusion in a grammar of CSE. Similarly, existential constructions, while showing statistically significant behavioural differences between settings, do not give enough information about which sub-variety is actually used. A more varied selection of grammatical variables is required in order to give a more comprehensive overview of the English(es) used in Singapore. More crucially, the quantitative approach used in this chapter is not as informative as a comprehensive qualitative analysis could have been. The next chapter addresses these issues.

Chapter 6

Codes in context

THE problem with the analysis presented in chapter 5 is twofold. Firstly, the variables selected do not give a complete picture of the variation at work in Singapore English. This is perhaps obvious, as there are many other variables that can be used to distinguish CSE and SSE. Besides phonetic and phonological variables (investigated by, among many others, Bao 1998, Brown et al. 2000, Deterding 2006, 2007b), there are several lexical variables (see e.g. Wee 1998, 2008, Low and Brown 2005:67–87, Deterding 2007a:66–84), and, of course, grammatical variables. The latter are manifold and have been extensively described (see also section 1.3.4): a short list would include auxiliaries, null subjects, topic-prominence, verb and noun inflexions, and copula-deletion (Ho and Platt 1993, Alsagoff and Ho 1998, Low and Brown 2005, Deterding 2007a:40–84, Gut 2009, inter alia). It is thus clear that the data presented herein would benefit from a more in-depth analysis, taking into account a wider range of variables. These will enable a better snapshot of the variation inherent to language use in Singapore, and will provide a more solid basis for the formulation of an appropriate model. The following variables will therefore be analysed in section 6.1: verbal inflexions, the use of auxiliary verbs, and copula-deletion of BE.

Secondly, the quantitative approach taken throughout chapter 5 does not reveal the entire complexity of the situation. The methodology that was used did much to show the patterns of use in individual situational settings and over several settings. It did not, however, give much insight into what was happening *within* a given setting. To take an example, while existential constructions were expressed in percentages of CSE variants out of all constructions, and a picture of the 'CSE-ness' of the recording was possible, this was not the case for discourse particles, as it was impossible to express their actual occurrence as a percentage of the total of potential occurrences. Therefore, there is a problem with the nature of the variables that renders quantitative analysis somewhat tricky. More importantly, however, the analytic framework followed in the preceding chapter completely glosses over the variation that occurs *during* a given recording. It is conceivable, as reported by Gupta (2006b:22), that a single piece of discourse shifts regularly from H to L and back (due to the 'leaky' nature of the Singaporean diglossia), depending on a variety of conditioning factors. This qualitative, closer textual analysis will be carried out in the following section, yielding a more fine-grained interpretation of the speakers' language use. A discussion of the social meaning of this variation will be attempted in section 6.2, where recent work on indexicality (Rampton 2006, Coupland 2007, Eckert 2008) will inform the discussion of the new results.

The present chapter analyses a subset of the recordings, namely those where most CSE variants have been observed: the group settings. In what follows, reference to individual speakers (e.g. in the form of 'ii.M.3.f') will always point to their speech in the respective group recording (i.e. ii.M.gr), unless specified otherwise.

6.1 The verb

Three variables connected with the verb will be considered here: inflexions, auxiliaries, and copular BE.

6.1.1 Verbal inflexions

According to Gupta (1994:9–13), there are two types of 'features' in SgE: those that are diagnostic of L, and those that are diagnostic of H. One such feature is the verbal inflexion marking the third person singular, exemplified in (1) below. The use of a zero inflexion in (1a) is diagnostic of L, and marks the utterance as L. However, the use of *-s* in (1b), while required in H, is optional in L (Gupta 1994:9): therefore, when the verb form has an H inflexion, it is not unambiguously part of an utterance in H, since *-s* as a marker of 3SG is optionally present in L.

(1)   a.   He want∅ to see how we talk. (ii.M.2.f)

      b.   Hor fun means rice noodles. (i.C.1.m)

Another inflexional morpheme that occurs variably in SgE is past tense inflexion, represented here by (-ed) (but covering also irregular past forms). Again, its absence marks the utterance as L, but its presence does not automatically turn the utterance into H. Examples from the data include irregular (2a) and regular (2b) past forms, both marked and unmarked. The (-ed) variable includes preterites and past participles.

(2)   a.   (i)   My auntie went there, she went shopping and she wants to go back just to shop. (ii.I.4.f)

          (ii)   He doesn't say we cannot include our own money. (ii.M.3.f)

      b.   (i)   He's rather experienced. (i.I.4.m)

          (ii)   You know, he marry a Singaporean. (iii.C.2.f)

Therefore, within a diglossic framework, and paraphrasing Gupta's (1994:10–13) definitions, the effect of verbal inflexion can be formalised as in (3) below. This formula applies to both (-ed) and (3SG).

(3)   a.   Absence of inflexion $\longrightarrow$ L

          $\longrightarrow$ H̸

   b.   Presence of inflexion $\overset{?}{\longrightarrow}$ H

          $\overset{?}{\longrightarrow}$ L

As examples (1) and (2) show, these inflexional features occur relatively widely in the data. The variable (-ed) had 21 instances of the L variant, and 77 of the inflected variant. Similarly, (3SG) had 13 instances of $[\varnothing]$, and 52 of the inflected type. The examples in (4) and (5) illustrate the use of these variables. It is interesting to note, as for instance in the first two examples of (4), that both variants can occur in the same utterance. This is sometimes a result of self-correction, but not always, as the change can go in both directions. This latter point is of relevance, since it may well be that the co-occurrence of H and L variants is not coincidental in the context of the exchange. Section 6.2 will consider this in more detail.

(4)   That's for the part of Cambodia that I <u>come</u>, that I <u>came</u> across on the internet. (i.C.1.m)

   They never <u>say</u> the date, he <u>didn't</u> state the duration, right. (i.I.4.m)

   That's what him <u>say</u> to us just now. (ii.M.2.f)

   My brother one <u>went</u> there and he <u>took</u> the budget airline and then he <u>come</u> back with the normal airline. (ii.M.3.f)

   Then we should have <u>buy</u> bikini. (iii.I.gr)

   Desaru? When you <u>say</u> Desaru? (iii.M.3.m)

(5)   If he <u>have</u> like a rubber plantation or something. (i.C.4.m)

   Oh you do ah, ok, i.M.3.m <u>have</u> relatives there. (i.M.4.m)

Because he <u>want</u> to see how we all talk, normally. (ii.M.2.f)

It <u>cover</u> up everything in the floss. It's not nice. It <u>look</u> very cheap. (ii.I.1.m)

We can at least spend three days two night in a hotel which only <u>cost</u> thousand plus. (iii.M.3.m)

In sum, verbal inflexions are an often-used feature, and show interesting patterns of use. Particularly in the groups that had a high count of overt inflexions in their recording, the feature can be analysed in a longitudinal way. Figure 6.1 below shows at which point in the interaction a given variant is used: each turn is numbered and plotted on the X axis, and for each turn, the number of H and L variants for (-ed) and (3sg) is given (either none, one, or a maximum of two in the present case). This gives an idea of the distribution of these variants, and the picture that emerges shows a true mix of H and L variants, without an immediately obvious order to the distribution. This seemingly haphazard use of variants, which will be further highlighted below, calls into question the existence of two clearly identifiable diglossic varieties.
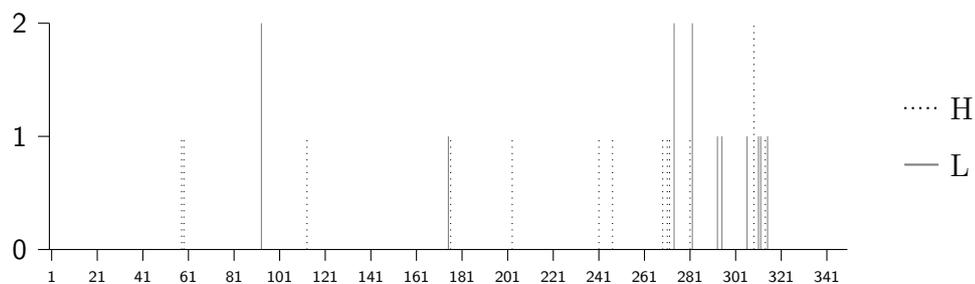
Figure 6.1: Occurrences of (-ed) and (3sg) in ii.M.gr. The X axis shows the number of the turn in which the variant is used, and the Y axis the number of tokens in each turn.

6.1.2 Auxiliaries

Features considered under this heading include inversion in interrogatives and the use of modal auxiliaries. According to Gupta (1994:12–13), inversion in

SgE is a feature of H, except when used with BE and CAN, where it can be either H or L. Similarly, the modals HAVE and DO are used in H only; other modals (except CAN) are H too. This can be formalised as follows:

(6) a. Absence of inversion $\longrightarrow$ H̶

$\longrightarrow$ L

b. Presence of inversion $\xrightarrow{\hspace{2cm}}$ H

$\xrightarrow{\text{iff } \neg\text{BE/CAN}}$ L̶

Examples from the data abound, with, again, several cases where the H and L variants are used in the same turn. In the examples reproduced below, there is lack of inversion (7f–h) and absence of modals required in H (7a–c,e,i), as well as missing DO-support in negatives (7d). On the other hand, there is also the presence of auxiliaries (7b,c,i) and of inversion (7e). There are, again, interesting juxtapositions of H and L usages: consider (7c), which features self-correction, as well as (7i), where deontic modality is marked (albeit in a pro-dropped construction) but the next verb (featuring the subject) lacks the modal. This latter example is particularly interesting, since it shows the close interplay between features of H and L: pro-drop, which is an L feature (Gupta 1994:10–11), occurs here in an otherwise H verb group, whereas in the following L verb group, the pronoun is phonologically realised[1]. This poses problems for a diglossic analysis, a point which will be taken up in the following section.

(7) a. Three cents leh, <u>how to pay</u>? (i.C.1.m)

b. So how about Genting? <u>Never been</u> there before, <u>I've never been</u> there in my life. (i.C.4.m)

c. But budget airline, <u>how much ah they cost</u>, how much <u>do they cost</u> (i.I.4.m)

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[1]Of course, pro-drop being a feature of L does not mean that its absence is diagnostic of H.

d. <u>Why not we chose</u> our holiday back in Singapore? (ii.C.2.m)

e. So the ferry <u>how much is this</u> roughly, <u>some of you been</u> to Bali actually? (ii.C.4.m)

f. How much <u>it will be</u>? (ii.M.2.f)

g. How long <u>we are</u> supposed to talk? (iii.M.1.f)

h. <u>What the cruise is like</u>? (iii.I.gr)

i. Cannot go Batam, <u>must be</u> a place where <u>we never been</u> before. (ii.M.3.f)

A graphic representation of the distribution of H and L variants of auxiliaries and inversion is given in Figure 6.2. In this graph, the horizontal dimension represents the internal temporal structure of each recording, with turns as the unit. All nine group recordings are then concatenated together for a complete picture. The two horizontal lines represent the two variants of a combined variable (auxiliaries + inversions), with the H variants as the base line and the L variant as the upper line. Thus, a picture emerges as to the distribution of H and L variants.

Figure 6.2: Auxiliaries and inversions in all group recordings. Each instance is marked by a tick; the H variants on the lower line and the L variants on the upper line.

What transpires from Figure 6.2 is, firstly, that the H variants (use of modal auxiliaries other than BE and CAN and presence of inversion in interrogatives) predominate: there are 240 H variants and just 28 instances of L. Secondly, the distribution of L variants is unequal: ii.I.gr has none, i.M.gr and i.I.gr have one each, whereas ii.M.gr has the most, 7. Thirdly, there is no clear break in the use of H or L: many L variants occur in the same turn as H variants, or

are surrounded by turns with H variants. There are only two major gaps in H usage (in ii.M.gr and iii.C.gr), during which L variants occur intermittently, but this is not the default pattern. A closer investigation of what triggers the use of one or the other is warranted; section 6.2 will deal with this.

6.1.3 The copula

The copula refers to the verb BE in its use as a 'link or mark of relationship between one element and another' (Matthews 2007:82). Its use in the Singaporean context has been described at length in Ho and Platt (1993) and Gupta (1994), to cite but two. It is the BE used in the examples below, and can link the subject with adjectives (8a), nominals (8b), an *-ing* inflected verb (8c), and passives (8d).

(8)   a.   It might <u>be</u> perfect for the mind, but not perfect for the body. (i.C.1.m)

      b.   That<u>'s</u> the point. (ii.C.4.m)

      c.   People will like really notice what you<u>'re</u> wearing. (ii.M.2.f)

      d.   It<u>'s</u> all being recorded, hello! (ii.I.2.f)

Its absence is often termed *copula-deletion*, and is encountered in several contact varieties (e.g. African American Vernacular English, see Labov (1969, 1982:179), but also CSE, as Ho and Platt (1993) make clear). Examples of copula-deletion from the data include those in (9).

(9)   I heard that the hor fun ∅ quite famous. (i.C.1.m)

      First we ∅ thinking of going to Malaysia. (i.M.3.m)

      My uncle ∅ staying there. (ii.M.1.m)

      What ∅ your dialect? Panjabi? (ii.I.1.m)

      That boat ∅ very short one. (iii.C.2.f)

      These ∅ like houses. (iii.I.gr)

As with the previous variables, the distribution of [−BE] and [+BE] varies within each recording, although occurrence rates are lower. Of the 605 instances of the variable (BE) in the group recordings, only 35, or 5.8 %, were [−BE]². Again, too, there are (several) instances where [−BE] and [+BE] co-occur in the same turn. Consider, for instance, example (10). Here the speaker uses (BE) twice, the first time with [−BE] and the second time with [+BE]. Note that the subjects of the two clauses do not have the same referent; *that boat* is not the antecedent of *it*.

(10)   That boat$_i$ ∅ very short$_i$ one, but it$_j$'s very long$_j$. (iii.C.2.f)

6.1.4 Summary

The variables considered in sections 6.1.1–6.1.3 can be summarised as behaving in the following way. Firstly, there is no sense of an agreement to use exclusively H or L variants in a given turn or in a given succession of turns. Secondly, the H variants are, in all cases, in the majority. Thirdly, the motivation for the use of one or the other variant is, from the perspective taken here, unclear. This final point will be addressed in the following section; this summary merely lists the overall behaviour of the variables.

A broad representation of the distribution of H and L variants in the group recordings is given in the graphs in Figure 6.3 (page 210). Here the predominance of the H variants is illustrated graphically, with an indication as to which variables are more likely to be used in their L form. Copula-deletion is the least favoured variant, whereas uninflected verbs are more likely (albeit at a modest 21.8 %). These pie charts alone, however, do not explain the internal structure of the interactions very well. Figure 6.4 (page 210) is an attempt at

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²The inclusion of *it's* accounts for 224 of the 570 instances of [+BE]. No instances of *it*+[−BE] were observed, presumably for articulatory phonetic reasons: often, *it's* as a whole was omitted.

a more comprehensive analysis, where the Malay group from the polytechnic (ii.M.gr) will serve as an example. In this chart, the horizontal axis is akin to a time axis, with each unit being one turn (or one line-break in the transcription). In the top half of the chart are the L variants and in the bottom half the H variants of four separate variables: auxiliaries (including inversion), BE, inflexions, particles, and existential constructions. All but the particles are binary, with instances in both H and L.

A few things can be said about this chart, which could be repeated for the other eight group recordings. Firstly, and this has been noted several times in this section, H variants co-occur with their L counterparts throughout the recording. There is no sense of two clearly defined varieties, with their set of variants used exclusively. In Gupta's (1994) terms, there is active switching from H to L and vice-versa. The 'leaky' (Gupta 2006b:22) quality of the SgE diglossia is here seen to be extreme. Secondly, while we cannot talk about two distinct varieties, there *do* seem to be instances where the use of a particular type of variant peaks: there are clusters of H variants and clusters of L variants. Note, for instance, the rich number of L variants in turns 250–330, or the similarly prolific use of H variants in 250–320. The problem with these is that they occur quasi-simultaneously, which, again, renders an identification of the passage as either H or L difficult. Thirdly, and perhaps less interestingly, L variants are vastly outnumbered by H variants. The particles are the only L variable that is being used extensively. This analysis unveils the need for a closer look at what actually triggers the use of what we have called, so far, 'H' and 'L' variables. This is what the next section sets out to do.
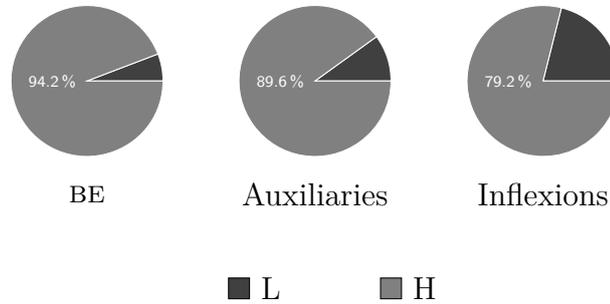
Figure 6.3: Proportion of H and L variants in the three verbal variables. The percentages given are those of H variants.
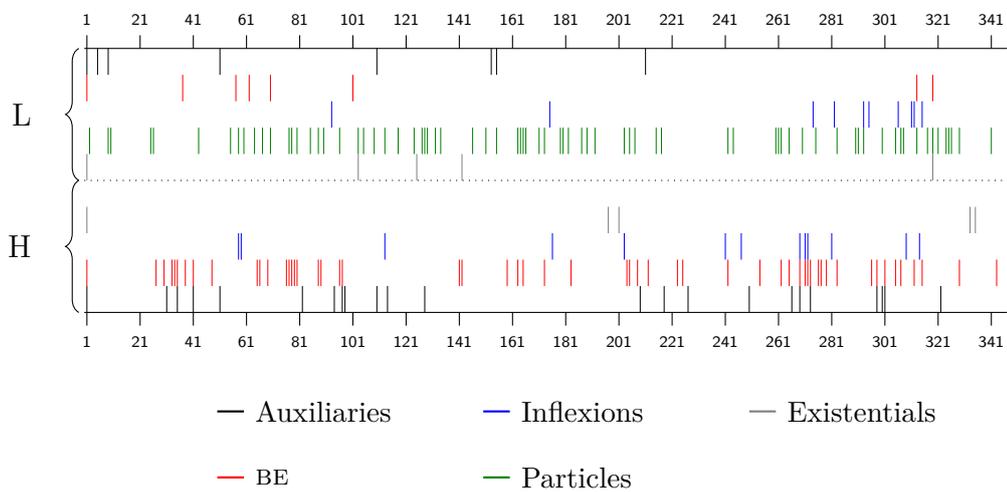
Figure 6.4: Occurrences of H and L variants of the variables (-ed) and (3sg) ('inflexions'), (be), and use of auxiliaries and presence of inversion ('auxiliaries') in the group recording ii.M.gr. Particles and existential constructions have been added for comparison. The horizontal axis shows the number of the turn in which the variant is used.

6.2 Indexicality

The analysis presented so far (in chapter 5) could be described as working within what has been termed a 'first-wave' approach (Eckert 2005), with variables taken to be markers of a given, pre-defined social category. These variables carry prestige or stigma based on social class, a (subsequently recognised as not easily definable) category which is regarded as a 'map of social space' (Eckert 2005:3). Certainly the large-scale surveys of e.g. Ho and Platt (1993), and the previous formulation of models correlating formality with levels of education (Platt 1975, 1977, Pakir 1991) fall within this type of study. The concept of *style*, in these studies, refers to the attention speakers pay to their speech, and, according to Eckert, is controlled by an orientation towards the prestige or stigma associated with the variables used (Eckert 2005).

It is particularly the relationship between variables and social categories that is problematic in this approach. Of course the correlations between, say, the variable (ɑː) in Norwich English[3] (Trudgill 1974) and the social classes taken into account are beyond statistical doubt. Trudgill (1974:ch.3, cited in Chambers 2003:51) also went to considerable length to ensure a reasonably accurate picture of his informants' social class, by computing a 'socio-economic index' that took into account not only the informants' occupation, but also their housing type, their income, their level of education, their father's occupation, and the neighbourhood they lived in, with each given a score and weighted appropriately. Nevertheless, the socio-economic index thus generated remains a *pre*-defined social category — much like sex or age. This category is then ascribed certain variables, such as (ɑː), which has a variant [ɑː] for those with a higher index, and a variant [äː] for those with a lower index. Speakers use one or the other based on how much attention they pay to their speech;

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[3]In Norwich the variable (ɑː), which occurs in words such as *father*, *cart*, *after*, has a prestige variant [ɑː] and local fronted variants [äː] or [aː] (Trudgill 1974:97–99).

word lists and reading passages usually triggering a higher rate of the prestige variant, and casual styles usually using more of the non-prestigious variant.

However, Trudgill recognised that the selection of one or the other of these variants can be more than simply a result of attention (which would mean that the prestige variant is always the one desired). He explained some of this variation as reflecting different kinds of prestige: *overt prestige*, which is associated with the variant that is overtly recognised as prestigious (i.e. the more RP-like), and *covert prestige*, carried by the local variant. This latter kind of prestige has local currency, so much so that in the self-reporting tests administered post hoc, informants quite often over-reported their use of the local variant. The overt vs. covert prestige distinction nevertheless continues to regard variables largely as markers of social categories, with the choice of one variant over the other being a result of an orientation to prestige or stigma — with the latter potentially reinterpreted as being locally prestigious.

A departure from this approach can be seen in what Eckert calls 'second-wave' studies. These are characterised by an ethnographic approach, where the informants consist of typically small-scale, geographically-defined communities (Eckert 2005:15). Rather than the 'top-down' methodology of first-wave studies, where social categories are decided upon before the study commences, and are then imposed on the sample, here the process is reversed, and it is locally-defined categories that are seen to link to large-scale demographics. An example can be found in Eckert's own study of two groups of US high school students, which she called 'jocks' and 'burnouts' (Eckert 1989). The definition of these two groups was not pre-meditated, and arose in the course of the researcher's interaction with the students. In fact, these groups were not homogeneous, and did not have a clear delimitation as a 'clique' in which membership is explicitly acquired or rejected. Rather, students could be more or less strongly part of the group, interacting with other students

sharing their taste in music, clothing, and, obviously, linguistic features. The fact that many, but not all, of the 'jocks', who had a culture of identifying more closely with school values, and incidentally of using the more standard features of General American, came from what can be called a middle-class background, was methodologically unconnected to the definition of the group. The group's behaviour, linguistic and otherwise, is something that transpired from the grouping itself, rather than from an extrinsic social category 'class'.

Second-wave studies also broke with the first-wave idea of what a linguistic variable stands for. In ethnographic studies of the second-wave kind, variables are taken to index locally-defined categories, rather than the large-scale pre-defined social categories. For example, in Labov's (1963) study of variation in Martha's Vineyard, the two often-cited variables (ay) and (aw)[4] take on several meanings. Firstly, a centralised onset has a traditional, dialectological meaning; it can be seen as a feature of the local accent. Lowering of the onset, as a result of contact with the mainland, has occurred in more recent generations, and this has given rise to a second, more symbolic meaning. Those identifying more strongly with the island used the raised variants (some even more so than in the traditional accent), whereas those intent on leaving for the greener pastures of the mainland used the lowered variant.

The variables, therefore, point to a social meaning that is locally created. The style thus created represents an 'act of affiliation' (Eckert 2005:15) to a particular category, which, however, is local in that it is both geographically and temporally restricted. Unlike in first-wave approaches, speakers are not seen to be born into a particular social category, complete with its sociolinguistic variables. Speakers use the variables as a means to be part of or to distance themselves from the social categories that they find themselves ex-

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[4]Labov's notation; IPA (ai): [aɪ] vs. [əɪ ∼ ɐɪ] and (au): [aʊ] vs. [əʊ ∼ ɐʊ].

posed to. Thus, a speaker can be part of several categories in the course of his/her life, perhaps even concurrently, as Eckert's (1989) 'in-betweeners'.

Building on this new approach, 'third-wave' studies are concerned with the ethnographic analysis of 'communities of practice' (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992, Wenger 1998, Eckert 2000). These communities are characterised not by geographical or social categories like speech communities, but by a common set of practices, goals, or values. Here the local categories discussed previously are defined not in terms of higher-order social categories (first-wave) or as being linked to demographics (second-wave), but as being built on a set of common stances (Eckert 2005:30). These stances (activities, characteristics) are *indexed* by the use of sociolinguistic variables; these variables then combine to form a style, which is here seen to be used for the active construction of the speaker's persona.

Eckert (2008) explains this by postulating an 'indexical field' attached to every sociolinguistic variable. The field covers the potential range of social meanings of the variable. One of the examples she gives is that of word-final /t/ release in American English, illustrated in Figure 6.5. The variants themselves, i.e. the actual realisation of /t/ (e.g. [tʰ], [∅], [t˺], [ʔ], [t͡ʔ], etc.), are not the main focus here. It is a list of the social meanings associated with those variants where the /t/ is audibly released. The field consists of attributes falling into three types: social types, permanent qualities, and stances. Eckert is quick to point out that this distinction does not refer to distinct categories of social meanings, but 'emphasise[s] the fluidity of such categories and the relation between [them] in practice' (Eckert 2008:469). The local nature of the system is evident in that the variable can index, in Eckert's field of /t/ release in American English, a social type 'British'. In a British context, however, the same variable (/t/ release) would index a different social meaning.

		British			

School
teacher   **Educated**   Nerd girl

Articulate   *Annoyed*

Formal   *Clear*   *Emphatic*   *Angry*

Elegant   *Careful*

Polite   *Effortful*   *Exasperated*

Prissy   Gay diva
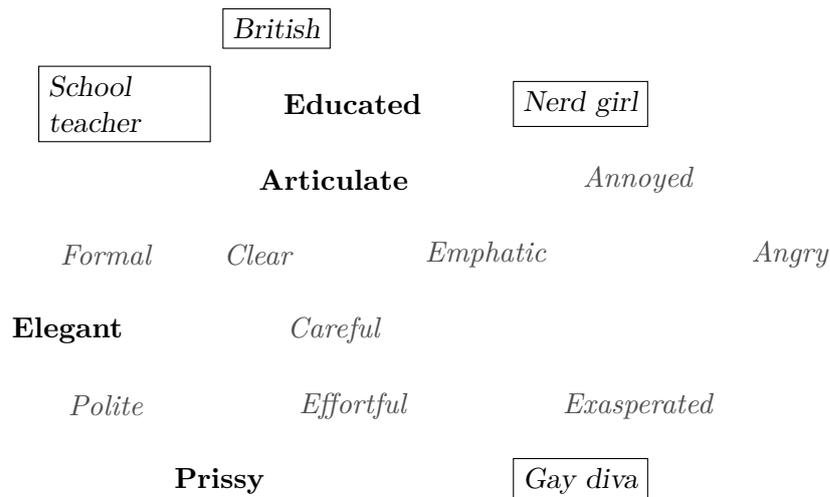
Figure 6.5: 'Indexical field of /t/ release. ⎡Boxes⎤ = social types, **black** = permanent qualities, *gray* = stances.' (Eckert 2008:469)

The social meanings covered by /t/ release are quite diverse, and show the usefulness of an indexical *field*. The stances, which range from 'formal' and 'polite' to 'annoyed' and 'angry', are but momentary expressions of one's state of mind; they are occasional in use and useful to mark one's attitude at a particular moment in time, in a particular situation. Permanent qualities, on the other hand, are already part of the speaker's identity, due to a habitual use of certain stances. A person who takes an exasperated stance repeatedly, might become to be seen as an exasperated person through 'stance accretion' (Rauniomaa 2003, cited in Bucholtz and Hall 2005:596, cited in Eckert 2008:469). There is, therefore, considerable fluidity in the way in which the adjectives in Figure 6.5 can be used. The permanent quality 'educated' refers to the social identity a speaker is constructing, in this case by the use of released /t/, which may, in other speakers, be simply an occasionally taken stance with the same meaning.

Clearly, this kind of approach to sociolinguistic variation is a major departure from the first-wave approaches described earlier. The level of detail

with which speakers' variation in speech is analysed is much more fine-grained, and enables a more relevant and localised explanation for a particular use of a given variable. Of course, the conclusions one can draw from these kind of analyses are not easily reproducible to the population as a whole, but they do offer explanations for complex phenomena of linguistic variation such as those observed in SgE.

6.2.1 Indexicality in Singapore English

The reproduction, for the Singaporean case, of an indexical field such as the one in Figure 6.5, is not the main purpose an indexical analysis of SgE should have. More importantly, the localised social meaning of sociolinguistic variables, as well as their use by the participants involved, is of essence. Considering the widespread use, highlighted in section 6.1, of co-occurring instances of what has been called, in diglossic terms, H and L variants, a closer look at their use in conversational interaction will enable an attempt at a formulation of this local social meaning.

Consider, for instance, example (11), where i.C.1.m introduces, in the first utterance, the term *hor fun*.[5] In the second sentence, the speaker turns towards the microphone (as reflected audibly in the actual recording), and gives a definition of the term, quite presumably for the benefit of the researcher. The explication triggers laughter in the other three participants, a reaction the speaker obviously expected.

(11)   We can eat *hor fun* there, I <u>heard</u> that the *hor fun* ∅ quite famous.
         [to microphone] er *hor fun* me<u>ans</u> rice noodles. (i.C.1.m)

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[5]Term of Cantonese origin, 河粉 *hòh fán* (Mandarin *hé fěn*). A Chinese dish consisting of broad, flat rice noodles, fried with prawns, fishcakes, vegetables, etc., and served in gravy (Lee 2004). The anglicised spelling with non-rhotic ⟨r⟩ and ⟨u⟩ for /a/ is the usual one in Singapore and is the one reported in Lee (2004).

Attention is drawn to the absence of copular BE in the first sentence, where *hor fun* is first used, and crucially, to the presence of a 3SG inflexion in the second sentence. This second sentence is addressed, more or less directly, to the researcher. Apart from the explication of *hor fun*, which does in itself highlight a (perceived) difference in local knowledge, the shift from an L variant of (BE) to an H variant of (3SG) at the point where the addressee changes seems too much of a coincidence. It is conceivable that [−BE] indexes a stance that can be described as 'local', likely to be triggered by the use of *hor fun* (a local, or at least regional dish). In contrast, the inflexion on *means* can be considered as indexing a non-local, if not global stance, which brings the concept *hor fun* out of its local meaning into the reach of the outsider's understanding.

Example (11) is of course only one of many where L and H variants co-occur. Interestingly, the two sentences cannot be identified as being entirely L and H respectively, seeing the use of an inflected *heard* between two L variants. To illustrate another intertwined use of H and L variants, as it were, consider example (12):

(12)   How long <u>we are</u> supposed to talk? (iii.M.1.f)

Here we have a non-inverted interrogative — traditionally diagnostic of L — combined, in the same clause, with a realised copula, [+BE]. While the [+BE] variant is not *per se* diagnostic of either H or L, it is nonetheless the only one accepted in H. This raises the question of why, given a choice, the speaker did not opt for a fully L-marked utterance: if anything, the use of the copula lessens the 'L-ness' of the question.

The explanation for the use of the variants in (12) is not as straightforward as in (11), where the presence of (perceived) local lexical items helps in the identification of an indexical stance taken by the speaker. There is also, in (11), a clear shift between the first and the second clause. This is not the case

in (12): the question is a single clause featuring one instance of an L variant immediately followed by, if not combined with, a non-L feature. The turn itself is nested between others that use overwhelmingly non-L and H features, as shown in (13):

(13)   3:   So we have decided. Three hundred bucks per person, Sarawak's the place. God bless Sarawak man. Yeah. (***) ok. So ∅ everybody agree with Sarawak? Yes! Well done!

        1:    How long we are supposed to talk?

        2:    So that's all?

        3:    Yeah, because we agreed on Sarawak, Sabah.

        (iii.M.gr)

This exchange is predominantly in a variety of SgE that would be described as H — the only exception being the question of the first informant (iii.M.3.m) 'So everybody agree with Sarawak?', which lacks DO-support. It seems therefore unusual, from a diglossic point of view, for iii.M.1.f to switch to a style that includes L features. A possible explanation could be that iii.M.1.f has a lower proficiency level than her interlocutors — an assumption not borne out by the rest of the data, however. Likewise, it is possible for the non-inversion to have been triggered by the lack of DO-support in the preceding turn. Much more likely, however, is the nature of the question itself: it is, after all, an expression of impatience, signalling the speaker's annoyance with the task at hand (the turn is uttered $10'24''$ into the recording). It is conceivable, therefore, that the use of an L variant in this utterance indexes a stance 'annoyed' or 'impatient'. The concurrent use of [+BE] might then be seen as a remnant of the overall H nature of the interaction, where StdE features predominate.

That the variables investigated here can be used to index a wide array of stances is further exemplified in (14). Here I have highlighted two instances of noun plural inflexion (*toiletries* and *beaches*), reported by Gupta (1994:13) as

being another StdE feature. It thus appears that after four H variants, four consecutive L variants occur, only to be closely followed by another H variant.

(14)   4:   Oh, very very important. Where are we going to go for sanitary, our toiletries and everything?

    1,3: [exasperated sighs and laughs]

    2:    Oh my god!

    4:    Aah, yes, nobody thought of that!

    3:    There the beaches never got toilet∅ ah, got public toilet.

    4:    Yes yes got, I think they have got it. They protect the beach, a heritage site for them.

    (i.I.gr)

It seems reasonable to suggest that the L variant of (got) in i.I.4.m's reply to i.I.3.m is triggered by the latter's twofold use of this variant in the preceding turn. The speaker then repeats his objection, this time with an auxiliary HAVE, an H variant.

What might have triggered i.I.3.m's L variants of existential constructions could well be the nature of the topic discussed. There is a certain light-heartedness about the issue, as evidenced by the laughs of the participants once the topic is introduced. A similar orientation can be observed in i.I.4.m's 'Nobody thought of that!', which has a mild sarcastic overtone, but here, an H variant is used. The difference between the two is that in the case of *thought* the H variant mockingly indexes a stance 'important', whereas in the case of *got*, the L variant indexes 'light-heartedness'. The inflected *beaches* may simply be a remnant of the preceding turn's H-fullness, but need not index H at all, since, as explained earlier, inflexions can also variably occur in CSE (this applies to both verbal and nominal inflexions, see Gupta 1994:13).

Thus far, examples (11)–(14) have shown several possible stances that can be taken, using the grammatical and lexical variables we have focused on.

L variant	H variant
local	global
regional	serious
exasperated	important
annoyed	
light-hearted	

Table 6.1: Selected variables and the stances they index.

Table 6.1 summarises them. Some, like 'local' vs. 'global', are reminiscent of the dyads proposed by Alsagoff (2007) in her 'cultural orientation model' (COM, see section 4.6, page 155). This is not a coincidence: her model takes an approach to SgE variation that is very similar to Eckert's (2008) indexicality. Alsagoff's COM is, however, much more concerned with the idea of a continuum between two varieties (Local and International Singapore English), whereas an indexical approach would, in the present case, leave the definition of distinct varieties aside. This point will be considered in more detail in the concluding chapter.

While grammatical and lexical variables of SgE are the prime elements in this study, I will here briefly explore one additional feature occasionally observed in the group recordings: code-switching.[6] This is an unusual variable in that it is unsuitable for first-wave studies, but potentially interesting for the kind of ethnographic, small group-based approach this chapter has taken. Code-switching, as predicted in section 2.1.2 (page 39), does not occur widely in the data. This is due to many factors, chief among them the setting in school and the fact that the informants are aware of being recorded. In the group recordings, however, the first time that all four informants were together and without the researcher, some instances of code-switching did occur — and the same is true for the radio-microphone recordings. Two instances of Tamil were observed:

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[6]I use a relatively loose definition of code-switching here, with any non-StdE lexical item classified as a switch.

(15)   a.   Koṭikiṟtuku need three days ah. (ii.I.3.f)

        b.   And we mustn't forget Mr. Maṇmataṉ. (iii.I.2.f)

In (15a), *koṭikiṟtuku* is a colloquial Tamil verb phrase that translates as 'to eat a lot', and in (15b), *maṇmataṉ* is a noun that roughly translates as 'good-looking male person'. The context makes it clear that the referent, in this case, is the researcher.

It is reasonable to consider code-switching as a feature of CSE, or certainly of LSE — code-switching is, more often than not, highly localised in nature. What, then, are the triggers for these switches? They occur in isolation and are not surrounded by any other Tamil switch. Perhaps the fact that all participants are of the same ethnic background could be an explanation, particularly with the official 'mother tongue' policy that links language and ethnicity. This however does not take into account ii.I.gr, where ii.I.1.m is Panjabi and openly admits to not understanding much Tamil at all. In fact, the explanation for the switches could well be not much different from those offered for the previous examples. Consider (15a), for instance, where the topic at hand is that of food and of the necessity of allowing enough time at the chosen holiday destination (Thailand) in order to appropriately sample the local delicacies. A similar instance was observed in (11), where the topic was food as well, and where the term *hor fun* (arguably not a switch, but at the very least a lexical item for a region-specific dish with local relevance) was accompanied by another CSE or L feature, BE-deletion. The same is true of (15a), where a discourse particle *ah* is used. The data, therefore, seems to suggest that the topic of food has a strong influence on the choice of variants.

Similarly, references to the researcher are likely to be indexed by L variants. In (15b), the researcher, who is not immediately present, is referred to with an ostensibly opaque Tamil noun. The reason for this choice, one can surmise, is an assumption that the referent is unable to understand the flattering descrip-

tion — a correct assumption, until I enrolled the help of a native speaker. Note that here, there is no other L variant in the sentence; in fact, *mustn't forget* is an auxiliary-supported structure that is considered H by Gupta (1994:13). This could be explained by the fact that the utterance, if anything, carries positive overtones, with a suggested invitation of the researcher to the group's weekend getaway. To put (15b) into perspective, remember example (12), where instead of a direct reference to the researcher, there is a mild criticism of the recording process, a sign of exasperation not unlikely meant to be heard by the researcher. And again, the speaker uses an L variant (lack of inversion in an interrogative) followed by an H variant ([+BE]). What this seems to show is a kind of struggle between two of Alsagoff's orientations, 'local' and 'global', in their widest sense. There is a desire to connect locally with the other participants, discussing the outsider or subverting the interview setting, in a manner that is local and not immediately penetrable to the researcher. At the same time, however, the interview setting itself and its 'global' nature — due to the (physical or otherwise) presence of a foreign interviewer — is given consideration as well. This is achieved by the simultaneous use of variants that have previously been ascribed to a given sub-variety of SgE (CSE/L/LSE/basilect or SSE/H/ISE/acrolect, depending on the author and the model).

There are many more examples of this in the data, but I shall conclude this section by mentioning a different stance that can be indexed, in SgE, by several variables. Ethnic accents of SgE have been investigated in some detail (see e.g. Deterding and Poedjosoedarmo 2000, Lim 2000, Tan 2005, Deterding 2007b), although there has not been a clear account of what exactly makes one ethnic variety distinct from the other. The differences in vowel quality investigated by Deterding (2007b) are not large enough to account for the high success rates observed in ethnic accent identification tests (Deterding and Poedjosoedarmo 2000). Besides code-switching, which is a (generally) ob-

vious marker of ethnicity, Deterding identifies intonation as a possible marker. Thus, when searching for examples of ethnic indexing in the data, phonological variables are of paramount importance. Example (16),[7] taken from the radio-microphone recording ii.C.rm, and described in Leimgruber (2009), is, however, more than simple ethnic self-indexing. Here, a group of Chinese polytechnic students use (what they perceive to be) variables indexing an Indian ethnicity — they are basically imitating, if not mocking, an Indian accent.

(16) 1: Do you know want to slap you?

4: 'scuse me?

$\overbrace{\hphantom{xxxxxx}}^{A}$

1: Oh, naː˧θɪŋ naː˩θɪŋ

4: Oh, na-.. $\underbrace{\text{o˥ naː˥ʈɪŋ naː˥ʈɪŋ.}}_{B}$ $\underbrace{\text{maɖl˥ naˑɖl˩}}_{C}$

2, 3: [laugh]

4: $\underbrace{\text{diŋgl̩˥ naˑɖl˥ gɪml̩no̥ː˩}}_{D}$

All: [laugh]

4: ma˥ɖɻ̩˥ ɖon˦ kam˥ æn sɛl˥ mi ol˦ dɪs˦ kaɪnɖ˦ ɔf˦ ʈɪŋ˦ aˑ˩. faˑɪv˥ $\left.\vphantom{\begin{array}{c}a\\b\end{array}}\right\}$ _E_
    bəts˥ plis˥. baɖ˥ its˥ onli˥ inaff̩ɔ˥ wan˦ bəd˥

2: $\underbrace{\text{wɐn˦ bəd˥ no̥˩ lak˥}}_{F}$

?: [singing]

All: [laughing]

(ii.C.rm)

The context of this exchange shows the spontaneous nature of the use of ethnic indexing. Speaker ii.C.1.f makes a good-natured threat to ii.C.4.m, upon which the latter asks for clarification. ii.C.1.f then shields herself by dropping the subject ('nothing, nothing', _A_ in (16)), but doing so with lengthened first syllables and an unusual intonation pattern. ii.C.4.m starts to repeat the utter-

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[7]A note on the transcription used in (16): passages of interest (those highlighted with braces) are in IPA. Intonation is indicated by means of tone marks. While this is not entirely orthodox, it gives a useful impression of what the actual recording sounds like.

ance, checks himself, and restarts, this time with a much stronger mock-Indian accent (*B*) — notice the use of retroflex [ʈ], where ii.C.1.f previously had [θ]. He then carries on with two nonsense 'Indian' syllables (*C*), with abundant use of retroflexion and sing-songy intonation. This is met with laughter by the other two participants, a reaction that the speaker seems to enjoy: the following turn (*D*) is a similar nonsense construct, again characterised by several retroflex consonants, length contrast, and a wide pitch range. After another round of laughter by the whole group, ii.C.4.m embarks on a longish turn in this mock-Indian accent (*E*), which includes two sentences which are (not entirely accurate) quotes from a reasonably famous Visa credit card advertisement visibly set in India and featuring Richard Gere (the term *mother* [maˈɖɻ]] refers to ii.C.3.f, who, for unknown reasons, is given this nickname throughout ii.C.gr and ii.C.rm, mostly by ii.C.4.m). The reference is taken up by the group, with ii.C.2.m continuing the parody ostensibly with another quote (although this one does not appear in the original), and with an unidentified group member starting to sing the advertisement music, resulting in general laughter.

Clearly, this kind of indexical usage of sociolinguistic variables is highly reminiscent of 'crossing' (Rampton 1995, 2006), although it does not work in exactly the same way. Typically, in crossing, the speaker uses a stylised version of another participant's variety, and this participant is somehow involved in the exchange (as addressee or overhearer), or, in the case of 'stylised Asian English' (Rampton 1995, cited in Coupland 2007:139–142), the speakers themselves are associated with the variety into which they cross (but which they do not normally use, e.g. Asian British using stylised Asian English when they normally use the local vernacular, see Rampton 1995). Example (16), however, features four Chinese participants, with one of them, ii.C.4.m, starting an imitation of Indian-accented English (marked with extensive use of retroflexion, unusual vowel length, and varying intonation), and even imitating a nondescript 'In-

dian' language (*c* and *d* above). No participant is of Indian background; it is only the 'nothing, nothing' by ii.C.1.f that triggers the 'crossing'. Central to the exchange is the introduction, in *e*, of snippets from the Visa advertisement, immediately recognised by the participants. Not only does this strengthen ii.C.4.m's position in the group, it also explicitly indexes the stylised accent as 'Indian', thus removing all doubts as to its social meaning. It is also an example much less of crossing than of 'ritualised interaction' (Rampton 2009).

From an indexical perspective, then, there is a subset of ethnic stances that can be indexed linguistically by using several variables: a stance 'Indian' is achieved, in SgE, even by non-Indian speakers, by using retroflex consonants and a distinctive intonation — regardless of whether these features are actually used by real Indian SgE speakers — and other features, such as topic and non-linguistic elements (e.g. singing) can act in a similar way. The extreme example in (16) is one where the participants immediately recognise the stance indexed. This need not always be so, but in this case, the connection between the stylisation and the real-world referent category, as mentioned, was made explicit.

6.3 Summary

After the quantitative analysis presented in chapter 5, this chapter has shed some qualitative light on the data. It is now clear that a closer analysis of discourse, supported by a wider range of variables, gives a more detailed insight into variation in SgE. How this will affect the models hitherto used to explain macro-sociolinguistic variation in Singapore is the topic of the next chapter. What follows here is a summary of the findings.

The behaviour of the new verbal variables has been summarised in section 6.1.4. The way in which these variables, in conjunction with those previ-

ously described (discourse particles and existential constructions), can be used to index social meaning, in an indexical framework, was the subject of section 6.2.1. While the stances and other social meanings that can be indexed in this way are numerous, in attempting to list them (see Table 6.2), it is useful to distinguish between (what have been called, in a diglossic framework) H and L variants. Note that these stances are not dyadic, unlike Alsagoff's (2007) orientations.

L variants	H variants
Local/regional	Global
Exasperated	Serious
Annoyed	Important
Light-hearted	Pretentious
Relaxed	Mocking

Table 6.2: Some of the stances indexed by H and L variants.

Not all variables are equally suited to index a particular stance. In fact, each variable is likely to have its own indexical field, much like /t/ release in Figure 6.5 (Eckert 2008:469). It is not the aim of this summary to re-create such a field for every variable investigated in this thesis, particularly with regards to Eckert's use of 'permanent qualities' and 'social types', elements of the field that are speaker-specific (through 'stance accretion' in the former case and stereotyping in the latter) and that are a result of stance-taking. However, an attempt at illustrating discourse particles' indexical field would produce a field comparable to the one in Figure 6.6.

Following Eckert's Figure 6.5, I have given two 'social types' (‖ *boxed* ‖) that might well be indexed by the use of Singlish discourse particles. The term *auntie* (discussed at length in Wong 2005) covers a complex semantic range, including as a respectful term of address for older women, but more crucially, sometimes as an adjective, used to describe a person — a social type — who is old-fashioned, not particularly well-educated, possibly Chinese-educated, and

Ah Beng   Auntie

Relaxed   *Careless*

Natural   *Informal*   *Uneducated*

Friendly   *Rude*
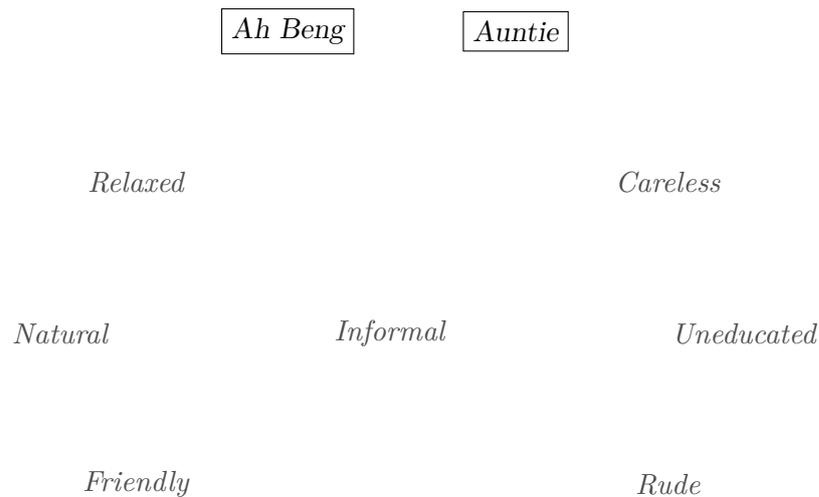
Figure 6.6: Indexical field of discourse particles.

often equated with a low level of English proficiency. The term can also be used as an adjective of inanimate nouns with a similar image, e.g. old-fashioned clothing. *Ah Beng* can be roughly translated as 'chav'; it describes (male) youngsters, perceived to be of lower-class background, with little interest in education and typically seen to be up to no good (via membership in gangs, etc.). In addition to several other cultural practices (clothing, hairstyle, music, drug abuse, etc.), a relatively low proficiency in English and the use of non-Mandarin varieties of Chinese are often considered characteristics of this social type. Discourse particles are one of many variables typically used by these two social types.

The stances (in *grey*) are split into two categories, which one could call 'positive' and 'negative'. The stance 'informal', at the centre of the field, is important, as it is the one on which the others are built. It is in this heterogeneous nature of the field, also seen in that of Eckert's /t/ release, that lies the true explanatory power of indexicality. The ability to account for a variable's meanings in sociolinguistic interaction, regardless of those meanings' polarities with regards to formality, attention to speech, etc., is what is missing

from models more concerned with identifying individual sub-varieties of SgE. Particularly the combinatory possibilities offered to speakers wanting to index several, sometimes seemingly opposing stances (as shown in the examples above), is enlightening. The concluding chapter, therefore, will take a more in-depth look at how indexicality helps us understand the variation inherent in SgE, and how it may help refine previously-proposed models.

Chapter 7

Discussion and conclusion

CHAPTERS 5 and 6 reveal the need for a closer theorisation of concepts such as 'codes', 'sub-variety', and 'code-switching', on which the existing variationist models are based. The present chapter undertakes this, and shows how the concept of indexicality, introduced in section 6.2, offers an attractive new model for the Singaporean case, which builds on and moves beyond the previous models.

7.1   Existing models

Under this heading, I present a brief overview of the models examined in more detail in chapter 4, and consider how these models can explain the data presented in the preceding two chapters. While the continuum and diglossia are the two major models, the others (in particular Alsagoff's COM) are also important and need to be considered here. Table 7.1 is given as a useful recapitulation of these models.

	SgE internal organisation	Terminology (number of sub-varieties)	Reason(s) for speaker variation
Post-creole continuum (Platt 1975)	continuum with StdE at the acrolectal and Singlish at the basilectal end	acrolect/basilect (∞)	level of education and stylistic choice
Polyglossia (Platt 1977)	diglossic relationship between Singlish and StdE but also between English and other languages	H_x/L_x ($2/\infty$)	home language, situational context
Diglossia (Gupta 1989)	StdE and Singlish in diglossic relationship with occasional code-switching	H/L (2)	situational context
Proficiency (Pakir 1991)	StdE and Singlish at extremes of a continuum linked to proficiency and formality	SSE/CSE (∞)	language proficiency and choice of level of formality
Modified triangles (Poedjosoedarmo 1995)	same as Pakir (1991) but formality/proficiency link only for acrolectal speakers	acrolect/basilect (∞)	language proficiency and choice of level of formality
Cultural orientation model (Alsagoff 2007)	StdE and Singlish at extremes of a continuum used to signal cultural orientation	ISE/LSE (∞)	cultural orientation (global or local)

Table 7.1: Overview of existing variationist models for SgE.

Example (1) below is given as a snippet of data against which these models can be tested. The extract is from the group recording of the Malay informants at the polytechnic (ii.M.gr). The group consists of two males (ii.M.1.m and ii.M.4.m, 1 and 4 below) and two females (ii.M.2.f and ii.M.3.f, 2 and 3 below). Features identified by Gupta (1994) as Singlish have a straight underline, and features identified as StdE have a wavy underline.

(1) 3: Fifteen minute ah, is it? Aiyoh, don't know what to say ah.   1

     4: Eh after this ∅ finish ah?   2

     2: No. One of you have to go walk around the school, meet your   3
         friends and talk.   4

     4: Are you sure ah?   5

     2: Because he want to see how we all talk, normally. . .   6

     3. (***) stupidity.   7

     2: That's what him* say to us just now.   8

     4: Serious? So dumb.   9

     3: Do you realise that he's actually quite nervous?   10

     4: I know!   11

     2: Yeah. He will edit it lah, I think.   12

     1: So confirmation right, we will be Bangkok.   13

     4: (***)   14

     2: Yeah.   15

     3: [laugh]   16

     2: Ok lah, confirm ah, Bangkok. Let's have a try ah. . . It's more like   17
         a survival things† ah, with three hundred.   18

     4: (***), eat like rice?   19

     3: No ah, that one is only for accommodation. But actually, if you   20
         go there right, my brother say for just going there is actually five 21
         hundred bucks ah.   22

4: No <u>lah</u>. 23

2: Minimum! 24

3: Ng-ng. My brother, my brother one* <u>went</u> there and he <u>took</u> the– 25

2: Budget one? 26

3: Budget airline and then he <u>come</u> back with normal, the normal 27
airline, then the total <u>is</u> hundred. But never mind, we can always. . . 28

4: But if you take, yeah, my friend <u>say</u> <u>ah</u>, because he ∅ going back 29
Thailand, (***) don't know right, Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai? 30

1: Chiang Mai, Chiang Mai. 31

4: He <u>say</u> if he <u>takes</u> Silk Air, it'<u>s</u> five hundred, to go. 32

2: To go only. 33

3: <u>Hah</u>? 34

2: <u>Wah lau eh</u>! 35

4: But if you take Jet Star, can ∅ eight <u>dollars</u>. FROM‡ <u>ah</u>, from 36
eight <u>dollars</u> onwards. But then <u>got</u> the airport tax. 37

2: That one the eight <u>dollar</u> is a plus plus thing, you know. 38

4: Yeah <u>lah</u>. 39

(ii.M.gr)
* Other colloquial features.
† Hypercorrection.
‡ Emphasis.

In Platt's (1975) continuum, we would expect these informants to be con-
versing in a relatively informal atmosphere, signalled by the use of Singlish
features (in particular the discourse particles), which outweigh the StdE ones
32 to 19. They would therefore be using, much of the time, a lower mesolectal
variety on the SgE continuum. However, as Platt's continuum consists of two
dimensions, we would also need to locate the speakers on the socio-economic
scale in Figure 4.1 (page 126). This is more complicated, as the type of school
attended is not in itself enough to decide on the informants' socio-economic

status (see section 2.1.2, page 39), although this was Platt's measure. One could of course decide to use the adolescent informants' parents' occupation (see Appendix V, page 270), and, indeed, the group seems to come from comparable family backgrounds. This, however, does little to explain the actual inherent variability of the discourse: why, for instance, does ii.M.3.f use, in the one turn in lines 20–22, variants in the sequence L–H–L–H–H–L? Of course the absence of a clear method of identification for the continuum's sub-varieties is regrettable, but surely we cannot explain this apparent alternation between acrolect and basilect merely by referring to the speaker's socio-economic status, or, indeed, the formality of the setting. It is hardly conceivable that situational setting and levels of formality are switching at such a quick rate.

Diglossia, too, does little to explain this example (I subsume here Platt's polyglossia to general diglossia — there are no instances of English–Malay code-switching in (1)). Clearly the exchange is neither fully H nor fully L; perhaps the notion of a 'leaky' diglossia (Gupta 2006b:22) is of help. The L–H–L–H–H–L sequence in ii.M.3.f's turn certainly seems to use both features recognised by Gupta (1994) as H (nominal inflexion) and as L (particles).[1] In order for 'leaks', or switches, to be identified, however, it would be necessary to first identify which code is dominant and which one is being switched into ('matrix' and 'embedded' language respectively, in Myers-Scotton's (1997) terminology). But this is far from simple. In fact, the two sub-varieties are so close that it is not possible, unlike in more straightforward examples of classic diglossia, to be entirely sure which code is the 'matrix' in a given utterance. This is particularly so because of the nature of the features used to identify H or L. Take noun plural inflexion, for instance. Its absence is diagnostic of L,

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[1] Gupta (1994:13) notes that '[CSE] nouns are not normally inflected [...] while this is categorical in StdE'. Thus, inflexions are not as such markers of H, since they can optionally occur in L. This, however, does not invalidate the point made here. A further example, by speaker ii.M.2.f in line 12, shows alternation of H and L features that are diagnostic of their respective sub-varieties (modal auxiliary and particles, respectively): 'He will edit it lah, I think.'

but its presence, while a requirement of H, is also possible in L. This makes a clear distinction between Singlish and StdE difficult.

Clearly, then, a diglossic approach to (1) is of little help, since, as shown by the highlighting throughout the example, H and L variants are interwoven to an extent that makes the identification of individual sub-varieties close to meaningless. The triangular models of Pakir (1991) and Poedjosoedarmo (1995) (see page 149 and 153 respectively) may well offer a better explanation, although they suffer from problems similar to those of Platt's (1975). The proficiency levels of the informants was not tested in any means other than through sampling in schools that have particular entry requirements, including appropriate results in English Language. That dimension of the triangles is therefore impossible to test here. More crucially shaky, however, is the nature of the linguistic continuum stipulated by Pakir and Poedjosoedarmo. Of course the acrolect is equated, in both cases, with SSE or StdE, and the basilect with CSE/Singlish, but the sub-varieties linking these two are not defined in great detail (unlike, for instance, DeCamp's (1971) implicational scale for the Jamaican continuum) — a shortcoming also found in Platt. Thus, it is as hard to locate a speaker, or even a single utterance, on a given position on the triangles, as it is to locate that speaker or utterance on Platt's continuum, because of the seemingly incoherent use of Standard and Singlish variants within the same utterances. Given that formality is, in all these models, a major factor, an utterance such as the one in lines 20–22 of (1) would be very hard indeed to classify along such a scale. And to suggest that its variant sequence of L–H–L–H–H–L represents successive switches from informal to formal is as unsatisfactory as the suggestion of successive switches from one diglossic sub-variety to the other.

Of the models presented in Table 7.1, it may well be Alsagoff's (2007) cultural orientation model (COM) that is most suited to explain the data

presented here. Its shortcoming, perhaps, lies in the name of the model: it might be too restrictive to limit its applicability to cultural orientation alone. While it is conceivable that ii.M.3.f's observation in line 10 ('Do you realise that he's actually quite nervous?'), which presents a mild criticism of the researcher, is framed in ISE — evidenced by the use of inversion and [+BE] — because of the referent's status as an outsider, thus forcing the utterance into a cultural orientation of 'globalism', it is hard to see how ii.M.2.f's 'That's what him say to us just now.' (line 8) is different enough to warrant LSE. Overall, however, it does seem to be the case, at least in example (1), that StdE features prevail in exchanges where the researcher is part of the topic.[2] Other components of COM, such as the dyads authority–camaraderie and educational attainment–community membership (see page 160) can also be used to explain many cases of apparent H–L alternation. The main strength of COM resides in the fact that, much like Eckert's indexicality (of which more below), features of H and L (or ISE and LSE, in Alsagoff's terms) can combine to accommodate several orientations in the same utterance:

> A speaker may choose to stress authority and yet signal community membership. As a consequence, while they may decide to orientate towards ISE to indicate authority, they might also exhibit some degree of Singlish features to indicate a local perspective in order to stress membership in the community.
> (Alsagoff 2007:40)

This model, therefore, offers the most attractive explanation yet for the kind of variation observed in (1), and will provide a springboard to the application of Eckert's model to the Singaporean case. First, however, I shall turn to the all-important issue of what actually is meant by the various terms *code* and *sub-variety*, so widely used in existing models.

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[2]Compare a similar instance in the previous chapter's example (11) (page 216), where there also was a switch from LSE to ISE when the researcher was addressed (via the microphone).

7.2 Varieties, codes, and code-switching

So far, terms such as *code*, *variety*, and *sub-variety* have been used as near-synonyms when talking about SgE. Matthews (2007) offers definitions for each, saying that a *variety* is 'any form of language seen as systematically distinct from others', and that a *code* is 'any language or distinct variety of a language, whether or not it is actually thought of as a code in any illuminating sense'. This may need a bit of clarification. In sociolinguistics, *variety* is a term that is used widely, and came about initially to avoid the loaded terms *accent*, *dialect*, and *language*. The problems in identifying language boundaries along a dialect continuum, for instance, are well known. It is, therefore, convenient to use *variety* not just for every dialect making up the continuum, but also for the super-imposed standardised ones. The same holds true for *code*, but works at an even more abstract level: it can be applied not just to varieties of language as we normally understand it, but also to any means of communication, such as, for example, the Morse code (Matthews 2007:62). There is a good overview of these considerations in Wardhaugh (2002:25–56). What is of concern here is the applicability of these terms when modelling variation in SgE.

In a classic diglossic situation, there seems to be general agreement about what each *variety* stands for. Take the Swiss diglossia as a convenient example. Standard German is H, Swiss German is L: two varieties, used by members of the speech community depending on the context (as defined by Ferguson 1959). The situation, however, is not quite as simple as that. L is not a uniform variety at all. Leaving the usual sociolinguistic variations (class, age, sex, etc.) aside, there is immense geographical variation in L: in fact, what is commonly called 'Swiss German' consists of several varieties of High Alemannic, Highest Alemannic, and Low Alemannic (in order of number of speakers), which themselves present internal geographic variation. The High Alemannic varieties of Frauenfeld (Thurgovia) and of Kriens (Lucerne) are identifiably different. This

poses the problem of having a considerable number of varieties, all of which co-exist, collectively, in a diglossic relationship as L with Standard German, H. This may warrant the term *sub-variety*, to highlight their common trait as a Swiss German diglossic variety.

It does not stop there, however. H, too, is not the uniform variety that the theory might wish it to be. There are well-known differences in the standard varieties of Germany and of Switzerland (Standard German and Standard Swiss German, respectively), which are also codified in (pan-)German dictionaries. Many are lexical, partly due to the different political systems of the countries where they are used, others are orthographic (e.g. the absence of ⟨ß⟩ in the Swiss variety), others again are phonological. But even given a complete codification — if that were possible — of these two standard varieties, in *production* many Swiss would still exhibit various types of H. This may be a result of various levels of proficiency, of exposure to spoken H, or of willingness to use the spoken language of a neighbouring country, but more significantly, of L1 interference, an L1 which, as explained in the previous paragraph, is everything but uniform. Given a sample of ten Swiss German speakers from ten geographically distinct varieties, it is likely that the H form produced by each would contain strong elements (pronunciation, particularly) of their respective L.

In this case, the idea of two uniform varieties co-existing harmoniously in a diglossic relationship is little more than a theoretical idealisation. The same can be said of other classic diglossic situations, and the same can be said of SgE. Authors such as Platt (1975) recognised this, stipulating a continuum of sub-varieties, linking a prestige variety (StdE) with the local basilect Singlish. Besides the recognition of more than two varieties, however, this model suffers from a shortcoming similar to the diglossia model: the identification of sub-varieties. Despite grounding his work in DeCamp's (1971) post-creole con-

tinuum, a 'true' continuum without discrete sub-varieties, Platt suggests an identifiable variety in the basilect, where 'bunching' (Platt 1975:366) occurs.

The main problem, common to all these approaches, is the assumption that speakers, in any one utterance, are using a homogeneous code in a given context. Granted, Gupta allows for 'leaks' of one code into the other, but maintains nonetheless that variables 'tend to constellate [...] and most utterances will be identifiable as one or the other variety' (Gupta 1994:8). Clearly, as the data presented here has shown, things are not as straightforward. If we were to analyse the exchange in (1) using Platt's continuum, speakers would be seen to be continuously gliding up and down the SgE continuum, switching from one sub-variety to the other, presumably triggered by situational context and topic. Not only would this presuppose a redefinition of the term *code-switching* to border on style-switching, it would also imply a constant reevaluation of situational context or topic *within* a given utterance, triggering the appropriate switch. Instances of homogeneous sub-varieties are rare in the data, seeming to suggest that this is the wrong explanation. Similarly, an analysis of (1) in a diglossic framework would see speakers constantly mixing H and L, switching several times in a single utterance — an explanation not far from that of the continuum, except that instead of moving up and down a linear continuum, speakers move from one diglossic sub-variety into the other.

There is no denying that certain variables can be seen as being associated with a given code. For example, discourse particles are clearly and almost unambiguously considered to be part of the local vernacular (i.e. Singlish, or L), and DO-support is a good marker of StdE (H). However, it seems reasonable to argue that Singlish and StdE have more similarities than differences: the bulk of English grammar is common to both, with exceptions carefully listed in descriptions of SgE. So it becomes possible to analyse an example such as (2) in a more enlightening way: the features of L and of H, highlighted by

straight underlines and wavy underlines respectively, can be seen as marking
Singlish and StdE, and, therefore, presenting a departure from this common
(grammatical) core. It is not the aim of this approach to stipulate three codes
(e.g. 'neutral', StdE, and Singlish), but much rather to view the features usu-
ally ascribed to StdE or Singlish as being recognised by the speakers, who then
exploit them to create social meaning.

(2) a. But budget airline∅, how much ah ∅ they cost, how much do they
         cost?

     b. Ah, how much would it cos[tʰ] (.) to travel there?

     (i.I.4.m)

In (2a), i.I.4.m requests information from his peers about the cost of budget
airlines' flights to Malaysia. There are features of L in the topic (uninflected
noun phrase) and in the question (discourse particle and missing DO-support).
The question is then immediately reformulated, this time with two (related)
features of H (inversion and DO-support). Such instances of putative self-
correction are frequently encountered in the data, and may have several expla-
nations, one of which being a sudden awareness of being recorded, and thus
switching to a more formal style, by marking it with H features.

Likewise, (2b) shows how speakers are aware of the social meanings of these
(H and L) features. This question is asked several turns after (2a), by the same
speaker. Not only is he using an auxiliary construction, but also a released
final /t/, something that hardly ever happens in spoken SgE (see section 1.3.2,
page 17). Here the /t/ is, furthermore, strongly aspirated, followed by a slight
pause enabling the speaker to finish the question. The desired effect is clearly
achieved when his co-informants respond with laughter.

It would appear, therefore, that rather than switching from one code to
another (or, rather than H 'leaking' into L or vice-versa), features of an appro-

priate code are used at a given point in the utterance in order to index a social meaning. Clearly, the homogeneous use, over a complete utterance, of an L code, for instance, is very rare indeed: it is much more useful to think of the first half of (2a) not as L as such, but as having three L features. Given the near-impossibility of satisfactorily defining a sub-variety 'L' and 'H' of SgE, the idea of *features* of L and H being used for social indexical purposes brings us closer to a viable model for SgE variation.

7.3 Indexicality as a new model

The indexical approach presented in section 6.2 offers the opportunity to formulate a new model for SgE variation that builds on the previous models' shortcomings. First and foremost, it bypasses the inconvenience of having to define sub-varieties of SgE. Secondly, it is firmly entrenched in third-wave approaches to language variation, an angle from which SgE has not, thus far, been truly analysed — with the possible exception of Alsagoff (2007).

The problems with sub-varieties (or 'codes') of SgE, discussed above, revolve around the large degree of grammatical overlap in the two putative varieties 'H' and 'L'. Therefore, a model seeking to explain SgE variation should have, as its central objective, neither the definition of sub-varieties, nor the labelling of strings of utterances as being of such a sub-variety. These enterprises, while justifiable in first-wave approaches, fail to account for the true complexity of the linguistic repertoire of SgE speakers. However, it is important for the model to identify *features* (or variables) of what may be considered, in an attempt to simplify the discussion, codes associated with the local vernacular (Singlish) and the/an international standard (StdE).

Such a model, which combines elements of stylistics and indexicality (Coupland 2007, Eckert 2008, Rampton 2009) with the more traditional, binary

diglossic view of SgE (Gupta 2006b, Alsagoff 2007), may not necessarily result in a graphic model as aesthetically pleasing as the ones proposed by Platt (1975, 1977), Pakir (1991), or Poedjosoedarmo (1995). A simple list of features associated with Singlish and StdE might well be enough as a starting point. Similarly, as far as the social meanings indexed are concerned, the formulation of an indexical field, as per Eckert (2008), while not a prerequisite, would inform the understanding of the stances potentially indexed by means of the aforementioned features. Unlike Alsagoff (2007) and the orientations of her COM, however, I do not feel the need for these indexical stances to come in dyadic form: some of them will do, of course, such as formal–informal, but others need not.

The features, then, consist largely of the variables investigated in this thesis as well as those reported in other descriptions of SgE. Features of Singlish include, but are not restricted to, discourse particles, existential constructions with *got*, non-inflected verb phrases and noun phrases, pro-drop, BE-deletion, and the absence of conjunctions introducing conditional clauses. Features that mark StdE in Singapore include inversion in interrogatives, the use of certain auxiliaries, and the presence of verbal and nominal inflexions. While these features are seen, in this new model, as being indicative of Singlish and StdE respectively, that is, as 'belonging' to their respective codes, they do not, by their mere occurrence in a given utterance, mark that utterance as being 'in Singlish' or 'in StdE'. This is an important point, as it solves the issues encountered in previous models with regards to speakers using separate homogeneous codes and constantly switching from one to the other: this model suggests that features recognised as diagnostic of Singlish and StdE are consciously used by speakers in order to index a particular social meaning.

It is these social meanings that need further clarification. Alsagoff (2007) proposes a list of cultural orientations that are indexed by the use of a local or

an international variety of SgE. This list, given in section 4.6, is reproduced here in Table 7.2 for ease of reference. Alsagoff's model is the first to take an indexical approach to SgE variation, even though she does not explicitly call it thus. The model sees the speakers as orienting themselves towards one of two cultural orientations, globalism and localism, and as expressing this orientation by choosing features associated with ISE (International Singapore English) or LSE (Local Singapore English) respectively. The innovative element of this approach is that a mere *orientation* towards one or the other does not necessarily render the entirety of the speakers' utterance ISE or LSE. Rather, the possibility of combining features from both of these codes enables the speakers to situate themselves *between* the two orientations, along a continuum of cultural orientation which allows for an expression of local identity couched in a discourse on the advantages of globalisation, for instance.

	ISE	**LSE**
	Globalism	*Localism*
(a)	Economic capital	Socio-cultural capital
(b)	Authority	Camaraderie
(c)	Formality	Informality
(d)	Distance	Closeness
(e)	Educational attainment	Community membership

Table 7.2: 'Features of the two orientations in the cultural orientation model' (Alsagoff 2007:39, Table 1).

That the expression of local identity is important to Singaporeans is beyond doubt. As described by Alsagoff (2007) and explained in section 4.6, Singaporeans live in an environment where cultural expression is complex and multipolar. Besides the relatively straightforward cultural policies of the government, which equate ethnicity with cultural affiliation, there is the presence of so-called 'Western' culture(s) as well as the cultures surrounding the island-state, and, last but not least, the Singaporean culture itself. There is still considerable uncertainty as to what this culture actually encompasses, but

there is also an increasing awareness of Singapore's local distinctiveness in a globalised world. The quote below, taken from an online discussion forum, is a contribution from an ostensibly Chinese Singaporean. It is a recognition of the independent status of Singapore (and its 'quirks', or culture), yet at the same time acknowledging its origins outside of the country — using a Tourist Board slogan 'uniquely Singapore' followed by the ubiquitous *lah*. There is an expression of pride in the local varieties of English and Mandarin, often criticised by policy-makers as not matching the exogenous standards still seen, by some, as the ideals towards which Singaporeans should strive.

> SG is NOT Beijing or Shanghai or Fujian or Canton, or UK or USA
> .... we're uniquely Singapore lah!! And as a born and bred Singaporean .... I really think locals should be proud of their unique regional quirks, including Singlish. So what if we can't enuniciate [sic] perfect Queen's English, so be it. Ditto Beijing-perfect Mandarin.
> (SG Chinese 2009:#22)

In a COM approach, this message is entirely in ISE, as it is directed at an international audience (the forum in question being used predominantly by 'Western' expatriates in Singapore). The only LSE element is *lah*, which is clearly used to highlight Singaporean identity. Notwithstanding its stereotypical character, it very effectively indexes a local stance, or, in COM terms, takes a localist orientation towards socio-cultural capital.

Cultural orientation, therefore, should form an important part of the indexical system of SgE. More stances can be listed, however, as mentioned earlier: the ones in Table 6.2 and Figure 6.6 should be taken into consideration as well. It should be noted here that there can be an indexical field for each variable (such as discourse particles in the field in Figure 6.6). The attempt here is to give a non-exhaustive list of stances that can be achieved by using the Singlish or StdE features described above. Figure 7.1 gives an impression of how these stances could be arranged following Eckert's (2008) styling of an indexical field.

Socio-cultural capital   Economic potential

Closeness   **Local**   **Global**

Community membership   Educated

Camaraderie   Important   Serious

Friendly   Distance

Relaxed
Informal   Formal

Uneducated   Authority

Rude   Mocking

Pretentious
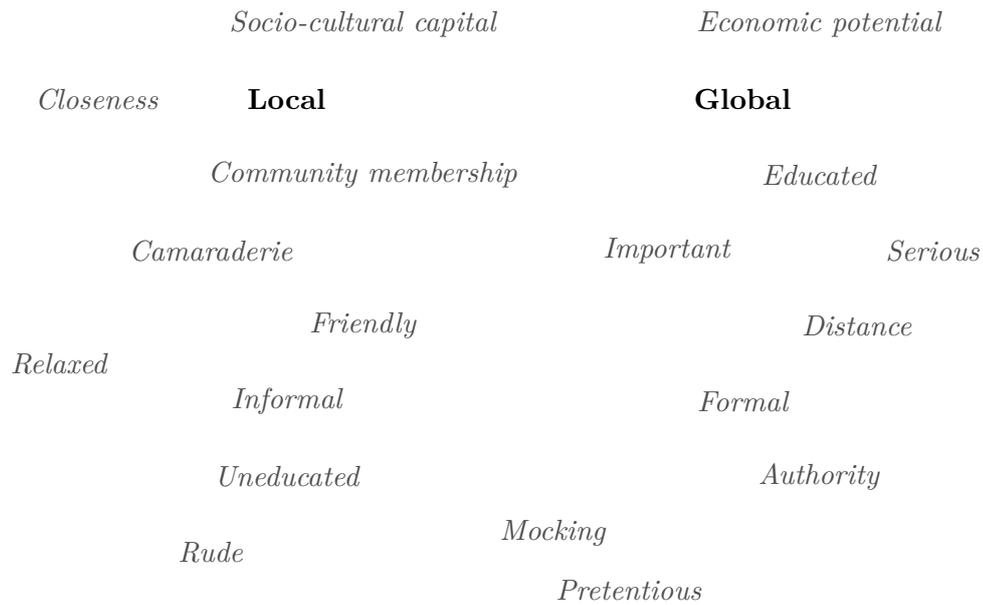
Figure 7.1: Indexical field of SgE. **Black** = cultural orientation, *grey* = stances.

As mentioned above, these stances need not be dyadic, although many are. Figure 7.1 maintains Alsagoff's (2007) COM features (slightly reworded), and situates them around the larger cultural orientations of 'global' and 'local'. In addition, the stances described earlier as found in our data are added to the field, and placed in the approximate neighbourhood of the cultural orientation with which they may be associated. Thus, for instance, an 'important' stance is likely to be indexed with the same linguistic variables as an expression of 'economic potential', and 'camaraderie' is related to 'relaxed' in linguistic production. Besides this horizontal arrangement, there is also a vertical one, which is broadly reflected in the positive and negative associations evoked by the wording of the stances. 'Pretentious' can be indexed with ISE features, but evokes very different connotations from, say, 'educated', indexed with the same features.

The indexing process itself can be usefully illustrated with a diagram such as the one in Figure 7.2. Any act of linguistic identity expression starts with a

decision (1.), on the speaker's part, as to which stance he or she wishes to take and to convey to the addressee(s). The linguistic resources available are then searched (2.) to identify features that index the desired stance. Finally (3.), these features are used in the utterance in order to fully index the stance taken. This utterance and the indexical features it contains are then decoded by the addressee(s), who identify the stance taken. In the example in Figure 7.2, the speaker (i.C.4.m) wishes to express community membership, selects discourse particles as the appropriate feature to index this stance, and consequently uses two in his utterance.
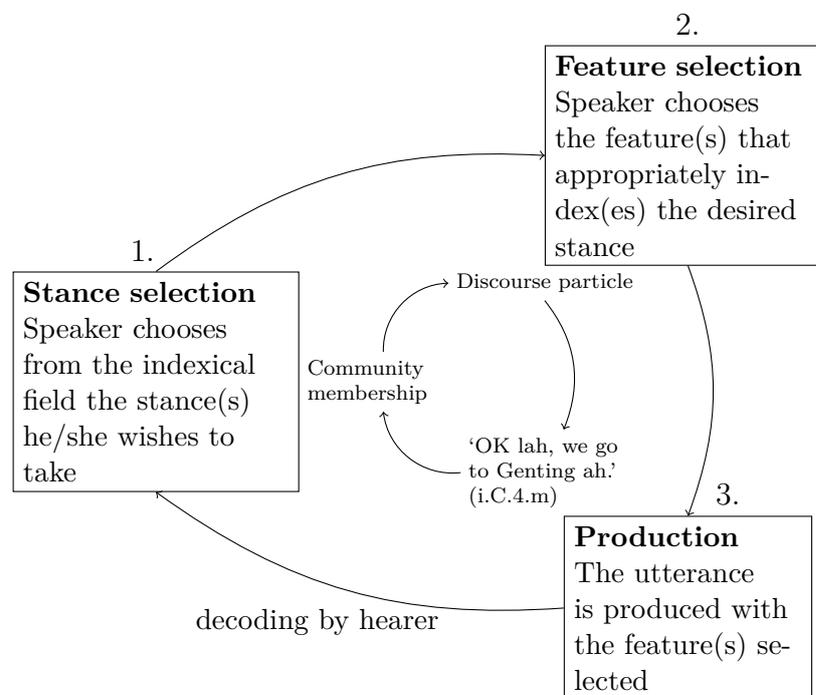
Figure 7.2: Indexing process with an example.

The advantages of such a model are twofold. Firstly, it removes the problems inherent in the identification and definition of sub-varieties of SgE, a concern central to existing models and their major flaw. The indexicality model does not postulate a switch from one homogeneous code or variety to another when a speaker uses a particular variable: it is the *features* of one of two codes that are seen as fulfilling the task of indexing a particular stance —

not of making that particular utterance conform to a given variety. Thus, the example in Figure 7.2 is not Singlish as such, it simply uses Singlish features to index a stance of community membership. Secondly, this model emphasises speaker agency. As opposed to models based on Platt (1975), the use of Singlish features is not, in the indexical model, based on speakers' level of education, socio-economic status, or another measure of English proficiency, but rather on their knowledge of the features' potential to index certain stances. As shown in the examples given throughout chapters 6 and 7, there is a high level of awareness of the social meaning of the linguistic variables used. This awareness was recognised by Gupta (1994), who attributes the diglossic distribution of CSE and StdE to speakers' knowledge of when to appropriately use one or the other. The indexicality model takes this a step further by refuting the idea of codes and code-switching between H and L, and by further underlining the importance of linguistic variables not as diagnostic of a particular variety being used, but as indexing a particular stance.

There are, of course, some limitations to this model. While arguably solving the conundrum of synchronic variation in SgE, indexicality is probably not suited to explain in much detail the changes in progress in the English spoken in Singapore. As pointed out by Trudgill (2004:156–157), linguistic expressions of identity are much more likely to be a *result* of language change (and language contact, in the case of SgE) than its cause. It would be hard to argue that discourse particles, for instance, were deliberately selected by Singaporeans, who then transferred them from the substrate into the emerging Singlish in order to adequately mark a Singaporean identity. It is much more plausible that this feature only became a marker of identity once it was established in Singlish. Similarly, it is important to mention that unlike, for instance, Platt's (1975) model, language proficiency is not a variable in this model. It seems reasonable to assume that the SgE speech community is composed of both

native speakers (see Gupta 1994:13–32 and Bokhorst-Heng et al. 2007 for an exploration of this concept) and non-native speakers. The indexicality model, as applied to SgE, presupposes a respectable command of both Singlish and StdE, or rather, of which code individual features belong to. It makes sense, therefore, to restrict its validity to the younger generation, whose use of English has been cemented by now compulsory education in the English language.[3]

Likewise, the model does not contribute extensively to recent typological work on World Englishes (Kortmann and Schneider 2008, Sharma 2009, Lim and Gisborne 2009). While the post-creole continuum and the diglossia hypotheses grew out of models proposed for other varieties, thereby situating SgE in a wider sociolinguistic typological context, the indexicality model is limited to a highly localised explanation of SgE variation. While the model itself is potentially universally applicable, it requires a level of local adjustments (in the linguistic variables as well as the social stances indexable) that make it unique to — and limited to — the speech community at hand.

Despite these shortcomings, the indexicality model has the unrivalled potential to explain the seemingly random variation observed in SgE, a target that none of the previous models met. The primary reason for this success is to be found in the high level of detail that the model takes into account, as well as its departure from ill-defined concepts such as *code* and *sub-variety*. Its focus is less on the average production of speakers' SgE than on their actual usage of variables associated with Singlish or StdE. The resulting stance-taking is an integral part of the model, serving as the explanation for actual variation.

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[3]English was made the sole medium of education in 1987. Compulsory education (for the six years of primary school) was introduced in 2003, although education was near-universal by the end of the 1990s (MOE 2009).

7.4 Conclusions

This thesis started with a broad overview of the historical and linguistic background of SgE, with a summary of the variationist models presented to date, and the rationale for the fieldwork needed to shed light on the issue. This fieldwork was described in detail in chapter 2. The variables retained for analysis were considered in chapter 3, and the variationist models were analysed in more detail in chapter 4. The data analysis in chapter 5 showed the need for more variables. These were analysed in chapter 6, which also shifted the overall orientation of the thesis towards a more third-wave view. Chapter 7 then considered the results and their effect on the models presented, finally retaining indexicality as the one best suited for SgE.

A summary of the main findings of this thesis would include the apparent split in language use between situational settings, which, however, was not seen as being significant enough to warrant an outright vindication of the diglossia hypothesis. The major finding, therefore, has to be the evidence supporting the departure from a code-based analysis of SgE, which is partially achieved by shifting attention from the utterance level to the feature level. While individual features are still seen as 'belonging' to either Singlish (e.g. discourse particles) or StdE (e.g. inversion), their use alone does not turn the utterance into a code 'Singlish' or 'StdE'. Rather, each feature is seen as potentially indexing a particular stance, with the possibility of several features co-occurring and reinforcing each other, but also with the possibility of features of different codes co-occurring, thereby indexing more than one stance in the same utterance.

This indexicality model, described in detail in sections 6.2 and 7.3, is presented here as an extension to Alsagoff's (2007) COM, which took a first step towards a rejection of the unhelpful concept of *code*. This reanalysis of SgE

variation proposed by Alsagoff notes that from a code-based perspective, utterances that are fully Singlish or fully StdE are not the norm. This highlights one problem faced by other models, since despite Gupta's (1994, 2006b) definition of SgE diglossia as 'leaky', the sub-varieties CSE and StdE are still seen as underpinning variation. Platt's (1975) continuum, on the other hand, allows for intermediate varieties, but still defines a basilect Singlish and an acrolect StdE as homogeneous codes at the extremes of the continuum. Yet more problematic is the failure of the continuum model to define the mesolects linguistically. As mentioned, unlike other post-creole continua, Platt's does not provide an implicational scale of linguistic variables, but bases the mesolects on stylistic choice and as results of educational attainment. Indexicality remedies this by using actual linguistic features, assigning them to Singlish or StdE, and considering their use as indexical of a given social meaning, thereby bypassing the need to unambiguously define a given speaker's code, lect, or sub-variety.

This novel approach to SgE variation, pioneered in a very different context by Eckert (2008), shows an explanatory power unparalleled by previous models. Its highly localised nature, within a near-universal framework, makes it a useful additional tool for the analysis of sociolinguistic variation in speech communities around the globe.

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Appendices

I   Letter to students

University of Oxford
Faculty of English Language and Literature
St Cross Building, Manor Road, Oxford OX1 3UQ, United Kingdom
E-mail: jakob.leimgruber@ell.ox.ac.uk
Telephone: +44 7789764604 (UK), +65 90353618 (S'pore)
Website: http://users.ox.ac.uk/~pemb2415/research.htm

In partnership with the University of Oxford (UK), your school has kindly agreed to take part in a study investigating pupils' English language use. We would like to invite you to be part of this study. We very much hope you would like to take part, but before you decide, it is important you know why the study is being done and what it will involve.

What are we trying to find out?

We are interested in the interaction between Standard English and "Singlish", and whether it is clear that they are indeed two distinct varieties.

What will happen if you take part?

A researcher will come to see you in school on several occasions. Firstly, there will be an individual interview, which will be recorded, and which will last a maximum of 20 minutes. You will also be given a questionnaire, which can be taken home to fill in.

In a second phase, you will first be recorded conducting a dialogue with a partner, who will also have been individually interviewed previously. You will then be joined by two more previously-interviewed students to form a group of four pupils. The interviewer will give you a specific task and record your discussion. These two sessions should not exceed 40 minutes of recording time.

Thirdly and lastly, one student from each group of four will be given a radio-microphone to record the group's speech during a recess period, e.g. lunch-break. This will serve as a control recording to check on the previous group data.

What happens to the results of the study?

Results for each student are kept strictly confidential. You are allocated a code number only and all information and results are kept in a secure location. Your results will not affect your academic performance in any way. We aim to publish our findings in the scientific community, but this may take some time.

Who is conducting this research?

The research project is organised by Jakob R. E. Leimgruber, who is a graduate (doctoral) student under the supervision of Prof. Suzanne Romaine and Prof. Deborah Cameron. He will be the researcher visiting you. This study has received ethics clearance through the University of Oxford's ethical approval process for research involving human participants (ref. SSD/CUREC1/06–031).

What should I do next?

If you would like to take part in this study, please sign the enclosed consent form and give it back to the person who gave it to you. If you would like to discuss the research with someone beforehand, or if you have any questions afterwards, feel free to use the contact details in the letterhead.

II Consent form

University of Oxford
Faculty of English Language and Literature
St Cross Building, Manor Road, Oxford OX1 3UQ, United Kingdom
E-mail: jakob.leimgruber@ell.ox.ac.uk
Telephone: +44 7789764604 (UK), +65 90353618 (S'pore)
Website: http://users.ox.ac.uk/~pemb2415/research.htm

Variation in Singapore English as Reflected in Aspectual Construction

- Your educational institution has agreed to take part in a study run by a doctoral student of Oxford University looking into English language use.

- If you take part, a researcher will come and visit you in school or another appropriate setting, and interview you individually for a maximum of 20 minutes, as well as in groups of two and four for another 20 minutes (max) each time. A subsequent recording of the group of four, using radio-microphones, will conclude the study.

- If you agree to taking part, please fill in the form below and return it to the researcher in charge as soon as possible.

- To find out more about the project, please read the attached information sheet or have a look at our website http://users.ox.ac.uk/~pemb2415/research.htm. You can also e-mail us at jakob.leimgruber@ell.ox.ac.uk, or call Jakob R. E. Leimgruber (doctoral student) on 90353618 if you have any questions.

Name: . . . . .Date of birth: . . . .

Name of school/institution: . . . .

I have read and understood the details of the above study, and have had the opportunity to ask questions and discuss it with others. I understand that participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason and without my education being affected in any way.

I agree to take part in the above study.

Name: . . . .

Signature: . . . . .Date: . . . .

III Questionnaire

University of Oxford

Faculty of English Language and Literature
St Cross Building, Manor Road, Oxford OX1 3UQ, United Kingdom
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Why a questionnaire?

In order to put our results into context, we need some background information about the participants. All information provided will be entirely anonymous, and only related to the equally anonymised recordings.

Questionnaire

Month and year of birth:

Ethnicity (race):

Father's occupation:

Mother's occupation:

Father's medium of education: English/Chinese/Malay/Tamil (circle the appropriate)

Mother's medium of education: English/Chinese/Malay/Tamil (circle the appropriate)

What should I do next?

Once filled in, please return this questionnaire to the researcher. If you would like to discuss the research with someone beforehand, or if you have any questions afterwards, feel free to contact:

<div align="center">

Jakob R. E. Leimgruber
Faculty of English Language and Literature
St Cross Building, Manor Road
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</div>

Junior College			Polytechnic			ITE		
Recording ID	*Time*	*T/group*	*Recording ID*	*Time*	*T/group*	*Recording ID*	*Time*	*T/group*
i.C.1.m	15:24		ii.C.1.f	16:12		iii.C.1.m	09:24	
i.C.2.f	10:08		ii.C.2.m	15:03		iii.C.2.f	13:20	
i.C.3.f	11:59		ii.C.3.f	15:09		iii.C.3.m	14:03	
i.C.4.m	13:39	01:40:24	ii.C.4.m	15:32	02:05:04	iii.C.4.m	12:22	02:25:37
i.C.dia.14	13:48		ii.C.dia.12	15:21		iii.C.dia.12	18:49	
i.C.dia.23	10:43		ii.C.dia.34	14:26		iii.C.dia.34	12:21	
i.C.gr	12:27		ii.C.gr	16:52		iii.C.gr	18:23	
i.C.rm	12:16		ii.C.rm	16:29		iii.C.rm	46:55	
i.M.1.f	12:35		ii.M.1.m	13:33		iii.M.1.f	11:52	
i.M.2.f	11:30		ii.M.2.f	14:54		iii.M.2.f	11:38	
i.M.3.m	13:31		ii.M.3.f	13:33		iii.M.3.m	12:33	
i.M.4.m	13:12	01:40:18	ii.M.4.m	14:26	01:55:51	iii.M.4.m	10:35	01:45:57
i.M.dia.12	10:06		ii.M.dia.14	15:13		iii.M.dia.12	18:57	
i.M.dia.34	16:05		ii.M.dia.23	14:28		iii.M.dia.34	11:32	
i.M.gr	12:35		ii.M.gr	14:21		iii.M.gr	13:07	
i.M.rm	10:44		ii.M.rm	15:23		iii.M.rm	15:43	
i.I.1.f	08:20		ii.I.1.m	14:16		iii.I.1.f	11:45	
i.I.2.f	13:16		ii.I.2.f	15:35		iii.I.2.f	10:48	
i.I.3.m	11:57		ii.I.3.f	14:36		iii.I.3.f	11:25	
i.I.4.m	12:18	01:31:19	ii.I.4.f	13:53	01:44:30	iii.I.4.f	11:46	01:43:12
i.I.dia.12	14:11		ii.I.dia.12	14:17		iii.I.dia.14	12:09	
i.I.dia.34	10:28		ii.I.dia.34	11:21		iii.I.dia.23	13:21	
i.I.gr	10:37		ii.I.gr	10:22		iii.I.gr	16:17	
i.I.rm	10:12		ii.I.rm	10:10		iii.I.rm	15:41	
Total	**04:52:01**		**Total**	**05:45:25**		**Total**	**05:54:46**	

Total time for 72 recordings: 16:32:12

Of which: - 36 individual interviews: 07:46:02

                 - 18 dialogue interviews: 04:07:36

                 - 9 group recordings: 02:05:01

                 - 9 radio-microphone recordings: 02:33:33

Junior College			Polytechnic			ITE		
Recording ID	*Words*	*W/group*	*Recording ID*	*Words*	*W/group*	*Recording ID*	*Words*	*W/group*
i.C.1.m	1,646		ii.C.1.f	1,797		iii.C.1.m	815	
i.C.2.f	519		ii.C.2.m	1,318		iii.C.2.f	1,276	
i.C.3.f	721		ii.C.3.f	1,363		iii.C.3.m	944	
i.C.4.m	1,438	10,594	ii.C.4.m	1,996	16,863	iii.C.4.m	769	11,955
i.C.dia.14	2,142		ii.C.dia.12	2,243		iii.C.dia.12	3,363	
i.C.dia.23	735		ii.C.dia.34	2,459		iii.C.dia.34	1,230	
i.C.gr	1,693		ii.C.gr	2,937		iii.C.gr	1,953	
i.C.rm	1,700		ii.C.rm	2,750		iii.C.rm	1,605	
i.M.1.f	1,250		ii.M.1.m	1,286		iii.M.1.f	929	
i.M.2.f	999		ii.M.2.f	1,587		iii.M.2.f	1,050	
i.M.3.m	1,067		ii.M.3.f	1,532		iii.M.3.m	1,222	
i.M.4.m	1,489	13,107	ii.M.4.m	1,466	15,361	iii.M.4.m	597	8,710
i.M.dia.12	1,516		ii.M.dia.14	2,398		iii.M.dia.12	1,381	
i.M.dia.34	2,970		ii.M.dia.23	2,646		iii.M.dia.34	1,125	
i.M.gr	2,377		ii.M.gr	2,376		iii.M.gr	1,161	
i.M.rm	1,439		ii.M.rm	2,070		iii.M.rm	1,245	
i.I.1.f	796		ii.I.1.m	1,953		iii.I.1.f	935	
i.I.2.f	1,376		ii.I.2.f	1,439		iii.I.2.f	721	
i.I.3.m	909		ii.I.3.f	1,558		iii.I.3.f	816	
i.I.4.m	1,422	12,413	ii.I.4.f	1,039	12,344	iii.I.4.f	1,047	9,075
i.I.dia.12	2,752		ii.I.dia.12	2,491		iii.I.dia.14	1,168	
i.I.dia.34	1,612		ii.I.dia.34	1,361		iii.I.dia.23	968	
i.I.gr	1,791		ii.I.gr	1,326		iii.I.gr	1,921	
i.I.rm	1,755		ii.I.rm	1,177		iii.I.rm	1,499	
Total	**36,114**		**Total**	**44,568**		**Total**	**29,740**	

Total words for 72 recordings: 110,422

Of which: - 36 individual interviews: 43,087

              - 18 dialogue interviews: 34,560

              - 9 group recordings: 17,535

              - 9 radio-microphone recordings: 15,240

V Informants

Identifier	School	Ethnicity	Sex	Date of birth	Father's occupation	Mother's occupation	Interview
i.C.1.m	JC	Chinese	M	01.09.1990	Driver	Manager	01.08.2007
i.C.2.f	JC	Chinese	F	25.06.1990	Computer analyst	Housewife	01.08.2007
i.C.3.f	JC	Chinese	F	08.12.1990	Chemical engineer	Tax officer	01.08.2007
i.C.4.m	JC	Chinese	M	02.03.1990	Teacher	Teacher	01.08.2007
i.M.1.f	JC	Malay[1]	F	23.04.1989	Insurance agent	Administrator	25.07.2007
i.M.2.f	JC	Malay[2]	F	28.06.1990	Unemployed	Librarian	25.07.2007
i.M.3.m	JC	Malay	M	17.05.1990	Dance instructor	Admin officer	25.07.2007
i.M.4.m	JC	Malay[3]	M	21.11.1990	Driver	Housewife	25.07.2007
i.I.1.f	JC	Indian[4]	F	12.05.1990	Engineer	Clerk	25.07.2007
i.I.2.f	JC	Indian[5]	F	23.07.1990	Civil engineer	Accountant	25.07.2007
i.I.3.m	JC	Indian[6]	M	17.03.1990	Unemployed	Clerk	25.07.2007
i.I.4.m	JC	Indian[7]	M	21.11.1990	Lecturer	Clerk	25.07.2007
ii.C.1.f	Poly	Chinese	F	09.12.1988	Taxi driver	Secretary	07.11.2006
ii.C.2.m	Poly	Chinese	M	08.07.1989	Taxi driver	Bus driver (part-time)	07.11.2006
ii.C.3.f	Poly	Chinese	F	20.04.1989	Taxi driver	Draughtsman	07.11.2006
ii.C.4.m	Poly	Chinese	M	20.06.1989	Teacher	Homemaker	07.11.2006
ii.M.1.m	Poly	Malay	M	26.06.1987	Retiree	Housewife	08.11.2006
ii.M.2.f	Poly	Malay	F	14.02.1989	Self-employed	Housewife	08.11.2006
ii.M.3.f	Poly	Malay[8]	F	03.11.1989	Postman	Housewife	08.11.2006
ii.M.4.m	Poly	Malay	M	12.12.1989	Deceased	Clerk	08.11.2006
ii.I.1.m	Poly	Indian[9]	M	11.07.1988	Security guard	University lecturer	10.11.2006
ii.I.2.f	Poly	Indian[10]	F	19.10.1988	Cashier	Salesperson	10.11.2006
ii.I.3.f	Poly	Indian[11]	F	22.09.1988	Engineer	Nurse	10.11.2006
ii.I.4.f	Poly	Indian[12]	F	04.10.1989	Manager	Bank executive	10.11.2006
iii.C.1.m	ITE	Chinese	M	13.12.1988	Restaurant manager	Clerk	20.09.2006
iii.C.2.f	ITE	Chinese	F	16.02.1987	Odd jobs	Housewife	20.09.2006
iii.C.3.m	ITE	Chinese	M	11.03.1987	Electrical officer	Nurse	20.09.2006
iii.C.4.m	ITE	Chinese	M	22.02.1988	Mechanic	Housewife	20.09.2006
iii.M.1.f	ITE	Malay	F	06.12.1988	Equipment operator	Medical devices service specialist	21.09.2006
iii.M.2.f	ITE	Malay	F	10.08.1989	Senior technician	Housewife	21.09.2006
iii.M.3.m	ITE	Malay[13]	M	29.05.1989	Unemployed	Housewife	21.09.2006
iii.M.4.m	ITE	Malay	M	16.08.1988	Shipyard technician	Cleaner	21.09.2006

Identifier	School	Ethnicity	Sex	Date of birth	Father's occupation	Mother's occupation	Interview
iii.I.1.f	ITE	Indian[14]	F	26.11.1987	Delivery driver	Massage therapist	31.10.2006
iii.I.2.f	ITE	Indian[15]	F	03.11.1988	Equipment controler	Housewife	31.10.2006
iii.I.3.f	ITE	Indian[16]	F	15.03.1988	Taxi driver	Housewife	31.10.2006
iii.I.4.f	ITE	Indian[17]	F	29.10.1987	Customer service officer	Accountant	31.10.2006

Total: 36 informants; 12 from each school; 12 from each ethnic group.
20 females, 16 males. Average age: 17.5 years.

[1]Mother Javanese
[2]Mother Chinese
[3]Boyanese
[4]Tamil
[5]Telugu
[6]Tamil
[7]Tamil
[8]Javanese
[9]Panjabi
[10]Tamil
[11]Malayalee
[12]Tamil
[13]Javanese
[14]Tamil
[15]Tamil
[16]Tamil
[17]Tamil

VI Example transcriptions

The following is a reproduction of four `.txt` files, one for each of the four settings involved — reprinting all 72 would have been beyond the scope of this thesis, but they are available from the author upon request.

The following conventions were used in the transcriptions:

<!R>…</R>	interviewer turn
<#>…</#>	informant turn (e.g. <2>…</2>)
(***)	inaudible
(*…*)	tentative transcription
<!ML>…</ML>	metalinguistic element
<!CO>…</CO>	comment
<!SC>…</SC>	code-switch to Mandarin
<!SM>…</SM>	code-switch to Malay
<!ST>…</ST>	code-switch to Tamil
<!RN>…</RN>	research notes
<!P>…</P>	note on pronunciation (in X-SAMPA[18])

In addition, each file contains a header (<!header>…</header>) with information about the file, the speakers, the situational setting, and the school.

---

[18]Extended Speech Assessment Methods Phonetic Alphabet, a plain-text method of indicating pronunciation; it was chosen because of possible interferences of unicode IPA with WordSmith Tools. Furthermore, despite the full range of the IPA being available in X-SAMPA, the goal of this study was not in narrow phonetic transcription, and only a small subset was actually used.

VI.1 Individual interview

```
<!header>
title=i.I.1.f
setting=individual
school=1
race=I
sex=f
</header>
```

<!R>Good, how are you</R>
I'm fine, thank you
<!R>good. Don't be too scared of the microphone. Let's start, erm first of all, this is erm the middle of the term, so the national day is coming up soon, what are your plans for this national day holiday</R>
yes, national day. Actually promotional exams are coming up so I can act- I shall start studying
<!R>yeah, not much time for fun?</R>
I don't think so, coz I'm student counsellor, so we'll be involved in a lot of duties as well
<!R>so what do you do as a student counsellor</R>
ok, as a student counsellor, erm, could be, basically we are organised into different units, I'm in the feedback (***) in the student council, so which means we take responses from students, some feedback, and we try to respond to them. Apart from that we organise events such as national day, teachers' day, open day and all, so we organise events so that means we have to do the budget, planning of the events, the activities and all, so we're kept quite busy.
<!R>I understand. So is that your CCA</R>
it's one of my CCAs. The other one is Indian dance.
<!R>Indian dance, ok, cool. So erm, what I mean what is that like. Not asking you to dance, but you know describe</R>
it's, it's fun, it's my passion, yeah, and one of my hobby as well. I participate in SYF this year, and happen to win gold with honours
<!R>oh great</R>
yeah and after that we had (***) of performance, in, in I think Ngee Ann convention centre, Ngee Ann Poly convention centre, so yeah we were practicing for that. Now, dance has, well I wouldn't say ceased, but it's been not really active. So council more active now.
<!R>ok. So this dance is like a solo thing, or are you in a group</R>
groups
<!R>groups ok, erm right, so that's your hobby you say, do you do it outside of school as well</R>
as in at home, when I'm free, when I feel like dancing yeah
<!R>ok, at at home</R>
yeah
<!R>great great, are you part of any clubs</R>
no, don't have the time to
<!R>ok, I see. So is that a CCA that you've only taken up in JC or have you done it before</R>
in Primary school. Long time back
<!R>ok, so all the way till here</R>

in, not in secondary school though
<!R>what were you involved there</R>
secondary school I was in computer club and chess
<!R>oh so you like board games as well</R>
I like chess in specific
<!R>which chess is it</R>
English, international, yeah. I used to play tournaments
<!R>tour?</R>
tournaments
<!R>oh, ok, so is there no chess club in JC?</R>
well there is but I decided I shall try something different
<!R>fair enough. Ok so in which stream are you</R>
science
<!R>science stream, ok, so what are your, well career,
what's your dream job</R>
I used to think that I wanted to do medicine, but I have
changed since. Yeah, er basically because I think if you
become a doctor, right, can be quite difficult. Difficult
juggling family life and work. So I have decided since,
perhaps I should try something in the business skill, in the
investment banking. It's quite challenging job.
<!R>ok, yes of course, you're I mean you're in your first
year now, right, so next year will be busy, so what are you
planning to do after that?</R>
so, basically, I want to get into overseas universities,
with a scholarship, if possible, yeah, and then er perhaps,
get a masters' in business administration, and then
hopefully come back to Singapore to work
<!R>well they will make you come back if you get the
scholarship, then you have the bond to serve</R>
yeah but still but I want to come back too
<!R>yeah well of course of course, so erm ok, you're you
would like to do the masters aborad as well</R>
yeah think so
<!R>excellent, so is there lots of, well business-related
subjects that you do here</R>
only economics
<!R>you enjoy that</R>
it's fun yeah
<!R>very good. Right, erm good, if during the holiday, if
there are holidays for a longer period of time, erm what do
you normally do</R>
I'm not sure..
<!R>if you're not studying for exams of course</R>
because it's been a long time since I've had a long holiday.
Because most of them coming back to school. So can't quite
recall, but yeah perhaps overseas trip. Usually go India.
Got a lot of relatives there.
<!R>have you been to India before</R>
yeah, my parents are from India
<!R>ok, so whereabouts in India are you</R>
in southern India, Tamil Nadu
<!R>oh, Tamil Nadu, so you're Tamil yourself.</R>
yeah
<!R>ok so do you go there often</R>
often
<!R>very nice. Excellent. Erm, but in your free time here,

like weekends, you don't go to India on the weekends</R>
yeah, weekends
<!R>so what activities, hobbies</R>
I like to read<!P>ri:d</P> books, play chess, and dance
<!R>yeah. so what kind of books do you read</R>
fiction. I don't have a particular author, so I just go to
the library, pick a book, and then they have those synopsis
or something, and read<!P>ri:d</P> and if I like it I take
it. No particular author.
<!R>good. Did you read Harry Potter</R>
yeah. my favourites
<!R>yes, really? So you have been.. have you finished the
last one</R>
yeah, this Sunday
<!R>is it good?</R>
excellent, actually
<!R>is this film out yet</R>
the fifth one, yeah. and I watched it as well
<!R>ok, yeah, you're a fan then</R>
yeah
<!R>did you queue up in front of the library as well</R>
for you mean to buy the book
<!R>yeah</R>
actually I queued up. There was like a hundred, two hundred
people in front of me. And at that point er actually,
there's a this person, another customer who just bought the
book, came to the end of the queue, I was at the end of the
queue, and then he told us there is a shorter queue at the
back. So we sort of rushed there and I got my book within
five minutes.
<!R>well done. Excellent. Good, so Harry Potter, obviously,
erm, reading, and you wanted to become an investment banker.
So how do you see that future, that career</R>
I think- it's challenging, and I think it's not monotonous,
because it's not a nine to five office job or something, it
requires, it's a wider scope. You meet a lot of new people,
interaction and need for soft skills, yeah so I think it's a
unique job
<!R>certainly. So what does an investment banker actually
do, it's not like the normal counter banking</R>
we are supposed to talk to clients, persuade them to invest
money in something, and hopefully it turns out good for
them, so it's a lot of risk involved
<!R>yes, yes, so it's obviously not for normal people who
just want to put their money into the bank</R>
it's rich usually
<!R>yeah for the better, the richer people. Ok, and how come
you're </R>
I just find it challenging, basically you need.. because I
find the normal nine to five job really boring, so that's
why I wanted to try something quite different. I used to
consider medicine, because at least through that you're
helping someone, there's a sense of satisfaction, but I
realise it may not be possible to juggle in future, so, coz
safer, but still a more challenging one so I think this one
seems to attract me
<!R>yes so it seems to be a bit more flexible in terms of

hours and all. Good, that's pretty much it actually. Thank
you very much</R>

VI.2   Dialogue interview

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<1>how do we start</1>
<!R>maybe by asking why he wants to go or stay?</R>
<2>hm, ok, er, ok, why is it better to stay in Singapore
during holidays</2>
<1>you get the TV programmes, you get the computer games,
you get everything you want here, but if you were to go
overseas right, you have to bring all your clothings, your
burden, and you have to take care of whatever necessities so
you</1>
<2>but in Singapore, like what you say you only stay at home
right, you only stay indoors and you never go outdoors</2>
<1>er in Singapore you still can go outdoors right</1>
<2>but Singapore is so small. How many places can you go? I
think Singapore one day you can finish every tourist spots
you can see already. Right?</2>
<1>not true, there's still other things which you can er
there's other place you can go to, maybe you can go hunt for
the night markets, the pasar malam, or er maybe some new
buildings like VivoCity, or maybe you still can go to
Orchard Road, there's always something new for you to see.
Or, ah my favourite, theme park</1>
<2>there's only one theme park in Singapore and it's, if you
go there very often you get sick of the rides. Don't tell me
you are not sick of the rides.</2>
<1>no I seldom go</1>
<2>ok</2>
<1>ok, besides that you can always go to study, revise,
true? Otherwise when you go back to school ah, you don't
know anything (***) like that</1>
<2>revise? But it's holiday, you're not supposed to
revise</2>
<1>well it's personal hobby. Then why is it that you like to
go other countries, and what are the countries which you
prefer to go</1>
<2>ok, that's a very good question. For me, right, maybe
I'll just go to some European countries, because is their
their sceneries are very (***) and they have you have some
very rare sight that you will see there, rather than you can
see in Singapore, because Singapore, you can't see any of
the views which you see in European countries</2>
<1>em ok, you know about the terrorists attacking right. So
er</1>
<2>it's in America</2>
<1>ok, when, aren't you afraid of, ok when you're taking the
airplane, aren't you afraid of anything, hijacks or what</1>
<2>I think the security in the airports ah, surely prevents,
preventing this kind of attacks or this kind of terrorist
so</2>
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<1>but anything might happen right</1>
<2>yeah, anything might happen but I think it's worth the
try that you go to other countries</2>
<1>and die in other countries</1>
<2>is not that- you see that every day there's hundreds of
flights, every day, but how many times will you see a plane
be hijacked. Will you be that one plane that is in these
thousands of flights that you caught that is hijacked</2>
<1>depends on how "lucky" you are</1>
<2>ok, you never get that lucky lah</2>
<1>ok anyway what other, besides sceneries, what others do
you enjoy if you were to go overseas</1>
<2>even the theme parks there are even bigger and better
than Singapore's. you get more exciting rides than you get
in Singapore</2>
<1>like?</1>
<2>like ok roller coasters there are even faster even more
faster and said to be safe lah, so you don't see anything
about falling off the ride or something like that</2>
<1>yeah in Singapore almost happened. Ok, er you said you
prefer European countries right, would you like erm how you
call that, how would you adapt to the environment there, for
instance if it's in winter, and Singapore is like so hot, so
warm</1>
<2>then obviously you will have to bring additional clothes
or winterwear like that lah</2>
<1>ok but will you expect yourself to fall ill or
whatever</1>
<2>fall ill, will be one of the turn-offs of going to other
countries</2>
<1>this is for instance if you fall ill er if you turn
unwell, then you will not be able to look at the sceneries,
if you don't won't be able to look at the sceneries, the
whole trip will be wasted</1>
<2>but I'm willing to take the chance that even if like I
would take the chance that if I don't fall sick I will have
the I will have what's worth of the scenes and what's worth
of my money paid. And even if I fall sick, right if will
even take the chance that I'll go out and view at the
scenery there. Even have to try their theme parks ah,
because if I pay a lot of money and I go there just to miss
it, I might as well don't go there. So I might give it a try
lah... other than shopping and theme parks and staying at
home, what else can you do in Singapore?</2>
<1>again?</1>
<2>other than shopping, staying at home and theme parks,
theme park, what else can you do</2>
<1>actually that will depends on personal interest, for me
right, I'm more into staying at home type. As in, my hobbies
are all there, computer games, the msn, or even animals,
pets, whatever it's all in there, and I'm not really.. going
out</1>
<2>so you are saying you're insociable</2>
<1>I didn't say that</1>
<2>you are trying to imply that</2>
<1>ok, anyway, it's of different interest, different
hobbies, so your hobby is to go outdoor, get to know new

things right</1>
<2>yeah</2>
<1>get to taste (***)</1>
<2>but don't you feel that it's better to get to know more
things, rather than stay in a four-sided room? And facing
the computer all the time</2>
<1>and besides, actually, besides staying at home in a
four-sided, four four-room, I mean four walls around you,
for walls around you ok, actually you can always go for
camps or what. It can be in Singapore right, you can always
apply for OBS <!CO>Outward-Bound School</CO> in Pulau
Ubin</1>
<2>but since you prefer to staying at home, but do you think
you will go for this camps? In Singapore during holidays</2>
<1>I went. Yes, I went and because of the SARS I was being
pulled back</1>
<2>of the what</2>
<1>SARS</1>
<2>ok</2>
<1>see? I want to go for camp, I want to go outdoor only,
SARS come, I cannot I go home</1>
<2>but if you are given a chance now, will you go? With the
SARS over. But there's haze lah</2>
<1>is it? Aren't you worried about the haze issue if you
were to go... for instance, there is, ok, even there
accidents happen in the airport, right</1>
<2>what kind of accident</2>
<1>when was it, I forgot oh that airplane which, something
happen to airplane anyway I forgot</1>
<2>what the airplane crash</2>
<1>not really.. they they what happen, forgot</1>
<2>forgot. Ok</2>
<1>short-term memory, sorry... how to continue</1>
<!R>ok, no more ideas?</R>
<1>can change the topic?</1>
<!R>yes, erm, yeah, we need some more minutes. What topic
are you thinking of?</R>
<1>actually we do have a common interest</1>
<!R>do you?</R>
<1>yes because if we have a different interest right you
wouldn't be able to like continue, because it's still diff-
how to say, he's looking things at different point of view
and I'm more sticking to the homely ground where I prefer to
stay at home and he prefer to go outdoor and start getting
risk yeah so erm it's still for the I'm still concerned
about the safety things while he's more to the adventurous
type so how can we</1>
<2>it's because I feel that whenever you see a few things
yourself you get to learn more, other than when you do
research on internet or what you won't get to learn as much
because you.. what's lacking in the website itself is what
you will see and what you will experience yourself. The
website is just words and words and words. And pictures lah,
there's pictures</2>
<1>even without spending money, you get to know and get to
know slightly a bit of</1>
<2>but if you spend money you get to learn and feel the

experience of what is, how is it to being there how does it look to you and not to the photograph itself</2>
<1>but for instance if you spend a lot of money going overseas spending a lot of days, but for me right, if I were to stay at home and click on the internet I can go to several countries. I can go sort of lah</1>
<2>but what you what you what you done is you only scratch the surface of the country itself, you never go in depth of what this country can offer you like even if you can go shopping from other countries but do you really get to see all the variety of all the items that you can get in the shopping centre of a foreign country</2>
<1>at least you don't have to worry about the gift which you have to give to your relatives or whoever, you don't have to spend the money</1>
<2>but the main purpose of going overseas during holidays is just to spend you money right. Singapore is earning on tourism, is not, because Singapore is a earning on tourism, and a lot of tourists are willing to spend money in Singapore. That's why I think going on a tour itself is to just to spend money</2>
<1>actually when you come to think of it, right, even though if you have went to erm a lot of different tourist attraction in Singapore, right, doesn't mean that you've been went to all. Have you been to the farms?</1>
<2>yeah</2>
<1>not all the farms I'm sure</1>
<2>not all</2>
<1>yeah, so erm actually I used to think I know Singapore very well until my friends started bringing me to Changi Coastal Walk, er Canopy Walk, Tree-top Walks, these are all the places which I haven't been before. And it's all in Singapore, and I haven't even combed Singapore before and why would I want to jump over to other countries before knowing your grounds</1>
<2>because you will er how to say ah, you will spend all your time discover new things about Singapore. You will just, whenever you are in Singapore, right, you will tend to be staid, you will tend to stay at home, and when you are in a foreign country and you know you are spending a lot of money in that tour itself</2>
<1>make full use of it</1>
<2>you tend to make full use of the time, of how much you are using. So if you are in Singapore, I think you will be lazy to go out of your house</2>
<1>lazy could be one point, but if you are really into it, if you are really into sort of like nature, you want to go for example Sungei Buloh lah</1>
<2>but you are not into lah</2>
<1>yeah I didn't say I- I said I study I study things also like that </1>
<2>you only look at few pictures of trees and flowers like</2>
<1>no but in Singapore you also can get to understand more about it. What if you were to go to other countries and they start telling you eh do you know that Sungei Buloh, there's this this this, and you will like "I don't know anything

about that I've never been there" so doesn't it make someone
with no knowledge when you go out of the country</1>
<2>but you can always try to smoke your way through right,
understand?</2>
<1>that's not very nice</1>
<2>ok, is is somewhat part of general knowledge that you see
on news or what that Singapore has this Canopy Walk or
anything like that because is always on the news, whenever
Singapore has a new tourist attraction, right, there will be
a newspeople or what on that tourist attraction itself, so I
think more or less people will have general knowledge of
that Canopy Walk all this, Sungei Buloh thing. So whenever
you go out maybe you can talk to foreigners about this, so
you won't act like a someone who doesn't know anything</2>
<1>I agree that you have to sometimes, at time you need to
go overseas and take a look at the outside world, right, but
I still stick to my point that I would prefer to stay and
understand Singapore first, really totally understand
Singapore inside out outside in or whatever, then you get
out to other countries and maybe you start concentrating on
this particular country. And get to know, maybe you will
want to do some grad research first, then you go to that
country, then you will know that er what kind of what kind
of what do they mean by the description</1>
<2>yes research must be done first before you go and visit a
country but if you take ten years of twenty years to
research on Singapore itself and do this thorough research
and what, know the country inside out and outside in or what
maybe after that you will not have the time or you don't
have the time because you are working now, ten or twenty
years, in that time, in ten or twenty years' time. Because
if you start now, maybe you need ten years to completely
know Singapore, by the age of twenty-seven, do you think you
have the time to go to foreign countries that often? Because
you are having a career now, or maybe a family</2>
<1>ok er I don't think you need ten years to know
Singapore.</1>
<2>so but you still need a time right, and by the time,
maybe by the time you finish you might not have the time to
go</2>

VI.3   Group recording

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race=C
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<!R>budget of three hundred dollar per person and you know
go somewhere where you've never been before, plan
activities, you know, do that. I'll be back in fifteen
minutes</R>
<4>ok I think we can start</4>
<1>ok so we have a budget of three hundred dollars per
person</1>
<4>mm</4>
<1>we need to find somewhere that we haven't been to before.
Let's think</1>
<2>i don't think we can go overseas</2>
<4>three hundred</4>
<2>not enough cash</2>
<4>budget ah</4>
<2>budget airlines, ok</2>
<4>budget airlines</4>
<2>is it safe</2>
<1>i heard that what, Tiger Air is offering three cents
fares to Phuket</1>
<3> one dollar also have</3>
<1>three cents leh how to pay</1>
<2> it's even cheaper than taking a taxi in Singapore</2>
<4>but where.. er..</4>
<1> we cannot take er we cannot, we cannot go to places very
far, so I think we should restrict ourselves to Asia</1>
<4>ok</4>
<1>ah, because if we go somewhere like erm.. Japan, Japan is
still in Asia</1>
<4>UK, US</4>
<1>you go, ah, you go to more far away places, I think three
hundred is not enough</1>
<!ML>bell ringing</ML>
<1>yeah and three hundred must include accommodation and
food also lor</1>
<4><!ML>whispers</ML>you said lor</4>
<!ML>laugh and tutting</ML>
<4>i think we should invest the money, and turn into more
money</4>
<1>oh?</1>
<3>yeah can, er no, I don't</3>
<2> I suppose not, ok so invest our money, then plan a bit
our holiday</2>
<4>how much, how much can we get from one thousand two
hundred</4>
<1>well we cannot put the one thousand two hundred. It's
(***)</1>
<4>ok ok forget it. Let's talk about the holiday. Malaysia,
Malacca, Kuala Lumpur, Phuket, Batam</4>
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<1> we need to go, he said we need to go somewhere where we haven't been to before</1>
<4>oh really oh ok</4>
<1>so then a new experience come</1>
<4>i've never been to Desaru, Phuket, Batam. Have you been there</4>
<3> I've been to Thailand</3>
<1>i've been to Batam. Phuket I've, I, I went before</1>
<4>so..</4>
<1><!ML>emphsising</ML>what about you</1>
<!ML>muffled giggles</ML>
<2>hardly step out of Singapore</2>
<4>so how about Genting. Never been there before, I've never been there in my life</4>
<1>no, never been there before </1>
<2> but usually it's only gambling and what</2>
<4>i thought they have amusement park right</4>
<1>yeah they have amusement park. Most of the people go there just to visit the casino</1>
<4>ok lah, we go to Genting ah. Yes? Let's plan (***)</4>
<1>ok so, we'll take a coach there</1>
<4> I would think that the coach</4>
<1>i don't think can, we can fly directly</1>
<4> yeah it will be up to about eighty dollars coach fare, return</4>
<1>return</1>
<4>yeah</4>
<1>return is about eight, so that leaves us with two two oh</1>
<4>two hundred and twenty</4>
<1>two twenty</1>
<4>we'll be buskers ah I think we just, we just get money, how is like (***) cycle there</4>
<1>two hundred.. cycle there? Good idea</1>
<4>but we don't have a limit right, we can like take three months off college and we can like cycle there, yeah ok</4>
<1>yeah and we can do some odd jobs along the way to earn more cash. These three weeks will be spending money also</1>
<2>did he say it has to be like a perfect holiday</2>
<4>not really I don't think so</4>
<1>not, not in that sense lah</1>
<4>i think as long as it's a new experience it should be ok</4>
<1>so go, so we will go to Genting and look at the crowds</1>
<4>look at the crowds? Visit the amusement park, I think the amusement park there are very good</4>
<1>but what about accommodation, coz I think the hotels</1>
<4>i think yeah </4>
<1>i think we can all squeeze into one room ah</1>
<4> I think about the youth hotels</4>
<3> just set up a tent</3>
<4>a tent</4>
<1>we tent</1>
<!ML>laugh</ML>
<3>go there and camp</3>
<4>it's quite sad actually, we take a coach, and then after

that</4>
<1>you live in a tent</1>
<4>yeah</4>
<2>those backpackers</2>
<4>ah, YMCA</4>
<1>do they have</1>
<4>i don't think they have those in Genting, coz people will
go there to gamble </4>
<1>and stay in those hotel</1>
<4>any other ideas. Can we like go to somewhere, like Ipoh,
I've never been to Ipoh before. Shall we like go and stay in
the countryside or something. Then can feed the chickens all
day long (***)</4>
<1>ah, and this will be a, a, an escape out of our urban
lifestyle</1>
<4> so let's say</4>
<1>good idea</1>
<4>erm, ideas, because we need to cater for food. So we have
to bring our own food there, if we go to the countryside</4>
<1>i don't think so, some..</1>
<2>just kill a chicken</2>
<1>some dry rations ah, like biscuits and</1>
<4>it's quite sad a holiday</4>
<1>to eat along the way, yeah. it might be perfect for the
mind, but not perfect for the body. If you want to go to the
countryside it's just to relax and just off your handphone
and just lie around there and look at the sky</1>
<4>yeah lah.. how long do you think our holiday should be.
Three days, four days</4>
<1>i think- do we have enough to to cater for one week</1>
<4>seven days, three hundred, two hundred, two hundred
divided by seven, about (***)</4>
<1>can we take a flight to to Ipoh ah</1>
<4> I don't think so. Coz Ipoh, it will be better to take a
coach</4>
<1>a coach. So it end up around eighty</1>
<4>i think we think of the things we want to do first, if
not it's meaningless to get ourselves there and there's
nothing to do</4>
<2>you say amusement parks right</2>
<4> but they don't have amusement parks in Ipoh, unless you
are still considering Genting</4>
<2>Ipoh</2>
<1>Ipoh</1>
<2>i say Ipoh</2>
<1>we can eat ho fun</1>
<3>yeah that's what I thought</3>
<1>we can eat ho fun there, I heard that the ho fun quite
famous. Er ho fun means rice noodles</1>
<!ML>laughs</ML>
<1>in gravy</1>
<4>ok what else can we do there, I think ice-cream or
something. What else do people do</4>
<1>Ipoh is near the, along the coastal area</1>
<4>really</4>
<1>it is</1>
<4>i have no idea</4>

<2>(***)</2>
<1>yeah lor. I don't know whether they have swimming pools in Ipoh</1>
<!ML>screeching chair</ML>
<1>oops, sorry, ah, so</1>
<4>so what to do</4>
<1>we can, we can just go to a more rural part of Ipoh and, and feed the chickens</1>
<4>feed the chickens. Sure you can do</4>
<1>i don't think so. Bird flu ah. Yeah, but (***) to return to Singapore</1>
<4>do you think there's shopping centres in Ipoh</4>
<1>i think shopping centres to some extent yes ah, but not, not as, erm, what do you call that, not as posh as Singapore's one ah</1>
<4>so they have lots of black markets ah</4>
<1>black market</1>
<4>yeah, sell you know, stuff, pirated stuff</4>
<1>i have no idea, but I think there are lah, I think</1>
<2>did he say it has to be overseas</2>
<4>i'm not sure, I have no idea. Can go to Sentosa</4>
<1>go to a foodcourt</1>
<4>yeah but I don't think it will be </4>
<1>or can go Check Java <!CO>nature reserve on Pulau Ubin</CO></1>
<4> no that place is a mess. Pulau Ubin, that place is a mess</4>
<1>is it?</1>
<4>yeah</4>
<1>you've been there before</1>
<4>yeah, I've been there, I go there every year</4>
<1> is it? Check Java</1>
<4>yeah</4>
<2>also we have to go somewhere we've never been before</2>
<4>yeah</4>
<!ML>laugh</ML>
<4>Phuket, go snorkelling, never been there before</4>
<1>Phuket</1>
<4>we need to think about what we want to do. Do we want to..</4>
<1>i think it's just to do erm things that we are not able to do in Singapore.</1>
<4>why not do some community service. Right, let's engage someone in Ipoh, maybe a farmer or something, then we can like er homestay, then at the same time help him (***) rubber plantation or something you know. Or maybe we can teach his kids if he's, or maybe like bring his kids to school or something</4>
<1> I heard from a, I heard from a friends that there's one Tiger Airway return ticket to Cambodia for one ninety-nine, so you just (***)</1>
<4>one dollar ninety-nine cents or one dollar ninety-nine</4>
<1>oh yeah, one dollar ninety-nine cents, not one nine nine dollars. No, so with that one dollar ninety-nine cents we can go there and we can, coz Cambodia is a relatively er rural country, so there are many underprivileged people for

us to help. So we can have a homestay there so in that, we will save accommodation cost, and we can also help to do community work, like building a library or just building a jetty or, or, we just help them improve their lives. And foodwise, I think we only</1>
<4>can live of coconuts</4>
<1>we only need to, to er get some dry rations, yeah lah, and some of the money, a few dollars, we can use it to buy gifts for the children there</1>
<4>in fact I think we don't need to spend the three hundred dollars, we can write a proposal to the school, we may use our Edusave account or something, or maybe get the school to sponsor us, you know. I think that will be a better idea, then we can save the three hundred dollar things, like maybe preparing our, our, our equipment or whatever things we need to go over there to work you know. Or maybe even like spend one or two days over there er what do you have in Cambodia</4>
<1>huts, and villages ah but that's for the part of Cambodia that I come, that I came across on the internet</1>
<4>i'm sure we can go into the city to find something nice to do, for one day or two</4>
<1>yeah, just to, just to er</1>
<4>relax</4>
<1>relax fun, go city relax</1>
<4>yeah that's quite true</4>
<1>yeah so we also have to do for sponsors, to help sponsor the erm the bricks and the cement. Because I think three hundred is not enough to cater for the er bricks the cement and what we need to build</1>
<4>whatever not</4>
<1>whatever not</1>
<4>interesting. Erm, so we go to Cambodia, by erm one dollar, two dollar flight per person</4>
<1>two dollars</1>
<4>then we spend about one week in the village</4>
<!ML>R comes back</ML>
<1>yes!</1>
<!R>where are you going</R>
<4>we're going to Cambodia</4>
<!R>Cambodia?</R>
<1>after going through a list of ten places</1>
<!R>ten places</R>
<4>more like three</4>
<!R>that sounds exciting</R>

VI.4 Radio-microphone recording

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<!header>
title=iii.M.rm
setting=radio-microphone
school=3
race=M
RN=Some interference from mobile phones
</header>
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<3>so basically I'm late. I'm late because a friend I'm supposed to meet at 2.30 and now is already three and it's gonna be a (***) late. Just because I'm here. Ok, never mind, I sacrifice my time so...</3>
(***)
<4>why are you late</4>
<3>why am I late</3>
<4>yeah</4>
<1>good question</1>
<3>I'm late because I am</3>
<2>stuck in this interview</2>
<3>I am stuck in this. It's a good thing though. It's a good thing. But I didn't expect it to be ending this late. Yeah, because all my friends said it's gonna end like twelve plus, so I'm particularly surprised lah, so-called surprised. And I don't know what time I would be reaching at Sentosa and I hope they wouldn't get angry at me. Hope so... coz I've been late all this while. But actually I'm not the one who's always late lah, there's some other people who <!ML>phone ringing</ML> I just receive a phone call <!ML>talks to his friend on the mobile, some interference. Meanwhile, 2 and 4 are chatting</ML></3>
<2>so what about is your course</2>
<4>erm my course is a lot about er maintenance, about the building, such as fire extinguisher, er</4>
<2>fire extinguisher?</2>
<4>yeap. Like if the fire extinguisher is empty we have to change the fire extinguisher</4>
<1>(***) I see</1>
<4>so what course are you taking </4>
<2>biochem</2>
<4>ok. First year?</4>
<2>yeah.</2>
<3><!ML>having finished his call</ML> for your info, I just kena scolded</3>
<1>why</1>
<3>my friends. Because I'm late.<!SM>(***)</SM></3>
<2>hey, should I or should I not buy... </2>
<3>should you or shouldn't you?</3>
<2>should I or should I not buy a watch for my dad's birthday tomorrow</2>
<3>why not you should not buy a watch. Why mustn't you buy a watch?</3>
<2>donno can buy watch or not</2>
<1>it's your dad's birthday</1>
<3>it's your dad's birthday, besides watch what other things you can buy. What kind of watch what is your budget?</3>

<2>shut up</2>
<!ML>laugh</ML>
<!SM>(***)</SM>
<2>oh my god</2>
<3>it's always been like that you know</3>
<4>what I can see</4>
<3>I'm told I can shut up</3>
<2>people give you what you say already</2>
<3>yeah so aiyah. It's the holidays, holy days</3>
<1>(***) when's your holiday next week? Next week</1>
<4>no. schooling. <!SM> (***) sekolah = school</SM></4>
<2>why are you so quiet? Come on tell us more about
yourself, something like that. Any CCA, yeah</2>
<4>er, no CCA coz usually finish late</4>
<3>oh</3>
<2>sorry</2>
<4>usually finish late</4>
<2>oh. What CCA are you in</2>
<4>no CCA</4>
<3>because he usually</3>
<1>finish late</1>
<2>ok, all right. What time do you start school and finish
school?</2>
<4>start about 8 usually ten to, finish around five or six
or four.</4>
<2>your course is NITEC</2>
<4>NITEC</4>
<3>oh</3>
<2>do you intend to.. like... (***)</2>
<4>depend how my result are good, good maybe go poly</4>
<2>come on</2>
<3>be optimistic for that</3>
<1>where there's a will there's a way</1>
<3>there's a will there's a way</3>
<3><!SM>(***)</SM> yeah, so...</3>
<2>yeah <!ML>laugh</ML></2>
<3>sorry <!ML>another call</ML></3>
<4>so are you three from the same course</4>
<2>same class</2>
<1>are you, yeah.</1>
<3>yeah, same course, same class</3>
<4>oh ok</4>
<3>same group of guys (***)</3>
<1>what's the meaning of (*pretty*) shrub?</1>
<3>bush... short bush</3>
<1>and it starts with an H? it means like (***)</1>
<3>(***)</3>
<1>serious? Oh, (*pretty*) shrub. Which school are you
from</1>
<4>Teck Whye Sec</4>
<1>Teck Whye</1>
<3><!SM>(***)</SM> oh...</3>
<2>Teck Whye</2>
<1>how old are you</1>
<4>eighteen</4>
<3>wow</3>
<2>eighteen going to be nineteen or..</2>

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<4>(***) eighteen</4>
<2>oh</2>
<3>oh <!SM>(***)</SM></3>
<4>and..</4>
<3>Teck Whye <!SM>(***)</SM></3>
<4><!SM>(***)</SM> that was</4>
<2>varies from (***) Malay dance (***)</2>
<3>then in school got CCA</3>
<4>NCC</4>
<3>NCC what rank</3>
<4>first sergeant</4>
<3>wow</3>
<4>land</4>
<2>after that you went to (***)</2>
<4>nope. No time.</4>
<3>no time</3>
<4>holiday usually go to work.</4>
<3>oh you're working</3>
<4>no, only holiday</4>
<3>oh</3>
<2>so next week back to work</2>
<3>(***) working next week</3>
<4>looking for work looking</4>
<3>looking ah, oh. What was the work you have</3>
<4>cleaner at Raffles Hotel</4>
<2>good</2>
<3>cleaner in the room to room or the (***)</3>
<4>er not room to room ah, only the cleaning at the
kitchen</4>
<3>oh, ok what (***) hotel (***)</3>
<2>wow... I can't find a word (***)</2>
<3>it's not part of the conversation</3>
<!ML>laughs</ML>
<2>have you seen us in school before? I doubt so</2>
<3>have you seen me in school before? From far... I'm a
bit</3>
<4>not</4>
<3>obvious you know</3>
<1>humongous</1>
<3>(***)</3>
<1>eh but many teacher already said you lost weight</1>
<2>yeah but he looks you know... (***)</2>
<3>I don't loose weight at all I can't afford to loose more
weight</3>
<2>ok. He don't want to loose maybe because (***)</2>
<3>do you go for NS medical check up</3>
<4>yeah</4>
<2>how is it</2>
<4>test B</4>
<3>mine is this coming 6 October</3>
<4>oh ok</4>
<3>and I won't pass <!ML>laugh</ML></3>
<1>why?</1>
<4>blood check-up</4>
<3>what</3>
<4>blood check-up</4>
<2>you think (***)</2>
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<3>(***) blood, and I  know but.. teeth check ah.. check
teeth</3>
<4>theeth check? No</4>
<3>(***) stuff </3>
<4>yeah yeah teeth check lah, I think so, I got</4>
<3>(***) and...</3>
<4>hearing check</4>
<3>hearing check? Wow, sight check, all check ah</3>
<4>ah, (***)</4>
<3>alamak, but check you know </3>
<2>the body (***)</2>
<4>that one got!</4>
<3>Got?</3>
<4>Have!</4>
<3>phew oh? Uh-oh</3>
<2>behave</2>
<3>ok</3>
<2>right</2>
<3>the one who's taking is a female or a male</3>
<4>male of course</4>
<3>oh you test B</3>
<4>coz of one problem. Nose bleeding</4>
<3>(***) so are you excuse from NS?</3>
<4>nope</4>
<2>I don't think so right</2>
<4>only if you have heart problems</4>
<2>yeah. Starting get more...</2>
<4>serious</4>
<3>for me</3>
<3>(***) I'm a science student... yeah but erm it's I mean
like what do they do for that medical check-up it's like...
they ask me to recall (***)</3>
<4>mm, yeah. Starting you have to take a photo of yourself.
Wearing a army shirt</4>
<2>serious?</2>
<3>army shirt?</3>
<2>that's (***)</2>
<4>yeah photo, then...</4>
<3>(***) <!ML>mobile phone interferences</ML></3>
<4>yeah, for your (***) card</4>
<3>you ever?</3>
<4>no. not ready yet</4>
<2>he's not in yet, for god's sake</2>
<3>I'm just (***)</3>
<2>well, I'm glad</2>
<3>and I'm dead. And they like ask to do some exercises, or
something</3>
<4>no exercises</4>
<3>good </3>
<4>urine check got ah</4>
<3>urine check ah?</3>
<4>using the..</4>
<3>(***) clear my bowels</3>
<4>there's one guy over there I remember... an Indian guy
who cannot urine over there</4>
<3>what</3>
<2>sorry</2>
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<4>can't urine over there</4>
<3>can't urine over there</3>
<4>yeah, suppose to take the urine test, but he can't urine</4>
<1>oh dear for the whole day?</1>
<3>ok, well. So basically it's like just no physical test ah</3>
<4>no</4>
<2>that is when you get in or..</2>
<4>that is when you for er <!ML>3's phone ringing again</ML></4>
<!ML>3 on phone with friend, Malay</ML>
<2>(***) you are very quiet. Really.</2>
<4>really?</4>
<2>seriously</2>
<4>seriously?</4>
<2>so... you look like the (***) shy kind of guy I'm so sorry</2>
<4>is ok. So you know any second year any biochemical guys</4>
<1>I don't think so. Your friends are in there</1>
<4>yeah.</4>
<2>who? Maybe we know</2>
<4>Sidi</4>
<2>Sidi</2>
<1>Sidi is the one... short hair or glued up?</1>
<4>short hair. Mohawk</4>
<2>is he short?</2>
<4>tall. 1.81</4>
<2>I don't know any</2>
<3>what kind of music do you like</3>
<4>mm, Malay heavy metal</4>
<2>wow</2>
<1>wow</1>
<3>you listen to Amok? or just. Amok have a special album, wow, alamak. Cannot carry</3>
<2>too heavy, ah</2>
<3>(***) cannot carry</3>
<!ML>laugh</ML>
<3>but yeah, latest song you've downloaded or bought? I assume is downloaded lah.</3>
<4>quite true quite true</4>
<3>yeah, downloading is cool. I support piracy</3>
<2>wow, whey (***)</2>
<3><!SM>(***)</SM></3>
<!SM>(***)</SM>
<1>why do we need to end something with yeah? Rather than er..</1>
<2>typical Malay yeah</2>
<3>quite true ah... that's the problem with us you know? Yeah. <!ML>interferences</ML></3>
<2>what to do</2>
<4>yes.</4>
<2>ok, so it's good that we three (***)</2>
<3>yeah, it's kind of (***) you know</3>
<!ML>R returns</ML>
<2>Hi. How are you doing?</2>

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<!R>fine, and you? Enjoying yourselves?</R>
(***)
<!R>trying to, eh. Ok well, thank you, the ordeal is over
for you</R>
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