• Singapore English (SgE) speakers receive input from a myriad of languages that include the superstrate, British English (BE), and the substrates, Mandarin, Tamil, and Malay.

• SgE continuum has Standard Singapore English (SSE) on one end and Singlish (= Colloquial Singapore English) on the other.

• Past scholarship suggest linguistic accommodation is motivated by desires to 1) increase communication efficiency or 2) invoke positive or negative responses from the interlocutor(s).

• Does linguistic accommodation shift VOT to a different category?

Introduction

Methods

4 Singaporeans recorded in 3 different casual phone conversations
• Insider: another Singaporean, a friend or relative
• Researcher: ambiguous insider/outsider status; family lives in Singapore; speaks outsider dialect
• Outsider: an American English speaker not from Singapore; included Asian Americans as well as Anglo Americans

Measured 1453 stops in stressed syllables (word-initial and intervocalic).

Results

• There is a general increase in VOT when participants speak with an insider versus an outsider, excluding the velars (Fig. 1).

• Fig. 2: the SgE variant participants use with insiders have VOT values closer to those of Singapore Malay and Tamil for /p/ and /t/ and conversely, the variant used when speaking with outsiders is closer to BE.

• Figs. 3: Despite overlapping categorical productions of VOT that can occur within one conversation, /p/ and /t/ are produced differently when a participant speaks to an insider versus an outsider.

• Singapore Mandarin appears not to have a substratum influence at the level of VOT, but other substrate languages do.

Discussion

• SgE speakers are sensitive to their interlocutors and demonstrate linguistic accommodation through their production of VOT.

• VOT is one resource among many that exhibit a difference across different SgE varieties.

• No categorical shift but sub-categorical shift in VOT.

• When speaking to an outsider, SgE users produce VOT values closer to those of BE; when speaking to an insider, SgE users produce VOT values closer to those of Singapore Malay and Tamil.

• Speakers use SSE with the researcher, suggesting that they still accommodate to the researcher’s outsider dialect despite knowing of the researcher’s insider connections.

• SgE speakers linguistically accommodate their interlocutor(s) by varying between their usage of SSE and Singlish.

• The switch that SgE speakers make between SSE and Singlish is reflected in the different productions of VOT.

References


