

***Meh* contributes VERUM:
A study of biased questions in colloquial Singapore English**

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Abstract. This paper analyzes the contribution of the *meh* particle in biased questions in colloquial Singapore English (CSE). Canonical CSE questions can be formed with inversion, or with declaratives with rising intonation (maintaining neutrality), while non-canonical questions typically require discourse particles. *Meh* occurs clause-finally (It’s raining *meh*?) and has been described to mark questions and express skepticism, encoding the opposite of what the speaker thinks to be true. Drawing from Romero and Han (2004), I propose that *meh* contributes the meta-conversational operator VERUM, which triggers the existence of an epistemic implicature.

Keywords. biased questions; non-canonical questions; discourse particles; Asian Englishes; Singapore English

1. Introduction. Cross-linguistically, non-canonical questions typically share one or more of three characteristics: (i) in addition to eliciting information, they might convey a certain bias about what that information might be; (ii) they would not conform to the typical syntactic form; or (iii) on top of or in place of eliciting information, they seek to engage in some other kind of speech act (Dayal 2016). Interrogative sentences encompass canonical questions (1), which a speaker would ask an addressee to request for information that the latter is privy to, and non-canonical questions (2) — more complex questions that indicate some form of bias which a speaker might hold (Farkas 2020). The tag question in (2a) and rising declarative (2b) indicate some expectation on the speaker’s part about the proposition.

- (1) Are you joining us?
- (2) a. Mush is coming, isn’t he?
b. Mush is coming?

While that is indeed the case for ‘standard’ Western varieties of English, this pattern is different in colloquial Singapore English (CSE), a contact variety of English spoken in Southeast Asia¹. While the canonical form with inversion (3) does not encode any bias or expectation about the proposition, neither do rising declaratives (4).

- (3) Is Chia at work? [inversion; no speaker bias]
- (4) Chia is at work? [rising declarative; no speaker bias]

* I would like to thank Michela Ippolito, whose seminar on *Expressing content with attitude* gave me the inspiration to kick-start this project. I would also like to thank the audiences at the 13th Toronto-Ottawa-Montreal Semantics workshop and the LSA 2022 Annual Meeting for feedback on iterations of this ongoing work. Lastly, I am grateful to the CSE speakers who have graced me with their time and judgments for this project. Author: Gregory Antono, University of Toronto (gregory.antono@mail.utoronto.ca)

¹ Note that colloquial Singapore English, or Singlish, functions in a leaky diglossic relationship as the low variety, with Standard English (as taught in schools and used in official capacities) as the high variety (Gupta 2006). This contact variety of English draws influences from a multitude of languages, including (but not limited to) Sinitic languages like Mandarin, Hokkien and Cantonese, and various varieties of Malay.

The speaker in both cases does not necessarily hold a particular bias or expectation about Chia being at work. Both (3) and (4), then, are canonical in this variety of English, which raises the question of how non-canonical questions are formed.

2. Non-canonical questions in colloquial Singapore English. A strategy to form questions in CSE that are non-canonical is the appending of discourse particles to syntactic declaratives. This paper focuses specifically on the *meh* particle (5), pronounced as [mɛ], analyzing it within the context of non-canonical questions (Ladd 1981; Romero and Han (2004); amongst others). *Meh* is one of 11 discourse particles described in the CSE literature (Gupta 1992). *Meh*'s origins have been attributed to Cantonese. This particle does not occur in assertions and has been described to mark a question. Crucially, it expresses skepticism, or the opposite of what the speaker thinks to be true (Gupta 1992, Wee 2004; Wong 2000).

(5) It didn't rain *meh*?

(6) Context: A is asking B for the location of a coloured pencil, and B has indicated that B does not know where it is. A has asked B where the colour pencil is twice.

A: You don't know *meh*?

B: No, I don't know. Didn't see.

(Wee 2004: 121; Example 40, adapted from Gupta 1992)

In (6), Gupta (1992) describes A's use of the particle as indicating skepticism at B's ignorance and shows that A actually thinks that B should know where the pencil is. (7) illustrates a context where the speaker has a pre-conceived expectation and is forced to confront it.

(7) Context: A has a lot of work to do and planned to stay in the windowless office for lunch, even though the weather forecast had predicted beautiful, cloudless weather today. After the lunch hour, B returns to the office completely drenched.

A: It rained *meh*?

'Did it *really* rain?'

Here, the speaker holds the belief and expectation that it had not been raining but is presented with visual evidence that the addressee is completely wet. Consequently, the speaker questions that it might have been raining after all, challenging their pre-existing belief. Their question is presented with *meh*, with a bias toward the negative answer (that it had not been raining).

Meh is infelicitous where the speaker has a bias that *p*. Modifying the context in (7), (8) illustrates an example where the speaker has the expectation that it would rain (*p*). In this case, the speaker would be biased toward this notion, and *meh* would not be compatible.

(8) Context: A planned to stay in the windowless office for lunch, since the weather forecast had predicted a torrential downpour today. After the lunch hour, B returns to the office completely drenched.

A: #It rained *meh*?

'Did it *really* rain?'

It should also be noted that *meh* is incompatible in neutral contexts. In (9), the police officer has no evidence whatsoever regarding Daron's nationality, and *meh* is not felicitous.

(9) Context: Daron is making a report at a police station for his stolen wallet and the police officer asks him for his name, and then asks the following question:

- a. You're Singaporean?
- b. #You're Singaporean *meh*?
'Are you *really* Singaporean?'

Note that without *meh*, (5) to (9) could all still be questions valid questions, surfacing as syntactic declaratives with final rising intonation. Crucially, these would not have the epistemic implicature. In essence, *meh* questions are complex speech acts of questioning and asserting with a negative bias, of $\neg p$. The source of this particle has been attributed to Cantonese, where *me55* indicates surprise and marks rhetorical questions (Hara 2014; Leimgruber 2013). This particle pertains to polarity questions, and is not compatible with *wh*-questions:

- (10) a. #What did Daron eat *meh*?
b. #Where did Weida go *meh*?

2.1. PREVIOUS ACCOUNTS OF *MEH* AND SOME ISSUES. The most in-depth account of *meh* is by Ler (2001), who analyzes the particle within a Relevance Theoretic approach. She describes three main functions of this particle: *meh* (i) questions a presupposition, (ii) expresses surprise and (iii) means the opposite of what was thought to be true. Ler (2001: 21) describes *meh* as a non-truth-conditional "procedural particle", that constrains how an utterance is interpreted, based on propositional content that is "becoming manifest in the speaker's environment" which contradicts a speaker's previously held expectations. Similarly, Wong's 2004 analysis of *meh* comprises of the steps in (11) (Wong 2004: 782).

(11) *meh* =

- (1) at a time before now, I thought something
- (2) something happened now
- (3) because of this,
I think I can't think like this anymore
I think I have to think like this (anaphoric component)
- (4) I don't know
- (5) I want to know
- (6) because of this, I want you to say something about it to me now

Crucially, Wong (2004)'s analysis of these discourse particles bears the metalinguistic move 'I want you to say something about it to me now'. Wong claims that functions of this particle arise as part of the cultural context, and not inherently encoded as part of the particle's meaning. In his analysis, the addressee is expected to answer with 'yes' or 'no', as some form of confirmation of the speaker's pre-conceived beliefs. A problematic component of Wong (2004)'s analysis of the *meh* particle is the assumption that the addressee is expected to respond and resolve the speaker's confusion about *p* being added to the Common Ground, which I take to be the set of propositions that discourse participants have mutually agreed to (Stalnaker 1978). I disagree with Wong's analysis on two levels: firstly, I posit that *meh* indeed contributes meaning in the form of a metalinguistic conversational move, and secondly, I posit that this meaning is what allows the use of *meh* with rhetorical questions.

Going back to Ler (2001), she states that *meh*-appended questions invite responses that seek to resolve the discrepancy between a speaker's previous belief and the propositional content that

is newly present in their environment. However, I make the claim that the *meh* particle does not obligatorily necessitate a response. In (7), for instance, A’s skepticism does not necessitate a response from B. *Meh* appears to be available in contexts where a speaker does not have an interlocutor and could serve as a rhetorical question, as in (12).

(12) A is lining up outside a mall alone, where patrons are typically required to line up to take their temperatures and scan their identity cards (a government-stipulated regulation during the pandemic for contact-tracing). A mall officer is ushering people in without going through the usual protocol:

A: Can just walk in like that *meh*?
‘Can we *really* walk in like that?’

Regardless of whether an interlocutor is present in this context, (12) is felicitous and potentially indicates a rhetorical question. The speaker challenges their previously held belief (which is common knowledge to the local context here) that they could not walk in without taking their temperature first but does not expect a response to their question because they have already accepted this information and have proceeded on despite their previous belief. I now turn to the literature on English polarity questions, before attempting an analysis of *meh*.

2.2. ENGLISH POLARITY QUESTIONS. The literature on polar questions is vast, and it has generally been established that English positive polar questions (PPQ) are relatively neutral as compared to other types of polarity questions, albeit depending on the availability of evidence in a given context (Ladd 1981; Romero and Han 2004; Frana and Rawlins 2019; amongst others). A question like (13a), for instance, would be felicitous only in the presence or absence of evidence for *p*.

- | | |
|--|-------------|
| (13) a. Are you married? | (PPQ) |
| b. Are you MARRIED? / Are you <i>really</i> married? | (VERUM-PPQ) |
| c. Aren’t you married? | (High NPQ) |
| d. Are you <i>not</i> married? | (Low NPQ) |
| e. Are you NOT married? / Are you <i>really not</i> married? | (VERUM-NPQ) |
- (Frana and Rawlins 2019: 11; Ex 19)

The other types of polarity questions in (13), however, display various degrees of bias. Crucially for the present paper’s discussion, we will pay closer attention PPQs with VERUM (13b), and negative polar questions (NPQs) with preposed negation (13c), which require non-neutral contexts.

Frana and Rawlins (2019: 12; Ex 25 and 26) provide the following pair of contradiction scenarios to illustrate how these two types of polar questions necessitate biases of opposite polarities. While VERUM-PPQs require speaker’s bias toward a negative answer in a context with contradictory evidence (14), high NPQs require speakers to have a positive bias, when there is contextual evidence proving otherwise (15).

(14) VERUM-Positive Polar Questions
(S expected $\neg p$, evidence for *p*)

Context: Alex is throwing a party and invited us both. You and Alex hate each other, and I expect you would not attend the party. While we are on the phone, you say: “I’m looking forward to seeing you at the party”. I ask you:

S: Are you *really* going to Alex’s party? / Are you GOING to Alex’s party?
S: #Aren’t you going to Alex’s party?

(15) HIGH-Negative Polar Questions

(S expected p , evidence for $\neg p$)

Context: Alex is throwing a party and invited us both. You and Alex are good friends, and I expect you would attend the party. While we are on the phone, you inform me that you'll be out of town on the date of the party. I ask you:

S: #Are you *really* going to Alex's party? / Are you GOING to Alex's party?

S: Aren't you going to Alex's party?

In essence, note that there are contrasting speakers' biases in the context of these two kinds of questions. A non-exhaustive list of types of biased polar questions is found in Table 1, summarized by Frana and Rawlins (2019: 13).

| Type of polar questions | Speaker's prior bias | Contextual evidence |
|--|----------------------|---------------------|
| PPQ: <i>Are you married?</i> | can be absent | p or absent |
| V-PPQ: <i>Are you MARRIED?</i> <i>Are you really married?</i> | $\neg p$ | p |
| HiNPQ: <i>Aren't you married?</i> | p | $\neg p$ or absent |

Table 1. Biased polar questions in English (Frana and Rawlins 2019: 13)

I will now turn to polar questions in Colloquial Singapore English.

2.3. BIASED POLAR QUESTIONS IN COLLOQUIAL SINGAPORE ENGLISH. We have seen in the previous section that there are specific biases and contextual evidence that are necessary for types of polar questions in 'standard' varieties of English. A first issue to raise in Colloquial Singapore English is the usage of negation in polar questions. *Meh* is not compatible in 'standard' preposed and non-preposed negation questions (16a) and (16b) and is only allowed in-situ (16c), in its declarative form.

- (16) a. #Doesn't Mush drink *meh*?
- b. #Does Mush not drink *meh*?
- c. Mush doesn't drink *meh*?

It has previously been found that there is a possible epistemic bias that low negation allows, and high negation obligatorily convey. Romero and Han (2004) posit that the position of negation in polarity questions shows a correlation with the 'strength' of the speaker's prior bias. While negative polarity questions with high negation convey a positive bias, negative polarity questions with low negation do not necessarily convey the same bias.

Colloquial Singapore English proves to be a problem for this account. In this contact variety, copula deletion commonly occurs, and has been said to be a probabilistic phenomenon (Chang 2009). When CSE speakers were consulted for (17), they remarked that the presence of the copula in (a) to (c) sounds overly formal for Singlish. Instead, the presence of the question particle *ah* with a falling intonation² or invariant tag *is it?*³ in (d) is more felicitous. This *ah* particle

² This is distinct from *ah* with a rising intonation, which is used in interrogative sentences and wh-questions. I have previously discussed the syntactic conditions for this rising *ah* in Antono (2020). See also Yeo (2010) and Chang (2016) for a larger discussion.

³ Gupta (1992: 341) writes that the *is it?* tag in CSE requires an addressee to agree to a speaker's proposition, and that this tag does not require the copula in the preceding sentence: *You lost your handphone, is it?* Wong (2008)

requires confirmation from the addressee that p (Mush is not coming). With *meh* in (e), the speaker expects $\neg p$: that Mush is coming.

- (17) A: We are all here. Let's go!
- a. S: #Is Mush not coming?
 b. S: #Isn't Mush coming?
 c. S: #Mush isn't coming?
 d. S: Mush not coming *àh?* / is it?
 e. S: Mush not coming *meh?*

I posit that the negative polarity question in Colloquial Singapore English, which surfaces in-situ, shares the same flavour as the high negative polarity questions in standard English, presented in (15). Additionally, the infelicity of (a) to (c) in (17) points to a need to modify Romero and Han's account for biased questions in this variety of English, especially without the dichotomy of preposed and non-preposed negation. While a regular yes/no question only has the operator Q (18), the authors introduced VERUM as an operator (19) that manifests as the overt particle *really* or focal stress on a finite verb (Hohle 1992). VERUM is used to establish that a speaker is certain that a proposition p should be added to the Common Ground (CG).

$$(18) \llbracket Q \rrbracket = \lambda p_{\langle s,t \rangle} \lambda w_s \lambda q_{\langle s,t \rangle} [q = p \vee q = \neg p]$$

$$(19) \llbracket \text{VERUM}_i \rrbracket^{g^x/i} = \llbracket \text{really}_i \rrbracket^{g^x/i} = \\ \lambda p_{\langle s,t \rangle} \lambda w_s \lambda w' \in \text{Epi}_x(w) [\forall w'' \in \text{Conv}_x(w') [p \in \text{CG}_{w''}]] \\ = \text{FOR-SURE-CG}_x$$

In their account, $\text{Epi}_x(w)$ is the set of worlds that conform to x 's knowledge in w , $\text{Conv}_x(w')$ is the set of worlds where all the conversational goals of x in w' are fulfilled, and $\text{CG}_{w''}$ is the Common Ground or set of propositions that the speakers assume in w'' to be true (Stalnaker 1978; Roberts 1996). In other words, x is certain that for all worlds that satisfy x 's conversational goals, p is added to the Common Ground. Romero and Han (2004) have made the case that VERUM does not contribute to the propositional content of the sentence, but instead contributes to the expressive content.

I hence suggest that when negation remains in-situ in CSE, it behaves like the High PPQs seen in standard English, while the particle *meh* instead serves a similar purpose as the English adverb *really* and possesses the operator VERUM, triggering the existence of an epistemic implicature.

3. *Meh* contributes VERUM. My analysis follows the same assumptions as these authors. Firstly, the epistemic state of a speaker consists of propositions with varying degrees of certainty. Secondly, in conversations, we observe the Gricean Maxim of Quality, where we say p only if we have at least indirect evidence that p is indeed true. Lastly, two conversational moves are available: (i) assertion, where we instruct to add p to the Common Ground; or (ii) we question a move (such as the questioning of an assertion).

Frana and Rawlins (2019), also addressed by Romero and Han (2004), suggest that meta-conversational moves are subject to a Principle of Economy, which dictates that a meta-conversational move should not be used without the existence of a quality dilemma. One such quality

compares this tag to Anglo English tags through a semantic and cultural lens. For the purposes of this paper, I will put both the CSE *àh* and *is it?* tag aside for future investigation.

dilemma is when epistemic conflicts arise with a speaker has a pre-existing bias toward p or toward $\neg p$, where the context also presents counterevidence. As shown in Section 2, *meh* is infelicitous in contexts where the bias was that p . Adapting the Good Manners scenarios from Frana and Rawlins (2019: 16, Ex 33 and 34), I show in (20) and (21) that *meh*-questions presuppose certainty that p should not be common ground.

(20) (S expected p (Mush ate already), evidence against $\neg p$ (Mush has not eaten already))
Context: Bao invites Mush for drinks and tells him to come after dinner. When he arrives, Mush asks if she has any food. Bao asks him:

- a. You haven't eaten? ('Haven't you eaten already?') (NPQ)
- b. You haven't eaten *meh*? ('You *really* haven't eaten?') (*Meh*- $\neg p$ PQ)
- c. #You ate already *meh*? ('You've eaten already?') (*Meh*- p PQ)

(21) (S expected $\neg p$ (Mush has not eaten already), evidence for p (Mush ate already))
Context: Bao invites Mush for dinner and makes clear to him that she will prepare her best dishes. At dinner Mush barely touches any food. Bao asks him:

- a. #You haven't eaten? ('Haven't you eaten already?') (NPQ)
- b. #You haven't eaten *meh*? ('You *really* haven't eaten?') (*Meh*- $\neg p$ PQ)
- c. You ate already *meh*? ('You've eaten already?') (*Meh*- p PQ)

I raise these examples to show that *meh* is compatible with the speaker's expectation of the negative resolution ($\neg p$), and evidence for the positive proposition.

In order to illustrate the contribution of VERUM by *meh*, I first begin with a regular CSE polar question *Mush dances?* ('Does Mush dance?'). As mentioned above, and discussed in Romero and Han (2004), this type of regular polar question would typically have the Q-morpheme, repeated in (22). This would yield the LF in (23b), and the resulting denotation would yield two balanced partitions as seen in (24).

$$(22) \llbracket Q \rrbracket = \lambda p_{\langle s,t \rangle} \lambda w \lambda q_{\langle s,t \rangle} [q = p \vee q = \neg p]$$

- (23) a. Mush dances?
b. LF: $[\text{CP } Q [\text{IP } \text{Mush dances}]]$
c. $\llbracket \text{Mush dances} \rrbracket = \lambda w. \text{dance}(j, w)$
 $= \llbracket Q \text{ Mush dances} \rrbracket (w_0)$
 $= \lambda q [q = \lambda w. \text{dance}(j, w) \vee q = \lambda w. \neg \text{dance}(j, w)]$
 $= \{\text{"that Mush dances"}, \text{"that Mush doesn't dance"}\}$

(24)



We will now look at the contribution of *meh* (25). Applying (25), where VERUM is spelt out as *meh*, to the question *Mush dances meh?* ('Does Mush *really* dance?') (26), we will end up with an unbalanced partition (27). As postulated in Romero and Han (2004: 628), there is a choice between whether p should be added to the CG without any doubt (FOR-SURE-CG $_x p$), or if there is any reason to doubt (\neg FOR-SURE-CG $_x p$).

$$(25) \llbracket \text{VERUM}_i \rrbracket^{gx/i} = \llbracket \text{meh}_i \rrbracket^{gx/i} =$$

$$\lambda p_{\langle s,t \rangle} \lambda w. \forall w' \in \text{Epi}_x(w) [\forall w'' \in \text{Conv}_x(w') [p \in \text{CG}_{w''}]]$$

$$= \text{FOR-SURE-CG}_x$$

- (26) a. Mush dances *meh*?
 b. LF: [CP Q VERUM [IP Mush dances]]
 c. $\llbracket \text{CP} \rrbracket (w_0) =$
 $= \lambda q [q = \lambda w. \forall w' \in \text{Epi}_x(w) [\forall w'' \in \text{Conv}_x(w')$
 $[\lambda w''' . \text{dance}(j, w''') \in \text{CG}_{w''}]] \vee q = \lambda w. \neg \forall w' \in \text{Epi}_x(w) [\forall w'' \in$
 $\text{Conv}_x(w') [\lambda w''' . \text{dance}(j, w''') \in \text{CG}_{w''}]]]$
 $= \{ \text{“It is for sure that we should add to the CG that Mush dances”}, \text{“It is not for$
 $\text{sure that we should add to the CG that Mush dances”} \}$

(27)

FOR-SURE-CG_x*p*

¬FOR-SURE-CG_x*p*

This unbalanced partition, as Romero and Han highlight, places the burden on the addressee as to whether the proposition *p* (‘that Mush dances’) should indeed be added to the Common Ground. In the examples we have seen up to this point, the speaker has reason to believe, be it based on contextual evidence or previous knowledge, the truth or falsity of a given proposition. Table 2 summarizes the observations from *meh*-questions.

| Type of polar question | Speaker’s prior bias | Contextual evidence |
|---|----------------------|---------------------|
| NPQ: <i>You haven’t eaten?</i> | <i>p</i> | $\neg p$ |
| <i>meh</i> -PQ: <i>You ate already meh?</i> | $\neg p$ | <i>p</i> |

Table 2. *Meh* questions and biases in Colloquial Singapore English

4. Remaining issues. In this section, I would like to address a few issues that my present account of *meh* has not addressed, which would warrant future investigation. I posit that phonological deviations further question the truth or falsity of a particular proposition. could be parallel to prosodic marking of focus in English. Take for instance, the adverb *really* in (28a) and (28b), which are both examples with the VERUM operator. While the presence of the epistemic adverb *really* in both cases indicates that the speaker believed or at least expected that John doesn’t drink, when there is stress or marked intonation on the adverb (as in (29b)), the speaker would be indicating a stronger negative bias than without (as in (29a)). In essence, when uttering these questions, varying the stress or intonation on *really* could evoke a subtly different interpretation, where one iteration might give a stronger bias (or doubt) than the other.

- (28) a. Does John really drink? (unmarked)
 b. Does John REALLY drink? (marked)

This is similarly observed in the CSE *meh* (29). Specifically, deviations from the standard pronunciation of *meh* with the level tone, such as with a falling tone, encode a stronger sense of questioning a presupposition, such as in the flavour of defiance. It is also plausible that the phonological deviation in (29b) is more of a rhetorical question than (29a) can be.

- (29) a. Mush drinks meh↑? (unmarked *meh* with level tone)
 b. Mush drinks meh↓? (marked *meh* with falling tone)

Additionally, it is presently unclear as to how to address the optionality of answering *meh* questions, which prototypically lean toward an answer that is obvious in a given context. Going back to example (7) with B walking into the windowless office completely drenched, A’s ‘It rained *meh*?’ does not necessitate a response, according to CSE speakers I have consulted. The degree of obviousness of the answer (that it is indeed raining) invalidates the need for an actual

response from B. This is less clear when evidence is not readily available in the context but is something that is perceived as common knowledge amongst participants (30).

(30) Context: Daron requires help moving out of his apartment, and has enlisted the help of Mush, who is notorious amongst the group of friends to be unreliable and unhelpful. Daron tells Bao that Mush will be helping him. Bao replies:

Bao: Mush got help you before *meh*?
 ‘Has Mush ever helped you?’
 Implies: Mush has never helped.

Again, a reply from Daron is not obligatory. While Daron is extended the invitation to respond with yes or no, the main crux of this exchange is Bao’s voicing of her distrust in Mush’s helpfulness. Future work on this topic would require further examination of how *meh* can be used in rhetorical contexts.

5. Concluding remarks. While many scholars have sought to analyze the various discourse particles in CSE, previous work on *meh* has been scarce, with the exception of Ler (2001). Through this paper, I aimed to tease apart the various contexts in which *meh* can be used, to specify its contribution to discourse. I have shown that *meh* is used in non-canonical questions and have posited that *meh* contributes the meta-conversational operator VERUM, which contributes an epistemic bias that is much like the adverb *really* in Standard English. *Meh* is not compatible in neutral contexts and is felicitous only in contexts where the speaker has reason to believe that $\neg p$, or that p should not be added to the Common Ground. The epistemic bias has opposite polarities in the *meh*-appended question and the propositional content of the bias. Additionally, the ambiguity observed in preposed and non-preposed negation in polarity questions that previous studies on English have uncovered does not apply seamlessly in this variety of English: negation remains in-situ, and this type of question appears to behave like the high negative polarity questions observed in ‘standard’ varieties of English. The CSE negative polarity question anticipates a positive speaker bias, with or without the presence of contextual evidence.

I have also discussed two remaining issues that would need to be addressed in future work. Firstly, I have observed that phonological deviations of the tone on *meh* affects bias strength: the unmarked *meh* with level tone is considered to be weaker than the marked *meh* with a falling tone. I have drawn a parallel between phonological and stressed variants of the adverb *really* in Standard English. Additionally, it remains an open question as to whether *meh* can be said to be applicable in rhetorical questions, or if it is simply an invitation for addressees to respond optionally.

Within CSE, it would also be informative to test other discourse particles that contribute to biased questions. This includes the falling *ah* and the *is it* tag, mentioned in Section 2.3, as well as the particle *hor*, another import from Cantonese that has been described as the polar opposite of *meh* (Hara 2014). It remains to be seen whether other CSE particles similarly contribute VERUM, or the limits to which this analysis can be extended. World Englishes prove to be an interesting testbed for a theory of questions. Most of the literature on biased questions, for instance, has presumably been based on more ‘standard’ varieties of English spoken in the western world. It would be necessary to continue examining how these theories of questions would apply in language systems that exhibit mixed characteristics drawn from various languages, as in the case of Colloquial Singapore English.

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