

"Standard" English	Singlish
Why did you scream?	Why you scream?
These apples are delicious.	Apple delicious.
Have you already eaten?	Eat already anot?
I don't understand.	I catch no ball.
I will go to the bus stop and wait for you.	I go bus-stop wait for you.
What time is it now?	Now what time?
What do you want to have for lunch?	What you want to makan for lunch?
I feel like getting takeout.	I feel like dabao-ing leh.
How about we ask her to buy it?	If not we tumpang her to buy.
Two packets of chicken rice to go, please.	Two packet chicken rice, dabao.
He has taken it with him.	He take go already.
It looked like it was going to rain, but it didn't.	Want to rain, want to rain, never rain.
Why do you always react in such a way?	Why you always like that one?

#### Sources

[https://www.academia.edu/28716029/Serial\\_Verb\\_Constructions\\_in\\_Singapore\\_Colloquial\\_English](https://www.academia.edu/28716029/Serial_Verb_Constructions_in_Singapore_Colloquial_English)

<https://blogs.ntu.edu.sg/nbsgradstudies/2015/11/25/20-singlish-words-phrases-to-get-you-started/>

<https://www.thoughtco.com/singapore-english-and-singlish-1691962>

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## **Syntax: Zero Copula/Copula Deletion**

In this instance, the copula refers to the verb “be” and the use of it as a link between the subject and adjectives, nominals, *ing*-inflected verb, and passives. Where copula deletion is present, this use of “be” is omitted.

Ex. 1) My sister  $\emptyset$  staying there. / My sister is staying there. (used with *ing*-inflected verb-present continuous)

Ex. 2) They  $\emptyset$  very large old trees. / They are very large old trees. (used with adjectives)

Ex. 3) At first, we  $\emptyset$  considering moving to Germany. / At first, we were considering moving to Germany. (used w/ *ing*-inflected verb-past progressive)

Source: Leimgruber (2013), p. 75.

## **Morphology: Reduplication**

There are at least four different patterns of reduplication in Singlish. They fill different functions, expressing e.g. intimacy, attenuation, intensification, or continuity.

In nominal reduplication, nominal bases are reduplicated when referring to someone who is close (expressing intimacy or affection). This may happen with a nominal base as well as with a name. In the case of reduplication of names of individuals, names are shortened to a single syllable.

Ex. 1) N-N for intimacy: This my girl-girl. / This is my daughter [or girlfriend].

N-N for intimacy: I'm looking for Ry-Ry. / I'm looking for Henry.

When adjectives are reduplicated in Singapore English, the result is an intensification of the meaning of the base adjective. Only simple and comparative adjectives are reduplicated (as superlatives can be understood as already being situated at the end-point on a scale of intensification).

Ex. 2) Pred.Adj-Pred.Adj for intensification: His face red-red. / His face is very red.

Pred.Adj-Pred.Adj for intensification: Make it smaller-smaller! / Make it  
smaller!

To express attenuation or continuity, verbal reduplication is used. In attenuative verbal reduplication, a single copy of the base is used. The described action thus is made more casual or less sustained. When the verb 'walk,' is reduplicated, for example, it "results in the meaning 'stroll', where the activity is now less directed or oriented towards a specific destination"<sup>1</sup>.

Ex. 3) V-V for attenuation: Just eat-eat lah. / Just eat some/eat a little.

V-V for attenuation: Don't always stay in the house. Go outside walk-walk. /

Go outside for a stroll.

Durative verbal reduplication is used to express that an action is continuous or ongoing. In durative verbal reduplication, instead of a single copy of the base, two copies of the base are used.

Ex. 4) V-V-V for durative: We all eat-eat-eat. / We all keep/kept on eating (for a longer time).

V-V-V for durative: Take bus no good, always stop-stop-stop. / The bus keeps on stopping.

N= noun, V= verb, Pred.Adj.= predicative adjective

Sources: Lim (2004), p.106-112, Ansaldo (2010), Ch. 24, p. 510.

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<sup>1</sup> Lionel Wee in ed. Lisa Lim: *Singapore English. A Grammatical Description*, 2004, p. 110.

## Works Cited

Ansaldo, Umberto. "Contact and Asian Varieties of English" in: Raymond Hickey (ed.): *The Handbook of Language Contact*, 2010, p. 498-517.

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