

AAE103

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
- /e/ ~ /æ/ neutralisation
- monophthongal /eɪ/ and /əʊ/
- close vowel in *bed*
- /ʊə/ in *poor*
- /aɪə/ and /aʊə/ are both bisyllabic
- absence of reduced vowels

long/short vowels

potentially merged	potential homophones	example
/i:, ɪ/	feast, fist	 
/ɔ:, ɒ/	sports, spots	
/ɑ:, ʌ/	dark, duck	 
/u:, ʊ/	fool, full	 

/e, æ/

- /æ/ is not fully open
- *send/sand* may be homophones

/eɪ, əʊ/

- /eɪ/ may be [e:]
- /əʊ/ may be [o:]

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

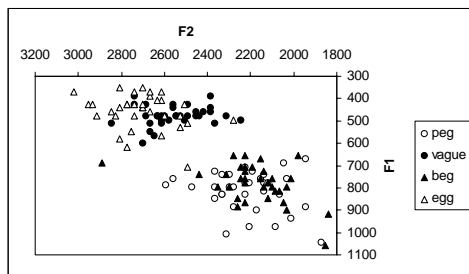
- peg 🗨️
- egg 🗨️
- vague 🗨️

egg : words

- peg
- egg
- vague



plot for 34 female speakers



from Deterding (2005)

/ʊə/

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

triphthongs

- /aɪə/ tends to be [aɪjə]
- /aʊə/ tends to be [aʊwə]

but not always predictable:

- require has [aɪjə] 🗣️
- science has [aɪ] 🗣️
- *flour* is [flɑː]; but *flower* is [flaʊwə]

reduced vowels

- *continue* tends to have full vowel in first syllable
- *to* tends to be [tu:] 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 //
- 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
- Deterding, D (2005) 'Emergent patterns in the vowels of Singapore English'. *English World-Wide*, 26:2, 179-198.
- Deterding, D (2003) 'An instrumental study of the monophthong vowels of Singapore English'. *English World-Wide*, 24:1, 1-16.