



## From Phasal Polarity expression to aspectual marker Grammaticalization of already in Colloquial Singapore English

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Our paper focuses on the aspectual marker already in Colloquial Singapore English (CSE) and argues that the CSE already has changed its grammatical function from what is referred to as a Phasal Polarity (PhP) expression implying a reference point at a prior phase in English as well as in other European languages (cf. Van der Auwera 1993; Van Baar 1997) to an aspectual marker marking the perfective aspect (both the completive and inchoative aspect), as shown in (1) and (3). We submit that such grammaticalization results from contact induced interference introduced by the ubiquitous Sinitic substrates (i.e. Hokkien, Cantonese, and Mandarin) spoken in the area (see (2) and (4)). Our research draws on material from the Oral History Interviews held by the National Archives of Singapore as well as the Singaporean component of the International Corpus of English (ICE-SG), which provides evidence that higher ratios of already are indicative of higher substrate influence. We will extend our research to the additive marker also, the experiential marker ever and the contrastive foci maker one, three other expressions in CSE which have acquired Chinese-derived grammatical functions.

(1) *Colloquial Singapore English* (Completive)

- a. I see the movie *already*. (Bao 2005: 239)  
'I saw the movie.' or 'I have seen the movie.'
- b. I stopped *already* working. (Oral History Interviews 000284/Reel 5)  
'I have stopped working.'

(2) *Mandarin Chinese*

Zuótān wǒ kàn le zhè ge diànyǐng.  
Yesterday I see le this CL film.

'I saw the film yesterday' (CLL Comtemporary/Prose 3/Xiao Q.)

(3) *Colloquial Singapore English*

He *already* studied there. But after some time, I went there, I can't find him. (Oral History Interviews 000009/Reel 23)

'He had started to study there, but I didn't find him when I went there' (Inchoative)

(4) *Mandarin Chinese*

wǒ érzi shàngxué le  
my son go school ASP  
'My son has started school.'

### References

- Bao, Zhiming. 2005. The aspectual system of Singapore English and the systemic substratist explanation. *Journal of Linguistics* 41(2): 237-267.
- Van Baar, Theodorus M. 1997. Phasal polarity. Dordrecht: Foris Publications.
- Van der Auwera, Johan. 1993. 'Already' and 'still': Beyond duality, *Linguistics and philosophy* 16(6): 613-653.