

Colloquial Singapore English: Key Features

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1 Introduction

Singapore is one of a number of different countries that have postcolonially adopted English as an official language and that continues to use English in a significant portion of its daily life. As such, English in Singapore, through constant use, has become its own linguistically distinct variety with a number of stabilized features that are different from Inner Circle varieties of English, such as Standard Southern British English (SSBE) or General American English (GA).

This paper will focus primarily on describing key features of Colloquial Singapore English (CSE), otherwise known as “Singlish”; I will also briefly touch upon the sociohistorical background of Singlish as well as the current social atmosphere surrounding the variety.

1.1 Sociohistorical background

Singapore’s modern history began with the arrival of Sir Stamford Raffles in the early 1800s. From there, Singapore was established as a sea port for trading and has remained

one of the busiest ports in the world even today. Because of its close connection with trade, Singapore has seen the influx of many immigrants and therefore has a very diverse population made up of millions of people from different ethnic, linguistic, and other backgrounds.

Colloquial Singapore English (CSE) is thought to have formed through the school system. Children of different ethnic and linguistic backgrounds would interact using Bazaar Malay, a pidgin, which was then replaced by the developing CSE, which then stabilized. CSE is thought to have developed many of its characteristics due to partial fossilization of an interlanguage variety of English (Platt & Weber 1980: 20).

CSE has been described as a “new English”, but it is perhaps more accurately labeled as “creoloid” or as a “semicreole”. Platt & Weber (1980) argue that, although CSE developed out of a different set of circumstances than most creoles (i.e. there is no pidgin in CSE’s ancestry, although the definition of “creole” as “developing from a pidgin” is now contested; furthermore, CSE lacks the historical context that led to the formation of Atlantic creoles), CSE shares many characteristics and features with other creoles, including the following:

- (1) Transference of structure and concepts from one or several ethnic language(s) into the “standard” language;
- (2) Has native speakers;
- (3) Superordinate language is the official language (or one of the official languages);
- (4) Zero or variable copula realization;
- (5) Unmarked for past tense or variable past tense marking;
- (6) Zero or variable marking for 3rd person singular present tense.

(Platt & Weber 1980: 23–24)

CSE may therefore be considered as a creoloid, according to Platt & Weber.

2 Description of Colloquial Singapore English features

In describing CSE, I will be focusing on and describing five features of Colloquial Singapore English: (1) its vowel inventory, (2) its rhythmic patterning, (3) PRO-drop, (4) the function and use of “got”, and (5) the various discourse particles.

2.1 Phonology

2.1.1 Vowel inventory

word	SSBE	SSE	CSE	Mand.	Hokk.	Cant.	Mal.	Tam.
KIT	ɪ		i					
FLEECE	i:							
FACE	eɪ							
DRESS	ɛ		e					
TRAP	æ							
SQUARE	ɛə	ɛ						
STRUT	ʌ		a					
PALM	ɑ:							
START								
LOT	ɐ		ɔ		ɔ			
THOUGHT	ɔ:							
GOAT	oʊ		o	o, ou	o, oʊ>o	o, ou	o	
FOOT	ʊ	u						
GOOSE	u:							
Additional contrast	-			round.	nasal.	round.	-	length

Figure 1: Vowel inventory of both major varieties of Singapore English as compared to possible substrate languages as well as the superstrate Southern British English. Adapted from data and tables in Lim 2004.

Colloquial Singapore English has a reduced vowel inventory when compared with Standard Singapore English or Standard Southern British English (SSBE) (cf. figure 1). Whereas SSBE and SSE show almost no difference in their respective vowel inventories,

CSE merges a number of vowels that are otherwise contrastive in SSBE and SSE. In particular, the tense-lax vowel distinction is almost completely neutralized, with the exception of [e] and [ɛ], as well as [ɔ] and [o].

Lim (2004) discusses the tense-lax neutralization in CSE. In particular, Lim argues that the tense-lax distinction occurs on a continuum, rather than as a present-absent binary: Lim argues that [i] and [ɪ] show more extreme placements in SSBE and occupy more extreme edges of the vowel space (i.e. [i] is higher and fronter in SSBE than in SSE), whereas the distance between [i] and [ɪ] is smaller in SSE, where the vowels are further from the edge of the vowel space, and smaller still in CSE, where the distance between [i] and [ɪ] is so small that the two vowels appear to be neutralized. Additionally, CSE [ɔ] is also less low and less back than the SSBE equivalent (Lim 2004: 22).

Full vowel quality is also typically retained. The lack of vowel reduction may be due to CSE's status as a syllable-timed language; SSE, similarly, displays a lack of vowel reduction (cf. section 3.1.2). Furthermore, whereas SSE shows some use of diphthongs (i.e. [eɪ], [oʊ]), CSE displays a complete lack of diphthongs; however, Lim (2004: 24) notes that use of diphthongs may be correlated with formality of speech, suggesting that increases in formality and structure of communication tend to produce diphthongs where monophthongs would be expected.

The vowel inventory of CSE as diagrammed in figure 1 is much closer to its possible substrate languages, as well as the other prevalent languages in Singapore (Mandarin, Hokkien, Cantonese, Malay, and Tamil), than to the superstrate SSBE. As Lim notes (2004: 25), there are no clear, detailed descriptions of the specific language varieties in Singapore, and there may therefore be some variation between the paradigms suggested and actual speech in Singapore varieties of the language.

Lim notes that, although each substrate language has a slightly different set of vowels and may have some other contrasts (e.g. rounding in Mandarin and Cantonese, nasalization in Hokkien, and length in Tamil), each inventory can be divided into three levels:

high, mid, and low. Despite the other contrasts in each vowel system, none of the substrate languages include tense-lax height distinctions, thus providing an explanation as to why CSE—closer to the substrate languages than SSE—shows tense-lax neutralization.

2.1.2 Rhythm

General American English, British English (both RP and SSBE), Canadian English, Australian English, and other varieties of Inner Circle English are typically characterized as stress-timed languages; syllables vary in duration based on whether or not the syllable is lexically stressed. However, Singapore English—both Standard Singapore English and Colloquial Singapore English—is, like some other varieties of English, characterized as a *syllable*-timed language. Syllable-timed languages show less variation in syllable length; syllable-timing in Singapore English often leads to the perception of Singapore English as rapid, choppy, etc.

Much of the characterization of Singapore English as a syllable-timed language has been based on perceptual descriptions of the variety. Low et al. (2000), meanwhile, examine this characterization using a quantitative analysis, in particular examining two aspects of rhythm in Singapore English (specifically, Standard Singapore English, although rhythmic information can be applied to CSE as well): (1) syllable duration via measurements of vowel duration, and (2) vowel reduction, quantified as dispersion from the center of the vowel space.

Low et al. (2000) conclude that, based on quantitative measures, SSE does indeed show less variability in duration between syllable length than RP, therefore demonstrating based on phonetic data that SSE can indeed be classified as a syllable-timed language. Further, Low et al. (2000) also conclude that, based on acoustic analysis of vowels in both lexically stressed and unstressed positions in a controlled set of words, SSE shows significantly less vowel reduction, if any, than RP, therefore supporting the assertion that vowels typically retain their full quality in varieties of Singapore English.

Syllable-timing in Singapore English is most likely due to substrate influence. Although Mandarin Chinese is a stress-timed language, it did not have much linguistic power during the formation of Colloquial Singapore English; most people at that time spoke dialects of Chinese, typically dialects from the southern region of China. Only until recently (i.e. the 1970s, cf. Lim 2007) has Mandarin become a strong force in Singapore, particularly after strong government campaigning to increase the use of Mandarin to form a more cohesive identity among the Chinese community in Singapore (cf. the Speak Mandarin Campaign); if we examine Singapore's census data, we can see that a significant portion of Singapore's elderly Chinese population continues to predominantly speak dialects of Chinese, rather than Mandarin. Therefore, we can rule out Mandarin as an influence on CSE and SSE's rhythmic characteristics. Further, although Tamil and other Indian languages are syllable-timed, they have continuously been minority languages in Singapore and therefore would also have minimal influence on Singapore English's rhythmic patterning.

The remaining languages with significant influence over Colloquial Singapore English are Cantonese, Hokkien, and Malay, all of which are syllable-timed languages. It is therefore likely that early learners of English in Singapore transferred the syllable-timing of their native languages to English and perpetuated this rhythmic pattern until it fossilized and became a characteristic of CSE and SSE.

2.2 Syntax

2.2.1 PRO-drop

Colloquial Singapore English is characterized as a PRO-drop language (Alsogoff & Ho 1998, Gupta 1994, Platt & Weber 1980). PRO-drop languages allow the deletion of pronouns; pronouns in CSE can be dropped in multiple places in a sentence. For instance, pronouns can be deleted from the subject position of a sentence:

(1) A: What for? Don't want to get involved already lah.

'I don't want to get involved already lah.'

The pronoun does not have to be in the subject position, as evidenced by the following examples, where the deleted pronoun is a direct object of the verb:

(2) A: This is not the Chinese sea cucumber, you know. What you call worms.

People eat raw, you know.

'...People eat them raw, you know.'

(3) A: In fact, er, if you shake the coke okay, I can still open.

'...I can still open it.'

(Wee & Ansaldo 2004, emphasis added)

CSE's possible substrate languages—varieties of Chinese, as well as Malay and Tamil—are all PRO-drop languages. Wee & Ansaldo (2004) further state that, where pronouns are present, they are interpreted as having an emphatic effect.

2.2.2 “got”

The word “got” in CSE is polysemous. Its meanings range from meanings that are very similar to how the word is used in Standard Southern British English (SSBE) and in General American English (GA); however, in addition to the meanings Inner Circle varieties of English ascribe to the word, “got” in CSE also has a variety of other meanings and uses.

Table 1 lists the various usages of “got” and provides illustrative examples of each usage of “got”.

Lee et al. (2009) suggest that Hokkien is the primary substrate language for CSE, with British English as the superstrate language. They argue that the functions of “got” that fall outside the typical superstrate usages of “got” line up well with the functions of Hokkien *u*; Lee et al. argue that Cantonese, while possible as a substrate language for CSE, does

Usage	Example
Possessive	I got two brothers, one sister. 'I have two brothers and a sister.'
Existential	Here got many nice houses. 'There are many nice houses here.'
Realis modality	I go Japan these days. 'I go to Japan these days.' I got go Japan these days. 'I go to Japan on a regular basis these days.'
<i>Aspect</i>	
Habitual:	a. You play tennis? (i) 'Do you play tennis regularly?' (ii) 'Have you played tennis before?' b. You got play tennis? (i) 'Do you play tennis regularly?' (ii) *'Have you played tennis before?'
Experiential:	You got stay in Ang Mo Kio *(before)? 'Have you ever lived in Ang Mo Kio?'
Completive:	You got wash your hands? (i) 'Did you wash your hands just now?' (ii) *'Have you washed your hands before?'
Emphasis	A: You never sweep the floor ah? 'You didn't sweep the floor, did you?' B: I got sweep! 'I did sweep the floor.'
Challenge/Disagreement <i>Idiomatic: Only "where got", no "why got", "who got", etc.</i>	A: This dress very red. 'This dress is very red.' B: Where got? 'Is it? I don't think so.'
Passive	Later you get cheated ah. 'You may be cheated later on.'
To receive/to obtain	She get flowers every day. 'She receives flowers every day.'
To become	The white skirt got dirty. 'The white skirt is dirtied.'

Table 1: Summary of usages of "got", as well as examples. Adapted from Lee et al. (2009).

not line up as neatly with “got” in CSE as Hokkien does. Bazaar Malay provides an even weaker case as a substrate language when analyzed through the specific word “got”.

2.3 Discourse

2.3.1 Discourse particles

The particle “lah” is salient in both CSE and SSE and has become a stereotype of CSE. When asked (Lu 2010) for a definition of “Singlish” or how “Singlish” could be described to an outsider, many respondents noted the use of “lah”:

- (1) “You know, sometimes I don’t understand. This is where like my linguistics stuff comes in. Because I don’t know if you’ve looked at the Wikipedia page for Singlish yet. They’ve come up with like varying degrees of Singlish, right. I guess, I don’t know. I mean, obviously, when you use ‘lah’ at the back... but Malaysians use ‘lah’ too.”
- (2) “I would describe Singlish as, for example, like, you put a sentence down, and then you have uh lahs and lors, you know, this and that, yeah, so.”
- (3) “Like. Lah, lor, all these ah. Yeah.”
- (4) “I wouldn’t be too sure about it. Yeah, it’s just like, um, adding lah, leh, to end of the sentences. Yeah.”

Discourse particles, as the interviewees noted, are indeed typically found in the sentence-final position, although they can occur at the end of a phrase, as well (subsequent examples also drawn from Lu 2010):

- (5) “I think for Singapore it’s individual *lah*, who we are facing with.”

- (6) "... but there's also a certain minority—there's a small minority who only speak perfect English and they do not—they do not like Singlish *lah*, okay, because they think that, oh, Singlish is uncouth, and then you know only uneducated people speak Singlish..."
- (7) "To me *lah*, okay *lah*. I my own also speak Singlish *lah*, but as long as people understand what you're talking, to me it's okay; no need to be so formal with English."
- (8) "Oh yes, from TV *lah*, sometimes in the news yeah, yes, yes, the government is encourage everything."

However, it is important to note that the clauses in which "lah" can be found can also stand alone as the ends of sentences, suggesting that there is a constraint on what types of clauses in which discourse particles can appear. Additionally, discourse particles are optional—failing to include a discourse particle at the end of an utterance will not render the utterance ungrammatical.

Wee (2004) highlights eight discourse particles of interest: *lah*, *ma*, *wat*, *meh*, *leh*, *lor*, *hor*, and *hah*. Their definitions are summarized in table 2. A number of illustrative examples, drawn from Wee 2004, follows:

- (1) *lah* – indicates speaker's mood or attitude and appeals to addressee to accommodate the mood or attitude
- (i) A: What do you want to talk about?
B: Anything under the sun *lah*.
- (ii) A: Come *lah*!
B: Where?

Wee notes that "lah" is not simply used to convey a speaker's emotion, although it is often used as such, and the specific emotion or attitude varies depending on the utterance

and context. Wee notes that “lah” is also used as a solidarity marker that “softens” a speech act. For instance, in example (ii), the bare command “Come!” would typically be perceived as being harsher or ruder than “Come lah!”

(2) *ma* – indicates information as obvious

(i) A: How come you call me?

B: You page for me *ma*.

The use of “ma” in example (i) conveys that speaker B finds it obvious that the reason why he or she is returning speaker A’s call is that speaker A paged for speaker B; this information, speaker B expects, should be obvious to speaker A.

(3) *wat* (*what*) – indicates information as obvious and contradictory to what has previously been stated

(i) A: I dam stupid lah! I shouldn’t have stopped.

B: You can start now *wat*!

Speaker A is discussing regrets over deciding to stop dance classes. Speaker B replies by providing an obvious solution—that speaker A can resume classes now—and thereby also contradicts speaker A, in that speaker A appears to imply that starting dance classes again is either difficult or an untenable solution.

(4) *meh* – indicates skepticism

(i) Context: Be demonstrates how a mathematical problem is to be solved to A, who seems unconvinced.

A: Like that one *meh*?

B: Ya lor.

(5) *leh* – marks a tentative suggestion or request

- (i) A: Actually... come to think about it actually, er, this movie speaks very badly about men *leh*.

“Leh”, then, works as a “pragmatic softener” (Wee 2004) and softens the statement in which it appears, making the statement weaker.

- (6) *lor* – indicates obviousness or a sense of resignation

- (i) A: What do they sell at the market?

B: Sell fish *lor*, vegetable *lor*, meat *lor*, all this lah.

- (ii) B: How come you are so family-oriented ah? My mum would like you for a daughter.

A: I think it’s quite... It’s the way I’ve been brought up *lor*.

B: For me it’s always career first, career first, career first. Never family first.

(Laughing)

Similarly to “ma” and “wat”, “lor” indicates obviousness of information. However, “lor” can also indicate that a situation is not only obvious but cannot be changed, and that, because a certain situation cannot be changed, one can only accept the situation and move on, as in example (ii).

- (7) *hor* – asserts and elicits support for a proposition

- (i) A: I bought a Prada wallet yesterday.

B: You are very rich *hor*?

A: No lah. Got sale wat.

- (8) *hah* – question marker

- (i) Context: A is asking B about the guests for a party.

A: Who shall I invite for the BBQ *hah*?

B: The usual people *lor*.

Particle	Definition/Usage
<i>lah</i>	indicates speaker's mood/attitude and appeals to addressee to accommodate the mood/attitude
<i>ma</i>	indicates information as obvious
<i>wat</i>	indicates information as obvious and contradictory to what has previously been stated
<i>meh</i>	indicates skepticism
<i>leh</i>	marks a tentative suggestion or request
<i>lor</i>	indicates obviousness or a sense of resignation
<i>hor</i>	asserts and elicits support for a proposition
<i>hah</i>	question marker

Table 2: Eight common discourse particles as described by Wee 2004.

Gupta (1992, 2006) suggests that discourse particles carry the overall intonation contour of the utterance. However, Lim (2004) provides a different hypothesis and suggests that the particles both carry tone as well as the overall intonation contour. She argues that tone is in fact part of the particle itself and argues that the particles are key in determining the intonation contour of an utterance for multiple reasons:

- (1) Because the particles carry a fixed tone, they then tend to become prominent syllables in an utterance; and
- (2) As particles help determine the overall meaning of the utterance, their fixed tone movement will affect the intonation and pitch movement of the rest of the sentence and therefore the overall intonation contour.

Lim's argument challenges the common observance that contact languages typically do not retain tone, even if their substrate languages are all tonal. However, given that only a small set of words—just the discourse particles—appear to retain tone, it is possible that the tonality of the particles is an exceptional case and not indicative of a larger trend or challenge to the general observation.

Further, Lim's argument can also be countered in the opposite direction: an utterance with a given meaning may have a fixed or expected intonation pattern; therefore, the particle will always appear to have the same intonation pattern (and the same pitch movement) because it is part of a fixed sentence structure and will always be found in similar contexts with regards to the attitude and emotional content of the sentence. It is possible that the particles themselves do not have tone, but are always found in the same intonational context, and therefore appear to carry a fixed tone. There is, then, a chicken-and-egg problem that must be further investigated before an adequate conclusion can be reached.

It is difficult to determine the exact origin of the particles, particularly because a number of languages (Bazaar Malay, Hokkien, Cantonese, and Mandarin) have similar particles with similar functions. Lim (2007) rules out Mandarin as an origin for the particles, as Mandarin did not gain widespread power, prestige, and prevalence until the late 1970s. Further, Bazaar Malay does not show the same wide range of particles that are found in CSE and only made use of the particles "lah" and "ah".

Based on the argument that the discourse particles have lexical tone, Lim concludes that Hokkien could not have been the source of the particles, as the Hokkien particles are not tonal; particles in Mandarin Chinese are also non-tonal. Lim concludes that Cantonese is the likely originator of the CSE particles and argues that Cantonese would have had significant power and influence over CSE during the time when the particles may have been introduced into the language; Lim also argues that the entire class of particles may have been imported into CSE from Cantonese.

Lim's historical analysis of the discourse particles, however, does not apply to the more prevalent particles "lah", "ah", and "what", which date back to earlier periods than the other particles. Lim suggests that "lah" may have been from Bazaar Malay or from Hokkien and states that it is difficult to determine exactly which language is the originator, particularly when there could have been convergence during the time when the

particle was introduced. Lim argues that “ah” is most likely a Hokkien particle that acquired more meanings from other substrate languages, and that “what” (spelled “wat” by Wee) is most likely a calque of “ma”, another particle existing in Sinitic languages.

3 Current social focus

3.1 The Speak Good English Movement

As with many other non-standard languages and as with many creoles, Colloquial Singapore English is held in low regard by the Singapore government, which has, since the year 2000, funded and put forth the Speak Good English Movement (SGEM), which aims to teach Singaporeans to speak and use good, simple English in their everyday lives. The SGEM follows in the footsteps of the successful Speak Mandarin Campaign, which aimed to encourage Chinese Singaporeans to use Mandarin instead of Chinese dialects in order to foster a more unified Chinese community in Singapore; in fact, the two campaigns are headed by the same group of people (Lu 2010, private interview).

Although the official intent of the Speak Good English Movement is to raise the bar for English language learning and usage in Singapore, many have questioned the motives of the movement and interpreted the so-called “movement” as a government campaign against CSE. Their concerns are not without merit: Lee Kuan Yew, former Prime Minister of Singapore, in a speech that is now notorious, once called Singlish a handicap he did not want to wish on Singaporeans, and others have echoed the same sentiment.

If we refer to figure 3, which illustrates the tag line and goals of the SGEM from its beginning until the present, we notice a trend and direction in the nature of the movement. In the beginning of the movement (years 2000–2004), the tag line was “Speak well. Be understood.” and the primary focus of the movement was to encourage people to speak grammatical standard English, often explicitly condemning CSE (referred to as “Singlish” in the movement) in the process.



Figure 2: Illustration from the SGEM website (retrieved October 6, 2010) demonstrating incorrect English and the proper corrections. The sticky note on the right and on the left show clear examples of CSE syntax and diction and are labeled “wrong”, with the equivalent in SSE written underneath.

After the initial four years of the SGEM, the movement began to gradually shift from simply correcting Singaporeans’ English to empowering Singaporeans to use grammatical English in their everyday lives and to take charge of their use of English. The goal, then, went past simply having a basic command of the language and instead became a goal of mastering the language and using English to communicate in an elegant and eloquent manner. Additionally, mentions of CSE became more infrequent, if it appeared at all.

This trend lasted up until the end of the 2009–2010 program, titled “Impress. Inspire. Intoxicate.” The 2010–2011 program, however, deviates from this trend. With the tag line “Get it right”, the SGEM once again reverts to the prescriptive focus that characterized the movement in the 2000–2004 years. The movement once again focuses back on correcting errors and is once again overt with its criticism of CSE, including some graphics that clearly show CSE as a “wrong” or “ungrammatical” form: as an illustration of “broken English”.

It is unclear why there has been a sudden shift back to themes and topics that characterized the earlier years of the SGEM. It is possible that the SGEM has not had much of an impact on Singaporeans or has had less of an impact on Singaporeans than anticipated, prompting the Singaporean government to renew efforts against the use of CSE in

the form of a harsher SGEM. Lu (2010) concludes after conducting a series of random interviews with approximately 50 Singaporeans that many Singaporeans are in fact largely unaware of the movement and typically do not care much about the movement, suggesting that the SGEM has not had as strong of an impact on Singaporeans as the Speak Mandarin Campaign or as the SGEM would like to hope.

3.2 CSE and Singaporean identity

Singapore as a nation, having only gained independence in the mid-1960s, has had little time to nation-build and create a national identity; further, even prior to independence, there was not a sense of national identity—Singapore’s history is based on immigration and trade; therefore, its population is diverse—even today—and does not form a single cultural unit. It is therefore difficult to speak of “Singaporean identity” as if there were a unified identity—there is not.

However, CSE does have an important place in Singaporeans’ hearts. As CSE is the result of a natural process of language formation in Singapore, CSE is seen as something that Singaporeans created, and that unifies all Singaporeans, as most Singaporeans can speak CSE. It is seen as a class equalizer and a way to communicate across different ethnic groups (cf. Lu 2010, private interviews). In a state where the government continuously attempts to dictate what being “Singaporean” truly means, Singaporeans are quick to latch on to something that already unifies Singaporeans and already exists as a common ground between all Singaporeans.

The central nature of CSE to Singaporeans’ identity explains, in part, why the SGEM has not had as much success as it would have liked. Singaporeans are reluctant to part with CSE and reluctant to see it changed.

Year	Tagline	Goals
2000-2004	Speak Well. Be Understood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drive the message that with practice, it is not difficult to speak good English • Improve the standard of English of teachers • Promote the advantages of speaking good English when conducting business • Reduce the use of Singlish in broadcast media
2005/06	Speak Up. Speak Out. Speak Well	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get Singaporeans to speak standard English all the time, instead of switching to proper English only for formal occasions. • Teachers and parents encouraged to be good role models by not speaking Singlish, as well as making language lessons fun and lively, or reading aloud to their children more often.
2006/07	Be Understood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be Understood: Not only in Singapore, Malaysia and Batam • Recognise and use standard English. • Build emotional literacy as well as foundational skills in grammar, spelling and pronunciation.
2007/08	Rock Your World!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote and showcase the use of good English through music, drama and The Art of Persuasion - an oratorical contest/showcase. • Youths encouraged to showcase their talents while creatively expressing themselves in good English.
2008/09	I Can	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can help others improve their English. I can take action to improve my English. I can speak good English if I want to. • English training for retail staff
2009/10	Impress. Inspire. Intoxicate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Six Lives drama series • Focus on enjoying good English as a means to communicate eloquently • English anecdotes, tips and lessons weaved into the story will demonstrate what it means to impress, inspire and intoxicate with the English language.
2010/11	Get It Right	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broaden the environment where Standard English is spoken and heard in Singapore. • Consistently use Standard English, so that those who are weak in the language can be exposed to, and immersed in it, and learn by example. • Call to action for everyone to make the extra effort to ensure they use the English language accurately and correctly; a motto to remind them that whenever they use English, they should try to use it correctly. • "Rallying cry" to collectively and consciously raise the standard of English in Singapore.

Gathered from the SGEM website: <http://www.goodenglish.org.sg/>

Figure 3: Tag lines and goals of the SGEM throughout the years.

4 Conclusion

Colloquial Singapore English is a rich variety of English capable of expressing many subtle nuances of meaning. Substrate influence from various languages, such as Hokkien, Cantonese, Malay, Mandarin, and Tamil are strong on CSE; however, given the diverse language ecology during the formation of Colloquial Singapore English and the number of languages that could have influenced the language, it is difficult to trace an exact origin of the language and difficult to pin specific traits to specific substrate languages, particularly when the substrate languages themselves are similar or converge.

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