

Variation in Singapore English as reflected in aspectual constructions

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Singapore English, an outer-circle English (Kachru 1985) with endogenous contact ecology (Bao 2005), has been subjected to considerable amounts of research. Nonetheless, its typological status is still a matter of dispute. Called a 'creoloid' by Platt in 1975, a number of models have been posited to explain its nature. Central to the debate is the analysis of the variety as a continuum (Platt 1975; Ho & Platt 1993), reminiscent of post-creole ones (DeCamp 1971), as opposed to the idea of a diglossic speech community (Gupta 1998; 2001). In this latter analysis, Standard Singapore English is H(igh), and Colloquial Singapore English, often called 'Singlish', is L(ow).

In order to shed light on the issue, a sample of 36 students from three distinct socioeconomic backgrounds is being interviewed. Four different situational settings, ranging from highly formal face-to-face interviews to unmonitored radio-microphone recordings, will provide evidence for either one or the other approach: if situational settings have a significant influence on language use, the diglossic view will be the one to favour, if however a more fluid transition is observed, the continuum hypothesis will be given more credence.

My poster focuses on the methodological framework of the above study, with special reference to some problems encountered during the data collection. For instance, the original intention of using solely aspect markers (building on the findings of Bao (1995), and within his 2005 systemic substratist framework) had to be revised to include other variables such as existential *got*. The use of discourse particles, identified by Gupta (1994) as diagnostic of the diglossic L sub-variety, also proves helpful.

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