John Benjamins Publishing Company

Attitudes toward accents of Mandarin in Singapore

Rachael Hui-Hui Chong and Ying-Ying Tan

The University of Birmingham, UK / Nanyang Technological University, Singapore

Like many other countries, Singapore has seen some public tension fermenting over what is sometimes perceived as the government's generous open-door immigration policy. Some Singaporeans appear to have taken to regarding themselves as rightful "natives" by distinguishing between local and foreign accents (see Jacobs 2012; Oon 2012). With a sizeable number of foreigners hailing from China, do Singaporeans have negative attitudes toward non-local Chinese accents because of these 'anti-foreigner' sentiments? This paper examines the language attitudes of Chinese Singaporeans towards speakers of Mandarin from three locales: Beijing, Taiwan and Singapore. It describes an attitudinal test using the verbal guise technique, comparing the attitudes of 100 Singaporean Chinese youths toward the Beijing, Taiwanese and Singaporean accents of Mandarin along the dimensions of prestige and solidarity. This study shows that there are distinct differences in the ways in which the three accents are perceived by Singaporeans. However, contrary to expectations, the foreign accents are not discriminated against, but are in fact ranked more favourably as compared to the local accent. Ultimately, functionality and economic goals of advancement seem to override other socio-cultural aims of the nation as Singaporeans focus on the prestige that the foreign Chinese accents can bring them.

Keywords: language attitudes, Mandarin, Singapore, verbal-guise, accents

关键词: 语言态度, 普通话, 新加坡, 口音

1. Introduction

Accents are often the main sources of prejudice and discrimination. In May 2010 for example, the state of Arizona legislated that teachers with ethnic accents can no longer teach English. Many Singaporeans have taken to distinguish themselves as

the rightful "natives" of Singapore by discriminating between local and non-local accents, and more importantly, using accents to discriminate against foreigners (see Jacobs 2012; Oon 2012). And this is particularly acute with the increasingly large number of immigrants from China entering the country. The *New York Times* recently reported that this mass immigration within a short period of time, coupled with a few very public incidents involving these migrants, have had "normally well-mannered local Singaporeans" spewing "vitriol" and "venom" (Jacobs, 2012) against them. This has led some, including Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong in his recent *National Day Rally Speech*, to express concerns that Singaporeans are becoming anti-foreigner and xenophobic, thereby damaging Singapore's international reputation (Lee, 2012). Will Singaporeans have negative attitudes toward non-local Chinese accents because of these 'anti-foreigner' sentiments? If so, is accent therefore a contributing factor to xenophobia? The aim of this paper therefore is to examine the language attitudes of Chinese Singaporeans towards speakers of Mandarin from three locales — Beijing, Taiwan and Singapore.

Language attitude studies are typically motivated by the tendency to make inferences and form perceptions about speakers — their capabilities, beliefs and attributes — based on the language and accent they adopt (Cargile *et al.*, 1994). These studies recognise that accent is a 'powerful social force' (Cargile and Giles, 1997: 195) that can not only affect interactions between persons, but also construct stereotypes of the speakers. Ladegaard (1998) for instance, found that Received Pronunciation (RP) was deemed the prestige variety among Danish students due to the practice of prescriptivism that reinforces the British version of English as "standard", while the pervasion of American media rendered General American English (GAE) as likeable and having more positive, affective attributes among Southeast Asian students (Bayard *et al.*, 2002). This shows that different varieties of the same language are charged with different sociological associations, and these play an important role in shaping how they are perceived. People are also able to distinguish between accents because each represents a different, definitive set of values to them.

There is a large number of scholarly work on language attitudes, and this is particularly so toward English and its varieties across the world. The classic work of Lambert *et al.* (1960), for example, evaluated and compared the language attitudes toward French and English in Quebec. Other similar work (e.g. Giles, 1970, 1971; Hiraga, 2005) followed, studying the language attitudes toward different regional accents in the UK. Within the Singapore context, some research has been carried out comparing the attitudes toward Singapore English and Estuary English (Chia and Brown, 2002); Singapore English and Australian English (Kirkpatrick and Saunders, 2005); Singapore English and American English (Tan and Castelli, 2013); and between formal Singapore English and colloquial Singapore English (Cavallaro and Ng, 2009).

In contrast, there are fewer studies on language attitudes of Mandarin, and thus far, none within the Singapore context. Baran's (2007) study comparing Mandarin in China and Taiwan shows that attitudes are in part informed by political reasons. The Mandarin of Mainland China is seen as a standard variety imposed to unify Taiwan and the Mainland as one Chinese nation. Those who reject this view thus have negative attitudes toward Mandarin as it is seen as detrimental to the formation of a Taiwanese identity. In this case, language attitudes based on political convictions motivate speakers to react in different ways toward the Mandarin of China and Taiwanese Mandarin. In another study, Sproat *et al.* (2004) examine the attitudes toward Mandarin varieties and regional accents in China. These different Chinese accents reveal the origin and social background of the speaker, and as affirmed by Leong (2000), are strong markers of difference between Chinese nationalities. These studies on language attitudes imply the presence of an entrenched set of sociolinguistic practices that govern the use of language and consequentially, beliefs about the language. These different attitudes and emotional associations held towards a language or accent motivate or hinder speakers to use it (Cargile *et al.*, 1994). These attitudes accentuate the distinctiveness of the language by representing it differently in people's consciousness. In other words, it is not so much these linguistic differences between the Mandarin accents that distinguish them, but the emotions and beliefs that they evoke that set them apart from each other. Given the increasingly globalized world where human mobility becomes the norm and the ensuing language-related conflicts, it is all the more important for us to study perception of accents and the reasons underlying language attitudes.

2.   Mandarin in Singapore

As mentioned earlier, studies on attitudes toward Mandarin are far and few, and none within the Singapore context, despite the fact that the language holds an important position within the Singaporean society. In recent years, the influx of Chinese migrants and workers from Mainland China and Taiwan has also come to bear on the form of Mandarin spoken in Singapore, and more importantly, the perceptions and attitudes toward different Mandarin varieties.

Mandarin plays an important role in the multi-racial and multilingual society of Singapore. Not only is it one of the four official languages of Singapore, it has also been made to be the common language among the disparate Chinese "dialect" groups, easing communication and fostering social cohesion across all Chinese Singaporeans who are of Cantonese, Hokkien, Teochew, Hakka backgrounds, amongst others. The importance of Mandarin can be seen in the State policy act driving the *Speak Mandarin Campaign*, which began in 1979 and continues today.

This campaign's original aim was to discourage the use of other Chinese languages other than Mandarin (see Bokhorst-Heng, 1999 on a detailed discussion of this campaign; Wee, 2003 on the campaign as an example of linguistic instrumentalism; and Tan and Goh, 2011 on the impact of the campaign). Mandarin, as promoted in the campaign rhetoric, can be regarded as a "cultural repository" (Stroud and Wee, 2007:256) of values and traditions that roots Singaporean Chinese in their heritage. Mandarin is seen as a tool, in light of the increasing shift to English, to preserve the Asian identity of Singaporeans (Bokhorst-Heng, 1999). More recently, efforts of the campaign have also begun to focus on nurturing a bicultural elite group who is to be well-acquainted with both Eastern and Western cultures (Tan, 2006). It is believed that possessing a good command of Mandarin will give Singaporeans an edge in doing business with rising economic superpower China.

All these motivations have also translated into a bilingual education policy where all Singaporean Chinese students are required to learn Mandarin, in addition to English. The rationale offered by the Singapore Government for this is that learning one's 'Mother Tongue' (the official language of one's assigned ethnic group) would give children "an anchor in their ethnic and cultural traditions" (Gopinathan, 1997:67), and this anchor is believed to be able to act as a cultural ballast, preserving one's Asian heritage, beliefs and traditions. All Chinese Singaporean children therefore, for the first ten years of their formal education, have to learn both English and Mandarin. Most Chinese Singaporeans born after 1965 are bilinguals of English and their "designated" Mother Tongue, ie. Mandarin. It is also because of this 50-year-old bilingual education programme that the Mandarin in Singapore has developed a distinctive Singaporean accent, even though Beijing Mandarin (BM) and Taiwanese Mandarin (TM) are prevalent in Singapore (Torgerson, 2005). BM is represented in Singapore, primarily in education, and TM, in the media. BM is recognised by the Singapore's Ministry of Education as the "standard" in school curriculum (Chua, 2003). The orthography of Chinese in Singapore also adopts the system of simplified characters (Zhu, 2008) used in Mainland China. This means that the Mandarin used and taught in schools is based on that of Mainland China, and one can infer that speakers of this variety or accent, in comparison with speakers of some local Chinese accent, may be seen as well-educated, powerful or prestigious. TM, on the other hand, is the staple diet of the Singaporean Chinese media. The Chinese pop culture in Singapore is heavily reliant on the pop culture in Taiwan. Taiwanese variety shows and dramas are constant features in the local free-to-air Chinese TV channels. In addition, foreign shows (e.g. Korean, Japanese and Hong Kong) which require Mandarin dubbing are acquired from Taiwan, which means that they would have been dubbed over in TM. TM is a variety that is not only familiar to Singaporeans, but can be said to be one that is heard most frequently.

It is against this sociolinguistic backdrop that we consider the perceptions of Mandarin in Singapore, in comparison particularly between the local accent and the other two more "standard" accents from Beijing and Taiwan. What are the attitudes of Singaporeans toward these accents of Mandarin? Since BM is recognised as the "standard" used in official domains like government, administration and school, would its speakers be deemed more educated? And, as an instrument to engage China's global economy, and economic capital that enables social mobility, would Singaporeans regard BM as a high-prestige variety that can allow them to engage the massive Chinese market? Or would BM, with the increasing tension between Singaporeans and Chinese migrants from Mainland China, be met with disdain? And with regard to TM, with TM used more in the media and popular culture, would it be viewed as an informal accent, and its speakers thus perceived to be friendly, humorous and desirable? And how would Singaporean Mandarin (SM) factor in? Has it developed enough, both linguistically and sociolinguistically, to conjure nationalistic pride and community membership as Singaporeans vis-à-vis the other Chinese communities, or would it simply be viewed as an inferior cousin to the more established BM and TM? These are the questions that this paper seeks to unveil. We do so through an attitudinal test comparing the attitudes of 100 Singaporean Chinese youths toward BM, TM and SM.

3.   The study

The method of data elicitation in this study is an attitudes test designed to perform a three-way comparison between BM, TM and SM. The verbal guise technique is used to elicit attitudes towards the three Mandarin varieties in question, which necessitates the use of three different speakers for the three different accents. The verbal guise technique is derived from the more classical matched guise technique. In Lambert *et al.*'s (1960) classic work, the matched guise technique was used to indirectly evaluate the attitudes towards French and English in Quebec. In this study, speakers are found to be consistently rated highest attributes relating to status and attractiveness when an accent is considered prestigious. Conversely, speakers are rated more highly in solidarity traits when the accent is considered of low prestige — and this is when the speaker and what is said remain unchanged. Even though the verbal guise technique has been said to dilute the strength of the more commonly-used matched guise test which uses only the voice of one speaker to investigate attitudes toward different accents (Cavallaro and Ng, 2009), the difficulty of implementing the matched guise technique lies in finding the one speaker who can speak or mimic all the different accents being investigated. And it is precisely

because of this difficulty that we use the verbal guise technique in this paper. The verbal guise technique has in fact been well-used, especially in the Singapore context. Various researchers (e.g. Chia and Brown, 2002; Deterding, 2005; Deterding and Kirkpatrick, 2006; Kirkpatrick *et al.*, 2008; Tan and Castelli, 2013) use the verbal guise technique to study language attitudes towards accents of English with much success, and it is likely that this technique will also be equally effective in evaluating accents of Mandarin.

Like the matched guise test, speakers are rated along scales with adjective pairs like "stigmatised versus prestigious" (Jung, 2005), and personality traits like 'confident', 'good-looking' and 'gentle' (Yook, 2005). Others like Scales *et al.* (2006), sought listeners' opinions on attributes like 'sounds educated', 'is easy to understand' and 'has bad pronunciation'. For this study, we will look at attitudes in terms of status and solidarity dimensions (Cavallaro and Ng, 2009; Tan and Castelli, 2013). Traits associated with the status dimension are, for example, intelligence and education. The solidarity dimension, on the other hand, focuses on features such as likeability and friendliness.

3.1   The stimuli

The stimuli consist of audio recordings of 2 native speakers of each Mandarin variety in question, i.e. BM, TM and SM. Only females were recorded so that gender will not be a factor influencing language attitudes. All 6 stimuli speakers were residing in Singapore during the time when the study was carried out. All 6 speakers were aged between 20–28, and the BM and TM speakers were graduate students reading their degrees in Singapore, from Beijing and Taiwan respectively. These speakers have not stayed in Singapore for more than 2 years. The SM speakers were undergraduate students who have received bilingual English-Chinese education in Singapore. The recordings with the speakers were conducted in a soundproof phonetics laboratory at the university. The speakers were asked to read out two pieces of Chinese text extracted from Chinese materials such as newspapers and books (see Appendix 1). They were allowed to rehearse the text until they were able to produce a smooth reading of it, which was recorded for use. Extracts of their recording, each one of no more than 20 seconds in length, were then used as stimuli for the questionnaire. The final sound samples were identical in content, though they varied slightly in length and rate. This is to ensure that no other contextual factors which may have been caused by the content would influence the perception of the participants.

3.2 The questionnaire

The questionnaire accompanying the verbal guise test was administered via an online questionnaire website *surveygizmo*, and potential respondents were issued a link (http://www.surveygizmo.com/s3/641357/Survey-on-Mandarin-speakers) to access it. The questionnaire was prefaced by brief instructions about the task, and a statement that informed and sought consent for the researcher to use their responses for the study. As the target informants were Chinese Singaporeans who have received English-Chinese bilingual education in Singapore, within the age range of 17 to 25, and were preferably undergraduates at the local universities at the time of data collection, the respondents were also asked to fill in a language profile survey to verify their nationality, age, current level of study and language usage. This was to ensure that the respondents fit the target profile. Gender, unfortunately, was not considered to be a factor during the data collection process, and this limitation can be addressed in future research.

A total of 12 speech samples were played, one after the other, with each Mandarin accent represented 4 times, twice of each of the 6 speakers recorded. No two recordings of the same text were played consecutively, to minimise comparisons made between the accents. To each speech sample, there were 10 corresponding statements, e.g. "This speaker is friendly" or "This speaker is educated", along a Likert scale of 1–5 — 1 being least agreeable, and 5 being most agreeable (a sample of the survey is presented in Appendix 2). This is meant to elicit attitudes that participants had towards the speakers, and therefore the accents themselves. In particular, these responses revealed the level of prestige and/or solidarity attributed to BM, TM and SM. To elicit responses for the status dimension, participants were asked questions about the stimulus speaker's:

i.   education: whether the speaker sounded educated;
ii. self-confidence: whether the speaker sounded confident;
iii. wealth: whether the speaker sounded wealthy;
iv. leadership: whether the speaker sounded like a leader.

To elicit responses for the solidarity dimension, participants were asked questions about the stimulus speaker's:

v.   friendliness: whether the speaker sounded friendly;
vi.   trustworthiness: whether the speaker sounded trustworthy;
vii. sincerity: whether the speaker sounded sincere;
viii. humour: whether the speaker sounded humorous.

These are several of the key traits distilled from Hiraga's (2005) study, where she had a range of adjectives associated with "solidarity" evaluated by a sizeable group

of native English speakers. These informants both selected and contributed adjectives they would use to describe their native tongue. These were then carefully divided into two groups, status and solidarity, through a rigorous Factor Analysis process. We have used the four most common traits reflected, which other studies have also successfully employed (see Bayard *et al.* 2001, Cavallaro and Ng 2009, and Tan and Castelli 2013).

The final two statements do not belong to the status and solidarity dimensions. The statement, "I would like to speak Chinese like the speaker", is meant to elicit responses toward the respondents' desire toward adopting a particular accent. This will determine the likeability of the accent heard. The final statement, "I have heard speakers with this accent before", is posed for the researchers to ascertain if participants recognise and have heard the type of Mandarin being spoken before. This final statement does not pertain to the speaker, but the accent itself, and therefore will not be included in the analysis below.

3.3 The participants

The participants were 100 Chinese Singaporeans who have received English-Chinese bilingual education in Singapore, and are within the age range of 17 to 25. All 100 participants were undergraduates at the local universities. Controlling the age group and education level of the participants was to remove any generational or educational influences on the perceptions of Mandarin. The participants were recruited by word-of-mouth and were recommended by the network of friends and acquaintances of the first author. Participants were not remunerated and partook in the questionnaire out of goodwill.

3.4 Statistical tools

ANOVA was used to compare the mean ratings of BM, TM and SM across the 9 traits. Thereafter, a Tukey post-hoc was applied to ascertain if differences were significant, and if so between which variety pairs. The results will be described in the next section, where the ratings for each variety are examined by individual traits in the following order: education, self-confidence, wealthiness, leadership (traits on the "prestige" dimension), followed by traits on the "solidarity" dimension, namely, friendliness, trustworthiness, sincerity and humour. This will be followed by an analysis of the final trait, likeability, which measures how favourable or desirable each accent is.

4. Results

The overall results of the verbal guise test are captured in Figure 1, which shows the mean ratings of the three Mandarin accents across all traits.

In general, it can be observed that BM has the highest mean rating across all prestige traits (including 'educated', 'self-confident', 'wealthy' and leadership'), and across most solidarity traits ('trustworthy' and 'sincere'), except for 'friendly' and 'humorous'. Conversely, SM has the lowest mean rating on all prestige traits, but is rated higher on solidarity traits like 'friendly' and 'humorous'. TM seems to straddle between both BM and SM, but notably parallels the trend of BM albeit at a lower notch. The scale of 'likeable' measures how much listeners would like to speak like the speaker. Evidently, BM is the most likeable, while SM is the least likeable. Reasons for these trends will be explored in the subsections that follow. A summary of the means of each trait is presented in Table 1.
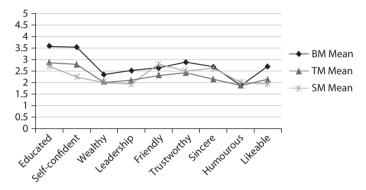

Figure 1. Mean ratings of the three accents by trait

Table 1. Group statistics

	BM Mean	Std Deviation	T'M Mean	Std Deviation	SM Mean	Std Deviation
Educated	3.58	0.76	2.89	0.79	2.69	0.75
Self-confident	3.55	0.67	2.79	0.9	2.21	0.67
Wealthy	2.36	0.86	2.04	0.82	2.03	0.84
Leadership	2.52	0.86	209	0.83	1.94	0.73
Friendly	2.62	0.59	2.32	0.79	2.79	0.7
Trustworthy	2.87	0.7	2.4	0.79	2.52	0.73
Sincere	2.68	0.65	2.14	0.77	2.6	0.82
Humourous	1.9	0.68	1.89	0.8	2.04	0.74
Likeable	2.7	1	2.15	0.98	1.91	0.78

The means of each trait will be compared across the three varieties using ANOVA and post-hoc Tukey. The ratings assigned to each group's speakers are therefore representative of the ratings of the accent itself.

4.1 Prestige trait 1: Education

The education scale measures how well-educated the speaker sounds, and thus connotes social mobility. BM is rated highest on this 'educated' trait, followed by TM and then SM. BM's rating is significantly higher than the other two, where a Tukey post-hoc test shows that there is significant difference between BM and TM ($p < 0.05$, F = 37.28, df = 2, N = 100) and BM and SM ($p < 0.05$, F = 37.28, df = 2, N = 100), while that between TM and SM is not significant ($p = 0.162$). This means that speakers of BM are perceived to be the most educated among the three groups, while speakers of TM and SM are similarly thought to be lacking in sophistication. Compared to other traits, it is one of the stronger and clearer indicators of the differential perceptions between the three accents — on the prestige scale.

This concurs with similar studies where speakers with standard accents were rated more favourably along dimensions of status and competence (Edwards 1977, Edwards and Jacobsen 1987; cited in Cavallaro and Ng 2009: 151), and here education reflects the prestige that comes with speaking with the BM accent. This could be the result of BM being long cultivated as the standard variety in schools, and authenticated by the government through mainstream media, the *Speak Mandarin Campaign*, and the endorsement of English-Chinese bilingual students who excel in the Chinese language. This "bicultural elite" is awarded opportunities to engage China and the Chinese culture, and thereby gain invaluable cross-cultural experiences (Tan, 2006). These opportunities are placed on a premium in Singapore's competitive, meritocratic society, and thus the ability to use "standard" Mandarin is deemed a prized asset that lends sophistication to the speaker.

4.2 Prestige trait 2: Self-confidence

The self-confidence scale measures how confident the speaker sounds, judging by how fluently she speaks and how assertive she sounds. It displays a certain degree of belief in the authority that a language wields. This trait is perceived most strongly in BM, followed by TM and then SM. Differences are also significant between all three varieties at $p < 0.05$ (F = 79.13, df = 2, N = 100). Again, SM is rated lowest, implying that speaking SM does not lend much self-assurance or sense of security to the speaker compared to the two other accents. It is notable that the rating for this trait in the TM group is much less stable than the rest, having a higher standard deviation of 0.90. This means that opinions are more divided towards the

self-confidence of TM speakers, whereas responses unanimously show that BM speakers are confident and SM speakers lacking in confidence.

Self-confidence is considered to mark status and prestige, as it is symptomatic of the speaker's beliefs in his ability and competences (Bénabou and Tirole, 2002). With regard to this, a speaker whose behaviour undermines his capabilities will be seen as less confident and insecure about himself. In this study, BM speakers may appear to display more self-confidence by virtue of their speaking fluently, with accurate pronunciation and the right intonation. This is deemed the emulated standard among most Singaporeans. A lack in fluency, where speakers pause inappropriately or do not use proper intonation, reduces the assertiveness, making the speaker appear doubtful of him or herself. This is perceived in SM speakers, as the results show, making SM speakers appear less confident.

4.3 Prestige trait 3: Wealthiness

The wealthiness scale measures how much listeners think the speaker is well-to-do and upwardly mobile. The differences are apparently less stark compared to the other traits. There is significant difference between BM and TM and between BM and SM ($p < 0.05$, F = 4.92, df = 2, N = 100), but not between TM and SM ($p = 0.999$). This is similar to the results for the 'educated' trait, and show that BM speakers are clearly perceived to be more 'educated' and more 'wealthy' than TM and SM speakers. In other words, BM is clearly rated higher than TM and SM, tending towards a status-inclined evaluation. Nonetheless, all three ratings are generally low (below 2.5), suggesting that the speakers in general are not thought to be wealthy or have a high socio-economic status (SES). Coupled with the relatively higher standard deviation scores which indicate less consistency in ratings, we may conclude that wealthiness does not distinguish the different Mandarin accents very well.

The 'wealthy' trait requires a secondary deduction, in that listeners have to perceive the element of "prestige", before inferring high SES. The inability to make this link could account for the substantially lower scores on this trait, especially for BM. Since BM is known to be the official variety of Mandarin espoused by the government, schools and administration, it attributes its users power, prestige, and thereby high SES. This is admittedly not as strongly reflected in the low BM score, but nonetheless sets it apart from the other two as the variety associated with higher SES. As TM and SM are not considered to be the standard classroom variety, they do not facilitate socio-economic advancement, and are thus associated with lower SES groups whose speakers are deemed less 'wealthy'.

4.4 Prestige trait 4: Leadership

The 'leadership' scale indicates what listeners perceive about speakers' competence and leadership abilities. This may be related to other status traits like 'educated' and 'self-confident' which qualify the speaker as competent and possessing authority. BM is substantially rated as higher in leadership quality than TM and SM, as reflected in the significant differences ($p < 0.05$, F = 13.67, df = 2, N = 100) between BM and TM and between BM and SM, but not between TM and SM ($p = 0.391$). This follows the trend of the 'educated' and 'wealthy' traits which reinforces a split between BM and the other two varieties, the former clearly rated higher on most traits of status and prestige. It should be noted that the lower ratings across the board suggest that 'leadership', like 'wealthy', does not correlate strongly with the type of Mandarin spoken.

Being the variety advocated as the standard across official spheres bolsters BM as the language of power and status. This attributes users of BM competence and authority suited for leadership roles. Perceived as more educated and self-confident, listeners may find them more suitable for high-ranking positions, as compared to TM and SM speakers who pale in these qualities. As the variety charged with entertainment and affective value, TM is less associated with leadership. Likewise, SM is the language in homes, markets and among friends, and does not function well in official contexts where a more formal variety is required.

4.5 Solidarity trait 1: Friendliness

The friendliness scale measures how friendly and approachable respondents think the speaker is, and how effective she is in interpersonal relationships, based on the accent used. This departs from status-based qualities where standard and official use of Mandarin is valued, and focuses on the personal and social attractiveness of the speaker. SM garnered the highest ratings, though its difference with BM is not significant, while TM received the lowest ratings, where its differences with both BM and SM are significant at $p < 0.05$ (F = 11.74, df = 2, N = 100). This means that both the SM and BM speakers are perceived to be friendlier and more sociable than the TM speakers, whose scores also reflect a general rating of 'unfriendliness'.

As SM is used among close friends and relations, one expects that it be rated higher on traits related to solidarity like friendliness. The Singaporean listeners are more likely to associate SM with intimacy, which explains a higher rating for "friendliness" as compared to BM and TM. Surprisingly though, the BM score is comparable to SM which means that BM represents substantial affective value to listeners, despite being associated with notions of prestige and status. This unexpected result perhaps signals an evolving position of BM in Singapore. TM is rated

significantly lower than both BM and SM as it is probably a less-used variety in Singapore, and thus is distanced by Chinese Singaporeans.

4.6 Solidarity trait 2: Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness scale similarly examines the social attractiveness of the speaker, and in particular measures the speaker's personal integrity and reliability. BM is accorded the highest ratings for this trait, followed by SM and then TM, though differences are not significant between the latter two ($p = 0.447$). BM speakers are clearly perceived to be more trustworthy as significant differences are found between BM and TM at $p < 0.05$ (F = 11.16, df = 2, N = 100) and between BM and SM. This means that Singaporean listeners can better relate to the BM, instead of the local SM, a surprising result given that BM may be seen to be more official or formal that may not be used to forge interpersonal relationships in the Singapore society. Additionally, given the recent furor toward Mainland Chinese migrants in Singapore, it is interesting that the BM accent does not trigger any perception of untrustworthiness, suggesting perhaps that accent has little to do with social discrimination.

　　The lack of trustworthiness in the SM speakers may be due to their perceived poor reading skills, as compared to the BM speakers. This causes the speaker to appear unsure of herself and thus unable to gain trust from her listeners. Another reason could be that trustworthiness was interpreted differently and read as a trait of competence instead of sociability. Listeners may have judged reliability based on how firm and confident-sounding the speaker was, and the poorly-rated SM on 'self-confidence' could have compromised its rating on reliability.

4.7 Solidarity trait 3: Sincerity

The sincerity scale is also one of the traits of interpersonal relationship that measures how genuine and endearing the speaker is to the listener. BM speakers are regarded as the most sincere, but not very much more than SM speakers ($p > 0.05$), whose score closely follows. Both BM and SM speakers are rated significantly more 'sincere' than TM speakers at $p < 0.05$ (F = 14.90, df = 2, N = 100) and between SM and TM.

　　SM speakers should supposedly be perceived as more sincere as it is their natural way of speaking, unlike that of BM, a more formal and official accent that may sound more "put on" to be regarded as genuine. The same applies to TM, which as seen from the earlier results, apparently does not endear itself to Singaporean listeners. However, the results considers BM to sound almost as sincere as SM, showing that BM is not coldly regarded as would a foreign accent be, but shares some

level of solidarity with the local variety. This may be explained by the increasing presence of Mainland Chinese in our midst that has bred more familiarity toward the accent. This is a result worth noting, as it once again suggests that socio-political conflict in the society between the Mainland Chinese and Singaporeans have not deepened to the point that one uses accent to discriminate.

4.8 Solidarity trait 4: Humour

The humour scale measures the social attractiveness of the speaker, and her ability to socialise, entertain and emotionally engage others. This trait can be said to be most easily associated with colloquial contexts, e.g. among friends, family and other informal situations. Interestingly, although SM has the highest ratings in humour, no significant differences are found between all three varieties ($p > 0.05$). This suggests that humour is not characteristic of any particular accent.

4.9 Likeability

The trait 'likeability' determines how much the listener would like to speak like the speaker, depending on what the accent is valued for. Results show that Singaporeans want to speak like the BM speakers most, significantly above the TM and SM speakers at $p < 0.05$ (F = 19.14, df = 2, N = 100). Listeners prefer TM to SM speakers, but only by a slight margin ($p > 0.05$). BM is rated high on prestige, and also the most likeable in terms of listeners wanting to speak like it. This shows that Singaporeans would like to speak like the "prestige" variety BM most, rather than TM and SM which exhibit friendliness and humour. In other words, the 'likeability' of the variety is dependent on its 'prestige'.

This 'likeability' can therefore be said to be consolidated attitude that listeners have towards the respective Mandarin accents. To some extent, it is conditional on the responses to the preceding traits, and reflects which accent is most favoured by Singaporeans, and on what bases. Listeners want to speak more like BM and TM, implying a desire to speak more fluently and accurately, and in a way that resembles an external "standard", while a form of Mandarin like SM that represents solidarity and interpersonal relationships is least preferred. Contrary to expectations, the language of prestige is the one that listeners tend towards and show desirability, instead of the language of solidarity and/or everyday use. In other words, 'prestige' is valued more than 'solidarity'. This shows Singaporeans' penchant toward linguistic pragmatism, and not solidarity.

In sum, one can say that the three varieties are characterised very differently by the various traits. The findings of the results are summarised in Table 2 as follows:

Table 2. Summary of findings

1.	Education: BM > TM > SM	BM is rated highest, and SM lowest, on all traits of prestige.
2.	Self-confidence: BM > TM > SM	
3.	Wealthiness: BM > TM > SM	
4.	Leadership: BM > TM > SM	
5.	Friendliness: SM > BM > TM	SM is rated highest on friendliness, though not significantly.
6.	Trustworthiness: BM> SM > TM	BM is also rated highest on trustworthiness and sincerity.
7.	Sincerity: BM > SM > TM	
8.	Humour: SM > BM > TM	No significant differences are found between pairs.
9.	Likeability: BM > TM > SM	BM is significantly the most likeable.

5.   Discussion

5.1   The status of "standards"

It is quite clear from the results that BM is a symbol of prestige. Considering prestige and solidarity ratings on the whole, the prestige rating for BM is greater than its solidarity ratings, suggesting that it is "linguistic instrumentalism" that motivates the use of BM, which also colours the perception toward BM as a variety associated with status, education and economic advantage. This is further supported by its prestige ratings being higher than that of TM and SM, and affirms BM's position as the standard language holding unwavering prestige and power. This may be expected, as BM has always been held as the 'standard' in Mandarin education in Singapore.

TM, on the other hand, would be expected to be associated with solidarity as it is the variety associated with entertainment, media and pop culture. Interestingly, the mean ratings for TM on prestige traits are higher than the solidarity ones. This dilutes the notion of a dichotomy between BM and TM, despite their being represented in different, and rather contrasting contexts in Singapore. Moreover, TM also fared the poorest on solidarity traits, even lower than that of BM which is thought to have low solidarity value. Obviously, the associations of TM with the Taiwanese media representing warmth and love (in soap operas) and fun and whackiness (in Taiwanese variety shows) have not influenced the attitudes that Singaporeans have toward TM. A possible reason is that listeners have not been exposed to TM much as they have hardly heard it spoken in its expected contexts (i.e. Taiwanese romantic dramas, variety shows), although an assessment of

television habits is required to ascertain this. It appears that TM is not as desirable as it is predicted to be, but rather more "revered" as a standard or symbol of power. This is contrary to its prevailing contextual uses in non-official domains like television and entertainment. Moreover, trends of BM and TM in Figure 1 are almost parallel to each other, suggesting that listeners' perceptions towards both varieties are rather uniform, with BM enjoying higher ratings across all scales (prestige, solidarity, and likeability).

Nonetheless, both BM and TM are contrasted from SM by their higher prestige ratings than solidarity ratings. This could mean a dichotomy in perceptions between local and foreign accents — where the local accent is favoured in terms of affective value, and the 'foreign' ones for the prestige and competence exhibited by their speakers. Singaporeans perceive BM and TM speakers as more educated, self-confident and aloof, while speakers from their own community as more friendly.

These results suggest quite clearly that the negativity toward immigrant Chinese in Singapore have not affected Singaporeans' attitudes toward the non-Singaporean Chinese speakers. The foreign accents, ranking higher in terms of prestige ratings, are preferred over the local accent.

5.2 A two-fold attitude towards Singaporean Mandarin

It is apparent from the results that SM is rated higher on solidarity, yet at the same time, SM has also shown itself to be the least likeable variety, as compared to BM and TM. This suggests clearly a dichotomy between SM and the other two foreign accents along the status and solidarity dimensions: SM on solidarity and BM and TM on status.

This exposes a dual mentality that Singaporeans hold towards SM, and this may have stemmed from their English-dominant bilingual background. Although these Singaporeans are aware that they are ethnically Chinese, they have been educated in English. In Wee's words, there is only a "superficial association with ethnic culture" (2009: 18), brought about by an "abiding legacy of Anglophone education" (Goh, 2007: 47) in Singapore. Singaporeans recognise and cognitively impute values to SM, but emotionally remain detached from it.

This underscores the notion of linguistic instrumentalism where the functional uses of a language override its socio-cultural uses, creating a false appreciation of the language. Although the recent *Speak Mandarin Campaign* rhetoric has become less practical-driven and more culture-centric, with slogans like *Huayu Cool* and *Huayu Cool Celebrates the Richness of Chinese Culture* (Promote Mandarin Council, 2006), it does not nullify the pressing importance of English as an irreplaceable and effective means of communication with the greater non-Chinese-speaking world. Besides, the priority of economic advancement does compel

pragmatic Singaporeans to shelve socio-cultural considerations (e.g. preservation of language) and exploit the advantages of using a standard form of Mandarin. This diminishes the use of Mandarin as a language of ethnic identification, and commodifies it as a resource for social mobility (Wee, 2009). With the rising importance of English, Mandarin may be viewed as irrelevant in their everyday lives, save for formal settings in which the more "standard" variety is employed. This explains why BM, the prestige form, is favoured.

Do Singaporeans have negative attitudes toward non-local Chinese accents because of the wave of supposed 'anti-foreigner' sentiments then? It is quite clearly not. In fact, the results show the opposite. The fact that Singaporeans do not identify strongly with SM reflects a nonchalance toward the distinction between a local or non-local Chinese. For Singaporeans therefore, a sense of "Singaporean-ness" (Wee, 2009) perhaps supersedes a sense of 'Chinese-ness'. This would explain why, in the face of a supposed foreign 'threat', that Singaporeans do not rally behind SM and use SM as a logical tool against foreign accents.

Or one can use this to reflect the Singaporean way of life: functionality and economic goals of advancement override other socio-cultural aims of the nation. The use of a language, or accent in this case, no longer hinges on the socio-cultural aspects, but is defined by need and means of survival (Chua and Kuo, 1995). While SM serves well as a casual means of communication between Singaporeans, it can never compensate for the prestige that the foreign Chinese accents can bring them.

References

Baran, Dominika Marta. 2007. "Linguistic practice, social identity, and ideology: Mandarin variation in a Taipei County High School." Cambridge: Harvard University.

Bayard, Donn, Ann Weatherall, Cynthia Gallois, and Jeffery Pittam. 2001. "Pax Americana? Accent attitudinal evaluations in New Zealand, Australia and America." *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 5: 22–49.

Bayard, Don, Cynthia Gallois, George B. Ray, Ann Weatherall, and Kirk P. H. Sullivan. 2002. "Evaluating English accents worldwide." Retrieved July 22, 2011, Available from http://www.otago.ac.nz/anthropology/Linguistic/Accents

Bénabou, Roland and Jean Tirole. 2002. "Self-confidence and personal motivation." *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 117(3): 871–915.

Bokhorst-Heng, Wendy. 1999. "Singapore's Speak Mandarin Campaign: Language Ideological Debates and the Imagining of the Nation." In *Language Ideological Debates*, ed. by J Bloomaert, 235–265. New York: Mouton de Gruyter.

Cargile, Aaron C., Howard Giles, Ellen B. Ryan, and James J. Bradac 1994. "Language attitudes as a social process: A conceptual model and new directions." *Language & Communication* 14(3): 211–236.

Cargile, Aaron C., and Howard Giles. 1997. "Understanding language attitudes: Exploring listener affect and identity." *Language & Communication* 17(3): 195–217.

Cavallaro, Francesco, and Bee Chin Ng. 2009. "Between status and solidarity in Singapore." *World Englishes* 28(2): 143–159.

Chia, Boh Peng, and Adam Brown. 2002. "Singaporeans' Reactions to Estuary English." *English Today* 18: 33–38.

Chua, Beng Huat, and Eddie Kuo. 1995. "The Making of a New Nation: Cultural Construction and National Identity." In *Communitarian Ideology and Democracy in Singapore*, ed. by B. H. Chua, 101–123). London: Routledge.

Chua, Chee Lay. 2003. "The emergence of Singapore Mandarin: A case study of language contact." Available from http://search.proquest.com/docview/305282413?accountid=12665

Deterding, David. 2005. "Listening to Estuary English in Singapore." *TESOL Quarterly* 39: 425–440.

Deterding, David, and Andy Kirkpatrick. 2006. "Emerging South-East Asian Englishes and intelligibility." *World Englishes* 25: 391–409.

Edwards, John. 1977. "Students' reactions to Irish regional accents." *Language and Speech* 20: 280–286.

Edwards, John, and Maryanne Jacobsen. 1987. "Standard and regional standard speech: Distinctions and similarities." *Language in Society* 16: 369–379.

Giles, Howard. 1970. "Evaluative reactions to accents." *Educational Review* 22: 211–227.

Giles, Howard. 1971. "Patterns of evaluation to R.P., South Welsh and Somerset accented speech." *British Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology* 10(3): 280–281.

Goh, Robbie. 2007. "The anxiety of influences: Dis-locating authority, culture and identity in the novels of Colin Cheong." *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 42(3): 45–62.

Gopinathan, Saravanan. 1997. "Language Policy Changes 1979–1992: Politics and Pedagogy." In *Language, Society and Education in Singapore: Issues and Trends*, eds. by Saravanan Gopinathan and Ho Wan Kam, 65–91. Singapore: Times Academic Press.

Hiraga, Yuko. 2005. "British attitudes towards six varieties of English in the USA and Britain." *World Englishes* 24(3), 289–308.

Jacobs, Andrew. 2012. "In Singapore, Vitriol Against Chinese Newcomers." *New York Times*. Retrieved on May 13, 2013, Available from http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/27/world/asia/in-singapore-vitriol-against-newcomers-from-mainland-china.html

Jung, Woo-Hyun. 2005. "Attitudes of Korean EFL learners towards varieties of English." *English Teaching* 60(4): 239–260.

Kirkpatrick, Andy, and Neville Saunders. 2005. "The intelligibility of Singapore English: a case study in an Australian university." In *English in Singapore: Phonetic Research on a Corpus*, eds. by David Deterding, Adam Brown, and Ee Ling Low, 153–162. Singapore: McGraw Hill.

Kirkpatrick, Andy, David Deterding, and Jennie Wong. 2008. "The international intelligibility of Hong Kong English." *World Englishes* 27: 359–377.

Ladegaard, Hans J. 1998. "National stereotypes and language attitudes: The perception of British, American and Australian language and culture in Denmark." *Language àf Communication* 18: 251–274.

Lambert, Wallace E., Richard C. Hodgson, Robert C. Gardner, and Samuel Fillenbaum. 1960. "Evaluational reaction to spoken languages." *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 60: 44–51.

Lee, Hsien Loong. 2012. "National Day Rally Speech 2012." Retrieved 31 August, 2012, Available from   http://www.pmo.gov.sg/content/pmosite/mediacentre/speechesninterviews/

primeminister/2012/August/prime_minister_leehsienloongsnationaldayrally-2012speechinenglish.html.

Leong, Greg. 2000. "Remembering Chinese." *Journal of Australian Studies* 24(65): 58–68.

Oon, Clarissa. 2012. "The Chinese immigration challenge." *The Straits Times*. Retrieved 31 August, 2012, Available from http://www.straitstimes.com/Think/Story/STIStory_806494.html

Promote Mandarin Council. 2006. "Huayu Cool celebrates the richness of Chinese culture." Retrieved October 25, 2011, Available from http://www.mandarin.org.sg/site/press-releases/huayucool-celebrates-the-richness-of-chinese-cu.html

Scales, Julie, Ann Wennerstrom, Dara Richard, and Hui Wu Su. 2006. "Language learners' perceptions of accent." *TESOL Quarterly* 40(4): 715–738.

Sproat, Richard, Thomas Fang Zheng, Liang Gu, Jing Li, Yanli Zheng, Yi Su, Haolang Zhou, Philip Bramsen, David Kirsch, Izhak Shafran, Stavros Tsakalidis, Rebecca Starr, and Dan Jurafsky. 2004. "Dialectal Chinese speech recognition: Final report." Retrieved September 23, 2011, Available from http://www.clsp.jhu.edu/ws2004/groups/ws04casr/report.pdf

Stroud, Christopher, and Lionel Wee. 2007. "Consuming identities: Language planning and policy in Singaporean late modernity." *Language Policy* 6:253–279.

Tan, Charlene. 2006. "Change and continuity: Chinese language and policy in Singapore." *Language Policy* 5: 41–62.

Tan, Ying Ying, and Christina Castelli. 2013. "Intelligibility and attitudes: How American English and Singapore English are perceived around the world." *English World-Wide* 34(2): 177–201.

Tan, Ying Ying, and Irving Goh. 2011. "Politics of Language in Contemporary Singapore Cinema: The Films of Jack Neo, or Politics by Cinematic Means." *Interventions: Journal of Postcolonial Studies* 13(4): 610–626.

Torgerson, Renée C. 2005. *A comparison of Beijing and Taiwan Mandarin tone register: An acoustic analysis of three native speech styles*. Brigham Young University: Department of Centre for Language Studies.

Wee, Desmond. 2009. "Singapore language enhancer: Identity included." *Language and Intercultural Communication* 9(1): 15–23.

Wee, Lionel. 2003. "Linguistic instrumentalism in Singapore." *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 24(3): 211–224.

Yook, Cheongmin. 2005. "Korean university students' attitudes toward varieties of English." *Proceedings of the Joint Conference of AAAL and ACLA/CAAL 2006*. Montreal: Canada.

Zhu, Ying. 2008. "Transnational circulation of Chinese language television dramas." *Global Media and Communication* 4(1): 59–80.

Appendix 1. Reading texts for recordings

a. 我国有大约14万名来自领近国家的女佣。自90年代以来，到我国工作的外国女佣日益增加，主要原因是我国经济发展迅速，人民收入增加，雇用女佣在家帮忙做家务，照顾老年人或年幼孩子，让雇主放心工作。

(Taken from *Active Learning: Strategies to Score in Chinese*)

b. 一大早，妈妈就呼喊我的名字，提醒我该去补习华文了。其实，她哪里知道，我早就醒了，而且还急不可待的希望时钟快快走。因为，我们的补习班里，新来了一位高大帅气的男孩，这可是我们女校不可能遇见的。如果我的那些好友知道我与帅男孩同坐一室，还不知要多么羡慕我呢。

(Taken from *The Diary of a Teenage Girl*)
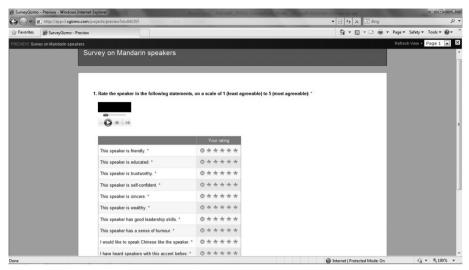
An English translation for texts (A) and (B):

a. Singapore has about 140,000 foreign domestic maids. Since the 90s, their numbers have increased, mainly because of Singapore's rapid economic growth and rising incomes. Employing domestic maids is advantageous as they can help with the household chores, look after children and the elderly, and enable employers to focus on their work.

b. Early this morning, my mother called out and reminded me about my tuition lesson. She didn't know that I was already wide awake, wishing that time would pass quickly. A new boy had come to our tuition class, and this never happened in the girls' school I attend. If my good friends knew that I have a male classmate, they would be so envious of me.

Appendix 2. Language profile survey for participants doing recordings

Note to speaker:
Thank you for participating in this study. Before you proceed with the recording, could you tell me:

Your nationality:	
Your age:	
Your current level of study:	
The language(s) you speak (from most fluent to least fluent):	
The language(s) you speak at home:	
The language(s) you use when watching TV, movies:	
The language(s) you use when reading newspapers, magazines etc.:	
The language(s) you use when listening to the radio:	

Screenshot of Questionnaire

Authors' addresses

Rachael Hui-Hui CHONG
The University of Birmingham
Department of English
JG Smith Building, Pritchatts Road
Edgbaston, Birmingham B15 2TT
U.K.

Ying-Ying TAN
Division of Linguistics and Multilingual
Studies
School of Humanities and Social Sciences
Nanyang Technological University
HSS-03-50
14 Nanyang Drive
Singapore 637332

yytan@ntu.edu.sg