SINGLISH AS A DIALECT IN SINGAPORE

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ABSTRACT

As a dialect in Singapore, Singlish have its uniqueness and special position in Singapore society. Based on Peter Druggill's Theory, this article aims to investigate the differences between Singlish and standard English in terms of vocabulary, consonant, vowels, diphthongs, stress and intonation, morphology. Particles, questions, others grammatical features, Examples of the Term, It's Origin and It's Definition**,** English words with different meanings in Singlish, expressions, examples of the term, it's origin and it's definition. Interview on two interviewee were carried out to find out their usage of Singlish in daily life. Singlish however is still primarily a second language, in a period of fluidity of vocabulary and especially syntax because the creolisation process is not yet complete.

Keywords*: Singlish, dialect, Singapore, creol*

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INTRODUCTION

The term dialect is used in two distinct ways, even by scholars of language. One usage refers to a variety of a language that is characteristic of a particular group of the language's speakers. The term is applied most often to regional speech patterns, but a dialect may also be defined by other factors, such as social class. A dialect that is associated with a particular social class can be termed a socialect; a regional dialect may be termed a regiolect or topolect. The other usage refers to a language socially subordinate to a regional or national standard language, often historically cognate to the standard, but not a variety of it or in any other sence derived from it. A dialect is distinguished by its vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation.

If Standard English is not therefore a language, an accent, a style or a register, then of course we are obliged to say what it actually is. The answer is, as at least most British sociolinguists are agreed, that Standard English ia a dialect. As we saw above, Standard English is simply one variety of English among many. It is a sub-variety of English. Sub-varieties of languages are usually referred to as *dialects*, and languages are often described as *consisting of* dialects.

Peter Drudgill's Theory

Trudgill is a well-known authority on dialects, as well as being one of the first to apply Labovian sociolinguistic methodology in the UK, and to provide a framework for studying dialect contact phenomena. Peter Trudgill is also the auther of Chapter 1 ("The Meanings of Words Should Not be Allwed to Vary or Change") of the popular linguistics book "Language Myths" of which he is also a co-editor.

The fact is that all dialects, both traditional and modern are equally grammatical and correct. They only differ because of their social significance. As a result of a historical accident the Standard English dialect is the dialect that is used in writing and so is used for official purposes. This is why it's taught in British schools for reading and writing. Trudgill's theory has a lot to do with overt and convert prestige.

Overt prestige - is the comes with using the type of language that is nationally recognized and is used in official and educational contexts. Speakers who use standard English are therefore considered well educated, intelligent because they are using the "correct" and "best" version of English.

Convert prestige - on the other hand, comes from not identifying with the standard language. It is the prestige that comes with group loyalty and solidarity. Working-class speakers show their class and region by sticking to non-standard norms. One theory is that women are socially insecure so they are more careful to use the overtly socially prestigious forms than men.

Another is that working class language is associated with being rough and tough. In a survey people were asked to rate how well they thought recorded speakers would do in a street fight. Those with regional accents came out on top every time. These traits are considered macho and tough so men tend to lean towards talking like this and women seem to lean away from talking like this. It is worth considering that everyone uses accent and dialect more in more informal situations like at home with friends and family.

However in an interview they would speak very differently. Trudgill found that in Norwich the ending "ng" on words like walking and talking is the prestigious variable. Like the "r" in New York, it is used by upper class and more in formal situations than informal situations. Trudgill took his research a step further and looked at the sex as well as the class of the speaker. Then Trudgill did some self evaluation tests. He showed people in his survey prestigious and stigmatized pronunciation and asked them to say which they thought they normally used. He already knew the truth of what they spoke from his survey, so he was able to compare how people actually speak compared with how they thought they did. What they actually told him was how they would like to talk. He found that women of all classes tend to over-report (claim they're using the prestigious variant when they actually don't). Men of all classes tend to under-report

(claim they used the non-standard form when in fact they used the prestigious one). This suggests that men and women as well as upper and lower class are aiming to speak a different type of language. This proves Trudgill's theory and shows women try to speak in a more prestigious way whereas men prefer to speak with a more non-standard dialect. This was also proven in the interview which was conducted. From the two interviewees, it could be seen and observed that the woman (Mrs Michelle Lai) was trying her level best to be fluent and correct in whatever she was going to answer but as for Mr Khoo, he was very relaxed, calm and spoke fast without much pauses, although he was not fluent.

Why do People Speak Different Dialects?

This is easier to answer if we ask: why doesn't everyone speak the same? Like all languages, English is constantly changing. Some changes spread out to cover the whole country; others spread only so far, leading to dialect differences between areas. The spread of changes may be caused by physical barriers to communications.

The fact that English has been spoken in England for 1500 years and for just 200 years in Australia explains why we have so many more regional dialects. In Britain, it is often possible to tell where someone comes from within 15 miles. In Australia there has not been tome for such regional variety to develop, though small differences are now beginning to appear.

It is unlikely though that there will ever be as much dialectal variation in Australia as in England. Modern transport and communication systems are very different from even 100 years ago. It is unlikely that English will break up into a number of different non-intelligible languages. German and Norwegian languages developed when people moved apart and were no longer communicating with one another. In modern times that is unlikely to happen.

Accent is something learnt early in our lives, a complex process of synchronizing lips, jaw,

tongue, soft palate and vocal chords. Once learned, it is difficult to unlearn. Accents therefore do not change as readily as incorporating new words into our repertoire. To change accents we seem to need regular face-to-face contact with speakers of different accents. Hearing accents on television does not have the same effect.

"The fact is that all dialects, both traditional and modern, are grammatically and correct. They differ only in their social significance and function. As a result of a historical accident, the standard English dialect is today the dialect which is used in writing, and which by convention, is used for official purposes. This I why we teach children in Britain schools to read and write in this dialect. This does not mean, however, that there is anything wrong or linguistically interferer about the other dialect which …are spoken by … the majority of population of England."

Differences in Language Used Between Dialects

Dialects differ in their pronunciation (accents), grammar and vocabulary. With Modern Dialects, pronunciation is the biggest clue as to where someone comes from. But there is also another difference in dialect use – how a dialect is used and what is for.

Some dialects, for instance, are known for the ability of their speakers to conduct conversations containing quickfire wit and repartee – This leads to stereotyping of speakers as having certain characteristics.

Other Dialects

It is important to remember also that there are overseas varieties of English, such as American and Canadian English, and varieties where English is a second language, such as Malaysia, India, Malta and Nigeria. Here, English is used widely in government and education but may have few native speakers, leading to distinctive, institutionalized forms. Indians English, for example, has certain words and pronunciations in the same way that American English does.

English in British cities has also developed as a results of the huge number of different languages spoken as the mother tongue. This is nothing new. The Jewish language Yiddish was spoken in the East End of London through the early years of the 20th century. Norwich was more than one-third Dutch-speaking in the 16th century, and Dutch continued to be spoken there for over 200 years.

All the languages of the world would appear to demonstrate some degree of stylistic differentiation in this sense, reflecting the wide range of social relationships and social situations found, to a greater or lesser extent, in all human societies. It is believed, with Labov (1972) that there is no such thing as a single-style speaker, although it is obviously also the case that the repertoire of styles available to individual speakers will be a reflection of their social experiences and, in many cases, also their education. It is of course important here to distinguish between individual speakers of languages and those languages themselves, but it is clear that languages too may differ similarly in the range of styles available to their speakers. In many areas of the world, switching from informal to formal situation also involves switching from one language to another. In such cases, it is probable that neither of the two languages involved will have the full range of styles available to speakers in monolingual situations.

English as it is employed in areas where it is the major native language of the community, such as in Britain Isles, North America and Australasia, is a language which has the fullest possible range of styles running from the most to the least formal. This obviously does not mean to say, however, that all speakers have equal access to or ability in all styles, and it is generally accepted that one of the objectives of mother tongue education is to give pupils exposure to styles at the more formal end of the continuum that they might otherwise not gain any ability in using.

Background of the Dialect of Singapore English//Singlish

Singlish is the English-based creole spoken and written colloquially in Singapore. Although

English is the lexifier language, Singlish has its unique slang and syntax, which are more pronounced in informal speech.

Singlish vocabulary formally takes after British English (in terms of spelling and abbreviations), although naming conventions are in a mix of American and British ones (with American ones on the rise). For instance, local media have "sports pages" (sport in British English) and "soccer coverage" (the use of the word "soccer" is not common in British media). Singlish also uses many words borrowed from Hokkien, the Chinese dialect native to more than 75% of the Chinese in Singapore, and from Malay. In many cases, English words take on the meaning of their Chinese counterparts, resulting in a shift in meaning. This is most obvious in such cases as "borrow"/ "lend", which are functionally equivalent in Singlish and mapped to the same Mandarin word, which can mean to lend or to borrow. For example: ***"Oi, can I borrow your calculator" / "Hey, can lend me your calculator?"***

Singapore English has its origins in the schools of colonial Singapore. In the nineteenth century very few children went to school at all, and even fewer were educated in English. The local lingua franca was a pidginised variety of Malay, called Pasar Melayu, Bazaar Malay. This can still be heard in the region, especially from older people. The people who spoke English and sent their children to English medium schools were mainly the Europeans, the Eurasians (people of mixed racial ancestry), some of the small minorities, such as the Jews, some of the Indians and Ceylonese, and also a group of Chinese people usually called the Straits Chinese, who had ancestors of long residence in the region, and who spoke a variety of Malay usually called Baba Malay which was influenced by Hokkien Chinese and by Bazaar Malay. The fact that all these children would have known Malay probably explains why most of the loan words in Singapore Colloquial are from Malay.

Singapore English probably grew out of the English of the playground of these children of various

linguistic backgrounds who were learning English at school. As more and more of its people experienced learning English at school, English became widely spoken, alongside Singapore's many other languages. Since Singapore became an independent Republic in 1965, the use of English has increased still further. For many Singaporeans, English is the main language. Many families speak English at home and it is one of the first language learnt by about half of the current pre-school children. Well over half of the population born since 1965 are native speakers of English, and the proportion of native speakers of English is still rising.

Nearly everyone in Singapore speaks more than one language, with many people speaking three or four. Most children grow up bilingual from infancy and learn more languages as they grow up. Naturally the presence of other languages (especially various varieties of Malay and of Chinese) has influenced the English of Singapore. The influence is especially apparent in the kind of English that is used informally, which is popularly called Singlish, but which is called Singapore Colloquial English or Colloquial Singapore English in most academic writing.

Many Singaporeans move smoothly between Singapore Colloquial English and Standard English. As most Singaporeans use a lot of Singapore Colloquial English to their children, children tend to speak Singapore Colloquial English before they speak Standard English. It is still the case in Singapore that the younger you are and the richer your family is, the more likely you are to have English (and that usually means Singapore Colloquial English) as your native language. But Standard English is used in formal contexts, as it is all over the English-using world.

Differences Between Standard English and Singlish

(1) Vocabulary

As you will see from the examples in the sections below, the vocabulary of Singlish is mostly shared with other varieties English. Like all varieties of English, the standard English of

Singapore needs special words to deal with local institutions for example:

Singapore's light rail system, partly above ground and partly below, is called the ***MRT***;

Singapore's major system of government managed housing, in which over 80% of the population live, is called the ***HDB***;

The ***HDB*** run flats. Wealthy people may live in condominiums (made up of apartments), or even in luxurious bungalows (detached properties of one or two storeys);

Children start nursery school at age 3, kindergarden at 4, primary school at 6. they attend secondary schools from age 12 up to 16 (when they take O-levels) then go to junior college (where they take A-levels), or perhaps a VITB before moving on to university or polytechinic; in Singapore people normally go barefoot in the house. The wear ***slippers*** at the beach; the same footwear which in other places called "thongs" or "flip flops".

Naturally Singlish uses all these words too. In addition there are some words especially associated with Singlish, and you can find many dictionaries and glossaries of these in book form and on the web. Some of these words come from English e.g. blur (***adjective, meaning 'confused, ignorant'***)

Others come from other languages spoken in Singapore, especially Malay and Hokkien. We have already seen the pragmatic particles like ***lah, ah*** and ***hor,*** which are frequently used. Speakers of Singlish are not necessarily aware of which language they are from however. These include: ***habis 'finished', makan 'to eat, meal', chope 'to lay a claim to, as when putting bags at a table to indicate reservation', cheem 'difficult, obscure', ang mo 'a white person' or rojak 'mixed, something mixed'.***

Even those words may (after a struggle) start being used as part of Singapore Standard English.

The word kiasu, from Hokkien, started being used in the Singapore press in the 1990s, with italics. In Oktober 2000 it was first seen in Singapore's leading newspaper without the italics. It's a vital word. It means 'always wanting the best for oneself anda willing to try hard to get it': the kiasu student is always the first to get the book out the library (they may even hide the book in the wrong shelf so thatno-one alse can read it), and always the first to get they assignments in to oysters that the take all the oysters onto their plate, to make sure there are enough. Kiasuism is a spirit of self-mankey, as national characteristic, and I think the word can be said to have now passed into local standard!

(2) Consonant

In some accents of English, ***RICE*** and ***RISE*** sound different. In Singapore English they usually sound the same. Singapore English does not distinguish between voiced and voiceless fricatives in final position. This also affects the ***(f)*** and ***(v)*** sounds and the ***(th)*** and ***(dh)*** sounds. Sometimes, especially in informal speech, people do not distinguish between voiced and voiceless plosives in position, so that sometimes in Singapore ***HOP=HOB, BIT=BID, BACK=BAG***. In final position ***(t)*** is often a glottal stop, and ***(d)*** is sometimes too. In words like ***THINK*** and ***BATH*** a ***/t/*** sound id often used. In words like ***THEN*** and ***LEATHER*** a/***d***/ is often used. In careful speech a dental fricative is used for ***(th)***. Some speakers end words like ***BREATH*** with a /***f***/ sound, but this is more unusual.

Tradisionally in Singapore English (as in most kinds of English from England, Australian English, etc) ***/r/*** is pronounced only when it is followed by a vowel. In recent years, however, under the influence of American media, some younger Singaporeans have started to uise an /r/ in words like ***HEART*** and ***PORT***, when they are speaking very carefully. You can sometimes hear an ***/r/*** in other places (***'father and mother'***)! In words like ***ACT, CAST, STOPPED*** etc which end with a consonant cluster, the cluster is often reduced (***e.g. 'ac', 'cas', 'stop'***). This can make it hard to tell whether a person using a past tense form or not.

(3) Vowels

Singapore English does not have a distinction between short and long vowels. In this way it is rather like Hawai'i Creole English. Below shows the examples on the use of the IPA symbols. The word which is pronounced similarly to the sound in the British accent, RP, and in reference varieties of US English, in Singapore English are all short. Below are listed the words which are pronounced with the same vowel (using the list in Well's book Accents of English).

KIT, FLEECE (/i/)

FACE (/e/)

TRAP DRESS SQUARE

FOOT, GOOSE (/u/)

GOAT (/o/) (pronounced as in most varieties of US English)

LOT, CLOTH, THOUGHT, NORTH, FORCE

NURSE, commA, letter

STRUT BATH PALM START

(4) There are diphthongs similar to those used in many varieties of English in England in the following:

PRICE

CHOICE

MOUTH

NEAR

CURE, POOR

(5) Stress and Intonation

Singapore English has a distinctive rhythm, which has been described as 'machine gun' style. There is less distinction between stressed and unstressed syllables than in reference varieties of English. It also has its own tunes of speech – as in many varieties of English, this is often very noticeable in identifying the variety. The whole basis of intonation is different from that in more studied varieties.

(6) Morphology

(a) A lot of grammatical endings that are required in Standard English are optional in Singapore Colloquial English. Marking plurals and past tenses is a matter of choice, so may be omitted, e.g.

What happen yesterday?

You go where?

Got so many car!

Then bicycle go first ah. (='So the bicycle went first')

I just sit and everything do for me. (='it does everything')

You know what happen lah. Fine. (='you know what happened? I got fined.')

(b) There are very few complex verb groups in Singapore Colloquial English. Grammatical relationships are shown mostly by position, e.g.

The house sell already. (='I have sold the house' OR 'the house has been sold')

Big bicycle taken away.

I got big one for you.

(c) The verb TO BE is used in Singapore Colloquial English, and when it is used, it changes (AM,

ARE etc) as in standard English. But it is often optional, e.g.

She so pretty.

That one like us.

The first one downstairs.

This new revision ah, REALLY new!

(7) Particles

Singapore English uses about 11 particles, mostly borrowed from Hokkien or Cantonese, to indicate attitude to what is being said. They work rather like you know and you see. The three most common are ah (usually expects agreement), lah (strong assertion) and what (usually corrects something).

Here are some examples:

There's something here for everyone lah.

Otherwise, how can be considered Singaporean ah?

No parking lots here, what.

OK lah, bye bye.

And then how many rooms ah?

You see my husband's not at home lah. That's the problem, ah.

Her price is too high for me lah.

(8) Questions

Questions with part of the verb TO BE are much as in Standard English, e.g:

Is it ?

Are you sick?

But questions with other verbs do not usually change the order of the subject and the verb.

Here are some examples:

Go where?

Why you so stupid?

Why she never come here?

How to fix?

(9) Other Grammatical Features

There are many other features of Singapore Colloquial English which have been discussed in analyses. For example, you can miss out the subject much more freely in Singapore Colloquial English than you can in standard English, e.g.

Finish already. (someone has finished – could be 'I', 'he' etc. – the context will tell you)

Don't want.

You can also find many conditional sentences without subordinating conjuctions, e.g.

You do that, I hit you.

You want to swim, then swim here.

(10) Examples of the Term, It's Origin and It's Definition:

Term	Origin	Definition
Ar?	Cantonese & Mandarin	Originated from Chinese term. Used in this case within questions and rhetoric where opinions and affirmations are being sought.
Ah Beng	Hokkien	A transliteration of the Chinese name. A hillbilly, someone with little dress sense. Also used to refer to a gangster, the expressions came about because Ah Beng is a common Chinese male name.
Ah Long	Cantonese	A transliteration of Chinese name, Slang term for "loanshark".

Aiyah	Chinese	Sometimes used as "Aiyoh". Chinese equivalent of "Oh No!", "OH Dear!". Another derivative of the term, Ai-Yoh-Yoh.
Blur	English	Clueless. In a daze, unaware of what is going on.
Buaya	Malay	Literally means "crocodile". Refers to a womanizer or flirt.
Buay Tahan	Hokkien & Malay	Combination of the Hokkien term 'buay and Malay term "tahan". Means "unable to withstand" or colloquially "cannot stand it".
Chicken Business	English and Malay	Direct translation of the Cantonese slang, which means to prostitude oneself.
Chin Chai	Hokkien	Hokkien pronunciation. When applied colloquially, it means "anything" or "whatever". Used in situations when one does not feel like making a decision and wants another to help him/her makes a decision. Can also be applied to situations to do something in a half-heartedly manner.
Chop Chop	English	Used to tell someone to do something fast
Come Again	Singlish	Repeat – say again
Gabra	Singlish	Used to describe confusion or disorganization.
Gostan	Singlish	Means to reverse or go in the backward direction. Originates from the nautical phrase "go astern".
Ini Machiam	Malay	Means to be very certain.
Kiasu	Hokkien	Literally means to be afraid of losing.
Kiasee	Hokkien	Literally means to be afraid of dying. Used in the same manner as "kiasu". Transliteration of the

		Chinese term.
Kiam	Hokkien	Transliteration of the Chinese term which literally means "salty". Used to describe a stingy person.
Kope	Singlish	Means to copy from someone without permission. It may also mean to steal from someone.
Kopi	Malay	Refers to coffee
Kopitiam	Malay & Hokkien	Literally means "coffee shop". "Coffee shop" in Singapore refers to "food centre"
Lah	Malay	Taggged at the end of a sentence as an exclamation except in questions.
Leh	Singlish	Tagged at the end of a sentence in a similar manner as "lah". Used to emphasize the sentence.
Liao	Hokkien/Chinese	Means "already" or "over". Sometimes used as a substitute for the "already" used in Singlish, especially by Chinese-speaking people.
Mah	Mandarin	Usually tagged at the end of a question.
Photostat	English	To make a photocopy.
Pok Kai	Cantonese	Means to go broke. Also used to curse people.
Return back	English	To give back. Direct translation from the Chinese phrase.
Revert	English	To reply. Often used in email and text messages.

(11) English words with different meanings in Singlish:

follow – *to come along/accompany – "Can I follow?"*

having here *– to eat in at a restaurant. The antonym is "take away" or "tah-bao".*

help, lah – *please do lend me a hand by desisting from whatever it is you are doing: help me out here* – "Help lah, stop hitting on my sister"

last time - *previously, in the past* – "Last time I would want to go down to Africa, but I don't know about now."

mug - *to study* – Derived from British 'mug up'. Common expression amongst all students. Instead of ' He's mugging up…', locally used as ' He's mugging for …' (Not to be confused with the Americanism, meaning assault with intent to rob).

marketing – *going to the market or shops to buy food* – Rare expression. "My dad may help in the marketing side, by going to the market to get some things."

next time – *in the future* – "Next time when you get married, you'll know how to cook."

on, off - *to switch on/off* – "I on the TV"

on ah – *It's settled then?*

open - *to turn on a light* – "I open the light." (Derived from Chinese, which uses the verb "to open" in this manner. Use of "open" to mean "turn on" is limited specially to lamps or lights.)

pass up - *to hand in* – "Pass up your assignments". *Although once common, usage is now discouraged in schools.*

(12) Expressions

Blur like sotong - literally blur like a squid. To be extremely clueless. Squids squirt ink as a self-defence mechanism to get away. The ink makes it hard to see, thus "blur". – "Wah! You damn blur leh! Liddat (like that) also dunno!" (don't know)

Don't fly my kite/aeroplane – Rare expression. A Singlish expression which means 'Please do not go back on your word' or 'Please do not stand me up'

Don't play play! – Uncommon expression, popularized by local comedy series Phua Chu Kang Pte Ltd. Used only to evoke humour. Means 'Don't fool arround' or 'Better take things seriously'

Got problem ah? - an aggressive, instigatory challenge. Or an expression of annoyance when someone is disturbed. 'Do you have a problem?'

He still small boy one – a remark (Often offensive) made against someone who is not of a legally median age allowed by the law. Or expression used to excuse someone because he is either immature or still too young to know the difference.

Issit / Izzit? - lazy form of "is it?" Used in various contexts, to question in both positive and negative forms, or as a response in a rhetorical quizzical manner. Eg: You going home now issit? Eg: You not going home issit? Eg: someone comments: "You look good today." Answer: "Issit??"

The Future of Singlish

- Singlish is learned today natively by children, not by non-English speaking adults trying to learn English. There are plenty of people who can speak Singlish better than any Chinese, Malay, or Indian language/dialect.
- The complexity, maturity, and expressivity of Singlish is comparable to any other language or dialect.

Taking the above definition into account, it is clear that Singlish has already developed from a pidgin into something like a "creole", i.e., Singlish has creolized. A creole is, by definition, a tongue that is as expressive and rich as any full language or dialect on its own right. This is what Singlish is – not a poor form of English, but a rich, expressive, complex dialect of English on its own right. (Ran April 5, 2004)

Mrs.Michelle Lai, as a non-Singlish speaker (but learning), agreed that (she's also a non- native English speaker) Singlish is not a substandard form of English but a language/dialect on its own. It took English, richly enhanced it in vocabulary and had some Chinese grammatical forms thrown it. It's pretty neat!

Of course the people worrying that people who may not learn 'international standard' English well enough due to exposure to Singlish do have a point. Singlish usages inevitably slip into speaking and writing patterns when Singlish speakers communicate in English. To someone unaware of Singlish this looks like sub-par English, which it is of course, from that perspective. It's a difficult situation.

We believe however that being explicitly being clear about the difference between Singlish and other forms of English in public education may actually be more productive in helping Singlish

speakers to learn how to speak "proper" English than trying to bend Singlish back into English forcefully. A positive awareness of what makes Singlish unique and different could also help people learn to better communicate in other forms of English.

A majority of Singlish speakers still do not speak it as a native language. However, the majority of younger Singaporeans do, and this trend seems to be increasing. Once the transition is more completed (when Baby Boomer generation has completed transition to "elder" generation), Singlish will likely be the native language of all influential Singaporeans, and it is possible, even probable that by 2050 it will be the native language of almost all Singaporeans. Native speakers are what makes Singlish a creole instead of a pidgin, they are the ones who have set the absolute grammatical rules. Language acquisition is a complex process, but it is such that future native speakers are likely to learn the same standard of Singlish that was unconsciously created by its very first native speakers, due to the influence of peers and older siblings who are also native speakers(the same process that serves to ensure that children of immigrants born in the new country learn the new language without an accent, despite their parents' accents). Node 05:35, 19 November 2006 (UTC)

The article does need to be improved no doubt, but as Ran discussed above, it should be in the direction of moving it away from "How is it different from English?" and towards describing it as a discreet entity. The historical proofs and the linguistic proofs that Singlish is a creole (actually currently undergoing the transformation from pidgin to creole, but since it has native speakers already it is considered a "creole" even though it has not yet completely stabilized) are abundant, if you want them you need only to ask. The popular misconceptions that Singlish is a dialect or "just broken English" are just that – misconceptions. Some with myths like "Singlish has no grammar" or "Singlish is just a hodge-podge of English and Hokkien with no rules". Singlish does have grammar and it does have rules. Example: Does it make any sense to say "Can also tea one lah lor or nit izzit"? No, it doesn't, because Singlish like every other natural language, has

rules for contructing clauses. The rules are perhaps not as solid or well-defined as those of English, but that is because Singlish is, as I mentioned earlier, in a state of flux.

CONCLUSION

Singlish however is still primarily a second language, in a period of fluidity of vocabulary and especially syntax because the creolisation process is not yet complete. For this reason, its vocabulary and syntax do not have the same stability and solidity of most creole languages. However, in a couple of generations, it is probable that Singlish will be the primary native language in Singapore, and the vocabulary and syntax will have solidified.

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