Cantonese particles in Hong Kong students' English e-mails

GREGORY JAMES

Notes on the emergence of a Cantonese/English hybrid in cyberspace

WITH THE popularisation of the Internet, the use of e-mails and computer-based chats (CBCs) has increased dramatically among university students. An interesting feature of such communication, however, is that a written medium is treated like speech (cf. Maynor, 1994). Conversations turn into notes where grammatical accuracy and conventional formalities take a backseat to instant communication. In the case of on-campus CBCs, informality and a certain disregard of the conventions of standard English are all the more manifest.

It is commonly believed in Hong Kong that this general freedom to write 'bad English' has encouraged the habit of randomly incorporating Cantonese words into English e-mails. Yet an examination of students' e-mails and icq ('I Seek You') communications reveals that far from 'polluting' their English by substituting Cantonese words haphazardly for English ones, or by applying Cantonese structures to their English writing, students tend to incorporate certain kinds of Cantonese words systematically into their texts for specific identifiable purposes.

These Cantonese additions appear not only to be helping the writers overcome their lack of ability to adjust to the style of English written conversation, and enabling them to supply from their native language what they cannot express adequately in English, but also to be enhancing solidarity and collectivity. A particular feature of the 'creolescent' language created in this way is the addition of Cantonese final particles at the ends of English sentences.

Tone and intonation

Cantonese is a tone language, in which each syllable comprises not just consonants and vowels, but also a pitch pattern, or 'tone'. Tone has a semantic value, and lexical items with identical configurations of consonants and vowels may be distinguished in meaning by tone alone. Take, for example, these two items:

sīngkèih-yaht 'Sunday'
sīngkèih-yāt 'Monday'

They have identical phonological realisations, but are differentiated by the tone of the final syllable: **yaht** (in 'Sunday' = 'sun'), **yāt** (in 'Monday' = 'one, first'). (In the Latin-script transcription used here, **h** is not consonantal, but a marker of low tone, and the macron a marker of high tone.) Superimposed upon lexical tone is sentence intonation, but this is supplemented by an elaborate array of modal and aspectual particles, many of which address the same functions in Cantonese as those of into-

GREGORY JAMES is Professor in the Language Centre, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, of which he has been Director since its foundation in 1991. Previously, he served for two years as Vice-Principal of the Institute of Language in Education in Hong Kong, and for ten years was Tutor to Overseas Students at the University of Exeter. In his thirty-year ELT career he has taught in Europe, the Middle East, India and China, and has been a guest speaker in some twenty-five countries. His major publications are in the field of lexicography, with particular reference to the languages of South Asia.

nation in English. Put simplistically therefore – and as a general observation rather than as universal phenomena in either language – where Cantonese uses tone for lexical differentiation, and lexical items for modal and attitudinal purposes, English uses intonation for mood and attitude, and segmental features for lexical differentiation. An example may make this clear.

In English, the word 'yes' may be uttered with contrastive intonation patterns:

yès: intonation: falling function: a statement of agreement
yés: intonation: rising function: an interrogative ('really?')
yês: intonation: rising then falling function: an assurance, as in answer to a negative ('yes, I do')
yěs: intonation: falling then rising function: a doubt ('possibly') or even a tentative negative ('no').

Yes is 'yes', but the speaker uses intonation patterns to modify the strictly affirmative meaning.

In Cantonese, however, the same set of consonants and vowels, uttered on different tones (rising, falling, falling-rising, etc.) represents distinct vocabulary items. It is here not a question of a different 'word' said on a different tone. The selection of the particular tone is as much part of the word as are the consonants and vowels. **yaht** ('sun') is no more **yāt** ('one') said on a different tone than 'dog' is 'god' backwards. Many native English-speaking teachers are surprised when their young Cantonese-speaking learners apparently have difficulty in listening comprehension by failing to recognise what are apparently familiar vocabulary items spoken to them. These learners may have learned an item in one spoken context, e.g. a presentation by the teacher (stressed, with a falling intonation: 'This is a *boòk*'), but are now hearing it in a different context (e.g. unstressed, level intonation: 'That's *his* book'). The intonational and stress difference is perceived as a tonal difference, and the two words are not recognised as being the same.

Smileys

In English, sentence intonation has an important function in conveying attitudinal and modal meaning. In the written language, this can be expressed by punctuation, or by syntax, but ambiguity, deliberate or unintentional, is a feature of writing. Interpretations of dramatic works, for example, depend very much on the

choice and superimposition of intonation patterns on written dialogue. In real-time written conversation (as in such instant electronic communication as icq), the nuances of meaning conveyed in speech cannot always be intimated speedily. This is why we have witnessed the emergence of ideographic symbols (emoticons or smileys) and novel punctuational conventions or abbreviations (cf. Schulze, 1998). Some examples, in context, are:

It's my birthday!	Conventional neutral exclamation
It's my birthday :-)	:-) = 'I am happy'
It's my birthday :'-)	:'-) = 'I am very happy'
It's my birthday :-(	:-(= 'I am sad', or 'I am depressed'
It's my birthday :-P	:-P = 'I am telling you a secret'
*It's my birthday *<s:-D*	*<s:-D = 'It's party time!'

The lists of smileys available online and in print demonstrate that their development is still immature. Indeed, many are absurd (see e.g. Sanderson & Dougherty 1993; Tamosaitis 1994), and seem to exist in lists rather than actual use. As early as mid-1994, Paul Andrews wrote in the *Seattle Times* that smileys were becoming a bane:

Smileys are an idea whose time has come – and passed. … It's time to ban smileys (… only a few smileys actually smile and some of the more esoteric ones are downright scatological). They're the smallpox of the Internet; smoke signals on the information highway.

Missing their underlying sociolinguistic significance, he superciliously, and quite unjustifiably, mocks their origins:

Smileys got their start as an emotional shorthand or emblem – a way of clarifying the intent of a potential ambiguous statement. … Initially, perhaps, smileys served their purpose. A lot of people on the Net were science and engineering types whose high school English class comprised their sole preparation for mixing subtle inflection or irony with the written word. A strategically placed smiley let them inform the recipient that an otherwise strange, opaque, or obnoxious declaration was meant only as a joke – e.g., 'You idiot! :-).' … Judiciously used, smileys did the trick. As newbies discovered them, though, smileys proliferated beyond the point of usefulness. Today they've lost all impact and have become the equivalent of crackling and popping on a cellular phone.

Andrews claims that smileys are not only clichéd, but redundant: 'Attaching a smiley to something that's funny is like elbowing someone after telling them a joke and saying, "Get it?"' Perhaps; but they are useful in cases of disambiguation or potential misunderstanding. He alleges that they are dysfunctional: 'Attaching a smiley to something that isn't funny doesn't make it so.' For him they are unnecessary:

> The primary reason smileys didn't exist for so long is that good writers did not need them. A cleverly constructed sentence, finely wrought witticism or deft turn of phrase needs nothing to clarify or punctuate. It's a thing of beauty. Good writing needs smileys like the Mona Lisa needed lipstick and eye shadow.

But smileys are not the stuff of crafted, edited prose; they belong to the world of instant written spoken communication, the linguistic equivalent not of the Mona Lisa, but of stickmen on the back of an envelope. Bryan Garner (2000) is more realistic:

> Internet English is surely relaxed and playful and creative. The so-called smileys made from text characters – from the commonplace :-) for someone smiling to more complex emoticons – show a delightful imagination at work. And the immediacy of modern communication demands a saving of keystrokes, however much the old-schoolers will lament the lack of reflection that often goes into instant messages.

Andrews opines that the proliferation of smileys defeats the point of their existence. But he does not define what he understands to be 'the point of their existence'. As we have seen, they are shorthand symbols serving to indicate the emotive quality attached to an utterance. But shorthand writing does not imply a restricted repertoire of symbols. There will, and should, be as many symbols as there are affective dispositions relevant to the expression of the full meaning of the utterance. Many symbols have also been invented, more or less facetiously, to represent extra-linguistic features, e.g. :*) 'writer is drunk'; |-O 'writer is yawning'; :-Q 'writer is a smoker', a phenomenon which is incidental to the main consideration here, but which is an interesting development of the expression in graphic mode of visual factors such as body language, which can affect the interpretation of one's interlocutor's speech in normal conversation.

That these have grown up in parallel with the more linguistically oriented symbols is per-haps a reflection of the, often subconscious, significance of the visual elements in face-to-face conversation. The common feature of all smileys is that they are made explicit by the writer. In other words, writers can commit to graphic symbolism just those aspects of the visual situation (true or not) that they want to be known and interpreted by their reader-interlocutors, a filtering process which allows manipulation of their reaction.

Cantonese sentence-final particles

What in spoken English is carried by sentence intonation is, at least partially, compensated for in real-time written-spoken English by smileys. In common with other varieties of Chinese, Cantonese, on the other hand, has a set of mostly, but not exclusively, utterance-final particles (cf. Yau 1965; Gibbons 1980; Kwok 1984; Luke 1990; Luke & Nancarrow 1997; Chan 1999) – 'emphatic words … which serve to strengthen the tone of the sentence' (Law 1998) – which convey rhetorical, or speech act, information and, in some measure, can be said to be the lexical equivalents of smileys.

Yau (1965) lists 206 forms, Ball (1924:122–25) 77 forms, Egerod (1984) gives 62, Neidle (1990) claims between 35 and 40, and Kwok (1984:8), 30; Matthews & Yip (1994:340) list 36, and discuss some of their functions, but do no more than hint at the wide variety of highly affective colouring these particles can bring to an utterance. As Ball (*op. cit.*:122) remarks, 'It is curious, and most interesting to notice how small and insignificant a word at the end of a sentence will change the meaning of the whole sentence, like the rudder at the stern of the ship governing the motions of the whole vessel.' Small yes, but hardly insignificant! (The term *particle* itself is, I feel, misleading. Defined in the *Oxford English Dictionary* [1999] as 'a minor part of speech', *particle* in English traditionally includes function words, such as prepositions and derivational affixes.)

Cantonese speakers communicating with one another in English by electronic media therefore already have at their disposal a set of lexical items to express mood and attitude, which they incorporate into their English messages. The result is a linguistic hybrid: English vocabulary and syntax, interlarded with Cantonese modal and aspectual particles. I am not aware of any discussions in the literature concerning

the use and effect of Cantonese particles in this circumstance, but there is some evidence that a similar phenomenon occurs as a concomitant to other basilectal features in spoken Singapore English (Kwan-Terry 1978; Bell & Peng 1983; Platt 1987). Gupta (1995) claims that 'Singapore colloquial English' has twelve 'pragmatic particles', which 'always follow a constituent and are often, but not always, sentence final. Their main function … seems to be to indicate the attitude of the speakers to what they are saying, especially in terms of degree of commitment.' She groups the particles from 'most assertive' to 'least assertive' (I follow Gupta's spellings):

CONTRADICTORY: *mah*, *what*, 'show[ing] that the speaker is forcefully contradicting something that has been said';

ASSERTIVE: *meh*, *ger*, *leh*, *dah*, *nah*, *lah*, *lor*, 'used to show the speaker's commitment to what is said, or to mark a directive';

TENTATIVE: *hor*, *hah*, *ah*, 'used to put forward an idea tentatively, or to mark a request'.

Gupta claims that these particles are learned 'very early and very easily by normally developing children', and the noun + *ah* construction often marks the first two-word sentence in a child learning Singapore English. She adds that the use of these particles enables a child 'to participate forcefully and successfully in argument from the earliest age'.

Gupta's examples from Singapore English, and their interpreted functions, may be compared with the examples of Cantonese particles in the Hong Kong variety of English exemplified in my students' icq correspondence, which I discuss in the next section.

Analysis of an example

Below is a copy of a fragment of a by no means untypical actual icq exchange, which one of my students at Hong Kong University of Science and Technology forwarded to me in response to a request I made for examples of their messages to each other. I have retained the spellings, capitalisation and punctuation (including the suspension points) verbatim; I have changed the names, to preserve the students' anonymity, and I have italicised the particles. The numbers in brackets refer to the explanatory notes following.

Gary:		day dreaming. haha. just feel bored and can't concentrate.

dunno why – haha.

Philip:	[1]	why cant concentrate *ar*? have "heart problem"??
Gary:		nope. just can't push myself but I m not feeling down or sad. hahaha, it's strange.
Philip:	[2]	work hard *ar*. u will have
	[3]	present on friday *wor*. and have 4 midterms. dont day
	[4]	dream *la*
	[5]	i will support you mentally *ar*
Gary:		thx. u make me feel warm studying in UST – University of Stress and Tension yes, there r many ppl watch me thru icq. i can't be so lazy and let them disappointed.
Philip:		hei hei … will u go to library on fri?
Gary:		i'm not sure. haven't decided yet but probably coz i have bought the text book of econ112. i need to borrow the 2-hr reserve as a reference.
Philip:	[6]	see u on lib on fri *ar*? ok? as my friend will not
	[7, 8]	stay *ma* … find sb to study *la*
	[9]	… to push me up *ar*.
Gary:		so do i. haha. i also think that studying w/ a companion is better than alone. Probably, your biology won't interfer w/ my Computer and Econ. We can concentrate on ourselves while sitting next to each other – yeah - then c u on fri
	[10]	*la*.
Philip:	[11]	ok *ar* … see u on which floor
	[12]	*ar*? at what time? i will have lesson from 9:00 to 12:00 and 1:00-3:00
	[13]	*wor*
	[14]	dinner together with grace *ar* – ok?
Gary:		dinner ok. i also have lesson from 0900-1200 but 1500-1600 afterward. if u used to study on G/f [Ground Floor], that's fine w/ me. and let see there than. early arrive, early study and early wait. ho ng ho? haha –
Philip:		grace will not go to have
	[15]	lecture for huma *ar* … can u help her to keep notes for her as i know u and she will have quiz on thu soon. Thanks very much. may be LG1 [Lower Ground 1st
	[16]	Floor] is much better *wor* …
	[17]	noisy *ma* … at

		G/F … also u seem used to
	[18]	study there *ma*.
Gary:		i can take the lecture notes to her but i can't promise i can jot any notes for her coz the lesson is boring … and i can hardly follow although i haven't fallen asleep … actually, everywhere would be ok w/ me.
	[19]	ok. then lg1 *la*.
Philip:	[20, 21]	ok *la* thanks *ar* … she is not lazy, she run lecture as she has mid term tmw …
Gary:		i know she is not lazy and i also believe that she got her own reason for skipping lectures. let m
		try my best to take notes for
	[22]	her *la*.
Philip:		ha ha … something want to
	[23]	ask u *ar* … ha ha … it
		is much better to ask through
	[24]	icq *wor*.
Gary:		just ask
Philip:	[25]	ha ha … nothing *la* ask u later … wait us get
	[26]	friendly first *la*… ha ha ha ha …

Notes

[1] *why cant concentrate ar?*
ar represents the interrogative particle, **a**, which 'is not sufficient to mark a question by itself, but accompanies interrogative constructions … and copular questions' (Matthews & Yip 1994:345), and, as here, wh-questions.

[2] *work hard ar.*
ar represents the particle **a**. Matthews & Yip (1994:346) suggest that **a** has a 'softening' function in statements or confirmations. Here, one may perceive, perhaps, a paramuthetic function: comforting encouragement.

[3] *u will have present on friday wor.*
wor represents the epistemic particle **wo**, with hypomnestic function, used in reminders (= '*Don't forget* you have a presentation [to give] on Friday'); cf. Luke (1990:233–42); Matthews & Yip (1994: 354).

[4] *dont day dream la*
la represents the persuasive particle **la**, typically used for suggestions and advice; cf. Luke (1990:92–97), Matthews & Yip (1994:351).

[5] *i will support you mentally ar*
ar represents the paramuthetic particle **a**, as in [2].

[6] *see u on lib on fri ar?*
ar represents the assertive particle **a**,

expressing a proposition, which is reinforced with the following question, *ok*?.

[7] *as my friend will not stay ma*
ma is an abbreviation for the epistemic particle **āma** which provides an explanation of shared antecedent knowledge: something assumed to be already known, or readily understood; cf. Matthews & Yip (1994:352), Law (1998). This sense of this clause would therefore be, '*as you (may) know* my friend will not be staying …'

[8] *find sb to study la*
la represents the affirmatory particle **la**, 'to emphasize a point of current relevance' (Matthews & Yip 1994:351). This clause builds on that in [7], with something of the sense of: '*so you see,* I need to find someone to study with'. Cf. Luke (1990:74–81).

[9] *to push me up ar*.
ar represents the topic particle **a** (Matthews & Yip 1994:341), serving to highlight the conclusive element of the whole utterance, thus giving the sense of: '*in short,* to help me on'. Bruche-Schulz (1998) has suggested that particles in Cantonese should in general be understood as anaphoric cohesive devices, in that they serve as logical connectors in addition to their other structural features. In [8], [9] and [10], we can see this function at work in the causal sequence *ma – la – ar*.

[10] *then c u on fri la*.
la represents the particle **la**, as in [8], here with a confirmatory function. Cf. Luke (1990:98–102).

[11] *ok ar*
ar represents the agreement particle **ā**, equivalent here to the English 'then': 'OK *then*'. Cf. [6].

[12] *on which floor ar*?
ar represents the interrogative particle *a* in a wh-question, as in [1].

[13] *i will have lesson from 9:00 to 12:00 and 1:00–3:00 wor*
wor represents the epistemic particle **wo** as an indicator of axiologic aspect, serving to indicate the presentation of information it is expected the hearer may not know; cf. Matthews & Yip (1994:353–54).

[14] *dinner together with grace ar – ok?*
ar represents the interrogative particle **a**, accompanying the question-element *ok?*. *ar* indicates the declarative sentence to be questioned, accompanying the English *ok*, which is the actual question-bearing element, added as a kind of lexical eroteme.

[15] *grace will not go to have lecture for huma ar*
ar represents the topic particle **a**, serving to indicate a simple declarative sentence, which will be elaborated upon. In English,

this might not be expressed lexically in the topic sentence, but the elaboration might be prefaced by 'so'.

[16] *may be LG1 is much better wor*
wor represents the epistemic particle **wo**, with hypomnestic function (a self-reminder = '*come to think of it* LG1 [= the lower ground floor] may be better'), as in [3].

[17] *noisy ma … at G/F*
ma is an abbreviation for the epistemic particle **ma** of assumed shared antecedent knowledge: '*since, as we know*, the ground floor is noisy'; cf. [7].

[18] *also u seem used to study there ma.*
ma is again an abbreviation for the particle **ma**, and links this clause with the preceding one: 'and *since, as I [and you] know*, you seem to study there [i.e. on LG1] usually'. The clauses in [17] and [18] give reasons for the decision already cited in [16]. The connective function of the causal sequence *wor – ma – ma* can be compared to that of *ma – la – ar* in [8, 9, 10].

[19] *then lg1 la.*
la represents the confirmatory particle **la**, as in [10].

[20] *ok la*
la represents the confirmatory particle **la**, as in [10, 19].

[21] *thanks ar*
ar represents the topic particle **a**, as in [9, 11].

[22] *let m try my best to take notes for her la.*
la represents the affirmatory particle **la**, with the sense of benevolent consent. This clause builds on the one preceding it, with something of the sense of: '*so* I'll try my best to take notes for her'. Cf. Luke (1990:98–102).

[23] *something want to ask u ar*
ar represents the topic particle **a**, as in [2], with something of a 'tentative' function – here, showing diffidence and perhaps an element of bashfulness – which might be represented in English by an existential construction, and a perfective verb: '*there's* something *I've been wanting* to ask you'.

[24] *it is much better to ask through icq wor.*
wor represents the epistemic particle **wo**, whose discourse function here appears to be that of recession, with Philip distancing himself from a direct declarative: '*And I think* it is much better to ask through icq, *you know*.' This is an example of what Luke (1990:242 ff.) calls 'realization': 'WO is sensitive … to the question of how an information item can be presented to a recipient in such a way as to build into that information-offer a reference to background expectations against which the value of that

information can be assessed' (ibid.:259).

[25] *nothing la.*
la represents the affirmatory particle **la**, as in [8]: '*Oh, it's* nothing.'

[26] *wait us get friendly first la.*
la represents the affirmatory particle **la**, as in [8, 25]: '*Let's* wait …'

Whereas Cheng *et al.* (2000) found that code-mixing is a common language phenomenon in the Hong Kong e-mail (Internet newsgroup) environment, their study was confined to the use of English lexis in Cantonese, in which context English content words were found to be interpolated into Cantonese text more often than function words. In my data cited here, apart from the interpolation of the one Cantonese phrase (*ho ng ho* 'OK?', between [14] and [15]) and the use of **baat** at [49], the use of the Cantonese particles in English text is the only general feature of code-mixing at play – in this extract, only eight (**a**, **ā**, **āma**, **ga la**, **ja**, **la**, **lō**, **wo**) of the total repertoire are exemplified – and they are blended into the syntax and semantics as inherent elements of the language. These particles are more than just the lexical equivalents of smileys, then, since they express syntactic as well as semantic relationships (Law 1990; Neidle 1990; Bruche-Schulz 1998). The harmonious coalescence of features of both English and Cantonese has produced a 'creoloid' (Platt 1975, 1978; Trudgill 1992), in which the language contact has given rise to a parallel use of features of the two languages at several levels. The modal and aspectual particles give lexical substance to the mental reasoning and affective disposition of the writers in subtle ways quite alien to standard English. At the same time, they do not interfere with the (idiosyncratic) surface sentential structures.

It can readily be seen that the use of Cantonese particles is a pervasive feature of this variety of English, a variety which is characteristic of the written-spoken medium. Rarely do Cantonese speakers speak English to each other when there is no non-Cantonese speaker present; and when there is, they tend towards a mutually comprehensible variety, without the final particles, the use of which would be interpretable only by another Cantonese speaker. In the HKUST Learner Corpus, a sixty-million-word archive of upper-secondary- and tertiary-level Cantonese students' formal writing in English (class assignments and examinations), there are no examples of the occurrence of final particles.

The variety of English I have identified, therefore, appears to be restricted to the informal context of speech but which, unlike Singapore English, is not generally spoken, but to a large extent elaborated in the electronic written mode: a case of written diglossia.

Pedagogic implications

In the foregoing analysis of a brief icq conversation between two of my students, I have deliberately eschewed the illustrative use of smileys as alternatives to Cantonese particles, although there are several instances where these might be appropriately used. From the English glosses I have given to the text fragments, it can be seen that appropriate manifestation of the mood and tone of expression can be achieved by lexis and syntax. But many of the phrases I have indicated are perforce idiomatic, and seem to occur very rarely, if at all, in our students' spoken English, in pragmatically appropriate contexts: *OK then, come to think of it*; tense uses such as *I've been wanting to ask you*. Moreover, these phrases are not economical of keystrokes, and the very brevity of the mono- and di-syllabic particles in Cantonese is a characteristic which has motivated their evolution in the icq English of Cantonese-speaking students.

There is no changing the icq formations, and the creole features I have identified will, no doubt, develop even further. However, in my classes, I have used examples from icq exchanges to enhance my students' awareness of the aspectual and modal possibilities of idiomatic phrases in English. At first, students are bemused, but also somewhat embarrassed, that extracts from their icq conversations should be a focus of interest: they fear that they are being accused of using 'corrupt' English, and they often do not want to discuss the use of Cantonese particles, let alone defend them in their own informal electronic communications.

There is a feeling of the 'outsider' teacher 'snooping' on confidential intercourse: the effect of particles in creating solidarity and collectivity, as I have mentioned, is not insignificant. Nonetheless, it is possible to overcome this initial resistance, with tact and patience. As a beginner in Cantonese, I have the advantage of being able to present myself as a language learner to my students. Now they are the knowers, and I am the novice. In class, when I have sought clarification of meanings,

for example, in icq text extracts containing particles, students have often been very willing to try to help me, but have already been amazed at their own inability to explain to me what they understand intuitively. So, a frequent response is, "Oh, that word has no meaning, it's just there for emphasis."

A contrastive approach, demonstrating that choice implies meaning, usually helps the discussion along. I might ask, for example, "What does *It's my birthday la* mean?" No meaning, just emphasis. "OK. What does *It's my birthday wo* mean?" Ah! That's different! These, and perhaps further examples with other particles and other sentences, lead inevitably to elaborations of different speaker attitudes and moods. A useful and productive interlude can be the replacement of the particles in a selection of text extracts, by smileys. Students can be invited to invent their own, and explain the modal and aspectual meanings they are attempting to convey. I feel that it is important that students be helped to verbalise their knowledge, because in so doing, many latent English phrases, which can be exploited later, begin to emerge. From this stage, we examine extracts of conversations in context, and replace the smileys/particles by idiomatic English, building up the interchanges of speech to preserve coherence, as well as the affective features of the discourse.

In this way, instead of condemning the creolised variety of English, I have used it as a bridge to demonstrate to my students the formal contrasts between the discourse patterns of English and Cantonese, and to heighten their awareness of the possibilities that English affords of expressing the subtleties displayed by the particles in their native language of Cantonese. ■

References

Andrews, P. 1994. *Put on a happy face, but not in my email!* [Online.] Available at: www.mit.edu:8001/people/cordelia/smileys_edit.html.

Ball, J. Dyer. 1883, 1924. *Cantonese made easy*. 4th edition. Hong Kong: Kelly and Walsh.

Bell, R. & L. Q. S. Peng 1983. '"Today la?" "Tomorrow lah!": The LA particle in Singapore English.' In *RELC Journal* 14, 2, 1–18.

Bruche-Schulz, G. 1998. 'Written Cantonese. The use of utterance particles in oral and written styles.' In B. T'sou (Ed.), *Studia linguistica serica* (Papers from the 3rd International Conference on Chinese Linguistics, July 14–16, 1994, at the City Polytechnic of Hong Kong) (pp. 129–44). Hong Kong: City University of Hong Kong, Language Information Sciences Research Centre.

Chan, M. K.-M. 1999. 'Sentence particles je and jek in Cantonese and their distribution across gender and sentence types.' In S. Wertheim, A. C. Bailey & M. Corston-Oliver (Eds), *Engendering communication: Proceedings of the Fifth Berkeley Women and Language Conference* (pp. 117–28). Berkeley CA: Berkeley Women and Language Group.

Cheng, S. K. K., W. Y. R. Fung, P. W. P. Kwok, & L. L. C. Lau. 2000. 'A study on Cantonese-English code-switching and code-mixing in Hong Kong Internet newsgroups.' Paper presented at the HAAL Research Forum, Hong Kong, 3rd June.

Egerod, S. C. 1984. 'Verbal and sentential marking in Indo-European and East Asian languages.' In *Computational Analyses of Asian and African Languages* 22, 71–82.

Garner, B. A. 2000. 'Capturing Netspeak, but not reining it in.' Review of *Wired style: Principles of English usage in the digital age*, by Constance Hale and Jessie Scanlon (Broadway Books, 2nd edition). The New York Times on the Web. [Online.] Available at: www.nyt.com/.

Gibbons, J. 1980. 'A tentative framework for speech act description of the utterance particles in conversational Cantonese.' In *Linguistics* 18, 763–75.

Gupta, A. Fraser. 1995. 'Singapore English: Pragmatic particles.' In *Speech and Hearing Association (Singapore) Newsletter*, December. [Online.] Available at: www.leeds.ac.uk/english/staff/afg/shastxt.html#Three.

Kwan-Terry, A. 1978. 'The meaning and the source of the "la" and the "what" particles in Singapore English.' In *RELC Journal* 9, 2, 22–36.

Kwok, H. 1984. *Sentence particles in Cantonese.* Hong Kong: University of Hong Kong, Centre of Asian Studies.

Law, P.-K. J. 1998. *Craziness – Chinglish*. [Online.] Available at: home.netvigator.com/~ukjoe/chinlish.

Law S.-P. 1990. 'The syntax and phonology of Cantonese sentence-final particles.' PhD, Boston University.

Luke, K. K. 1990. *Utterance particles in Cantonese conversation*. Amsterdam & Philadelphia PA: John Benjamins.

Luke, K. K. & Nancarrow, O. T. 1997. 'Modal particles in Cantonese: A corpus-based study.' Paper read at the annual meeting of the Yuen Ren Society for the Promotion of Chinese Dialect Fieldwork, University of Washington, 25th March.

Mak, L. Y. O, & M. M. L. Keung, eds. 2000. *Changing Languages: Language Education in the era of transition*. Hong Kong: Language Centre, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology/Shanghai: School of Foreign Languages, Shanghai Jiaotong University.

Matthews, S. & Yip, V. 1994. *Cantonese. A comprehensive grammar.* London & New York NY: Routledge.

Maynor, N. 1994. 'The language of electronic mail: Written speech?' In N. Montgomery & G. Little (Eds), *Centennial usage studies* (pp. 48–54). Tuscaloosa AL: University of Alabama Press.

Neidle, C. 1990. 'X'-structures and sentence-final particles in Cantonese.' Syntax Workshop at the Center for the Study of Language and Information, Stanford University, 29th May. Abstract in *CSLI Calendar*, 24 May, vol. 5, 29. [Online.] Available at: www-csli.stanford.edu/Archive/ calendar/1989-90/ msg00043.html.

Platt, J. 1975. 'The Singapore English speech continuum and its basilect "Singlish" as a "creoloid".' In *Anthropological Linguistics* 17, 7, 363–74.

—. 1978. 'The concept of a "creoloid" – exemplification: Basilectal Singapore English.' In *Papers in Pidgin and Creole Linguistics 1*, A-54, 53.

—. 1987. 'Communicative functions of particles in Singapore English.' In R. Steele & T. Threadgold (Eds), *Language topics 1* (pp. 391–401). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Sanderson, D. W. & Dougherty, D. 1993. *Smileys.* Sebastopol CA: O'Reilly & Associates.

Schulze, M. 1998. *Substitution of paraverbal and nonverbal cues in the written medium of IRC.* [Online.] Available at: www.linguistik.uni-erlangen.de/~max/Tree/iada98.pdf.

Tamosaitis, N. 1994. *Net talk.* Emeryville CA: Ziff-Davis Press.

Trudgill, P. 1992. *Introducing language and society*. London: Penguin.

Yau, S. C. 1965. 'A study of the functions and of the presentation of Cantonese sentence particles.' MA, University of Hong Kong.