
Emblematic Codeswitching Represented in Fiction: the case of the Malay discourse markers *lah*, *what*, *ah*

Mohammad Fadzeli Bin Jaafar
Department of Linguistics,
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia

Introduction

Studies on the usage of the particle *-lah* have been carried out by quite a few scholars.¹ The particle *-lah*, seen at a glance, appears to have no meaning as it is only a bound morpheme. However, the particle *-lah* has a specific function in Malay. According to Asmah Haji Omar (1986: 209), the particle *-lah* is an assertive word which is often used in affirmative and command sentences. Asmah (and most Malaysian grammarians) believe that the function of *-lah* is specifically to serve as a “softener”. The following examples are from Asmah (1986: 214):²

Request:

- (1) Tolong*lah* buka pintu ini.
Please open this door
- (2) Silalah masuk.
Please come in.

Command:

- (3) Keluar*lah* sekarang.
Go out now.
- (4) Buat saja*lah*.
Just do it.

Based on the examples above, we can see that *-lah* can change the structure and the meaning of the Malay sentence. Without *-lah* utterances (1) and (2) are command sentences. However, by adding *-lah* the meaning changes from command to request. And by adding *-lah* in a sentence the politeness of a speaker in requesting something is manifested. So, in this context we can clearly see that the particle *-lah* functions as a “softener” for the politeness marker ‘tolong’ *please* and ‘sila’ also *please*. Examples (3) and (4) make use of *-lah* to further stress a command and it is normally uttered in a slightly high pitch. Thus far, we have seen briefly how *-lah* is used in Malay grammar. In this study, however, I will discuss the usage and functions of *-lah* in written discourse. For this purpose I have chosen a short passage from a short story written by Siew Yue Killingley.³ It is the assumption of this study that *-lah* carries several different functions, such as softening, confirming, emphasising, parsing, intensifying, and expressing (please see below, for example 3.2.1.1).

As *-lah* is also quite widely used in bilingual conversation in Malaysia, I will also pay attention to code-switching in this study. Before describing the functions of *-lah* in detail, I will first discuss the previous studies carried out on *-lah* and will attempt to present my views on the functions of *-lah*.

Code-switching refers to the practice of alternatively using two or more languages or dialects in one speech situation (Eastman, 1978: 117). It is a normal phenomenon in many parts of the world (see Pride, 1971. 26; Wardhaugh,

1993: 103). In Malaysia, for example, where Malay is the national language and English is used as the second language, code-switching is also quite normal. It is therefore a common practice in Malaysia for a person to switch from one language to another without even being conscious about it.

In Malaysia, those who are English educated would normally speak Standard Malaysian English when speaking to foreigners. However, they would switch to Malay when speaking to a fellow Malaysian. I believe that this is very much related to culture. There are certain expressions which a Malaysian finds rather uncomfortable to use when talking to a fellow Malaysian. These expressions are simply not compatible with their cultural identity. For example, if somebody says to his/her friend, "*You look beautiful in your new dress*", the reply could be, "*No-lah, you look much prettier*". It is interesting to note that this reply carries a certain social function. Generally, it is immodest for a Malaysian to accept a compliment with just a mere, "*Thanks*" or "*Thank you*". "*No-lah*" spoken softly would reflect the speaker's humility, (and sometimes even embarrassment) and, as a natural extension, the *lah* serves as an identity marker. For the purpose of this article, I shall use the term identity marker as a certain characteristic in conversation which reflects the identity of the speaker.

2.0 Previous studies

2.1 Richards and Tay (1977)

According to the study carried out by Richards and Tay, the particle *la*⁴ is a unique feature of the low variety of Singapore English. Here, the study is more inclined to discuss the distinction between High and Low varieties of English in Singapore. They believe that *la* is normally used in informal situations. They further claim that *la* is a code marker which identifies informality, familiarity, solidarity and rapport between the participants (p. 155). They also suggest that *la* serves various functions, such as accomplishing requests, invitations, promises and expressing caution. Richards and Tay tried to identify the origin of *la*. Based on their studies they believe that *la* is of Hokkien origin.

"We propose that *la* in Singapore English originates in Hokkien, rather than in Mandarin or standard Malay, and suggest that it has also penetrated colloquial Malay via Hokkien".⁵ (Richard's and Tay, 1977:155)

In 1982, Richards reiterated the claim that *la* is a unique feature in the communicative style of Singapore English. This particle, can be attached to a variety of morphemes from local languages and from English. Richards, however, did not discuss the functions of *la* beyond the word level. He gave this example (p. 237):

- (5) That, depend on you *la*, if you want to take off one day or your office give you, that's up to you *la*.

In the example given above, Richards clearly demonstrated that *la* could be used in the middle of an utterance as well as at the end. This contradicted his earlier finding with Tay in 1977. He also drew a comparison between Singapore-English and Tagalog-English. According to him, *na* in Tagalog English is structurally similar to *la* in Singapore English. For example, 'Lets go *na* !.

2.2 Kwan-Terry (1978)

Another study of *-lah* was carried out by Kwan-Terry in 1978. She proposed that *la* and *what* reflect the emotive attitude of the speaker. In her research, she tried to distinguish between the two variant forms of *la* in Singapore English by using duration and stress. The two forms are the stressed form (represented as *lá*) and the unstressed form (represented as *lâ*) which carry different meanings. She suggested that *la* is used to indicate friendliness for persuasive purposes. For example (p. 23):

- (6) "Make it cheaper *la*. Don't make so much profit this time *la*".

Example (6) illustrates a bargaining conversation between a customer and a shop-keeper. The customer in this situation is trying to persuade the shop-keeper to reduce the price. Here, *la* is uttered unstressed and functions as a "softener" for the utterance.

In discussing the particle *what*, she claimed that *what* is normally used at the end of the sentence and it reflects the emotion of the speaker. Her example; "You told me to wait here *what*" Here, the function of *what* is quite different from *la*, because the speaker is showing his objection to the question, "Why didn't you come in?" (p. 25). Kwan distinguished the stressed form from the unstressed form by referring to the intonation of the utterances.

2.3 Bell and Ser (1983)

The aim of the study conducted by Bell and Ser was to investigate this discourse phenomenon further and to substantiate the previous studies on *la* made by Richards and Tay (1977) and Kwan-Terry (1978). Bell and Ser focused on the variant forms and social functions of *la*. They questioned the claims made by Richards and Tay that *la* only occurred at the end of a sentence. The results showed that *la* not only occurred at the end of the sentence but also at the beginning and the middle of a sentence. For example:

(7) *la* the dog ate the food

(8) The dog *la* ate the food

(9) The dog ate the food *la*

According to Bell and Ser the examples above can be accepted in Singaporean English utterances. However, every sentence has a different meaning. In example (7) the particle *la* is used to emphasise and contrast the focus of the sentence, which is 'It was the dog that ate the food'. In contrast, example (8) tells us that 'The dog really did eat the food'. By using these examples, they tried to show the pragmatic value of *la*. In discussing the difference between *la* and *lah*, they say they believe that *la* signals a decrease in the social distance between participants. On the other hand, *lah* increases social distance and power between the participants (p. 15).

2.4 Ken and Yin (1988)

The study made by Ken and Yin investigated Kwan-Terry's claim that the two variant forms of *la* contrast in duration and stress, and the claims made by Bell and Ser that these two forms of *la* can change the pragmatic force underlying the speech act (p. 154). They also tried to find out the roles of intonation, stress, and duration, in contributing to the pragmatic meaning of *la*. The analysis of their study showed that *la* consists of three variants which contrast in the three pitch heights of high, mid and low. They also found that (p. 158):

"...the utterances can perform various communicative functions that can be marked with various subtle emotive attitudes expressed by the speakers"

They also suggested the use of a tonal-intonational descriptive framework in studying the pragmatic meaning of *lah* in Colloquial Singapore English.

2.5 Fraser-Gupta (1994)

The particle *-lah* has also been discussed by Fraser-Gupta in 1994. In her study, she appeared to agree with Richards' view that *-lah* is loaned from one of the dialects of South China. She claimed that *-lah* is used to indicate the attitude of the speakers to what they are saying. It can be assumed that Gupta is trying to tell us that the function of *-lah* is a meta-discursive device, like punctuation in written discourse. She further added that *-lah* usually follows a constituent and quite often occurs at the end of a sentence, but not always. However, unfortunately, Fraser-Gupta did not give any examples to support her statement that *-lah* could also occur in the middle of sentence.

Fraser-Gupta also touched on the tentative particle *-ah* which is normally used to mark a request by the speaker. According to her, *-ah* compared to *lah* is the weaker form of an assertion. For example, "The first one downstairs *ah*" (p.10). Fraser-Guota also touched on *mah* and *what*. These particles, according to her, are normally used by the speaker to forcefully contradict what has been said. The example given: "I never ever draw *what*" (p.10).

Finally, it is interesting to note that *-lah* in her observation is used by Singaporean children to forcefully instruct their elder relatives or parents. For example, "Put this first *lah*" (p. 67).⁶ From what is written, it can be said that Fraser-Gupta's study generally revolves around the pragmatic particles in Colloquial Singapore English (CSE). The result showed that most Singaporeans use a variety of particles in their daily conversations, including *na*, *mah*, *what*, *lah* and *ah*.

2.6 Conclusions drawn from these studies

Based on what has been written, it can be seen that the previous studies of *-lah* were based on several sources of data. Richards and Tay (1977: 42) used a very short fragment of a recorded telephone conversation. Kwan-Terry (1978: 22) obviously discussed *-lah* and *what* based on her observations only. Bell and Ser (1978: 22), on the other hand, studied the syntax of *-lah* by using questionnaires, informal interviews and also introspection and intuition. Ken

and Yen (1988: 153), researched *lah* based on recorded data of child and adult interactions. Then, Fraser-Gupta (1994: 59) claimed that her study was recorded in a naturalistic setting.

Most of them also agreed that *la* is a unique feature (i.e Richards and Tay, 1977; Richards, 1982; Ken and Yin, 1988) In fact, the previous studies focussed on the pragmatic meaning of *la* in Singapore English. Ken and Yin (1988) however, gave special attention to the relation between the intonation and the pragmatic meanings of *la*.

3.0 A study of emblematic use of *lah* in predominantly English discourse

3.1 The data used in this study

This study will be different from the earlier studies in that the aim is to determine the functions of *lah* in written discourse, and specifically in fiction. It will take an empirical approach and will utilise the data obtained from a short story.

Briefly, the story written by Siew Yue Killingley in 1968 is about two lovers in a university in Malaysia. In this extract they are discussing how they can communicate with each other during the vacation. The conversation took place in a lounge. The characters are Rukumani, a girl and Devanayagam, a boy. Both of them are Malaysians of Indian origin and native Tamil speakers who are in love and want to hide their relationship from their families. Rukumani suggested that Devanayagam correspond with her by making use of Amy Wong (her neighbour). Please see Appendix 1 in this study below).

To enable the reader to follow the argument clearly, I shall assign numbers and letters to the sentences used in the example. The use of these numbers and letters will be explained in the following paragraph. I will then discuss the local functions of *lah* in the text.

3.2 Data analysis and the problems

The analysis of this study is based on two types of information: paragraph information and sentence information. For example:

(10) (3.3) (D) "He's a joker, so sure tell my father I send love letters.

(11) (3.4) (D) But still, try *lah!*'

The first entry in the examples above has the number "(3.3) and (3.4)". In example (10), the number "(3.3)" indicates the third paragraph and third sentence. In example (11), the number "(3.4)" indicates the fourth sentence of the same paragraph. The following symbol, (D) represents the speaker (in this case D represents Devanayagam). It is hoped that it will help the reader to understand the story, especially the dialogue between the speakers. The italicised letters are used to indicate the focused word, such as *lah* in example (11). It must be pointed out here that I did face some problems in interpreting the meaning of certain utterances accurately as my interpretation of the meaning is closely tied to my perception of the situation. A different reader may interpret the meaning differently. At this juncture, it is important to distinguish between recorded data and fictional data. By using recorded data, the identity of the speaker and the meaning of the utterance can be accurately known based on the speaker's intonation. However, by using the narrative data (in this case, a short story) we can only refer to the data, and try to make our own assumptions based on the context. However, I am convinced that it is an advantage to use the data in this study as the writer and the characters in the story are Malaysian. As a bilingual Malaysian I have no problem in arriving at an interpretation of the meaning of the utterances exchanged between the speakers in the story.

3.2.1 The functions of *-lah* in fiction

The basis of this study is the view proposed by Gumperz, "...that switching at a particular moment conveys semantically significant information and can also help to amplify or emphasise a point" (see Grosjean, 1982: 152-153). It is my intention here to illustrate the significance of this statement for the study of code-switching in the speech of Malaysians who are bilingual in Malay-English. I will use the occurrences of the particle *-lah* in the narrative (by Killingley) as the basis of the study. Gumperz's statement clearly tells us that language switching in any case and in any language conveys semantic information and can help the speaker to emphasise a certain point in conversation. Taking this as the basis of my argument, I will attempt to elaborate on the functions of *-lah* in bilingual communication in Malaysia. As mentioned earlier, this study will focus on the interpretation of *-lah* as a function to indicate

politeness and to emphasise, to confirm and to intensify; and to indicate the speaker's attitude to a topic.

3.2.1.1 The attitude of the speaker to the topic

There are two instances of *-lah* in the narrative extract. There are also two instances of *what* and four *ah* in the same narrative. The particle *-lah* is a discourse marker in this data. It carries more than one meaning. For example:

(12) 3.4 (D) But still, try*lah* !'

(13) 6.0 (D) 'Okay, Okay*lah* !'

The general meaning of *-lah* may be inferred from the examples above. Mostly *-lah* appears to indicate the politeness of the speaker. Example (12) clearly indicates that the speaker is expressing his attitude towards what he is saying and, at the same time, signalling closeness to his interlocutor. In this situation the speaker, Devanayagam, had been forced by his girl friend to write to her, and he was having difficulty in finding the opportunity to write the letters and receive the replies. The situation is narrated as below:

(14) 3.0 (D) I think so can, replied Devanayagam, 'but helluva difficult man.

3.1(D) See *ah*, my sisters brothers all, running all over the house and if I write they will ask if I'm learning and want to look.

3.2(D) Also *ah*, if I go to post letter that clerk at the post office can see me.

3.3(D) He's a joker, so sure tell my father I send love letters.

To please his girlfriend, Devanayagam despite the forscen difficulty, agreed to write to her and replied, 'But still, try *lah* ! Here, without *-lah*, the sentence "But still, try" would lack emphasis and would be imbued with less meaning. It cannot be ascertained here whether the utterance was in low or high tone, since this is written data which represents speech. But, *-lah* in this context may indicate the mild exasperation and resignation of the speaker.

3.2.1.2 Confirming and intensifying

Based on the data, I also believe that *-lah* is used to further confirm a statement. For example, in utterance (13) above Deva said, 'Okay, Okay *lah* !' In my interpretation, this utterance means that he is serious. The particle *-lah* in this context is quite different from the example (12). This is because Deva in his speech uses *-lah* as an expression to further strengthen the confirmation. By using *-lah* the author showed that Deva, had in fact strengthened his promise to Rukumani.

The other function of *-lah* in this context is to intensify a statement. In utterance (13) for example, the speaker has been forced to make a promise. The following is the immediate discourse context of the utterance:

(15) 5.0 (R) 'Suppose you tell them you want to go for shows.

5.1 (R) Then can simply go somewhere and just scribble a note to me.

5.2 (R) Don't think I'm so hard up ah, but since I suffer you at least should write to me when you're free'.

6.0 (D) Okay, Okay *lah* !'

If the examples of *-lah* in (15) had been spoken, it is likely that it would have been expressed in high tone. The function of *-lah* here is to intensify and strengthen the assurance made. In this case it is further intensified by the repetition of the word, "Okay"

3.2.1.3 The syntactic constraints on *-lah*

I am inclined to agree with Richards and Tay that *-lah* generally can occur at the end of the sentence. Richards and Tay proposed that *-lah* can be attached to different morphemes from local languages and from English. This may not be the case. In fact, *-lah* may more be versatile in its character. As shown in sentence (6.0) above, it is attached to the word "Okay" The particle *-lah* is added at the end of the utterance by most Malaysians especially when conversing in English to make an utterance sound more informal.

It is also interesting to note that the habit of inserting the particle *-lah* in English conversation by Malaysians is prevalent but in most cases the speakers are unaware⁷ of the act. It is based on this fact that I strongly believe that *-lah* is a very prominent and powerful identity marker of Malaysian English speakers.

3.2.2 The functions of *what* in fiction

The word *what* literally means 'apa' in Malay. In Malay conversation the word 'apa' normally appears in utterances such as question tags to confirm or to emphasise a known fact. For example:

(16) Hari Isnin memang hari kerja apa.

Monday is a working day, what.

(17) Ahmad suruh saya datang sini apa.

Ahmad asked me to come here what.

The above examples illustrate the function of *what* in turning statements 'Monday is a working day' and 'Ahmad asked me to come here' into tag questions seeking confirmation for propositions. The examples also show that the question tag *what* normally occurs at the end of the utterance (please compare with Fraser-Gupta in 2.5 above).

In the example of this study, (2.2) (R) *Can send to Amy's house, what.*, the function of *what* fits in well with the hypothesis given above. As can be seen from the conversation, the reply given was in response to the earlier question in (2.1) 'This time you think you can write or not?' and the fact is already known to both interlocutors.

In this respect, I must say that I have to disagree with Kwan-Terry's claim that the function of *what* is limited just to indicate disapproval or objection. As demonstrated in the example given by her "You told me to wait here *what*" it is obvious that the speaker was confirming the instruction given to him by the other speaker in this case in a rather grudging manner. The function of the

particle *what* is therefore much wider, i.e. to confirm or emphasise a known fact either in normal utterance or to indicate disapproval or objection.

3.2.3 The function of *ah* in fiction

The particle *ah* is normally used in Malay conversation to assert a certain point. In most cases, the utterances using the particle *ah* are short and usually followed by a longer utterance. For example:

(18) Tengok *ah*, pokok itu akan tumbang.

See ah, the tree will fall.

Example (18) above describes the function of *ah*, in asserting the view that the tree will fall. The particle *ah* in this example is used as an expression to attract the listener's attention.

The four examples of *ah* found in the data are shown below:

(19) (3.1) (D) See *ah*, my sister brothers all, running all over the house and if I write they all ask if I'm learning and want to look.

(3.2) (D) Also *ah*, if I go to post letter that clerk at the post office can see me.

(5.2) (R) Don't think I'm so hard up *ah*, but since I suffer for you, at least should write to me when you're free.

(6.1) (D) Not that I don't want *ah*, but very difficult.

The utterances above reflect the speakers' attempt to assert certain points in their conversation. In (3.1) and (3.2) Devanayagam tried to assert the fact that he has difficulties in trying to write and post the letters. In (5.2), Rukumani tried to assert the fact that she is not that hard up. In (6.1) Devanayagam tried to assert the fact that he is unwilling to write. It must be noted here that *ah* in

examples (5.2) and (6.1) serves to assert the point expressed in the first part of the utterance.

4.0 Conclusion

In the course of doing this study, I have made some new discoveries particularly about the use of *-lah*. It is hoped that the findings discussed in this study will serve as a basis for further investigation. I also hope I have been able to demonstrate that the use of discourse markers such as *lah*, *what* and *ah* by Malaysian English bilinguals constitute a form of emblematic code-switching. In fact, switching using markers such as *lah*, *what* and *ah* serves broad functions: (1) it is a means of sounding more Malaysian, that is, it is a means of displaying a particular social identity; (2) it is also a resource that speakers use to convey their attitude to a particular topic; (3) it is a means of accomplishing local pragmatic functions such as intensifying or confirming a point.

Note

- 1 I would like to thank Dr. Marilyn Martin Jones, Ghazali Abu Hassan and Dr. Teo Kok Seong for their comments on this paper .
- 2 The translation is mine.
- 3 "Everything's Arranged" by Sue Yue Killingley in L. Fernando (Ed.) (1986) *22 Malaysian Stories* Heinemann Educational Books (Asia) Ltd. Kuala Lumpur.
- 4 *la* here is similar to the particle *-lah* in this study, because the only difference between them is phonetic. See Richards and Tay (p. 152) in their footnote.
- 5 I am inclined to believe that *-lah* has its origin in the Malay language. My contention is based on the following: firstly, in many examples the location of *-lah* in the word order in the English sentence and the Malay sentence is identical. Secondly, its functions in the English language are similiar to some of its functions in the Malay language. Thirdly, it must be noted here that Malaysia and Singapore share the same cultural and ethnic make up. Interaction between people speaking different languages may have assisted in the spread of the particle *-lah* . Here I believe that it originated from the Malay language and subsequently spread to Hokkien and English. My view is based on the fact that the use of *-lah* in English is not prevalent in other Hokkien-speaking communities in Asia. In Malaysia and Singapore, most Hokkien speakers can speak Malay and may have picked up the particle in this way. It is less likely that Malay and Tamil speakers picked up the particle from Hokkien speakers as most of them do not speak Hokkien. Also, as pointed out by Richards (1982), *na*, which is a *-lah* equivalent, is found in the Tagalog language. Tagalog is a variant of the Malay language and many words in Tagalog are actually Malay words. This strengthens my belief that *-lah* originated from the Malay language. However, a more detailed study is desirable to further support this argument.
- 6 This also happens in Malaysia where *-lah* is often used by children or teenagers when they wish to ask their older brother or sister or parent something. In many cases, in my observation the tone of *-lah* is quite high in such situations. At this point I agree with Gupta that *-lah* in certain cases carries a connotation of assertiveness.

- 7 Most researchers believe that the speakers are often unaware of the fact that they are switching from one language to another. Please see Grosjean, 1982; Holmes, 1993; Wardhaugh, 1993.

Bibliography

- Asmah Haji Omar. 1986. *Nahu Melayu Mutakhir*. Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.
- Bell, T.R. and Ser, L.P.Q. 1983. 'To-day la? 'Tomorrow lah'; the LA Particle in Singapore English. *RELC Journal* 14:2, 1-18.
- Eastman, C.M. 1978. *Aspects of Language and Culture*. San Francisco: Chandler and Sharp Publishers, Inc.
- Gupta, Anthea Fraser. 1994. *The Step-tongue: Children's English in Singapore*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters Ltd.
- Holmes, J. 1993. *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*. New York: Longman.
- Ken, L.K. and Yin, L.M. 1988. A Proposed Descriptive Framework for the Pragmatic Meanings of the Particle *La*. In Colloquial Singaporean English (150-161). In B. Mc Carthy (ed.) *Asian Pacific Papers*.
- Killingley, S.Y. 1968. Everything's Arranged in 22 *Malaysian Stories*. In L Fernando (ed.) Kuala Lumpur: Heinemann Educational Books (Asia) Ltd.
- Kwan-Terry, A. 1978. The Meaning and the Source of the "la" and the "what" Particles in Singapore English. *RELC Journal* 9: 2, 22-36.
- Pride, J.B. 1977 *The Social Meaning of Language*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Richards, J.C. and Tay, Mary, W.J. 1977. The *La* Particle in Singapore English (141-155). In W Crewe (ed.). *The English Language in Singapore*, Singapore: Eastern University Press.
- Richards, J.C. 1982. Rhetorical and Communicative Styles in the New Varieties of English (227-248). In Pride, J.B. (ed.). *New Englishes*. London: Newbury House Publishers, Inc.
- Wardhaugh, R. 1993. *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*. Second Edition. Oxford: Blackwell.

Appendix 1

- 1.0 The university term is over and the two friends discuss how they can communicate with each other during the vacation.
- 2.0 Devanayagam and Rukumani are sitting in the lounge, watching the distracting and excited girls rushing by with packed cases, longing to go home to some decent food.

The utterances below come from the dialogue between Rukumani and Devanayagam ((D) refers to Devanayagam and (R) refers to Rukumani)

- 2.1 (R) 'This time you think you can write or not?
- 2.2 (R) Can send to Amy's house *what*.
- 2.3 (R) My mother likes her mother.
- 2.4 (R) I can easily go there to get your letters.
- 2.5 (R) But I think better you don't put my name outside.
- 2.6 (R) Can just put 'Miss Amy Wong'
- 2.7 (R) She knows your writing and won't open.
- 3.0 (D) I think so can, replied Devanayagam, but helluva difficult man.
- 3.1 (D) See *ah* my sisters brothers all running all over the house and if I write they all ask if I'm learning and want to look.
- 3.2 (D) Also *ah* if I go to post letter that clerk at the post office can see me.
- 3.3 (D) He's a joker, so sure tell my father I send love letters.
- 3.4 (D) But still, try *lah!*
- 4.0 Rukumani was a little piqued.

- 4.1 It was all right for Deva to put off writing to her because he could go out to shows with his friends.
- 4.2 Moreover he had the tail-end of the vacation to look forward to when he could come back to the U and not have his family on top of him.
- 4.3 She would have to suffer all sorts of deprivations in Ipoh.
- 5.0 (R) 'Suppose you tell them you want to go for shows.
- 5.1 (R) Then can simply go somewhere and just scribble a note to me.
- 5.2 (R) Don't think I'm so hard up *ah*, but since I suffer you at least should write to me when you're free'.
- 6.0 (D) 'Okay, okay *lah!*
- 6.1 (D) Not that I don't want *ah*, but very difficult.
- 6.2 (D) Also if you know I love then should be enough what; what for want to write the whole time?'

(The first number refers to the paragraph and the second number refers to the sentence)

This extract is from the short story "Everything's Arranged" by Siew Yue Killingley in *22 Malaysian Stories* ed. L. Fernando (1968) Heinemann Educational Books (Asia) Ltd. Kuala Lumpur.