

Singaporean English and Singlish

Listening Transcript



Interviewer: If you're not Singaporean or you haven't lived in Singapore long enough, you're wondering, what did she just say? Well, Singapore has four official languages, alright, we got English, Mandarin, Malay and Tamil. And then there's the fifth one, Singlish.

Singapore is a diverse melting pot of different races and different cultures, and Singlish is the hybrid of all these languages mixing together. So what are some of the favourite Singlish phrases are there? Let's go find out. It should be fun.

So, do you like have your favourite Singlish word?

Shop owner 1: *Alamak!*

Interviewer: *Alamak! Alamak* means what actually?

Shop owner 1: "How come you do like this?" Maybe.

Interviewer: Yeah. I think so. How come you do like this?

What's your favourite phrase?

Shop owner 2: *Wah lau!*

Interviewer: What is *wah lau*?

Shop owner 2: *Wah lau* means "Wow! Why like this?"

Interviewer: How about *buay tahan*?

Customer 1: *Kana tong!*

Interviewer: And what is *kana tong*?

Customer 2: *So bu liou!*

Interviewer: And what is *so bu liou*?

Customer 1: [another voice explains in Mandarin for customer 1]

Interviewer: Cannot control, so cannot control.

How about I *blanjah* you? If I were to say that, what would that mean?

Customer 2: I treat you. Yeah.

Interviewer: Treat you to a drink, to a meal. Awesome. Thanks for the *blanjah*.

Customer 2: OK. Sure. Take it.

Interviewer: Lunch is settled.

To break down Singlish for us, we're talking to a linguist, a specialist in languages, at NTU. Hi Luka, how are you?

Luka: I'm doing good.

Interviewer: So tell us more about Singlish. How did Singlish come about?

Luka: Singlish has been portrayed often times as a bad form of English. In fact, when linguists look at it, it has all the properties we see around the world of languages getting in contact. When languages get in contact, they mix.

Interviewer: And another day, Singaporeans use Singlish. You know, we're proud of it. We love it. It's part of us. It's not Shakespeare, sure, but then again, who understands Shakespeare. So, just use it and be uniquely Singaporean. You take care.