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Singapore Colloquial English?
Or deviant Standard English?[i]

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There are two main frameworks for the analysis of Singapore English: the **lectal continuum** model and the **diglossia** model. The late John Platt and his Monash University students have been the principal users of the lectal continuum model (e.g. Platt 1975, Platt and Weber 1980, Ho and Platt 1993). Their approach emphasises the non-nativeness of Singapore English, entails the analysis of varieties along the continuum in terms of their deviance from Standard English, and links linguistic features to educational level. The diglossia model (e.g. Richards 1977, Richards 1983, Gupta 1989, Gupta 1991, Gupta 1994) is currently more common among those working in the National University of Singapore. It involves a delimitation of an L-variety, **Singapore Colloquial English**, which is treated as having an autonomous syntax. The diglossia model links linguistic features to context of use, emphasises the nativeness of Singapore English and casts speakers in an active role.

Using the recent books by proponents of each of these schools as examples, the advantages and disadvantages of both approaches are illustrated. The main advantage of the lectal continuum model is that all varieties of English in Singapore are potentially describable, while the diglossia model requires a definition of **(native) speaker** which excludes many learner varieties. The main advantage of the diglossia model is that it allows for a coherent description and analysis of the contact variety.

Introduction

Like Fiji (Siegel 1987), Singapore offers a complex multilingual setting where contact varieties appear and disappear, but where the languages that have created them remain. The approaches made to Singapore English raise issues in two concepts that Le Page has said (1988:30) are fundamental in sociolinguistics:

1.   The definition of 'a language'
2.   The definition of 'native language' (/mother tongue)

I will not go into (1) at this point. As for (2) (which in a way depends on it), I think that all normal humans have at least one native language and that many people have more than one. And that a native language is a language you learn in infancy, before learning any other. I have defended this view elsewhere (Gupta 1994:18). The concept 'native language' can surely not be defined (as it often is, even by linguists) on the basis of genetic ancestry or location of birth, and your personal first experiences of language learning are formative. Also, for contact varieties, the process of nativisation is pretty crucial.

This paper is about Singapore English, but most of what I have to say applies to Malaysian English too. Despite demographic and political differences in the role and distribution of English, there remain varieties of Malaysian English that are virtually identical to their parallels in Singapore (although there is greater variation in Malaysia than in tiny Singapore).

Singapore English is a range of Englishes. The contact variety which I call Singapore Colloquial English (SCE) is strikingly different from Standard English (StdE), especially in

syntax. No English pidgin has ever been historically attested for Singapore or Malaysia, and present-day Singapore English has no relationship whatever to Chinese Pidgin English or Melanesian Pidgin English. There was a Malay based pidgin (Bazaar Malay), which is still used a little today, and a related creolised Malay used by a Chinese community (Baba Malay, spoken by the Straits Chinese, and still used a little). These have been of importance in the formation of SCE. It is generally agreed that SCE had its origins in the English-medium schools of the Straits Settlements in the early twentieth century (Platt and Weber 1980, Bloom 1986, Gupta 1994). Historiographic data from nineteenth and early twentieth century Singapore (Gupta 1994, Gupta fthcg.) shows how the roots of SCE were based in the particular ethnic mix of these schools, which in the nineteenth century were composed predominantly of English and (pidgin/creole) Malay-speaking pupils (Europeans, Eurasians, Jews, Armenians and Straits Chinese) and where the teachers consisted roughly equally of Eurasians, Europeans, and Indians. In the early twentieth century there was an influx of non-Chinese pupils who spoke varieties of Chinese. Female education in English is crucial for English to become a native language. Until well into the twentieth century female English-medium education was virtually restricted to the Europeans, Eurasians, Jews and Armenians. The first other girls to receive education in English were Straits Chinese. Again, the importance of the pidginised and creolised varieties of Malay emerges.

I would place myself in the old tradition (Weinreich, Thomason and Kaufman) that there are a range of contact experiences, and that it is the processes and results of contact which are of especial interest. I don't want to get into arguments about whether SCE is or is not a creole. That it is a contact variety is undisputed. Rather than discussing what we might wish to mean by the terms 'creole' or 'creoloid', I prefer to see Singapore English in the context

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of languages or varieties which as a result of having been in a contact situation have "a form palpably different from either stock language" (Weinreich 1953:69). A natively spoken variety that carries the mark of any significant degree of discontinuity in development which results from contact can be seen as something like a creole in this sense. These varieties are referred to by Thomason and Kaufman (1988) as 'mixed languages': Note that Singapore Standard English is not a contact variety.

Like many contact varieties, Singapore Colloquial English, usually referred to as 'Singlish', is the subject of ambivalent attention in Singapore. Singapore's former Prime Minister, Lee Kuan Yew, remarked at a talk to university students in August 1994 that Singlish is only for losers:

> I think it's important that you know the English language because it is the international language, and you speak it in the standard form.

> Do not speak Singlish! If you do, you are the loser. Only foreign academics like to write about it. You have to live with it. And your interlocutors, when they hear you, their ears go askew. You detract from the message that you're sending.

> I don't have to speak with an English upper-class accent. But I speak in a way which makes it easy for them to understand me and, therefore, they are not distracted by my background.

(Lee Kuan Yew, speech to National University of Singapore students, 29
July 1994, quoted in *The Sunday Times*, July 31 1994)

This foreign academic will continue to demonstrate her interest in writing about it....

Modes of analysis

There are 3 main modes of analysis for Singapore English which have different theoretical implications. These are similar to the 'stages' of Bloom (1986) and of Foley (1988) but they are not chronological -- the earliest studies, Killingley's, were in Mode (c).

(a)   **Singapore English is imperfectly learnt Standard English**. Its features are errors. This approach talks about interference, and identifies Singapore English as a non-native variety. It can be found even in very recent books (e.g. Ko and Ho 1992). In this mode of analysis the contact variety is not seen as having its own grammars: Singapore English is an accretion of mistakes as a result of imperfect learning. I live in the hope that this is no longer seen as a respectable approach.

(b)   **The lectal continuum approach**, associated with the late John Platt and his students. Singapore English is not to be seen as deficient, but is most usefully analysed in terms of its difference, or deviance, from better known varieties, such as British Standard English. (all the work by Platt and his

students, Tay and Gupta 1983, Gupta 1986,). This approach lends itself to a deviationist approach (near approach (a)) which treats features of dialects other than StdE/RP as deviations). For example faced with Singapore English [o] in *know*, a follower of this approach would say that the RP diphthong had been monophthongised.

This approach treats the full range of proficiency. The usual research methodology is a modified Labovian one, in which large numbers of respondents, stratified by educational attainment, are recorded in an interview setting (Platt and Ho used 100 respondents). The Platt school approach tends to describe Singapore English as a non-native variety: respondents are not generally queried about their language backgrounds, as native speakers of Singapore English are given no special place in this analysis -- the native speakers of English are all in countries like England and the US.. The Platt school use post-creole continuum terms -- acrolect, mesolect, basilect. The acrolect is taken to be an idealised Standard British English -- what Platt and Ho (1993:12) call "a prescriptive native speaker standard". *Speakers* are classified as acrolectal, mesolectal or basilectal, according to their educational level. They are not recorded at different levels of formality.

Singapore English is described as a non-native variety, regardless of its status for the individual speaker. Its features are developmentally ordered,

and are regarded as the result of 'mother tongue interference' and 'overgeneralisation'.

(c)   **The diglossia approach**. Singapore English is best analysed in relation to Singapore only. Standard English is locally established, and is not significantly different from other standard Englishes. The most informal variety of Singapore English however is a variety of English so different from StdE that it must be analysed entirely on its own terms (recent work by me, recent Kwan-Terry, Pakir's recent work, current unpublished work by Lubna Alsagoff, and by David Gil). Its grammar must be established by an examination of the usage and/or judgements of its native speakers. This approach artificially establishes a polarisation, identifies 'native speakers' and tends to ignore speakers of low proficiency. Native speakers are those who grew up with English as a primary language before attending school. Many researchers extend study to all proficient users whether native speakers or not, regarding as proficient someone who shows control of StdE in formal situations. I pay especial attention to native-speaker children over the age of 5, on the grounds that they have usually not acquired StdE yet, and may thus be monovarietal speakers of L. Tay (1991) has criticised this on the grounds that I thus equate the L variety with babytalk.

Methodology is usually small scale and non-quantitative, often using data from a variety of sources including recordings in informal or domestic settings, overheard speech, elicited speech, and judgements.

The diglossia approach uses terms H (StdE) and L (SCE/Colloquial Singapore English/Singlish[1]). Varieties are defined by both use and usage. Functionally, L is the variety used by either native speakers above the age of four or five, or used informally by speakers who also have the option of speaking StdE. Formally it is a variety sharply different in specified ways (especially in syntax) from StdE. This is the only approach possible if an aim is the analysis of an autonomous variety different from StdE.

Comparison of style of analysis

My comparison is between the way approaches (b) and (c) have actually been used. It would be perfectly possible to have a lectal continuum approach which had some differences from the one actually used by those from the Platt school. The differences are summarised in the Appendix.

(a) lectal continuum approach

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[1] Some people using the diglossia approach use the term *Singlish* while others avoid it. This is because *Singlish* is commonly used to mean both the informal variety of those proficient in English and also the low-proficiency learner variety. As the establishment of an autonomous variety precludes the analysis of the usage of non-native or low proficiency speakers, it is important to us to separate these two meanings. The term *Singlish* is officially defined by SBC (Straits Times July 10 1993) as '"ungrammatical English spoken by those with a poor command of English.'

In Ho and Platt (1993) structures are analysed by their relationship to their StdE paraphrases, although in many cases there may be alternative paraphrases. Platt and Ho classify respondents according to their level of education. The examples below are taken from the section on "*Clause + be* and *be + clause* environments." Platt and Ho indicate that "Clauses used by informants with tertiary level education are generally similar to those used in SBrE" (p69), while among those with A level qualifications[2] clauses are on the whole "fairly stable" (p70) except where "gerunds" are concerned, e.g. *Give dem the basic foundation is important*. The examples below are therefore all from those with a maximum of O-Level qualifications.

WH clauses

(1)   *Dey offer you is four plus.*

            'What they offer you in salary.'

Noun Phrase + *be* + Clause

(2)   *Dey employ most of they are Malaysians.*

            'Most of the staff employed are Malaysians.'

(3)   *I like very much is de Domestic teacher.*

            'The teacher I liked best was the Domestic Science teacher.'

To-infinitive clauses

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[2]   In the Singapore education system, A-levels are the external examination taken at age 18, which are required for admission to university courses. O-Levels are the external examinations taken at age 16 -- a certain standard must be attained to allow students to progress to A-Level.

(4)   *The purpose is have connections.*

(5)   *Earn dere easy, spend also de same.*

            'To earn a living there is easy, to spend all your money there is just as easy.'

            Gerunds

(6)   *Work shift is very tired.*

            'Working on the night shift is very tiring.'

   Some diglossia approach proponents (like me) object to the use of eye dialect, as this

seems to be part of the deviance approach, here used for phonology. I would use either

normal orthography or a broad phonetic transcription. Many of these sentences would not

be regarded as bona fide L by proponents of the diglossia approach, as they would not be

used in the L of native or proficient speakers. Let us put that aside for the moment: if they

were L, the autonomy approach would discuss these utterances in terms of their structure in

SCE. The basic description *Clause + be* would not be used, as, given the possibility of zero

copula, there may well be no BE in the utterance (as in (5)). In (1), (3), (4), (5) and (6) there

are noun clause structures, where finite clauses are functioning as the subject of an equative

sentence. The terms *gerund*, *wh-clause* etc. will not be used, as they are artefacts of

translation. There has probably been PRO-drop in (6) -- lack of context does not allow

retrieval here, and the sentence may not be well formed in SCE. The noun clause in (4) may

be an imperative -- again context would provide the full structure. In (2) we seem to have a

totally different structure, with relative clause (*Dey employ*), of which the head may be *they*.

I do not see that *Dey employ most of they* can be a clause, as *most of they* is the subject of *are*.

(b) diglossia approach

SCE should not be seen as *really* autonomous and this undoubtedly causes problems. When I first (in 1988, in the paper later published in 1992) introduced the treatment of SCE as an autonomous variety I had a prolonged debate with R. B. Le Page, who has attacked the autonomous concept as unrealistic. Which it is. I very much agree with the analysis of Carrington (1993) which makes all competence varilingual. But I still think it's useful to focus on the grammatical structures in a way which is possible only in an abstracted delimited variety. Those who (unlike me) use a syntax based on speaker judgements have an even greater need to establish autonomy. The pseudo-autonomy of the diglossia approach will present them with some real problems, because Singapore's diglossia is very leaky indeed. The main area of leakiness is the use of H where a strict Ferguson definition would predict L.

In actual usage speakers move across their varietal range in a way that is socially meaningful. Although individual utterances or stretches of discourse may be focused (on formal grounds) towards either StdE or SCE, discourses seldom sustain SCE for long continuous periods.

Someone asks a woman whether her son is doing his National Service. Among other possible answers, she can say:

(1)   Finish.

(2)   Finish already.

(3)   Finish already lah.

(4)   Finish lah.

(5)   Finished.

(6)   Finished already.

(7)   Finished already lah.

(8)   Finished lah.

(9)   He's finished already lah.

(10)   He's finished lah.

(11)   He's finished already.

(12)   He's finished.

She can't say:

            *Lah finish already.

            *Finish all-gone.

            *All-gone finish.

            *He done finish.

            *Done finish.

            *Has finished.

The StdE forms here are:

HAVE perfective

past participle morphology

The SCE forms are:

PRO-drop

use of pragmatic particle

already as aspectual marker

However, structures may combine the StdE perfective with the SCE particle. The pronunciation of the final stop of the past participle is more likely to be present if the auxiliary is there but may appear without the auxiliary, and may be absent with it.

The speaker's choices will be related to all sorts of variables which we won't go into -- such as how the question was asked, and her relationship with the speaker. But the crucial question for the autonomy issue is: how many of these we want to be from the same pseudo-autonomous variety, SCE? (1) to (8) are definitely SCE, and (12) is definitely StdE. Many Singaporeans regard virtually any use of *already* as SCE, so may not regard (11) as StdE. Unless we want to accept that anything which is grammatical in StdE is grammatical in SCE (which is how speakers really see the situation) we have to artificially exclude

certain StdE systems from the grammar of SCE. The artificiality of doing this makes reliance on judgement difficult.

As has been observed by many scholars in a range of contexts (for example, Bickerton 1977), in making judgements people who know a standard variety and are aware of concepts of correctness are liable to make their judgements on the basis of a sense of correctness which is often dependent on the formal written language. If asked about grammaticality this speaker will probably only accept *He's finished* as grammatical. It may or may not be possible to get her to admit that she sometimes uses the others. Many speakers will deny that educated speakers ever use these structures, even when faced with tape recordings. What people actually say even in the colloquial forms of StdE is much freer. In spoken usage, extralinguistic contextual information is vital. Conversations are built up over a period of time based on shared information. In non-standard varieties, and in creoles, there is an even greater gulf between what people say and what they consciously regard as correct, and where there is not a full range of functions, and especially where the formal functions are missing, there is no expanded, non-contextually based variety to which speakers can have recourse. This is likely to lead to rejection of sentences that are common in spoken usage. For example, a Singaporean graduate student who read my paper on pragmatic particles (Gupta 1992b) claimed that the attested utterance *Why lah?* (a child responding to his mother's prohibition on his going out) was impossible. He rejected the use of the particle *lah* in an interrogative. There is nothing unusual about using *lah* with *why*, where the use of this assertive particle marks the interrogative as an assertive, non-question, some sort of rebuke (="Whyever did you put that dish in the oven?"). A reliance on judgements which pays no attention to usage runs the risk of producing a grammar based

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on stereotypical behaviour which does not encompass the real richness with which speakers operate under natural conditions. So far, the only linguist to have used judgements systematically has been David Gil, who has approached this issue with great caution and achieved many useful insights by working with informants.

I will give some examples of the diglossia analysis using my own data, as I do in Gupta (1994) -- although these examples are not from the book itself as I prefer to give additional material. The context does not strictly determine the choice of L or H -- an example of the leakiness of diglossia in Singapore English. Speakers can switch between H and L in the same context to achieve highlighted effect.

In a conversation between a 4;3 year old girl (EG) and her mother (MG), we can see how the child consistently uses the L variety, while her mother moves from H to L:

[EG is looking at a photograph taken at her kindergarten. *botak* is a loan word from Malay, meaning 'bald'. EG's father's name is also 'David'.]

1   MG: Who are these?

2   EG: David.

3   MG: Which one is David?

 [EG points to a child in the photograph]

4   MG: Yes.

5   AG: David?

6   We know a David don't we?

7   EG: Mummy our friend ah, our friend also David, our friend.

8   MG: Who else is David?

9   EG: David ah, botak head already lah, last time   didn't, now botak head.

       [This David's hair has been cut very short]

10   MG: Is it?

11   Why?

12   EG: He-│ he   │

13   MG: │ His   │

12   EG: mummy want to cut.

13   MG: His mummy want to cut his hair?

14   EG: M.

15   AG: Oh so │ botak. │

16   EG: │ Jia Ting- │

       Jia Ting also botak head.

17   MG: Oh │ dear. │

18   AG: │ Oh dear │

19   EG: Mandarin.

       [here EG is identifying the language of the name *Jia Ting*]

20   MG: Oh.

21   EG: Then David is English.

22	MG:	M.
23		Who else is David?
24	EG:	Our school class lor. [very high rising]
25	MG:	Some more -- your Daddy leh?

By line 24, EG cannot understand why her mother is pestering her so much about David. Her *lor* in (24), with its very high rising tone, appears to be expressing surprise that MG should imagine there is another David in her class. Her mother switches to L for (25) using the grammatical particle *leh*, which marks an x-interrogative and can be glossed as "What about-". A contingent answer would be *My Daddy David*. She does not wait for an answer, but turns to me to tell me an anecdote about EG.

Here, are two birthday greetings taken from the personal room of the pre-internet NUS bulletin board. The first uses StdE of the sort than can be found in electronic communication anywhere (there are no omissions -- dots are in the original). Both these texts were produced by users who would be described as "acrolectal speakers" by the Platt school.

> Birthday wishes ......
>
> Announcement!! Announcement!!
>
> On the 12th March 1992, My best friend birthday....
>
> She is ..... Miss Lim Siew Yian....
>
> Grasping this chance..... I want to wish her A Very Happy 20th....
>
> But it will be hard on her 'cos there will be a last paper for her on the 13th march....

Anyway i hope that she can have some fun on her birthday though she has to study

for the paper tomorrow....

I also wish her good luck for her coming examinations...

May her coming birthday brings her good luck for her examinations in a few days

time......

May those who know her....... Wish her a happy 20 birthday.....

May God bless her.......

Her best friend..... Someone who know her for about 8 years...

Bye.... Take Care and good luck.

(Tay Mui Kheng, 24 Feb 1992)

This is a student not very secure in the morphology of StdE (*friend birthday*, *may X

brings her good luck*, *someone who know*, *a few days time*). The presence of inflections is

more significant than their absence: thus the hypercorrect *brings* is one of several clear

indications, like the complex verb groups, that this writer is aiming at StdE. This is what the

Platt school would identify as mesolectal -- as it includes variable morphology, a features of

the L variety that here results from lack of control of StdE.

Other birthday greetings may focus, entirely or in part, on SCE:

Thank you, sifu, [*master/teacher,* here jokingly implying a disciple-teacher

relationship between fellow students] for the Bday greeting

but sifu, you very the economical hor

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one greeting to me n you ask for 5 in return

think I better learn from u

if not send entries send until blur

by the way, dont worry lah

I am not going to claim angpow [gift of money on red envelope, normally given

only to juniors, and also at weddings] from u

well............not yet..........hehe

who knows, may be soon u'll have to give angpows

This greeting begins with a focus on SCE, and illustrates three of the four characteristic elements of SCE (subject deletion, pragmatic particles *hor* and *lah*, and zero copula) but there is use of StdE features too in the last three lines (complex verb groups and noun and verb morphology). The motivation of this kind of rapid switching is not always clear, as is the case here. I have found switches from SCE to StdE associated with a switch to the pedagogical mode in speech to children, and switches to SCE from StdE associated with clarification of StdE utterance that were not responded to, or with an increased emotional involvement. Pakir (1991:173) also has examples of such switches, associated with emotional responses. This text would presumably be described as basilectal by the Platt school, as it includes many features of their basilect.

There are numerous uses of the L variety in literature, used as one might expect, for characterisation, humour, and to show shifts of attitude. A popular comedy tape in Singapore (*Why U so like dat?* by Siva Choy), released in late 1990, and a runaway best-seller, makes much play of use of English. In one sketch, a disk jockey, 'DJ de Souza' (this name would be either Eurasian or Indian), is talking on the air, with Standard English and an exaggerated American accent. When his wife rings, as listeners have been invited to, he changes accents, and syntax:

[Song over. Phone rings]

Hi there. This is old smiley face de Souza himself. And to what do I owe the pleasure of this phone call?

Alamak Yvonne, how many times I've told you don't call when I'm working ah. You think the other deejays' wives call them when they're working?

This is not as extreme a variety of SCE as the one used by Tan Hwee Eng on the bulletin board, with the DJ's lower variety still having some standard markers, particularly morphological ones, but there is a clear indication of a switch to the low variety.

Pros and Cons

In common to both approaches is an agreement that individuals move across Englishes, and that the main differences between speakers and between styles is in syntax.

A diagram often seen in the Platt school texts is something like Figure 1 (here taken from Ho and Platt 1994:5).

[INSERT FIG. 1 ABOUT HERE]

Diglossia approach scholars would dispute this diagram, which equates the informal variety of proficient speakers with the more limited range of less proficient speakers. We are more likely to see the continua of proficiency and formality as to some extent separate. We think that it is possible for SCE to be ungrammatical if spoken by someone whose native language it is not.

Platt and Ho (1993:15) refer to "some academics in Singapore who feel that research should concentrate on the speech and writing of the more educated members if society", and they defend the importance of "basilectal SE" for the understanding of how second language acquisition functions." It does so happen that at present native speakers of English are disproportionately from higher social classes, although the native speaking children are not (as yet) highly educated. I agree with Ho and Platt that "the whole range of SgE" needs to be studied. It is true that the restriction to native speakers means that we are

ignoring a large proportion of the English-users of Singapore. However, it is also legitimate to look at the syntactic structure varieties uncluttered by issues of second language acquisition in the individual speaker.

I don't see that these two approaches must be in opposition. One focuses on native speakers, and on their style shift, while the other focuses on the behaviour of all speakers in a formal context. The diglossia approach does not lend itself very well to large scale quantitative research, to which the Platt school is committed. Surely both quantitative and non-quantitative approaches have a role?

There are intrinsic difficulties in a deviance approach. A lot of us have been caught out by this. I first came across the term *wash-up* ("You look warm -- go and wash up before we go out.") in Singapore. In British English *wash-up* can only refer to washing dishes, not people. I therefore assumed that it was Singapore English (Shields 1979). Later I learnt that this use is widespread in US English. I once heard a talk on the English of the Philippines in which *overtake* ("The car overtook me at high speed.") was described as a Philippines English deviation -- the speaker was not familiar with the British English usage. One is constantly stopped in one's tracks by these pseudo-deviances in work of the lectal continuum school.

For example, Ho and Platt classify as non-standard Singaporean English uses of *take* which do not have the connotation of taking things without permission. They describe (p170) the following sentence as resulting both from interference from Chinese and from 'overgeneralisation':

Please *take* a handout on your way out of the lecture theatre.

I find this perfectly normal and unremarkable.

Ho and Platt's type of analysis can reveal the extent to which Singaporeans of different educational levels approximate to Standard English. This can be expected to feed into pedagogy (p187):

> One cannot overemphasise the value of quantitative data: the ordering of environments in terms of difficulty of acquisition of a variable and the ordering of data by means of implicational scaling for any linguistic variable(s) can certainly provide much-needed insights and short cuts in the teaching/learning process.

As a corollary, Ho and Platt suggest that *be + Nom* should be taught before *be + Adj* and *be + V-ing* (p188). This is unrealistic: Singapore schools are entirely English-medium and the syllabus does not (and surely cannot and should not) proceed structurally on an item by item basis. Furthermore, the presence or absence of a copula is variable in virtually all Singaporean English speakers, and it seems misleading to regard it in purely developmental terms.

The lectal continuum approach has led to speakers being portrayed as the passive victims of their educational level, with different degrees of *acquisition* of structures, who

experience *confusion*, *problems*, and *difficulty* in using English (all terms from Ho and Platt 1994). An approach based on concepts of deviance, which concentrates on the proficiency continuum, cannot portray speakers of English in Singapore as active speakers who make *acts of identity* (Le Page and Tabouret Keller 1985) by manipulating their language repertoires in a rich sociolinguistic milieu. On the other hand, the diglossia approach, which does just this, ignores those people who really do experience *confusion*, *problems*, and *difficulty* in using English.

At the moment I will stick with the diglossia approach, which continues to work for me. But in due course the whole spectrum of Singapore English will need to be looked at. The decision which to choose seems to be a matter of your own research priorities -- for me it is to get a greater understanding of the syntax of the contact variety, SCE.

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APPENDIX
Summary of differences

Issue	Lectal Continuum	Diglossia
Image of varieties of SingE	2 dimensional continuum of acrolect - mesolects-basilect.	Proficiency continuum and formality continuum separated.
Who?	John Platt, Heidi Weber, Ho Mian Lian, etc..	Jack Richards, Anthea Fraser Gupta, David Gil, etc..
Syntax?	Deviations from StdBrE.	Autonomy of L.
Phonology?	Deviations from RP. Use of eye dialect.	Attempt to establish phonemic system of SingE.
Informants?	All English educated Singaporeans.	Only Singaporeans who have English as a native language or are deemed to be of same proficiency as native speakers.
Source of data?	Large numbers of informants, stratified by education, but not necessarily selected by statistical sampling. Labovian interviews.	Small number of informants, unsystematically selected (except for native speaker status). Informal conversation, overheard data, speaker judgements.
Analysis	Systematic Labovian analysis.	Often impressionistic. Seldom quantitative.
Nature of data?	Fairly formal speech.	Greatest interest in most informal varieties.
What is SingE?	A non-native variety. A creoloid.	A dialect of English. SCE is a contact variety/creole/creoloid.
Central interest?	Effects of second language acquisition.	Syntactic structures of L.

FIGURE 1

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