L8 : Singapore English
Vowels and Consonants

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(data from Lim Siew Hwee Corpus)

varieties

• there are many varieties
• SCE (Singapore Colloquial English) = "Singlish"
• ESE (Educated Singapore English)

here we will deal with ESE

tendencies

• there are tendencies, not absolutes
• ESE tends to use [t] for /θ/, but not always

vowels

• long/short neutralisation
• /ei/ ~ /æi/ neutralisation
• monophthongal /eI/ and /ɑʊI/
• close vowel in bed
• /ʊɑI/ in poor
• /æɑI/ and /ɑʊɑI/ are both bisyllabic
• absence of reduced vowels

long/short vowels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>potentially merged</th>
<th>potential homophones</th>
<th>example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>/əː/</td>
<td>/ɪː/</td>
<td>feast, fist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/æː/</td>
<td>/ɔː/</td>
<td>sports, spots</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ɑː/</td>
<td>/ʌː/</td>
<td>dark, duck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/uː/</td>
<td>/ʊː/</td>
<td>fool, full</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

/e, æ/

• /æ/ is not fully open
• send/sand may be homophones
/ɛɪ, əʊ/  
- /ɛɪ/ may be [ɛː]
- /əʊ/ may be [oː]  

vowel in *bed* and *egg*  
- *bed* usually rhymes with *made* but not with *fed*
- *egg* usually rhymes with *vague* but not with *peg*

egg : sentences  
- peg  
- egg  
- vague  

egg : words  
- peg  
- egg  
- vague  

plot for 34 female speakers  

/ʊə/  
- most Singaporeans differentiate *poor* and *paw*
- most BrE speakers do not
- the diphthong /ʊə/ no longer exists for most BrE speakers

from Deterding (2005)
triphthongs

- /aɪə/ tends to be [aiə]
- /aʊə/ tends to be [aʊə]

but not always predictable:
- require has [aiə]
- science has [aɪ]
- *flour* is [flaʊə]; but *flower* is [fləʊə]

reduced vowels

- *continue* tends to have full vowel in first syllable
- *to* tends to be [tuː] rather than [tə]
- contributes to syllable-based rhythm
- also common in other NVEs

consonants

- dental fricatives
- consonant clusters
- glottal stop
- devoicing of final fricatives
- vocalisation of /l/
- increasingly rhotic?

dental fricatives

- initial /θ/ tends to be [t]
- final /θ/ tends to be [f]
- /ð/ tends to be [d]

final consonant clusters

- final consonant clusters tend to be simplified
- final consonant may be omitted
- (also common for /t,d/ to be deleted in BrE)

glottal stop

- final /t/ and /k/ may be [ʔ]
- (very common in BrE)
final fricatives

- may be no distinction between final /z/ and /s/
- *cease* and *seize* may be homophones

vocalisation of /l/

- dark /l/ may be produced as a vowel
- (also common in BrE)

rhotic?

- some younger speakers have postvocalic /r/
- may be becoming more popular
- an influence from Hollywood?

Readings

- SoE 155-158
- ESPROC 11-12, ch 6, 7, 8
- TELISROP ch 8, 9, 10