

John Benjamins Publishing Company



This is a contribution from Chinese Language and Discourse 8:1
© 2017. John Benjamins Publishing Company

This electronic file may not be altered in any way.

The author(s) of this article is/are permitted to use this PDF file to generate printed copies to be used by way of offprints, for their personal use only.

Permission is granted by the publishers to post this file on a closed server which is accessible only to members (students and faculty) of the author's/s' institute. It is not permitted to post this PDF on the internet, or to share it on sites such as Mendeley, ResearchGate, Academia.edu.

Please see our rights policy on <https://benjamins.com/content/customers/rights>

For any other use of this material prior written permission should be obtained from the publishers or through the Copyright Clearance Center (for USA: www.copyright.com).

Please contact rights@benjamins.nl or consult our website: www.benjamins.com

Mandarinization and the construction of Chinese ethnicity in Singapore

Kevin Zi-Hao Wong and Ying-Ying Tan

Nanyang Technological University Singapore

This paper examines the process of Mandarinization in Singapore, and the effects of this process on the construction of Chinese ethnicity in Singapore. It does this through an analysis of official government speeches, followed by a questionnaire study examining the beliefs and attitudes of Chinese Singaporeans toward three varieties of Mandarin-Chinese, as well as Chinese “dialects” and English. The discourse analysis reveals an underlying assertion of a primordial relationship between Mandarin-Chinese and Chinese ethnicity. This, however, is not reflected in the beliefs of Chinese Singaporeans, who value Mandarin-Chinese for mainly instrumental reasons, and associated with a foreign standard. Chinese ethnicity in Singapore is instead constructed through a combination of Mandarin-Chinese, “dialects” and English. Ultimately, such a discrepancy results from Mandarinization’s dependence on an oversimplified understanding of language and ethnicity in Singapore.

Keywords: Mandarin-Chinese, Singapore, Attitudes, Ethnicity, Identity

1. Mandarin Chinese as the ‘Chinese’ Tongue

Since the 19th century, there have been movements to construct Mandarin Chinese as the language of the Chinese people, be this in terms of the Chinese nationality or Chinese ethnicity. The drive towards modernization that followed the end of the Opium Wars in China, for example, was accompanied by the view, shared by many government officials and scholars at the time, that such modernization was impeded by linguistic diversity (Chen, 1999: 13–14; Guo, 2004: 47; Liang, 2015: 17). Language reformers therefore envisioned the development of a standard language for China, and ultimately succeeded in formalizing one based on *Guanhua*, which had already served as an informal lingua franca amongst Chinese officials (Chen, 1999: 14–20; Ramsey, 1987: 4–11). *Guanhua*, and later Mandarin

Chinese (or *Putonghua* or “common language”), was reaffirmed as the standard language of the reconstituted People’s Republic of China in 1955 (Chen, 1999: 24).

The desire to have a common Chinese language has also manifested itself in Chinese communities outside of China. In Singapore, the process of constructing Mandarin Chinese as the language of the Chinese people began in the period leading up to independence, with the development and implementation of the bilingual policy. As in China, the Chinese in Singapore were linguistically diverse, speaking various tongues such as Hokkien, Cantonese, Teochew, Hainanese, and Hakka (Chiew, 1995: 43–44). Singapore itself was also ethnically diverse, with 75.5% of its population at the time being Chinese, 13.6% being Malay, and 8.8% being Indian (Rubdy, 2003: 56). Rather than designating a single language as its official standard, it was decided that Singaporeans should be bilingual, speaking English as an ethnically neutral lingua franca, alongside one of three official “mother tongue” languages, Mandarin Chinese, Malay, or Tamil, assigned according to their father’s ethnic group (Bokhorst-Heng, 1998: 290; Dixon, 2009: 119; Rubdy, 2005: 57; Wee, 2003: 214). For the Chinese, this official “mother tongue” was to be Mandarin Chinese, which had previously been introduced as an informal lingua franca amongst the Singaporean Chinese by Chinese nationalists arriving from China in the late 19th century (Yen, 1986: 303–304; PuruShotam, 2000: 44–45). Mandarin Chinese was therefore designated as an important school language alongside the other two official “mother tongue” languages (Pakir, 2004: 120), and in 1979, the *Speak Mandarin Campaign* (SMC) was implemented to further promote the use of Mandarin Chinese, while discouraging the use of other Chinese languages, denigrated as “dialects” (Bokhorst-Heng, 1999: 243). What is the underlying motivation behind the process of Mandarinization in Singapore? And to what extent are Chinese Singaporeans impacted by the state’s Mandarinization policies? This paper aims to evaluate both the state discourse on Mandarin Chinese and outcomes of this process of Mandarinization in Singapore. This study will be in two parts. In the first part, we will highlight, through an analysis of official government speeches and a critical review of past research, the rationale and process of Mandarinization in Singapore. We will show and argue that underlying the disparate motivations for Mandarinization offered by the state is one singular belief that there is a primordial relationship between Mandarin Chinese and being ethnically Chinese. In the second part, we will evaluate how this primordial relationship is being received by the people as we look at the effects of this Mandarinization process by examining the beliefs and attitudes of Chinese Singaporeans toward Mandarin Chinese.

Thus far, there is a lack of comprehensive research on the relationship between language and Chinese ethnicity in Singapore. Studies on language use amongst Chinese Singaporeans do show that, in line with official policy, there has been a shift away from Chinese “dialects” towards Mandarin Chinese. Gupta and

Yeok (1995), for example, using an ethnographic study of a Cantonese family in Singapore, showed a gradual shift away from Cantonese across three generations of this family. Similarly, Li, Saravanan and Ng (1997), using a combination of observation and interview methods to investigate language use, language choice, and language attitudes amongst 72 Chinese Singaporeans belonging to the Teochew “dialect” group, record a shift away from Teochew towards Mandarin Chinese across generations. Both studies, whose focus is on language shift, however, did not give an indication of the relationship between language use and Chinese ethnicity. Has the shift away from “dialects”, for example, really resulted in these languages being perceived as less important to Chinese ethnicity? Conversely, has the increasing use of Mandarin Chinese been accompanied by a sense that this language is important to being Chinese in Singapore, or is its value primarily utilitarian? Furthermore, both Gupta and Yeok (1995) and Li et al. (1997) find evidence suggesting that the shift away from “dialects” in Singapore has actually been a shift towards English more than it has been a shift towards Mandarin Chinese, raising important questions about the impact of English on Chinese ethnicity in Singapore that have yet been answered.

Studies pertaining to language and identity in Singapore do suggest that, on the whole, ethnic identity itself is becoming less important. Kamwangamalu (1992: 38), for example, finds that while 95% of his Singaporean Chinese participants continue to identify Mandarin Chinese as their “mother tongue”, only 38% have “strong feelings” for it. Meanwhile, the participants in general are increasingly attached to English, particularly English spoken with what he calls the “Singapore Accent”, considering it to be part of their heritage, their tradition, and their culture (Kamwangamalu, 1992: 40). Kamwangamalu (1992: 38–39) believes that this detachment of linguistic affinity from ethnicity accompanies a growing identification with “Singaporean-ness”, as opposed to “Chinese-ness”, “Malay-ness”, or “Indian-ness”, since it is English that acts as a unifying language for all Singaporeans. Meanwhile, Kwan-Terry (2000) explores the notion of “islands of identity” in Singapore. Initially, she describes these islands as corresponding mainly to ethnic group membership, with the Chinese, Indians, and Malays forming the largest three. However, she notes the shift towards English in the home, and argues that the instrumental value of English and its social prestige bring to the landscape of identity in Singapore two new islands, eclipsing those which correspond to ethnic group. These new islands encircle those who are able to switch between educated, internationally-accepted English and “uneducated”, locally-inflected English, and those who are only able to speak the latter. Both these studies, while reflecting the importance of English in the construction of identities in Singapore, have not questioned the essential relationship between Mandarin Chinese and Chinese ethnicity in Singapore. There seems to be a presumption

that a shift away from Mandarin Chinese, or increasing emotional attachment to English, necessarily implies decreasing identification with Chinese ethnicity. There remains a need therefore to examine this relationship far more closely.

Only one recent study thus far has commented specifically on language and Chinese identity in Singapore. Chong and Tan (2013) examine the attitudes of young Chinese Singaporeans towards local and foreign varieties of Mandarin Chinese. Their findings suggest that Mandarin Chinese's rising economic value has actually prompted Chinese Singaporeans to favour the Beijing variety of Mandarin Chinese over the local variety, diminishing the latter's value to culture and ethnic identity. In fact, their findings suggest that there might be a lack of strong identification with the local variety of Mandarin Chinese amongst Chinese Singaporeans in the first place, and that Chinese Singaporeans may actually identify more strongly with their "Singaporean-ness" than their "Chinese-ness" (Chong and Tan, 2013: 135–136). That said, Chong and Tan (2013) arrive at these conclusions only with reference to different varieties of Mandarin Chinese, and do not consider either the Chinese "dialects" or English. The present study thus fills an important gap in the research, not only investigating Chinese Singaporeans' beliefs about the importance of Mandarin Chinese to being Chinese in Singapore, but doing so with multilingualism in mind, taking into consideration local and foreign varieties of Mandarin Chinese, as well as "dialects" and English.

How then has Mandarin Chinese, in multilingual Singapore, come to be the language of and for Chinese Singaporeans? In the next section, we will present the state's rationale behind the process of Mandarinization in Singapore, and show how Mandarin Chinese has been constructed to be the prerequisite for Chinese ethnicity.

2. Officially Mandarin: the state's construction of Mandarin Chinese

As mentioned earlier, Mandarin Chinese has been recognised as an official language in Singapore alongside English and two other official "mother tongue" languages. The *Speak Mandarin Campaign* (SMC), implemented in 1979, has also been employed to promote the use of Mandarin amongst Chinese Singaporeans, over other Chinese languages¹. Existing literature on language planning and policy in Singapore has characterised these measures as emerging in response to

1. The *Speak Mandarin Campaign* (SMC), which started in 1979, is a state-run publicity event that takes place for one month annually. The campaign produces periodicals and materials on themes that change yearly, aimed at encouraging Singaporeans to use and speak Mandarin Chinese.

challenges and opportunities that Singapore faced since independence in 1965 (e.g. Bokhorst-Heng, 1998, 1999; Rubdy, 2005; Wee, 2003; Chua, 2004; Dixon, 2009). In other words, the motivations for Mandarinization are being posed as solutions or responses to problems faced by the nation. The three key motivations for the Mandarinization process are as follows.

2.1 Mandarinization as a means to manage Singapore's diverse population

One of the major challenges faced by the post-independence government in 1965 was Singapore's ethnically diverse population. Not only was Singapore made up of three distinct ethnic groups, the Chinese community itself was also heterogeneous as it consisted of Chinese people who spoke different Chinese vernaculars, many of which are not mutually intelligible. The ability of Singapore's leaders to unite Singaporeans under a shared, national identity was constrained by the political climate of the day, which made it impossible for them to construe Singapore as a nation comprising a single, unified people. Any attempt to do so would have been understood by Singapore's neighbours as an attempt to entrench the dominance of the Chinese, who made up the large majority of Singapore's population (Bokhorst-Heng, 1999: 237). Singapore's leaders needed to forge national solidarity between the ethnic groups, without being seen to promote a system that favoured any one of them.

Part of how this was eventually achieved was through the implementation of Singapore's official bilingual policy, according to which Singaporeans were to speak both English and an official "mother tongue", with each language envisioned as serving different functions. English was to address the need for economic development, as well as the need to forge unity between the different ethnic groups. On the one hand, English gave Singaporeans access to science and technology, both crucial to economic development (Wee, 2003: 214). On the other, English also served as a lingua franca, facilitating communication between the ethnic groups. English was furthermore also understood as being a neutral language that belonged to none of the three ethnic groups (Bokhorst-Heng, 1998: 290; Bokhorst-Heng, 1999: 237; Wee, 2002: 290), and therefore did not confer economic advantage on any one ethnic group (Rubdy, 2005: 59).

Meanwhile, the official "mother tongues" – Mandarin Chinese, Malay, and Tamil – were to prevent Singapore's government from being seen as entrenching the majority Chinese ethnic group. These three ethnic languages were recognised as official languages, one corresponding to each of the main ethnic groups in Singapore (Dixon, 2009: 119); Mandarin Chinese for the Chinese, Malay for the Malays, and Tamil for the Indians. While this did not eliminate linguistic diversity in Singapore completely, it did serve to reduce it. More importantly, the fact that

three ethnic languages were granted official “mother tongue” status also meant that each of Singapore’s three main ethnic groups could claim equal linguistic representation (Bokhorst-Heng, 1998: 290).

That said, the role played by these official “mother tongues” must also be understood as going beyond providing representation. In the first place, the idea that each “mother tongue” should represent one ethnic group presumes that each of these ethnic groups really forms a coherent whole. Certainly, when it comes to the Chinese in Singapore, this could not be taken for granted. As noted previously, the Chinese in Singapore spoke a range of different Chinese vernaculars. While Mandarin Chinese had been introduced as an informal lingua franca by Chinese nationalists in the late 19th century, as late as 1978, 85% of Chinese Singaporeans continued to speak another Chinese “dialect” as their primary home language instead (Bokhorst-Heng, 1999: 238). Official discourse on Chinese languages in Singapore has characterised this as a problem. For example, in 1985, Wong Kan Seng, then Minister of State for Community Development & Communications & Information, noted that linguistic diversity amongst the Chinese in Singapore impeded communication:

- (1) “In Singapore, our forefathers came from mainly the southern part of China, and there were many dialect groups. While they may be able to read the written language, they have difficulties understanding each other because of the use of dialects. This is not ideal for Singapore.” Wong, Kan Seng (1985)

At the same time, however, it was clear that the introduction of Mandarin Chinese as the official “mother tongue” of the Chinese in Singapore was not simply to facilitate communication. In a speech made at the launch of the SMC in 1991, analysed in full by Bokhorst-Heng (1999: 246), Goh Chok Tong, then Singapore’s Prime Minister, remarked that the lack of a common language actually called into question Singapore’s status as a nation. A nation, he believed, had to comprise of a single people, speaking the same language. This is not far from the Herderian ideal of having a common language as a prerequisite to building the nation. Not only did Singaporeans not have a common language, even within the same family, it was common for different generations to speak different languages. Goh then suggested that this problem might nevertheless be circumvented if Singapore’s ethnic communities were tightly-knit, while remaining mutually tolerant and respectful. When it came to the Chinese in Singapore, it was assumed that Mandarin Chinese would be able to serve this purpose:

- (2) “For the Chinese community, our aim should be a single people, speaking the same primary language, i.e. Mandarin Chinese, possessing a distinct culture and a shared past, and sharing a common destiny for the future. Such

a Chinese community will then be tightly knit. Provided it is also tolerant and appreciative of the other communities' heritage, able to communicate with them in English, and work with them for a common future, Singapore will grow to become a nation." Goh, Chok Tong (1991)

Similarly, in 2000, Aline Wong, then Senior Minister of State for Education, explained the importance of "mother tongues" in Singapore's bilingual education system, citing the inescapable fact of Singapore's diverse population (Wong, 2000). As much as people wished to speak of a "unified Singapore", she argued, the fact was that there still existed "primordial sentiments towards one's ethnicity, culture and religion". To overcome this, Singaporeans needed a "sense of self-assuredness" when they interacted with each other, something which was only possible if each ethnic community found "its own anchorage in its own culture and traditions". "Mother tongues", including Mandarin Chinese, were then crucial because it was through them that moral values and cultural traditions were transmitted.

Mandarin Chinese's recognition as an official language representing the Chinese in Singapore was thus, in effect, also an assertion of its centrality to a Chinese ethnicity that is shared amongst all Chinese Singaporeans, regardless of what other languages they might speak.

2.2 Mandarinization to mitigate the westernising effects of English

A report commissioned in 1978 (cited in Bokhorst-Heng, 1999: 238, 250) to evaluate the outcomes of the bilingual policy, particularly as they pertained to the Chinese community in Singapore, suggested that the relationship between Chinese ethnicity and Mandarin Chinese, however, was not one that could be taken for granted. Contrary to expectations, Chinese Singaporeans were still persisting in speaking other Chinese "dialects" despite the bilingual policy. Singapore's government feared that if the Chinese "dialects" continued to obstruct the establishment of Mandarin Chinese as the "mother tongue" of all Chinese Singaporeans, English would become the intra-ethnic link for the Chinese (Bokhorst-Heng, 1999: 250, 252). This was undesirable for two reasons. Firstly, because of its economic value, English already enjoyed a status far above those of the official "mother tongues". Statistics already showed a shift towards English as a primary household language amongst Chinese Singaporeans even as early as the late 1980s and 1990s (see Pakir 1993). Singapore could not afford to have English being too closely associated with any ethnic group, let alone the Chinese. Secondly, there was fear that if Singaporeans became monolingual in English, it would lead to the 'Westernisation' of an Asian nation. While English was necessary for driving Singapore's economy, it also led to Singapore becoming "soft-shelled", and exposed to what Singapore's government

considered undesirable Western values (Pakir, 1993: 92; Wee, 2002: 290–1); and such Western values were viewed by Singapore’s government in an extremely unfavourable light (Bokhorst-Heng, 1999: 241; Wee, 2003: 214).

The SMC arose in 1979 as a reaction to this. It sought to discourage the use of “dialects” while encouraging the use of Mandarin Chinese, reinforcing its position as the “mother tongue” of all Chinese Singaporeans. It did this to consolidate the Chinese ethnic group, to prevent them from adopting English as their common language (Chua, 2004: 69). It also aimed to prevent Singaporeans from becoming too Westernised, by ensuring that traditional Chinese values continued to be transmitted through Mandarin Chinese. These traditional values were “good values”, suitable for Singapore, unlike Western ones, which were not (Wee & Bokhorst-Heng, 2005: 178). They would serve to prevent Singaporeans from becoming “deculturalised”, and unduly influenced by Western values (Bokhorst-Heng, 1998: 307–9). In this way, Mandarin Chinese also came to serve as a “cultural ballast”, helping to mitigate the Westernising effects of English.

It should be noted, however, that this description of Mandarin Chinese’s role as being that of ensuring that traditional Chinese values continued to be transmitted does not fully characterise its importance. This much can be discerned by noting two characteristics of official discourse on language and culture in Singapore. First, it has been acknowledged several times in official discourse that English is actually capable of being used to transmit culture. In (3), for example, Singapore’s first Prime Minister, Lee Kuan Yew, argues that it is possible to “distil the essence” of “Asian culture and values”, so that they can be transmitted through English, albeit only for “supplementary instruction”.

- (3) “Somehow we must abstract and distil the essence of our Asian culture and values so that English may be used for supplementary instruction in moral education.”
Lee, Kuan Yew (1979)

Similarly, in (4), then Deputy Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong describes the transmission of Chinese culture and traditional values as one of the objectives of Mandarin Chinese language education in Singapore. However, he acknowledges that some students may have difficulty mastering Mandarin Chinese in school. For these students, it is actually possible to do the job at least “partly” through English.

- (4) “But we want to inculcate these cultural values even in pupils who have difficulty learning CL, if necessary partly by using English.”
Lee, Hsien Loong (1999) (CL: Chinese Language)

Excerpt (5) is perhaps most enlightening. In it, Lee Kuan Yew argues that it is possible to teach culture through English, using Confucianism as an example. Earlier in the same speech, however, he describes Mandarin Chinese as crucial,

and English as “emotionally [un]acceptable” as a “mother tongue” for Chinese Singaporeans.

- (5) “Let me add that although language and culture are closely related, they are not identical... we shall teach Confucianism through English, using only key words and phrases in the original Chinese. This can be done.”

Lee, Kuan Yew (1984)

The above makes it apparent that the possibility of using a language to transmit a culture does not alone qualify it to be a “mother tongue”. It must be that Mandarin Chinese as the “mother tongue” of Chinese Singaporeans has an additional role. This role might then be discerned by noting the second characteristic of official discourse, that is how the officials reacted to the problem of Westernisation. In (6), Lee Kuan Yew takes the opportunity to relate the story of Dr Lim Boon Keng, who learnt the hard way that he would never be treated by the British as an equal, even though he was a Queen’s scholar.

- (6) “One historical model of the bicultural elite that we need to replicate is Dr Lim Boon Keng. Born in 1869 to a Straits Chinese family, Lim Boon Keng was not taught Chinese. He was a Queen’s scholar and studied in Edinburgh to become a doctor... He realized during his stay in UK that whatever his accomplishments, the British would always treat him as a British subject of Chinese origin, not as their equal. He resolved to connect with his cultural roots.”

Lee, Kuan Yew (2004)

In (7), he specifically reminds English-educated students that they were not Englishmen, and never would be. This is true regardless of how Westernised they became.

- (7) “I told English-medium school students: study English well, but never forget that you are not an Englishman and never will be.”

Lee, Kuan Yew (2012)

In other words, the Singaporean state read the problem of Westernisation not merely as the undesirable transmission of Western values into Singapore, but as an undue reverence to the West. Chinese Singaporeans were described in official discourse as becoming enamoured with the West, blindly aping it. In a speech made in 1988, for example, Goh Chok Tong warned Singaporeans against becoming a “pseudo-Western society” (Goh, 1988). Meanwhile, in his 1994 SMC launch speech, Lee Hsien Loong, Singapore’s third and current Prime Minister, opined that Singaporeans became “carried” away when they felt “insecure” in their own Asian-ness and began to crave the approval of what they considered a superior civilisation (Lee, 1994).

Insofar that this was a problem that Mandarin Chinese was supposed to solve, it should then be clear that Mandarin Chinese's value to Singapore lay not only in its being a means of cultural transmission, but also as a means of cultivating confidence in Chinese culture. Indeed, in this 1984 speech, quoted above, Lee Kuan Yew argued that Mandarin Chinese was an important means by which Chinese Singaporeans would be reminded that they were "part of an ancient civilisation with an unbroken history of over 5,000 years". This represented "a deep and strong psychic force" that would give Singaporeans confidence to face great challenges. Similarly, in (8), Goh Chok Tong pointed out that Mandarin Chinese gave Chinese Singaporeans the opportunity to learn about and appreciate various aspects of Chinese culture. This would remind them that they were "part of a rich history which is Chinese", and which they could feel proud of.

- (8) "Mandarin Chinese not only allows Chinese to communicate easier with one another but also opens up many chests of treasures – Chinese literature, music, operas, paintings, calligraphy, ceramics and so on. When we can appreciate them, we will feel proud to be part of that rich history which is Chinese."
Goh, Chok Tong (1991)

Mandarin Chinese thus helps to mitigate the Westernising effects of English not only because it transmits culture. Rather, there is once again the presumption of a shared Chinese heritage that all Chinese Singaporeans can claim ownership to, specifically through the shared language of Mandarin Chinese. Pride in this shared heritage then ensures that Singaporeans are resilient enough to resist the temptations of the West.

2.3 Mandarinization to take advantage of China's economic growth

More recently, several researchers (e.g. Wee, 2003; Tan, 2006; Tupas, 2015) have noted that the SMC has also begun to promote Mandarin Chinese as serving the state in one more important way, that is to allow Singaporeans to take advantage of China's economic growth. While it was initially only English that possessed economic value in Singapore, Mandarin Chinese began to be conceived as possessing such value as well (Wee, 2003: 216). Tan (2006: 52) cites a sevenfold increase in bilateral trade between Singapore and China as an example of the opportunities that China's economic expansion presented to Singapore. Government officials sought to persuade Singaporeans of the need to "ride on the economic growth of China" (Tan, 2006: 52). They presented the ability to speak Mandarin Chinese as a valuable asset in enabling them to do just this, as it allowed Singaporeans to communicate with individuals from China (Tan, 2006: 53; Wee, 2003: 216, 219).

Despite Mandarin Chinese's role being instrumental in this case, and thus a departure from the two roles discussed earlier, it ultimately draws from the same understanding of what Mandarin Chinese does for Chinese Singaporeans at a more fundamental level. The two quotes (9) and (10) below are particularly enlightening in this respect. In each, Mandarin Chinese is described not only as facilitating communication, but allowing the establishment of solidarity or rapport with Chinese nationals. In (9), for example, Goh Chok Tong relates how speaking Mandarin Chinese helped to create a "common understanding", a "common bond", and a sense of "belong[ing] together" between Chinese businessmen. This is despite the fact that they were all of different nationalities.

- (9) "Although the official language of the congress was English, the moment someone spoke in Mandarin Chinese, the atmosphere changed. It became more intimate. The use of Mandarin Chinese brought out immediate a common understanding among the Chinese businessmen of different nationalities. They felt a common bond. They felt they belonged together."

Goh, Chok Tong (1991)

In (10), Wong Kan Seng describes Mandarin Chinese's value in China as bringing about a "facilitative atmosphere of intimacy". Like Goh, he mentions a "common bond", and furthermore talks about the establishment of "guanxi"².

- (10) "Hence, speaking Mandarin Chinese with your counterparts in China can bring a facilitative atmosphere of intimacy to your business dealings. This will also help you to establish 'guanxi' in China." Wong, Kan Seng (1995).

Mandarin Chinese's role in helping Singapore take advantage of China's economic growth thus extends beyond mere communication. Mandarin Chinese is believed to also foster solidarity and intimacy, and this value is derived from the notion that it is linked to a shared Chinese ethnicity, common to Chinese people both within and beyond Singapore. The use of Mandarin Chinese allows Chinese Singaporeans to establish a sense of solidarity with their counterparts in China, and this is done by appealing to this shared ethnicity.

2. 'Guanxi' refers to a network of implicit, unspecified and reciprocal obligations and assurances that bind together people and organisations in Chinese society and shape the course of long-term social and business relationships (Luo, 2007: 2)

2.4 Evaluating the state construction of Mandarin Chinese and Chinese ethnicity

At the beginning of this section, it was proposed that Mandarin Chinese has been constructed as playing a particular role in Chinese ethnicity, which in turn enables it to address the challenges and opportunities faced by Singapore since independence. What we have shown so far is that under the veneer of motivations, the state fundamentally believes that the function of Mandarin Chinese is its ability to generate a Chinese identity. This identity is shared amongst all Chinese Singaporeans, and indeed amongst all Chinese peoples. It sets Chinese Singaporeans apart from Singaporeans of other ethnic groups and from the West. It is furthermore an identity that Chinese Singaporeans can be proud of, guarding their relations with both these groups.

This Chinese identity has these properties because it is based on a specific construction of Chinese ethnicity: one founded on Chinese civilisation. This is something that only Mandarin Chinese can do. In his 1984 speech, Lee Kuan Yew describes Mandarin Chinese as suitable as a “mother tongue” of Chinese Singaporeans, and not English, because it unifies the “dialect” groups in Singapore, but also because it reminds Chinese Singaporeans that they are “part of an ancient civilisation with an unbroken history of over 5,000 years.” Similarly, in his 2005 SMC launch speech, Lee Hsien Loong notes that Mandarin Chinese gives Chinese Singaporeans access to “a whole world of Chinese art, culture and traditions, which spans thousands of years of Chinese civilisation.” Using only English would cause Chinese Singaporeans to lose this access. Finally, in his 1991 speech, Goh Chok Tong warns Chinese Singaporeans who have lost the ability to speak Mandarin Chinese that they “[run] the risk of losing the collective wisdom of the Chinese civilisation”. Underlying political discourse on the importance of Mandarin Chinese is thus its essentialness to the construction of Chinese ethnicity. It is this characteristic of Mandarin Chinese that enables it to serve state interests.

However, having said this, one can anticipate several potential mismatches between political discourse and everyday life. For one, it is doubtful whether a Chinese ethnicity based on ancient Chinese civilisation is adequate as the basis of a Chinese Singaporean identity. While political discourse treats the Chinese as a single, homogenous ethnic group, in reality, Chinese people all over the world differ culturally. Examples given in political discourse of the kind of culture Mandarin Chinese gives Singaporeans access to include Confucianism, opera, calligraphy, and even ceramics. These have very little relevance to the everyday experience of being Chinese in Singapore.

Just as there are different Chinese peoples, there are also different varieties of Mandarin Chinese, which political discourse does not recognise. Instead, the

political discourse prescribes what is essentially an exonormative standard. In a speech made at the 70th anniversary dinner of the Teochew clan association, Goh Chok Tong argues that Singaporeans have to speak a Mandarin Chinese that can be understood in China and Taiwan. Singapore Mandarin Chinese, with its abundance of borrowings from “dialects” and English, is deemed unacceptable ((11)).

- (11) “I notice that a form of Singapore Mandarin Chinese is creeping in. I call this ‘chap chye’ Mandarin Chinese. This is Singlish’s counterpart. It is a mixture of dialects and Mandarin Chinese with English words thrown in. ‘Chap chye’ Mandarin Chinese is not understood in China and Taiwan.”

Goh, Chok Tong (1999)

This standard of Mandarin Chinese, however, is understood by Goh (1999) as not being attainable by a majority of Chinese Singaporeans. Rather, it is envisioned that Singapore’s education system will strive to produce about 300 Singaporeans each year, known as the “bicultural elite”. This group of Singaporeans will possess the high level of proficiency in Mandarin Chinese necessary to become “steeped in the Chinese cultural heritage, history, literature and the arts”. These Singaporeans will be uniquely qualified to engage with China and to take up positions of governance in Singapore (Lee, Hsien Loong, 1999; Lee, Kuan Yew, 2009).

Having this exonormative standard could worsen the sense that the Chinese ethnicity prescribed in official discourse is remote from the lives of Chinese Singaporeans. It furthermore leaves the meaning of the local, variety of Mandarin Chinese, open to “unplanned” construction, beyond the scope of official planning (Eggington, 2003: 452). What this means then is that this idealized form of Mandarin Chinese that has been constructed by the state to be linked intimately to the Chinese ethnicity may have little relevance to speakers who use the local variety of the language, and who possibly have different linguistic resources to define their identity. In the next section, we examine the extent to which Chinese Singaporeans use Mandarin Chinese as a tool to define their Chinese ethnicity.

3. Chinese Singaporeans’ beliefs about the role of Mandarin Chinese

In the previous section, we showed, by analysing political discourse, how Mandarin Chinese was understood by Singapore’s government as being essential to the construction of Chinese ethnicity in Singapore. Two potential mismatches between political discourse and everyday life were proposed. First, the state construction of Chinese ethnicity is remote from the everyday experiences of Chinese Singaporeans, and could be inadequate as a basis for identity in Singapore. Second, political discourse does not differentiate between varieties of Mandarin Chinese

and prescribes an exonormative standard on Singaporeans. In this present section, the beliefs of Chinese Singaporeans, who have been subjected to the official constructions of Mandarin Chinese and Chinese ethnicity in political discourse, are investigated. This is done using a questionnaire survey administered to 100 Chinese Singaporeans.

3.1 Questionnaire design and procedure

The questionnaire consisted of 64 questions and took place online, using the SurveyGizmo online survey tool. For a full list of questions in the questionnaire, refer to Appendix A. The questionnaire would have taken each participant approximately 15 minutes to complete at a leisurely pace.

100 participants took part in the questionnaire. Participants were recruited through word-of mouth, with the initial batch of participants sourced from amongst the authors' friends and acquaintances. Participant selection did not control for language proficiency, although all participants had to self-identify as being ethnically Chinese, and had to be citizens of Singapore who were born and raised locally. Participants were divided equally into four different age groups: those aged 20 to 29, those aged 30 to 39, those aged 40 to 49, and those aged 50 and above. Differences between age groups may be anticipated as, depending on their age, participants may have been exposed to different language environments. As Pakir (1993: 74) noted, societal bilingualism in Singapore has changed drastically since independence. Older participants lived in a time when Chinese "dialects" were still dominant, and would have been exposed to political discourse that addressed this. Younger participants, on the other hand, would probably have been less exposed to "dialects", and more exposed to English. They would also have come of age at a time when China's economic ascent became apparent to many through the news media.

One of the key features of this questionnaire is that it takes into account different varieties of Mandarin Chinese, and builds partly on the findings of Chong and Tan (2013), whose work looked at Chinese Singaporeans' attitudes towards three different varieties of Mandarin Chinese: Beijing Mandarin Chinese (BM), Taiwanese Mandarin Chinese (TM), and the local variety, Singapore Mandarin Chinese (SM). SM has not been extensively studied thus far, and as far as the phonology of SM is concerned, Chong and Tan (2013) took SM to differ from BM and TM only in terms of accent. They find important differences between attitudes towards these varieties and conclude that BM is the prestige variety in Singapore, whereas SM is only valued for solidarity. We expect therefore that the differences between the varieties of Mandarin Chinese would have an impact on the way Singaporean Chinese perceive the language. The questionnaire made use

of three recordings, borrowed with permission from Chong and Tan. Chong and Tan used the verbal guise technique to elicit attitudes towards the three Mandarin Chinese varieties in question. Each recording lasted approximately 30 seconds, and consisted of a native speaker of Mandarin from Singapore, Beijing, and Taipei. They used only female native speakers, aged between 20–28, so that gender and age would not be factors influencing language attitudes. Each sound sample was identical in content, though they varied slightly in length and rate. For a transcript of the recordings, refer to Appendix B. Both foreign and local varieties were used, to verify Wee's (2003) arguments about tensions between endo- and exonormative standards results from Mandarin Chinese's instrumental value. In analysing the results, particular attention was paid to differences between ratings of BM and SM, since Chong and Tan (2013) found that it was BM that was clearly the prestige variety in Singapore. At no point during the questionnaire were the identities of these varieties revealed to the participant.

The questionnaire was in three parts. The first set of questions prompted participants to listen to the three stimuli recordings. Participants were asked to indicate which of the three recordings sounded most similar to the way that they spoke, and also most similar to the way the majority of Chinese Singaporeans spoke. Given that the participants were all Singaporean, it was expected that a majority would identify the SM speaker as most closely resembling themselves. Following this, participants were asked to indicate which speaker they most desired to sound like, and which speaker they desired the majority of Chinese Singaporeans to sound like. Given that the state construction of Chinese ethnicity had taken place through a "highly proficient", exonormative standard of Mandarin Chinese, it was expected that a majority of participants would prefer to sound like either the BM or TM speaker.

The second set of questions sought participants' beliefs about the importance of Mandarin Chinese. The questions consisted of statements about Mandarin Chinese's importance. Participants were to rate their agreement to each statement on a scale of 1 to 5. The questions were arranged in five groups of functions, specifically, (1) culture, (2) internally-oriented community, (3) externally-oriented community, (4) internally-oriented communication, and (5) externally-oriented communication. Questions in the "culture" group of functions pertained to the importance of being proficient in Mandarin Chinese to learning about, participating in, and appreciating various aspects of Chinese culture, such as traditional practices and festivals. Questions in the internally-oriented "community" group of functions pertained to the importance of Mandarin Chinese in forging solidarity between Singaporeans and Chinese Singaporeans. Questions in the externally-oriented "community" group of functions pertained to the importance of Mandarin Chinese in establishing *guanxi* or networks in China. Questions in the

internally-oriented “communication” group of functions pertained to the importance of Mandarin Chinese as an intra-ethnic lingua franca in Singapore that allowed Chinese Singaporeans of different “dialect” groups to communicate with each other. Finally, questions in the externally-oriented “communication” group of functions pertained to the importance of Mandarin Chinese in allowing Chinese Singaporeans to communicate with their business or diplomatic counterparts in China. It is expected that, if the state construction of Mandarin Chinese as essential to Chinese ethnicity is effective, participants will rate “culture” and “community” groups highly. It is also expected that both internally- and externally-oriented functions will be rated highly, since Mandarin Chinese as the “mother tongue” of Chinese Singaporeans is understood according to the state construction as serving these functions.

The third set of questions prompted participants to rate the three varieties of Mandarin Chinese spoken by the speakers in the recordings, as well as the Chinese “dialects” and English. This was done for functions grouped into the same five sets as above for Mandarin Chinese in general, albeit simplified, to minimise the length of the questionnaire. In the event that the state construction of Mandarin Chinese does not favour any of the three varieties, it is expected that all three will be rated highly. However, given the emphasis placed by the state construction on highly proficient Mandarin Chinese, and given Chong and Tan’s (2013) findings, it is considered more likely that BM and TM will be rated higher than SM. This would demonstrate SM to be less highly valued than the two exonormative standards. Meanwhile, it is expected that both “dialects” and English will be rated low, given the state construction Chinese ethnicity in Singapore as being one common between all “dialect” groups and distinctly non-Western.

A binomial test was used to compare proportions of participants making language evaluations for themselves and for other Chinese Singaporeans. A one-way ANOVA with repeated measures was used to compare groups of mean ratings between different varieties and different functions. Whenever significant differences were found, a Tukey post-hoc test was run to identify which pairs of results these significant differences lay between. Finally, Kendall’s Rank Correlation Tau was used to identify significant correlations between age groups and mean ratings. The results of these tests will be presented in the next section, in order of the sets of questions presented above: first, participants’ evaluations of themselves and other Singaporeans; then, their beliefs about the importance of Mandarin Chinese in general; and finally, their beliefs about the importance of specific varieties.

3.2 Results

3.2.1 Language Evaluation

This section examines the participants' evaluations of the variety of Mandarin Chinese that they believe they and other Chinese Singaporeans actually speak, as well as the variety that they and other Chinese Singaporeans should speak.

Figures 1 and 2 show the participants' overall evaluations for themselves and for other Chinese Singaporeans. The majority considered themselves to sound most like the SM speaker, with 55% doing so, more than the 28% and 17% doing so with the BM and TM speakers respectively ($p > 0.001$). Similarly, most participants also believed that Chinese Singaporeans sounded like the SM speaker (67%), and not the TM or BM speakers (17% and 16% respectively) ($p > 0.001$).

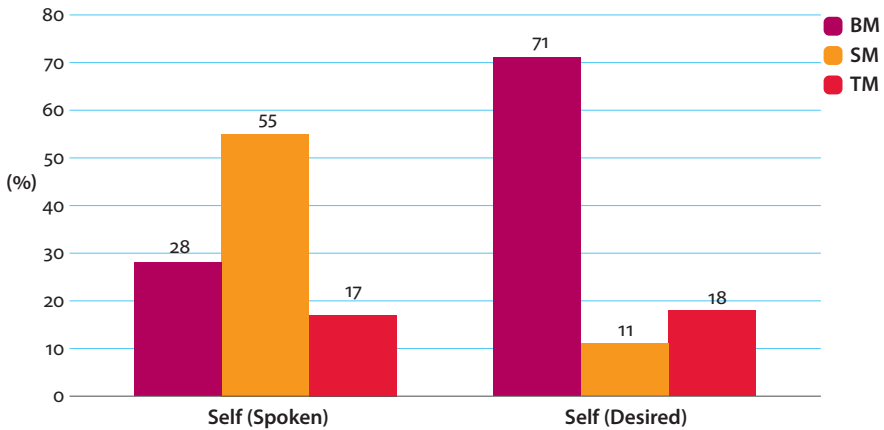


Figure 1. Language Evaluations for Self

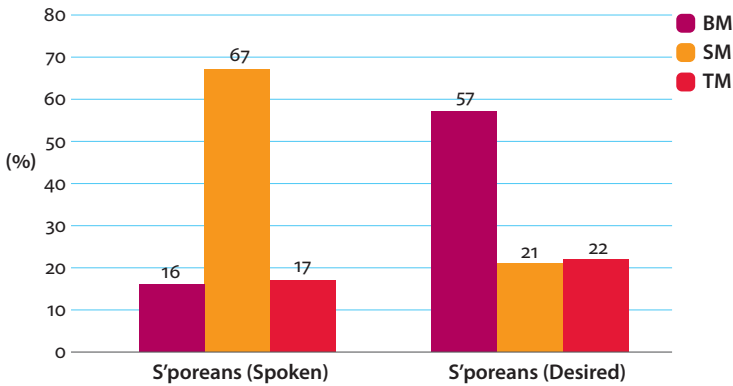


Figure 2. Language Evaluations for Singaporeans

Table 1. Language evaluations by age

	Mandarin	20s	30s	40s	50s	Total
Self (Actually spoken)	BM	2	6	10	10	28
	TM	3	4	5	5	17
	SM	20	15	10	10	55
Self (Desired)	BM	13	18	20	20	71
	TM	7	4	4	3	18
	SM	5	3	1	2	11
Others (Actually spoken)	BM	2	3	3	8	16
	TM	3	5	7	2	17
	SM	20	17	15	15	67
Others (Desired)	BM	12	16	15	14	57
	TM	6	5	6	5	22
	SM	7	4	4	6	21

When it comes to how participants would like themselves and other Chinese Singaporeans to sound, however, the situation is reversed. Only a minority of participants wished to sound like the SM speaker (11%), and thought most Chinese Singaporeans should as well (21%). Instead, most participants wanted themselves and other Chinese Singaporeans to sound like the BM speaker (71% and 57% respectively) ($p > 0.001$).

These results suggest a gap between the variety of Mandarin Chinese which Chinese Singaporeans speak, and the variety which they prefer to speak, supporting the notion that the state construction of Mandarin Chinese has indeed resulted in a prestigious, foreign variety being privileged. The results however do suggest that this gap may be closing. As can be seen in Table 1, there appears to be an interaction between participants' age groups and their evaluations. Younger participants are more likely than their older counterparts to indicate that they and other Chinese Singaporeans sound like the SM speaker. Younger participants are also more likely than their older counterparts to prefer sounding like the SM speaker. Nevertheless, even amongst the youngest group of participants, BM remains preferred by the majority.

3.2.2 *The importance of Mandarin Chinese*

This section presents participants' ratings for the importance of Mandarin Chinese in general, in serving each of the functions identified earlier. Participants rated Mandarin Chinese most important to communication (3.45), followed by culture (3.14), with its importance to community receiving the lowest mean

rating (3.07). The difference in ratings for these functions are statistically significant ($F(2,98) = 21.57, p > 0.001$), with importance to communication being rated significantly higher than importance to both culture ($p > 0.001$) and community ($p > 0.001$).

Figures 3 and 4 show the mean total ratings for internally and externally-oriented community and communication functions respectively. Significant differences are found between ratings for these different orientations ($F(5,95) = 22.69, p > 0.001$). Ratings for the importance of Mandarin Chinese to establishing a sense of community and to communicating with Chinese people from China are significantly higher than the same with Chinese Singaporeans (community: $p > 0.001$, communication: $p > 0.001$). A significant, albeit very weak interaction is found between ratings for externally-oriented communication and participant age group ($\tau = -0.187, p = 0.026$), with older participants less likely than younger ones to consider Mandarin Chinese important in this respect.

These results cast doubt on whether participants see Mandarin Chinese as being essential to Chinese ethnicity. Participants appear to value Mandarin Chinese primarily for communication, the most mundane and practical of the three functions considered. Furthermore, participants rated Mandarin Chinese's externally-oriented functions far higher than its internally-oriented ones. This suggests that participants value Mandarin Chinese mainly as a means of dealing with Chinese people from China. These results differ from what would have been expected had the state construction of Mandarin Chinese as essential to the Chinese ethnicity in Singapore been effective.

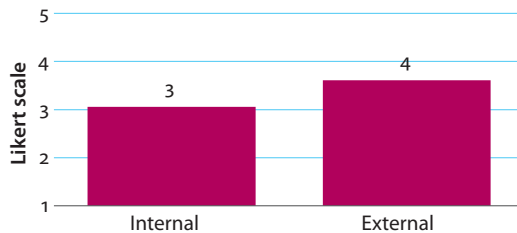


Figure 3. Orientation of Community for Mandarin Chinese

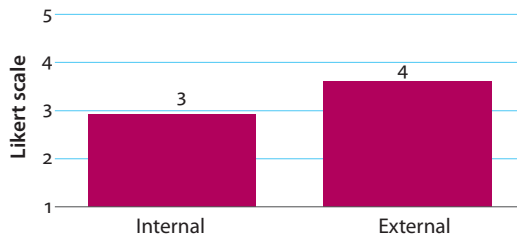


Figure 4. Orientation of Communication for Mandarin

3.2.3 *The importance of specific varieties*

This section presents participants' ratings of the importance of specific varieties, in serving each of the functions identified. Participants' responses to this set of questions will reveal which varieties are more important to being 'Chinese' in Singapore.

Table 2. Overall importance of different varieties by age

	20s	30s	40s	50s	Total
BM	3.86	3.77	3.77	3.53	3.73
TM	3.81	3.71	3.43	3.36	3.58
SM	3.68	3.59	3.26	3.33	3.47
"Dialects"	3.55	3.49	3.52	3.52	3.52
English	3.16	3.32	3.09	3.11	3.17

Table 2 shows the mean total ratings for each of the five varieties tested, without distinguishing between functions. Significant differences are found between ratings for the five varieties ($F(5,95) = 13.97, p > 0.001$). BM received the highest ratings out of the five, with significant contrasts found between ratings for it and SM ($p > 0.001$), "dialects" ($p = 0.011$), and English ($p > 0.001$). This result corroborates with earlier language evaluation findings, in which BM was deemed the most preferred variety. In fact, more interestingly, SM was rated lower than Chinese "dialects". While this difference was not significant ($p > 0.999$), that SM was not rated higher than "dialects" is itself remarkable, since "dialects" have long been stigmatized, given the denigrating language policies toward "dialects" in Singapore. A significant, albeit weak interaction is found between ratings for SM and participant age group ($\tau = -0.219, p = 0.006$), with younger participants more likely than older ones to consider SM important. Nevertheless, even amongst the youngest group of participants, BM was rated significantly more important than SM ($p > 0.001$) while the contrast between mean ratings for SM and "dialects" is not significant ($p = 0.360$). English was also rated significantly less important than any of the other four varieties (BM: $p > 0.001$, TM: $p > 0.001$, SM: $p = 0.002$, "dialects": $p > 0.001$).

Table 3. Importance of varieties to externally-oriented functions by age

	20s	30s	40s	50s	Total
BM	4.38	3.84	3.90	3.70	3.96
TM	3.54	3.58	3.24	3.32	3.42
SM	3.02	3.38	3.00	3.12	3.13
"Dialects"	2.96	3.12	3.18	2.96	3.06
English	2.10	2.90	2.68	2.48	2.54

Table 4. Importance of varieties to internally-oriented functions by age

	20s	30s	40s	50s	Total
BM	3.40	3.72	3.68	3.36	3.54
TM	3.94	3.80	3.54	3.46	3.69
SM	4.16	3.82	3.40	3.58	3.74
“Dialects”	3.68	3.60	3.56	3.68	3.63
English	3.88	3.68	3.36	3.60	3.63

The primacy of BM may reflect its value to externally-oriented functions (Table 3). Significant differences are found between ratings received by the five varieties for these functions ($F(4,96) = 41.41, p > 0.001$). BM is found to be rated significantly higher than any of the other four varieties ($p > 0.001$). BM’s importance thus appears to lie primarily in its instrumental value, corroborating with Chong and Tan’s (2013) findings, that BM is highly rated on measures of status. A weak correlation is found between ratings for BM and participant age group ($\tau = -0.257, p = 0.002$), with younger participants more likely than older ones to consider it important to externally-oriented functions. BM does continue to receive the highest ratings across all age groups, although contrasts between BM and TM amongst participants in their 30s and 50s are not significant (30s: $p = 0.116$, 50s: $p = 0.090$).

When it comes to internally-oriented functions, SM actually received higher mean ratings than any of the other four varieties (Table 4). That said, no significant differences are found between ratings received by the five varieties for these functions ($F(4, 96) = 1.14, p = 0.343$). That “dialects” and English were not rated significantly lower than the three varieties of Mandarin Chinese appears to contradict official discourse on the construction of Chinese ethnicity, which excludes both these varieties. Once again, a weak correlation is found between ratings for SM and participant age group ($\tau = -0.308, p > 0.001$), with younger participants more likely than older ones to consider it important to internally-oriented functions. Even so, contrasts between SM and “dialects” and between SM and English have not been significant, across all four age groups, except between SM and “dialects” with participants in their 20s ($p = 0.016$).

Table 5. Importance of varieties to culture by age

	20s	30s	40s	50s	Total
BM	3.80	3.74	3.74	3.54	3.71
TM	3.94	3.74	3.52	3.30	3.63
SM	3.86	3.58	3.38	3.30	3.53
“Dialects”	4.00	3.76	3.82	3.92	3.88
English	3.50	3.38	3.20	3.24	3.33

Significant differences are found between ratings received by the five varieties for importance to culture ($F(4,96) = 12.24, p > 0.001$). Most notably, “dialects” received the highest mean rating out of the five varieties (Table 5), significantly higher than that received by SM ($p = 0.011$). Moreover, while SM received a higher mean rating than English did, the contrast between the two is not significant ($p = 0.373$). Once again, this appears to contradict official discourse on the construction of Chinese ethnicity. BM received a slightly higher rating than SM did, although the difference between the two is not significant ($p = 0.528$). Weak correlations are found between ratings for TM and SM and participant age group (TM: $\tau = -0.273, p = 0.001$, SM: $\tau = -0.251, p = 0.003$), with younger participants more likely than older ones to consider these varieties important to culture. This is such that, with participants in their 20s, ratings for these varieties are not significantly lower than that for “dialects” (TM: $p = 0.763$, SM: $p = 0.481$). Nevertheless, the mere fact that “dialects” receive a mean rating comparable to that of SM at all is notable, given how much official discourse in Singapore has emphasised the role of Mandarin Chinese in culture.

These results once again suggest that political discourse favours an exonormative standard of Mandarin Chinese over the local variety. BM received overall higher ratings than SM. Meanwhile, the results defy expectations that “dialects” and English would always be rated lower than the varieties of Mandarin Chinese. When it comes to culture and internally-oriented functions, “dialects” and English do rank similar to, or at times, higher than the varieties of Mandarin Chinese.

3.3 Summary of results

The results of the questionnaire suggest that Chinese Singaporeans place a lot of value on instrumental functions. Mandarin Chinese in general is rated more highly for communication than for community and culture, and more highly for externally-oriented functions than for internally-oriented ones. This latter finding is further reflected in the perceived importance of BM, which participants rated significantly higher than SM not only for externally-oriented functions, but also generally. Participants did give SM higher mean ratings than BM for internally-oriented functions, and this is especially so for the younger participants. However, even so, SM is not alone in serving these functions, with “dialects” and English evidently also playing a part. When it comes to culture, participants consistently see “dialects” as being at least as important as SM.

4. The construction of Chinese ethnicity in Singapore

The findings of the study cast doubt on whether Mandarin Chinese is really essential to the construction of Chinese ethnicity in Singapore. Analysis of the political discourse uncovered a potential mismatch between the state's construction of Chinese ethnicity, and the Chinese ethnicity that Chinese Singaporeans are likely to experience in their everyday lives. It also unveiled a potential mismatch between the Mandarin Chinese that officials associate this Chinese ethnicity with and the Mandarin Chinese that most Chinese Singaporeans actually speak. The questionnaire results reveal what may be an outcome of these mismatches: Chinese Singaporeans value Mandarin Chinese mainly for instrumental reasons, they use it as a tool to connect with Chinese outside of Singapore, and as such, favour a foreign variety, BM, over the local one.

Such a result is not surprising. Tupas (2015: 98) points out that language policy in Singapore has always been consistent with an overarching ideology of pragmatism that informs all policy-making. Many Singaporeans, including Chinese Singaporeans, resent the arrival of large numbers of mainland Chinese immigrants in Singapore over the last decade, believing them to be both a strain on Singapore's resources and a threat to its unique culture. Yet Chong and Tan's (2013) findings, just like the present study's, indicate that Chinese Singaporeans still favour foreign Mandarin Chinese accents, including BM, over their own. Tupas (2015: 98) argues that this is evidence that Singaporeans have internalised the state's pragmatic ideology, seeing the usefulness of a variety even as they disapprove of its speakers.

This is not to say that SM is not valued, or that Mandarin Chinese does not play a role at all in the construction of Chinese ethnicity in Singapore. When it comes to internally-oriented functions, for example, SM receives particularly high ratings. However, the questionnaire results also make clear that SM is only part of the picture. "Dialects" and English are in fact rated nearly as important as SM for internally-oriented functions, and at least as important as SM for culture. Chinese Singaporeans thus appear to perceive these varieties as also being part of how they engage with one another, and with their Chinese ethnicity.

Indeed, despite efforts to discourage the use of "dialects" in Singapore through the SMC, Lim (2009: 64) describes a revitalisation of these varieties in Singapore, borne out by their prominent use in recent local films. She also points out the importance that Singaporeans ascribe to "dialects" when it comes to connecting with their heritage. Bokhorst-Heng and Wee (2007: 336) describe the notable failure of the SMC to eradicate the use of "dialect" names in favour of Mandarin Chinese ones. They attribute this to the importance of "dialect" names in maintaining "ancestral connection", since it is "dialect" family names which indicate family lineage.

Meanwhile, as much as official discourse presents the Chinese community in Singapore as distinct from other ethnic groups and from the West, the fact that English plays a part in Chinese ethnicity also suggests that it is not “purely Chinese”. Kamwangamalu (1992: 38–39) describes English as having a “focusing” effect on Singapore’s three main ethnic groups, emphasising their shared Singaporean identity. The results of the present study suggest that English might actually play a minor part not only in culture and community, but specifically in Chinese culture and Chinese community, so that one might go a step further, and posit that Chinese ethnicity itself in Singapore incorporates elements of Singaporean-ness.

The aforementioned tensions surrounding mainland Chinese immigrants in Singapore not only demonstrate that Chinese Singaporeans see themselves as different from these immigrants, it is also telling how often these tensions manifest themselves in disagreements concerning language use and language norms. A *New York Times* article published in 2012 describes how Singaporeans begrudge having to use Mandarin Chinese to order Kopi-C, a coffee drink whose name is derived from Malay, now that coffee shops are increasingly staffed by mainland Chinese workers (Jacobs, 2012). It also describes the unhappiness of Singaporeans who “woke up one day to find the trains more crowded with people who speak Mandarin Chinese” (cited in Jacobs in *New York Times*, 2012). And this unhappiness is not directed towards foreign-accented Mandarin Chinese specifically. A trial conducted by local subway operator SMRT to announce station names in Mandarin Chinese on certain lines met with great controversy. Part of this was out of concern that such announcements were alienating Malay and Indian Singaporeans. However, many were also upset because they believed these announcements were really intended to benefit mainland Chinese immigrants. This is despite the fact that the announcements were made not in a distinctly foreign accent, but a more recognisably local one (Zhou, 2013). Incidents such as these suggest that, with Chinese Singaporeans increasingly speaking English, Mandarin Chinese might actually be seen, at least in certain contexts, as a marker of difference, possibly resulting in a growing disconnect between Mandarin Chinese from Chinese ethnicity in Singapore.

There are two limitations to the present study which should be noted. To begin with, participants answered questions after hearing recordings of BM, TM, and SM, but not of “dialects” or English. This might conceivably have resulted in participants rating the two groups of varieties differently. Nevertheless, this measure was necessary to avoid prompting participants to think of these varieties as specifically foreign or local. We also wanted participants to think of “dialects” collectively, and of English without reference to any specific variety, as official discourse on Mandarin Chinese has done. This would not have been possible with recordings.

The present study also did not control for the participants' level of language proficiency. This is because the study aimed to focus on generational effects, and artificially controlling for language proficiency would have undermined the analysis of these effects, since age is itself a factor determining language proficiency, given historical and ongoing language shift. Nevertheless, future research might examine language proficiency as a factor.

The study did find some significant correlations between participant age groups and the perceived importance of different varieties, with younger participants more likely than older ones to value SM overall, as well as with regard to internally-oriented functions and culture. These correlations were consistently weak, and the major findings of the study were unaffected by them. Younger participants also appear more likely to value SM, English, and "dialects" in a variety of contexts, albeit these associations were not statistically significant. Findings concerning differences between age groups are thus difficult to interpret. A longitudinal study might be more productive in revealing changes to the perceived importance of Mandarin Chinese to Chinese ethnicity in Singapore over time.

The findings of the present study raise broader questions about the pan-Chinese identity. Singapore's government have appealed to such an identity in promoting a common Chinese ethnicity as the basis for intimate relations between Chinese Singaporeans and Chinese nationals. However, what does this identity even refer to, when the diasporic Chinese communities inevitably incorporate into their own Chinese ethnicity cultural elements of their adopted societies? Can such an identity co-exist with a view of Mandarin Chinese as a resource to be exploited? These questions are more important now that Chinese ethnicity has renewed relevance. With China's diplomatic and economic clout growing, diasporic Chinese communities across the world may find that they have an interest in the meaning of Chinese ethnicity globally. They may find they have an opportunity, or perhaps even feel compelled, to align themselves with or against this global Chinese ethnicity.

Despite the best efforts by Singapore's government to portray Mandarin Chinese as essential to the construction of Chinese ethnicity, results of this study show that "dialects" and English often also play an important part in how Chinese Singaporeans experience their ethnicity. Chinese ethnicity is not homogenous, and appears to incorporate elements of Singaporean-ness that are not strictly Chinese. The findings highlight problems with the way language planning is carried out in Singapore, and have broader implications towards an understanding of a pan-Chinese identity, and of Singaporean-ness.

References

- Bokhorst-Heng, Wendy D. 1998. "Language planning and management in Singapore." In *English in new cultural contexts: Reflections from Singapore*, ed. by Foley, Joseph A., et al., 287–309. Singapore: Oxford University Press.
- Bokhorst-Heng, Wendy D. 1999. "Singapore's Speak Mandarin Campaign: Language ideological debates in the imagining of the nation." In *Language ideological debates*, ed. by Blommaert, Jan, 235–265. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter. doi: 10.1515/9783110808049.235
- Bokhorst-Heng, Wendy D., and Wee, Lionel. 2007. "Language planning in Singapore: On pragmatism, communitarianism and personal names." *Current Issues in Language Planning* 8(3): 324–343. doi: 10.2167/cilp118.0
- Chen, Ping. 1999. *Modern Chinese: history and sociolinguistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. doi: 10.1017/CBO9781139164375
- Chiew, Seen Kong. 1995. "The Chinese in Singapore: From colonial times to the present". In *Southeast Asian Chinese: The socio-cultural dimension*, Vol. 2, ed. by Suryadinata, Leo, 42–66. Singapore: Marshall Cavendish Academic.
- Chong, Rachael Hui-Hui, and Ying-Ying Tan. 2013. "Attitudes toward accents of Mandarin in Singapore." *Chinese Language & Discourse* 4(1): 120–140. doi: 10.1075/cld.4.1.04cho
- Chua, Catherine Siew Kheng. 2004. "Singapore's literacy policy and its conflicting ideologies." *Current Issues in Language Planning* 5(1): 64–76. doi: 10.1080/14664200408669080
- Dixon, L. Quentin. 2009. "Assumptions behind Singapore's language-in-education policy: Implications for language planning and second language acquisition." *Language Policy* 8(2): 117–137. doi: 10.1007/s10993-009-9124-0
- Eggington, William G. 2003. "Unplanned Language Planning." In *The Oxford Handbook of Applied Linguistics*, 2nd Edition, ed. by Kaplan, Robert. B, 452–462. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Goh, Chok Tong. 1988. "Speech by Mr Goh Chok Tong, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence, at the PAP Youth Wing Charity Night, 28 October 1988, at 8.00 PM." National Archives of Singapore (gct19881028s).
- Goh, Chok Tong. 1991. "English Version of Speech in Mandarin by the Prime Minister Mr Goh Chok Tong, at the Launching Ceremony of the 1991 Speak Mandarin Campaign, at Singapore Conference Hall Auditorium on Monday, 30 September 1991 at 8.00 PM". National Archives of Singapore (gct19910930).
- Goh, Chok Tong. 1999. "Speech By Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong At The 70Th Anniversary Celebration Dinner Of The Teochew Poit Ip Huay Kuan On Saturday, 4 September 1999, At 7.45 PM At The Neptune Theatre Restaurant". National Archives of Singapore (gct19990904t).
- Guo, Longsheng. 2004. "The relationship between Putonghua and Chinese dialects". In *Language policy in the People's Republic of China: Theory and practice since 1949*, Vol. 4., ed. by Zhou, Minglang, & Sun, Hongkai, 45–54. Boston: Springer. doi: 10.1007/1-4020-8039-5_3
- Gupta, Anthea Fraser, and Yeok, Siew Pui. 1995. "Language shift in a Singapore family". *Journal of Multilingual & Multicultural Development* 16(4): 301–314.
- Jacobs, Andrew. "In Singapore, Vitriol Against Chinese Newcomers," *New York Times*, Jul. 27, 2012. <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/27/world/asia/in-singapore-vitriol-against-new-comers-from-mainland-china.html>.

- Kamwangamalu, Nkonko M. 1992. "Multilingualism and Social Identity in Singapore." *Journal of Asian Pacific Communication* 3(1): 33–47.
- Kwan-Terry, Anna. 2000. "Language shift, mother tongue, and identity in Singapore." *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 143(1): 85–106.
doi: 10.1515/ijsl.2000.143.85
- Lee, Hsien Loong. 1994. "Speech by BG (NS) Lee Hsien Loong Deputy Prime Minister at the 1994 Speak Mandarin Campaign Launch on 6 Sep 94 at Shangri-La Hotel at 8.00 PM." National Archives of Singapore (lhl19940906s).
- Lee, Hsien Loong. 1999. "Ministerial Statement by DPM BG Lee Hsien Loong on Chinese Language in Schools in Parliament on 20 Jan 99". Ministry of Education Singapore, 19 May 2015, <http://www.moe.gov.sg/media/speeches/1999/200199.htm>.
- Lee, Kuan Yew. 1979. "Excerpts of a Talk Given by the Prime Minister Mr Lee Kuan Yew on "The Joint Campus: the Importance and the Limits of Bilingualism" Organised by the Joint Campus Students Association, on 5 January 1979." National Archives of Singapore (lky19790105).
- Lee, Kuan Yew. 1984. "Speech by Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew at the Opening of the Speak Mandarin Campaign on Friday, 21 Sep 84, at the Singapore Conference Hall." National Archives of Singapore (lky19840921a).
- Lee, Kuan Yew. 2004. "Speech by Senior Minister Mr Lee Kuan Yew at the International Conference on National Boundaries and Cultural Configurations, 10th Anniversary Celebration of the Centre for Chinese Language and Culture, Nanyang Technological University, Wednesday, 23 June 2004." National Archives of Singapore (2004062302).
- Lee, Kuan Yew. 2009. "Speech by Mr Lee Kuan Yew, Minister Mentor, at Speak Mandarin Campaign's 30th Anniversary launch, 17 March 2009, 5.00 P.M. at NTUC Auditorium." Speak Mandarin Campaign, 19 May 2016, http://mandarin.org.sg/en/~media/smc/documents/goh%20mm%20lee%20kwan%20yew_smc%20launch%20speech_english_170309.pdf.
- Lee, Kuan Yew. 2012. *My Lifelong Challenge: Singapore's Bilingual Journey*. Singapore: Straits Times Press.
- Li, Wei, Saravanan, Vanithamani, and Ng, Lee Hoon Julia. 1997. "Language shift in the Teochew community in Singapore: A family domain analysis". *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 18(5): 364–384.
- Liang, Sihua. 2015. "The Politics and Sociolinguistics of Chinese Dialects." In *Language Attitudes and Identities in Multilingual China: A Linguistic Ethnography*. London: Springer.
doi: 10.1007/978-3-319-12619-7_2
- Lim, Lisa. 2009. "Beyond fear and loathing in SG: The real mother tongues and language policies in multilingual Singapore." *AILA Review* 22(1): 52–71. doi: 10.1075/aila.22.05lim
- Luo, Yadong. 2007. *Guanxi and business (Vol. 5)*. Singapore: World Scientific. doi: 10.1142/6256
- Pakir, Anne. 1993. "Two tongue tied: Bilingualism in Singapore." *Journal of Multilingual & Multicultural Development* 14(1–2): 73–90. doi: 10.1080/01434632.1993.9994521
- Pakir, Anne. 2004. "Medium-of-instruction policy in Singapore". In, Tollefson, James W., & Tsui, Amy B. M. (Eds.). *Medium of instruction policies. Which agenda? Whose agenda*, 117–133. Mahwah, NJ: L. Erlbaum Publishers.
- PuruShotam, Nirmala Sreirekam. 2000. *Negotiating Multiculturalism: Disciplining Difference in Singapore*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter. doi: 10.1515/9783110801903
- Ramsey, S. Robert. 1987. *The Languages of China*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

- Rubdy, Rani. 2005. "Remaking Singapore for the new age: Official ideology and the realities of practice in language-in-education." In *Decolonisation, globalisation: Language-in-education policy and practice*, edited by Lin, Angel, and Peter W. Martin. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Tan, Charlene. 2006. "Change and continuity: Chinese language policy in Singapore." *Language Policy* 5(1): 41–62. doi: 10.1007/s10993-005-5625-7
- Tupas, Ruanni. 2015. "Pragmatism, Mandarin and political culture in Singapore: recent reprises of an ideology." *Journal of World Languages* 2(2–3): 94–105. doi: 10.1080/21698252.2016.1183269
- Wee, Lionel. 2002. "When English is not a mother tongue: Linguistic ownership and the Eurasian community in Singapore." *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 23(4): 282–295. doi: 10.1080/01434630208666470
- Wee, Lionel. 2003. "Linguistic instrumentalism in Singapore." *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 24(3): 211–224. doi: 10.1080/01434630308666499
- Wee, Lionel, and Bokhorst-Heng, Wendy D. 2005. "Language policy and nationalist ideology: Statal narratives in Singapore." *Multilingua* 24(3): 159–183. doi: 10.1515/mult.2005.24.3.159
- Wong, Aline. (2000). "Keynote Address by Dr Aline Wong, Senior Minister of State for Education, Ministry of Education, Singapore, at the International Baccalaureate (IB) Asia-Pacific 16th Annual Regional Conference on Curriculum, Assessment and Cultural Equity to be Held on Friday, 24 November 2000, at 9.15 AM." Ministry of Education Singapore, 19 May 2016, <http://www.moe.gov.sg/media/speeches/2000/sp24112000.htm>.
- Wong, Kan Seng. 1985. "Speech by Mr Wong Kan Seng, Minister of State (Community Development & Communications & Information), at the Speak Mandarin Campaign Quiz Competition At Kuo Chuan Community Centre on Saturday, 12 October 1985 at 8.00 PM." National Archives of Singapore (wks19851012s).
- Wong, Kan Seng. 1995. "Speech by Mr Wong Kan Seng, Minister for Home Affairs at the Launch of the 1995 Speak Mandarin Campaign on Monday 11 September 1995 at 7.30 PM at the Television Corporation of Singapore (TCS) TV Theatre." National Archives of Singapore (wks19950911s).
- Yen, Ching Hwang. 1986. *A Social History of the Chinese in Singapore and Malaya, 1800–1911*. Singapore: Oxford University Press.
- Zhou, Rongchen. 2013. "What's in a station name? A healthy dose of identity & pride!" *IPS Commons*, 5 September 2016. <http://www.ipsccommons.sg/whats-in-a-station-name-a-healthy-dose-of-identity-pride/>.

Appendix A. List of questionnaire questions

The following is a complete list of questions posed to participants of the questionnaire. Not all the questions were used in the final analysis.

Part I. Participant data (4 questions)

- Gender
- Age group
 - 20–29
 - 30–39
 - 40–49
 - 50 & above
- Citizenship
- Ethnicity

Part II. Language use data (3 questions)

- When you were growing up, what languages did you speak regularly?
 - English
 - Mandarin
 - Malay
 - Tamil
 - Other Chinese Dialect(s): _____
 - Other language(s): _____
- Currently, what languages did you speak regularly?
 - English
 - Mandarin
 - Malay
 - Tamil
 - Other Chinese Dialect(s): _____
 - Other language(s): _____
- Which of the following languages are you most fluent in? (You may select more than one language if you are roughly equally fluent in both.)
 - English
 - Mandarin
 - Malay
 - Tamil
 - Other Chinese Dialect(s): _____
 - Other language(s): _____

Part III. The importance of Mandarin (15 questions)

(All the following questions are to be answered on a 5-point rating scale, with

1 = Strongly disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Neither disagree or agree

4 = Agree

5 = Strongly Agree)

- It is important to be proficient in Mandarin in order to...
 - Culture
 - ... understand Chinese folk tales and the stories behind Chinese holidays and festivals
 - ... understand Chinese rituals and practices (such as staying up late on lunar new year eve, lunar new year greetings, greeting relatives by their appropriate titles, etc.)
 - ... participate in Chinese festivals (such as the lunar new year, the moon cake festival, the dumpling festival, the hungry ghost festival, etc.)
 - ... learn and understand traditional Chinese values (such as filial piety).
 - ... avoid becoming too Westernised in terms of lifestyle and values
 - Community
 - Internal orientation
 - ... feel a sense of community with other Singaporeans
 - ... be accepted by other Singaporeans as being one of them
 - ... feel a sense of community with Chinese Singaporeans
 - ... be accepted by other Chinese Singaporeans as being one of them
 - External orientation
 - ... feel a sense of community with Chinese people from China
 - ... be accepted by Chinese people from China as being a fellow Chinese person.
 - Communication
 - Internal orientation
 - ... communicate effectively with other Chinese Singaporeans
 - ... relate to other Singaporeans through shared Chinese values and cultural knowledge
 - External orientation
 - ... communicate effectively with Chinese people from China
 - ... relate to Chinese people from China through shared Chinese values and cultural knowledge

Part IV. Which Mandarin? (4 + 3*6 = 22 questions)

(Participants will be directed to listen carefully to three audio recordings, of a Singaporean Mandarin speaker, a Taiwanese Mandarin speaker, and a Beijing Mandarin speaker. Participants will be told that these recordings are of “three Mandarin speakers”, without explicitly stating that each recording is of a different variety of Mandarin.)

- Which of the above speakers sounds most like how you speak?
- Which of the above speakers sounds most like how you would like to speak?
- Which of the above speakers sounds most like how Chinese Singaporeans generally speak?
- Which of the above speakers sounds most like how Chinese Singaporeans should speak.

(Participants will be directed to listen again to each of the above audio recordings in turn. Participants will be asked to rate each speaker according to the following set of questions, on a 5-point Likert scale, with

1 = Strongly disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Neither disagree or agree

4 = Agree

5 = Strongly Agree)

- The speaker will be able to...
- Culture
- ... learn and understand traditional Chinese values in Singapore.
- ... understand and participate in traditional Chinese rituals and festivals in Singapore.
- Internal community
- ... be accepted by other Chinese Singaporeans as being one of them.
- External community
- ... be accepted by Chinese people from China as being a fellow Chinese person.
- Internal communication
- ... relate to other Chinese Singaporeans and communicate effectively with them.
- External communication
- ... relate to Chinese people from China and communicate effectively with them.

Part V. Other languages in Singapore (12 questions)

(All the following questions are to be answered on a 5-point Likert scale, with

1 = Strongly disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Neither disagree or agree

4 = Agree

5 = Strongly Agree)

- A Chinese Singaporean speaking primarily a Chinese dialect (such as Cantonese or Hokkien) would be able to...
- Culture
- ... learn and understand traditional Chinese values in Singapore.
- ... understand and participate in traditional Chinese rituals and festivals in Singapore.
- Internal community
- ... be accepted by other Chinese Singaporeans as being one of them.
- External community
- ... be accepted by Chinese people from China as being a fellow Chinese person.
- Internal communication
- ... relate to other Chinese Singaporeans and communicate effectively with them.
- External communication
- ... relate to Chinese people from China and communicate effectively with them.
- A Chinese Singaporean speaking primarily English would be able to...
- Culture
- ... learn and understand traditional Chinese values in Singapore.
- ... understand and participate in traditional Chinese rituals and festivals in Singapore.

- *Internal community*
- ... be accepted by other Chinese Singaporeans as being one of them.
- *External community*
- ... be accepted by Chinese people from China as being a fellow Chinese person.
- *Internal communication*
- ... relate to other Chinese Singaporeans and communicate effectively with them.
- *External communication*
- ... relate to Chinese people from China and communicate effectively with them.

Part VI. Reactions to LPP in Singapore (8 questions)

(All the following questions are to be answered on a 5-point Likert scale, with

1 = Strongly disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Neither disagree or agree

4 = Agree

5 = Strongly Agree)

- Do you agree with the Speak Mandarin Campaign in Singapore that...
 - ... speaking Mandarin is crucial in order for Chinese Singaporeans of different dialect groups to remain united.
 - ... speaking Mandarin is crucial in order for Chinese Singaporeans to preserve their traditional Chinese cultural values.
 - ... speaking only English will cause Chinese Singaporeans to become too Westernised.
 - ... speaking a Chinese dialect makes it more difficult for a Chinese Singaporean to learn Mandarin properly.
 - ... Chinese Singaporeans should focus on learning to speak Mandarin well first, even if it means giving up speaking dialects.
 - ... Standard Mandarin as it is spoken in Beijing should serve as a model for Chinese Singaporeans seeking to perfect their Mandarin.
 - ... strong proficiency in Mandarin will allow Chinese Singaporeans to gain a firm grasp in Chinese cultural heritage, history, literature and the arts.
- ... speaking Mandarin will allow Chinese Singaporeans to relate to Mainland Chinese as fellow Chinese people with a common heritage and culture.

Appendix B. Transcript of Questionnaire Stimuli

Audio stimuli consist three audio recordings taken with permission from Chong & Tan (2013). Each recording consists a speaker of a distinct variety of Mandarin, reading the following text in Mandarin Chinese:

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。

English gloss:

Early in the morning, my mother shouted me awake and reminded me i had Chinese tuition to attend. In fact, what she didn't know was that I had long already awoken, and moreover had been eagerly waiting for the clock to tell me it was time to go.

Authors' addresses

Kevin Zi-Hao Wong
School of Humanities
Nanyang Technological University
Singapore 637332
Singapore

Ying-Ying Tan
School of Humanities
Nanyang Technological University
Singapore
yytan@ntu.edu.sg