

# Grammar

- Simplification devices: over-generalisation, omission, reduction, substitution and restructuring.

# Extracts from short stories

**'Everything's Arranged' – Siew Yue Killingley**  
Sitting in the lounge, watching the distracting and excited girls rushing by with packed cases, longing to go home to some decent food, Rukumani asked Devanayagam, ***'This time you think you can write or not? Can send to Amy's house, what. My mother likes her mother. I can easily go there to get your letters. But I think better you don't put my name outside. Can just put `Miss Amy Wong'. She knows your writing and won't open.'***

***'I think so can,'*** replied Devanayagam, ***'but helluva difficult man. See ah, my sisters brothers all, running all over the house and if I write they all ask if I'm learning and want to look. Also ah, if 1 go to post letter that clerk at the post office can see me. He's a joker, so sure tell my father 1 send love letters. But still, try lah!'***

As soon as Johnny had gone out of the front door, Rukumani's mother started.

‘Young people nowadays have no shame. My mother would have sent me out of the house if I had entertained a boy friend as freely as that. All that whispering. What will the neighbours think? A Chinese boy coming to whisper with my daughter. Do the Radakrishnans next door allow their daughters to run wild? Do you ever see a strange boy visiting the daughters of Tharmaratnam? But my daughter is different. She wants to be modern and be seen with all sorts of men. Why do you want to make me suffer in my old age? Can't you see that I'm trying to arrange a good respectable marriage for you? Show your gratitude. You're driving me to the grave!’

# Question form

- **This time you think you can write or not?**

The operator 'do' is omitted in this question and it is also often omitted in wh-questions in colloquial Malaysian English. Omission of 'do' does not result in incomprehension of the meaning of the sentence. In wh-questions which require subject-verb inversion, the subject-verb order is often retained. This appears to be overgeneralisation of word order that subject must always be followed by verb.

# Use of "can"

- Can send to Amy's house.
- Can just put 'Miss Amy Wong'.
- I think so can.

Here the subject pronouns are dropped and the first two sentences begin with the modal 'can'.

De Silva (1981) found that the modal auxiliary system is reduced in colloquial Malaysian English and that usually only 'can' and 'must' are the ones which are used. These modals are used with a number of different functions which in standard English are served by some of the other modals. In the above examples, 'can' is used to indicate possibility and ability.

# Below are examples given by De Silva(1981) in Wong(1983):

- You can have this book for a week. –permission
- You can drive ah? – ability
- Can lend me your bike or not? – willingness
- Sure can./ Can also. – agreement
- How the food there? Can do. – moderate approval



You come with me lah. Can or not?

– affirmation

How can he allow this to happen?

– incredulity

Can't be she sick all this time. –

improbability

Can't be she still not home. – improbability

Cannot be he take your money. –

impossibility

Cannot be he do all this.

– impossibility