

Malay Lexical Borrowings in Singapore Colloquial English

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Abstract

Singapore English evolved as a contact variety with English as its superstrate and the local languages, namely Chinese, Malay and Tamil as its substrate languages. It is expected, therefore, that Singapore English would contain features borrowed from these substrate languages. In this paper, we investigate the processes and types of lexical borrowing in the colloquial variety of Singapore English (henceforth SCE) from vernacular Malay. Based on analysis carried out on a corpus of sixty-four Malay/SCE lexical items, we propose that equivalence in the grammatical category, economy of use and social motivations are three key factors that could account for the integration of Malay words in SCE. In addition, the integration of Malay words in SCE works in tandem with the more dominant substrates influence of Chinese languages on the grammar of SCE.

Introduction

Borrowing of lexical items is a phenomenon that occurs in a wide variety of linguistic settings ranging from monolingual settings to those which are multilingual. The introduction of foreign lexical items which are eventually borrowed into the language also occurs in a variety of ways, namely through the media, literature and through widespread use by bilingual speakers who have knowledge of both the target as well as the source languages. In this paper, we aim to investigate the processes of lexical borrowing involved in the use of Malay lexical items in Singapore Colloquial English (henceforth SCE) with reference to Donald Winford's (2003) Classification of Lexical Contact Phenomena table. The corpus which will serve as the data for our study was compiled based on our own day to day use of SCE, being native speakers of SCE and Malay ourselves, as well as through everyday observations of its use in naturally occurring conversations around us, web pages maintained and owned by Singaporean bloggers (e.g. www.talkingcock.com and www.xiaxue.blogspot.com) as well as through

published articles on the lexicon of Singapore English by researchers like Adam Brown (1999) and Lionel Wee (1998).

For the purpose of this paper, we have decided to confine our research to the following parameters:

- vernacular Malay as the source language instead of institutionalized Malay
- to disregard nonce borrowings
- observations and analysis based on a corpus of sixty-four lexical items
- a focus on semantic usage rather than grammatical usage (although the latter is explored briefly).

This paper is organized as follows. In the next section, we will provide some background information on the English in Singapore with a focus on SCE as a contact variety. Section 3 will provide the reader with the social and linguistics motivations that govern the process of borrowing. This section will especially focus on the reasons for the borrowing of lexical items in SCE. In Section 4, we will discuss the results of our data analysis based on our list of Malay lexical items used in SCE. Here, we will compare how the lexical items are used in the source language, Malay, and how they are used in SCE in order to identify the processes of change that were involved in the borrowing of each lexical item. Thereafter, we will conclude our study in Section 5 by discussing the challenges we faced as we embarked on this study and possible areas for future research.

English in Singapore

The British colonization triggered the rapid spread of the English language. In Singapore, the English-medium schools of the Straits Settlements were instrumental in the spread of English after the British colonization (Gupta, 1994a). This was where institutionalized English was taught and spread in the early years of the twentieth century. As a result, English spread from these schools and their students to others in the family and community including non-English educated speakers. These speakers were mostly bilinguals and spoke at least one of the local languages in addition to the vernacular English (Gupta, 1998). As a result of this 'contact', these local languages influenced the variety of Singapore English then and still do now, though to a different degree. Wee (1998) asserts that just like other New Englishes, 'the development of Singapore English is influenced by contact with British and American varieties of English, as well as background languages such as Chinese, Malay and Tamil' Singapore English can therefore be defined as a contact language with English as its

superstrate language and the local languages (Chinese, Malay and Tamil) as its substratum (Bao, 2005).

The variety of Singapore English which we are concerned with in this study is the vernacular or the colloquial variety (SCE). This variety, based on Gupta's Diglossia framework (1994a), would qualify as the L-variety of Singapore English and is used in informal situations. It is the variety of Singapore English which is most different from British English, especially in grammar (Bao, 2003) and which reflects the influence of the local languages the most. Singapore Standard English (henceforth SSE), on the other hand, is closely similar to other standard Englishes around the world, including the 'Native' varieties like British, American and Australian Englishes (Gupta, 1998).

Although SCE is a socially stigmatized variety that is strongly discouraged by the government, media and school system (Bao, 2003), SCE is increasingly used even by those who are highly proficient in SSE as a mark of solidarity and ingroup-ness. It is also extensively used in informal situations by both the acrolectal and mesolectal speakers and can be heard over the media in local shows like *Phua Chu Kang*, *Police and Thief* and *Army Daze*. It is the variety of Singapore English that Singaporeans grow up with before learning the institutionalized variety in schools. Its increasing significance in the Singaporean speaker's language repertoire and its increasing acceptance as a characteristic of the Singaporean identity are factors which make it an interesting and relevant source of study. It is with this in mind that we have decided to take a microscopic view of the language and examine the lexicon of Singapore English, particularly those borrowed from Malay. In the next section, we discuss the process of lexical borrowing and the motivations that give rise to it.

Motivation for Borrowing

Borrowing can be generally defined as a process when language A for instance, uses and ends up absorbing a linguistic item or feature from language B which language A does not have. The linguistic features or items that are absorbed into language A can be called borrowings. SCE has many borrowed words since all Singaporeans are bilingual or multilingual. Many words have been borrowed in particular from Malay (eg. *rojak*, *makan*, *kena*) and Hokkien (eg. *cheem*, *chin chai*, *kaypo*). In this section, we will look into the some factors that lead to borrowing.

i) Euphemistic purposes

Occasionally, a word could be used as a substitute for another word as speakers may avoid using such words either because they were considered as vulgar or taboo. So, they find it more comfortable to

borrow Malay words and integrate them in the vocabulary of SCE. For instance, the Malay word *pondan* refers to effeminate man. However, this word is used in SCE instead of the other more offensive terms like "fuggot" or "fairy".

ii) Idiomatic purposes

Sometimes, an idiom from the Malay language could be used to equate one concept with another. The function of such idioms would be to provide meaning to be understood in a more abstract sense. For instance, the Malay phrase *potong jalan* in the SCE sentence, 'Why you *potong jalan* my gal?' would imply that 'Why did you steal my girlfriend from me?' Often used in the context of 'snatching' somebody's girlfriend (or boyfriend) away, the phrase can also refer to other types of transactions where one party is being bypassed or cut off. Originally, in Malay it means "to cut a (new) road".

iii) Metonymical purposes

Often some words when used in the SCE contexts undergo a process whereby the word acquires a new sense by virtue of association. For instance, the SCE word *goondu* in Tamil refers to 'fat and clumsy and awkward'. However, in SCE it is associated with someone who is a fool or simpleton. In other words, SCE speakers have broadened the meaning of the Tamil word *goondu*.

iv) Social solidarity and accommodation theory

As Singaporeans converse in SCE, Malay loan words penetrate the conversation and, this can be viewed as a process whereby the speakers tend to converge towards their interlocutor with the intention of reducing the social distance, and to accommodate one another. Hudson states that speakers balance two languages or more against each other as a 'kind of linguistic cocktail' (1996) to understand and accommodate each other in any interaction. This balancing of 'linguistic cocktail' is what occurs as speakers speak in SCE to accommodate each other and build up solidarity between them.

v) Communal interaction

Communal interaction occurs when contact situations involving speakers of different dialects or languages are put together in a situation where opportunities are created for prolonged interaction to take place. In such situations, languages involved could be unintelligible so communities involved realize that they need to create a lingua franca with mixed elements for easy communication. So, SCE with additions

of some Malay words became a possibility. For instance, the Malay word, *bodoh* (meaning 'stupid' or 'silly') in English is widely understood by all races in Singapore.

Therefore, from a macro perspective, this practice of borrowing by SCE speakers to accommodate each other has been observed to result in the creation of a Singaporean identity, forging a nationalistic spirit among the different communities in Singapore, who otherwise speak different languages from each other. This is possible as unlike standard English, which is seen to be rather 'foreign' and 'distant', SCE consists of borrowed linguistic items which belong to the local languages in Singapore, hence, giving its local speakers a sense of ownership and belonging.

Data Analysis

In this section we examine if words borrowed from Malay reflect a change in meaning when used in SCE and investigate the processes involved. At the moment there is little research that explores what happens to the meanings of a word that is borrowed from a non-English language into a variety of New English or in this case, a contact variety with English as the superstrate language (Wee, 1998). Hence, it is particularly interesting to compare how a word used in the source language, in this case Malay, has its meanings fully retained, broadened or narrowed in SCE. In this unique contact situation, influences from Standard Singapore English (henceforth, English), Chinese languages and Malay govern the ways in which Malay words are used in SCE.

We begin by using Winford's (2003:45) classification of lexical contact phenomena, based on Haugen's 1953 categorization, to organise Malay words in SCE according to instances of complete importation, narrowing and broadening of meanings or native creations. The classification is not always neat due to insufficient meanings in Malay to begin with, or if the words went through a change in the source language itself before being used in SCE. However, classification is still meaningful in adding to our understanding of the processes involved in lexical contact phenomena, especially for one that has not been studied extensively and in testing the usefulness of Winford's (2003) and Haugen's (1953) proposed categories.

In our analysis, we found that an area particularly interesting for discussion is the category of native creations. Words in this category had a different meaning in SCE from its common use in Malay thus they could be argued to be purely native creations. In turn, their use in SCE has influenced the ways in which some of these words are used in conversation, in the source language.

Apart from examining the use of Malay in the SCE lexicon through this classification, we see a need to look into some structural principles that encourage the robust use of Malay words in SCE. Situating the study of lexical contact phenomena in the ways in which the words are used, we find that categorical equivalence (in relation to the grammatical category) between Malay and English promotes the integration of loanwords such as *makan* or *agak-agak* and that structural features of SCE such as lack of verb inflection for tense and number are influenced by Chinese languages and Malay. Hence this unique contact situation promotes the integration of some Malay words into SCE.

Pure loanwords with retention of meaning

Winford's (2003) classification of lexical contact phenomena identifies a category of "pure loanwords" where there is complete importation or transference of meaning from the source language. Pure loanwords may comprise single words or compounds. The following is an inexhaustive list of Malay words in our data that belong to this category of pure loanwords, where the borrowed word stays true to its meaning it is used in the source language. The Malay words are in bold and their meanings (in italics) are provided along with their grammatical category in SCE, in brackets.

- (1) Want to **makan**? (*eat / verb*)
 There's **makan** there, what. (*food / noun*)
 The money that Durai **makan** from NKF, no need to return ah? (*siphoned / verb*)
 I very naive one, first day work sure **kena makan**ed by lao jiaos. (*taken advantage or bullied / verb*)
- (2) I think the contractor **bedek** you lah... only 27SA is completed. Next to be completed is 275D. (*lie, bluff, trick / verb*)
- (3) Don't **pakat** against me. (*collaborate in secret, get into an alliance / verb*)
- (4) If I give up now, I **rugi**. (*make a loss / verb*)
- (5) I didn't want to buy a flat there, a bit **ulu**. (*remote / adjective*)
- (6) She just **suka-suka** change the date. (*freely / adverbial*)

Based on background knowledge of how the above words are used in Malay, the ways in which they are used in SCE correspond with their meanings in Malay. These borrowed words (**makan**, **bedek**, **pakat** and **rugi**) do not go through any change in meaning. **Makan** in (1) is used in Malay in several senses, to express a broad range of meanings and this is evident in SCE too. Table 1 below shows how **makan** is used for the same functions both in SCE and in Malay. It can be used as a verb to mean 'eat' or to express the sense of 'taking advantage of' and it can also be used as a verb to mean 'food'. All the constructions in (1) are familiar in terms of usage, in Malay, and could be

Table 1: 'Makan' in Malay and SCE

Meaning/ Grammatical Category	Colloquial Malay	SCE
<i>eat/verb</i>	Nak makan?	Want to makan?
<i>Food/noun</i>	Ada makan dekat sana.	There's makan there, what
<i>Siphoned/verb</i>	Duit yang dia makan tu, tak payah bagi balik?	The money that Durai makan from NKF, no need to return ah?
<i>taken advantageof, bullied/verb</i>	... boleh kena makan dengan orang yang dah lama kerja dekat situ	I very naive one, first day work sure kena makaned by lao jiaos

reproduced in the source language to convey the same meanings. Seeing as to how **makan** has both literal and metaphorical uses in SCE, it could be argued that this robust word has been borrowed into SCE in a very thorough manner

However, words such as **ulu** in (5) may not fall neatly into the category of pure loanwords that have their meanings retained. The word **ulu** in SCE is typically used in association with an 'inaccessible location that has few amenities' or is taken to mean 'remote' **Hulu** in Malay denotes 'head of an object', 'upper portion of a river', or 'upcountry' (translated from Kamus Dewan, 2002). There appears to be a slight difference in meaning in the word **hulu** in Malay and **ulu** in SCE today as **ulu** in SCE could generally refer to any 'relatively undeveloped locale' In addition, the word **hulu** is typically used as an adverbial in Malay (*hulu kampung* or *hulu sungai*) to specify a particular location but in SCE, it may be used as both an adverbial or an adjective to describe a location (a bit ulu). However, as **ulu** or **hulu** carries the same suggestion of being 'far from the centre', (both as an adverbial or an adjective in SCE) and because current literature in Malay does use the word **ulu**, suggesting that **ulu** in SCE was adopted following the evolution of **hulu** to **ulu** (in terms of orthography) in the source language itself, it could still be considered a pure loanword that has retained its meaning.

(7) One senior suggest that I should **ponteng** one day of school. (*play truant or be absent without good reason / verb*)

(8) I cannot eat mee rebus every day, very **jelak**. (*satiated with food / adjective*)

Words such as **ponteng** in (7) and **jelak** in (8) are cases of straightforward importation where the meanings they express in Malay are mapped directly to their meanings in SCE. These words have been used in SCE for a long time and with great ease for at least one reason - economy of use. The word **jelak** is commonly used as it conveys the natural sensation of being satiated with food, in a simple and straightforward manner. **Ponteng** is used in SCE because it denotes in a clear and economical manner, the idea of 'staying away from school without leave' or 'playing truant'. It could be argued that **ponteng** fills a lexical gap in Singapore English as it conveys a different sense or meaning from 'playing truant'. Playing truant as it used in Singapore English suggests that a student loitered elsewhere under the pretext of going to school but if one were to use **ponteng**, it could suggest that a student stayed away from school without a valid reason and this student **might** have been at home instead. It would be less harsh to say **ponteng** as opposed to the more serious offence of 'playing truant'. The word **ponteng** then could be argued to fill a gap in the Singapore English lexicon.

Interestingly, the word **ponteng** has been clipped or truncated to simply '**pon**' in the slang of teenagers in Singapore. So we have '**pon school**' as a fairly common expression. Truncation of words is a phenomenon that could be associated with the speech of teenagers in SCE as they truncate quite a few words in the English lexicon itself such as 'enthu', 'ex' 'pro' and 'glam' for enthusiastic, expensive, professional and glamorous respectively. The phenomenon of truncation (as it is more a matter of slang or speech style) will not however be discussed here.

Categorial Equivalence between Malay and English

The robustness of some Malay words in SCE can be accounted for (apart from social factors) by the equivalent categorial status between Malay words and their English counterparts. Words such as **makan**, **bedek**, **ponteng**, **pakat** and **rugi** could be categorized as verbs in Malay and they are able to be used quite easily in SCE constructions in place of corresponding English verbs such as 'eat', 'lie', 'play truant', 'collaborate secretly' and 'make a loss'. Likewise the Malay adjective **jelak** in (8), the slightly problematic Malay adverbial **ulu** in (5) and the Malay adverbial **suka-suka** in (6) by virtue of their equivalent categorial function to English words needed in that position in the SCE construction, fulfill their roles. The table below illustrates this.

While it may not be fair to force fit some English verbs or adjectives into the SCE constructions in the right column of the table (clash in register for some), an observation can be made that some of the Malay words are used in SCE because of the semantic force they possess. Words such as **pakat**, **ponteng** or **jelak** convey nuances or senses in such an economical and

Table 2: Categorical equivalence in Malay and English

Gramatical Category In Malay / in SCE	SCE with Colloquial Malay words	SCE without Colloquial Malay words
Verb/ verb	Want to makan ?	Want to eat ?
Verb/ verb	I think the contractor bedek u lah.	I think the contractor lie to you *
Verb/ verb	One senior suggest that I should ponteng one day of school	One senior suggest that I should play truant one day of school *
Verb/ verb	Don't pakat against me	Don't collaborate secretly
Verb/ verb	If I give up now, I rugi	If I give up now, I make a loss
Adjective/ adjective	I cannot eat mee rebus everyday, very jelak	I cannot eat mee rebus everyday, very satiated with food *
Adjective/ adjective	I didn't want to buy a flat there, a bit ulu	I didn't want to buy a flat there, a bit remote
Adjective/ adjective	She just suka-suka change the date	She just freely change the date

precise manner that their closest English equivalents 'collaborate secretly', 'play truant' and 'satiated with food' simply fall short of achieving. Social factors such as the domain of use, dynamics in the relationships of the interlocutors and the desire to accommodate to reduce social distance also influence the choice to use these Malay words.

As we discuss the other categories in the classification of lexical contact phenomena, the Malay words will still be presented in terms of their grammatical category and meaning because evidence of equivalence in categorical status can still be observed for many of the other Malay words in SCE.

Retention of Malay Idioms

Malay idioms have also been adopted into SCE. Their idiomatic meanings are used in the original sense in SCE. The idioms in (9) and (10) are familiar to SCE speakers while (11) is not. An explanation is offered to account for why some idioms such as (11) are not part of the linguistic repertoire of SCE speakers.

(9) But we can't just **buat bodoh** if she ask us, right? (*feign ignorance / idiom*)

(10) You think such a **kucing kurap** party can win the election meh? (*small or insignificant / idiom*)

(11) You always say no when we ask you out. Don't **tarik harga** lah. (*play hard to get / idiom*) *

Some idioms such as **tarik harga** are not as commonly used today and changes in language policy as well as one's social circle could account for it. These idioms are more familiar to the older generation in Singapore, many of whom picked up Malay in school. The introduction of bilingual education in 1956 brought about by the search for a Singapore identity, placed a need on the people to learn Malay and English in the 1950s. From a situation where the government sponsored campaigns to learn a new Malay word each day to the existing situation where bilingual education allows one to pair English with one of several mother tongue languages, it should be expected that some words would not continue to be as popularly borrowed as some others. As fewer people with knowledge of these idioms use them, these words may cease to be part of the SCE.

Idioms such as **buat bodoh** and **kucing kurap** are quite commonly used and understood in SCE possibly because they are composed of very basic Malay words such as **bodoh** and **kucing** and because of the effect of adversity or negativity that both convey. However, these explanations are at best limited and superficial and the reason why some idioms are more salient in contact situations could be studied more thoroughly, taking into consideration the experiences of individuals and knowledge of the sociohistorical factors. What the situation does tell us is how historical factors such as changes in language policy or the adoption of a new prestige variety 'will have an impact on what gets borrowed, retained or lost in the contact variety

Semantic Change - Narrowing

There are a number of Malay words in the data that reflect semantic change when used in SCE. Wee (1998) refers to this as narrowing, where the meaning of a word becomes more restricted such that it is used to describe a smaller range of things than before. The examples below demonstrate how some Malay words in SCE are used specifically for certain purposes or meanings and are not understood as carrying the broad range of meanings that the Malay language prescribes for them.

(10) I cannot **tahan** her temper anymore. (*endure / verb*)

Other meanings of **tahan** in Malay include 'to stop or to detain'

(11) You better not **kacau** her, she's about to cry already. (*disturb / verb*)

Other meanings of **kacau** in Malay include 'to mix or chaos'

(14) We all **kena tekan**. (*pressurised or pushed to the limit / verb*)

Other meanings of **tekan** include 'push (eg a button)'

(15) I myself have **kena hantam** in online forums. (*strike or hit / passive kena*)

Other meanings of **kena** include 'to suit or match'

In Malay, the words found above carry a few possible meanings and speakers of Malay would be familiar with these different meanings. The question of why only a particular meaning of each word was adopted in CSE to the exclusion of the rest is certainly not easy to answer. A similarity can however be found in the above verbs. They commonly express the idea of the patient (as opposed to the agent) being affected by adversity. Of the range of ideas that each word conveys, the idea of the patient going through adversity is selected, as if to suggest that there is a need to convey expressions of pain and helplessness through native terms. Again, these words from a native language (Malay) could be argued to express certain affective senses that an English equivalent would not be able to express as strongly.

Before we conclude that semantic narrowing appears to be unique to expressions of adversity, we need to explore more instances of narrowing. The example in (16) of **lagi** shows that narrowing also affects other Malay words in SCE that are quite unrelated to adversity.

(16) That one **lagi** best! She didn't even know what was going on! (*more / intensifier*)

In Malay, **lagi** can be used in more varied contexts to express 'more'

The word **lagi** in (16) when used in SCE serves the function of being an intensifier and its use is severely limited to certain pairings such as **lagi best** or **lagi shok**. Pairings such as **lagi angry** or **lagi exciting** are unheard of. In Malay however, **lagi** can be used in many contexts to express the state of having 'more' or having something 'additional'. Some examples of its use in Malay are listed below.

(17a) Dia beli satu **lagi** rurnah (She bought one *more* house).

(17b) Jangan buat dia marah **lagi**. (Do not make her angry *anymore/ again*).

(17c) Dia **lagi** tua dari saya (She's older than me).

Under Winford's (2003: 45) classification, pure loanwords may show some semantic change when used in the recipient language. While he

acknowledges semantic change, he has not specified the two distinctions very clearly - namely narrowing and broadening. An addition could be added to Winford's classification to make the distinction between pure loanwords with complete retention in meaning in the recipient variety such as **ponteng** in (7) and **jelak** (8), and loanwords that reflect some narrowing such as **tahan** and **lagi** in (12) and (16) respectively. While Winford (2003) may have intentionally referred to 'narrowing' as 'possible semantic change' to allow the classification some flexibility, we believe it is useful to specify clearly descriptions such as 'narrowing' or 'broadening'.

Semantic Change - Broadening

When the meaning of a word has become more general or is broadened to include a wider range of meanings when employed in a contact variety, the word is said to have experienced broadening (Wee, 1998). Some Malay words used in SCE accumulated a greater semantic range and an explanation given for this is that the meaning of a linguistic innovation tends to be broadened when used by people in a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual community. The meaning of a word will tend not to be narrower than its original sense, because it will include the original meaning as well. We look at several examples in (18) and (19).

(18) Wrong already lah. **Balik** (*restart / verb*)

(19) My turn to **blanja** you today, ok? (*give a treat / verb*)

In Malay, **balik** means 'return' typically in the senses of going home or to turn back.

If a native speaker wishes to say restart, he would say '**buat balik**' which means 'do again' where the verb '**buat**' (to do) is included. In SCE however, **balik** in the appropriate context, functions as a lexical verb that suggests 'restarting' and for **balik** to be used in this manner in SCE suggests that the original meaning of **balik** as the action of 'returning to something' is included.

In (19), **belanja** in Malay refers to 'spending money' but **blanja** in SCE is broadened to mean 'giving a treat'. Its use in SCE implies that one does need to know that 'giving a treat' includes 'spending money'. Due to the broadened meaning of **blanja** in SCE, when SCE speakers use **blanja** in Malay, they do use it to mean 'give a treat' besides the original meaning of 'spending money'. The effect of broadening on the source language as a result of linguistic innovation (or broadening) in the contact variety is observed here. In a contact situation, this influence could be expected and when we discuss native creations in another section, there will again be instances where native creations of Malay words used in SCE are introduced to colloquial Malay as well.

Following through with our earlier suggestion on Winford's (2003) classification, we propose adding distinctive categories for broadening and narrowing to describe semantic change more precisely. *Narrowing* could be added as 'a process of semantic change through loanwords' whereas *broadening* could be included under 'loanshifts (extensions)' as there is a shift in the semantics of a native word under influence from foreign motivation (in this case, SCE).

Loanblends

Two categories of loanblends are found in Malay words used in SCE – derivational blend and compound blend. We will first deal with derivational blends, followed by compound blends.

An instance of derivational blend that we found in SCE comprises a borrowed stem from Malay and an English affix. Morphological integration of loanwords poses little problems if the recipient language does not have complex rules pertaining to gender, number and case, just as in the case of SCE. In (20), the affix is *-ion* whereas the borrowed stem is the Malay word **agak-agak**. It is with ease that morphological integration is done here, between the English affix *-ion* and the Malay verb **agak-agak** and the reason for this is yet again, the argument of categorial equivalence. Here **agak-agak** serves the categorial function of verb just as 'estimate' would have done with *estimate+ion*.

Table 3: Grammatical category of **agak-agak** in Malay and SCE

Grammatical Category/Meaning	'agak-agak' in SCE	'agak-agak' in Malay
Adverbial / about	Dia sampai agak-agak pada pukul dua pagi.	The ST agak-agak how bigah? 20 inch have ah?
verb / estimate	Agak-agak sahaja bila hendak bubuh garam.	Last time when just start keeping fish, just agak-agak the amount then whack only Fish never die means ok.

(20) Size is around 12-14, depends if you add tail and how good is your agaration. (*estimation* / noun)

It is interesting to look into the use of the word *agak-agak* as it is used in Malay and to compare its use in SCE. From the table below, we can observe that *agak-agak* can function as a verb and an adverbial in both Malay and SCE. Just Like *makan*, the ways ID which *agak-agak* is used in SCE (serving two possible grammatical categories) reflect the ease with which it has been borrowed into SCE.

Meanwhile, examples of compound blends found in SCE are made up of an English stem and a Malay stem. In (21), we have **botakhead** but with this compound, the Malay word **botak**, meaning bald could also exist individually as an adjective in SCE, as seen in (22), attesting to the familiarity of this word in SCE.

(21) See that **botak head**? That's my cousin. (*bald head* / noun)

(22) He **botak** now. (*bald* / adjective)

Purely Native Creations

Purely native creations show innovative use of native words to convey foreign concepts and we do have some Malay words that are used creatively in SCE to express new ideas. The words in bold below are used creatively in SCE and the concepts they express are not native to Malay.

(24) He always **angkat** his boss. (*curry favour* / verb)

(25) People there very **atas**. ('have a taste for expensive things', 'uppity' / adjective)

(26) Referee **kayu** (*useless* / adjective)

(27) Got no **kakis** lah (*cronies or company* / nOHD)

(28) Eh, don't **ketuk me** lah. (*trick someone into paying for a meal* / verb)

(30) Got **lobang**? (*connections* / noun)

(31) He's a **buaya**. (*flirt / metaphor: noun / adjective*)

(32) He **sotong** lah. (*not alert!* adjective)

(33) It's all part of **wayang**, if no **wayang** then people no jobs liao leh. (*pretence* / noun)

The concepts expressed by the above native creations are unique to SCE and are not found in the original meanings of these words in Malay. A word such as **kayu** in (26) is highly specialised for it is used usually only in relation to referees. Some of these have been adopted for use in Malay itself, for instance, it is acceptable today to use **lobang** in Malay to mean 'connections' when the original meaning of the word in Malay is 'gap or hole'. However at least one of these native creations has not been integrated into the Malay lexicon and tills is **atas**. **Atas** in Malay means 'up' or 'on top' and it is typically used as an adverbial or to denote the position of an object. It does not mean having an 'inclination for expensive goods' or being 'uppity' as it is typically used in SCE.

Due to the lack of sufficient data on the original meanings of these Malay words and lack of information on whether these words were used in these senses in Malay before usage in SCE, background knowledge of how these words are used in Malay and SCE had to be relied on in arguing for these as purely native creations. There may be competing explanations to account for these words as cases of broadening or narrowing or as pure loan words that have their meanings transferred from the source language. If these are indeed native creations, it should be noted that the creative use of these words in SCE has impacted on its use in Malay, adding to the broadening of meanings in the source language.

Integration of Malay words in SCE

As mentioned earlier, categorial equivalence between Malay and English words enable the easy integration of Malay words into SCE. Verbs such as **makan** or **ponteng** were incorporated easily into the SCE word order. Now, we shall examine the structural features of SCE and their compatibility with some Malay words to account for why some Malay words are particularly robust and easily integrated into the grammar of SCE. We will only be looking at Malay words used as verbs in SCE.

(34) He **makan** everything (*eats / verb*)

[Lack of verb inflection to show subject-verb agreement; influenced by Hokkien and Malay]

(35) Yesterday he **ponteng**. (*played truant / verb*)

[Lack of verb inflection to show past tense; influenced by Chinese languages and Malay]

(36) He **makan** already (*ate / verb*)

[Use of already for completive aspect; influenced by Hokkien and Malay and lack of verb inflection for tense]

What is given in parentheses is an observation of how the constructions reflect some features of SCE such as the lack of verb inflection for tense or number or the use of 'already' to mark the completive aspect. These features in SCE are a result of substrate influence from Chinese languages (Platt, 1983; Gupta, 1994) as well as Malay which also does not mark the verb for tense or number and shows the completive aspect with a word such as 'sudah' (SCE equivalent is 'already').

As established earlier, some Malay verbs were able to be integrated easily into SCE on the basis of categorial equivalence and word order. In (35), we see a construction that follows the Adverbial + Subject + Verb order that closely resembles what we would see in a Malay construction. We also

see evidence of how the substrate languages in the contact situation (Chinese languages and Malay) influence the grammar of SCE through the missing verb inflections (that are actually needed to show tense and number in Standard English). These utterances therefore demonstrate the unique contact situation in Singapore.

There are however, instances when speakers of SCE will actualise inflectional affixes (-ed) and (-ing) for more robust Malay words in SCE. It has been established that SCE is actualised along a lectal continuum due to the different competencies of its speakers (Plan, 1980) and there are speakers of SCE who will take care to use inflectional affixes to indicate the past tense (-ed) or progressive (-ing) expressions. It may also be argued that the inflections -ed and -ing are fairly simple English inflectional affixes as opposed to marking for number and so speakers of SCE actually have little problem adding these inflections if they wish to. The examples in (37) to (39) with the robust word **makan** demonstrate this.

(37) I am still in town, **makaning** now (verb + progressive -ing)

(38) So today the 3 of us went out to Newton and **makaned** (verb + past -00)

(39) Vidia, have you ever **makaned** at the restaurant in the CP? (have + verb -en)

The robustness of **makan** and phonological factors could account for why **makan** appears to be the only Malay word inflected so readily with -ed, -ing or -en. Other verbs such as **ponteng**, **bedek** or **agak-agak** while popular are not as robust as **makan** and where the sounds of Singapore English are concerned, their final consonants being plosive /k/ or nasal /ŋ/, are not compatible with the -ed inflection. In SCE, consonant clusters are simplified, often by the omission of the final plosive and if SCE speakers were to inflect **ponteng**, **bedek** and **agak-agak** with -ed or -ing, their actualizations would be too effortful for them and go against phonological features of Singapore English.

Problems and Challenges

In carrying out this study, we faced several challenges. The first has to do with the tool with which we had chosen to base our analysis on. Winford (2003), in coming up with his Classification of Lexical Contact Phenomena table, had considered the views of Haugen and had made his own revisions to Haugen's (Winford, 2003) classification. Despite this, we still could not find a perfect fit for some of the borrowed lexical items in our corpus, especially those that had undergone semantic changes. We thus decided to adopt Lionel Wee's (1998) concepts of 'broadening' and 'narrowing' of meaning and added these categories to Winford's classification table.

The next few challenges we faced are related to the data we had compiled. As SCE is used significantly to build up solidarity among its users, its use then may vary among different social networks. The word *pont eng*, for example, may be manifested differently in different groups. While some speakers may choose to stick to its original pronunciation and form, others, like the college students we observed, have chosen to clip the word (*pon*) and pronounce it differently. The process of change that the word *pont eng* had gone through therefore differed according to which social group was observed to be using it. Classifying it was therefore a problem.

In the case of analyzing semantic change in the borrowed words, we faced problems deciding whether there was any broadening or narrowing of the meaning especially when we analysed its use by speakers who spoke both SCE and Malay. While the meaning of a word may have narrowed when used by a non-Malay SCE speaker, a Malay SCE speaker may be able to use the word in its original form with its multiple meanings. In such cases, we decided to base our analysis on the meaning which is understood by the vast majority of SCE speakers, who in most cases, are non Malay speaking.

The last problem we faced was what to include in our corpus. Like all languages, SCE has evolved as a result of changes in the country's language policy as well as changes in the context of use. Thus, what it is now is different from what it was a few years ago. In such a situation, we can expect to find words which were used by SCE speakers in the past to be dropped by speakers of the present. An example would be the phrase *tarik harga*, which was used significantly in the past but which has disappeared from the SCE lexicon in the present day. Similarly, new words have entered the SCE vocabulary as a result of its changing environment. We therefore decided to focus our data analysis on lexical items which are still present in the lexicon of current SCE speakers. For future studies, however, we may choose to embark on an extensive investigation of such 'dead' terms and explore the reasons for their disappearance.

Conclusion

Before further studies are conducted on the changes in the meanings of Malay words used in SCE, we have proposed classifying them according to whether they are pure loanwords with full retention of meaning, narrowed loanwords, broadened loanwords or native creations foreign to the source language. To make the classification easier, we propose making the categories of narrowing and broadening more precise in Winford's (2003) classification of lexical contact phenomena. The categorisation of Malay words as they are used in SCE is not always neat due to insufficient literature on whether these words underwent a change in meaning or accumulated a broader range of meanings in the source language before being adopted into SCE.

Equivalence in the grammatical category, economy of use and social motivations are three key factors that could account for the integration of Malay words in SCE. In addition, the integration of Malay words in SCE works in tandem with the more dominant substratist influence of Chinese languages on the grammar of SCE. More robust Malay words such as *makan* have been so deeply integrated in SCE that inflectional affixes from English are attached to it, over and above the myriad senses in which it is employed, from the literal meaning of 'eating' to its metaphorical or figurative uses. Finally, we have also provided an insight into how broadening and native creations of Malay words in SCE have had an impact on the ways in which these same words are used in the source language.

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APPENDIX A

Corpus of Malay Words in SCE

SCE word(s)	Meaning in SCE	Source word
1 Agak-agak, agaration	Estimate	Agak-agak
2 Akan datang	Coming soon	Akan datang
3 Angkat	To curry flavour	Angkat
4 Apa macham	How	Apa macam
5 Atas	Uppity	Atas
6 Balik	Repeat, to go back	Balik
7 Balik kampung	To go home/back	Balik kampung
8 Barang-barang	Things	Barang-barang
9 Bedek	To bluff	Bedek
10 Blanja	To give someone a treat	Belanja
11 Bodoh	Stupid	Bodoh
12 Boleh	Can, to be permitted	Boleh
13 Botak head	Bald	Botak
14 Buat bodoh	To ignore, to be nonchalant	Buat bodoh
15 buaya	womaniser	Buaya
16 Cabut	To flee/escape	Cabut
17 Garang	Fierce	Garang
18 Geram	Angry, to feel affection	Geram
19 Gerek	Fun, enjoyable	Gerek
20 Gila	Mad, crazy	Gila
21 Goreng	Make up something/a bluff	Goring
22 Habis	Finished, completed	Habis
23 Hantam	To make a wild guess	Hentam
24 Jalan-jalan	Get a breath of fresh air, go out	(ber)jalan-jalan
25 Jambu	Attractive	Jambu
26 Jelak	Satiated with food	Jelak
27 Kachau	To disturb/harass	Kacau
28 Kaki	Friends, cronies	Kaki
29 Kawan	Friend	Kawan
30 Kayu	To describe a person who acts inappropriately	Kayu
31 Ketuk	To take advantage of someone in a monetart /financial sense	Ketuk
32 Koyak	In a terrible state	Koyak
33 Kucing-kurap	Of low status	Kucing-kurap
34 Lagi	More (intensifier)	Lagi
35 Langgar face	Ugly	-
36 Leceh	Troublesome	Leceh