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Grammatical change and diversity in Singapore English

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Abstract

Current research efforts in Singapore English are concentrated on determining how far contact language theory can be applied to Singapore English as a newly nativized variety (e.g. Bao, 2015), and on exploring the limits of contemporary theories of contact grammaticalization (Kuteva et al., 2018), diachronic factors (Siemund & Li, 2017), and construction-based explanations (Ziegeler, 2015). At this point, then, it would seem that there is no definitive, theoretical means of describing the structure of the colloquial sub-variety of Singapore English. The features most frequently discussed have been observed to reflect closely the syntax of the numerous southern Chinese dialects which make up the substrate, e.g. topicalization, omission of the copula, omission of plural suffixes and indefinite articles with non-referential nouns, the presence of an aspectual system rather than a tense system, and differences in the co-occurrence of certain features with negation, including *either* as a clause-final additive marker. The present chapter summarizes the interacting forces of both the substrate languages and the lexifier, English, and examines *either* more closely, as an example of ‘colonial lag’ in which the infrequency of the lexifier item at the time of contact gave rise to a greater need to resort to substrate models to grammaticalize the same functions.

Keywords: colonial ‘lag’, contact grammaticalization, Singlish grammar, substrate transfer

1 Introduction

The study of the structure of Singapore English in the latter half of the 20th century was frequently influenced by current sociolinguistic theoretical trends, and we can see that in early studies such as Ho & Platt (1993) or Gupta (1994), the former referring principally to the ‘Bioprogram’ hypothesis of Bickerton (1981), and the latter study being the first to describe Singapore English in terms of the diglossic situations of Ferguson (1959). Earlier than that, initial accounts of the structure of Singapore English tended to appear as error-based accounts, e.g. Tongue (1979), with little attempt to integrate their data into any kind of explanatory or even quantitative framework, though Platt (1975) had discussed the existence of a ‘creoloid’ with regard to Singapore English, which could be seen in terms of a style-shifting continuum. Later studies took up the challenge presented by the rich and diverse multilingual situation that Singapore presents, and began to examine the structure of Singapore English from the point of view of sub-varieties, e.g., Platt (1975) and Ho & Platt (1993), with Gupta (1991, 1994), Alsagoff

& Ho (1998), and Alsagoff (2010) distinguishing two principal sub-varieties, Singapore Colloquial English (SCE – Singlish) and Singapore Standard English (SSE), or a ‘local’ variety and a ‘global’ variety, while others, e.g. Leimgruber (2009, 2012) tended to reject the sub-varieties approach in favour of an ‘indexical’ approach instead.

The introduction of a diglossic account as in Gupta (1991) may appear to issue something of a disclaimer from an educator’s point of view, as the colloquial sub-variety was stigmatized from the beginning as non-standard. Gupta proposed that Singapore Colloquial English first emerged from the 1930s in the multilingual playgrounds of the English-medium schools where children from diverse language backgrounds used it as a common lingua franca. The language of the playground, then, could be seen as distinct from the language of the classrooms. However, Bao (2001, 2015) shows that the history of Singlish in Singapore could have begun much earlier as a trade pidgin in the days of British colonial settlement, perhaps existing alongside other lingua francas of the day, such as Bazaar Malay, and archived sound recordings now available of speakers born in the early 20th century reveal that Singlish was spoken as early as the late 1800s (Li & Siemund, 2018). Gupta’s preoccupation was the emergence of Singapore English as a ‘new’ variety of English in the sense of Platt, Weber & Ho (1984), for whom the definition of ‘new’ requires that the language emerged principally through the education system. For the early, English-educated generations, this may be so.

However, Bao’s allusions to a pidgin origin (2015, p. 55) for Singlish seem justified, given the structural composition of the dialect and its early use in trade situations. Ansaldo refers to Singlish as ‘an Asian variety of English with a Sinitic-type grammar’ (Ansaldo, 2009, p. 52), and Bao (2001, 2005, 2010, 2015) describes many of the features as transferred wholesale from the dominant Mandarin Chinese substrate, in a ‘Total Systemic Transfer’. According to Mufwene (1990), Mandarin Chinese has all the features of a perfect creole, though it is not one. Thus, it is not always possible to discern from the structure of Singapore Colloquial English whether they are related to a universal, pidgin-creole origin, or are simply the result of substrate transfer from the Chinese languages, which, according to Chao (1968) share basic structural similarities.

The present chapter will not pursue the much-debated argument of the role of the substrate versus universalist influence any further, and proposes instead to review the role of English itself, the ‘lexifier’ in shaping the grammar of Singapore English. For this reason, theories of contact grammaticalization (Heine & Kuteva, 2005) are also relevant. Furthermore, studies of Singapore English often focus on distinguishing features that are not found in the grammars of other dialects. One feature which is *not* frequently found in Singapore English grammar but *is* found in other dialects (as noted in Ziegeler, 2017a) is the clause-final additive marker, *either*. This will be re-examined in the present chapter, while considering the state of the lexifier grammar at the time of contact.

In the first section, some of the distinctive features of Singlish mentioned in recent accounts will be presented; in the second, the role of contact grammaticalization will be discussed, as presented in Heine & Kuteva (2003, 2005). In the third section the notions of ‘colonial lag’ and ‘retentionism’ are reviewed, and in section 4, clause-final *either* in Singapore English is discussed. Section 5 concludes the chapter, with the suggestion that the less frequent use of final *either* may be attributable, at least partly, to the fact that it was not a frequent item in the 19th century English that was first transported to Singapore. The present chapter thus offers an alternative viewpoint to the position that the substrate dominates the language of contact, and that the state of the English lexifier language at the time of contact may have also played a significant role in many cases, thus determining what is retained in the grammar at later stages.

2 Distinctive features of Singapore English grammar

The main features of Singapore Colloquial English which can be seen as distinctive, and therefore characteristic of the dialect as a whole, have been described in a proliferation of studies over the past twenty years or so. Many of the most familiar are summarized in studies such as Alsagoff & Ho (1998), from which some of the following items are taken, with others recorded from past personal observations. Alsagoff & Ho’s study was intended to demonstrate that Singapore Colloquial English had a grammatical system of its own, with its own ‘rules’, and should not be observed from the benchmark of the standard grammar alone. Twenty years later, Singapore Colloquial English may be recognized internationally as a unique dialect, with its own labels of cultural identity.

Amongst the syntactic features they discussed were, for example, the presence of topicalized sentence structures rather than subject-predicate structures:

- (1) Singapore – everything must pay
‘In Singapore, you must pay for everything.’

Example (1), uttered by a taxi driver (in 2006), illustrates the way in which almost any constituent can be fronted to act as topic (Bao, 2001) – in this case the adverbial, followed by the prepositional object. The example also illustrates the feature of pro-drop discussed by Alsagoff & Ho (1998): the subject of *pay* is ellipsed (probably because it is an impersonal subject). Similar examples can be observed in commercial contexts, such as in (2a–b), observed personally (2007) in a department store selling travel luggage and perfumes in Little India, Singapore:

- (2) a. This one can carry on board

- b. All perfumes should pay at the counter.

(2a–b) also show fronting of the (direct) object to become the topic, and possible pro-drop of an impersonal subject pronoun, though Platt, Weber & Ho (1984, p. 80) and Alsagoff & Ho (1998, p. 136) treat similar examples as ambiguous between topicalized structures with dropped impersonal subject pronouns ('This one, you can carry on board') and agentless passives with *be*-deletion ('This one can be carried on board'). (2b), however, would more likely have the latter interpretation ('All perfumes should be paid for at the counter'). In either case the subject is not significant enough to require encoding. The syntactic structure appears to be modelled directly on that of Chinese, as pointed out by Bao (2001, p. 303) for similar examples.

Morphological features are also distinct from the standard sub-variety with which SCE is in constant contact. As well as *be*-deletion in passive constructions and in copula constructions, amongst the features listed by Alsagoff & Ho (1998) are the absence of past tense in certain situations. Ho & Platt (1993) described this feature as regulated by the lexical aspect of the verb (if non-punctual or stative, past is marked less frequently). Phonological factors such as consonant clusters also often cause the loss of regular past tense suffixes. Other contexts included those of grammatical imperfectivity, such as past habituals, which frequently were observed by Ho & Platt (1993) to be unmarked for past. One such example is from personal observation (2005):

- (3) (A speaking of an old lady who had just died of lung cancer)
A. Did she smoke?
B. Yes, she smokes.

B's response illustrates perhaps that past tense is considered more in terms of lexical aspectual boundedness than of time reference in SCE, another factor which could be attributed to the influence of substrate languages such as Chinese, which do not have tense marking. In (3), the habit of smoking is considered unbounded as it refers to repeated events over a long time duration.

Cutting across the lexically-based limitations of tense marking is the use of a perfective aspect marker, *already*, in SCE, probably one of the most readily recognizable features of the dialect. According to Bao (1995, 2005, 2015), *already* is modelled directly on the use of a perfective marker in Chinese, *le* in Mandarin or *liao* in Hokkien, and the entire Chinese system of perfective marking has been transferred directly through the 'exponence' of *already* into Singapore English, so that its functions are modelled on those of the Chinese substrates rather than the past tense in English. For example,

- (4) a. Completive *already*: My father pass away already (Alsagoff & Ho, 1998, p. 139)
- b. Inchoative uses: At 4.15 we can't leave already (personal observation, during a university exam, 2008)
- c. Inceptive uses: Miss Lin eat cake already (Bao, 2005, p. 239)

(4a) is perhaps the only function which could substitute for a past tense in English, but more likely it could be translated with a present perfect aspect ('My father has died'). (4b) was uttered by a student referring to the future, not the past, and the use functions to mark a change of state (from being able to leave to no longer being able to). (4c) is described by Bao as ambiguous (out of context) between all three functions, though it is intended here to refer to the start of a new habit. The interaction with past tense is therefore limited in the use of *already* and it appears that tense is developing alongside the system of marking grammatical perfectivity, relating to the interplay and competition between the substrate languages and the original lexifier, English.¹

Other morphological differences include the so-called over-generalization of the progressive to accommodate stative verbs, such as in Platt, Weber & Ho's often-cited (1984) example:

- (5) I am having a cold.

Although Bao (2005, 2015) claims that the use of the progressive with stative verbs is rare if not absent in the ICE-Singapore corpus, some examples are found, as in the following:

- (6) He is having fever. (ICE-SIN:S1A-100#56:1:B)

The use in many such examples with *have* appears to be closely connected to situations of adversity, in referring to the possession of unfortunate conditions and health problems (Ziegeler & Lenoble, to appear), and mainly using the verb *have*, though some non-adversative examples using *have* can also be observed:

- (7) What number are we having?

(7) was uttered by a 60-year old female Singaporean (in 2017), while standing in a number-system taxi queue. These uses appear to be less frequent than adversative progressives using

have, and other stative verbs are certainly less frequent (Ziegeler, 2017b); there is scope for a great deal more research on this feature.

In other areas of the grammar, usage may be under-generalized by comparison to Singapore Standard English. We have already noted the somewhat less frequent use of the past tense and its restriction for many speakers to punctual and non-stative verbs. In noun phrase morphology, there is also a less frequent use of articles, particularly the indefinite article, with non-specific singular nouns, and plural marking is often absent on non-specific plural nouns (see Ziegeler, 2010, 2015). Many examples are found in generic nouns used in commercial contexts or public notices, where reference may be considered unbounded in terms of countability. For example:

(8) She queue up very long to buy *ticket* for us (Alsagoff & Ho, 1998, p. 144)

(9) *Pedestrian* this way.

(9) was observed on a traffic sign in Chinatown, Singapore, 2009, close to a building construction site. (9) is similar to (8) in that pluralization becomes less significant when the number of referents is either not known, or not salient, indicating that countability is associated closely with the domain of reference for such speakers (Ziegeler, 2012). Specific plurals are usually marked for number, while for specific singulars, the numeral *one* is often used, as shown in (10), from the ICE-Singapore corpus:

(10) but Kallang got *one* Fun world or what lah (ICE-SIN:S1A-085#281:1:A)
'But there is a Fun World in Kallang.'

The use of the verb *got* as an existential marker in (10) is also a frequent feature of Singlish (see Platt, Weber & Ho, 1984, for example). Other features discussed by Alsagoff & Ho (1998) in their summary article include the absence of conjunctions, the use of universal tag questions (*is it, isn't it*), and the use of *one* as a relative pronoun, discussed at length also in Bao (2015) as being a calque on the (Mandarin) Chinese nominalizer *de*.

(10) also illustrates the use of *lah*, a discourse particle in Singapore English used to express emphasis, and another unique feature typically identifying the dialect. The colloquial sub-variety contains a wealth of similar discourse particles, almost all of them borrowed from the substrate languages such as Hokkien, Cantonese, or Malay. Space does not permit a more complete discussion of such items, but more detail can be found in studies such as Lim (2007) or Leimgruber (2018) who finds that in some cases, they may be observed to reflect ethnic or gender-based tendencies in Singapore English.

While many of the features mentioned above could be directly related to similar features in the substrate languages, particularly Chinese, there are grounds to suspect that substrate influence is not the entire story and that one needs to take into account other forces at work in a contact situation, such as universal features, or grammaticalization patterns that would have taken place anyway, regardless of what situation is represented. The instances in which there is clear under- or over-generalization are a case in point, and comparison should be made not only with the substrate, but with other languages, at a typological level (see, e.g. Siemund, 2013) or even with the different stages of the history of English itself. The next section discusses such possibilities.

3 Grammaticalization and Singapore English


The field of grammaticalization studies has only recently been extended to explain contact situations, mainly in pioneering studies such as Heine & Kuteva (2003, 2005), and further developed in a theory of replication by recapitulation in Ziegeler (2014). The normal transmission of contact features via ordinary, contact-induced grammaticalization means is outlined by Heine & Kuteva (2003, 2005) as involving first, the contact language speaker's recognition of a function in the Model language (usually a substrate in creole situations) which requires replication in the Replica language (the contact language itself, though Heine & Kuteva do not distinguish between the Replica of contact, and the Replica as a lexifier language).² The speaker then searches for appropriate means of grammaticalizing the function needed, and grammaticalization takes place via normal universal strategies.

An example of such processes in both Singapore English and Hong Kong English is shown by Matthews & Yip (2009) with the case of *already* as a perfective marker. Forms with the same meaning as *already* or *finish* are listed as an areal feature of the Southeast Asian region by Dahl (2006) and thus it is not surprising from the typological point of view that this adverb should be selected for (ordinary) grammaticalization of perfective aspect in Singapore Colloquial English: the selection is universally relevant. On the other hand, Heine & Kuteva (2003, 2005) also illustrate cases in which the selection of the conceptual source for the (re)grammaticalization of Model or substrate language functions is not so universally obvious, and may only be found in examining the grammaticalization of the same source in the Model or substrate language. The lexical source selected for grammaticalizing the substrate function will thus be similar to one found in the substrate, and this is known as a case of replica grammaticalization in contact. In such instances, the replication process involves the entire diachronic pathway undergone by the lexical source in the substrate or Model language. An example of such processes was provided by Heine & Kuteva (2005) in the Irish English *after-perfect*, a construction which functions to express recent events which have just happened (often labelled the 'hot news' perfect). The replication of such a construction in the Irish

substrate is piecemeal, following every stage of its historical development into an aspect marker, and this is not a universal process of grammaticalization.

A similar example of replica grammaticalization came from Matthews & Yip (2009) who provided the case of the *give*-passive in Singapore and Hong Kong English:

- (11) John give his boss scold. (Matthews & Yip, 2009, p. 382)
'John was scolded by his boss.'

However, this feature is not known to be very frequent in Singapore English (see, e.g. Bao 2015, p. 222; Bao, 2010), and in Bao & Wee (1999, p. 8), cited in Matthews & Yip, it is claimed to have a restricted distribution when compared to its substrate models of Hokkien and Cantonese. The account provided by Bao is quite plausible – the morphosyntax of the lexifier, English, does not allow for a similar construction to express passives, and there is thus no reason why it should be employed (2015, p. 226). Matthews & Yip, however, also note the presence of lexical persistence in its restricted distribution to only animate subjects in Singlish, while in the substrate languages, there is no such constraint. Lexical persistence has also been found in the grammaticalization of *already* in Singlish (Ziegeler & Lee, to appear  the persistence derived again from the lexical meaning of the English form, not the source concept in the substrate. On the other hand, as seen above in (2), agentless passive constructions may be expressed through much simpler means, and to grammaticalize the verb *give* on analogy with similar models in Chinese would excessively complicate the code. Thus, it is often possible in some situations of contact that the substrate and the lexifier may work in competition with each other to provide the most economic means of expression in the contact or replica language.

3.1 *Replication by recapitulation*

The role of the lexifier may extend beyond that of a controlling influence on the lexical and morphosyntactic adaptation of elements from the contact situation. In a later study (Ziegeler 2014, 2017b) it was seen that the pathway of grammaticalization could sometimes recapitulate, schematically, that of the lexifier itself, i.e. the lexifier was used as the Model. The studies were based on the patterns of synchronic frequency found for three grammaticalizing features in Singapore English and in Indian English. The three features were: (i) the modal verb *will*, (ii) the progressive aspect, and (iii) the indefinite article. The modal verb *will* was observed to be used with much greater frequency in Singapore English than in British English in the function of a habitual marker (11.67% in the ICE-Singapore corpus vs. 3.13% in the ICE-GB corpus), its frequency also observed by Deuber (2010) in Trinidadian English. This ruled out the possibility, however remote, of a substrate conceptual source, and thus also the possibility of a replica grammaticalization as proposed by Heine & Kuteva (2005). For example (from the *Flowerpod Corpus*):³

- (12) but usually I *will* just eat it straight from the cup . . . don't really bother to add some more fruits. (Posted by jadedollie, 25 July 2008)

Habitual aspect marked by forms meaning *will* is not a frequent universal pattern of grammaticalization (only one other case was found, in Kru – a West African pidgin, of a form *wi* to express habitual aspect – see Singler, 1990. Heine & Kuteva, 2002 do not list it at all). However, the use of the predecessor of *will* in Old English texts was observed in Ziegeler (2006) to be more frequent in generic habitual constructions than in expressions of desire or intention. What appeared to be happening in the Singapore English habitual *will*, then, was a replication of earlier functions in the historical development of the lexifier.

Diachronic parallels were also found in the appearance of the progressive with stative verbs – a common feature of Singlish, as seen in (5–7) and also found in Old English and Middle English, as shown by (Mustanoja, 1960, p. 595):

- (13) . . . we holden on the Crysten feyth and *are bylevyng* in Jhesu Cryste (Caxton, 1489, *Blanchardyn and Eglantine*)
' . . . we hold onto the Christian faith and believe in Jesus Christ'

The historical development of the progressive along such lines appears to be illustrating a similar pattern of replication in recapitulating the strategies of its earlier diachronic functions in the lexifier. Whether or not such strategies can be isolated as grammaticalization is unclear; the earlier stages of the diachronic development of the English progressive convey the appearance of a reanalysis rather than a grammaticalization (Ziegeler, 2006), and raise the possibility that other diachronic processes of change besides grammaticalization may also be replicated in contact. Such questions are beyond the scope of the present study.

Finally, the indefinite article in Singlish may also be cited as following a historical pattern of development, in that it grammaticalized from a numeral *one* in Old English, used only for specific nouns. As noted in (10), *one* is used in place of the indefinite article in Singlish as a determiner for specific singular nouns, non-specific nouns often being left bare, and unmarked for number. Such developments, of course, are not restricted to English, and the grammaticalization of the indefinite article may be found universally to be following similar developmental patterns (Heine, 1997). In these cases, there may be parity between ordinary contact-induced grammaticalization and replication by recapitulation, though the progress of the successive stages of development requires further evidential support using frequency studies.

3.2 *Hyper- and hypo-grammaticalization*

The notions of over-generalization and under-generalization of the distinctive features of Singapore English have been discussed (Ziegeler, 2000, p. 12) as ‘hyper-grammaticalizations’ – overgeneralized features – or ‘hypo-grammaticalizations’ (under-generalizations), from the point of view of grammaticalization rates relative to standard varieties of English, which may be considered as benchmarks in studying the speed of grammaticalization in contact. The relatively slow rate of grammaticalization of past tense in Singapore English, motivated chiefly by (punctual) lexical aspect (see (3)), is one example of hypo-grammaticalization (since it is found with all verb types in standard varieties), while hyper-grammaticalization is rarer and may be found in examples of semi-modal verbs (e.g. Ziegeler, 2008, p. 406):

(14) The old phone *is able to* make outgoing call but not *able to* receive call.⁴

In (14), an example from personal observation in 2006, the semi-modal *be able to* has been hyper-grammaticalized to have inanimate subjects, probably on analogy with *can* (since it would be rarely acceptable with inanimate subjects in standard varieties). Thus, although the lexifier may impose constraints on distribution in some cases (as in the persistence of lexical source meanings in *already* and in *give*-passives discussed above), in other cases it appears to be absent, while there are distributional constraints in standard varieties. In this way, hyper-grammaticalization and hypo-grammaticalization work in tandem shaping the developmental pace of certain grammaticalization paths in contact, hyper-grammaticalization proceeding unfettered when there is no substrate model to control distributional spread, and the lexifier source itself is opaque, and hypo-grammaticalization restraining the relative rate of grammaticalization via the influence of the model category in the substrate.

Therefore, the diversity and change observed in the current state of Singapore English may be seen as illustrating a vigorous competition between substrate and lexifier influence, the substrate often controlling the morphosyntactic appearance of the dialect, as well as syntactic and information-structure features, as seen in examples such as (1) and (2) above, and the lexifier dominating the categories of the grammar most closely influenced by semantic factors, such as aspect, modality and tense, and elements grammaticalized from more transparent lexemic sources. Bao (2015) and (2010) has emphasized the role of the ‘Lexifier Filter’ as controlling the morphosyntactic exponence of substrate functions through the lexicon of English. In such studies, he was suggesting that there are influences on both sides of the contact feature pool, and that the substrate need not be considered the only influence in contact. A grammaticalization account refines these notions into diachronic reality.

Table 1 summarizes the respective roles of the substrate models and the lexifier in affecting the grammaticalization of Singapore English, as discussed above.

Process discussed	Substrate role	Lexifier role	Example
Ordinary contact-induced grammaticalization	Functional model for replication	Lexification; persistence	<i>Already</i> as a completive aspect marker
Replica grammaticalization	Stage-by-stage model for replication	Lexification; persistence	<i>Give</i> as a passive marker
Replication by recapitulation	Functional motivation only	Diachronic model for replication	<i>Will</i> as a habitual; the progressive aspect; <i>one</i> as a specific determiner
Hypergrammaticalization	None	None	<i>Be able to</i> with inanimate subjects
Hypogrammaticalization	Constrains distributional grammaticalization	Sometimes a diachronic model for recapitulation	Past tense mainly restricted to punctual lexical aspect

Table 1: Interacting forces in the grammaticalization processes in Singapore English.

4 Retentionism and colonial lag

Bao (2010, p. 792) also noted that Singapore English is unlike the contact situations of typical pidgins and creoles in that it has remained in constant contact with the local substratum languages as well as the lexifier English throughout its history. This means that all such languages may continue to exercise a degree of influence on the developing variety, though the use of (southern) Chinese dialects in Singapore has been largely discouraged in favour of standard Mandarin Chinese, in recent years, by government policy. One area which has received little attention in current discussion of contact English has been the area of retentionism, which has been compared in similar terms to earlier, phonological reports of ‘colonial lag’.

Colonial lag (as cited in Hundt, 2009 and Trudgill, 1999) was a term first employed by Marckwardt (1958, p. 50) to apply to situations in which features of the historical state of a language could be said to remain fossilized for a time, or at least until a stage of natural adaptation to a new environment takes place. Lass (1990) also used the term to describe retentions in the phonological description of Southern Irish English, while Trudgill (1999), studying the phonology of older speakers of New Zealand English, referred to earlier stages of the pronunciation of the input varieties of English during the latter half of the 19th century in explaining the unusually high settings of New Zealand front vowels. In many such cases, the

term has been used to refer to phonological differences existing between the overseas varieties of English and British English. Hundt (2009), however, discusses morphosyntactic differences between British English and US English, using diachronic corpora, and maintains that many such differences may be held to be innovative or revivalist in US English rather than conservative (e.g. the mandative subjunctive), while others, such as the progressive passive, may be considered conservative, or developing more slowly relative to British English. Trudgill's (1999) explanation for the presence of colonial lag was the absence of an input dialect for the second generation speakers; this implied that the children of colonial settlers were creating their own dialects anew. Such a hypothesis presupposes a period of relative isolation for the developing dialect.

Another frequently-cited example is that of Irish English, or Hiberno English, as discussed by Harris (1991), Siemund (2004), and Pietsch (2009). Irish English has been often described with reference to substrate features, but the retention of earlier, conservative features of the seventeenth-century English lexifier have also been taken into account. Harris (1991, p. 209), for example, takes the position that both the substrate and the lexifier (or superstrate) are mutually reinforcing in creating the distinctive features of Irish English grammar, convincingly conveying the argument for retention of earlier diachronic stages, with the exception of the *after-* (hot-news) perfect, discussed above, and the extended-time perfect, clearly a substrate influence from Irish.⁵ Siemund (2004) regards the entire system from a universal, typological perspective, suggesting that the structural patterns were not unique to Irish at the time. Pietsch's (2009) account further develops the earlier studies, building the hypothesis that the medial object perfect of Irish English today was also found most frequently in the English of the nineteenth century – the 'conclusive perfect' of today's English: *I have the job finished/We got the house sold*, and happened to match syntactically a similar medial perfect found in the Irish substrate. This illustrates that even the notion of retentionism cannot escape consideration of substrate factors.

In all such accounts, the tendency seems to be to form comparisons between existing features still used in the post-colonial dialect today with features which existed in the lexifier at the time of contact. What is less often researched are examples of dialectal features which are in the lexifier today but were absent or infrequent in the lexifier at the time of contact. In such cases, it may be questioned whether or not they actually became transmitted at a later stage, in parallel with their more recent developments in the lexifier languages. One example is the clause-final additive focus marker, *either*, to be discussed as a case study below.

5 *Either* in Singapore English

In an earlier study (Ziegeler, 2017a) it was seen that the use of clause-final *either* (which can be termed, for present purposes, right-periphery *either*) was noticeably less frequently used in Singapore English than in British English, being substituted in many cases by the use of *also*

preceding the negated item of the clause. In standard English, *either* is obligatory in the scope of negation, though *also* preceding negation is not non-standard, e.g.:

- (15) I also don't know (ICE-SIN: S1A009#105:1:B)
'I don't know either.'

The previous study had investigated *either* alongside other quantifiers in the scope of negation, and found that there was a generally reduced tendency in Singapore English to select a particularized form over a universal form in negative scope. In a survey of 250 possible uses in the *Flowerpod Corpus*, only 10% of tokens were found of clause-final *either* following a negative, the construction *also* + neg. V – as in (15) – appearing in its place in 48.4% of cases. A number of tokens (34%) replaced *either* with *also* or *too* as a final focus marker following a negative, for example:

- (16) Fibergel dont really work for me *too*. (Posted by: keach May 29 2005, 08:06 PM)

The *Flowerpod Corpus*, though, comprises relatively informal styles, marked by abbreviations and 'text-speak' items, and is perhaps even more informal than spoken usage in some cases, as the contributors to the blog-spots are always anonymous. Therefore, a more recent survey (using the ANTCONC concordance) of the entire ICE-SG corpus was undertaken, to investigate whether right-periphery *either* was used more frequently in formal, written styles in Singapore English. The token counts for right-periphery *either* were 34 in the ICE-SG, but 54 in the ICE-GB. From such results, it can be seen that British English, according to the ICE corpora, uses right-periphery *either* nearly 1.59 times more frequently than Singapore English. When the results are compared with other ICE corpora, even greater differences are found: for ICE-India, only 16 tokens were found, and for ICE-Nigeria, there were only 3 tokens of right-periphery *either* in the entire corpus.

Earlier studies have pointed to the substrate influence of certain constructions using pre-verbal additive markers (Hiramoto, 2015 for Singapore English, and Fuchs, 2012 for Indian English). It is also unlikely that clause-final additives restricted solely to the scope of negation will be found in the substrate, as such items appear to be rare across the world's languages (König, 1991 refers only to Finnish, and Gast & van der Auwera, 2011 show evidence of only Hungarian as having such a feature). On the other hand, Welsh is observed as having a negative scope additive, *chwaith* (King, 1996), though Trudgill & Hannah (2017, p. 41) show that clause-final *too* often replaces right-periphery *either* in Welsh English as well (e.g. *I can't do that too*).

Obviously, these initial observations require a more penetrating study. What is noteworthy, however, is that in the history of standard English, right-periphery *either* was

noted as rarely used in clause-final functions before the mid-nineteenth century, according to studies such as Rullmann (2002).⁶ If this is the case, then there is no reason for such a feature to be adopted in the post-colonial dialect; it was simply not sufficiently frequent to begin with. The rarity of a feature in the lexifier input can thus be considered as much a factor of ‘colonial lag’ as the presence of one: although right-periphery *either* is now frequently used in Inner-Circle varieties of English, the relative frequency with which it is used nowadays was not so much a factor in the developing, post-colonial dialects which may have already conventionalized another means of expressing the same function in the meantime, based on substrate patterns.

The situation thus illustrated indicates that not all of the substrate functions found in a contact dialect are the result of the speakers’ motivations to ‘copy’ the model of their L1s, and that in some cases, the substrate model may be simply the last resort when the item is infrequent or missing from the lexifier altogether and cannot be readily transmitted. Furthermore, this is not a matter of copying a lexemic source model of grammaticalization, but of replicating an entire construction model in the substrate, as can be seen in the (Mandarin) translation of (15):

- (17) 我 也 不 知道
 Wǒ yě bù zhīdao (Hiramoto, 2015, p. 643)
 1SG also NEG know

Similar constructions are found in Cantonese and Hokkien, according to Hiramoto (2015). This may also raise the question how the functions of right-periphery *either* were expressed at the time in the lexifier English. There is evidence that clause-final *neither* was used, concordant with a negative in the preceding clause (e.g. *I don’t know neither*) until the nineteenth century, according to studies such as Rullmann (2002) and Jespersen (1917). However, according to Bao & Cao (2017), negative concord has never been a feature of Singapore English, is rare in post-colonial Englishes (Siemund, 2013, p. 179–180), and not found at all in some (van der Auwera (2017: 129–130) explains this as due to the highly educated level of the original input varieties). Thus, in the above case, it can be seen that retentionism may involve the retention of former states of a dialect, and not just archaisms and relics of a bygone era.

6 Conclusions

The theoretical description of a ‘new’ variety of English leaves open a number of questions, not all of them answerable by using the comparisons of other contact situations such as pidgins and creoles. In particular, it must be considered that the means of transmission are different, as often cited, the language being used for official purposes and transmitted in an educational

setting. Although this does not discount the emergence of creole-like sub-varieties, as Singlish represents, it places constraints on the kind of theoretical account that can be used to explain the distinctive features that emerge in such varieties; the colloquial sub-variety is in constant contact not only with the substrate, but also with the standard sub-variety. In the above review, it can be seen that some influence from the substrates is clearly obvious, though it is not always the primary factor in explaining the variation found in Singapore English. It is thus necessary to take a careful glance at the historical developments that were in progress in the input English at the time of colonization, as well as the universal, typological processes that are constantly played out in the grammaticalization of a structural feature over time, whatever the situation of development. Each developing feature of a new dialect, then, may forge its own history.

Notes

¹ Dahl and Velupillai (2013) note that perfect aspect derived from forms meaning ‘already’ or ‘finish’ is typically found in geographical areas in which tense marking is rare or absent, though they cannot attest to the popular hypothesis that aspect-prominent languages always lack tense systems, and vice versa.

² For the purposes of the present study, the Replica language will refer only to the contact language being created, the Model will be termed the substrate, and the Replica as a lexifier will be termed the lexifier.

³ The Flowerpod Corpus is a personal corpus of Singapore internet blog-spot dialogues, constructed between 2007 and 2008 with the aid of Amelyn Thompson and the National University of Singapore Staff Research Support Scheme.

⁴ Note also the absence of plurality on non-specific *call*.

⁵ Harris notes (1991, p. 205) that even the comparison with the substrate form of hot-news perfect is not exact, as the word order is quite different in Irish.

⁶ Rullmann’s data is somewhat sketchy; a more comprehensive analysis (Ziegeler, Melac & Gast, 2019) reveals that the occurrence of *either* in clause-final positions is not absent for the period 1780-1850, but nevertheless still low: only 1.67% of all uses of *either*.

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