

Experiential aspect in Singapore English: the depolarisation of 'ever'

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1. Introduction

The topic of contact in grammaticalisation has been discussed extensively in Heine (2004) as genetic motivation, using a description which highlights the fact that the behavioural tendencies of language-users, like any other behavioural tendencies, are the product of what has motivated them in their diachronic development; i.e., language is what it is today because of the influencing forces of earlier stages of development. The grammaticalisation patterns observed in contact languages, or languages with a discontinuous genetic history, though, might provide greater challenges for research into the sources of motivation, raising the question of the competition between contact as a motivating force, or universal pathways of past language development that may have been followed whether contact was a factor or not. It is such challenges that the present study will attempt to address. Contact grammaticalisation has been the topic of an increasing amount of recent research, with seminal studies such as Bruyn (1996), Heine & Kuteva (2003; 2005), Hopper and Traugott (2003), Keesing (1991), and Matras & Sakel (2007) featuring prominently in the literature. Many such studies refer to the process in which a calqued item is borrowed into the contact language and undergoes further grammaticalisation once it has been transferred. In the case of Singaporean Colloquial English (SCE), a contact variety of English spoken in Singapore,¹ two

¹ The current contact situation in Singapore has been described in a range of recent studies, including Bao (2001; 2005; 2009, 2010), Lim (2007) and Low & Brown (2003) who provide a comprehensive coverage of the historical development of this dialect of English. The precise categorization of its present-day status is not always easy to pin down, and varies with the objectives of the study: Bao (2009, 2010) prefers to label the contact variety 'Singapore English' as identified in the data available from the ICE-Singapore, and 'English' the variety used in the ICE-Great Britain. Earlier approaches of the 1970s and 1980s emphasising comparison with a (supposedly) stable 'superstrate' variety, or a situation later to be described (in reference to decreolisation) as a contact continuum (Ho and Platt 1993), were followed by a diglossic situation first proposed by Gupta (1991; 1994), in which the co-existence of two independent subvarieties, Singapore Colloquial English, the Low (L) or vernacular, and Singapore Standard English (SSE), the High (H), presents itself as a context of functional choice according to the speakers' needs and the appropriateness of the speech setting. This situation, naturally, does not presume the total abandonment of contact possibilities between the two diglossic poles. It should be noted, furthermore, that some of the (colloquial) Singapore English used in the present study is quite different from anything found in the ICE corpus.

possible processes have been observed: either the borrowed patterns return to an earlier stage of development relative to their source language; e.g., for the grammaticalisation of the indefinite article, as observed in the use of the determiner *one* (see Platt, Weber & Ho (1984) for examples), or that the borrowed patterns preempt at a relatively accelerated pace stages that could be predicted to occur in the source language, but at a later time period (e.g. for the hypothetical modal verb *would* (Ziegeler 2000)).²

An interesting case which does not appear to be explained by either of the above two patterns is that of the adverb *ever*, used affirmatively, which in SCE has the meaning ‘at least once’, thus replicating the function of an experiential perfect marker in many dialects of Chinese (e.g., the Mandarin verb *guò* – ‘pass’), as observed by Bao (2005) and Ho & Wong (2001). The present study will examine the situation of borrowing and the motivation of contact where this adverb is concerned, and will offer an explanation in which patterns of replication are hypothesised as enabled by a metonymic relation holding between the expression of a possible event and one that is merely unidentified. It will be questioned whether the effects of contact-induced grammaticalisation are at work in the development of *ever* to become an experiential adverb in SCE. At the same time, it will be suggested instead that the selection of the source for the grammaticalisation of experiential aspect may be related to universal strategies of reanalysis that can be found associated with similar developments in non-contact situations. The role of ‘pivot-matching’ (Matras & Sakel 2007) will also be discussed. It is not the objective of the present study to present new data beyond that which is necessary for the discussion of the claims made, but to explain the data from previous studies in more detail and within the context of semantic continuity across contact. The problems to be analysed are thus semantic: first, how a speaker *selects* a form from the lexical source language for representing structures of the substrate (or model languages) and second, how this random selection can be explained in terms of semantic continuity (which is essential for the pragmatic motivation of grammaticalisation and other processes of grammatical change, as outlined in many previous studies, e.g. Traugott & Dasher 2002, Ziegeler (2006)).

In the second section of the paper, the present-day use of *ever* in Singapore English will be described, as recently outlined in the previous literature, along with its role as a functional equivalent to structures in Chinese and other contact languages. In section three, theoretical approaches to the study of grammaticalisation in contact situations will be discussed, in order to investigate whether they apply in the case of *ever*, and in section 4, the paper will review the use of *ever* in standard varieties of English. In section 5 a hypothesis will explain the way in which *ever* becomes selected for the function of marking experiential aspect in Singlish, as a semantic backshift from its negatively-polarised contexts.

² The use of the term ‘(lexical) source’ language is used in Matras & Sakel (2007), where it refers to what is often called the lexifier in creole linguistics. In the present paper the term will be used to distinguish the (target) contact language from the language from which it derives its lexicon, which has no apparent distinctive status in Heine & Kuteva (2005).

2. *Positive ever* in Singapore Colloquial English

The use of English in Singapore is that of a powerful lingua franca, where it unites the disparate ethnic communities from different linguistic backgrounds under one common linguistic bond. The demographic profile of Singapore has been held to stand roughly at 65% Chinese and 35% Malays, Indians, and others (Bao 2001, 2009). Formerly, at the time of British colonization in the early 19th century, a range of languages were spoken, including at least ten southern Chinese dialects, most prominently Hokkien (Fujian, or Minnan), Cantonese (Guangdonghua), and Teochew (Chaozhou), as well as Hakka (Kejia). Other languages spoken at the time included Malay, Tamil, Malayalam, Baba Malay, and another vigorous lingua franca in the early days of Singapore, Bazaar Malay. Thus, in many ways, the emergence today of a vernacular contact subvariety is inevitable for the development of a national cultural identity, and even Singapore Standard English contains features which mark it as distinctively Singaporean in character (see, e.g. Ziegeler 2003). Bearing in mind such a situation though, there is adequate justification to suggest that many borrowings into SCE will involve the loan translation of items from Mandarin Chinese, since Mandarin, as an official language spoken by the majority Chinese population in Singapore, is becoming increasingly a language in direct current contact with SCE. However, in the use of *ever* in marking experiential aspect in SCE, a category present in Mandarin Chinese but not distinctively marked in SSE, SCE does not recruit the counterpart lexical conceptual source from Mandarin in order to grammaticalise the category. *Ever* has been claimed as having its origins in Hokkien and Malay (Ho & Wong 2001) but in the present study, this will be open to question also, and the possibility of an alternative motivation for its presence is proposed instead.

In many studies of Singapore Colloquial English (e.g. Bao 2005) aspectual categories focus on prominent features such as the presence of the adverb *already* as a marker of perfectivity, with parallel functions to that of *le* in Mandarin Chinese. Fewer have described the presence of positively-polarised *ever* (henceforth PPE) as a marker of experiential aspect, though, as noted earlier, some recent studies provide an introduction: Ng (1999), Ho & Wong (2001) and Bao (2005). Ho & Platt (1993), as well as Low & Brown (2003), also mention its usage in Singaporean Colloquial English appearing in affirmative statements that are not found in standard varieties today, for example (Ho & Platt 1993: 76):

(1) I ever go/went/gone dere

which can be roughly glossed in Standard Singapore English as ‘I have been there’, with an additional implicit sense conveyed of ‘at least once’, the use of the present perfect alone conveying the indefiniteness in quantification of the anterior time period leading to the moment of speaking. Such quantification requires explicit marking in SCE, where the functions of the present perfect in general are often merged with those of the past tense, with the result that if it is used at all, the range of functions associated with standard varieties such as the experiential sense expressed in (1) may be relatively restricted. Ho & Platt (1993) also mention the use

of *never* as a general form of negation which is not restricted to co-occurrence with perfect aspect, suggesting that it may be influenced by non-standard negation from L1 varieties, but they pursue the possibility no further.

Ng (1999) provides an introductory description to the usage of *ever* as an experiential marker in SCE, at the same time attributing the function to a corresponding pattern in Mandarin Chinese. She notes a number of correlations with the Mandarin Chinese verb, *guò*, for example, (i) it expresses the perfective viewpoint, (ii) it is restricted to situations that show a "departure" from one stage to another, and (iii) it co-occurs with stative verbs or with non-statives, specific or indefinite situations, expressing new situations in co-occurrence with statives, and acquired experiences in co-occurrence with non-statives. Most importantly, it is restricted to events that can recur, for example:³

(2) John ever eat/at/eaten this apple before.

In (2), the intended meaning can only be that John has eaten this type of apple before, not a particular apple, since an apple can never be eaten more than once.

Ever is also seen to occur in habitual situations of extended duration in the past (1999: 27):

(3) John *ever* play/played truant everyday, but doesn't do so anymore.

Ng concludes her study by attributing the use of *ever* to 'strong substrate influence', suggesting it is a calque of *guò* in Mandarin Chinese, an experiential perfect marker with the function of marking events that took place at least once in the past. The only difference in usage, it would appear from Ng's study, is that in Mandarin, the experiential marker follows the verb, while in SCE, it always takes a position preceding the verb. Such a tendency may, of course, be related to the respective word order patterns in both languages. It could also be argued that the two forms are not parallel in grammatical categorization: *ever* is an adverb, and *guò* is a former lexical verb (meaning 'pass', 'cross', having grammaticalised further to function as a directional complement, an anterior aspect marker, and later an evidential (Chappell 2001; (1992: 83)).⁴ As such it is most likely to occupy a post-verbal position.

Ho & Wong (2001) also discuss *ever*, using, rather than intuitive data, data collected from a spoken corpus of 300 transcripts and interviews, and written samples of students' writing at secondary and undergraduate levels. Ho & Wong present spoken examples in which the adverb may appear as a response to polar interrogatives where it may be found in standard varieties (2001: 80):

(4) A. Your husband ever bring fish home to eat or not?
B. *Ever*.

³ Wu (2008) provides some counterexamples to this constraint; they will not be discussed in the present paper. However, it is observable that most of the examples Wu offers have multiple-participant subjects, or at least the presupposition of other participants in the discourse.

⁴ Chappell (2001) argues that all the experiential markers in the Chinese languages are more accurately described as expressing evidentiality.

- (5) A. You ever work in other jobs ah?
B. Yes, *ever work* in other jobs also.

In (4–5) the use of PPE co-occurs with its negatively-polarised counterpart (NPE), which would be found in SSE as well. The typical contexts of negative polarity are listed by Israel (2004) as including: the scope of negation, including negation expressed by adverbs such as *hardly*, and *rarely*, as well as *not*, negative quantifiers such as *nobody*, *nothing*, or *never*, the complements of predicates such as *doubt*, *be surprised that* (to which one could also add *regret that*, *deny that*, and *forget that*, *wonder whether*, amongst others), the antecedent clause of a conditional, the restriction of a universal or generic quantifier, the nuclear scope of *only*, and the focus of a polar interrogative, as in (5A). Israel (2004) adds to this list rhetorical information questions, comparative and equative constructions, and subordinate clauses introduced by *before* and *long after*. It will be seen below that there is adequate evidence of the use of NPE co-occurring alongside PPE in SCE, and that its positively-polarised uses are not the only ones. However, Ho & Wong note that PPE may appear in exchanges in which it has not been used in the preceding question:

- (6) A. Do you go to Change Alley?
B. Oh! Change Alley, *ever*.

It can also occur in non-interrogative contexts:

- (7) This share *ever* hit forty dollars!

and was observed as co-occurring with the adverb *before*, e.g. *I ever seen you before*. Ho & Wong refer to the main functions of *ever* as expressing an action that has taken place at least once before in the past (2001: 82). More examples of PPE are available from a local Singaporean internet site:

- (8) ya, pretty interesting to me, was one of my favourite modules in poly[technic university]..[I] **ever** thought of joining this industry, but heard lots of people saying tt ['that'] u play the bad guy in the co[mpany] and stuff..

<http://flowerpod.com.sg/forums/Career-Talk-f28.html&st=40>
(Posted by: diamonds Aug 21 2007)

However, examples also appear on the same site by the same speaker with NPE occurring alongside its experiential use:

- (9) oo.. thats good. i think if i **ever** work in an office, i'll choose to work in hr['human resources'] dept..

<http://flowerpod.com.sg/forums/Career-Talk-f28.html&st=40>
(Posted by: diamonds Aug 21 2007)

The ratio of PPE to NPE uses is not significant, standing at 1: 14 in the topic-selected corpus of 85,909 words (including posting information) from which the

above examples were selected.⁵ Thus, the evidence for co-occurring NPE in SCE is still relatively strong, and does not seem to have been affected by the presence of PPE, at least in this small sampling.

With respect to the languages with which SCE is in contact, Ho & Wong find counterparts not only in Mandarin Chinese *guò*, but also in Hokkien *koe/khi* and Cantonese *gwoh/kwo* (2001: 84), all possible cognate forms of *guò* in Mandarin.⁶ However, in addition to the 'pass' verbal sources for the aspect marker, they also note another form in Hokkien, which is rendered as *bat* or *pat*, suggesting a meaning of 'ever' and that it appears pre-verbally, as does *ever* in SCE, implying a closer word order correspondence between the two functional matches (2001: 85):

- (10) Goa bat khi Jit-pun
I EVER go Japan
'I've been to Japan (before)'

It is also found in response to questions, just as with *ever*:

- (11) Q. Li bat khi Jitpun bo?
You EVER go Japan not
'Have you ever been to Japan?'
A. Bat.
EVER
'I have/Once'⁷

Ho & Wong also note the occurrence of *pernah* in Malay, which they suggest is lexically translatable as 'ever' and also precedes the verb and can be used as an affirmative response to a question, in the same way as *bat* in (10–11). For example:

- (12) Q. Awak pernah-kah pergi ke Jepun?
you EVER-QP go to Japan
'Have you ever been to Japan?'
A. Pernah.
EVER
'I have/once'

Because of such parallels, Ho & Wong conclude their brief study by suggesting that (rather than Mandarin), it is the influence of Hokkien and Malay that has motivated the use of affirmative *ever* in SCE. They also allude to the derivation of *ever* from antonymous *never*, with the interpretation 'at any time' being a possible route of introduction, but go no further with this possibility; nor do they explain the loss of negative polarity entailed in its SCE transformation, or the fact that PPE and NPE co-occur in the same dialect used by the same speakers.

⁵ Also appearing was one example of a universal usage (see (26)).

⁶ Note that there is no strict standard for the romanisation of non-Mandarin Chinese dialects.

⁷ The end-glosses in (11) and (12) are my own.

In Hassan and Muhammed (1994), the English adverb *once* glosses as *dulu*, *sekali*, *segera*, *bekas*, and *dahulu*, though there is no indication of the different contexts in which these forms may be used. *Pernah* does not appear as the translation of 'once', but instead of 'ever', alongside *sentiasa*, *selalu*, and *selamanya*, so in this way, it accords with the claims of Ho & Wong for a direct calquing. However, it is uncertain why *pernah* is glossed as 'ever' in Hassan and Muhammed (1994) when in its affirmative declarative uses it has no parallel in standard English and must be translated by 'at least once' as its nearest equivalent in meaning, a translation they do not use possibly because of its alternative glosses in Malay. Since *once* is not represented by *pernah* in Malay either, we are left wondering what the true source meaning of this adverb really was, and how it could be so readily translated in affirmative contexts by an adverb that is normally restricted only to negative polarity contexts.⁸

The translation of 'never' in English is *tidak pernah* 'not ever', but it is clear that *pernah* is not restricted to negative contexts. In the same way, *bat* in Hokkien may also be negated (Chappell 2001):

- (13) i m bat siū koè goá ê khi koè
3sg NEG EVD receive EVD 1sg L anger EVD
'She has never before borne the brunt of my anger.'⁹

(13) illustrates the co-occurrence of both *koè* and *bat* in the same utterance, both grammaticalising evidential functions, indicating a functional overlap or layering (Hopper 1991): it is possible that there is also a replacement strategy in progress here. The experiential markers are, furthermore, glossed as evidential markers in order to illustrate the equivalences proposed by Chappell.

The appearance with negatives in both Malay and Hokkien leads one to assume that there are close parallels with the development of the SCE form, although it is not possible to determine for certain that the negative form might have preceded the introduction of the positive use in these substrate languages. The question remains, of course, why the form *ever*, with no functional parallel in affirmative contexts in present-day standard English, was selected to cover the needs of affirmative experiential markers in the model languages.

Bodman (1955) does not supply an affirmative form of *bat*, though there are verbs appearing in the vocabulary lists that are romanised as *bat* with the meaning

⁸ Foong Ha Yap (p.c.) considers that *pernah* has the status of an auxiliary in Malay, as it can co-occur with a question particle (QP, as shown in (12)). The lexical source seems to be unknown, though she considers it may be cognate with a similar form, *parna*, in Ilokano, a Philippine language, as shown in the following:

(i) Kalman parna tudu
yesterday have rain
'Yesterday there was rain.'

In such uses, it appears to express existentiality (via the H-possessive schema of Heine & Kuteva (2002)). If this is the source in Malay also, then there is a viable case for a polysemous link between *pernah* and *ever* in the shared sense of existentiality.

⁹ Chappell provides the Hokkien Chinese characters in the original example. (EVD = evidential marker)

'know', 'be able.' The lexical source of this form was indeed a verb with the meaning of 'to know, by experience' (Hilary Chappell 2001; Chappell 1992: 83) which lends itself easily to a meaning suitable for the grammaticalisation of an experiential marker referring to actions experienced at least once. Furthermore, Chappell (2001) illustrates the use of similar lexical sources from verbs meaning 'know' as experiential/evidentials in other Min languages.

Bao (2005) also discusses *ever* in SCE, and relates this marker to the more immediate and conspicuous influence of the adstratum language, Mandarin Chinese, rather than the older, less-used contact dialects such as Hokkien and Cantonese. He does not mention Malay as an influence, but also notes that as for Mandarin *guò*, and as discussed for (2), the aspect marker may not be used if the event it marks is not repeatable (Bao 2005: 245):

- (14) ?He ever old
'He was once old (and no longer is)'

Thus, *ever* is lower-bounded rather than upper-bounded in scope in that it must occur with events and states that occur at least once, and have the possibility of recurring (the same restrictions may apply to NPE, e.g. ??*Was he ever old?* - though see (25) below). Bao also discusses the use of *never*, which in SCE is seen to share closely the functional specification of *meī* in Mandarin Chinese, rather than *bù* (used with stative verbs), as a perfective negator. Bao's principle hypothesis is that the entire aspectual system of Chinese has been transferred wholesale to the situation in Singapore Colloquial English, where it becomes relexified. This type of transferral may well accord with a closely-related theoretical analysis of contact grammaticalisation (Heine & Kuteva 2003; 2005), which to present knowledge has not been taken into account in a great deal of depth in the Singaporean situation. However, it is obvious there are different possibilities with regard to substrate claims: Hokkien, Malay and Mandarin all having a role to play, according to previous research, and the claims for calquing sources are many and varied. What is missing, though, from previous accounts is not an account of the functional justification for transfer from the substrate, but a comprehensive, semantic explanation of the reasons underlying the selection of *ever*, since it shares no conceptual affinity with the lexical sources expressing experiential aspect in the substrate. It is for such reasons that theories of contact grammaticalisation should be examined, in order to determine if they have a role to play in the selection of *ever* as a means of grammaticalising experiential aspect in SCE.

3. Grammaticalisation in contact situations

As mentioned in the Introduction, the most common assumption associated with grammaticalisation in contact situations is its relatively accelerated rate of development: what normally takes up to one thousand years to accomplish in terms of ordinary grammaticalisation situations will often happen very suddenly, perhaps over only two or three generations (Heine & Reh 1984: 89–90). The reason for this is

that a contact situation in linguistic terms is a situation of communicative urgency, with greater need to move to advanced levels of automation of the language system in as short a time period as possible.¹⁰ The contact situations most often described in the literature include those of trade and commerce, or situations in which a large number of people of different language backgrounds are brought together for some functional reason, and require as efficiently as possible to establish a conventionalized lingua franca in order to carry out day-to-day transactions. Early Singapore was one typical example, as noted above. Hagège (1993) spoke of contact situations in grammaticalisation as being under the influence of Communicative Pressure. It is such communicative pressure which is the driving force behind the use of certain forms in an over-extended sense: they become used preemptively in environments which in older varieties of the language are not yet part of its distributional range. Although it is anticipated that the forms may eventually extend their range of uses to an increased number of environments in the lexifier, if they do, the time taken will be much longer, generally.

Heine & Kuteva (2003; 2005) discuss contact-induced grammaticalisation as a strategy for transferring some grammatical concept from the model language (M) to the replica language (R) (2003: 533). This strategy involves the following stages:

(15) Ordinary contact-induced grammaticalisation:

- a. Speakers of language R notice that in language M there is a grammatical category Mx.
- b. They develop an equivalent category Rx, using material available in their own language (R).
- c. To this end, they draw on universal strategies of grammaticalisation, using construction Ry in order to develop Rx.
- d. They grammaticalise construction Ry to Rx.

They also note that the process is a gradual one and may take several centuries to complete, especially at the last stage (d). Quite often, the R language is a pidgin or creole, and the M language is a substrate (though Heine & Kuteva do not employ such terms, as the theories are expected to have a universal application to any situation of contact). Heine & Kuteva (2003) provide an example of ordinary contact-induced grammaticalisation from Tayo (citing Corne (1995)), a French-based creole which evolved around 1860 in New Caledonia, in the development of a dual system of marking personal pronouns, a feature of the Melanesian substrate. The Tayo system recruited the French numeral *deux* for this function and grammaticalised it to a personal pronoun suffix, as follows:

(16) Tayo dual personal pronouns (Heine & Kuteva 2003: 534, citing Corne 1995: 125–128):

¹⁰ Givón (1989: 251-261) discusses grammaticalisation across a number of different dimensions as an example of the autom(is)ation of the code; i.e., a process associated increasingly with repeated, rehearsed tasks and routinised, conventionalised activities, illustrating a bottom-up shift from attended processing to automated processing. The accelerated automation of the system found in contact situations is thus representative of accelerated grammaticalisation.

<u>Tayo</u>	<u>Metropolitan French</u>
nu-de 'we (DU)'	nous deux 'we two'
u-de 'you (DU)'	vous deux 'you (PL.) two'
le-de 'they (DU)'	les deux 'the(y) two'

In such cases, the justification for the selection of the Ry item is obvious, and needs no further explanation: a new grammatical category not even present in the lexical source language is formed from lexical material borrowed from it, in an attempt to satisfy the functional needs associated with the speakers' model language. This results in a gain in the number of grammatical functions available in the replica language, relative to the source language.

Heine & Kuteva (2003; 2005) also discuss the notion of replica grammaticalisation, which differs from ordinary contact-induced grammaticalisation in that it is not simply a grammatical concept that is transferred from the M-language to the R-language, instead an entire grammaticalisation process found in the M language is replicated in the R language, as explained below (Heine & Kuteva 2003: 539):

(17) Replica grammaticalisation:

- a. Speakers of language R notice that in language M there is a grammatical category M_x.
- b. They develop an equivalent category R_x, using material available in their own language (R).
- c. To this end, they replicate a grammaticalisation process they assume to have taken place in language M, using an analogical formula of the kind [My > M_x] = [Ry > R_x].
- d. They grammaticalise category Ry to R_x.

The essential difference between these two processes means that Ry in ordinary contact-induced grammaticalisation may involve the use of any available material - it need not have any conceptual relation to the parallel function in My, but moreover, that the diachronic grammaticalisation of Ry in no way can be seen to match that of the model function it is emulating (thus, the grammaticalisation of dual pronouns in Tayo seen above does not replicate any similar system in French, which has no counterpart system and the numeral has optional status in such constructions). As Gast & Van der Auwera (forthc.) also note, the latter type involves the M language as its motivation, while the former relies on universally common grammaticalisation patterns. In replica grammaticalisation Ry and My may often share similar lexical source concepts (e.g. the Ry *give* in SCE which is used to replicate the function of grammaticalising passive-marker *gei* in Chinese, and undergoes the same evolutionary processes, albeit within a relatively limited time frame (Matthews & Yip 2009)). The often-cited example of replica grammaticalisation provided by Heine & Kuteva (2003; 2005) comes from the Irish English (R-language) replication of an Irish (M-language) 'hot-news' perfect aspect schema: [X is after Y] described by Heine & Kuteva as the Location Schema, which expresses events of recent relevance.

In Irish English in the late 17th century, the same process was replicated (Ry > Rx). The fact that no other language in the world is known to have undergone a similar process indicates that it is not a universal strategy but a replication of the entire process of grammaticalisation in the model language. The examples are given by Heine & Kuteva (2003: 540):

- (18) a. Irish (Harris 1991: 205)
Tá sí tréis an bád a dhíol
be: NON-PAST she after the boat selling
'She has just sold the boat'
- b. Irish English (Harris 1991: 205)
She's after selling the boat
'She has just sold the boat'

Proof that the entire process has been replicated in the R-language is shown in the fact that Irish English also has the construction with a NP following the *after*-expression: *He's after the flu* 'He's just had the flu' (Heine & Kuteva 2005: 102). This shows that an earlier, intermediate stage with NP complements usually precedes the VP stage diachronically, such a pattern not being found in any other language.¹¹

However, although these models portray quite lucidly the mechanisms of transfer, it is still necessary for us to investigate whether various attributions of the conceptual sources for *ever* discussed in the previous section could be explained by the models. It is clear that replica grammaticalisation is not applicable, as the forms used to express experiential aspect in the model languages have been shown to be completely unlike the adverb *ever* both lexically and functionally. The question thus remains whether PPE in SCE is an example of ordinary contact-induced grammaticalisation, and if so, how the Ry feature is selected to perform the functions of the My. This is discussed at length by Gast & Van der Auwera (forthc.) and also Matras & Sakel (2007) who refer to polysemy, cognitive strategies in the extrapolation of concrete senses from more abstract, grammaticalised replica forms, and the phenomenon of 'pivot-matching', in which the process of replication involves the identification of a structure in the replica language which matches that of the model language, and from which grammaticalisation may proceed (2007: 830). Important also to the present argument is the factor of 'respect' in the grammaticalising replicated form for the constraints of the replica language itself (2007: 830). Such matters will be discussed further below.

3.1 *The contact-based motivation of ever*

We have seen in the above discussion a number of ways in which grammaticalisation in contact situations may be brought about by particular interactions with the replica language. For the present case, the evidence from

¹¹ According to Marc Fryd (p.c.) the stage *after* + NP is subsequent to the stage *after* V-ing, on which it is a calque.

contact languages such as Mandarin Chinese, Cantonese and Hokkien (as well as Malay) in the presence of an experiential marker in these substrates certainly necessitates a functional matching for the new category in the contact language. However, given the procedures described above in Heine & Kuteva's accounts, it is difficult to assume that the story goes any further than this. As noted above, the example of *ever* is unlikely to be an instance of replica grammaticalisation, as the processes of grammaticalisation shown by the experiential markers in the model languages are not repeated in the case of *ever* at all, as will be seen below. The lexical source for the Chinese counterparts was either a verb form meaning 'pass', or in the case of *bat* (Hokkien) a verb form meaning 'to know, by experience', as mentioned above. The adverb *ever* in English bears no conceptual relation to such sources. The origins of the Malay form *pernah*, are not clear; however, it does not carry the meaning of 'once', as might be expected if it were from an adverbial source, and cannot be translated as 'ever' in positively polarized contexts.

The abandonment of a replica grammaticalisation pathway then leaves open the possibility that it is a case of ordinary contact-induced grammaticalisation. It must be recalled in such cases that there is no necessary conceptual relation between the form in the contact language and the form serving an equivalent function in the model language. The selection of material used to grammaticalise the function is left open in ordinary contact-induced grammaticalisation, where only the functional requirements of the model language are replicated. Therefore, previous accounts in which it is assumed that function X in SCE 'comes from' a substrate/adstratum language form Y must be considered with a respectful amount of caution, as they do not explain in any principled or theoretical manner exactly what 'comes from' the model language, or how it is derived. However, we cannot eliminate the more conservative viewpoint that the process we are observing in the case of *ever* may not even refer to contact-induced grammaticalisation at all.

Ordinary contact-induced grammaticalisation provides little in the way of information about the means by which the process of contact grammatical development is motivated: we know that there is a function in M (M_x) that requires replication (as R_x), but, as noted earlier, what is not always accounted for is the speaker's motivation for the *selection* of R_y . Since the grammatical function of experiential aspect is only implicit in standard varieties of English often in the form of the present perfect, it is most likely considered to be under-specified by speakers of SCE, for whom it is an obligatory category in the M-languages. The cognitive processes by which R_y becomes grammaticalised to R_x in the replica or contact language are not dealt with in sufficient detail in Heine & Kuteva (2005) for any significant generalisations to be made. However, the phenomenon of 'convergence' is cited from Matras (1998) as the means by which speakers of a group-internal language attempt to adapt material from that language to correspond with the functional requirements of an external counterpart structure, in an effort to match the mental processing operations of both languages (Matras & Sakel 2007: 834–5). This often requires the interlingual identification of polysemies, according to Matras & Sakel (2007), something that could not be apparent in the case of *ever* which has no semantic identification with the model language verb forms discussed above. Otherwise, it is necessary for us to explain the use of *ever* to grammaticalise

experiential aspect as a diachronically and typologically universal strategy that is followed through whenever the same source feature recurs across languages. Thus, if *ever* is exhibiting positive polarity effects in SCE, there may be reason to suspect a precedence at some stage in the history of *ever* in standard English varieties, given also the possibility discussed above that the contact variety may undergo the same stages at an accelerated pace of development.

Even if there are universal processes involved, it is especially difficult to justify the selection of *ever* from a semantic point of view, since it involves the need to explain the depolarisation of its modal character in NPE, and the means by which such depolarisation may be accounted for in terms of semantic continuity. In order to explain the present-day depolarisation of *ever* in SCE, then, it is important to investigate the diachronic development of *ever* for possible semantic changes over the historical context which may be similar to the situation holding in present-day SCE.

4. *The history of English ever*

The historical contexts in which *ever* appeared in the English language can be found in the *OED Online* (under the entry for *ever*), and it is seen that the adverb started out life as a universal quantifier with the meaning of 'always, continually', 'at all times.' At no time in the historical records provided in the *OED* is it defined as meaning 'once', though it is noted as assuming a meaning of 'at any time.' This meaning is listed as going back as far as the year 1000CE, where it appears in the scope of a negative, and could well be interpreted as strong early evidence for its present-day tendencies for negative polarisation. One such example (from Middle English) is the following:

(18)1382 WYCLIF*John* i. 18 No man **euere** sy3 God, no but the oon bigetun sone.
'No man ever sees God, none but the one begotten son.'

The meaning of the universal temporal quantifier is therefore presumed to be intimately linked with that of its existential counterpart meaning ('at least one time') from quite an early historical period. Leuschner (1996) notes that the Old English source of *ever* (*æfre*) meant both 'always' and 'ever' (its universal and existential quantifier meanings both present in the one adverb). The entries listed for *ever* with the existential meaning 'at any/one time', though, according to the *OED*, are restricted (primarily) to occurrence in negative and interrogative sentences, and in hypothetical and subordinate clauses; in other words, the examples given all appear in negatively-polarised contexts.

It is likely that the existential meanings would be found with no greater frequency than the universal meanings are for the same time period, as they do not represent the majority of senses supplied for the affirmative form in the *OED*. Early uses of the form meaning 'always' are equally apparent:

- (19) c1175 *Lamb. Hom.* 57 þet is and wes and **efre** scal beon iblecced ofer al.
'that is and was and ever shall be blessed over all'

Similar uses remain today in formal ecclesiastical contexts. However, as noted by Israel (1998), such uses are now considered archaic, since the adverb has become restricted to distribution in negative contexts; i.e., it has become a negative polarity item (NPI) and as a consequence, expresses mainly the existential meaning.¹² How this occurred is not precisely explained by Leuschner (1996), though the use of negation with a universal quantifier will always give rise to an existential meaning (via logical equivalences between external and internal negation, in which the meaning *always-not* gives way to one of *not at any time (never)* - cf., e.g. Jespersen 1917; Horn 1989: 216, see below). The resulting loss of the universal meaning was accompanied by a suppletion of the universal component of meaning in *all*-forms in Dutch and German, as well as English, where the earliest *all*-form (*(e)-alne weg*) occurred in Old English (Leuschner 1996), thus around the same time as the existential uses of *ever* were appearing in negative polarity contexts. Examples of such uses include (18) above, as well as others from the *OED Online*:

- (20) 1662 STILLINGFL., *Orig. Sacr.* III. ii. §17 We deny that **ever** his Atoms with all their occasions would **ever** produce those things which are in the Universe.

In the Helsinki Corpus, universal affirmative uses start to become rare in Early Modern English. (21) is one of only 8 out of 55 (14.5%) of such tokens found for the period 1500–1570:¹³

- (21) ther Screvener **ever** wrytyng ower namys man by man As we entyred in the presens of the seyð lordis,

1517. Richard Torkington, *Ye Oldest Diarie of Englysshe Travell*.
Ed. Loftie. p. 22

Negative uses (*never*) for this period also include a meaning of 'no longer', which may be considered obsolete in today's English:

- (22) This Jaff was Sumtyme a grett Citee, as it appereth by the Ruyne of the same, but nowe ther standeth **never** an howse but oonly ij towers,

1517. Richard Torkington, *Ye Oldest Diarie of Englysshe Travell*.
Ed. Loftie. p. 24.

¹² There may be the exception of environments such as comparative clauses, which Zepter (2003) claims restrict it to the universal meaning. However, examples such as her *Today is hotter than it ever was before*, while acceptable under a universal interpretation (*all the days before*), are equally acceptable when read as an existential (*any day before*). The coincidence of both universal and existential meanings in such environments indicates a possible context of shift, though it need not.

¹³ These uses represent 36 out of 157 (22.9%) of such tokens in the period from 1570-1640. However, more than one third appear as end salutations of personal letters; the proportion may be biased by such contexts.

The meaning of *never* in (22) refers to the discontinuation of a preceding state, not the meaning that we normally associate with *never* today, i.e., 'always-not.'

The examples provided by the *OED Online* and the EME (I–III) portion of the Helsinki Corpus reveal that the tendency for existential, negatively-polarised contexts is overwhelming. However, one example of a PPE was actually found in the EME section of the Helsinki Corpus:

(23) My Lords, I take it, he that has been examined, has **ever** been asked at the time of his Examination, if it be according to his meaning ...

1570–1640. *The Trial of Sir Walter Raleigh*,
ed. Hargrave, PI, 210.C1.

A similar example is the following:

(24) Suche a sorte of herytykes ho **ever** sawe, that wyll nother reverence the croose of Chryste

1500–1570. *The Autobiography of Thomas Mowntayne*,
ed. Nichols, p. 209.

The meaning in (23), out of context, could refer to a single event in the past, possibly equivalent to the function in SCE of marking affirmative experiential aspect; however, it is in effect likely to be a split 'free relative' pronoun (= 'who ever'), according to the context, while (24) could carry the universal meaning, 'always' as well. The existence of such examples reveals that PPE may have possibly appeared in the history of English, though was certainly rare at the time, and its frequency would be difficult to estimate on the basis of so few examples. It is certainly not the same function, though, as that of the experiential aspect in SCE. Even more surprising, though, is the following example:

(25) ...that yf **ever** he died before her, he wold **never** give her anythinge.

(1552–1602), *The Autobiography and Personal Diary of Dr. Simon Forman*,
ed. Halliwell, p. 10.

In this example, the use of *ever* appears ungrammatical in today's English as it violates the constraints of repeatability normally associated with the meaning, both for PPE as well as NPE. It is possible that the usage could reflect a non-standardism of the time, or perhaps just anteriority. This cannot be confirmed without more evidence; however, it is interesting that the same semantic constraint is common to SCE and present-day English uses of *ever* (see (14)), and that this provides evidence of its links with aspectual situations which are restricted to describing (repeatable) generic or habitual actions.

4.1 *Universal meanings of ever in SCE*

From the few data surveyed so far, the appearance of *ever*, then, as an affirmative experiential aspect marker in Singlish, can be shown to have a

questionable precedence in the history of English; the paucity of such examples relative to those found in negatively-polarised contexts as well as its non-occurrence in SCE in future or potential contexts as in (25) would undermine any possibility of a replica grammaticalisation based on the grammaticalisation paths of the (lexifier) source language. However, a (rare) single example of an apparently universal usage of *ever* appears in a Singapore internet site:

(26) And she? She senang senang taking care of only staff training and staff leave and yet drawing her high pay and she still hv ['have'] a HR mgr [manager] who is **ever** helpful to do things for her.

<http://flowerpod.com.sg/forums/Career-Talk-f28.html&st=40>
(23 August 2008)

In (26), the meaning is 'always',¹⁴ indicating that the universal meanings associated with past uses of *ever* may sometimes appear in SCE, perhaps as 'relics' of former colonial usage, though further evidence would be needed to confirm their usage as contact lexical items at such earlier times. It is also possible that the universal usages and the existential (NPE) usages occasionally co-occur in such dialects because they are in fact bi-directional reanalyses of each other (see below). From the historical picture, it is conclusive that *ever* shed many of its functions as a universal temporal quantifier, having been replaced by *always* at the same time as its existential functions began to increase through frequent use in negatively-polarised contexts (the two functions not being mutually exclusive at any one time). This pattern of relations holding between universal and existential quantifiers is not uncommon. However, the present-day frequency of negative existentials as well as negatively-polarised ones raise the question of which environment could have provided the source for the derivation of the experiential marker in SCE: one in which the existential meaning is open to question (*ever*) or one in which it is denied (*never*) (or both). It should be borne in mind also, that the experiential reading in SCE affirms the (certain) existence of the event it qualifies, albeit leaving open the possibility of its referentiality in the discourse, whereas NPE affirms the uncertainty of the event it qualifies.¹⁵ The mechanisms by which the use of *ever* becomes a marker of experiential aspect in SCE therefore remain to be accurately defined.

5. Logical equivalences

As noted earlier, Ho & Wong (2001) briefly mention the possibility that *ever* possibly arose as an antonym of the negative form *never*, but they go no further towards an explanation, raising the question, though, why this antonym could co-exist alongside NPE in the same dialect without being constrained for negative polarity. Haspelmath (1997, and Leuschner (1996), citing Haspelmath 1993)) claim

¹⁴ *Senang senang* is an adverbial reduplicative expression, borrowed from Malay, meaning 'having an easy life.'

¹⁵ In most cases of NPE, this is likely. There are uses, though, discussed by Horn (2000a) in which *ever* is suffixed to *wh-* indefinite pronouns, such as *who-*, *how-*, *where-*, *what-*, which he describes as 'indiscriminatives.'

for universal quantifiers, not existential ones, to emerge out of negative polarity contexts (through the intermediate stage of 'free-choice' quantification, which could be described as a means of marking existence in a non-negatively-polarised environment). Such developments could be, arguably, realised for *ever* in the use of indefinite pronouns such as *whatever*, as suggested by Leuscher (1996: 482)), and could explain the usage in (26) as well. The emergence of existential determiners with the meaning of 'any' from universal ones meaning 'every' has been noted by Haspelmath (1997: 156n) for Turkish and Hebrew, but he adds that though possible, such cases are relatively rare.¹⁶ If such cases are possible in other languages, the claims for contact-induced grammaticalisation must be thus weighted against the likelihood of universal strategies as mechanisms of change in contact as well. Such strategies provide the strongest explanations for language change, as they have a theoretical application outside the data sets to which they are originally applied, and beyond the contact situations where they are first observed.

The flexibility with which meanings of existential and universal *ever* interact crosslinguistically leads one to consider the logical means by which universal quantifiers may be reinterpreted as existential quantifiers, and vice versa. The tripartite logical equivalence relations between quantifier values such as in the following sets were first isolated by Jespersen (1917) and cited later in Horn (1989: 216):

(27)

A	all	everything	everybody	always	everywhere
B	some/a	something	somebody	sometimes	somewhere
C	none/no	nothing	nobody	never	nowhere

The A and C poles were considered to be absolute quantifiers, while the B members were considered to be intermediate quantifiers. Jespersen had added modal values to the sets, and considered the members to be interdefinable using negation in such a way that for each column listed, $\sim A = B$ (e.g. *not always = sometimes*), $\sim C = B$ (e.g., *not never = sometimes*), $A \dots \sim = C$ (*always not = never*) and $C \dots \sim = A$ (*never not = always*). The principle behind such interchanges is simply that if the negation is placed before the absolute quantifier (externally), it negates only the quantifier, allowing for intermediate scales, while if it is placed after the absolute quantifier (internally) it negates the propositional scope of the quantifier. These equivalences can be interpreted linguistically as bi-directional reanalyses, since they may result in instantaneous changes in meaning that can affect either the positive, universal pole of quantification, or the negative, existential one; as such, they cannot be classed within the unidirectional pathways necessary for grammaticalisation changes, and may co-occur simultaneously, as we have seen. (Note that Horn (2001: 399) considers pairs like *sometimes/ever* to be suppletive positive/negative polarity

¹⁶ French is one language, though, in which quantifiers meaning 'all' can be used to mean 'any' in the absence of a determiner, e.g. *En tout cas* 'at any rate/in any case', and *Tout dossier incomplet sera refusé* ('Any incomplete dossier will be refused'), personal observation, 27/09/10. The quantifier *tout*, typically meaning 'all' co-occurs with a singular noun and singular verb agreement in such examples, suggesting an existential, rather than a universal reading.

opposites; a further analysis might consider them as event-reference adverbs contrasting in the identifiability of the event they qualify.) The perceived co-existence of the A and B values can therefore be seen as a diachronic change in which A yields to B's meaning in negative contexts, the former meanings being supplanted by a new form (in this case, *always*), with B's meaning becoming the new meaning for the form (*ever*) that was formerly expressed as A.

Thus in the case of NP *ever*, which, currently as an existential quantifier, is a B-item, a meaning probably emerged diachronically via the negation of its former universal senses of 'always.' This may provoke the question how to accommodate both temporal quantifiers *sometimes* and *ever* together on the same scale. However, as noted by Israel (2001: 629), mentioned above, there is no limit to what may be found on quantity scales, and the terms are usually open to contextual requirements and the speaker's needs. In the case of *ever*, a distinction of discourse referentiality may distinguish it from other intermediate values such as *sometimes*; in this way, it could be perceived as parallel to the distinction between *some* and *any*. It is not simply a matter of negatively-polarised contexts for *any/ever* as against positively-polarised ones for *some/sometimes*. The true meaning of *any/ever* presupposes only possible existence, not simply the indefinite existence expressed by *some/sometimes* in which the event reference being quantified is known to exist, but is not identified.

Further evidence for the direction of semantic change is found in the fact that universal functions of *ever* are now relatively restricted in style and setting, as noted above, to the end-salutations of formal letters (e.g. *Yours ever*), and to legal and ecclesiastical usage (e.g. ... *is now and ever shall be, world without end* ...), as seen in section 4, both fairly formal contexts of use, or as an adjectival or adverbial modifier (e.g., *evermore, everlasting*, though Israel 1998 notes the relative infrequency of such items in his corpus data), all suggesting that the universal functions are becoming obsolete. The data from the Helsinki Corpus bears similar witness to the gradual restriction of such uses to negatively-polarised contexts. The evidence suggests that *ever* in Singapore English may either be in the middle of a change in progress and moving away from the current constraints of negative-polarisation, or simply be expanding its range of functions. Independent evidence for the latter possibility can be found in other languages, such as Modern Dutch (Hoeksema 1998) in which the adverb *ooit* 'ever' is polysemous between having a meaning 'at any time' in negative polarity contexts, and one of 'once' (past and future) in positive polarity contexts; e.g.,

(28) Niemand heeft het ooit geweten
nobody has it ever known¹⁷
'Nobody ever knew it.'

(29) Hier stond ooit een molen
here stood once a mill
'A mill stood here, once.'

¹⁷ (Author's gloss (DZ))

Again, the difference between *ooit* in (28) and (29) is simply that in (29) the modal meanings of uncertainty of time reference ('at any time') associated with (28) have given way to meanings of experientiality ('at one, unspecified time'). The usage now peculiar to Singaporean Colloquial English appears to be in a similar process of reanalysis, motivated by the functional needs of its substrate or model languages.

5.1 *A semantic back-formation*

The nature of this reanalysis is hypothesised to be a semantic (not a morphological) back-formation, a process previously identified by Queller (2003), but seldom discussed in relation to grammatical change. It is not a morphological back-formation because *ever* existed as an autonomous word prior to its reanalysis in SCE, with a universal meaning, and not necessarily restricted to negative contexts, as the historical examples above clearly demonstrate. As a morphological back-formation, it would require reanalysis as a new lexeme created out of an earlier morpheme that formerly had no perceptible lexemic autonomy (e.g. *televise* < *television*). However, we are looking only at a back-formed meaning for a pre-existing form, not the emergence of a new morpheme. While it may be argued that PPE may have emerged out of *never* in SCE, the co-existence of NPE in the same dialect and the historical evidence discussed makes it more likely that NPE began to appear simultaneously with *never*, as a morphological back-formation due to the raising of negation in certain contexts. Its earlier meaning was that of a universal quantifier in affirmative contexts, which only became restricted formally to an existential quantifier in negative contexts, and now is extended to function as an existential, positively-polarised quantifier in SCE.

The precise mechanism by which the back-formation takes place, though, continues to require explanation, and the need to seek semantic continuity between existential *ever* in its NP contexts and existential *ever* as an experiential marker. Both functions refer to the existence of events, the former to their possible existence, the latter to their necessary existence. In the case of SCE, though, what has happened is that speakers have borrowed a negatively-polarised, existential item, *ever*, and depolarised its meaning to refer no longer to the possible existence (of an event X) but, in its experiential usage, to the actual, but indefinite existence of an event X. In this way, the modality of the quantifier function in marking a possible event, which expresses the uncertainty of the event's actualisation, has been taken over and reinterpreted as mere indefiniteness, expressing simply the *absence of identification* of the event, in the same way as in (28–29) above. One possible grammatical consequence that may arise from this reinterpretation is that of experientiality. In the depolarisation from its negatively-attracting environments, the modality of the quantifier referring to the possible existence of an event weakens, leaving only the residual traces of a former modal role in the inferences of temporal indefiniteness assignable to the experiential function. The mechanism by which this reinterpretation may take place is as a metonymical shift: the meanings of absence of identification of an event are already implicit, but backgrounded, in the meanings of absence of certainty of the actuality of the event, and in fact, could form the causal link to the modal senses obtainable from negatively-polarised *ever* (an event may

have only a possible existence justifiably *because* of its lack of identification – this is why it is a backformation). It is such backgrounded associated senses which have been co-opted and exploited by the speakers of SCE at the point of contact in order to fulfill a function in their substrate languages which has no parallel in the lexical source language.

It is the element of event-indefiniteness (or non-uniqueness), as well as the requirement of repeatability associated with both the negatively-polarised existential and the experiential markers in the model languages that together form the basis for the pivot-matching strategy (of Matras & Sakel 2007) discussed above. The pivot-match, in such cases, demonstrates a reinterpretation of the modal uncertainty expressed by the adverb as existential indefiniteness, an interesting prospect for further research on semantic change in the field of modality. Such factors may also be considered to stand as evidence in favour of linking *any* with *ever* as a free-choice item, something that was refuted by Horn (2000b: 182), due to *ever*'s inability to 'sponsor' generic reference. Generic reference in both cases may be encapsulated in the repeatability factor: what is repeatable in terms of spatial entities may equally be repeatable in terms of temporal entities, given the constraints discussed above (**if ever he died ...*), and clearly articulated in the studies of *ever* in SCE (e.g., Bao 2005). The pivot thus revealed is not a concrete sense that can be extrapolated from the meaning, but a more abstract, implicit pragmatic inference associated with existential quantifiers in general. Moreover, we find that the constraints associated with the use of the item in the lexical source language are not there in the use of positive polarity *ever*, which is reanalysed in SCE way beyond the restricted negatively-polarised contexts of standard English.

6. Conclusions

In the case of SCE *ever* there is no necessary explanation from substrate sources that the model languages provided the conceptual source for the replication of a grammaticalisation route already present in such languages. The case for ordinary contact-induced grammaticalisation is also somewhat undermined by the independent factors of semantic backformation as a form of functional reanalysis, which in the models of logical quantifier equivalences shown in (27) can be seen to be bidirectional in terms of predicting grammatical changes in negative environments. With regard to contact-induced factors, the needs of the model language are met in the selection of an appropriate pivot form, which shares common functional characteristics with the counterpart category of the model languages. Semantic backformation provides a semantic explanation for the association of a negative polarity (temporal) quantifier with a new function of marking experiential aspect. However, the source form is already partly reanalysed as a negative polarity quantifier with an implicit minimiser meaning of '(not) possibly once/at one time'; the changes are thus metonymical in nature and can be mapped in the following way:

***Ever* as a temporal quantifier**

1) Universal

————→ Negative (existential) *never*
(by logical equivalence)

2) Existential

————→ NP *ever* (by morphological backformation)

3) Indefinite (experiential)

————→ PP *ever* (SCE) (by semantic
backformation)

Figure 1. Three-stage change in the polarity of *ever*, illustrating the emergence of experiential aspect as indefiniteness of time reference in SCE, already latent in the meanings of the modal meanings of *ever* associated with negatively-polarised contexts.

It is important, though, that the selection of *ever* as an experiential marker by speakers of SCE might not have taken place if the adverb in the source language had been at an earlier historical stage when universal meanings were more frequent. Although positive polarity *ever* is not unknown in contemporary English, the presence of negatively-polarised uses provided the source for the reanalysis of the adverb as an experiential marker, in which speakers could draw semantic parallels between existential uncertainty and simple indefinite reference. It is thus the minimiser meanings of NP *ever* ('at any/one time') that triggered the shift to experiential aspect, with a shift in the sense of referentiality of the event. The example of *ouit* used to mean 'once' in Dutch is an interesting parallel case, which, as for SCE, has not yet lost its negative polarity, using it alongside the positive uses. The difference is simply that in the Singaporean case, the motivation for reanalysis to the experiential is in the first instance contributed by the model languages with which it is in contact, and this is not believed to be the case for Dutch.

The present study leaves open the field for further studies to investigate the possibility of similar developments in other contact situations, as well as to explain the more searching questions of possible ways in which contact-induced reanalysis can possibly pre-empt semantic changes and patterns that may be hitherto uncharted in non-contact situations, such as seen in the present study in the example of depolarisation. Although there is much further scope for future exploration of the

phenomenon of semantic backformation in other languages, it is felt that the greater need is to establish an even broader theoretical basis to explain the contact strategies employed by speakers of replica languages in the selection of forms from the source language to recreate the functions determined by the model languages. This leaves open a vast range of future opportunities.

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