Afterthoughts and Right Dislocation in Colloquial Singapore English: An Experimental Approach

Beth Chan
National University of Singapore

Follow this and additional works at: https://repository.upenn.edu/pwpl

Recommended Citation
Available at: https://repository.upenn.edu/pwpl/vol29/iss1/5

This paper is posted at ScholarlyCommons. https://repository.upenn.edu/pwpl/vol29/iss1/5
For more information, please contact repository@pobox.upenn.edu.
Afterthoughts and Right Dislocation in Colloquial Singapore English: An Experimental Approach

Abstract
Although some pragmatic analyses claim that Afterthoughts (AT) and Right Dislocation (RD) are speech errors, I show that AT and RD in Colloquial Singapore English (Singlish) are subject to the following generalization through an experimental investigation: Singlish AT and RD disallow bare predicates, and strategies such as sentence-final particles (SFPs) or degree modifiers are necessary for grammaticality. To account for this, I propose that AT and RD containing bare predicates violate the Anchoring Condition (Ritter & Wiltschko, 2005; Tang & Lee, 2000; Yu, 2015) which requires events and states to be anchored to the utterance by time or by focus. I show that negation and aspectual marker already are also strategies that license AT and RD, and that these four strategies are able to anchor AT and RD by focus as they make reference to alternatives. I also suggest that Singlish RD is subject to an additional evaluative requirement, and that SFPs are a possible way to fulfil this requirement by virtue of being emotive markers (Rett 2021).
Afterthoughts and Right Dislocation in Colloquial Singapore English: An Experimental Approach

Beth Chan

1 Introduction

Colloquial Singapore English (Singlish), a vernacular variety spoken in Singapore, contains morphosyntactic and lexical features which make it distinct from standard English. For instance, Singlish readily allows pro-drop and copula deletion, as (1) shows.

(1) I very sure is chocolate.
   ‘I am very sure that it is chocolate.’

The possibility of deleting both the matrix copula am and embedded subject it in (1) allows Singlish utterances to convey propositional content without a full sentential form. Constructions such as Afterthoughts (AT) in (2a) and Right Dislocation (RD) in (2b) are similar in this respect.

(2) a. He can manage all the project, capable *(sia/lah).\(^1\)
   b. Capable *(sia/lah) her marketing intern.

Although AT and RD have structural differences as AT is characterised by an utterance-final predicate while RD contains an utterance-initial predicate, AT and RD in (2) are similar as the predicate and the sentence-final particle (SFP) sia or lah is used to express the proposition that he or her marketing intern is capable. The meaning contributed by each SFP varies, reflecting a different attitude held by the speaker towards the proposition. Sia marks mirativity as the speaker finds the capability of he (2a) or her marketing intern (2b) unexpected (Lee 2018). Lah has been classified as an assertive particle (Gupta 2006), expressing the speaker’s confidence in the capability of he or her marketing intern.\(^2\)

Regarding the syntax of Singlish AT and RD, I follow Ott and De Vries (2016) in assuming a biclausal movement analysis. In (2), the predicate in AT (capable sia/lah) and NP that the property of being capable is attributed to (her marketing intern) are contained in a second clause. Ellipsis takes place after movement such that the surface form of the second clause contains the predicate (in AT) or NP (in RD), as schematised in (3) (See Chan (2021) for details of this derivation).

(3) a. [He can manage all the project], [([capable, he is t],) sia/lah].
   b. [He is Capable sia/lah] [her marketing intern, t is capable sia/lah].\(^3\)

Cross-linguistic investigations have observed that AT and RD may also be observed with degree modifiers when the predicate is a gradable adjective (Fernández-Sánchez 2020). This is similarly observed in Singlish (4).

(4) a. He can manage all the project, *(very) capable.
   b. *(Very) capable her marketing intern.

Notably, Singlish AT and RD are subject to the generalization in (5). This generalization is specific to AT and RD and does not apply to fragment answers as bare predicates are licit fragment answers (6a) (Merchant 2004).

\(^1\)I thank members of the NUS Syntax/Semantics Reading Group for discussion, especially Zheng Shen, Nick Huang, Yu Jianrong and Meghan Lim. I also thank Charlene Koh for assistance with the recordings.

\(^2\)Singlish also allows optional plural marking in all the project.

\(^3\)Although other meanings for sia and lah have been proposed (Lee 2022, Lim and Hiramoto 2021), I assume a mirative reading of sia and emphatic reading of lah as a consideration of the nuances in their meaning is beyond the scope of this paper.

\(^4\)I assume that he is is deleted by pro-drop and copula omission. Although movement of her marketing intern is vacuous in this instance, see Chan (2021) for island effects that motivate movement.
(5) a. Singlish AT and RD disallow bare predicates.
b. Strategies such as SFPs or degree modification are necessary for Singlish AT and RD.

(6) A: What’s Yi Lin’s marketing intern like ah?
a. B: Capable.

I provide evidence that the generalization in (5) is robust through an experimental investigation, and account for (5) by proposing that bare predicates in AT and RD violate the Anchoring Condition (Ritter and Wiltschko 2005, Tang and Lee 2000) and strategies such as SFPs and degree modification, as well as negation and already, anchor AT and RD by focus. Contrary to analyses which suggest that these phenomena should not be subject to restrictions as they are mere speech errors (Geluykens 1987), this account contributes to cross-linguistic work on AT and RD and strategies which systematically improve the acceptability of ill-formed AT and RD.

2 Experiments on AT and RD

Two acceptability judgment experiments were conducted to verify the empirical claim in (5). Utilising formal experimental methods captures the quantitative effect of the ban on bare predicates, which cannot be identified through informal surveys. Both experiments followed the same format; the effect of bare predicates was investigated for AT in Experiment 1, and for RD in Experiment 2.

2.1 Experiment 1: AT

A 2×2 design using the factors STRUCTURE and STRATEGY examines the effect of SFPs in AT. STRUCTURE has the levels Afterthought (AT) and fragment answer (FA). FA items contained a fragment answer followed by an additional sentence to make the length across conditions more comparable. STRATEGY has the levels SFP and NIL, which differ in whether the SFP sia is present. The conditions in (7) are presented in response to “What’s Yi Lin’s marketing intern like ah?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What’s Yi Lin’s marketing intern like ah?</th>
<th>Experiment 1: AT-SFP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. He can manage all the project, capable sia.</td>
<td>AT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. He can manage all the project, capable.</td>
<td>AT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Capable sia. I heard he can manage all the project.</td>
<td>FA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Capable. I heard he can manage all the project.</td>
<td>FA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This setup follows Sprouse et al’s (2012) factorial design as it isolates the contribution of the SFP to AT by controlling for independent penalties that are associated with the absence of an SFP and differences in processing AT and fragment answers. When the condition means are plotted on an interaction plot (Figure 1), the ameliorating effect of the SFP in AT can be identified by comparing the contribution of the SFP to the AT-NIL condition ((1) in Figure 1) with the contribution of the SFP to the FA-NIL condition ((2) in Figure 1). This effect is quantified using the differences-in-differences (DD) score, which is the difference between (1) and (2) in Figure 1.

If bare predicates are acceptable fragment answers but are disallowed in AT, we predict that SFPs increase the acceptability of bare predicate AT items (AT-NIL) (7b) more than they increase the acceptability of bare predicate FA items (FA-NIL) (7d). Specifically, the predictions in (8) should be observed.

(8) a. Non-parallel lines are displayed on the interaction plot, where the difference between NIL conditions is greater than the difference between SFP/DEG conditions.
b. There is a positive DD score.
c. There is a statistically significant interaction between STRUCTURE and STRATEGY.

4Ah is an SFP which functions as a question marker (Lee 2018).
The same logic applies to the AT-DEG design, which examines the effect of degree modifiers in AT and has the conditions in (9). STRATEGY has the two levels DEG and NIL, which differ in the presence of the degree modifier very. The same predictions outlined in (8) are made.

(9) What’s Yi Lin’s marketing intern like ah?

Experiment 1: AT-DEG

a. He can manage all the project, very capable.

b. He can manage all the project, capable.

c. Very capable. I heard he can manage all the project.

d. Capable. I heard he can manage all the project.

Although the two factorial designs in (7) and (9) involve eight conditions, the overlap of NIL items across both designs allows the eight conditions to be condensed into six conditions when the experiment was run. Experiment 1 collected two tokens per condition (12 test items) and included 24 fillers to maintain a filler-to-test-item ratio of 2:1. 12 lexically matched sets were used so that participants rated sentences with different combinations of lexical items. The experiment was hosted online using PCIbex (Zehr and Schwarz 2018). A female native Singlish speaker was recruited to record the items, and participants listened to an audio clip with the test item before rating its naturalness as Singlish using a 7-point Likert scale (Figure 2). This setup follows Al-Aqarbeh and Sprouse (n.d.) and the auditory modality was used as Singlish is a primarily spoken variety.
for each strategy using the lmerTest package in RStudio (RStudio Team 2021). STRUCTURE, STRATEGY, and the interaction term were used as fixed effects, participants and items were included as random effects, and random slopes were removed until the model converged.

Table 1 presents the mean z-score (and standard deviation) for all conditions. These condition means are plotted in Figure 3. The predictions made in (8) are borne out. The interaction plots for both SFPs and degree modifiers display non-parallel lines, with a greater difference between NIL conditions than SFP/DEG conditions. Further, SFP use has a positive DD score of 0.36 and degree modification has a positive DD score of 0.39. In the linear mixed effects model for SFPs, STRUCTURE \( (F(1,270.2) = 21.14, p < 0.001) \) and STRATEGY \( (F(1,260.7) = 16.27, p < 0.001) \) have significant main effects. The linear mixed effects model for degree modification also observed main effects for STRUCTURE \( (F(1,39.2) = 12.72, p < 0.001) \) and STRATEGY \( (F(1,38.0) = 1.46, p = 0.23) \). In particular, the significant interaction effect of STRUCTURE × STRATEGY for both SFPs \( (F(1,270.2) = 6.88, p < 0.01) \) and degree modification \( (F(1,70.1) = 6.95, p < 0.01) \) is of importance as it is indicative of a grammatical violation that drives the unacceptability of AT containing bare adjectives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SFP</th>
<th>NIL</th>
<th>DEG</th>
<th>NIL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FA</td>
<td>0.64 (0.51)</td>
<td>0.51 (0.67)</td>
<td>0.43 (0.74)</td>
<td>0.51 (0.67)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AT</td>
<td>0.45 (0.80)</td>
<td>-0.03 (0.83)</td>
<td>0.28 (0.72)</td>
<td>-0.03 (0.83)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Mean z-scores (and standard deviations) in Experiment 1.

2.2 Experiment 2: RD

To investigate the generalization in (5) for RD, the factorial designs for SFPs and degree modification have the conditions shown in (10) and (11) respectively. To maintain consistency in the information presented across items, RD conditions are presented in response to a declarative instead of a question. For each factorial design, we make the same predictions in (8).

\[ (10) \] Yi Lin’s marketing intern can manage all the project.  \hspace{1cm} Experiment 2: RD-SFP
\[ a. \] Capable sia her marketing intern. \hspace{1cm} RD | SFP
\[ b. \] Capable her marketing intern. \hspace{1cm} RD | NIL
\[ c. \] What’s Yi Lin’s marketing intern like ah? \hspace{1cm} FA | SFP
\[ d. \] Capable. I heard he can manage all the project. \hspace{1cm} FA | NIL

(a) Factorial design for AT-SFP.  \hspace{1cm} (b) Factorial design for AT-DEG.

Figure 3: Interaction plots for each strategy in Experiment 1.
(11) Yi Lin’s marketing intern can manage all the project.

a. Very capable her marketing intern.

b. Capable her marketing intern.

What’s Yi Lin’s marketing intern like ah?

c. Very capable, I heard he can manage all the project.

d. Capable, I heard he can manage all the project.

Similar to Experiment 1, the eight conditions across both 2×2 designs were condensed into six conditions in Experiment 2, and the same task and data processing procedure were used. The results from a different group of 40 native Singlish speakers are presented below.\(^5\)

The condition means in Table 2 are plotted on the interaction plots in Figure 4. Non-parallel lines in the direction described in (8) were observed in the interaction plots for both strategies, and positive DD scores were found for both SFPs (1.05) and degree modification (0.67). The linear mixed effects model for SFPs observed significant main effects for STRUCTURE \((F(1,39.0) = 206.67, p < 0.001)\) and STRATEGY \((F(1,42.6) = 91.57, p < 0.001)\), and a significant interaction effect \((F(1,45.3) = 116.07, p < 0.001)\). For degree modification, STRUCTURE \((F(1,37.3) = 223.23, p < 0.001)\) and STRATEGY \((F(1,42.21) = 30.54, p < 0.001)\) have significant main effects; the interaction term was also significant \((F(1,45.9) = 18.82, p < 0.001)\). In both strategies, the significance of the interaction effect between the two factors is relevant as it suggests an effect associated with bare adjectives in RD.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SFP</th>
<th>NIL</th>
<th>DEG</th>
<th>NIL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FA</td>
<td>0.69 (0.55)</td>
<td>0.51 (0.66)</td>
<td>0.66 (0.70)</td>
<td>0.51 (0.66)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RD</td>
<td>0.16 (0.78)</td>
<td>-1.07 (0.69)</td>
<td>-0.25 (0.74)</td>
<td>-1.07 (0.69)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Mean z-scores (and standard deviations) in Experiment 2.

Figure 4: Interaction plots for each strategy in Experiment 2.

To summarise, both experiments found a significant interaction effect between STRUCTURE and STRATEGY for AT and RD. This is of interest as it indicates a violation that drives the unacceptability of AT and RD containing bare adjectives, and the ability of SFPs and degree modifiers to prevent this violation. The other predictions made in (8) – deriving a positive DD score and observing non-parallel lines on the interaction plot – were also borne out for both SFPs and degree modifiers in both experiments.

\(^5\)Experiment 2 was also conducted with a separate group of 40 native Singlish speakers with the audio recordings at a reduced speed, due to a concern that the items were spoken too quickly. The results also found a significant interaction effect for both SFPs and degree modification.
3 Proposal: Focus Anchoring AT and RD

To account for this ban on bare predicates, I propose that bare predicates in AT and RD violate the Anchoring Condition (Ritter and Wiltschko 2005, Tang and Lee 2000), following Tang and Lee’s rendition of the Anchoring Condition as a Generalized Anchoring Principle in (12).

Every clause must be either tensed or focused at the LF interface level.

Strategies such as SFP use and degree modification anchor AT and RD by focus as they are able to make reference to a set of alternatives, thus preventing an Anchoring violation. In the case of degree modification (13), the set of alternatives to degree modifier very would denote other degrees along a scale, such as a bit.

(13) a. He can manage all the project, *(very) capable.
   b. *(Very) capable her marketing intern.

As for SFPs, Gupta (2006) uses epistemic modality to model how different SFPs express varying degrees of the speaker’s commitment that the proposition is valid. Building on this epistemic modality framework, as well as Tang’s (2001) claim that contexts expressing epistemic modality allow focus anchoring with respect to possible worlds, I suggest that SFPs may make reference to a set of possible worlds by modelling SFPs as epistemic modals.6 Thus, one possible meaning for lah in (14) is: for all worlds consistent with the speaker’s knowledge, the proposition that the ice cream’s flavour is chocolate is true.

(14) You think that flavour is what ah?
   a. That ice cream got those brown sprinkles, chocolate *(lah).
   b. Chocolate *(lah) that ice cream.

This proposal builds on Yu’s (2015) account for copula omission in Singlish, which proposes that SFPs, degree modification, negation and aspectual marker already are strategies that allow copula omission. The experiments in section 2 have shown that SFPs and degree modification license AT and RD. Negation and already similarly extend to AT and RD in making them grammatical, as examples (15) and (16) show, and are also able to make reference to alternatives.

(15) a. He cannot manage the project, *(not) capable.
   b. *(Not) capable her marketing intern.
(16) a. Her daughter grow up so fast, eight years old *≠?₇(already). 8
   b. Eight years old *(already) her daughter.

Negation makes reference to a set of two alternatives: the proposition and its negation. The set of alternatives in (15) would contain the propositions: that helthe marketing intern is not capable, that helthe marketing intern is capable.

Turning to aspectual marker already, Krifka (2000) claims that all aspectual particles are sensitive to focus, arguing that already is a focus-sensitive operator that restricts focus alternatives. Specifically, already introduces an ordering for its alternatives, such that its alternatives are situated lower in the ordering than the focus. Already in (16) thus induces a set of alternatives to eight years old, such as being seven years old, six years old, and so on. As the daughter’s actual age is the largest out of all valid alternatives, Krifka also claims that this results in the conversational implicature that her daughter is older than expected, which is the pragmatic meaning contributed by already.

This focus anchoring account departs from Yu (2015) as Yu assumes a temporal anchoring analysis, where the proposed strategies fulfil the Anchoring Condition by anchoring copula-less

6Lee (2022) also draws a parallel between lah and epistemic necessity modal must.
7Singlish wh-questions allow wh-in-situ (Sato and Ngui 2017), and this is not meant to be an echo question.
8Singlish already has a sentence-final use (Hiramoto 2015).
sentences to time via aspect. Temporal anchoring may take place via tense marking or temporal adverbs as they allow the speaker to make temporal reference to an event by situating the event denoted by the predicate in time. However, (17) shows that a temporal anchoring account is untenable for Singlish AT and RD. Neither temporal adverb last time (17a,17b) nor overt tense morphology on works (17c) is sufficient to make AT and RD acceptable; the degree modifier very or SFP sia is still necessary.

(17) a. She accept new idea now, *(very) small-minded last time.9
b. She work at Google last time *// (sia) that girl.
    c. She works at Facebook *(sia) that girl.

Lastly, further evidence for a focus anchoring account over a temporal anchoring account for Singlish AT and RD comes from the ability of focus adverbs such as only to license AT and RD. The necessity of only in (18) for grammatical AT and RD would be difficult for a temporal anchoring proposal to account for as only does not straightforwardly make reference to time.

(18) a. She win the diving event leh, *(only) 14 years old.10
    b. She *(only) 14 years old that diver.

4 The Evaluative Requirement for RD

Looking beyond the adjectival data considered thus far, (19) shows that Singlish AT and RD are also attested with nominal predicates. AT and RD in (19) also contain two strategies which lead to focus anchoring: negation and the SFP lah, and differ in the optionality of the SFP. Although negation is sufficient to license AT in (19a) as the SFP is optional, the obligatory SFP in (19b) suggests that negation in itself is not enough to make RD with nominal predicates well-formed.

(19) a. Her brother still studying, not an attorney (lah).
    b. Not an attorney *// lah her brother.

Although both examples in (19) are anchored by focus, the contrast suggests that the conditions for grammatical RD are stricter than that for AT. I suggest that in addition to the Anchoring Condition, Singlish RD is also subject to an additional requirement of being evaluative (See Fernández-Sánchez (2020), Paul (2008) for a similar evaluative requirement in Romance and English RD respectively). I define an utterance as evaluative if it expresses the speaker’s point of view, and it is possible for other conversational participants to disagree with and not share this point of view without objectively determining which point of view is correct. In this sense, it is similar to Köblé’s (2004) notion of faultless disagreement, but allows for instances where disagreement among speakers is not overtly expressed. Without the SFP, the proposition in (19b) that her brother is an attorney is either objectively true or false, explaining its unacceptability. I thus suggest that the SFP is needed for grammatical RD in (19b) as SFPs are able to fulfil the evaluative requirement by encoding the attitude of their speaker towards the proposition.

4.1 Proposal: Considering SFPs as Emotive Markers

A consideration of SFPs as emotive markers, in the sense of Rett (2021), may shed light on their ability to fulfil the evaluative requirement. Rett claims that emotive markers contribute not-at-issue content that scopes over propositions, marking a speaker’s emotive attitude towards the proposition. For instance, alas in (20) reflects the speaker’s disappointment that Jane lost the race.

9Singlish allows optional agreement morphology (17a) and optional tense morphology (17b).
10Leh is an SFP that reflects the speaker’s tentative opinion towards a proposition (Wee 2004). Although (18a) contains the SFP leh, I assume that leh is not able to anchor AT as leh is not in the same clause as the predicate 14 years old, following a biclausal analysis for the structure of Singlish AT. Only is still necessary for (18a) to be grammatical.
AftERTHOUGHTS AND RIGHT DISLOCATION IN SINGAPORE ENGLISH

(20) Alas, Jane lost the race.

Similar to the emotive markers described by Rett, SFPs also convey not-at-issue content. This may be observed using the following two diagnostics. First, the accuracy of the speaker’s emotive attitude cannot be targeted for disagreement in discourse. That is, even though speakers may disagree on whether one should hold the attitude encoded by the SFP, it is not possible to voice this disagreement directly, as Lee (2022) similarly observes. In the case of *lah*, the contrast between the two continuations following *chocolate lah that ice cream* in (21) provides further evidence that *lah* expresses the speaker’s strong commitment to the truth of the proposition. The unnaturalness of (21b) may be attributed to how it contradicts the speaker attitude encoded in *lah*. (22) then shows that C is unable to disagree with the degree to which B is confident that the ice cream’s flavour is chocolate.

(21) A: You think that flavour is what ah?
   B: Chocolate lah that ice cream.
   a. I very sure is chocolate.
   b. # But I not sure if is chocolate. 11

(22) A: You think that flavour is what ah?
   B: Chocolate lah that ice cream.
   C: # No, you cannot be so sure is chocolate.

Second, the contribution of the emotive marker cannot be targeted by truth conditional operators such as negation. The unacceptability of (23a) shows that it is not possible for negation to target B’s strong commitment to the proposition that the ice cream’s flavour is chocolate. Instead, negation has to target chocolate (23b).

(23) A: You think that flavour is what ah?
   B: Not chocolate lah that ice cream.
   a. # I not sure if is chocolate.
   b. I very sure is not chocolate.

Rett (2021) situates her analysis in Farkas and Bruce’s (2010) framework, which distinguishes between propositions that only the speaker publicly commits to in the conversation (Discourse Commitments) and propositions in the Common Ground that are agreed on by all participants. Rett claims that the meaning encoded in emotive markers contributes to the speaker’s Discourse Commitments, rather than to the Common Ground, as emotive markers are speaker-oriented and thus reflect the speaker’s perspective. This may be seen in (24), which shows that the speaker attitude encoded in *lah* is held by the speaker, but not other participants. Although it is not possible for an addressee to directly challenge the speaker attitude expressed by the SFP (22), the ability of C to question B’s confidence that the proposition is true, which is the meaning encoded by *lah*, reveals that C does not share this same speaker attitude. The speaker-oriented nature of emotive markers may thus allow SFPs to contribute not-at-issue meaning and fulfil the evaluative requirement for RD.

(24) A: You think that flavour is what ah?
   B: Chocolate lah that ice cream.
   C: Why you so confident is chocolate? It could be coffee what. 12

4.2 Alternative Ways of Fulfilling the Evaluative Requirement

Besides SFPs, I note that the evaluative requirement may also be met through other means. As discussed in section 3, negation on its own leads to well-formed RD with gradable adjectival predicates (25), and an additional SFP is not necessary in this instance.

11 As noted in the introduction, copula omission and pro-drop are attested in Singlish; this allows matrix copula *am* and embedded subject *it* to be deleted.

12 Singlish *what* has been analysed as an SFP that expresses obviousness (Wee 2008).
I suggest that the evaluative requirement is met in (25) as gradable adjectives are inherently evaluative. The semantics of gradable adjectives makes reference to a degree which exceeds a contextually-determined standard (Brasoveanu and Rett 2018). As this standard may differ across speakers and cannot be objectively determined, gradable adjectives fulfil the evaluative requirement.

In addition, the evaluative requirement may be met through the use of adverbs such as already and only in (26).

Section 3 notes that already in (26a) contributes the pragmatic meaning that her daughter is older than expected, as the daughter’s actual age (eight years old) is ranked highest out of all other possible alternatives, such as seven years old or six years old. I suggest that only in (26b) may mirror even in ordering its alternatives such that 14 years old is lowest in this ranking, relative to its alternatives (15 years old, 16 years old etc). In this way, the use of only creates the pragmatic effect that that diver is younger than expected, and Hole (2015) posits a similar evaluative meaning for German nur ‘only’. As speakers may have different expectations of the age of her daughter or that diver, and may disagree on whether they find their actual age surprising, this allows the evaluative requirement to be met by already and only.

5 Conclusion

As Singlish AT and RD disallow bare predicates, various strategies such as SFPs, degree modification, already and negation are needed for well-formed AT and RD. This empirical generalization was verified through two acceptability judgement experiments for SFPs and degree modification when the predicates in AT and RD are gradable adjectives. To account for the ban on bare predicates, I propose that bare predicates in AT and RD violate the Anchoring Condition and such strategies are thus necessary to anchor AT and RD by focus. I also suggest that RD is additionally subject to an evaluative requirement, which may be met by the presence of SFPs or other means such as the inherently evaluative nature of gradable adjectives or the pragmatic effects contributed by already and only.

This study contributes to formal experimental investigations of Singlish phenomena, as most of the theoretical literature on Singlish is based on informally collected judgments. Moreover, while extensive work has already been conducted on the discourse functions of SFPs (Gupta 2006, Wee 2004, 2008), this account presents a new avenue for theoretical research on SFPs as it proposes that SFPs have a dual status of being both epistemic modals for focus anchoring and emotive markers which make AT and RD evaluative. Future work can extend this analysis to other SFPs besides sia and lah and investigate whether they may be accommodated in Rett’s analysis of emotive markers.

References

Al-Aqarbeh, Rania, and Jon Sprouse. n.d. Island effects and amelioration by resumption in Jordanian Arabic: an auditory acceptability judgment study.


AFTERTHOUGHTS AND RIGHT DISLOCATION IN SINGAPORE ENGLISH


Zehr, Jeremy, and Florian Schwarz. 2018. PennController for Internet Based Experiments (IBEX).

Department of English, Linguistics and Theatre Studies
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
National University of Singapore
Block AS5, 7 Arts Link, Singapore 117570
bethchf@u.nus.edu