



Singlish Phenomenon-Code Switching Viewpoint

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Abstract. Code switching during English interaction happens due to some reasons. One of the world issues in code switching is Singlish or SgE phenomenon. This research is aimed to contribute some findings in discourse particles that are commonly used in SgE interaction through code switching viewpoint. The data were taken from *Crazy Rich Asians* Novel, written by Singaporean, Kevin Kwan. The theories used in this research are from Lan (2017) which is used to analyze discourse particles in SgE and theory from Appel and Muysken (2006) to analyze type and function of code switching. Descriptive qualitative method is applied in this research. The results show that (1) there are 7 discourse particles found in this research: *Alamak, Lah, Aiyah, Aiyoh, Hiyah, Ah, Mah*. The most frequently used particles are *lah* (29%) and *alamak* (29%). (2) Based on the types of code switching, from 42 data, it was found that 24 data (58%) are categorized intra-sentential types, meanwhile tag switching and inter-sentential type are found in 9 data (21%) for each. (3) The function of code switching in SgE interaction of using particle are expressive and phatic functions. It can be concluded that code switching used in Singlish interaction is to express feeling, for example shock and dismay and to show solidarity among the speakers.

Keywords: Singlish · Code Switching · Types · Function

1 Introduction

Indonesia is the largest tourists' contributors to Singapore (The Jakarta Post, 2017) By this means Colloquial Singapore English (Singlish or SgE) (Lan, 2017) is now well known by many Indonesian people. By knowing SgE, Indonesians notice that there are something unique on SgE. Besides the tone and dialect, the use of discourse particle in SgE interaction is one of its uniqueness. The researchers as Indonesian people need to investigate this issue to elaborate the curiosity of why and how SgE emerges and how to understand SgE.

English in Singapore are divided into two types; they are Standard English (British English) and Colloquial Singapore English (Singlish or SgE). SgE is one of the spoken English during British colony of Singapore (Lan, 2017). SgE is usually marked by appearing some Chinese, Malay, and Tamil language among English interaction. "What nonsense, *lah!*", particle *lah* is a particle used by Singaporean (Febryanto, Suastra, & Tri Ediwan, 2018).

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SgE investigations have already been done by some researchers (Febryanto et al., 2018), (Chye, 2009), (Leimgruber, 2016), (German & Prévot, 2016), (Smakman & Wagenaar, 2013) in term of the use and function of its particle. Some of the research investigated the specific discourse particle, for instance; *lah*, *meh*, *beh*, etc. and it can be concluded that *Lah* is the most used particle in SgE. Discourse particle in SgE are called in different way according to its point of view. Some of the researchers concluded that discourse particle is an utterance final or audible coma since some of them occur in the final (Low & Deterding, 2003) while some of the them emerge in the beginning and middle of the utterances.

Commonly, SgE is used among friends interaction and low level social meeting (Tongue, 1979), (Platt & Ho, 1989). However, now days the mindset has improved, where some of Singaporeans assume by speaking SgE people do not labeled as a low level community member, indeed by speaking SgE they show the identity of their culture (Francesco, NG, & Mark Fifer, 2014), (Onn Wong, 2004). According to that idea, this research investigates how SgE emerges in high class social interaction.

This research takes a study case of *Crazy Rich Asians* novel written by Kevin Kwan. It is an English Novel about some crazy rich Singaporean families' life. This novel tells about a couple from different country, the man is from Singapore while the woman is from Taiwan. They meet in Oxford University, England, where both of them are lecturers in that university. Time flies, the woman are invited to come to Singapore to attend her boyfriend's best friend wedding party. Where the woman is surprise knowing the circle life of her boyfriend, all are luxury. Slowly, she understands that her boyfriend is not a regular man. All parties of family and business members are coming and interacting each other. The interactions are set mostly in Singapore. The novel is written by Kevin Kwan, a Singaporean, who certainly understands the real life of Singapore, culture, and how SgE interaction in Singapore happens. It can be concluded that, this novel definitely reflects Singapore culture and life where SgE phenomenon cases will happen frequently.

SgE is one of the CS cases (Matiini, 2017), (Murniati, 2017). CS is a situation when bilingual or multilingual communities communicate by inserting a or some languages along the main language they use. CS commonly appears in bilingual or multilingual interaction (Aitchison & Wardaugh, 1987). CS emerges along with the utterances, based on the arrangement of the words used in that utterances, CS are divided into three types; (1) Tag-switching like an exclamation, a tag, or a parenthetical in the other language than the rest of the sentence. For example OYE, when....” at the beginning of the text or as an emblem. (2) Intra-sentential code switching occurs in the middle of the sentence, this type usually call as a code mixing, and (3) Inter-sentential occurs between sentences. In addition, CS has various functions as well. There are six functions of CS (1) the referential function because it often involves a lack of one language or lack of facility in that language on a specific subject. (2) Directive function in that it involves the hearer directly. (3) Expressive function of code-switching serves the particular stressed to express what they mean. (4) Phatic function is to make different sense to the hearer. (5) Metalinguistic function is to comment directly or indirectly on the language involved. (6) Poetic function is to show a poetic meaning (Appel & Muysken, 2006),

This research is focused on CS in SgE interaction which is marked by discourse particle. Its aim to investigate the function of discourse particle usage in SgE through

CS viewpoint to find out what types and function are reached by the speakers of the particle usage in SgE. This research gap is that most research about SgE investigates the function of SgE according to its function in sentences whether as syntactical or pragmatic function, while in CS function viewpoint see how particle function in communication context.

By conducting this research, the researchers concern to find the implicit finding of how SgE can happen in high class social interaction in Singapore and the purpose of particles usage during the interaction. Some new of particles which are less discussed by other research are found in this research, they are *alamak*, *aiyoh*, and *hiyah*. Where it's rarely mentioned in any research. Those all are going to be new knowledge and contribution for readers and related research. Eventually this research still needs a deeper analysis to make it more applicable and understandable.

2 Method

Descriptive qualitative method is applied in this research by taking content analysis approach where the researchers describes some analysis data which are in phrase and sentences (Bandhari, 2022). This research is conducted by four steps analysis. Firstly, source data is taken from Crazy Rich Asians novel written by Kevin Kwan. The data are sorted by collecting some SgE conversations embedded by discourse particle. The sample data are 41 SgE conversations. Secondly, method and technique of collecting data, the research is limited to CS cases of SgE which embedded by discourse particle, technique in finding the data is by marking the data of the novel, note taking by inserting the page of the data, collecting them via excel in order to be easily analyzed by some determined theories. Thirdly, method and technique of analyzing data, by applying descriptive qualitative method, first step in analyzing the data is figuring out the theories used. Then, classifying the data according to the theories, where in this research the theories used from (Lan, 2017) to analyze discourse particle in SgE and theory from (Appel & Muysken, 2006) to analyze type and function of CS, after that, presenting some representative data to provide detail discussion. Lastly, method and technique of presenting analysis, combination between counting, describing, and narrating the results of analysis is conducted in this research.

3 Findings and Discussion

3.1 Findings

3.1.1 Discourse Particle as CS'S Marker in SgE

As described in introduction, the existence of SgE is from some local vernacular languages in Singapore, Chinese, Malay, and Tamil, during the interaction (Tan, 2017). Their unique dialect and some discourse particles are emerged. This research limited the data of CS only on CS with particle marker. This research findings show seven particles found in SgE with various emersion. (Gupta, 2002) mention that each particle has more than one function according to its context and use.

Table 1. Discourse Particles Findings

Position	Particles						
	Alamak	Aiyoh	Aiyah	Ah	Lah	Hiyah	Mah
Front	✓		✓	✓		✓	
Middle	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Final				✓	✓		✓

Table 2. Types of Code Switching (CS)

No	Types of CS	Amount	Percentage
1	Tag-switching	10	23.2%
2	Intra sentential	24	55.8%
3	Inter sentential	9	21%
Total		43	100%

Table 1 can be described that discourse particles in the front position are *Alamak*, *Aiyah*, *Ah*, and *Hiyah*. While in the middle position are *Alamak*, *Aiyoh*, *Aiyah*, *Ah*, and *Lah*. Then in the final position are *ah*, *Lah*, and *Mah*. The conclusion can be drawn that particles in SgE can be located in front, middle, and final of the utterances based on its characteristics and functions. The origin history of those seven particles will be explained below according to dictionary of Singlish;

Alamak: Malay (an exclamation of surprise).

Lah: Malay and Cantonese (linguistic origins are unknown).

Ah: Mandarin/Chinese (an exclamation, used to indicate admiration, affirmation, exhortation) and *as* (interrogative: conveying emphasis, expressing a request for the clarification of something just said).

Aiyah: Mandarin/Chinese (an exclamation used to express consternation, despair, dismay, exasperation).

Hiyah: Hokkian (to express shock and disapproval).

Aiyoh: Mandarin/Chinese (an exclamation to express concern, consternation, dismay, frustration, surprise).

Mah: Mandarin/Chinese (used to express something is apparent, obvious or self-evident).

Table 2 shows the most types of CS is intra sentential CS 55.8% it imply most of the CS occur in a sentence, while tag switching occurs 23.3% followed by inter sentential CS 21%.

Table 3 can be explained, from six functions of code switching (directive, expressive, metalinguistic, referential, phatic, and poetic). In this research found only two functions of CS they are expressive 23% and phatic function 47%.

Table 3. Function of CS

No	Function of CS	Amount	Percentage
1	Expressive	23	53%
2	Phatic	20	47%
Total		43	100%

3.2 Discussion

3.2.1 Types and Function of Code Switching in SgE Interaction

Tag Switching and Expressive Function Data 1: “*Alamak*, they can’t find our reservation,” Eleanor sighed “how come?...” Felicity inquired.

The italic word in data 1 “*Alamak*” shows a tag switch, an exclamation. It is a Malay slang word which means “oh my god”. The function of “*Alamak*” in data 1 is to express shock where Eleanor finds her reservation cannot be found in the hotel reservation book by receptionist. However she confidently has made the reservation. To be concluded, “*Alamak*” in data 1 has expressive function.

Tag Switching and Phatic Function Data 39: “*Ang mor, ah?*” he asked, looking at Peik Lin (117).

The word “ah” in data 11 is a tag switch, an exclamation. The function is to change hearer perception by emphasizing her idea. In this context, it has phatic function. Phatic function means when the speaker gives a different sense to the hearer. In this case, Peik Lin’s father emphasizes that Rachel’s boyfriend friend is a westerner or someone who has red or blond hair, it is the meaning of *Ang mor* while *ah* is used to emphasis his idea.

Intra-sentential CS and Phatic Function Data 17: “You know *lah*, Nicky doesn’t tell me anything!” (54).

Particle “*Lah*” in data 17 shows an intra-sentential code switching due to its existence. It emerges in the middle of the sentence and as a part of the sentence. “*Lah*” is a particle from Chinese dialect. In this context the function of “*lah*” is to reinforce speaker opinion, it has phatic function. The situation of the conversation is when Eleanor convinces Astrid that she does not know any information about Nick. Therefore, Eleanor asks Astrid about some information of Nick, his son.

Intra-Sentential CS and Expressive Function Data 54: “Aramanitaaaaa, *Aiyoh*, you’re too dark”.

The word *Aiyoh* is a Chinese word which means dismay. In data 54 it is categorized intra-sentential code switching because it emerges in the middle of the sentence and as a part of the sentence, while the function is to show dismay. In this context the speaker feels dismay about Aramanita, one of character in the novel and his son’s friend, because her skin is getting dark in her wedding period. The CS in data 54 has an expressive function.

Inter-sentential CS and Phatic Function Data 14: “Nicky, where are you? Call me tonight and let me know your flight information, *lah*. Everyone in the world except me knows when you’re coming home....”

In data 14 there are two sentences where between them there is particle “*lah*”. In this context “*lah*” is used to show exasperation because the speaker’s son did not let her know about his coming to Singapore. It has phatic function.

Inter-sentential CS and Expressive Function Data 22: Can you believe it? *Alamak*, a child from some divorced no-name ulu (90).

The position of the word “*Alamak*” is between the sentences, it is categorized as inter-sentential code switching. “*Alamak*” is a slang Malay word it is to show shock. It has expressive function. The situation of this conversation happens when Eleanor is shock predicting that her son’s girl friend is a woman who comes from divorced family.

3.2.2 How SgE Happens in High Social Level Community

According to the data found of this research, most of SgE interaction happened during informal context, however in formal context Singaporeans use Standard English or British English. See this example data:

Context: the conversation happens when Eleanor speaks to a hotel receptionist by using British English.

Eleanor (P. 10): “Yes, good evening, we have a reservation,” the woman replied in perfect English.

In conversation P.10 the place is at a hotel in London, Eleanor speaks British English perfectly, because she speaks to the native speaker of English.

Conversation between Eleanor and her husband in formal context and informal context:

Formal situation: Eleanor calls her husband from hotel receptionist telephone, where there are some hotel staffs and manager.

Eleanor P.15: “Come on, Harry, you’re not helping. I’ve called more than ten hotels already. Who knew that today was Commonwealth Day?”

In conversation P.15 Eleanor speaks in British English to his husband because there are some foreigners around her and she is in London, however she speaks SgE in informal situation.

Informal situation: Eleanor calls her husband from home to talk about their son.

Eleanor P.88: “don’t be so senile, *lah*! Don’t you remember what I told you last week? Your son has been dating some girl *in secret* for more than a year, and he had the cheek to tell us about it just *days* before he brings her to Singapore!”

In conversation P.88 the situation is where Eleanor calls her husband privately about their son. In this conversation she uses SgE.

4 Conclusion

The conclusion that can be drawn from this research is (1) there are 7 discourse particles from 43 data found in SgE interaction from the novel of *Crazy Rich Asians*. Those seven particles are *Alamak*, *Aiyoh*, *Aiyah*, *Lah*, *Ah*, *Hiyah*, and *Mah*. Those particles are used in the front, middle, and final of the utterance. According to the finding the particles used in front position is to show shock, surprise, disappointment and delightfulness. While

the particles used in the final utterances is to ask questions and approval, and emphasize their purposes. However, the particles used in the middle are to show both purpose as in the front and final position. (2) The result of categorizing those particles through code switching theories in term of types, there are found 24 data (55.8%) of intra-sentential CS, 10 data (23.2%) are tag switching, and 9 data (21%) are inter-sentential CS. It means most of switching happens in a sentence or becomes a part of the sentence. (3) While the functions are expressive (53%) and phatic (47%). It means code switching happens in SgE interaction are to show some expressions like shock, surprise, disappointment, delightfulness, emphasis, etc. and to show the relationship between the speakers to show their solidarity. Whereas this is due to SgE is considered as an English-based creole spoken language in Singapore.

This research is a case study research of *Crazy Rich Asians* novel written by Kevin Kwan. The writers warn that it still needed a wide and deep investigation to find a broad and crucial result to give applicable contribution. However, this research is hoped to be useful for readers who need information of particles used in SgE and for the linguistics students or researchers who are interested in SgE phenomenon investigation.

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