Bazaar Malay topics*

Bao Zhiming and Khin Khin Aye
National University of Singapore / Swinburne University of Technology, Kuching, Malaysia

Bazaar Malay is a Malay-lexified pidgin with a Chinese substratum spoken in the marketplace of Singapore (and elsewhere in Southeast Asia). Although it is no longer a lingua franca in Singapore today, it is nevertheless still spoken by older Singaporeans. Like Chinese and Malay, Bazaar Malay is a topic-prominent language. We document three types of the Bazaar Malay topic construction and show that they are identical to the topic structures found in Chinese. The degree of convergence in the topic construction between Chinese and Bazaar Malay, and between Chinese and Singapore English, supports the systemic view of substratum transfer.

Keywords: Bazaar Malay, pidgin, Malay, Chinese, topic prominence, contact-induced change, substratum transfer

1. Introduction

Bazaar Malay is a Malay-lexified pidgin which was widely used as a lingua franca in the Malay peninsula and the Indonesian archipelago before the British East Indian Company annexed Singapore as a trading port in 1819. In the early decades of the crown colony, Bazaar Malay continued to play that role, and the British government officers were often advised to learn it when they first arrived to assume office (Dennys 1878). Unlike Baba Malay, which is the mother tongue of the Peranakan community in the Straits Settlements,1 Bazaar Malay has never had

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1. Peranakan is a Malay word that means 'locally born'. The Peranakan Chinese, or Babas, are descendents of early settlers from the southern Chinese coast who married local Malay-
native speakers. The Chinese, Malay, and Indian communities that comprise the population of Singapore (and Malaysia) retain their respective mother tongues. From the beginning of the 20th century English started to replace Bazaar Malay as the lingua franca of choice in Singapore, and the process accelerated after Singapore gained independence in 1965. Although Bazaar Malay is no longer a lingua franca in Singapore, many older Singaporeans can still speak it fluently.

As expected, most of the words in Bazaar Malay come from Malay, without the usual affixation active in Malay morphology. There are words of Chinese origin, such as *lu* ‘you,’ *wa* (or *gwa*) ‘I,’ *tauge* ‘bean sprouts,’ and *lang* ‘person,’ some of which are also used in Baba Malay and other local languages. Many of the Chinese loanwords are of Hokkien pronunciation, betraying the influence of the dialect in the early days of Singapore, and indeed of the region. There are also English-derived words in Bazaar Malay (*persen* ‘percent,’ *tayar* ‘tyre,’ *aksiden* ‘accident’). Like the Chinese loanwords, the English loanwords are also in active use in the vocabularies of the languages spoken in Singapore.

Broadly speaking, the basic word order of Bazaar Malay is SVO, consistent with other pidgins, and with the contributing languages — Malay, the lexifier, and Chinese, the main substratum language. The basic clause structure is exemplified by the data shown in (1).2

(1) a. Saya sudah tujoh puluh lima umur
   1sg perf seven ten five age
   ‘I am already seventy five years old.’

b. Saya tengok itu orang jantan.
   I see this person male
   ‘I saw the man.’

c. Baru tahu badan semua sakit sampai tak boleh tahan.
   recently know body all sick until not can bear

speaking women (Vaughn 1879, Turnbull 1977, Tan 1988, Rudolph 1998, Ansaldo, Lim, & Mufwene 2007). The Babas speak a Malay-lexified patois called Baba Malay, which, according to Shellabear (1912, 1913), mixes Malay words with Chinese idiom or grammar. In Singapore, the community is among the first to shift to English from Baba Malay. The website peranakan.org.sg contains interesting information about the community.

2. The Bazaar Malay data reported in this paper were collected by Khin Khin Aye between 2002 and 2004 from 10 informants, aged between 49 and 77 at the time of data collection. Four of the informants are Chinese, four Indian, and two Malay. The data gathering sessions were conducted in community centers and coffee shops in Geylang, a Malay enclave during the colonial days. Details of the data collection are explained in Aye (2005). The data are cited without regard to the ethnicity of the source, and are understood by all our informants. We assume that the topic construction is a stable grammatical construction of Bazaar Malay, and is therefore part of the structural repertoire of a fluent speaker.
'Recently (he) noticed that the whole body ached so much he could not bear (it).'

d. Dia angkat ini besi.
3sg lift this iron
'He lifted this iron.'

As far as the basic SVO word order is concerned, there is not much difference among the languages in contact.


(2) a. Dulu punya pasar
old MOD market
'old market'
b. Saya kasi dia tahu awak datang
I give 3sg know you come
'I let him know that you have come.'

In (2a), the Malay verb punya 'own, possess' is used as a grammatical morpheme that links the pre-modifier dulu with the nominal head pasar, modeled on the Hokkien particle e (Mandarin de). Here, it has lost its lexical meaning, and its function in Bazaar Malay is to introduce modifiers. In (2b), kasi 'give' is used in the causative sense, consistent with the usage pattern of the Hokkien verb ho (Mandarin gei) with the same lexical meaning. Not surprisingly, these features also appear in Baba Malay; see Shellabear (1912, 1913), Pakir (1986), Lim (1988), Ansaldo & Matthews (1999), and Lee (1999).⁴

³. The influence, of course, extends to pronunciation as well. In Bazaar Malay, words such as tahu 'know' and mahu 'want' are pronounced without the intervocalic h, and banyak 'many' is pronounced as manyak. Despite the obvious differences in pronunciation, we adopt standard Malay spelling conventions in spelling Malay-derived words from our database of Bazaar Malay.

⁴. The Chinese influence in the use of punya to express the possessive has been noted by early students of Baba Malay and Malay. Shellabear (1912:6–7) warns: 'The frequent use of punya, however, is a Chinese idiom, and, though common with the Straits-born Chinese, should be avoided by Europeans who wish to speak with any approach to correctness.' Straits-born Chinese are the Peranakans.
2. Topic prominence

In this paper, we focus on topic prominence, another salient feature of Bazaar Malay. Although the topic construction is common among pidgins and creoles generally (Holm 2000, Winford 2003), Bazaar Malay topic prominence is heavily influenced by Chinese, the main substratum language. We document the whole range of topic structures in our Bazaar Malay database, and show that the Bazaar Malay topic structures are point-to-point identical with those of Chinese. Our analysis provides further empirical evidence in support of the role of grammatical system in substratum transfer (see Bao 2005).

Three structural properties have been associated with Chinese topic prominence in the literature (Chao 1968, Chafe 1976, Li & Thompson 1976, 1981, Xu & Langendoen 1985, Bao 2001, Bao & Lye 2005). These are exemplified in (3):

\[(3)\]

a. English-style

\[Nà-ge nû-hái, Zhângsān xïhuān tâ/e\]

that girl Zhangsan like her/e

‘That girl, Zhangsan likes her/e.’

b. Chinese-style

\[Shûiguô, Zhângsān xïhuâń píngguó\]

fruit Zhangsan like apple

‘As for fruits, Zhangsan likes apples.’

c. Bare conditional

\[Nî xïhuâń tâ, nî yînggâi zîjî gàoshû tâ\]

you like her you should self tell her

‘If you like her, you should tell her yourself.’

The topics are set in italics. The data are transcribed in pinyin in accordance with Mandarin pronunciation. In the English-style topic structure, the topic is semantically related to a resumptive or null pronominal in the comment, marked respectively

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5. As pointed out by two anonymous referees, typologically Malay is topic-prominent as well, which weakens the argument that the topic prominence of Bazaar Malay derives from Chinese. We are not in a position to discuss Malay topic structures here. Our focus is on the structural manifestation of topic prominence in Chinese, shown in (3). Any degree of convergence in the topic construction between Chinese and Malay will only facilitate the stabilization of the topic structures in Bazaar Malay.

6. The numerically dominant native dialects of early Chinese immigrants to Singapore are Cantonese and the Southern Min dialects of Hokkien and Teochew. The role of Mandarin in early language contact in Singapore should not be dismissed entirely, since it was the medium of instruction in Chinese vernacular schools before the government introduced nation-wide English-medium education. As far as the topic construction is concerned, there is no difference among the dialects.
by tā ‘her’ or e in (3a). In generative linguistics, the English-style topic structure is derived through movement, leaving behind a trace marked by e. The process is often referred to as topicalization. In the Chinese-style topic structure, the comment contains no pronominal, null or otherwise, to which the topic is related, as shown in (3b). For this reason, the Chinese-style topic structure resists movement analysis (Xu & Langendoen 1985). (3c) is an example of what Bao & Lye (2005) call bare conditional, where the conditional clause is not marked by an if-word.

Chinese conditionals are typically marked by a host of adverb-like expressions such as yàoshi, rúguǒ, tângruò, or jiâru, all of which can be glossed with English ‘if’; see Chao (1968) and Li & Thompson (1981). The position of these if-words is not fixed — they may appear clause-initially (4a), or clause-medially (4b), or be missing (4c) (examples cited from Bao & Lye 2005).

(4) a. Yàoshi kăoshi yănqí, wǒ jiù bù néng qù Yīngguó
   if exam postpone I then not able go England
   ‘If the exam postpones, then I won't be able to go to England.’

  b. Kăoshi yàoshi yănqí, wǒ jiù bù néng qù Yīngguó
   exam if postpone I then not able go England
   ‘If the exam postpones, then I won't be able to go to England.’

  c. Kăoshi yănqí, wǒ jiù bù néng qù Yīngguó
   exam postpone I then not able go England
   ‘If the exam postpones, then I won't be able to go to England.’

Such flexibility in the use of if-words in the Chinese conditional is not found in English, where the conditional clause is introduced by if in clause-initial position, and the bare conditional construction is used only for special effect (Say that again and you’re fired; see Huddleston & Pullum 2002). Chao (1968) uses topic and the associated notion comment as pragmatic notions, and treats all Chinese conditionals, marked or bare, as topics. For descriptive convenience we will discuss bare conditionals only. Following Xu & Langendoen (1985), we treat topic and comment as structural constructs. So the crucial difference between English-style and Chinese-style topic structures can be expressed as follows (TOP, topic; S, comment):

(5) a. English-style: \([…]_{\text{TOP}} […]_{\text{S}}\)

 b. Chinese-style: \([…]_{\text{TOP}} […]_{\text{S}}\)

TOP is the syntactic position that can be occupied by all major phrasal categories. The bare conditional structure obtains when the topic is interpreted as a conditional, without the use of any of the if-words. Structurally, it is identical to the Chinese-style topic, since the conditional clause typically does not originate within the comment clause, now interpreted as the consequent.
The three types of topic structure shown in (3) are diagnostic of Chinese topic prominence. We now proceed to show that Bazaar Malay has precisely these three types.

3. English-style topic structure

We first look at the English-style topic structure, which is exemplified below:

(6)  a. [Anjing]TOP [dia gigi sama dia punya tangan]$_S$
    dog 3sg bite with 3sg mod hand
    ‘The dog, it bit his hand.’
  b. [Itu gemuk punya orang]$_{TOP}$ [dia cakap dia boleh angkat naik]$_S$
    that fat mod person 3sg speak 3sg can lift up
    ‘The fat man, he said he could lift (it) up.’
  c. [Kerja punya pasal]$_{TOP}$ [dia tanya e]$_S$
    work mod matter 3sg ask
    ‘(A) work-related matter, he asked (about).’
  d. [Itu]$_{TOP}$ [dia tak suka e]$_S$
    that 3sg not like
    ‘She does not like it.’
  e. [Itu panggil apa]$_{TOP}$ [saya pun tak tahu e]$_S$
    that call what I also not know
    ‘What it is called, I also don’t know.’
  f. [Apa sayur dia cakap]$_{TOP}$ [saya tahu e]$_S$
    what vegetable 3sg speak I know
    ‘What vegetables he mentions, I know.’
  g. [Di cina]$_{TOP}$ [sudah ada bini e]$_S$
    in China already have wife
    ‘In China, (he) had already had a wife.’

_Punya_ is the grammatical particle that introduces pre-modification, see (2a). In (6a,b), the comment contains the resumptive pronoun _dia_; in (6c–g), it contains the null pronominal _e_. In terms of grammatical category, _TOP_ is occupied by a noun phrase in (6a–d), by a sentence in (6e,f) and by a preposition phrase in (6g). In terms of grammatical function, _TOP_ is the subject in (6a,b), the object in (6c–f) and the adjunct in (6g). The English-style topics have their direct counterparts in English, as indicated by the English translations in (6).

7. We assume that the basic constituent order of a Malay verb phrase is as follows:

    V – (Object) – Locative – Temporal
4. Chinese-style topic structure

Unlike English-style topic structure, the topic in Chinese-style topic structure does not originate in the comment. We have seen one example in (3b). More examples are given in (7).

(7) a.  

\[Nèi-xìě shùmù shùshēn dà.\] 
\[\text{those tree tree-trunk big} \]
\[\text{‘Those trees, the trunks are big.’}\]

b.  

\[Rénjiā shì fēng nián\]  
\[\text{others be bumper year}\]  
\[\text{‘As for those people, (it) is a bumper year.’}\]

(7a) is cited from Li & Thompson (1981: 462) and (7b) from Chao (1968: 71). (Tone marks are ours). In (7a), the subject of the comment sentence is part of the topic; in (7b), the topic provides the reference frame for the interpretation of the comment. The two semantic relationships between the topic and comment exemplified in (7) are the typical relationships that characterize the Chinese-style topic structure.

Chinese-style topic structure is also attested in Bazaar Malay (PART, particle):

(8) a.  

\[\text{[Bangsa ni Singapore]}_{\text{TOP}} \text{[Teochew, Hokkien, Fouchow, Kwanton race in Singapore Teochew Hokkien Foozhou Cantonese}\]  
\[\text{sini datang bangsa punya orang lah]}_{S}\]  
\[\text{here come race mod person part}\]  
\[\text{‘As for races of Singapore, Teochew, Hokkien, Foozhou, Cantonese are immigrants.’}\]

b.  

\[\text{[Singapore punya orang]}_{\text{TOP}} \text{[terlinga dia dengar mana yang barang murah, dia pergi]}_{S}\]  
\[\text{Singapore mod people ear 3sg hear where that goods cheap 3sg go}\]  
\[\text{‘As for Singaporeans, if his ear hears where things are cheap, he will go.’}\]

The locative and temporal adjuncts appear after the main verb, and the object, if any. The example below illustrates this order (Mintz 1994: 37):

\[\text{Sofiah ada pergi ke mana-mana besok?}\]  
\[\text{Sofiah have go to anywhere tomorrow}\]  
\[\text{‘Is Sofia going anywhere tomorrow?’}\]

For this reason, we analyze the prepositional phrase \text{di Cina} ‘in China’ to be topicalized from its canonical position marked by \text{e}.
c. [Itu barang ah]TOP [ada kali mahal, ada kali murah, itu that goods part have time expensive have time cheap that pasar sana]S market there 'As for those goods, sometimes expensive, sometimes cheap, that market.'
d. [Tapi saya minya tempat keraja]TOP [bukan Melayu lang Burma, but I MOD place work no Malay person Burma Indonesia, Bangladesh, China, India]S Indonesia Bangladesh China India 'But, as for my work places, (there are) no Malay people, only Burmese, Indonesians, Bangladeshis, Chinese, and Indians.'

In (8d), minya is a variant of punya, and lang ‘person’ is a Hokkien loanword. As the English translations suggest, none of the topics in (8) can be plausibly analyzed as originating in the respective comment clause. Instead, the comment provides information about the topic. In (8b) the comment clause, which may be given the structure shown below, contains a topic of its own:

(9) [Terlinga dia dengar mana yang barang murah]TOP [dia pergi]S ear 3sg hear where that goods cheap 3sg go '(If) his ear hears where things are cheap, he will go.'

The topic here is interpreted as a conditional clause, even though it is not so marked (see the bare conditional construction below). In (8c), the subject of the comment clause, itu pasar sana ‘that market there,’ appears at the end of the clause.

5. Bare conditionals

Conditionals in Bazaar Malay are typically introduced with the Malay word kalau. Two examples are shown below:

(10) a. Kalau itu Hokkien, kita cakap Hokkien sama dia lah if that Hokkien we speak Hokkien with 3sg part 'If that (person) is Hokkien, we speak Hokkien with him.'

b. Kalau mahu minum, minum kope satu paket if want drink drink coffee one packet 'If (we) want to drink, (we) drink one cup of coffee.'

However, the conditional marker kalau need not be used to introduce the conditional clause. Indeed, the bare conditional construction is very productive in our database. We have seen one example in (9); more data follow.
In (11), we analyze the bare conditional as top, and the consequent as comment, which is not bracketed. Naturally, these examples are felicitous if the topic clause is marked by kalau. The bare conditionals may also be followed by particles that typically mark topics, such as leh in (11c) and ah in (11f). This is to be expected, since structurally they occupy the top position, allowing the particles to be attached.

6. Multiple topics and multiple comments

In the preceding sections we documented the three basic types of topic construction in Chinese and Bazaar Malay: the English-style topic structure, Chinese-style topic structure, and the bare conditional as topic. The data we have seen contain single topics and single comments, even though the comment clause may itself be analyzable as topic-comment, as in (9). In topic prominent languages, a sentence may contain more than one topic to be used with a single comment clause, and more than one comment clause commenting on a single topic. Relevant examples are shown below (Li & Thompson 1981, Xu & Langendoen 1985, Bao 2001):
(12) a. Zuótiān, Lĭ xiānshēng, wō e_i kànjiàn e_j le.
yesterday Li Mr. I see ASP
‘Yesterday, Mr. Li, I saw.’
b. Zhèjiàn shì, Lĭ xiānshēng, wō gàosù e_i guo this event Li Mr. I tell ASP
‘This event, Mr. Li, I have told about.’
c. Zhè-kē shù, yè duō, huā shăo
this-cl tree leaf many flower few
‘This tree, the leaves are many, the flowers are few.’
d. Nèi-kuài tiáni, dàozi zhăngde hĕn dà, suŏyĭ e_i hĕn zhīqián
that-cl land rice grow very big so very valuable
‘That piece of land, rice grows very big, so (it) is very valuable.’

(12a,b) contain two topics, and (12c,d) two comments. Note that both (12a,b) are English-style topic structure, with the topics originating in the comment clause. (12c) is Chinese-style, whereas (12d) is a mixture of the English-style (the first comment clause) and Chinese-style (the second comment clause).

As in Chinese, Bazaar Malay employs clauses with multiple topics and multiple comments as well. The multiple-topic data are displayed in (13), and the multiple-comment data in (14).

(13) a. [Bazaar Malay]itu jam, semua boleh cakap e_i di kampong e_j S
Bazaar Malay that time all can speak in village
‘Bazaar Malay, at that time, all could speak in the village.’
b. [Pasal minya lu], saudagar pergi datang pergi datang, dia tanya sama e_i e_j S
matter mod you merchant go come go come 3sg ask with
‘About you, from the merchants who went to and fro, he asked.’

(14) a. [Toto]TOP mana-mana pun ada e_i S, e bukan di satu tempat S
Toto anywhere also have not in one place
‘Toto, (it is) everywhere, not in one place.’
b. [itu perempuan]TOP e banyak jahat S, tak boleh tahan e_i S
that woman many vicious not can endure
‘That woman, (she) was vicious, (I) could not stand (her).’
c. [Orang tua]TOP e pergi angkat payong ah S, e pukul lumbu ah S
person old go carry umbrella PART hit buffalo PART
‘The old man, (he) left carrying an umbrella, hit the buffalo.’
d. [Niaga]TOP Indonesia punya barang ambil keluar Singapore S,
business Indonesia mod goods take out Singapore
In (13) and (14), multiple topics are differentiated with subscripts, and the null pronominals \( e_i \) and \( e_j \) appear in the canonical positions of the topics, see footnote 7. In some cases, the same sentence may contain more than one topic and more than one comment as in the following example:

(15)  
\[
\text{[Dia cakap apa]_{TOP} [Singapore panggil apa]_{TOP} [dia tahu e]_S,}
\]
\[
3\text{sg speak what Singapore call what 3sg know}
\]
\[
[saya tahu e lah]_S
\]
\[
I know \hspace{1cm} \text{PART}
\]
\[
‘What he says, what Singapore calls, she knows, I know.’
\]
\[
\]

In (15), the two topics serve as the object within each of the two comment clauses.

7. Comparing topic prominence in Singapore English

In the preceding sections, we have demonstrated the close fit in topic prominence between Bazaar Malay and Chinese — the whole range of topic structures in Chinese is transferred from Chinese to Bazaar Malay. The same topic structures are found in Singapore English, the vernacular variety that is now being acquired as mother tongue by a growing segment of Singapore’s population (cf. Gupta 1994). It has long been recognized that Singapore English is topic prominent (cf. Platt & Weber 1980). The relevant data are displayed below.

(16)  

a. English-style topic structure

*Certain medicine, we don’t stock in our dispensary.* (Platt & Weber 1980:73)

b. Chinese-style topic structure

*My family everybody is educated in English.*

‘In my family everybody is educated in English.’ (Platt, Weber, & Ho 1983:47)

c. Bare conditionals

*Don’t care lah. Want to eat, eat; don’t want to eat, then don’t eat.*

‘Don’t worry. If you want to eat, eat; if you don’t want to eat, then don’t eat.’ (Bao & Lye 2005:283)
d. Multiple-topic structure
   *One time, the flats*, nobody want. (Platt, Weber & Ho 1983: 48)

e. Multiple-comment structure
   *That fish*, I bought last week, spoiled already. (Bao 2001: 307)

For detailed description and analysis, see the references cited above.

The clustering effect exhibited in the topic prominence of Bazaar Malay and Singapore English raises interesting questions about the nature of substratum transfer and the role of the contact ecology. Most studies of substratum transfer in the contact linguistics literature focus on identifying the source of individual novel lexical and grammatical features in the contact language; for example, see Muysken & Smith (1986), Mufwene (1990, 1993), and Lefebvre (1998). Unfortunately the clustering tendency in substratum transfer has not received its due attention. The convergence in topic prominence between Chinese and Bazaar Malay (and Singapore English) supports the argument, proposed by Bao (2005) and Bao & Lye (2005), that the grammatical subsystem is the locus of substratist explanation. Systemic substratum transfer takes place in contact environments where the contact language interacts with all the input languages throughout its history. This is the case with both Bazaar Malay and Singapore English.

Throughout its short history, Singapore has had the same mix of languages, and the same sociolinguistic relations among the languages; see Lim (2007) for a recent view on the history of the language situation in Singapore. The four ‘official’ languages, English, Chinese, Malay, and Tamil, have had a constant presence in Singapore, although their communicative functions have varied over time. Bazaar Malay and Singapore English emerged and developed in the same linguistic ecology, albeit at different times. For both Bazaar Malay and Singapore English, Chinese constitutes the main linguistic substratum. The early Chinese dialects are Southern Min (Hokkien, Teochew, Hainanese), Hakka, and Cantonese, and since the turn of the 20th century, Mandarin. All the contributing languages — the substratum languages and the lexifiers — are spoken along with the developing contact languages, albeit for different communicative purposes. Bazaar Malay and Singapore English are constantly being shaped by the same linguistic resources in the contact ecology. This crucial contact condition ensures robust substratum...
influence, resulting in the transfer of the entire cluster of topic structures from Chinese to Bazaar Malay and Singapore English.

Ansaldo (2004: 132) argues for a more nuanced linguistic matrix for Singapore English, shown below:

(17) a. Lexifier: English vernacular  
   b. Substrate: restructured Malay (Bazaar or Baba Malay)  
   c. Early adstrates: Min varieties: Hokkien, Teochew, Hainanese  
   d. Late adstrates: Yue varieties: Cantonese

To this list we may add Malay, Tamil, Hindi, and other Indian languages, as well as minor Chinese dialects such as Hakka and Hokchia, as early adstrates. In this matrix, Bazaar Malay and Baba Malay are placed as the linguistic substratum to Singapore English, with the Chinese dialects (and other languages) forming the adstratum. It is not clear why Cantonese is classified as a late adstrate, given the fact that Cantonese-speaking immigrants arrived at roughly the same time as other immigrants, and made up roughly 19% of the Chinese community as early as the late 19th century (Bao 2001: 283).

There is no doubt that the languages listed in (17), Malay, Tamil, and Indian languages, have been active in the speech community of Singapore to varying degrees. But the distinction between the substratum and adstratum of Singapore English is not easy to maintain for two reasons. First, English has always been the dominant language, with the rest assuming less important roles in the political and economic life of Singapore. As far as Singapore English is concerned, all these languages form the linguistic substratum. Second, the novel linguistic features in Singapore English are mostly Chinese in origin. Although Bazaar Malay and Baba Malay predate Singapore English, they have made negligible contribution to the grammar of Singapore English. For Chinese grammatical constructions that have transferred to Bazaar Malay, Baba Malay, and Singapore English, we would expect that they are transferred to Singapore English directly from Chinese, rather than indirectly through Bazaar Malay or Baba Malay.

In this connection, let us consider punya, which we first saw in (2) (see also footnote 4), and one in Singapore English. It has been shown beyond doubt that the punya construction in Baba Malay and Bazaar Malay is appropriated from Chinese (Hokkien e, Mandarin de) (Shellabear 1913, Pakir 1986, Aye 2005). If Baba Malay or Bazaar Malay were the substratum for Singapore English, we would expect that the punya construction to transfer to Singapore English, to be realized as

and shows that although ada and got have the same substratum source in u, their usage patterns are different, and the difference can be explained in terms of the filtering effect of the respective lexifier languages.
the *one* construction. Through careful analysis of the constructions in question, we can show that this is not the case. One crucial difference between the two constructions is that the *one* construction is productively used for emphasis in Singapore English (Gupta 1992, Bao 2009), but the *punya* construction does not have the emphatic use in Baba or Bazaar Malay. One specimen of the emphatic *one* is shown below (Gupta 1992: 332):

(18) Senior never come and help *one*
    ‘Seniors DID NOT come and help!’

If the *punya* construction is the substratum source of the *one* construction, we need to explain how *one* acquires the grammatical function as an emphatic marker. Prima facie, the most reasonable explanation is that Singapore English *one* is modeled directly on Chinese *de*, which has the emphatic use, rather than indirectly through the *punya* construction.

Ansaldo’s (2004) substrate and adstrate classification is based on the histories of the languages in the contact ecology of Singapore English, rather than on the linguistic effect of the distinction on Singapore English. Two historical facts are important. First, Bazaar Malay was the lingua franca before Singapore English took over that function; second, the Peranakan community is among the first to switch to English. These two facts could potentially give the restructured Malay varieties an opportunity to exert on the emerging Singapore English influence out of proportion to their number or position within the early Singaporean community, as predicted by the Founder Principle (Mufwene 2001). As we have shown, the founder effect in Singapore English is obscured by the continued presence of the very languages that have contributed to Bazaar Malay and Baba Malay.

8. Conclusion

In the preceding pages we have demonstrated the complete convergence in topic prominence between Chinese and Bazaar Malay. The salient properties of the Bazaar Malay topic prominence are summarized in (19).

(19) Topic structures in Bazaar Malay
    a. English-style topic structure
    b. Chinese-style topic structure
    c. Bare conditionals
    d. Multiple-topic structure
    e. Multiple-comment structure
This degree of convergence is also observed in Singapore English, which shares the same linguistic substratum as Bazaar Malay.

It is not surprising that Bazaar Malay, like Singapore English, has such robust Chinese-derived topic structures. Speakers of Bazaar Malay maintain their native languages. Our Chinese informants speak their native dialects and Mandarin as the primary means of communication at home, and Bazaar Malay as a lingua franca between people who do not share a common language. Moreover, Malay, especially spoken Malay, is also topic prominent, as noted by Rafferty (1987). The broad typological proximity between the two contributing languages — Chinese the substratum, and Malay the lexifier — facilitates the transfer of the topic structures qua system from Chinese to Bazaar Malay, and the subsequent stabilization of the transferred grammatical system in Bazaar Malay. Bao (2005) argues for a systemic approach to substratum transfer, which places the explanatory locus on the grammatical system. The Bazaar Malay topic prominence provides further evidence in support of this approach. The typological closeness between Chinese and Malay with respect to topic prominence allows the entire array of Chinese topic structures to filter through and become part of the grammar of Bazaar Malay.

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References


Bazaar Malay topics


