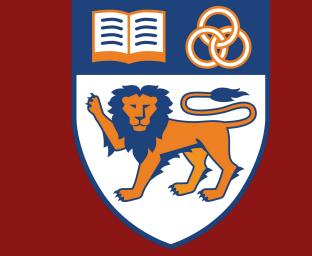


Experience affects dialect categorization of Singlish, and highlights differences in explicit and emergent categories across listener groups



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How do Singaporean and American listeners categorize Singlish?

Background

- Recent approaches to categorization focus on its context-dependent and ad hoc nature [1]
- Early linguistic experience increases accuracy of identifying American English dialects [2]
- Listener judgments often measured against researcher-determined labels
- Investigation of prosodic cues helps inform how we can understand 'familiarity'

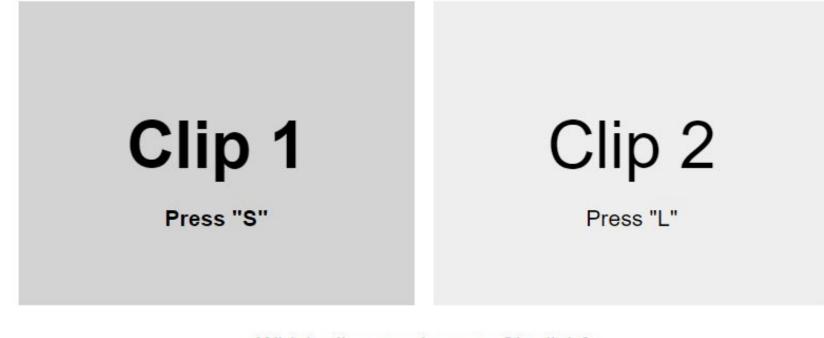
Present Study:

- Singlish, an ideologically-loaded variety of English used in Singapore
- Singaporean listeners (SG)
- Associate Singlish with informality, non-standardness, etc.
- American listeners (AM)
 - No associations with Singlish
 - No exposure to Singlish

Methods

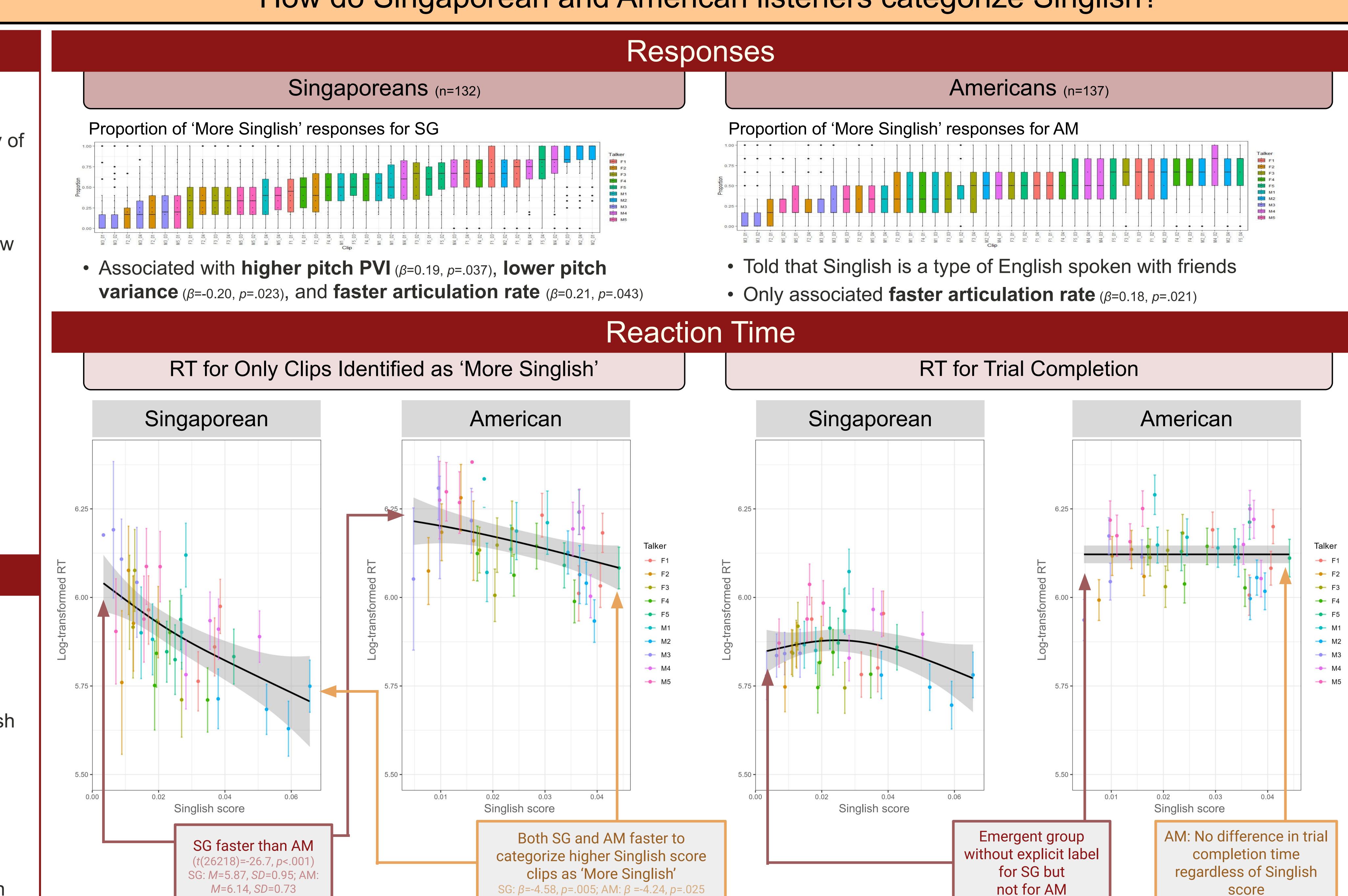
Speeded Forced-Choice Task

- 40 natural-speech stimuli
- 10 Chinese Singaporean talkers (5 M, 5 F)
- 1.4 to 2.6 seconds long
- Lexically and syntactically similar to Std English



Which clip sounds more Singlish?

6 blocks x 20 trials; within-block randomization



Discussion

Gradient Dialect Categorization

- Dialect categorization is similar to other types of categorization
- Listeners can categorize an unfamiliar dialect given a point of comparison
- SG make more gradient categorizations and use multiple acoustic cues

Speech-based Associations

- Listeners store non-lexical prosodic cues that carry social meaning
- AM associate fast speech rate with informality, casualness, non-standardness, etc.
- Pitch variability aligns with phrasal units in Singapore English [3]; not accessible for AM
- But some aspects of speech can be familiar even without prior exposure

Emergent Groups

- AM's uncertainty in categorizing high Singlish score clips suggests no emergent group
- Emergent groups without explicit labels for SG, but not AM
- But AM access enough variation to reliably categorize unfamiliar stimuli

References

1. Casasanto, D., & Lupyan, G. (2015). All concepts are ad hoc concepts. In E. Margolis & S. Laurence (Eds.), The conceptual mind: New directions in the study of concepts (pp. 543–566). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. 2. Clopper, C. G., & Pisoni, D. B. (2004). Homebodies and army brats: Some effects of early linguistic experience and residential history on dialect categorization. Language Variation and Change, 16(1), 31-48. 3. Chong, A. J. (2012). A preliminary model of Singaporean English intonational phonology. UCLA Working Papers in Phonetics, 111, 41-62.

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