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This is a contribution from *English World-Wide 30:2*

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# Revisiting English prosody

## (Some) New Englishes as tone languages?\*

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Many New Englishes are spoken in what can often be considered multilingual contexts in which typologically diverse languages come into contact. In several Asian contexts, one typological feature that is prominent in the multilingual contact situation (the “ecology”) is tone. Given that tone is recognized as an areal feature and is acquired easily by languages in contact, the question that arises is how this is manifested in the prosody of these New Englishes. Recent work has shown that contact languages, including English varieties, evolving in an ecology where tone languages are present do indeed combine aspects of tone languages. This paper attempts to go a step further, in suggesting not only that such varieties should not be viewed as aberrant in comparison to “standard” English but recognized as having their own prosodic system partly due to substrate typology, but also that in the consideration of New Englishes — here, Asian (but also African) Englishes — the traditional view of English as a stress / intonation language need to be revisited and revised, to consider some New Englishes as tone languages. Singapore English (SgE) is presented as a case in point, with the presence of tone demonstrated in the set of SgE particles acquired from Cantonese, at the level of the word, as well as in the intonation contour which moves in a series of level steps. A comparison is then made with Hong Kong English, another New English in a tone-language-dominant ecology, with a consideration of typological comparability as well as difference due to the dynamic nature of SgE’s ecology.

**Keywords:** Singapore English, Hong Kong English, Asian Englishes, New Englishes, typology, ecology, intonation, tone, tone language

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\* I thank Edgar Schneider, Bao Zhiming, and two anonymous reviewers for comments on an earlier, slightly different version of this paper, and Umberto Ansaldo, Nik Gisborne, Edgar Schneider and Caroline Wiltshire for comments on this paper. I am grateful to the following for sharing their work: Zhu Shenfa and Stephanie Wagenaar for some of the instrumental work on SgE intonation and particles respectively, Ng E-Ching and Wee Lian Hee for their thoughts on tone in the SgE word, and K.K. Luke for his material on HKE intonation.

## 1. Why revisit English prosody?

Why revisit English prosody indeed? This might well be the question that immediately arises upon encountering this paper. It is not particularly novel, after all, to recognize that the prosodic patterns of varieties of English differ: recent years have seen extensive attention to intonational variation in English (IViE) within the British Isles (see e.g. Grabe 2004), and different intonation patterns in varieties of English around the world, including New Englishes, have long been noted (e.g. Wells 1982; Schneider *et al.* 2004). Closer to home — the focus of this issue — in the past two decades, too, a significant amount of research has made headway in providing much-needed and important descriptions of various prosodic aspects of Asian Englishes (see e.g. the summary overviews in Mesthrie 2008b: for Indian English, Gargesh 2008; Malaysian English, Baskaran 2008; Philippine English, Tayao 2008). For Singapore English (SgE), research has encompassed areas of intonation (e.g. Deterding 1994; Low 1994, 1998; Lim 1997, 2000, 2001, 2004a; Goh 1998; Zhu 2003), stress (e.g. Low 2000; Lim and Tan 2001; Tan 2003; Lim 2004b), and rhythm (e.g. Low, Grabe and Nolan 2000; Deterding 2001).

So why is a revisiting of English prosody necessary? The motivation for this is three-fold. First, as has often been the pattern in some scholarship, such descriptions of structural features of New Englishes have tended to be, at worst, in relation to what they lack in comparison to native varieties of English, and, at best, how they differ from native varieties while still adopting notions and terms which may not be at all relevant for New Englishes, such as tonic stress. While such observations of prosodic patterns have certainly been valuable in the growing body of material for the description of a variety, I believe that viewing patterns in New Englishes from the vantage point of patterns documented for native Englishes can do a disservice to the New English varieties in that such an approach tends to miss representing patterns which reflect structural features from the Asian substrates. Instances where a serious attempt to describe and explain such distinctive patterns in these New Englishes in their own right are few and far between, though in very recent years, a number of younger scholars have been taking this up (more of this later). Second, descriptions of structural features of various regional groups of New Englishes — African, South Asian, Southeast Asian, East Asian, *etc.* — have tended to manifest in a list of features which the members in each group — or across a number of groups — share (e.g. Kachru and Nelson 2006 on Asian Englishes; Mesthrie 2008a on African and Asian Englishes), as if by virtue of membership of that particular group (also see Lim 2009a). While in (summaries of) such widely encompassing, ambitious volumes, a certain amount of reductionism is certainly necessary, even desirable, for providing broad brush strokes of groups of varieties, and while elsewhere in the volumes (e.g. in the separate chapters on

individual African and Asian Englishes in Mesthrie 2008b) there may be an indication of the factors for such patterns, some mention of why these systematic phonological similarities or phonetic differences amongst or between the groups still needs to be made, on the basis of the typologies of the substrate (and superstrate) languages.<sup>1</sup> Finally, a clear recognition of the typologies of the substrate languages of some New Englishes where one or more of the substrates are tone languages must surely lead to a serious consideration of what this means for the New English. While English is classified a stress or intonation language, New Englishes which manifest some presence of tone in their prosodic system must warrant at least some consideration for whether they may be classified instead as tone languages, as is suggested for SgE (Lim 2007a, b, 2008a, b).<sup>2</sup> This paper is thus an attempt to address these three concerns.

To best appreciate the patterns observed in the prosody of some Asian Englishes, I find it useful to subscribe to an ecological approach (after e.g. Mufwene 2001, 2008; for a detailed account of applying this approach to the understanding of Asian Englishes, see Ansaldo 2009a, b, c; for a model which assumes this perspective for Postcolonial Englishes, see Schneider 2007), which adopts ecology as a metaphor from population genetics and biology. In this approach, the emergence of contact-induced varieties such as SgE can be regarded as speakers making selections from a pool of linguistic variants available to them in a contact setting. This feature pool consists of the sum total of the individual forms and variants that each of the speakers involved, with different language backgrounds and varying linguistic experiences, brings into the contact situation. Which variants from this feature pool are chosen as stable elements of the newly emerging variety depends on the complete ecology of the contact situation, which comprises both external and internal factors. External ecology involves components such as the numerical (demographic) relationships between speech communities, the social relationships, involving issues of power or prestige distributions, between the participants, as well as attitudes towards the participants and/or their languages; and

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1. I wish to add that, even as I make this point, I have the greatest amount of respect for these invaluable collections of descriptions of varieties of English and the authors and editors who put them together.

2. To my knowledge, the idea that SgE, as a New English, be considered a tone language was for the first time seriously postulated in Lim (2007a: 468–9), and then more explicitly proposed in Lim (2007b, 2008a, b). (Note though that Killingley (1968) suggests that SgE word stress should not be discussed on the grounds that Malayan [Singapore + Malaysia] English is “a tone language” but later (Killingley 1972) withdraws the statement, cited in Bloom 1986: 428; note also though that “Malayan English” of four decades ago is a different animal from SgE today.) Later, other similar statements have been independently proposed or assumed (Ng 2008, 2009; Siraj 2008; Wee 2008a, b).

the quality and quantity of communicative events. The two main external factors impinging on the ecology in which SgE has emerged, namely migration patterns and language policies, which have both had effects on aspects such as population proportions and dominance of languages over different eras, are explored in other work (see Lim in prep). Internal ecology involves the nature of the linguistic input elements, surface similarities and typological degrees of relatedness between the languages involved, and it is this aspect of the ecological approach that is relevant to the investigation undertaken in this paper.

This paper is structured as follows. In Section 2, I first provide a brief illustration of various aspects of the prosody of one Asian English: SgE. Rather than attempt an analysis which tries to find equivalences to native Englishes — e.g. describing the frequencies of various intonation contour types or tones, or noting the placement of tonic syllable or stresses, always compared to patterns in British English (BrE) — I aim to examine those patterns which are particular to SgE. In Section 3, I consider an explanation for why such patterns manifest in SgE by appealing to the internal ecology in which SgE has evolved, specifically examining the typology of the substrate languages, addressing in particular the idea of the presence of (Sinitic) tone. In Section 4, I then go on to consider the implications for understanding the prosodic patterns of other Asian Englishes — but not simply because these varieties belong to the same regional group, but rather because it so happens that there are elements of their ecologies, *viz.* the typologies of their substrate languages, which share common traits which contribute to such prosodic patterns. I also consider the implications that such findings hold for work on English intonation, as well as for theoretical classifications of intonation and tone languages. In this regard, what I argue for is a revisiting of English prosody, in a more radical reconsideration of the prosody of some Asian Englishes, in terms of viewing such varieties not as stress or intonation languages but as tone languages.

## 2. Like Chinese *mɛ55*?<sup>3</sup>

SgE has often been anecdotally described as if it “sounds like Chinese” (Bloom 1986: 430, citing Killingley 1968). This intriguing observation has not, however, until recently, garnered serious investigation based on an examination of substrate typology as to why this may be the case. This section presents a summary overview

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3. The SgE particle *mɛ55* indicates (often mock-) surprise or incredulity for the proposition it is attached to; also see example (5a). Here the translation of the section heading would be ‘Does it really sound like Chinese?’, in response to the description in the first sentence of this section.

of the evidence derived from a number of fronts: discourse particles, words, and utterances.

## 2.1 Discourse particles

Perhaps the most obvious presence of tone in SgE is that found in the discourse particles. Again, although the particles have long been acknowledged in most scholarship as coming from the (southern) Chinese languages (e.g. Platt 1987; Gupta 1992; and see Lim 2007a for a comprehensive overview), and the question of whether the particles themselves carry (lexical) tone was posed early in scholarship on the particles (Platt 1987), it is only in very recent work that these two issues have been seriously addressed (Lim 2007a, b, 2008b, in prep). It has been argued that the larger set of SgE particles, namely *hor*, *leh*, *lor*, *ma*, *meh*, have their origins in Cantonese, and were acquired into SgE in a later era compared to the earlier particles *lah*, *ah* and *what*, and have carried into SgE (their original) Sinitic tone (Lim 2007a). Here we focus on this Cantonese set, examples of which are provided below in (1a) to (1e); note that the particles are transcribed together with their tone, represented as pitch level numbers, a practice proposed in Lim (2007a).<sup>4</sup> These are accompanied in each case by an example of the corresponding particle in Cantonese from which it derives (from Matthews and Yip 1994: 347, 348, 352).<sup>5</sup> A comparison of the SgE and Cantonese particles in the (a) and (b) pairs reveals striking parallels in segmental form, tone and meaning. In (1a), for example, the SgE particle *hɔ24*, which always occurs with a rising tone, and which asserts a proposition, making clear a positive response from the addressee is expected (Wee 2004: 124; Lim 2007a), is matched in Cantonese in its *hó* particle, with the same rising tone and indicating an expectation of the addressee's confirmation (Matthews and Yip 1994: 347). The SgE particle *lɔ33* in (3a), which occurs with mid-level tone, and which indicates obviousness, and in negative contexts inevitability or resignation (Wee 2004: 123; Lim 2007a), is similarly matched by a Cantonese

4. SgE data for particles and utterances derive from the naturally occurring data of the Grammar of Spoken Singapore English Corpus (GSSEC; Lim and Foley 2004), except (4a), from Wong (1994). The tones of the particles are represented as pitch level numbers 1 to 5 where, in the Asianist tradition, the larger the number the higher the pitch; thus 55 represents a high level tone, 24 represents a rising tone, and so on.

5. The transcription of examples (1b) to (5b) is provided as in the source (Matthews and Yip 1994), which uses the Yale system. Rising and falling tones are shown by rising and falling accents; high level tone is indicated by a level accent; no tonal indication is given for the mid level tone, and <h> is inserted after the vowel to indicate all low-register tones (low rising, low level and low falling).

particle *lo* in (3b) with mid-level tone and meaning of resignation (Matthews and Yip 1994: 352).

- (1) a. A: But it's beautiful in that... how... I mean, Finn got a chance to realize himself, right?  
 B: He's quite innocent *la21 hɔ24?* Innocent.  
 'He's quite innocent, don't you agree?'  
 [asserting proposition, expecting agreement]
- b. A: *Géi leng a hó?*  
 quite nice PRT PRT  
 'Pretty nice, huh?'  
 [expecting confirmation]  
 B: *Haih a.*  
 is PRT  
 'Yes, it is.'
- (2) a. A: My parents will disown me *a22* if I marry someone Caucasian or Indian. My parents very what.  
 'My parents will disown me if I marry someone Caucasian or Indian. My parents are really impossible.'  
 B: \*\*\* very old fashion *a21*.  
 A: My parents very old fashion *a21?* Then your parents *le55?*  
 'Are you saying that my parents are old fashioned? Then what about your parents?'  
 [indicating comparison, 'what about?']
- b. A: *Dī gāsī maaih saai béi yàhn la.*  
 CL furniture sell all to people PRT  
 'The furniture has all been sold.'  
 B: *Ga chē lē?*  
 CL car PRT  
 'What about the car?'  
 [meaning 'what about?']
- (3) a. A: But um I might stop working for a while if I need to, if I need to *la21*, especially for looking after kids.  
 B: But for me, I won't stop working *lɔ33*. The most I won't give birth to kids *lɔ33*. For the most I don't marry *lɔ33*.  
 'In my case, (even if I have children to look after) I won't stop working. In the worst of cases, I won't have children. In the worst of cases, I won't get married.'  
 [indicating obviousness, resignation]

- b. *Ngóh mjī dím syun lo*  
 I not-know how act PRT  
 'I really don't know what to do.'  
 [indicating resignation]
- (4) a. A: How come you call me?  
 'Why did you call me?'  
 B: You page for me *ma22*.  
 'You paged for me, after all (as you know) (so naturally I'm  
 returning your call).'
- b. A: *Bīngō lèih ga?*  
 who PRT  
 'Who's that?'  
 B: *Ngóhdeih sān lóuhbáan āma.*  
 our new boss PRT  
 'Our new boss, of course.'  
 [indicating obviousness]
- (5) a. A: No *la21*! He's using Pirelli, you don't know *me55*?  
 'No, he has Pirelli tyres; didn't you know that?'  
 [indicating surprise, scepticism]  
 B: Really? Don't bluff.
- b. *sīnsāang wah mh dāk ge mē?*  
 teacher say not okay PRT PRT  
 'What, did the teacher say it wasn't okay?'  
 [expressing surprise]

As evidence for the claim that the particles occur in SgE with their original (Cantonese) tone, Figure 1 provides an illustration of the pitch contour of one SgE particle, from the utterance *maybe it like what you say l33*, with the particle *l33* visualized clearly as being realized with level tone; instrumental analysis confirms that the particle lies in the middle of speakers' pitch range, and hence can be categorized as mid-level.

By virtue of the tones originally from Cantonese — comprising mid-level and high-level tones as well as rising and falling tones — the particles introduce very particular pitch levels or contours into the SgE prosodic system. As the particles occur in phrase-final position, this means that there are thus very particular boundary tones in SgE.

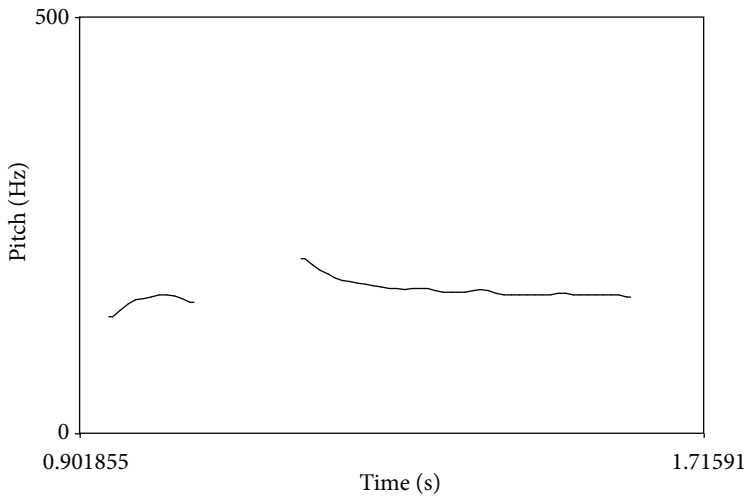


Figure 1. Mid-level tone of SgE particle *l33*

## 2.2 Word level

At the level of the word, some very recent work, all of which assuming at the outset that SgE “has tones” (Wee 2008b), has suggested that SgE has tone in addition to stress, with tone being predictable from stress (Ng 2008), with a high level tone being assigned to the final syllable (Ng 2008; Wee 2008a), as can be seen in the words in example (6) (from Ng 2008; Wee 2008a, b).<sup>6</sup>

(6) <i>cat, see</i>	55 / H
<i>'manage, 'teacher</i>	33–55 / MH
<i>in'tend, a'round</i>	11–55 / LH
<i>'Singapore, 'managing</i>	33–33–55 / MMH
<i>'origin, bi'lingual</i>	11–33–55 / LMH
<i>o'riginal, se'curity</i>	11–33–33–55 / LMMH
<i>o'riginally</i>	11–33–33–33–55 / LMMMMH

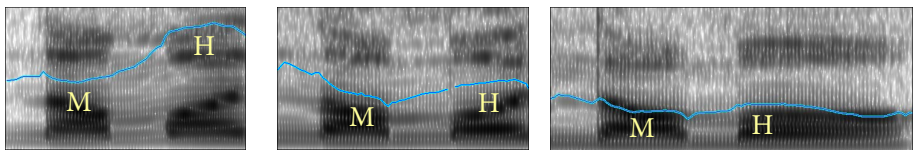


Figure 2. MH tones in SgE word *'normal*, in sentence-initial, -medial and -final position (from Ng 2009)

6. The tones on each syllable in example (6) are represented in pitch level numbers as well as in the phonological tradition where L = Low tone, M = Mid tone, and H = High tone.

This word-level tonal pattern is also shown to be independent of sentence position (Ng 2009), as illustrated in Figure 2.

### 2.3 Phrase / Utterance

Finally, let us consider SgE prosody at phrase level, where, echoing the observation in Lim (2004a: 42–8), a characteristic pattern in the intonation contour may be analysed as comprising sequences of sustained level steps or level tones which step up or down to each other, rather than glide more gradually from one pitch level to another. An illustration of such a pattern is provided in Figure 3, which constitutes the intonation on the utterance *I think happier*, where it is evident that the pitch steps up abruptly to a high level pitch for *think*, and then steps down again for *happier*. Similarly in Figure 4, the utterance *You told me* moves in a series

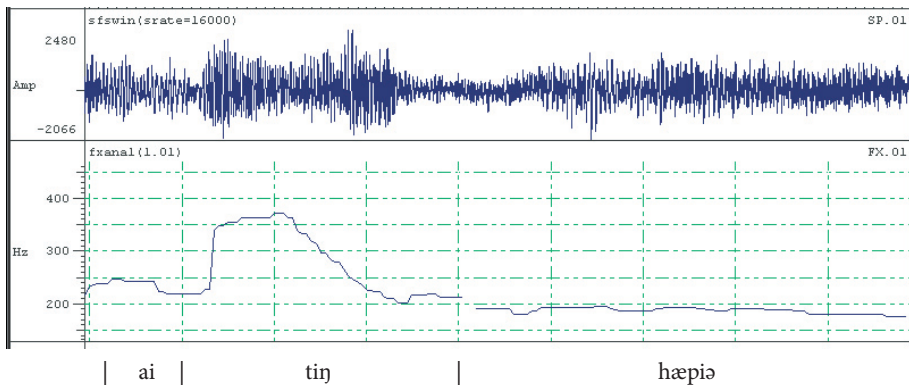


Figure 3. Sustained level step pattern in SgE utterance *I think happier*

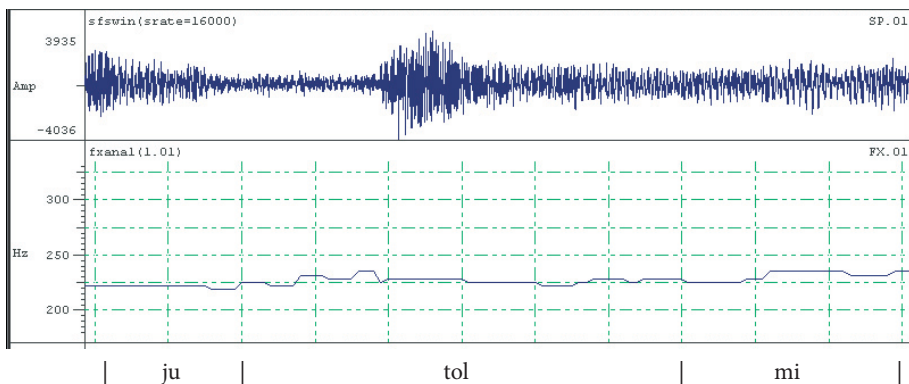


Figure 4. Sustained level step pattern in SgE utterance *You told me*

of sustained level tones, each of which is at a slightly higher pitch than the previous one.<sup>7</sup>

### 3. But is it tone?

Having now viewed the evidence for a tone-like presence in SgE at the levels of particles, words and utterances, a number of issues need to be addressed. For the more sceptical amongst us, the first question is what the likelihood is that this is indeed tone that is observed in SgE. A number of reasons come together to confirm that this is in fact a more than credible prospect.

First, suprasegmental features, including tone, are documented as being susceptible to being acquired in contact situations (Curnow 2001). Tone is often acquired in a non-tonal language by borrowing or imitation due to the presence of tone in the broader linguistic environment (Gussenhoven 2004: 42–3), such as in Middle Korean due to the prestigious status of Chinese in society then (Ramsay 2001) — here it should be noted how this is related to dominance in the external ecology. As a result of this, tone has been noted to be an areal feature, occurring in genetically unrelated languages spoken by geographically contiguous speech communities, as in Africa and South East Asia (Nettle 1998; Svantesson 2001).

The next point to recognize is that the linguistic feature of tone is certainly present in the ecology of Singapore. If we consider just the main players in the ecology — by this I mean the languages which are dominant — we have Bazaar Malay, Hokkien, Mandarin, and Cantonese (Lim 2007a, in prep; Ansaldo 2009a, b, c), where, with the latter three being Sinitic varieties, tone languages are clearly in the majority. Tone is thus a salient typological aspect of the feature pool. Other work has shown that dominant traits do influence the output (Thomason and Kaufman 1988), as seen, for example, in the case of Sri Lanka Malay (SLM) where, while pidgin-derived Malay is SVO, Sinhala and Tamil are both SOV, and the resulting Sri Lanka Malay is SOV; similarly, agglutinative morphology emerges in SLM because it is salient in two of the three adstrates, Sinhala and Tamil (Ansaldo 2008, 2009b). Additionally, if we consider external ecology, in Singapore it is the Chinese who form the largest proportion of 78% of the population, and have been such a majority since the early 20th century (Lim 2007a, in prep). On both counts then, namely, of the proportion of tone languages, and the proportion of speakers of these languages, tone dominates in the ecology. Moreover, tone is high

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7. SgE has been described as displaying a frequent use of (BrE) level tones (Goh 1998), but in such a description the pattern seems to be construed in analytical terminology for native Englishes, as mentioned in Section 1.

in markedness, in terms of the feature having a heavy functional load, or, put in terms of Matras' (2000) model of categorial fusion, it is pragmatically dominant, which also makes it a more likely target for being acquired (Matras 2000: 577). In all, it is most possible for tone to be acquired in SgE, given the feature's dominant presence in the ecology, both internal and external.

Finally, observations similar to the SgE case study have been made for other contact varieties whose substrates involve tone languages, in particular languages arising from contact situations involving European accent languages and African tone languages. One such example which has been argued strongly for in this regard is that of Saramaccan, an Atlantic maroon creole spoken mostly in Surinam, generally classified as an English-based creole, though its lexicon shows substantial Portuguese influence, with Gbe and Kikongo as substrates. There is evidence for a split lexicon in Saramaccan where the majority of its words are marked for pitch accent, with an important minority marked for true tone (Good 2004a, b, 2006). Similarly, Portuguese-lexifier Papiamentu shows use of both contrastive stress and contrastive tonal features which operate independently from stress (Kouwenberg 2004; Rivera-Castillo and Pickering 2004; Remijsen and van Heuven 2005), and the Austronesian language Ma'ya is also documented as a hybrid system involving both contrastive stress and tone, a result of contact with tonal Papuan languages (Remijsen 2001: 43). Lest one may argue that "creoles" are categorically different from "varieties of English" or of any other "language", there is also the example of Roermond Dutch, which has a Germanic-style stress system, but also a lexical tonal contrast, in that words may have no tones or a single H tone (Yip 2002: 257), as well as Nigerian English, whose prosody is also suggested to be a mixed system that stands "between" an intonation / stress language and a tone language (Gut 2005): its pitch inventory is reduced compared to BrE, and the domain of pitch appears to be the word, with high pitch triggered by stress, thus resembling a pitch accent language. In short, what is being suggested for SgE is nothing inconceivable, but a phenomenon that has been documented in other contact languages with substrate typology that is comparable in terms of involving tone languages.

#### 4. Asian Englishes on the agenda

The more significant question, I believe, that follows from all the above is this: What does this herald for the linguistics of English and the setting of the agenda for current and future work?<sup>8</sup> In what follows I consider two sets of issues arising

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8. This question is posed in the spirit of the 1st conference for the International Society for the Linguistics of English (ISLE1), with its theme "Setting the Agenda"; the workshop "The

from our observations of tone in SgE, which provide a response to the three concerns raised in Section 1, with the first being more theoretical in considering the implications for descriptive models of English intonation and for categorizations of intonation/stress and tone languages, and the second focusing on implications for the study of Asian Englishes.

#### 4.1 English intonation models and tone language classification

First, in the consideration of New Englishes — here, Asian (but also e.g. African) Englishes — I believe that we can attempt to stop using BrE- or “native-English”-based models. Certainly there are models such as ToBI and INTSINT which have been used for diverse languages; however when it comes to New Englishes, even if scholars have noted the problems in applying, e.g. the British model of intonation to the transcription of New Englishes (e.g. for SgE: Deterding 1994; Low and Brown 2005), and that such models are not appropriate for describing other Englishes, there is still a tendency to describe the system with regard to a native English standard.

Further, and perhaps more interestingly, the traditional view of English as a stress/intonation language needs revising. As is increasingly recognized, distinguishing between so-called stress languages, accent(ual) languages and tone languages is in fact not clear-cut. While traditionalists may still cling to the classic divide, many cutting-edge scholars have become more amenable to regarding these categories as being more loosely or broadly defined. For instance, most now agree that the category of accent languages does not group languages of a typologically coherent class (Hyman 2001a; Gussenhoven 2004), and take the position that the so-called accentual languages are just a subclass of tone languages (Yip 2002: 4). More significant for the purpose of this paper, tone languages are most recently defined much more broadly than before: following Hyman (2001b: 1368), “a language with tone is one in which an indication of pitch enters into the lexical realisation of at least some morphemes”, regardless of the density of lexically contrastive tones on words; lexical tonal marking, after all, has been noted to be of gradient nature (e.g. van der Hulst and Smith 1988). This opens up possibilities for more fluid considerations of tone languages, and of “combinations” of characteristics of what traditionally are considered stress languages and tone languages. It has, after all, been noted that tone and stress are “two separate phonological dimensions — tone being basically a property of segments, and stress not — which may well occur combined in the same language in quite a variety of ways” (Arends,

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Typology of Asian Englishes” in which this paper was presented was organized (by this author) for the conference.

Muysken and Smith 1995: 329); and that drawing a dividing line between languages with contrastive tone on (almost) all syllables and languages with tone contrasts in more restricted locations in the word is difficult (Gussenhoven 2004: 47).

In the light of the possibilities outlined in Section 3 and released from the constraints of more traditional categorization noted above, how then may we view the prosodic system of SgE?

For the set of particles, we first return to the question first explicitly raised by Platt (1987: 394) two decades ago: Do the particles have independent (lexical) tone? Based on the linguistic and sociohistorical evidence presented in this paper and in Lim (2007a, in prep), it is quite clear that the later set of SgE particles have been acquired into the SgE system in their entirety, including the tone they have originally in Cantonese; further, they must be used with that form, and not with any other pitch pattern, for the meaning required, regardless of the intonation pattern of the utterance in which they are found. This, I argue, is reason enough for accepting that they indeed comprise a subset of items which have tone (though not lexically contrastive tone — note, as outlined in the preceding paragraph, that this is not necessary for considering this to be tone).<sup>9</sup> These tonal items are then situated within what is possibly a different prosodic system — one that is more of a stress/intonation language, in which pitch functions in a system of intonation relatively comparable to the forms and functions identified in other “standard” varieties of English such as BrE (Zhu and Lim 2002; Zhu 2003; Lim 2004a: 39–42). Such a phenomenon is noted by Gussenhoven (2004: 46) as one of three typologically special cases where tone languages are concerned, namely when there is lexically specified tone in intonation-only languages. An example of this situation is when there are tonal specifications in the “segmental” lexicon for particles which invariably appear with a particular intonation contour, such as Dutch sentence-final [he], which expresses an appeal for agreement, which always appears with H after the pitch accent H\*L on a preceding word (Kirsner and van Heuven 1996); similarly Bengali has focus-governing particles which come with their own pitch accent (Lahiri and Fitzpatrick-Cole 1999), i.e. they must be lexically specified for tones, which crucially constitute morphemes in their own right and do not form part of the representation of the segmentally represented morphemes, unlike lexical tone (Gussenhoven 2004: 46). These both constitute situations not unlike our case in point.

The observation of tone at the SgE word level matches the second of the typologically special cases identified by Gussenhoven (2004: 45–6) in which languages

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9. Some scholars may still be cautious about whether pitch is being used linguistically here to warrant calling the phenomenon *tone* (e.g. Bao Zhiming p.c. Dec 2006), but I hold that the evidence and arguments outlined in sections 3 and 4.1 justify referring to it as *tone*.

have non-distinctive word-based tone; an example of this is Noon, a language of Senegal, which predictably has an H-tone on the penultimate syllable of every word (Soukka 2000). Again, the SgE word which specifies an H-tone on the final syllable of each word parallels this pattern, and thus can be considered a tone language in this regard, even if typologically peculiar.

## 4.2 The typology of Asian Englishes

The preceding discussion also leads us to a number of thoughts about the study of Asian Englishes, which can take us in at least three different, though closely related, directions. In what follows, I consider 1) typological comparability across different Asian Englishes, 2) the dynamic nature of ecologies, and 3) the differences that can arise between Asian Englishes as a result of the changing of ecologies, and therefore typologies, and therefore feature selection. Each of these can — and should — be discussed at far greater length, but within the constraints of this paper can only be very briefly addressed here.

### 4.2.1 *Typological comparability*

If we accept the ecological approach, then we can recognize that, in theory, if emerging English varieties have ecologies which are similar — for example, if the feature pools for the two ecologies include languages with similar typologies — then it is neither unlikely nor surprising if the two emergent Englishes exhibit linguistic features which are similar.<sup>10</sup> One does not have to look far to find a real-life example: the ecology of Hong Kong, in which Hong Kong English (HKE) is emerging, includes Cantonese, English and Mandarin, where Cantonese is clearly dominant in both external and internal ecologies; linguistic features such as Sinitic tone (from both Cantonese and Mandarin) as well as discourse particles (in particular from Cantonese) can thus be expected to be dominant in the feature pool. This may be seen to be quite similar to Singapore's ecology in the recent era where Mandarin and Cantonese can be seen to be more dominant.

Unsurprisingly then, common features in the emergent varieties may be identified. Cantonese particles have been observed in HKE (James 2001), which, as in SgE, are used with their Cantonese tone. Further, already more than two de-

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10. We need of course to exercise caution in too easily assuming similarity between different ecologies: this is underlined in Ansaldo and Lim (2008), who, after noting possible similarities in the ecologies of SgE and HKE, also point out how they differ, both in terms of external ecology — Singapore being English-dominant but Hong Kong being extremely Cantonese-dominant; SgE having attained Phase 4 of endonormative stabilization, and HKE being only in Phase 3 of nativization (Schneider 2007) — and internal ecology.

cares ago, it was suggested that “the English intonation system is reinterpreted on the basis of the Cantonese tone system” (Luke and Richards 1982:60), with more recent work demonstrating that stress and intonation in HKE is more than a simple process of approximation, but rather one of transforming the system into one based on tones, by the assigning of (lexical) tones to syllables for word stress (Luke 2000), to give a basic template of LHL!, and the applying of a computation for compound/linking words, phrases and sentences, which results in what is described as a “choppy” as opposed to a smooth intonation contour for HKE (Luke 2008). The patterns parallel those of SgE’s level stepping tones, described in Section 2.3.

#### 4.2.2 *Dynamism*

The comparability sketched above between SgE and HKE should not, however, be assumed to have always been the case. Ecologies are dynamic — as modelled for Postcolonial Englishes in Schneider (2007), and noted for SgE in Lim (2008a) — and changes in factors in the external ecology can result in changes in the typological mix of the feature pool and consequently the ensuing competition and likelihood for feature selection (see Ansaldo 2009a). While Sinitic varieties are certainly dominant in Singapore’s ecology in recent decades, in an earlier era during colonial rule and in the years prior to and just after independence, the dominant language would have been Bazaar Malay, as lingua franca for interethnic communication (as well as Hokkien for intraethnic communication in the Chinese community) (see Lim 2007a, in prep for details). In this, and other aspects of sociopolitical history, Singapore’s ecology was relatively comparable up until around mid-20th century with Malaysia’s, and certainly not with Hong Kong’s; correspondingly, SgE and Malaysian English were also considered extremely similar, evidenced in descriptions of that period (e.g. Platt and Weber 1980; Platt, Weber and Ho 1983), at least until around the same time, but perhaps no longer.

#### 4.2.3 *Difference*

The preceding two points of typological comparability between varieties and dynamism in ecologies together help account for instances of lack of fit. Even as we recognize that SgE and HKE exhibit similarities in terms of the presence of (Cantonese) particles and tonal prosody, which are explained by their current comparable ecologies in which Cantonese amongst other (Sinitic) varieties is dominant, we discover that upon closer examination the patterns start to diverge. In HKE, H tones are located on stressed syllables, and L tones on unstressed ones (Luke 2000, 2008; Chen and Au 2004; Wee 2008a), illustrated in example (7); this contrasts with the pattern for word-level tone in SgE, described in example (6), where H tones are located on the final syllable.

- |   |                    |
|---|--------------------|
| (7) <i>in</i> <sup>`</sup> <i>tend</i>                      | 11–55 / LH         |
| <sup>`</sup> <i>origin</i> , <sup>`</sup> <i>photograph</i> | 55–11–11 / HLL     |
| <sup>o</sup> <i>riginal</i>                                 | 11–55–11–11 / LHLL |
| (8) <i>I saw the manager this morning</i>                   | LHHHHHHHL!         |

Similarly, at phrase level, while HKE would have a pattern involving a sequence of tones as in (8), based on the basic LHL! template and subsequent computation (Luke 2008),<sup>11</sup> SgE tends to prefer prominence on the phrase-final syllable such that the pitch is perceived as relatively high: no significant decrease in fundamental frequency is measured compared to the initial syllable of the phrase-final word (Low 2000); such a maintenance of pitch or movement to high(er) tone phrase-finally is also observable in Figure 4.<sup>12</sup>

How can we understand these diverging patterns in SgE and HKE? I suggest that the word- and phrase-final prominence noted in SgE is due to the influence from Bazaar or Baba Malay in an earlier era when, as mentioned in the preceding section, it was dominant in the ecology (also see Lim 2008a). While no comprehensive study of the prosody of (Bazaar) Malay in Singapore is available,<sup>13</sup> there has been much research on other Malay/Indonesian varieties (see e.g. various chapters in Gensler and Gil to appear).<sup>14</sup> While findings for word stress are diverse, a number of studies do point to prominence on the penultimate and/or final syllable; and at phrase level there is general consensus that prominence is located phrase-finally (with acceptability increasing closer to the right edge of phrase-final word) (e.g. Goedemans and van Zanten to appear); a similar pattern is also noted in Singapore's Baba Malay (Wee 2000). While it may indeed seem curious that this earlier Malay influence appears to be maintained in spite of more recent Sinitic influence, in the ecology paradigm, the Founder principle suggests that the founder population in an ecology exerts a strong influence in features which persist in the emergent variety. A possible hypothesis is thus that it is the Baba/Bazaar Malay-speaking Peranakans, as the early English speakers in Singapore, whose influence is seen in SgE in such instances (see Ansaldo, Lim and Mufwene 2007 and Lim

11. Different boundary tones of H% or L% would then apply depending on the context (Luke 2008).

12. Experiments investigating emphatic and contrastive stress in SgE also demonstrate that speakers do not place prominence on the contrastive element as in "standard" Englishes but systematically locate pitch prominence utterance-finally (Lim and Tan 1999; Lim 2004b).

13. Though Ng (2009) is now doing instrumental work on Singapore Malay and Bazaar Malay word prosodic patterns.

14. What is represented in this paragraph is necessarily an extremely summarized account of Malay/Indonesian prosodic patterns documented in the literature.

2009b for details on the Peranakan community and their languages (Baba Malay and Peranakan English);<sup>15</sup> similar word- / phrase-final prominence is in fact noted in Peranakan English (Lim 2009b).<sup>16</sup>

## 5. Closing remarks

In conclusion, what has a revisiting of English prosody — in the light of some Asian Englishes — revealed? We can certainly recognize that there is tone in some Asian Englishes, if the typological pool of the languages in contact allows for it. Tone is clearly observed in SgE particles and in the SgE word, and SgE intonation shows contours constituting sustained level tone movements; similar observations apply to HKE.

While tone as a structural feature must surely derive from the Sinitic languages in the ecology of SgE, the clearest example being the SgE particles, differences in actual tonal patterns in SgE vs. HKE at both word and phrase level suggest that the story is more complex and warrants further, deeper investigation in future work: for instance, that in SgE it is not just the selection of Sinitic tone (Lim 2008c) from the feature pool, but an interaction between that and features of pitch prominence patterns in other languages dominant in the ecology, such as Baba / Bazaar Malay.

In any case, a revised view of English prosody, even in a weak version, must still recognize that there can be presence of tone in some New Englishes (here Asian, but also African), even if English is by traditional definition a stress language. In a strong version, we can venture further in rethinking this traditional classification of English prosody and accept that some Asian Englishes can indeed be tone languages.

In short, once we recognize the significance of ecology, then it is not difficult to recognize that anything is possible for the typology of the emergent contact variety of English — not a cavalier or anarchic free-for-all, but an infinite potential within the possibilities that the typologies of the substrates afford — including tone.

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15. I thank Salikoko Mufwene for highlighting the likelihood of the Peranakans as the founder population for SgE.

16. This line of investigation outlined in this section is certainly intriguing and far more complex than can be presented given the scope of this present paper, and will be taken up in future work.

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