

# Five decades of matched guise studies – what do we know about contextual constraints?

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# Introduction

- What is **matched guise (MG)**?
  - Listen to recordings (guises) of the same speaker
  - Rate speaker on a series of traits
- Widely used in language attitude studies
  - Matched Guise vs Verbal Guise
- 189 peer-reviewed results for “matched guise” and “verbal guise”
  - On Linguistics and Language Behavior Abstracts (LLBA) from 2010 to 2021

# Standard vs Non-standard

- Status traits versus Solidarity traits
- Standard rated higher on Status, non-standard rated higher on Solidarity
  - United Kingdom: Giles (1970)
  - Ireland: Edwards (1977)
  - Hong Kong: Lyczak et al. (1976)
  - Malaysia: Coluzzi (2016)

# Singapore English

- Singapore Colloquial English (SCE) has its own unique grammar, pronunciation, and lexical items
  - *Recession ah? Quite bad lor. I think we kena in, 2008 right?*
  - *My favorite food ah? Still need to ask meh? Chicken rice lah, obviously.*
- Singapore Standard English (SSE) similar to standard British English, with some pronunciation differences
  - *Well the recession's been pretty bad, I have to say. It started some time in 2008.*
  - *My favorite food is... well it's chicken rice for sure.*
- Generally, different domains of use + different levels of formality

# Singapore English

- SCE vs SSE
  - Cavallaro & Ng (2009), Cavallaro et al. (2014)
- Status: SSE > SCE
- Solidarity: SSE > SCE
  - Runs counter to general trend seen with MG studies
  - Despite SCE being seen as a marker of Singaporean identity

# Research Aims

- Investigate the effects of congruence between register (SSE/SCE) and topic formality (Formal/Informal) on MG ratings
- H1: SSE-Formal will be rated higher on Status than SSE-Informal
- H2: SCE-Informal will be rated higher on Solidarity than SCE-Formal

# Methodology

- Four-way matched guise experiment
- 588 Singaporean participants

	<b>Group</b>	<b><i>N</i></b>
<b>Gender</b>	Male	290
	Female	295
<b>Ethnicity</b>	Chinese	427
	Indian	81
	Malay	80





# Methodology

- Eight guises according to a 2 (Male/Female) x 2 (Formal/Informal) x 2 (SSE/SCE) factorial design

<b>Guise Type</b>	<b>Guise Gender</b>	<b>Topic Formality</b>	<b>Congruent?</b>
<b>SSE</b>	Female	Formal	Yes
	Male	Formal	Yes
	Female	Informal	No
	Male	Informal	No
<b>SCE</b>	Female	Formal	No
	Male	Formal	No
	Female	Informal	Yes
	Male	Informal	Yes



# Methodology

- SCE-Formal (Subprime mortgage crisis)
  - Recession ah? Quite bad lor. I think we kena in, 2008 right? 
- SSE-Formal (Subprime mortgage crisis)
  - Well the recession's been pretty bad, I have to say. It started some time in 2008. 
- SCE-Informal (Chicken rice)
  - My favorite food ah? Still need to ask meh? Chicken rice lah, obviously. 
- SSE-Informal (Chicken rice)
  - My favorite food is... well it's chicken rice for sure. 

# Methodology

- 10 traits:
  - honest, friendly, likeable, kind, helpful, confident, reliable, ambitious, intelligent, hard worker
- Randomized guise order for each participant
  - Either all SSE or all SCE guises
- Language attitudes questionnaire
  - Maintenance of Singlish
  - Importance of SSE

# Analysis

- Two factors identified through factor analysis: “Solidarity” and “Status”
- Factor scores extracted

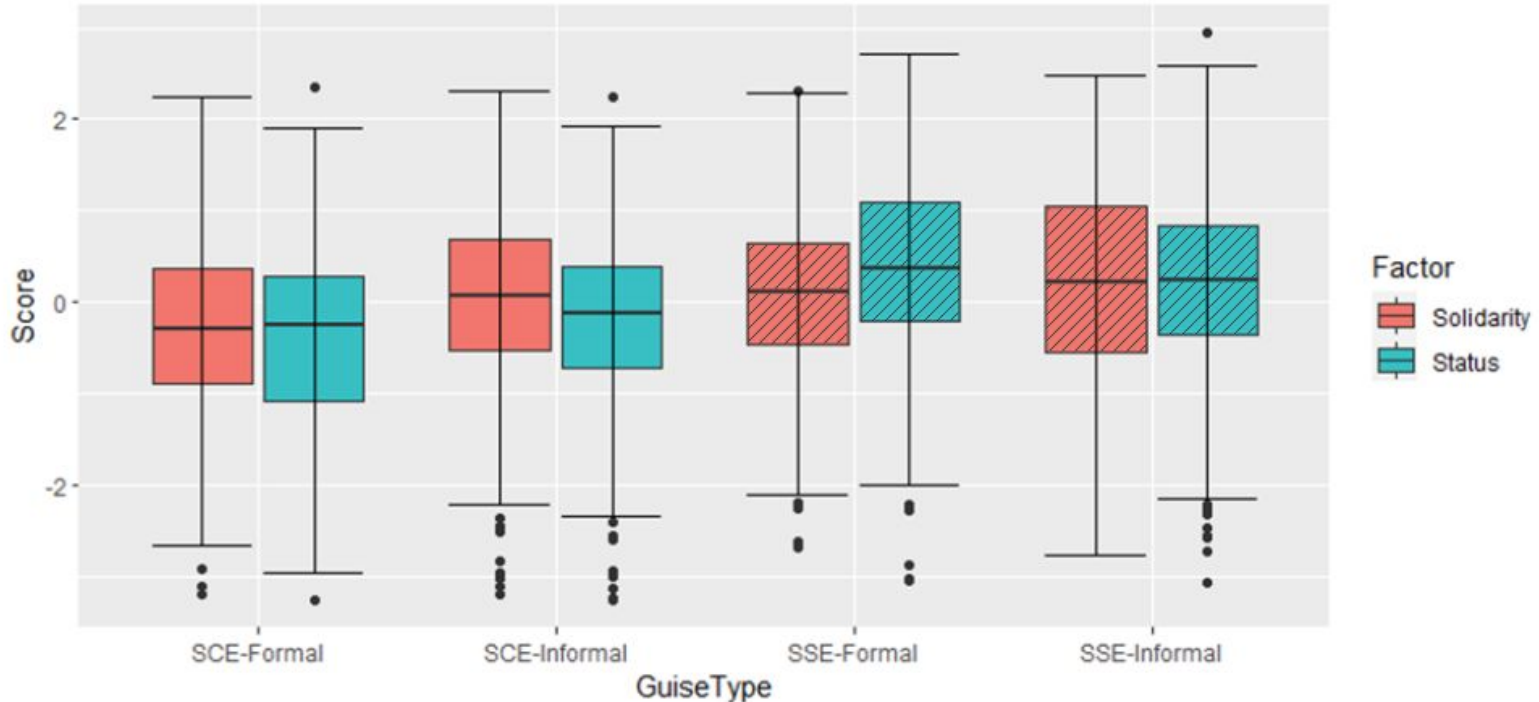
<b>Trait</b>	<b>Factor 1 (Solidarity)</b>	<b>Factor 2 (Status)</b>
Friendly	0.908	-
Likeable	0.806	-
Kind	0.730	-
Helpful	0.586	-
Honest	0.510	-
Ambitious	-	0.745
Intelligent	-	0.719
Confident	-	0.559
Reliable	-	0.493
Hardworking	-	0.481

# Analysis

- Linear mixed effects regression models
  - Dependent variable: Solidarity/Status score
  - Fixed effects: guise type, topic formality, guise gender, ethnicity
  - Random effect: participant
- Solidarity:
  - **Guise Type, Topic Formality**, Guise Gender, Ethnicity
- Status:
  - **Guise Type, Topic Formality**, Ethnicity

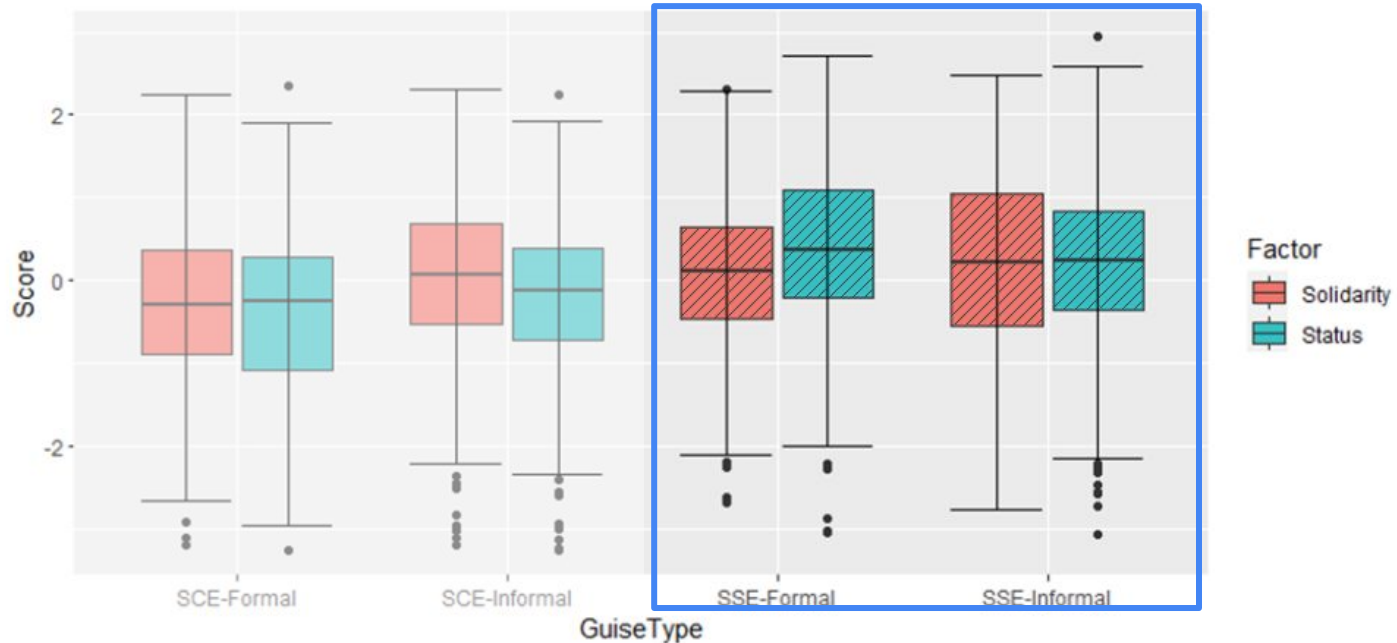
# Findings

- Overall, SSE guises were rated higher than SCE guises
  - For both Solidarity ( $\beta^{\wedge} = 0.7685, p < .001$ ) and Status ( $\beta^{\wedge} = 0.7072, p < .001$ ) traits



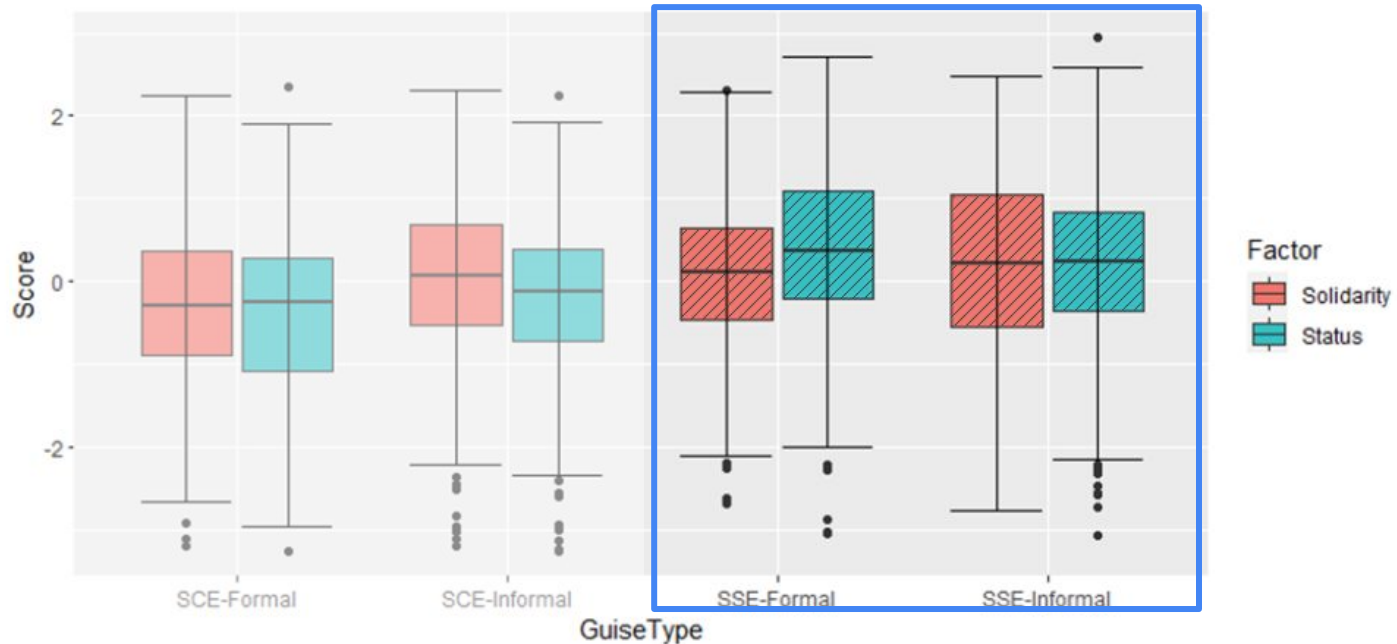
# Findings: SSE Guise

- The Formal condition is rated higher than the Informal condition on Status, but the Informal condition is rated higher than the Formal condition on Solidarity



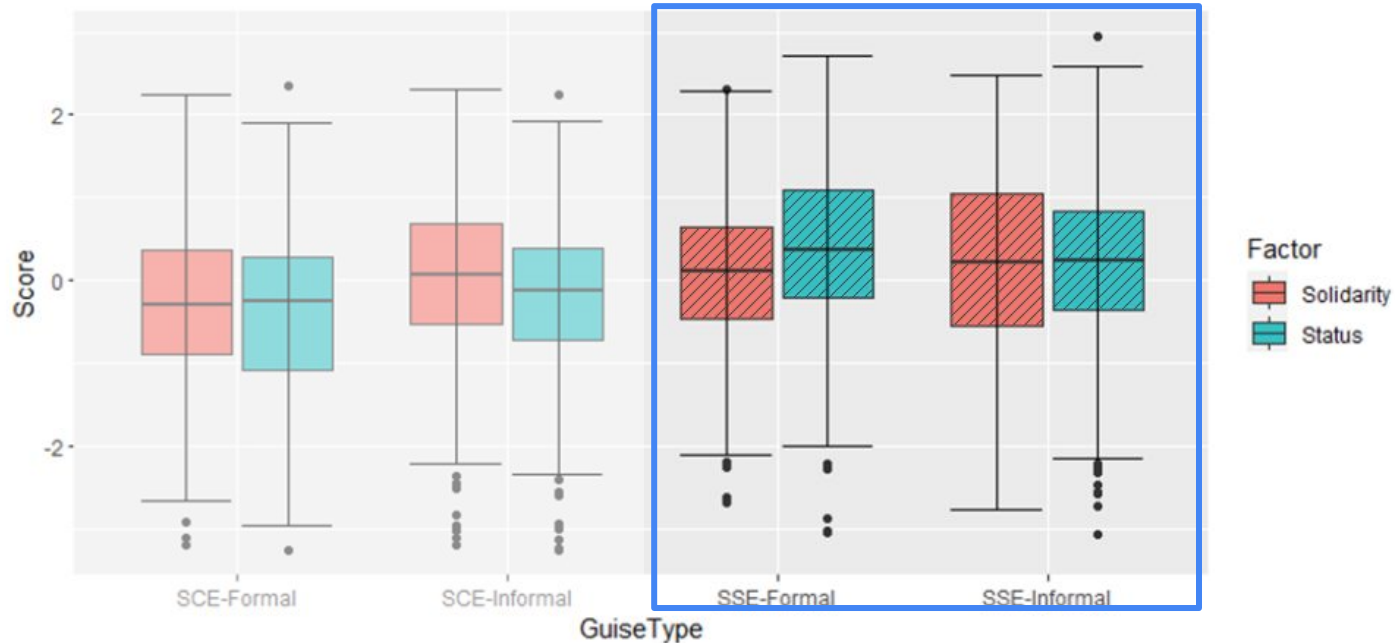
# Findings: SSE Guise

- Formal condition rated higher on Status than Informal condition
  - Formal (M = 0.37, SD = 0.96) vs Informal (M = 0.20, SD = 0.98);  $t(589) = 3.51, p < .001$



# Findings: SSE Guise

- Informal condition rated higher on Solidarity than Formal condition
  - Informal (M = 0.20, SD = 1.09) vs Formal (M = 0.056, SD = 0.90);  $t(589) = -3.24, p < .001$
  - Incongruent?



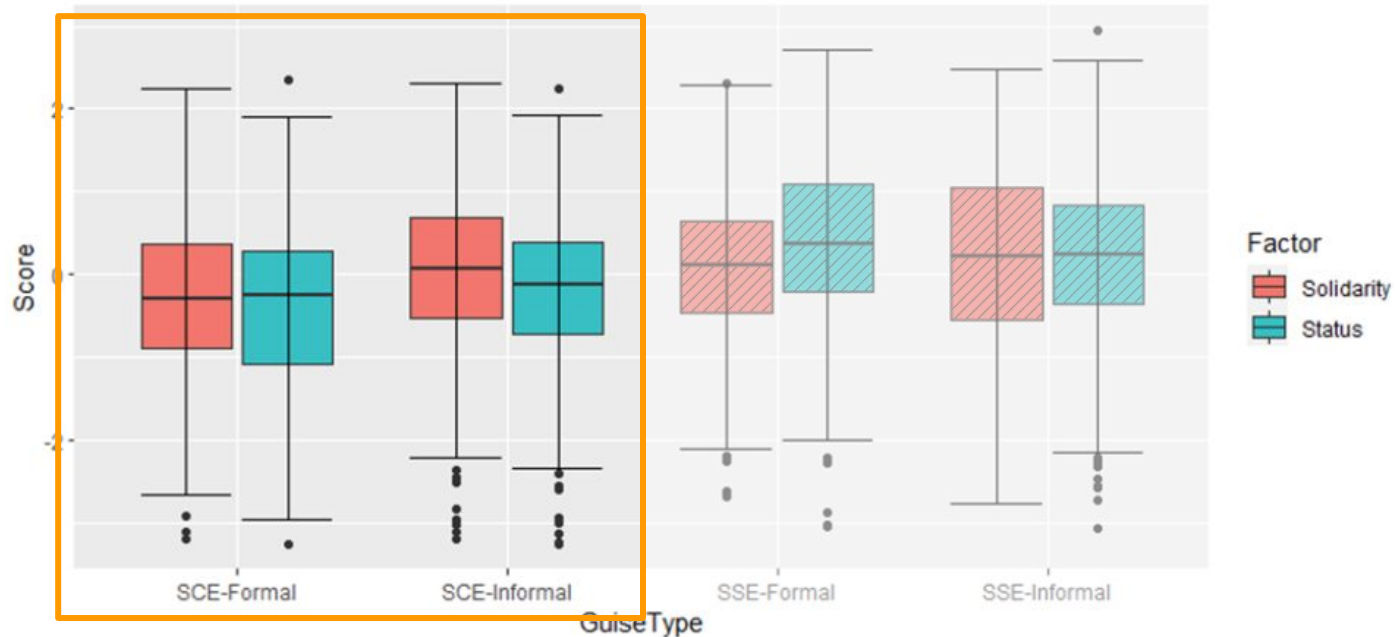


# Findings: SSE Guise

- High ratings for SSE guises in previous studies might have been driven by topic formality
  - SSE guise in the Formal condition was rated higher on Status but lower on Solidarity than in the Informal condition
- No difference between Solidarity and Status scores for the SSE guise in the Informal condition

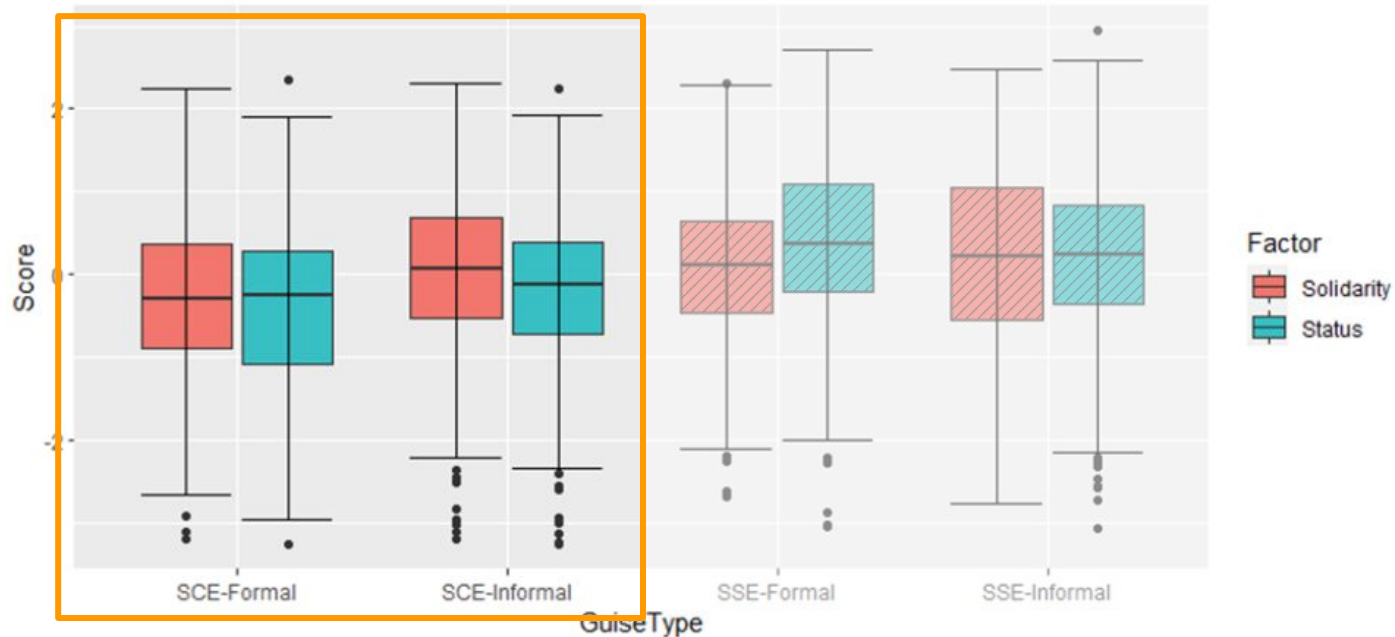
# Findings: SCE Guise

- The Informal condition was rated higher than the Formal condition on both Status and Solidarity traits



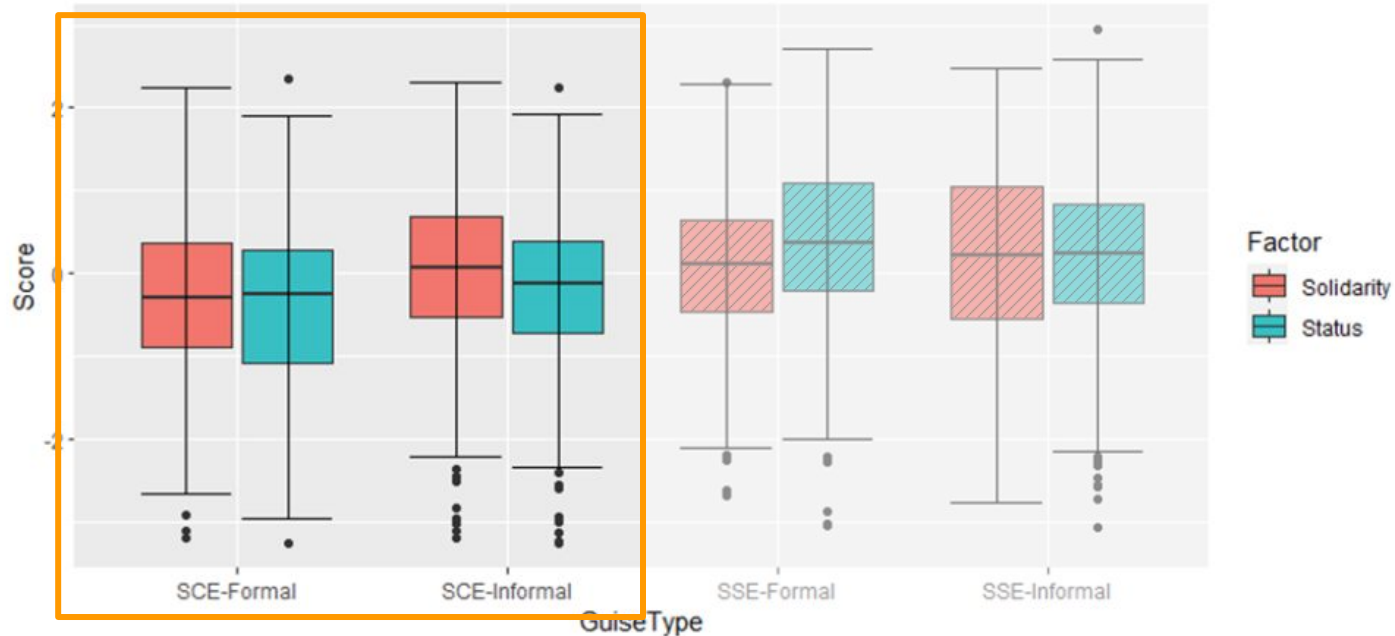
# Findings: SCE Guise

- Informal condition rated higher on Solidarity than Formal condition
  - Informal (M = 0.028, SD = 0.99) vs Formal (M = -0.29, SD = 0.95);  $t(585) = -7.07$ ,  $p < .001$



# Findings: SCE Guise

- Informal condition rated higher on Status than Formal condition
  - Informal (M = -0.19, SD = 0.90) vs Formal (M = -0.38, SD = 0.98);  $t(585) = -4.13, p < .001$



# Findings: SCE Guise

- SCE guises were rated more favorably in the Informal condition
  - Congruence between register and topic formality leads to more positive evaluations
- Solidarity scores for SCE-Informal and SSE-Formal were not significantly different
  - SCE and SSE can have comparable Solidarity scores depending on the topic formality

# Discussion

- SSE guises were generally rated higher than SCE guises across all traits
  - Same as previous studies
- Effects of topic formality were found

# Discussion

- Previous work found that SCE was rated lower than SSE on Solidarity
- But the present study suggests that this may have been because of topic formality
- “How important do you think is the maintenance of Singlish?”

*Foster a sense of unity among Singaporeans.*

*Singapore pride. Without it we are soulless.*

*Common medium of communication.*

*It's part of being Singaporean.*

*It is the “relaxed” version of communication in Singapore that promotes bond among Singaporeans.*

*“Friendly” communication and relations.*

# Discussion

- Positive attitudes toward a specific register may override effects of congruence between register (Guise Type) and context (Topic Formality)
- Topic formality has a moderating effect on attitudes toward the guises, but preferred variety overall is still SSE
  - SSE-Informal > SCE-Informal on Status
- “How important do you think Standard Singapore English is?”

*To be understood by foreigners.*

*So that we do not be a laughing stock.*

*It's necessary to be successful in Singapore.*

*Extremely important. It is the standard language of business.*

*It shows your educational background.*

*English is a universal language and speaking good English would put Singaporeans in a higher place in the world.*



# Conclusion

- SSE guises were rated more favorably than SCE guises overall
- Generally, congruent guises were rated more favourably on Status and Solidarity than incongruent guises
  - SSE: Formal > Informal on Status, Informal > Formal on Solidarity
  - SCE: Informal > Formal on both Status and Solidarity
- Previous work utilizing the matched guise paradigm does not control for topic formality
  - Topic formality helps explain the Solidarity ratings for SCE in previous studies

# Conclusion

- This study highlights the **importance of contextual constraints** when examining language attitudes through the matched guise paradigm
  - Topic formality, selection of traits, etc.
  - Specific to the sociolinguistic context
- Future work utilizing the matched guise experiment should control for or address the potential effects of contextual constraints when interpreting results

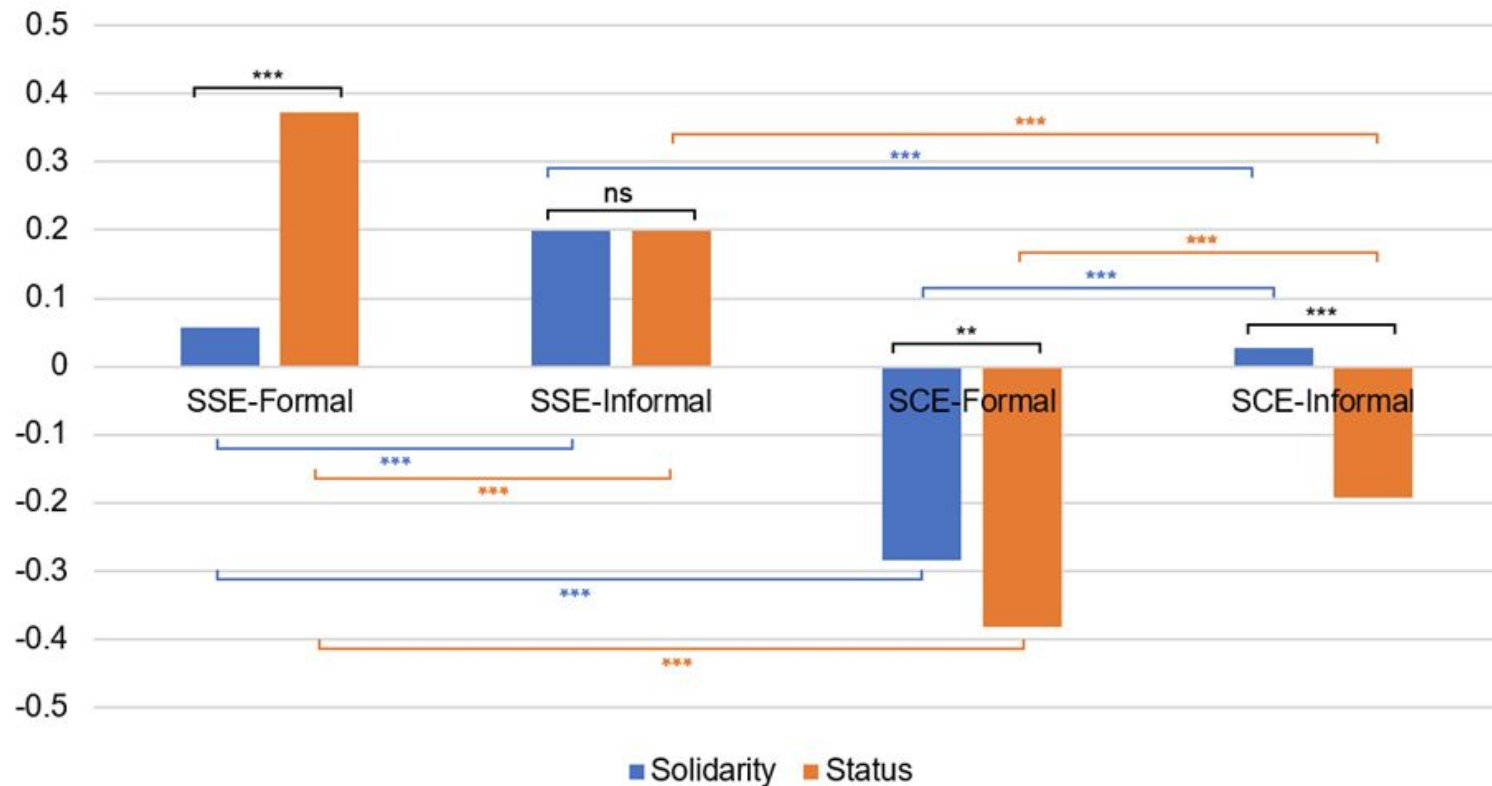
# Thank you!

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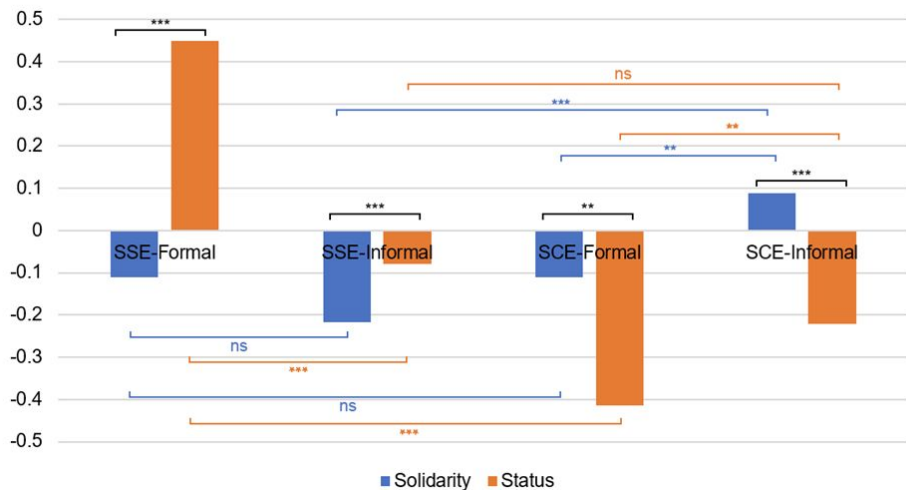
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## Solidarity and Status Factor Scores



Solidarity and Status Factor Scores - Male Guise



Solidarity and Status Factor Scores - Female Guise

