

AN EXPLORATORY CASE STUDY OF THE CODE SELECTION OF AN ENGLISH SPEAKER

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Sinopsis

*Sociolinguis berpendapat bahawa bahasa sepatutnya dipelajari dengan menghubungkannya kepada lingkungan sosial tempat di mana bahasa itu di gunakan. Dalam kertas ini, suatu kes penggunaan bahasa yang biasa dianalisis dengan menghubungkannya kepada suatu rangkaian komponen lingkungan — latar, peserta dan topik. John Platt (1980) menggolongkan Bahasa Inggeris Malaysia Jenis I (yang digunakan oleh mereka yang telah mengikuti pendidikan menggunakan Bahasa Inggeris sebagai bahasa pengantar) kepada tiga jenis, iaitu jenis **acrolect**, **mesolect** dan **basilect**. Yang demikian, kajian ini meneliti lebih lanjut kemungkinan menggunakan sistem penggolongan yang dicadangkan ini dalam kajian kes bahasa yang biasa.*

Synopsis

*Sociolinguists believe that language should be studied by relating it to the social and situational context in which it is used. In this paper, a case study's natural speech is analysed by relating it to a set of situational components — the setting, participants and topic. John Platt (1980) classifies Malaysian English Type I (spoken by those who have undergone an English medium of education) into three varieties — the **acrolect**, **mesolect** and the **basilect**. Thus, the study further explores the possibility of applying such a classification to the case study's natural speech.*

Introduction

Bahasa Malaysia is the national language of Malaysia, with English being the second language. With this situation, there has developed two broad categories of varieties of English which depend generally on the medium of education the speakers have been through: the English medium or the Malay medium. For convenience, the two broad varieties have been labelled 'Malaysian English Type I' (Platt, 1980: 168) the speakers of which have undergone an English medium of education and the second, 'Malaysian English Type II' (Platt, 1980: 168) the speakers of which have undergone a Malay-medium of education.

The case study in this exploratory research comes from the first group — the one that has undergone an English medium of education and speaks the variety of English labelled as 'Malaysian English Type I'.

This group is generally more proficient in English, where proficiency is defined not just in terms of grammatical well-formedness but also of speech act rules, functional elaboration and code diversity (Richards, 1969). It is particularly in the area of code diversity that the English-educated group is considered more proficient than the non-English educated.

In this study, due to the lack of any other classification of Malaysian English Type I, Platt's broad classification of the varieties of English has been used. In this classification, the varieties of English along the societal scale have been classified as *acrolect*, *mesolect* and *basilect*. The *acrolect* would be spoken by those belonging to the higher socio-economic strata and the *basilect* by those belonging to the lower socio-economic strata. Generally, it is assumed that speakers proficient in the *acrolect* are able to switch from one variety to another depending on situational constraints like the setting, topic and participants. On the other hand, speakers from the lower socio-economic strata seem to be proficient only in the *basilect* variety and are not able to shift their styles.

Work on the varieties of Malaysian English Type I has largely been on the varieties in relation to different strata of society: determined through the speaker's socio-economic background and educational level.

Relationship of Study to Sociolinguistics

"Diversity of speech has been singled out as the hallmark of sociolinguistics." (Hymes, 1974: 29). Linguistic diversity ranges from the different types of languages (standard and vernacular forms) that exist in a society to the different varieties of a language used in a society (Giles and Powesland, 1975: 16).

Linguists such as Norman Chomsky concentrated on language as an entity in itself. Gregory and Carroll (1978) cite Halliday who describes such an approach as an *inter-organism* where "what the speaker knows" and "language as knowledge" is concentrated on. On the other hand, sociolinguists do not study language in isolation but (to cite Halliday further) regard it as "essentially a social, an *inter-organism* activity ... Language is transmitted; it is patterned and it is embedded in the human social experience." (Gregory and Carroll, 1978: 3). Thus from the sociolinguistic point of view language

should be studied by relating it to the social and situational context in which it is used.

Stemming from the above, this study aims to explore, firstly, the relationship between the situational components (e.g. participants and topic) and the shifts in the use of the different varieties of English by the informant. Secondly, it aims to examine whether Platt's three-way classification of Malaysian English Type I into three varieties: the acrolect, the mesolect and the basilect can be applied effectively in describing the data made up of the speech of the informant while she's interacting with persons of differing social status, in different situations and talking about various topics.

Method of Collecting Data: Natural Speech

In carrying out this study to explore the code selection of an English speaker in relation to social and situational contexts, natural speech in everyday settings has been chosen. In support of this Trudgill (1978) cites Burton and Stubbs who claim that everyday conversation is ultimately the data with which sociolinguistics had to deal.

The traditional method of collecting speech samples through formal scheduled interviews has been rejected because "the very artificiality of settings where linguists interview a single informant and where speech samples must be produced in isolation from the customary circle of friends and family is hardly likely to bring forth the subtleties in selection of speech forms, shifts in formality and informality which characterize everyday interaction." (Gumperz, 1972: 208).

The natural speech was collected by tape-recording the speech of the informant over two whole days. The recordings were made with the informant's full consent.

A common criticism of this mode of data collection is that the informant was bound to have been conscious and affected by having the fieldworker around and tape-recording her speech. However the data collected proved contrary to the common criticism. There is evidence from the data to support the view that the taping was free from observer-effects. The informant's speech included joke-telling, teasing, discussion of personal problems, etc. Only when one is completely at ease with the persons present, can one discuss personal matters, for example, financial or work problems and engage in joking and teasing with the other persons present.

A large contributory factor to this natural situation was the fact that I acted as the fieldworker. The informant and I are close friends and we have often spent whole days together, so it was not unnatural

to have me around. As Wolfson says, '... there can be no better research site for the observation of free conversation than the circle of one's own friends and associates' (Wolfson, 1976: 205).

Rationale for Selection of Case Study

The choice of this particular informant as the case study was based on two considerations: firstly, in a study of the use of the varieties of English, it is beneficial to have an informant that mainly uses English in her everyday communication. The informant is of Indian ethnicity, and as Platt says, Indians with an English-medium education, "are still inclined to make use of English in such domains as employment, transactions and friendship and even to some extent in the family domain" (1980: 168).

Secondly, as stated earlier, having a friend as an informant contributed greatly to the natural situations which were essential for the gathering of data made up of natural speech.

Particulars of the Informant and Interlocutors

A person's socio-economic background and educational level would determine the level of society he belongs to and therefore the language variety that he speaks (Platt, 1980). Therefore, to have a clearer overview of the code selection — the choice of the varieties chosen by the informant in the situational contexts, the general particulars of the informant and interlocutors are given in Table 1.

Particulars of the Informant

As mentioned earlier, the informant is a Malaysian English Type I speaker (Platt, 1980) of Indian ethnicity. Her highest educational level is the Masters in Education (TESL). She works as a lecturer and draws an income of approximately \$1,550 a month. She is 36 years old.

Her proficiency in English is therefore good. Proficiency is here defined "not only first in terms of grammatical well-formedness but also of speech act rules, functional elaboration and code diversity" (Richards, 1969: 4).

The subject would therefore be placed on the highest level of Platt's sociolectal scale (Platt, 1980: 112). She would have mastery of all three varieties of English: the acrolect, the mesolect and the basilect and be able to switch from one to the other when necessary. The other languages spoken by the subject are Ceylonese Tamil and Bahasa Malaysia.

Table 1
The General Background of the Informant 'A' and others whom She Communicated with during the Fieldwork

Data reference	Age	Educational level	Occupation	Other Languages spoken	Income per month
A.	36 years	Masters in Education	Lecturer	Ceylonese Tamil, Bahasa Malaysia.	\$1,550
S.L.	48 years	Masters in Linguistics	Senior Lecturer	Hokkien, Bahasa Malaysia.	\$2,500
S.S.	28 years	Masters in Education	Lecturer	Punjabi, Bahasa Malaysia.	\$1,400
F.S.	38 years	University Degree	Accountant	Tamil.	\$3,500
K.L.	36 years	School Leaving Certificate	Housewife	Ceylonese Tamil, Bahasa Malaysia.	Beyond calculation
S.K.	40 years	Standard 6 (Chinese medium)	Shopkeeper	Cantonese, Bahasa Malaysia.	\$1,500
H.	27 years	Standard 6 (Chinese medium)	Shopkeeper's Assistant	Cantonese.	\$500
B.S.	23 years	Standard 6 (English medium)	Babysitter	Hokkien.	\$400
SIL	19 years	Form 2 (English medium)	unemployed	—	—
L.	29 years	Form 1 (English medium)	Labourer	Tamil, Bahasa Malaysia.	\$250

The Data

The data was collected by tape-recording the speech of the informant over two whole days. The informant carried out her daily activities, e.g. shopping and visiting, with the fieldworker around. The situations facilitated the fieldworker's presence as she is the informant's close friend and it was natural having her around.

The only situation that created a problem was taping the discussion of the informant with the Senior Lecturer. This was one instance when it would not have been proper for the fieldworker to have been present as the informant had requested to see the Senior Lecturer to discuss a problem at work. However this problem was overcome by placing the tape-recorder on the table in the office prior to the informant's entrance and with the Senior Lecturer's consent.

After the data had been transcribed (see Appendix A) and analysed, the informant was consulted as to the reasons for the choice of the use of a particular variety and the shift in style within the general trend of a variety. This was carried out to overcome the limitations that may have been present in the interpretation of the data because as Gumperz says, "the investigator's interpretation ... may be radically different from that of his subjects" (1972: 221).

Therefore Sankoff recommends that, "it would be necessary to follow the type of methodology pioneered by Gumperz in working closely with informants in the analysis of recordings of conversations in which they actually participated. Such methods are well worth the time and effort involved" (1972: 49).

Choice of Situational Components in Micro-Contexts

In code-switching the reasons for choosing a different stylistic variety can be analysed as being generated from a series of individual choices made under specifiable constraints and incentives (Blom and Gumperz, 1972). Examples of these 'constraints and incentives' which lead a speaker to choose one code rather than another could be the following situational components: the setting and the participants (Hymes, 1972; Ervin-Tripp, 1964).

In this study 'micro-contexts' is defined as combinations of situational components which have been drawn up based on the collected data; analyses of the language variety used and shifts between the varieties could then be related to the micro-contexts (Coupland, 1980: 3). The emphasis here would be on the components of a situation which are likely to be associated with different linguistic styles or codes. This would help us understand the reasons behind the code selection of the speaker.

Accordingly, it would be necessary here to determine the situational components which could be used to build up the micro-context figures based on the data. Hymes (1972) and Ervin-Tripp (1964) have drawn up a taxonomy of situational components which have been used as guidelines in studies on verbal behaviour in relation to situational contexts.

Based on these works, this study has chosen three basic situational components: the setting, the participants and the topic which are described as 'the most powerful in predicting language choice' (Sankoff, 1972: 35). A brief description of the three situational components as they are used in the study will now be given as follows:

Setting: It is used in relation to place e.g. office, provision shop, etc. and situation which can be either formal or informal (Sankoff, 1972; Ervin-Tripp, 1964).

Participants: The sociological attributes such as the status in society in terms of occupation, educational level and income earned would have to be considered (Ervin-Tripp, 1964). The proficiency level in English is related to the educational level and this determines which variety of the language is used (Mary Tay, 1979: Platt, 1980). 'Differences in the role of the participants affect the ... variety of the language used' (Mary Tay, 1979: 98). Role-relationships would cover the roles in relation to one another e.g. husband-wife, friend-friend and roles in relation to the social situation e.g. customer-shopkeeper.

Topic: This includes both subject matter and the propositional content of utterances (Ervin-Tripp, 1964: 67).

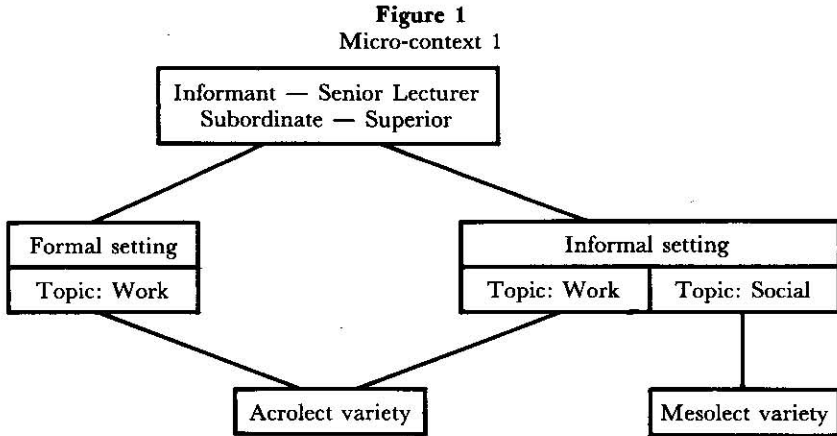
Even though these three situational components will be concentrated on, the other likely component which would play a part in the choice or shift of the language variety is the functional or purpose component (Ervin-Tripp, 1964; Hymes, 1972). This study has not incorporated it initially because valid reasons for this component being used as a factor shift in style were obtained after consultation with the informant. The informant was consulted as to why a particular shift occurred and thus the functional component will be discussed after the data has been analysed. As Sankoff says, "functions ... could be analysed, post hoc, as reflecting factors having to do with speaker's intention" (Sankoff, 1972: 44).

Analysis and Description of Data

In this section, the data was analyzed in relation to the micro-contexts in which it occurred. This resulted in the reasons for the choice of a particular speech variety in relation to the micro-contexts. These

reasons have been supported and confirmed by consultations with the informant.

Each micro-context is given a label, which ranges from Figure 1 to Figure 6. Future reference to a particular micro-context is made through these labels.



When talking to the Senior Lecturer in a superior-subordinate relationship, the informant maintains the formal atmosphere of the office and uses the acrolect variety in keeping with the social norms.

E.g. Excuse me, could I see you for a little while?

When the setting changes to an informal one, that is, the coffee club and the topic is not related to work, then an informal variety is chosen, the mesolect variety.

E.g. Oh oh! Looks like no more biscuits lah.

Ya lah, its such a pain.

With every other situational component remaining the same, a change in topic (from social talk to a work-related topic) leads to a change to a higher variety, the acrolect.

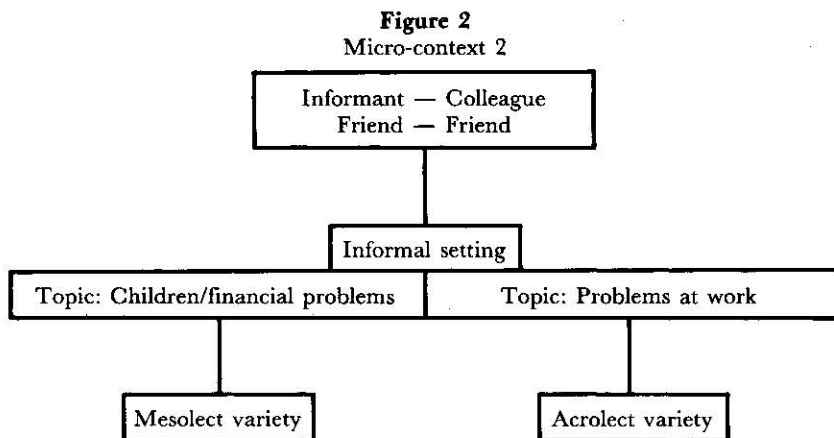
E.g. Hmm, I feel the need to formulate other types of questions.

Yes, there must be other ways of testing oral proficiency.

From the data collected in this study (see Figure 2), it seems that speakers who possess 'code diversity' (Richards, 1978), often use the upper mesolect variety in informal settings.

E.g. Now, any brand you give me and I'll take.

I never buy for her toys except for certain occasions, like birthdays, I bought one, that also reluctantly.



But when the topic shifted to one related to work, then the variety too shifted to the acrolect type. Here the nature of the topic and the persons concerned in the topic which is superior-subordinate relationship determined the shift.

E.g. I suppose I could do that. It's not much of a problem.
I'll have to get in touch with the coordinators.

These two interactions (Figure 3 a,b) took place in similar settings: the informant's house. The common participant in both is the visitor from Australia who is the informant's friend. But in the first interaction, the informant used a mixture of mesolect and acrolect, while in the second interaction, only acrolect was used.

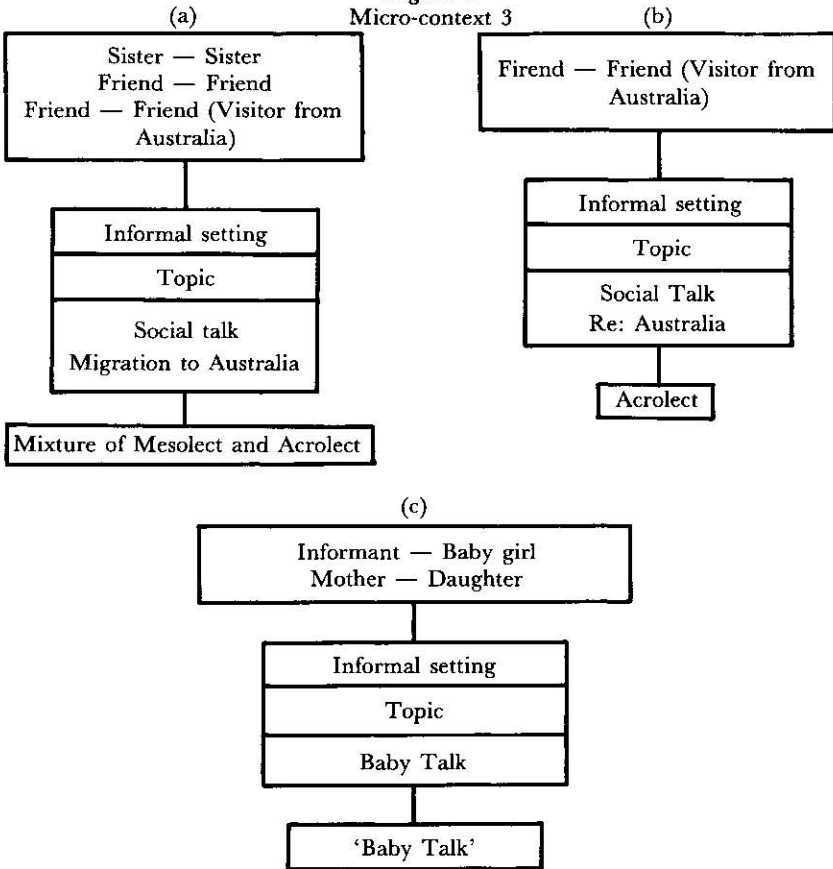
The informant's reasons for this peculiarity is the fact that the visitor from Australia did not speak mesolect but spoke 'good' English. Therefore, she switched to acrolect when she spoke with him.

E.g. How's your mum keeping?
Why weren't you happy here?
They are being pushed and reminded all the time.

The informant said she did not do this in the first instance because her two subjects spoke mesolect and there were instances when she got carried away with the situation into mesolect.

E.g. Eh, dont't forget ah.
Classroom interaction ... for me lah.
Don't know lah where to put the flowers.

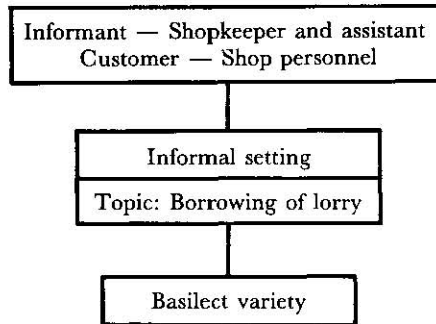
Figure 3
Micro-context 3



In the informal setting (Figure 3c) which took place in the informant's sister's house, the data indicates clearly the changes in speech that occur when the informant speaks to her baby daughter. This has been labelled as 'baby talk'. Ferguson has been cited in pointing out that in many languages "there is a style peculiar to the situation of an adult addressing an infant. The common formal features may include a change in lexicon, simplification of grammar, formation of words by reduplications, simplifying of consonant clusters ..." (Ervin-Tripp, 1964: 72).

- E.g. Wan, wan, wan murku?
- Wan koket?
- Finger out.
- Daddy where, daddy where. Gone.

Figure 4
Micro-context 4



The informant shifted to the basilect variety when talking to a different subject who is her regular grocer and his assistant. This was to put them at ease, to establish a friendly atmosphere.

E.g. Can ah. Help lah ah. Take my things eh.

S.Br.E. (I hope you'll be able to help me — to take my things).

O.K. When can?

S.Br.E. (When can you come?)

A dominant factor that determines the variety used by the informant is the proficiency level of the interlocutors. The shop personnel have picked up the basilect variety while serving the middle-class English-speaking community around the shop. Their mother tongue is Hokkien.

The informant said that even if there had been changes in the situation or topic to a more formal one, there would have been no change in the speech variety used, that is the basilect form. This is the only variety that they can speak and the informant would have no reason to want to create a distance between the shop personnel and her.

This situation between the informant and the babysitter is similar to the one with the shopkeeper and his assistant. The same reasons that were given for using the basilect variety there would apply here. Similarly, in relation to the babysitter, taking into account her educational and proficiency level, the basilect variety would be used.

E.g. Hello, long time no see eh.

S.Br.E. (Hello, I haven't seen you for a long time)

Another one more send to you, can or not?

S.Br.E. (Can I send another one to you?)

Really ah!

S.Br.E. (Is that so!)

But there is one instance of a change in the use of the basilect variety in relation to the babysitter. This is in relation to the babysitter's persistence in wanting to visit the informant during the Christmas period — a time when the informant will be moving house.

To assert herself, the informant tells the babysitter not to come at this time but that she will pick her up at a later date and she reverts to the mesolect variety to create a distance, to make the situation more formal and to get her point through.

E.g. No, we're shifting, you know.

We're shifting to Section 5, so in the process of shifting, today, tomorrow all, not in lah.

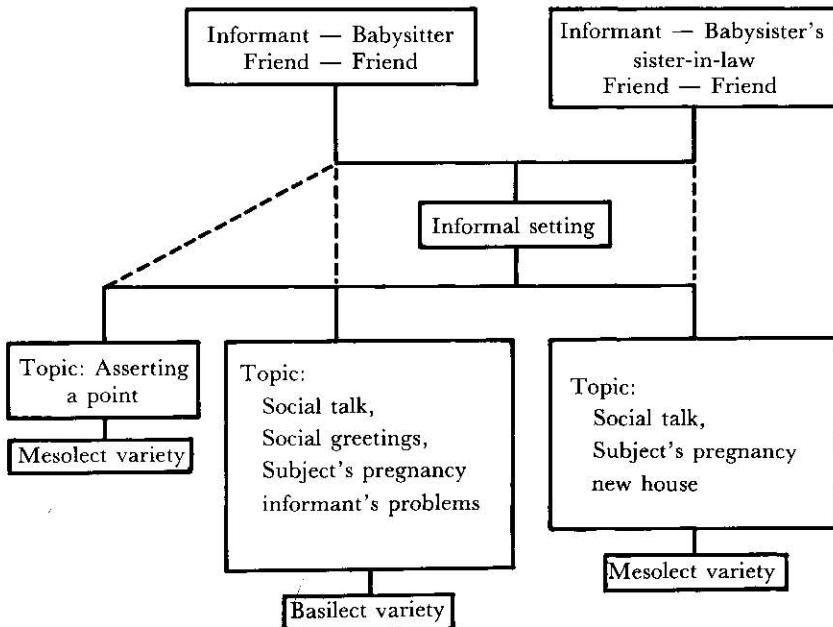
Wait lah, when the house is ready, I'll come and take you to the house.

There is a clear shift to a higher variety when informant talks to the babysitter's sister-in-law. When the babysitter leaves the situation to tend to some other chores, the informant feels the need to say something to fill up the awkward silence. She starts with some social openers:

E.g. How're you Peg? Not working?

You mean you resigned ah. Why?

Figure 5
Micro-context 5

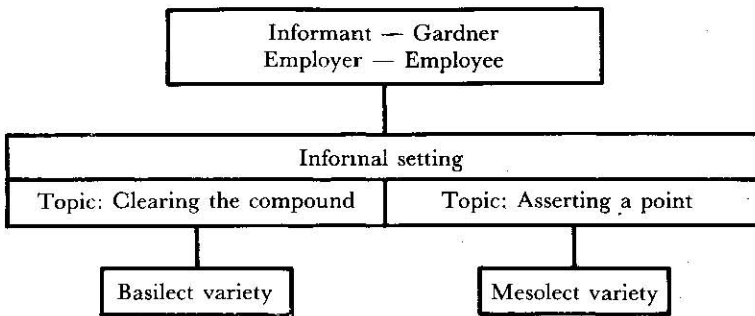


When the sister-in-law asks the informant personal questions, she retaliates aggressively with a higher variety:

E.g. What's wrong with a second one?
 What do you mean?

The informant's reason for shifting to a more formal variety was that she did not like the girl. She said that the girl takes advantage of the babysitter for whom the informant feels sympathy for. The informant therefore took no pains to put matters at ease between her and the sister-in-law. The informant used the formal variety to create a distance between her and babysitter's sister-in-law. This was discovered after the informant was consulted as to why this particular shift had occurred.

Figure 6
 Micro-context 6



This situation falls into the same category of the shopkeeper and the babysitter. The variety used is determined largely by the educational and proficiency level of the interlocutors. Similarly, the basilect variety is used here.

E.g.. You got lorry.
 S.Br.E (Do you have a lorry?)
 You can remove ah.
 S.Br.E (Can you remove it?)
 You can remove today also better still.
 S.Br.E (If you can remove it today, it will be much better).

Similar to other instances, the shift to the mesolect variety occurs when the subject needs to assert a point and to create a certain formal distance between her and the interlocuter.

E.g. Ooh! that's too expensive lah.
 That's high you know, the high area has no sand.
 You don't have to dig. When you do the road, you can dig it.

Dominant Syntactic Features of the Varieties

To determine the different linguistic styles or codes used, an analysis of the data is carried out to determine the dominant syntactical features of the different varieties related to the different situations. Gregory and Carroll (1978) cite J.C. Catford in defining language variety as 'a subset of formal and/or substantial features which correlates regularly with a particular type of socio-situational feature.' (1978: 84).

The general classification into the acrolect, the mesolect and the basilect depends on the level of society one comes from. This classification is not a clear demarcation between one and the other variety but a convenient classification to cover the whole range of the continuum of the varieties of English. An analysis of the data does show an interpenetration of features of other varieties amidst a dominant trend of one particular variety. This supports the point that the varieties of English do form a continuum.

Based on the data, some examples have been chosen to depict the general classification of acrolect, mesolect and basilect varieties. The examples are re-written in 'Standard British English' (Platt, 1980: 48) in an attempt to give a general picture to the degree of difference between the different varieties and Standard English.

I. The Acrolect Variety

There are no significant differences between the grammatical features of the acrolect variety of the informant and those of Standard British English.

II. Mesolect Variety

- a. Use of 'lah', 'ah' and longer sentences:
 - i. Ya lah, it's such a pain.
S.Br.E: Yes, it's such a nuisance.
- b. Generalised 'Is It' question tag.
 - i. You're giving her in a cup is it, she takes?
S.Br.E: You're giving it to her in a cup are you? Does she take it?
 - ii. The man said he's going to save some inches for me, isn't it?
S.Br.E: The man said he's going to save some inches for me, didn't he?
- c. Word-order
 - i. Why you didn't go to Genting Highlands?
S.Br.E: Why didn't you go to Genting Highlands?

ii. This one, when you're going to remove?

S.Br.E: When're you going to remove this one?

III. The Basilect Variety

a. Use of particles lah, ah.

i. Any other day lah.

S.Br.E: Any other day will do.

ii. Can ah. Help lah ah. Take my things ah.

S.Br.E: I hope you'll be able to help me — to take my things.

b. Subject deletion with the use of 'can'.

i. Similar to (a) (ii), above.

ii. He must come first. Then can.

S.Br.E: You can start after he's come.

iii. Tomorrow can?

S.Br.E: Can you come tomorrow?

c. Copula deletion.

i. How much you sell?

S.Br.E: How much are you selling this for?

ii. You, Mr what ah?

S.Br.E: What is your name?

d. Use of single verb or complement to replace subject + verb.

i. So expensive!

S.Br.E: It's very expensive!

ii. Help lah ah.

S.Br.E: Can you help me?

e. Lack of marking in verb tenses.

i. Ah, after Christmas I come and borrow your lorry can eh.

S.Br.E: I'll come to borrow your lorry after Christmas.

ii. I come and tell you, o.k.

S.Br.E: I'll inform you about it later.

f. Use of 'got' instead of 'there are' and the Possessive Form.

i. Got so many things to do.

S.Br.E: There are so many things to do.

ii. Your sister got one more ah?

S.Br.E: Does your sister have one more?

iii. You got lorry?

S.Br.E: Do you have a lorry?

- g Short phrases — use of particles ‘eh’ ‘ah’ in question forms.
- i. Terrible eh.
S.Br.E: Isn’t it terrible?
 - ii. How ah! Then how.
S.Br.E: What do I do then?
 - iii. You can remove ah?
S.Br.E: Can you remove this?
- h. Word order of sentences.
- i. He must come first, then can.
S.Br.E: You can start after he’s come.
 - ii. So expensive lah your lorry, cheaper cannot ah.
S.Br.E: Your lorry’s very expensive — can’t you reduce the price?
- i. Use of ‘like that’ instead of ‘in that case’.
- i. Wah! one big jing bang lah your houses eh like that.
S.Br.E: In that case your house must have been full of people.
 - ii. Ayoh! die lah like that!
S.Br.E: In that case I’m in trouble!

Conclusion

A global view of the data seemed to indicate that the basilect variety was clearly demarcated but not so with the mesolect and the acrolect variety. It was difficult to draw a line of demarcation between the acrolect and the mesolect variety. The mesolect variety was often used in informal settings by the informant with participants who belonged to the higher socio-economic strata (See Figures 2 and 3). But, in these informal settings, despite the absence of work-related topics, sentences of the acrolect variety were also used.

E.g. Fine, she was here this morning.

Her mother threatens to come here for house warming.

One explanation for this seems to indicate that in informal settings, the informant does not switch completely to the mesolect variety but uses instead a stylistic shift within her own sociolect (Platt, 1980). The result of this seems to be a mixture of acrolect and mesolect.

E.g. Not bad lah get help ah all the way from Australia. Everybody wants to go to Australia, I think. Finally, we’ll have a Malaysian clique there.

The other explanation might be that this mixture of acrolect and mesolect varieties could be placed along a continuum. As Platt says,

“Singapore English is a speech continuum ... There is a whole range from the ‘lowest’ variety, the basilect, through the medium range, the mesolects to the highest variety, the acrolect” (1977: 84) The same principle applies to Malaysian English Type I since “the overall pattern, ... still shows a very close relationship between the type of English used by English-medium educated Malaysians as a group and the variety we have referred to as Singapore English” (Platt, 1980: 168).

On the other hand, it is very clear that the informant switches from the acrolect to the basilect of the societal range, when speaking to participants of the lower socio-economic group. Here, she adopts the speech variety of the participants to narrow the social distance and to conform to the situation. (See Figures 3, 4 and 5). Reversely, she uses a switch in varieties, from a lower to a higher variety to create social distance, for example, when talking to the babysitter’s sister-in-law (See Figure 4). As Hymes says, “relationships of social intimacy or social distance may be signalled by switching ... between varieties of a single language ... ” (1974: 30). Giles supports this by aptly describing speech divergence as a strategy aimed at accentuating interpersonal differences and speech convergence as representing strategies of conformity (Giles and Powesland, 1975: 156).

In an informal setting, the situational component *topic* correlates with a change in speech variety only when it is related to work. However, when the basilect variety is used, a change in topic does not signal a change in language variety at all, unless it is a change in functional purposes.

It is clear that the factor “function of the interaction” (Ervin-Tripp, 1964: 88) which Hymes calls “purpose” (1972: 61) plays a dominant part in style-shifting at the basilect level. The informant when wanting to assert a point, creates a distance between the participant and her in the hope of getting the point across by shifting to a higher variety within the general trend of speaking the participant’s variety (See Figures 4 and 5). This style-shifting has been described as a “dynamic resource for the speaker” (Coupland, 1980: 1).

Appendix A: The Data

The lines that have the asterisk are the ones that have been chosen as examples.

Micro-context 1

*A: Excuse me, could I see you for a little while?

S.L: Yes, come in. What can I do for you?

- A: Well, ... hm, right now I'm in the midst of writing a few tests and have run into difficulties. I wonder if you could lend me a few books on testing.
- S.L: Of course, have a look at these books on the shelf.
- A: Thanks.

- A: Hello, are you coming for coffee?
- S.L: Yes, be with you in a minute.
- *A: Oh oh! Looks like there are no more biscuits lah.
- S.L: Oh dear! Always finishing so fast.
- *A: Ya lah, its such a pain.
- S.L: I'll go and get some from Fred's room.
- A: You know, I've a problem testing the Student's oral proficiency.
- S.L: What's the problem?
- *A: Hmm ... I feel the need to formulate other types of questions.
- S.L: You mean, other than the usual 'Talk About Yourself' type of questions.
- *A: Yes, there must be other ways of testing oral proficiency.
- S.L: Well, you've borrowed Oller's book. He gives some interesting suggestions.
- A: Hmm ... I'll look at it.

Micro-context 2

- A: I told him on the 26th after Christmas, we must sit down and take stock of our finances.
Really, you know, because there are so many things you would like to do for the house, more or less which you would consider as very essential but have to slow down a bit lah.
- S.S: You find that in the end ah, you've still got to live alright and you'll find there's nothing. How? and the baby's coming now that's going to be another additional ...
- A: But that one is not really cos' all Anusha's things are there. Milk is going to be free.
- ...
- S.S: How?
- A: Doctors get milk free you know. If I were in Malacca, I'll get it. Like, Rita, her baby milk is free and that time when I was there Parama on account of being my brother, he said "You want it?" It's just that I didn't want that brand. I was fussy.
- *Now, any brand you give me and I'll take.

- S.S: It's so much easier with your second one, y'know. The first one ah, the first one you're so scared of everything you want the best.
- A: But you don't realise its happening ...
- S.S: Until you've had one eh. I must learn from you all lah.
- A: But then the excitement is still there, with the first one you'll still want to do all those things, but thank God, I'm not that indulgent parent in the sense of toys. Even tho its the first one, she'll still has to learn to play with spoons and forks ... and boxes.
- That's true.
- I never buy for her toys except for certain occasions, like ... birthdays, I bought one, that also reluctantly.
- S.S: She's so young, its not appreciated.
- Ah the boxes and the tins she likes.
-

- A: So she said, "Well, I s'ppose I'll look into your suggestion and we'll see what can be done. If nothing can be done, we'll follow your suggestion *but* you have to approach the individual teachers and explain to them that you want it done. So, in the other words, it's a favour to me. So, I said, 'But can't it be done with the coordinators, after all the coordinators are the ones who distribute? and then she said, 'No, no, no! You want this done for you, so you ask the tutors concerned.'
- *I suppose I could do that. It's not much of a problem. I'll have to get in thouch with the coordinators.

Micro-context 3

- S.S: How's Sham eh?
- A: Fine, she was here in the morning.
Taking her mother around lah.
- S.S: Is Ron back for the weekend. Oh, he's still ...
- A: Her mother threatens to come here for housewarming.
- S.S: And what have you threatened to do?
- A: Send her on a one-way ticket.
- S.S: Eh, did you receive that, that swordsman ...
- A: Yes, what d'you mean did I receive?
- S.S: Where's Anusha?
- A: Sleeping, just went to bed.
- *A: Eh, don't forget ah.
- S.S: What?

- *A: Classroom Interaction ... for me lah.
 S.S: I've got already so just xerox it ah.
 A: Oh, you've got it.
 S.S: Ya, I've got it already.
 A: Not bad lah, get help ah all the way from Australia.
 S.S: And Singapore.
 A: You're going to help ah.
 A: Find out address all lah, since you got hopes of going to Australia.
 K.L: Who's got hopes?
 A: Intentions.
 K.L: Everybody wants to go to Australia, I think. Finally, we'll have a Malaysian clique there.
 S.S: It's already there.
 K.L: Don't know where to start.
 *A: Don't know lah where to put the flowers.
 K.L: That's what I was looking. I thought I saw a vase just now.
 A: I also did lah. I think Sharmile took it. I just pour some water inside and put it lah.
-

- *A: How's your mum keeping?
 F.S: She's much better now, thank you.
 The weather gets a bit cold for her sometimes.
 *A: Why weren't you happy here?
 F.S: I left for my children's sake and I'm happy I did it.
 A: How are they?
 F.S: They're fine — very happy there. There's too much pushing here, they used to have so much of homework to do.
 *A: Yes, that's true. They're being pushed and reminded all the time. That's because they've so much to cover.
 F.S: Ya, the primary school syllabus should be changed.
 A: Yes, I think the CDC is doing something about it now.
 F.S: What's that?
 A: Oh, that's the Curriculum Development Centre.
 F.S: My look at the time, I've to run.
 A: O.K. Thanks for dropping in and helping me at the same time.
 F.S: Do drop in tomorrow.
 A: We'll try but we won't promise because there's still so much of cleaning up to do.
 F.S: O.K. Bye.
 A: Bye.

Micro-context 4

- *A: Wan, wan, wan murku?
*Wan 'koket'?
- A: Did you buy those ah?
- S.S: Ya.
- A: Look at the rose there.
But it's close, should be close, She opened it.
- K.L: I didn't lah.
- *A: Fingeer out.
Look up for goodness sake, luk up.
Ask her to look up, she looks down.
Shy!
Aware of her eyes ... as Mark would say ... I just saying
what Mark would say.
Get up.
Why didn't kiss mummy? Kiss mummy. Quick, quick.
*Daddy where, daddy where. Gone.
Praba those days when you ask him 'Daddy where' lost. He
cannot see, Daddy where' lost.
You are extra shy today.
Anusha where, Anusha where, There.
Wan milk, wan milk. Yes or No.
Wait. Say please, say please.
You're giving her in a cup is it. She takes?
- K.L: Ya, she's always been taking.
- A: Guest come only, put on the plate lah.
- A: Why you didn't go? Why you didn't go to Genting
Highlands?
You sure its because there's no more place.
Not because you can't stand the cold.
- A: We went to the house. The man said he's going to save some
inches for me, isn't it? I mean, he's going to bring it forth
and all that. In the end he had put the fence back by 29
inches.
Wasted.

Micro-context 5

- S.K: But today, I think not free, not now.
A: Any other day lah.
S.K: Other day can.
*A: Can ah. Help lah ah. Take my things eh.

- S.K: Ah, not today lah.
 *A: O.K. When can?
 S.K: After Christmas, anytime.
 A: Anyday can.
 S.K: Ah.
 A: I come and tell you o.k.
 S.K: Please after Christmas.
 A: O.k. Thank you. Can lah can, after Christmas eh.
 S.K: After Christmas anytime eh.
 A: O.K.
 A: How much you sell?
 S.K: Eh.
 A: How much you sell?
 S.K: Oh ... 35 lah 35 lah.
 A: One 35 ah. Ayoh, so expensive.
 S.K: No lah.
 A: Choose ripe one ah. Gan ah can wash ah.
 S.K: Can, can.
 A: You Mr. what ah.
 S.K.A: Heng
 A: Heng ah.
 Ah, after Christmas I come and borrow your lorry can eh,
 can eh.
 S.K.A: Can.
 A: So expensive lah your lorry, cheaper cannot ah.
 S.K.A: Ask Gan lah.
 A: Ask Gan, your lorry what!
 S.K.A: Not my one oh, Gan one.
 A: Gan's lorry ah. Wah! It's Gan's lorry. You bluff one ah.
 Bluff one ah.

Micro-context 6

- A: Hello, long time no see eh.
 B.S: Ya lah busy you see. My sister just discharge from the hospital.
 A: Why?
 B.S: She had her operation you know — appendicits.
 Woh! you got another one more ah.
 A: Ya lah must have another one more ah.
 *One not enough lah. Another one more send to you can or not?

B.S: Can.

My sister got one more.

A: Your sister got one more ah!

S.I.L: No lah, false alarm. Went for D and C.

B.S: I told her please lah, not until Romo and Bian are bigger. for the past three weeks, we have hell man. Have to go to hospital to see her.

*A: Really ah! Nobody told us you know.

Ah, nobody told us what.

B.S: My sister came down.

A: Wah! one big jing bang lah your house eh like that.

B.S: You'll be here isn't it evening.

*A: No, we're shifting you know.

B.S: Where?

*A: We're shifting to Section 5, so in the process of shifting, today, tomorrow all, not in lah.

B.S: You won't be in ah.

A: Terrible eh. Christmas time and then shifting somemore.

B.S: So I thought you'll be in this evening.

A: Evening we're going to a Christmas party. Christmas Eve party.

B.S: Oh.

*A How're you Peg? not working?

SIL: Holiday lah.

A: How long?

SIL: Resigned lah.

*A: You mean you resigned, ah. Why?

SIL: The boss terrible man lah.

A: Really ah.

SIL My, you want a second one now.

*A What's wrong with a second one?

SIL: No, I didn't say anything was wrong with a second one but unexpected.

A: Expected. I told the mother.

SIL: You bought a house in Section 5.

A: Ya.

SIL: What sort of house is it?

*A: What do you mean?

SIL: Is it single-storey or double-storey.

A: Single-storey.

B.S: How's Anusha now?

A: Actually, she can play by herself now. I think I'll come and see you on Boxing Day, after Christmas, one day after Christmas.

I'll take her nappies ah.

B.S: Wait lah, what for you want to go back so fast.

A: Got so many things to do.

B.S: Wait lah.

A: Can use your phone or not?

B.S: Sure.

*A: Wait lah when the house is ready, I'll come and take you to the house.

B.S: O.K. Got telephone ah?

A: No telephone yet.

Micro-context 7

A: Ya?

L: Any work?

A: Ya, I said one week.

L: One week's time.

A: Ah. Because the other chap hasn't come yet.

L: Oh I see.

A: He must come first, then can.

So about the fifth or sixth lah. I told you fifth or sixth, isn't it?

L: Ya.

A: So might as well.

L: Because ah. Coming week. I've to do another one more road lah, so at the same time I can do it.

A: I see. You have to come on the fifth or sixth because the other chap is the one who did my compound eh and he said he'll bring a friend, so I've to ask him first ... not fair.

L: Chinese man ah.

A: No, Indian man.

O.K. This one, when you're going to remove. You can remove ah?

I'll pay you.

L: This rubbish ah.

A: Ya.

L: What about the Chinese man, won't remove ah?

A: No, this one the other Indian chap did it lah.

L: Oh I see.

- *A: You got lorry.
L: Got lorry lah.
*A: You can remove ah.
L: The sand every thing ah.
A: Ah ... not the sand this side, what's there, inside and there.
Wait, wait, wait, I'll come. Ah this, the one there.
*You can remove today also better still.
L: Today cannot lah.
A: Tomorrow can?
L: Tomorrow morning I come lah. Come and tell you and then
I bring that lorry lah same time.
A: How much?
L: I must ask my brother first lah.
A: O.k. So tomorrow morning you'll be here.
L: Tomorrow, about 9.20.
A: Approximately how much?
Roughly how much?
L: Must clear ah this sands everything also. Ya, there are all
loose sand ya. \$120.
*A: Ooh, that's too expensive lah:
L: The workmanship, the lorry, everything is included.
Because sands what, only the rubbish ah is o.k. we can just ...
A: No there's not much sand.
L: Here all sand what, there, thatside.
*A: That is high you know, the high area no sand, you don't
have to dig. When you do the road you can dig it.
L: Oh, only remove the rubbish lah!
A: Ya, hm, only the rubbish.
There is ... its part of the ground Y' know its not something
that's loose. So when we do the path here, the tractor or
whatever it is can dig that out to make it level ... you see
its like that.
L: So the land is very higher lah.
A: Ya ... a little bit higher ya.
L: \$80, inside and outside lah.
A: You come tomorrow.
L: Tomorrow morning.
A: Clear everything eh.
L: Ya lah ... but the sand, you want the sand ah.
A: Ya, I want most of the sand but these loose things here on
the top, the roots and ah that you've to take it away. Part
of the rubbish. You need not dig ya.

- L: I come tomorrow morning eh.
 A: And the one's outside too eh.
 L: O.K.

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