

# LANGUAGE IN INDIA

Strength for Today and Bright Hope for Tomorrow

Volume 10 : 12 December 2010

ISSN 1930-2940

Managing Editor: M. S. Thirumalai, Ph.D.

Editors: B. Mallikarjun, Ph.D.

Sam Mohanlal, Ph.D.

B. A. Sharada, Ph.D.

A. R. Fatihi, Ph.D.

Lakhan Gusain, Ph.D.

K. Karunakaran, Ph.D.

Jennifer Marie Bayer, Ph.D.

S. M. Ravichandran, Ph.D.

G. Baskaran, Ph.D.

## Colloquial versus Standard in Singaporean Language Policies

Tania Rahman, M.A.

---

---

### Abstract

This paper is based on an investigation of the standard - colloquial debate among the four official languages, English, Mandarin, Tamil and Malay in Singapore. The aim of the study is to examine (1) major steps/movements in the history of Singaporean language policies that have been influential in forwarding the debate in the country and (2) how this debate has been reflected in the country's educational policymaking.

Expanding on Gupta's (1989, 1994, 2001) "diglossia model", the study examines the diglossic "H" - "L" relationships among the languages to understand the standard - colloquial issue in the country.

The outcomes of this study reveal that (1) the standard - colloquial debate can be extended beyond the "Singlish" - Singapore Standard English (SSE) question to the other three official languages, and (2) the Singapore government's drive for standard language usage marks significant shift in language use and attitudes of the speakers towards the vernacular languages in the country.

**Keywords:** varieties of language, standard and colloquial varieties, diglossia, "H" and "L" varieties, language policy, Singapore Colloquial English (SCE) or "Singlish",

Language in India [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com)

1

10 : 12 December 2010

Tania Rahman, M.A.

Colloquial versus Standard in Singaporean Language Policies

Singapore Standard English (SSE), Literary Tamil (LT), Spoken Tamil (ST), Sebutan Baku (SB) and Johor-Riau system of pronunciation.

## **Introduction**

The debate between the standard and the colloquial varieties of language is age-old and the promotion of the standard variety is still debated in many parts of the world today. An interesting case is the language situation in Singapore where the standard – colloquial debate concerns multiple languages and their speakers.

Standard English is treated as the “High” (H) language in all communications and the local variety of English known as “Singlish” is considered as the “Low” (L) variety as reflected in government statements.

Mandarin is considered to be the second prestigious language among the majority Chinese community members whereas other Chinese dialects such as Hokkien, Teochiew, Hakka, Cantonese are regarded as the “Low” varieties to be spoken in informal situations like marketplace and home.

Tamil, the language chosen as a majority Indian language in the country, is also marked by the standard – colloquial distinction between Literary Tamil (LT) and Spoken Tamil (ST).

The H – L distinction is also present in the use of Malay language in Singapore, as it varies according to Sebutan Baku (SB) or standard *Bahasa Melayu* and Johor – Riau varieties of Malay pronunciation.

## **Language Policies in Singapore**

The language policies since independence of the country, particularly in the education sector, have been influential in engendering the current debate on the use of standard and colloquial varieties of languages in the country.

In Singapore, the spoken variants such as the Chinese dialects (Hokkien, Hakka, Teochew, Cantonese), spoken Tamil, and other languages are considered as “Low” varieties as proficiency in these varieties is neither recognized by the government nor the general public (Rubdy, 2007), despite being favored by the young generation students (Lee, 1983 and Pakir, 1997), because of the official use of “exonormic” Mandarin, RP English, Literary Tamil, and standard Bahasa Melayu (Schiffman, 1997). In fact the Singaporean education system regards these vernaculars as a “problem” that needs to be eradicated, rather than a “resource” (Schiffman, 1997; Rubdy, 2007).

## **The Goal of This Paper**

Language in India [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com)

10 : 12 December 2010

Tania Rahman, M.A.

Colloquial versus Standard in Singaporean Language Policies

The present paper aims to examine how the language policies in the country have reinforced the debate between the standard varieties of the four official languages in the country - English, Mandarin, Tamil and Malay and the vernaculars, i.e., the mother tongues of different communities. In search of an answer to this question, the paper explores the major policy attempts undertaken by the Singapore government regarding language use in the country since independence. The focus will be on the domain of education as it has been a crucial implementation tool for the government to materialize the language policies for bringing significant changes in language use in the country.

In discussing the language policies of the country, background information on the country's ethnolinguistic situation is explored which reveals the complex nature of the multilingual and multiethnic nation.

For analyzing the standard – colloquial debate in the Singaporean context, I have examined Gupta's (1989, 1994, 2001) diglossic model and found that the H – L relationship between the standard and colloquial varieties of English in Singapore, recognized now respectively as Singapore Standard English (SSE) and Singapore Colloquial English (SCE) or Singlish, are also evident in the other three official languages – Mandarin, Tamil and Malay. In order to discuss the standard – colloquial situation in Singapore, it is important to understand what exactly the term “standard” signify which is discussed below.

### **The Standard - Colloquial Debate in Language**

The question of what makes a particular variety of a language the standard variety is problematic. The “standard variety” is defined as “the historically legitimated, panregional, oral and written language form of the social middle or upper class” and also “subject to extensive normalization (especially in the realm of grammar, pronunciation, and spelling)” (Bussmann, 1996, p. 451 cited in Grzega, 2000). Usually it is characterized as

- “written variety” (Grzega, 2000),
- “codified” (Dittmar, 1997; Huesmann, 1998),
- “supraregional” (Dittmar, 1997; Huesmann, 1998; Grzega, 2000),
- “preferred in institutional contexts and official situations” (Grzega, 2000),
- “of overt prestige” (Huesmann, 1998),
- “taught in school, and hardly occurring in everyday speech in its idealized form” (Dittmar, 1997, p. 201; also in Grzega, 2000).

Huesmann (1998, p. 34) mentions some “additional empirical features” of standard varieties which characterize them as -

- “group-specific”,
- “prescriptive”,

Language in India [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com)

3

10 : 12 December 2010

Tania Rahman, M.A.

Colloquial versus Standard in Singaporean Language Policies

- “multifunctional”,
- “used in written language”

Unlike Huesmann (1998), Grzega (2000) identifies two sorts of standard varieties: “(a) a formal one - codified, prescribed by recognized authorities, relatively homogeneous, used in public situations (particularly monologs) – and (b) an informal one - more subjective, more flexible, part of a standard-nonstandard continuum, basically used in private dialogs, all in all: a pluralistic concept”.

### **On Defining Standard English**

Keeping these definitions and characteristics of the standard variety in mind, it is not easy to agree on the norm or norms that should apply to define varieties such as Standard English. For example, Hansen, Carls & Lucko (1996, p. 28) distinguish between “an official standard variety”, a variety that is “orientated toward one of the two main norms of English (English English or American English)” and “an unofficial standard variety” which has potentially more national features.

Trudgill (1999) considers Standard English as a “dialect” rather than a “language”, “accent”, “style”, “register” or “a set of prescriptive rules” defining it as “simply one variety of English among many” or “a sub-variety of English”. Biber, et al. (1999, p. 18), however, further classify between “standard” English, “standard English”, and “standard spoken English” according to their uses in written and spoken “registers”:

For written registers, we adopt an implicit, descriptive approach to characterize ‘standard’ English, in that we describe the grammatical forms and patterns actually used in published texts (as opposed to prescribing explicitly the forms that should be used in ‘standard English’). [...] we define standard spoken English as including grammatical characteristics shared widely across dialects, excluding those variants restricted to local or limited social/regional varieties.

### **Prescriptivist Attitude**

In Singapore, the attitude of policymakers, like decision-makers in many parts of the world, have been more or less “prescriptivist” on the use of non-standard varieties such as Singaporean Colloquial English (SCE) or “Singlish”, a “contact variety” (Gupta, 1998), which is regarded as detrimental to the development of English proficiency among the general public, particularly in the education sector and hence branded as “bad English”. Mr. Lee Kuan Yew, Singapore’s former Prime Minister, once commented:

I think it’s important that you know the English language because it is the international language, and you speak it in the standard form.

Do not speak Singlish! If you do, you are the loser. Only foreign academics like to write about it. You have to live with it. And your interlocutors, when they hear you, their ears go askew. You detract from the message that you're sending.

I don't have to speak with an English upper-class accent. But I speak in a way which makes it easy for them to understand me and, therefore, they are not distracted by my background.

(Lee Kuan Yew, speech to National University of Singapore students, 29 July 1994, quoted in *The Sunday Times*, July 31 1994)

Hansen, Carls & Lucko (1996) and Lee Kuan Yew (1994) appear to be more “prescriptive” in emphasizing standardized norms or rules and, in this way, by declining existing non-standard varieties, they tend to brand non-standard forms as “inferior”. Trudgill (1999) and Biber et al. (1999), on the other hand, are more “descriptive” as they focus more on describing and presenting language varieties considering language use in-context than just dwelling on the standardized norms.

The prescriptivist attitude of the Singaporean government has been instrumental in the rising debate concerning the diglossic “High” (H) - “Low” (L) relationships between standard and non-standard varieties in the country.

### **Singapore Situation**

It is, therefore, significant to examine the language situation in Singapore in the light of diglossic relationships of languages in the country. In order to do so, it is first significant to define diglossia and its features which are discussed below. The discussion is followed by an examination of the language and language policy situation in Singapore revealing diglossic relationships between the standard - non-standard varieties of different languages in the country.

### **Diglossia**

Propounded by Ferguson (1959), the concept of diglossia refers to “a situation where two languages or language varieties occur side by side in a community, and each has a clear range of functions” (Deterding 1998, p. 18). The varieties are namely: the “High” variety or the “H” variety and the “Low” variety or the “L” variety.

The H-variety is recognized as the “standard” variety for use in formal or “official” situations, such as public media (both print and electronic), education, law and religious services. On the other hand, the situations for the use of the L-variety are generally “informal”, e.g. shopping and exchanges between family and friends.

The “archetypal” examples of diglossia include language situations in the Arabic, Swiss – German and Tamil communities (Ferguson, 1959; Deterding, 1998) where a sharp distinction between standard and colloquial varieties is maintained in the use of standard varieties such as classical Arabic, Standard German and Literary Tamil in formal situations, e.g., classrooms, literature and news media, limiting the colloquial or non-standard in informal interactions such as exchanges among family members and friends.

As Deterding (1998) explains, a sense of “high prestige” is attached to proficiency in using the H-variety, even if everyone does not possess “sufficient” education to attain that level of proficiency (p. 18). Despite such high prestige, H-variety might seem “quite absurd” if it is used in informal situations like “at home” or “when chatting with close friends” instead of the L-variety (p. 18).

Although Ferguson’s (1959) H – L distinction entails a clear separation between the “circumstances”, linguistic features and proficiency in the use of the varieties, Fasold (1984) questioned the “strict separation between the two varieties” (Deterding 1998, p. 19) by predicting a possible continuum between the H and L varieties in the “archetypal” diglossic Arabic and Tamil societies.

Such continua are significant to consider in multilingual societies such as Singapore where it would be a fallacy to draw a strict line between the “H” and “L” varieties of languages in the country. Fishman’s (1967) concept of “extended diglossia” is significant in relation to the language situation in Singapore as here a number of “genetically unrelated” languages manifest the H – L functions, some being used in formal situations such as pedagogical, administrative, religious or other similar “prestigious domains” (Schiffman, 1997) and the others being used in informal contexts such as in the home domain.

### **Extending the Concept of Diglossia to Singapore Situation**

The article aims at discussing how the concept of diglossia can be extended and applied to analyze the language situation in Singapore in search of ways in which the use of the L-variety can be tolerated in educational institutions. For this purpose, the functions of different languages and their varieties and dialects including the agents and instruments emphasizing the standard variety over the non-standard ones in Singapore are identified. As bilingualism is a crucial aspect in Singaporean language policies, a distinction between languages, their varieties and dialects is maintained throughout the discussion in the paper in light of bilingualism to understand the diglossic relationships of languages, dialects and varieties in the country.

### **Bilingualism and Diglossia in Singapore**

With a population of more than 4.5 million (4,657,542 according to the CIA World Factbook, July 2009 est.), Singapore is a multilingual and multiethnic state in Southeast Asia. The country's demography comprises of 75.6% Chinese, 13.6% Malays, 8.7% Indians and 2.1% of "Others" (2005 General Household Survey, Singapore Department of Statistics).

The Chinese in Singapore are a "diverse" community comprising sub-groups such as Hokkien (43.1%), Teochew (22.1%), Cantonese (16.4%), Hakka (7.4%), Hainanese (7.1%) and "smaller communities" of Foochow, Henghua, Shanghainese and Hokchia (David, Cavallaro and Colluzi, 2009, p. 165 - 166).

Another ethno-linguistically "diverse" community comprises the Indians including speech communities such as Tamils (63.9%), Malayalees (8.6%), Punjabis (6.7%) and other "smaller Indian linguistic communities" like the Bengali, Urdu, Sindhi, and Gujerati (p. 166).

The Malays are a more "homogenous" group than either the Chinese or the Indians in Singapore despite being the "descendents of various ethnic groups such as Boyanese, Bugis or Javanese" (p. 168) comprising 13.6% of the total population in the country.

According to the *Ethnologue* report (2009), around 21 languages are spoken in Singapore (Lewis, 2009) of which four languages have the status of official languages – English, Mandarin, Malay and Tamil. Table 1 shows the distribution of different ethnic communities and the languages spoken at home in Singapore (in percentage), according to the 2005 General Household Survey:

**Table 1:** Major ethnic communities and their language usage at home in Singapore (2005)

<b>Ethnic communities</b>	<b>(%) of total Population</b>	<b>Languages</b>	<b>Language use at home (2000)</b>	<b>Language use at home (2005)</b>
Chinese	75.6%	English	23.9%	28.7%
Hokkien (43.1%)	0.33%			
Teochew (22.1%)	0.17%	Mandarin	47.2%	45.1%
Cantonese (16.4%)	0.12%			
Hakka (7.4%)	0.056%	Dialects	30.7%	23.9%
Hainanese (7.1%)	0.054%			
Malay	13.6%	English	7.9%	13%
Indians	8.7%	Malay	91.6%	86.8%
		English	35.6%	39%



Tamils (63.9%)	0.56%			
Malayalees (8.6%)	0.007%	Malay	11.6%	10.6%
Punjabis (6.7%)	0.006%	Tamil	42.9%	36.8%

Source: 2005 General Household Survey, Singapore Department of Statistics

The term “bilingualism” in Singapore refers to language skills in English and “one other, usually the child’s proscribed “mother tongue”” (Pakir, 1999, p. 342). English has been treated in Singapore as the “non-ethnic and thus neutral official language” which in the post-independence era has become the “*de facto* dominant working language” in the country (Kuo, 1983, 1999). It is treated as the “high language for all formal official functions” and “the only language taught in all schools at all levels” (Kuo, 1983, 1999). Mandarin has been selected as the lingua franca among the Chinese communities in Singapore. Malay is the national language of Singapore with only some “ceremonial functions” limited to the national anthem and military commands (Rappa and Wee, 2006, p. 82). Tamil, a language spoken by a major portion of the Indian population in Singapore, has been selected as the major Indian language representing the Indian communities in Singapore.

Historically and sociolinguistically, Singapore has had a multilingual and diglossic language system. During the British rule, Singaporeans used to communicate either in Bazaar Malay, a form of “pidginized” Malay (Gupta, 1998), or in “simplified” Hokkien (used among the Chinese community), in the marketplace. English was used by the colonial government for administrative purposes. Mandarin, generally used in formal occasions as Chinese national holiday celebrations and marriage ceremonies and also related to the rise of Chinese nationalism, was considered as prestigious, hence the “High” variety among the Chinese community members, and so Chinese schools were founded in large numbers at the beginning of the last century to teach in the variety. In other words, Bazaar Malay and Hokkien were deemed as the street/market languages i.e. the “Low” varieties whereas English and Mandarin were regarded as the “High” varieties, or the languages of education, administration, and formal celebrations. Other tongues such as Cantonese, Teochew, Tamil, or Punjabi apart from the “High” languages were regarded as the language of the home and similar speech group assemblage.

Since the 1990s, English has been in use not only as the “High” variety used in formal situations but also as a “Low” variant in its “Singlish” form used in streets, marketplaces and also at home replacing Bazaar Malay and market Hokkien. Today Mandarin, Standard Malay and Literary Tamil (LT) enjoy the official status in Singaporean language policy with the prestige of standard languages for the three major communities in the country.

### **Standard versus Colloquial Debate in Singapore**

Language in India [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com)

8

10 : 12 December 2010

Tania Rahman, M.A.

Colloquial versus Standard in Singaporean Language Policies



As the standard – colloquial debate in Singapore is manifested mainly in relation to the four official languages in the country: English, Mandarin, Malay and Tamil, the following discussion concerns these languages.

### **Standard Singapore English (SSE) versus Singapore Colloquial English (SCE) or Singlish**

In the standard – colloquial debate concerning English usage in Singapore, the Speak Good English Movement (SGEM) has been a crucial instrument for the government to materialize its prescriptivist ideologies regarding Standard English usage in the country. The colloquial variety of Singapore English, popularly known as “Singlish”, is considered by the Singapore government as a “sign of declining local English standards” (Wu Man-Fat, 2005).

Government initiatives for maintaining Standard English in the country even involved measures such as “the import of native speakers” (Wu Man-Fat, 2005) for teaching in schools and training local teachers, even though the measure caused “students’ confusion over accents” (Gopinathan, 1980, cited in Wu Man-Fat, 2005). Local textbooks of English, in accordance with the approach of the government on Standard English, are aimed at providing opportunities “for students to acquire a command of the English language that is as close to the level of native speakers as possible” (Jones and Mann, 1999). In adopting these steps, it appears that, according to Wu Man-Fat (2005), “rather than recognizing the need of a new ‘standard’ variety among Singaporeans for societal cohesion, the Singapore Government is trying to ‘remedy’ the situation”.

With such idealized view of Standard English, the use of Singlish in contexts such as schools in Singapore is “strongly discouraged due to concerns that it will impede the acquisition of ‘good English’, the effective development of students’ literacy skills and the quality of their overall education” (Rubdy, 2007, p. 308). Even many of the Singaporean citizens support the government stance on the use of standard English and discarding “Singlish” considering it as a “corrupted” and “degenerate form” and maintain “strong disapproval of teachers using this variety” (Rubdy, 2007, p. 308).

The Speak Good English Movement (SGEM) was launched in 2000 by the then Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong to “promote the use of good English among Singaporeans” (Media Release for the Speak Good English Movement (SGEM) 2004) and also to “stem the spread of Singlish among Singaporeans” (Rubdy, 2007, p. 308; also in Rubdy, 2001). In the past decade, the Singapore government has been actively promoting Standard English usage in the country through persuasive slogans and themes each year targeting different groups.

In reaction to the government drive for raising the bar for Standard English, academicians such as Lee (1983) and Pakir (1997) identified the popularity of Singlish, the “L” variety, among the young generation, mostly students, who opined that “it is perfectly acceptable

Language in India [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com)

9

10 : 12 December 2010

Tania Rahman, M.A.

Colloquial versus Standard in Singaporean Language Policies

to use the localized forms of English among peers as these types of English are more conducive to friendly relations. In contrast, they view the use of ‘Standard English’ which they learned in school show social distance” (Wu Man-Fat, 2005). Both teachers and students were found to “take pride in the indigenization of English in Singapore” (Pakir, 1997 cited in Wu Man-Fat, 2005).

As De Souza (1980) commented, “despite deliberate efforts directed at the implementation of a strict standardization according to an external model - Standard English of the United Kingdom - a subtle and long-term corpus change, in a different direction, would seem to be underway” (p. 229). Therefore, although Singlish has been officially “disparaged” or “stigmatized” and of “explicit official disapproval”, the actual scenario, as Rubdy (2007) comments, is that “the presence of the vernacular in the classroom continues to be robust” (p.308).

Recently, noticing the rising popularity of “Singlish” among the young generation, the government has targeted this group which is evident in the SGEM slogans and themes in recent years. For example, the SGEM slogan for the year 2007 has been “Rock Your World! Express Yourself” emphasizing “expression in good English that will enable people to use the right words to build relationships and reach out to other people instead of using words just for pragmatic purposes” in 2007 (Media Release for the Speak Good English Movement (SGEM) 2007). In 2009, the movement included an interesting twist by commissioning mrbrown, a “prominent blogger” in Singapore popular for his podcasts and blog posts “punctuated with Singlish”, to write a story showing that “the effort to improve one’s English is a reward in itself” (Media Release for the Speak Good English Movement (SGEM) 2010).

### **Three Approaches to Explain the Language Situation for English in Singapore**

As a result of the debates between the prescriptivist attitude of the Singaporean government towards use of Standard English rejecting its colloquial variant followed by the academicians’ reactions to it, different approaches have developed to explain the language situation for English in Singapore, particularly on the question of which variety should be termed as the native, hence standard, and which one as the non-native or non-standard variety.

One approach identifies Singapore English as a “non-native” variety instead of viewed as “having its own grammars”, and considers that it is “imperfectly learnt Standard English” (Gupta, 1998, p. 45).

Another model widely known as the “lectal continuum” approach propounded by Platt and his associates (Platt and Weber, 1980; Platt, 1987, 1991; Tay and Gupta, 1983; Gupta, 1986) also considers Singapore English as a “non-native variety” and the standard variety of English as belonging to countries like England and the US. Speakers are “classified” based on their educational level as “acrolectal”, “mesolectal” or “basilectal”

as in a “post-creole continuum” instead of being distinguished by different levels of “formality”. The acrolect is viewed as “an idealised Standard British English” (Gupta, 1998) or “a prescriptive native speaker standard” (Platt and Ho, 1993, p. 12).

A third approach considers English in Singapore as in a diglossic situation (Gupta, 1989, 1994, 2001). In this approach, Standard Singapore English (SSE) is recognized as a local variety, not being “significantly different from other standard Englishes” (Gupta, 1998). Singapore Colloquial English (SCE) is the informal variety different from Standard English with distinct features. It has a special grammar which needs to be explored considering the context of usage. The approach, however, has been criticized as problematic in identifying the English-speaking community in Singapore as “truly diglossic” (Pakir, 1991) as some community members with a low level of education show the tendency of code mixing, hence, “have an H-variety that is halfway between SSE and SCE” and some “English educated” members of older generation are reluctant to use the L-variety, i.e., SCE despite its use by the younger generation (Deterding, 1998, p. 19).

In response to these criticisms, the suitability of the diglossia approach in describing the language situation for English in Singapore can be defended on the grounds that by considering the distinction between the H and L varieties as “not absolute” (Deterding, 1998, p. 20), the concept of diglossia can be usefully applied to examine the English language situation in the country.

### **Extending the Concept of Diglossia to Describe Multilingual Situations**

I now turn to my next hypothesis: the concept of diglossia can be extended to describe multilingual situations such as in Singapore in which the diglossic relationships between “H” and “L” varieties are not only observable in case of English but can also be noticed between the standard – non-standard varieties of other languages as well as among all the languages in the country in relation to each other. To examine the hypothesis, at first diglossic relationships between the standard – colloquial varieties of the other major official languages - Mandarin, Tamil, Malay – as well as their dialects in Singapore will be analyzed and then it will be explored that the major languages in the country also exist in a diglossic relationship to each other.

### **Mandarin versus the Chinese Dialects**

The standard – colloquial debate also prevails among the speakers of Mandarin and other Chinese dialects in Singapore. Along with English, Mandarin is chosen as an official language to represent the Chinese communities in Singapore and hence also viewed as a privileged language in the country. The emphasis on Mandarin was once taken to that level in which studying and passing examinations in Mandarin became a compulsory requirement for all Chinese community members to complete secondary schooling and also to get admission in local universities.

An important instrument for the government to establish Mandarin as the standard language for use by the Chinese community in the country has been the Speak Mandarin Campaign, formerly known as “Promote the Use of Mandarin Campaign” (Pakir in Hassan, 1994, p. 165), founded by former Prime Minister Mr. Lee Kuan Yew. Hence, the campaign has a significant place in the history of Singaporean language policy to forward the standard – colloquial debate among the speakers of Mandarin and other Chinese dialects in the country.

The Speak Mandarin Campaign began in September 7, 1979 with the motivation of encouraging the use of Mandarin and discouraging the use of non-Mandarin Chinese dialects among the Chinese communities in Singapore. The campaign was initiated with a dual purpose: retention of Asian cultural values and “intra-ethnic” (David, Cavallaro and Colluzi, 2009, p. 166) communication among the various Chinese communities in Singapore. From 1991 onwards, the Speak Mandarin Campaign has aimed at encouraging English-educated Chinese Singaporeans to speak Mandarin.

In 2009, the campaign slogan was *Take the Challenge to Experience Chinese Language and Culture* - “a new nationwide initiative to deepen the appreciation of Chinese culture and increase the competency level of communication in Mandarin” (News Release, *The Promote Mandarin Council, The Chinese Language and Culture Fund and Business China launch, 2009*). At the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Launch of the Speak Mandarin Campaign on March 17, 2009, at the NTUC Auditorium, former Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew reiterated his stand on the need for a “common language of Chinese Singaporeans” in order to “direct” the language habits of Chinese Singaporeans: “Mandarin has to be the common language of Chinese Singaporeans, regardless of their dialect groups. If the government had left language habits to evolve undirected, Chinese Singaporeans would be speaking an adulterated Hokkien-Teochew dialect” (Speech by Mr. Lee Kuan Yew, former Prime Minister, at Speak Mandarin Campaign’s 30th Anniversary Launch, 17 March 2009, 5:00 PM at the NTUC Auditorium).

In the early years of the Campaign, controversies followed over the emphasis on Mandarin over other dialects implying “the dialects could transmit no worthwhile culture and that ignorance of Mandarin made Singapore Chinese rootless” (Gopinathan, 1998, p. 72). Further controversies ensued over the 1990 campaign slogan “If you are Chinese, make a statement – in Mandarin” which was felt to suggest that “only Mandarin speakers were to be considered Chinese”. The English translation of the slogan was charged with being “chauvinistic”.

### **Other Government Initiatives to Standardize Mandarin in Singapore**

In addition to the Speak Mandarin Campaign, the other government initiatives which played crucial roles in standardizing Mandarin in Singapore included Hanyu Pinyinization of Pupils’ Names in 1979 and the Report of the Chinese Language Review Committee in 1991.

Language in India [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com)

10 : 12 December 2010

Tania Rahman, M.A.

Colloquial versus Standard in Singaporean Language Policies

In November 1979, the government declared that

..schools should use Hanyu Pinyin names for pupils in pre-primary and Primary 1 classes from 1981. If parents insisted, the schools could enter pupils' dialect names in brackets in the register. It was intended that within three to four years all Chinese pupils from pre-primary to pre-university would be listed by their Pinyin names and dialect names in the register; the pupil would in school be called by his/her Pinyin name (Gopinathan, 1998, p. 74).

This attempt was said to be in line with the objectives of the Speak Mandarin Campaign “to promote a common Chinese identity” (Gopinathan, 1998, p. 74). Initially though there was no “overt resistance” to this attempt, later controversies arose over the transformation that it “separated (pupils) from their ancestral names” (Mr. Jek Yuen Thong, senior PAP member and former Cabinet Minister, Straits Times, March 6, 1985, quoted in Gopinathan, 1998, p. 74). As a reaction to such criticisms, the Ministry of Education indicated in December 1991 that “the practice of entering dialect names first in the register would be reinstated” (Gopinathan, 1998, p. 74).

Next, in reaction to concerns over “the decline of standards in Chinese attainment by pupils”, a “high powered” 22 member Chinese Language Review Committee headed by the Deputy Prime Minister was formed in June 1991 to “review and suggest improvements to the teaching of Chinese in schools” (Gopinathan, 1998, p. 82). The committee, in its Report issued in May 1992, proposed a comprehensive overview of Chinese language teaching to revitalize Chinese language learning and assessment. The Report, however, was later criticized for the committee being “content only to suggest further thought on the issue of the relationship between language skills and Chinese values, enlarging the number of pupils in express streams studying CL1 and Chinese literature, introduction of an optional General Paper in Chinese at the GCE AO level and the use of Chinese for Social Studies and Art at the primary level, and for Civics and Moral Education at the secondary level” (p. 84).

In all these attempts, it appears that the Singapore government “actively” promotes Mandarin establishing it as the second most dominant language in Singaporean education policy. The concern remains whether the status attributed to Mandarin as the standard/High (H) variety impedes the maintenance of other Chinese dialects such as Hokkien, Teochiew and Hakka predominantly regarded as the colloquial/non-standard/Low (L) variety. In a recent study (David, Cavallaro and Colluzi, 2009, p. 166), it has been reported that, “as a result of the bilingual educational policy and the influence of the Speak Mandarin Campaign, the young Chinese know and use Mandarin Chinese”. The study also reveals that Mandarin has also replaced other Chinese dialects, particularly Hokkien, for “intra ethnic” communication in “almost all domains”. Among other Chinese dialects, Hokkien is “known and still used, but mostly by older Chinese and the less educated” (David, Cavallaro and Colluzi, 2009, p. 166). The diglossic relationship between these two Chinese dialects is described as: “Mandarin is still by and large a High

(H) language, while Hokkien and the other Chinese varieties remain dominant in hawker centers, on buses, etc. (Kuo and Jernudd, 2003)” (David, Cavallaro and Colluzi, 2009, p. 166).

### **Literary Tamil (LT) versus Spoken Tamil (ST)**

The next ethnic group among whom the standard – colloquial debate prevails in Singapore is the Tamil-speaking group. The Tamils comprise around 63.9% of the Indian population which is 8.7 % of the total population in Singapore (David, Cavallaro and Colluzi, 2009, p. 166).

As shown in Table 1, the Indian population in Singapore comprises a number of speech communities including Tamils, Malayalees, Punjabis and other “smaller Indian linguistic communities” (David, Cavallaro and Colluzi, 2009, p. 166), for example, the Bengali, Urdu, Sindhi, and Gujerati linguistic groups.

David, Cavallaro and Colluzi (2009, p. 166) report a 17.2% decline in the use of Tamil as the “principal family language” during the years 1985 to 2005. In the last two decades, a tendency has developed among the Tamil ethnic groups to use English, i.e. Singlish, as the Low variety in informal interactions such as communicating with friends and family limiting the use of Tamil in prayers and in conversing with relatives (Saravanan, 1995, 1999). The low use of Tamil with friends, siblings, school and reading of primary students was reported by Ramiah (1991).

The decline in the use of Tamil at home indicates the high prestige attached to English as the decline occurs among the highly educated and well-off Tamil community members (David, Cavallaro and Colluzi, 2009, p. 167).

Such a crisscrossed pattern in the use of English and Tamil as sometimes the High and sometimes the Low varieties resulted from the gap between the varieties of Tamil taught at school and spoken at home (Schiffman, 1998). The Tamil spoken at home is a “more colloquial variety” i.e. Spoken Tamil (ST) than that taught at school, i.e. Literary Tamil (LT) which is “more formal” and “significantly different” from the variety spoken at home (David, Cavallaro and Colluzi, 2009, p. 166).

Schiffman (2003), an authoritative scholar on Tamil language, described the Tamil language situation in Singapore as follows:

Tamil as a home language is not being maintained by the better-educated, and Indian education in Singapore is also not living up to the expectations many people have for it. Educated people who love Tamil are upset that Tamil is becoming thought of as a “coolie language” and regret this very much. Since Tamil is a language characterized by extreme diglossia, there is the additional pedagogical problem of trying to maintain a language with two variants, but with



a strong cultural bias on the part of the educational establishment for maintaining the literary dialect to the detriment of the spoken one (p.105).

In case of Tamil in Singapore, like elsewhere in the world, Literary Tamil, characterized by either “norms as old as the 13<sup>th</sup> century variety codified by Pavanandi” or “norms from earlier periods” (Schiffman 2007), enjoys the High (H) status in formal contexts of language use whereas Spoken Tamil (ST) is regarded as the Low (L) variety being used in very informal conversations. As Schiffman (2007) comments:

... the linguistic culture favors the notion that if any kind of Tamil should have high status, and be used as one of Singapore’s official language, Literary Tamil is the variety that should have this status, and the spoken Tamil (ST) that children speak at home and bring into the classroom does not deserve the status.

Schiffman (2007) considers the language policy in relation to Tamil in Singapore as “anti-Tamil” noticing utter neglect of the decision makers such as the Curriculum Development Board under the Ministry of Education to regulate “what kind of Tamil will be taught”. Schiffman (2007) views this policy as “anti-Tamil” because “it denigrates the home variety, which is the actual ‘mother tongue’ of the Tamil community and attempts to replace it with a variety never used for authentic communication by Tamils anywhere”. In an earlier study, Schiffman (2003) marked the harmful impact of such “excessive purism” on maintaining the Tamil language in Singapore, “because of what it does to the perceptions of Tamil speakers about their language competence, and what ‘mother-tongue’ language study is for in Singapore” (Schiffman 2007). The standard – non-standard debate between Literary Tamil and Spoken Tamil in Singapore is best described in Schiffman (2007):

.... that the language spoken at home is the *real* mother tongue, is accepted by linguists as God’s truth, but is typically rejected by Tamil purists, who see only the literary language as deserving to have this designation. Thus the mother tongue of the child is rejected and denigrated, which has disastrous consequences for Tamils, as well as for other children who bring a non-standard language to the classroom.

Despite the purists’ push for Literary Tamil in education, the variety has been repeatedly declared as “totally useless, of no economic value, and in many cases, of no value whatsoever” by Tamil students and others who consider it “merely as a hurdle to be overcome in the process of gaining entrance to higher education in Singapore” with the impact that “younger Tamils have no sense of ‘ownership’ of the Tamil language, since they cannot use it in creative ways, such as to coin new terminology the way speakers of English can and do” (Schiffman, 2007).

Schiffman (2007) regards the problems with the Tamil language in Singapore—mainly seen as a problem of “language maintenance”—are actually problems of implementation.

Language in India [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com)

15

10 : 12 December 2010

Tania Rahman, M.A.

Colloquial versus Standard in Singaporean Language Policies



According to him, “Tamils in Singapore fall back on corpus concerns since the status of the language does not seem to them to be under the control of the Tamil community—it is determined by the Singapore government, which has left the corpus issues to the Tamil community, which then devotes all its energy to battling issues of lexical purity”. Schiffman (2007) views the battle over Literary and Spoken Tamil in Singapore as a “mania about corpus policy” similar to the “rail against the invasion of Hindi and the corrupting influence of Sanskrit” in Tamilnadu in India. Schiffman (2007) comments on this puristic drive as a typical Tamil tendency saying: “Singapore Tamils tend to do what Tamils know how to do best—the care and feeding of ‘pure’ Tamil”.

### **Standard and Non-standard Malay**

There is a lack of research on standard-colloquial question in Malay in Singapore. However, the Singaporean government identifies the need for standardizing Malay, at least in case of pronunciation, in its aim for achieving “uniformity between the spoken language used in schools and in public at formal occasions” within the Malay community (Ministry of Education, 2004).

The case of Malay in Singapore is interesting because although it enjoys the status of the national language, in practice its use is limited to singing the national anthem, in military commands and as one of the mother tongues to be learnt at school. Although these formal functions of the language apparently relate to the functions of a “High” variety, most of the uses of the language being limited to the “Low” domain, i.e., in Malay households and gradually being replaced by the use of English in all domains (David, Cavallaro and Colluzi, 2009, p. 168) suggest the virtually “Low” status of the language compared to English in practice.

In addition, the standard/colloquial question is also reflected among the Malays, perhaps not so strongly debated as among the Chinese and the Tamil communities, in the government drive for the adoption of ‘standardised’ pronunciation ‘Sebutan Baku’ (SB) in Malay Language (ML) (Ministry of Education, 2004). In line with its prescriptivist attitude, the government in Singapore endorsed the proposal for the adoption of the ‘standardised’ pronunciation in Malay Language (ML) or ‘Sebutan Baku’ (SB) in the early 1990’s put forward by the Malay Language Council (MLCS) (Ministry of Education, 2004).

As Malays in Singapore have historically been living close to Johore and Riau, they commonly use the Johore-Riau pronunciation system in both “formal” and “informal” interactions. The H – L distinction between these varieties is only evident in government statements such as: “While the bazaar-form of Johore-Riau pronunciation is still widely used in daily interactions in informal situations, the use of SB is encouraged in formal occasions such as in classroom teaching and learning, delivery of speeches, at seminars, forums, formal meetings, interviews, debates etc” (Ministry of Education, 2004). Thus, the government emphasis on the use of SB and the distinction between formal and

informal contexts of language use between SB and the “bazaar-form” of Johore-Riau pronunciation marks the H – L relationship between the two varieties only in official terms.

**The Impact of Standard Language Promotion in Singapore: Language Shift and Attitudes**

As mentioned earlier, in order to understand the diglossic situation in Singapore, it is necessary to consider the H – L distinction not only in the languages themselves but also among the languages in relation to each other.

The discussion in the present paper suggests that the diglossic relationships in languages are manifested not only in the standard – colloquial debate in the country but also in a “rapid language shift towards English” (Moyer, 2005) in all Singaporean communities due to the bilingual policy and the Speak Good English Movement. The extent of the shift to English as a “home language” is stronger among the Chinese and the Indian groups than the Malay community (Wei, Saravanan, & Hoon, 1997) between 1980 and 1990 in the country.

Table 2 demonstrates the significant increase in the use of English in all Singaporean households in the years 1980 - 1990 and in Table 3, the increase in English usage among three major communities in Singapore during 2000 – 2005 is shown. An 8.7% increase in the use of English among all communities in Singapore is evident during the decade 1980 – 1990 whereas in only five years during 2000 – 2005, a 13.3% increase in English usage can be noticed among three major Singaporean communities – Chinese, Malay and Indians. Although the Malays seem to maintain Malay usage at home, Saravanan (1999) noticed a tendency of growing English use in “family activities” (Moyer, 2005). Recent studies such as Cavallaro and Serwe (2009), David, Cavallaro and Colluzi (2009), Kassim (2008), Roksana (2000) attest to this fact.

Wei, Saravanan and Hoon (1997) found a shift from Teochew to Mandarin and English among the Chinese Teochew community in Singapore: “Mandarin and English are now used extensively in the family domain, which was previously occupied by Teochew” (p. 381). Gupta and Yeok (1995) found that “in Singapore the shift has been very fast, with, in many families, only one multilingual generation having access to the ancestral language. This has resulted in there being no common language between grandparents and their grandchildren” (p. 303). They attribute this shift primarily as the result of government encouragement of the use of English and Mandarin.

**Table 2:** Use of English, Mandarin and other Chinese dialects in Singapore between 1980 and 1990

Languages	Language use at home (%)	
	1980	1990

English	11.6	20.3
Mandarin	10.2	26.0
Chinese dialects	59.5	38.2

Source: adapted from Moyer (2005) and Pakir (1993)

**Table 3:** Language use in Singaporean households between 2000 and 2005

Communities	Languages	Language use at home (%)	
		2000	2005
Chinese	English	23.9	28.7
	Mandarin	45.1	47.2
	Other Chinese dialects	30.7	23.9
Malay	English	7.9	13
	Malay	91.6	86.8
Indian	English	35.6	39.0
	Tamil	42.9	36.8
	Malay	11.6	10.6

Source: 2005 General Household Survey, Singapore Department of Statistics (adapted from David, Cavallaro and Colluzi 2009)

All these findings and statistics suggest that, first, in terms of “Low” use of languages, namely, in the home domain, a significant language shift has occurred from the dialects/ethnic vernaculars to at least one of the official languages in the country.

Secondly, the government’s bilingual policy and campaigns for standard language usage has significantly contributed in this shift. The shift is marked not only between dialects of the same language family, e.g. from Hokkien and Teochiew to Mandarin, but also among varieties of different languages such as from Tamil or Malay to Singlish.

Thirdly, the prestige of the “High” variety is associated with English and Mandarin in Singapore whereas the functions of the dialects of these languages as well as the other minority languages such as Malay and Tamil being increasingly limited to the home domain are becoming the “L” varieties. Mandarin representing the majority Chinese communities in Singapore is of “higher prestige” than Malay and Tamil (Moyer, 2005). The “Speak Mandarin Campaigns” held annually has contributed in establishing the prestigious status of Mandarin in Singapore.

Similarly, the bilingual policy and the “Speak Good English Movement” have been instrumental in establishing English as a “High” language in Singapore. Therefore, it can be said that the linguistic situation in Singapore adheres to the conditions of Fishman’s (1967) “extended diglossia” as the H – L functions are not only observable in the uses of the standard varieties of each language (e.g. SSE or Standard Singapore English) in “formal” domains such as education, administration, public gathering and expressions, religious services and public festivals and in the “informal” uses of the colloquial varieties (e.g. SCE or Singlish) such as in the home domain, but also in treating “genetically unrelated” languages as either High (e.g. English and Mandarin) or Low (e.g. Tamil and Malay) languages.

## **Conclusion**

One of the aims of the present discussion was to predict implications for the educational policymaking in Singapore in light of the diglossic analysis of the Singaporean language situation. Government initiatives in the Singaporean language policy are said to be aimed at achieving “a balance between the national pride of linguistic ownership and the need for international intelligibility” (Khoo, 1993, p. 67). This idealistic aim results from the government’s prescriptivist attitude towards the standard variety branding the non-standard as “bad” or “poor”. In this “desire” (Khoo, 1993), the Singaporean government policies regarding standard language usage appear to be in conflict with existing practices such as use of Singlish or Chinese dialects by students in classroom interactions. Despite the government’s drive for standard language usage, the popularity of the colloquial variety, be it Singlish, Hokkien or Spoken Tamil, is conspicuous among the young generation, mainly students (David, Cavallaro and Colluzi, 2009; Lee, 1983; Pakir, 1997; Rubdy, 2007).

Therefore, the crucial question on Singaporean education is whether the non-standard varieties can be tolerated in the classroom or not. Although different studies (e.g. Deterding, 1998; Ferguson, 2003; Lin, 1996, 1999; Liu et al., 2004; Rubdy, 2007) have identified positive effects of allowing code switching between languages/dialects in the classroom, the Singapore government adheres to its “puristic” attitude (Rubdy, 2007) of maintaining the standard variety in all its policies.

In the Singaporean case, in support of Deterding (1998) it can be argued that in the diglossic language situation in Singapore, the existence of the dialects or the colloquial or the non-standard forms of language should be realized in contexts of usage instead of disparaging them in the classroom. Teachers and learners should collaborate in developing a better understanding of which variety to use in which context to avoid conflict between the use of the standard and non-standard varieties in classrooms.

To achieve this, learners should be trained to attain “the ability to switch appropriately between the H and L varieties” of not only English but also other languages. To do this, policymakers including teachers need to bear a tolerant attitude towards the non-

standard/colloquial varieties in situations like peer conversations and “encourage the use of a standard variety for some purposes,...when required” (Deterding, 1998, p. 21), such as in academic writing.

---

---

## References

- Biber, D., Johansson, S., Leech, G., Conrad, S. and Finegan, E., 1999. *Longman grammar of spoken and written English*. Harlow: Longman.
- Bussmann, H., 1996. *Routledge Dictionary of Language and Linguistics*. Gregory P. Trauth and Kerstin Kazzazi Trans. & Eds. London, New York.
- Cavallaro, F. and Serwe, S., 2009. Religion and language shift: the Malay community in Singapore. Paper presented at the *Symposium on Language and Diversity 5-6th March 2009*, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore.
- CIA World Factbook, 2009 (July 2009 est). Retrieved on 06 August 2009, from:  
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/sn.html>
- David, M. K.; Cavallaro, F. & Coluzzi, P., 2009. Language Policies – Impact on Language Maintenance and Teaching: Focus on Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei and the Philippines. *The Linguistics Journal*. Special Edition, September 2009, 155 – 191.
- De Souza, D., 1980. The Politics of Language: Language Planning in Singapore. E. A. Afendras, & E. C. Y. Kuo, eds. *Language and Society in Singapore*. (pp. 203-232). Singapore: University of Singapore Press.
- Deterding, D., 1998. Approaches to Diglossia in the Classroom: The Middle Way. *REACT*, No 2, 18-23.
- Dittmar, N., 1997. *Grundlagen der Soziolinguistik - Ein Arbeitsbuch mit Aufgaben*. Tübingen: Niemeyer.
- Fasold, R., 1984. *The Sociolinguistics of Society*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Ferguson, Charles A., 1959. Diglossia. *Word*, 15, 325-340. Also in Thom Huebner (ed.)

- Sociolinguistic Perspectives: Papers on Language in Society 1959-1994* / Charles A. Ferguson. (pp. 25-39). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Ferguson, G., 2003. Classroom code-switching in post-colonial contexts: Functions, attitudes and policies. *AILA Review*, 16, 38-51.
- Fishman, J., 1967. Bilingualism with and without diglossia; diglossia with and without bilingualism. *Journal of Social Issues*, 23(2), 29-38. Revised and reprinted as: Societal bilingualism: stable and transitional. 1970. In *Sociolinguistics: a brief introduction*. (pp. 78-89). Rowley, Mass.: Newbury House.
- Gopinathan, S., 1980. Language policy in education: A Singapore perspective. In E. A. Afendras and C. Y. Kuo (Eds) *Language and Society in Singapore*. (pp. 175-206). Singapore: Singapore University Press.
- Gopinathan, S., 1994, rev.1998. Language policy changes 1979 – 1992: politics and pedagogy. In S. Gopinathan, A. Pakir, H. W. Kam, & V. Saravanan (Eds.). 1994. *Language, Society and Education in Singapore: Issues and Trends* (1<sup>st</sup> edition). (pp. 65 – 91). Singapore: Times Academic Press.
- Grzega (Eichstätt), J., 2000. On the Description of National Varieties: Examples from (German and Austrian) German and (English and American English). *Linguistik Online* 7, 3/00. Retrieved on 31 March 2010 from: [http://www.linguistik-online.com/3\\_00/grzega.html](http://www.linguistik-online.com/3_00/grzega.html)
- Gupta, A. F., 1986. A standard for written Singapore English? *English World-wide*, 7(1), 75-99.
- Gupta, A. F., 1989. Singapore Colloquial English and Standard English. *Singapore Journal of Education*, 10(2), 33–39.
- Gupta, A. F., 1992. Contact features of Singapore Colloquial English. In K Bolton & H. Kwok (eds.) *Sociolinguistics Today: International Perspectives*. (pp. 323-345). London and New York: Routledge.
- Gupta, A. F., 1994. *The Step-Tongue: Children's English in Singapore*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Gupta, A. F., 1998. Singapore Colloquial English? Or deviant standard English? In Jan Tent & France Mugler (eds). *SICOL, Proceedings of the Second International Conference on Oceanic Linguistics: Vol. 1. Language Contact*. (pp. 43-57). Canberra: Pacific Linguistics.

- Gupta, A. F., 2001. English in the linguistic ecology of Singapore. Paper presented at *The Cultural Politics of English as a World Language*, June 2001, Freiburg.
- Gupta, A. F. & Yeok, S. P., 1995. Language shift in a Singaporean family. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 16 (4), 301-314.
- Hansen, K., Carls, U., and Lucko, P., 1996. *Die Differenzierung des Englischen in nationale Varianten*. Berlin.
- Hassan, A., 1994. *Language Planning in SouthEast Asia*. Perpustakaan Negara: Malaysia.
- Huesmann, A., 1998. *Zwischen Dialekt und Standard: Empirische Untersuchung zur Soziolinguistik des Varietätenspektrums im Deutschen*. Tübingen. (Reihe Germanistische Linguistik 199).
- Jones, H. and Mann, R., 1999. *Stepping Forward*. Singapore: Pan-pacific Publications.
- Kassim, Aishah Md., 2008. Malay Language As A Foreign Language And The Singapore's Education System. *GEMA Online Journal of Language Studies*, 8(1), 47-56.
- Khoo, R., 1993. Controlling Pandora's Box: Standards for the vocabulary of Singapore English. In A. Pakir (ed.), *The English Language in Singapore: Standards and Norms*. (pp. 67–78). Singapore: UniPress.
- Ko, P. S. and Ho, W. K., (eds.), 1992. *Growing Up In Singapore: The Pre-school Years*. Singapore: Longman.
- Kuo, E. C. Y., 1983, 1999. Language Policy and Nation-building in a Multi-ethnic Society: The Case of Singapore Model, in Cultural Identity and Modernisation in Asian Countries: Proceedings of Kokugakuin University Centennial Symposium. (pp. 94-101). Institute for Japanese Culture and Classics, Kokugakuin University, 9-13 January 1983, Tokyo, Japan, at: <http://www2.kokugakuin.ac.jp/ijcc/wp/cimac/kuo.html> (6 August 2009).
- Kuo, E. C. Y. and Jernudd, B. H., 2003. Balancing macro and micro sociolinguistic perspectives in language management: The case of Singapore. In J. Lindsay and Ying Ying Tan (Eds.) *Babel and Behemoth: language trends in Asia*. Asia Research List: National University of Singapore. Cited in David, M. K.; Cavallaro, F. & Coluzzi, P., 2009. Language Policies – Impact on Language



- Maintenance and Teaching: Focus on Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei and the Philippines. *The Linguistics Journal*, Special Edition, September 2009, 155 – 191.
- Lee, K. C., 1983. *Language and Language Education*. Singapore: Singapore University Press.
- Lewis, M. P. (ed.), 2009. *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*. 16th edition. Dallas, Tex.: SIL International, at: <http://www.ethnologue.com/>
- Lin, A.M.Y., 1996. Bilingualism or linguistic segregation? Symbolic domination, resistance and code-switching in Hong Kong schools. *Linguistics and Education*, 8 (1), 49-84.
- Lin, A.M.Y., 1999. Doing English lessons in the reproduction or transformation of social worlds? *TESOL Quarterly*, 33(3), 393-412.
- Liu, D., Ahn, G., Baek, K. and Han, N., 2004. South Korean high school English teachers' code switching: Questions and challenges in the drive for maximal use of English in teaching. *TESOL Quarterly*, 38/4: 605-638.
- Media Release for the Speak Good English Movement (SGEM), 2000 – 2004. Retrieved on 07 January 2010 from:  
<http://www.goodenglish.org.sg/category/about/over-the-years/2004/media-releases-2004/>
- Media Release for the Speak Good English Movement (SGEM), 2007. Retrieved on 07 January 2010 from:  
<http://www.goodenglish.org.sg/2009/about/over-the-years/2007/media-releases-2007/sgem-2007-encourages-singaporeans-to-make-speaking-good-english-a-lifestyle-choice/> and  
<http://www.goodenglish.org.sg/2009/about/over-the-years/2007/media-releases-2007/rock-your-world-express-yourself/>
- Media Release for the Speak Good English Movement (SGEM), 2008. Retrieved on 07 January 2010 from:  
<http://www.goodenglish.org.sg/about/over-the-years/2008/media-releases-2008/singaporeans-want-to-speak-good-english-to-be-better-understood/>
- Media Release for the Speak Good English Movement (SGEM), 2010. Retrieved on 08 April 2010 from:  
<http://www.goodenglish.org.sg/about/over-the-years/2009/media-releases-2009/speak-good-english-movement-engages-mrbrown-to-write-a-story-showing-how-good-english-can-impress-inspire-and-intoxicate/>

- Media Release for the Speak Mandarin Campaign (SMC), 2004 – ‘09. Retrieved on 08 April 2010 from:  
[http://www.mandarin.org.sg/2009/downloads/SMC2009-Launch-News\\_Release-20090317.pdf](http://www.mandarin.org.sg/2009/downloads/SMC2009-Launch-News_Release-20090317.pdf)
- Ministry of Education, 2004. FY 2004 Committee of Supply Debate. Reply by Mr Hawazi Daipi, Parliamentary Secretary (Education) on Teaching of Standardised Pronunciation in Malay Language (In English). Retrieved on 31 March 2010 from: <http://www.moe.gov.sg/media/speeches/2004/sp20040318c.htm>
- Moyer, A. J., 2005. Singapore: A Multilingual, Multiethnic Country. Retrieved on 12 August 2009 from: <http://www.emu.edu/courses/eddt582/singapore.html>
- News Release, 2009. The Promote Mandarin Council. The Chinese Language and Culture Fund and Business China launch. Retrieved on 06 August 2009 from: [http://www.mandarin.org.sg/2009/downloads/TCC2009-Launch-News\\_Release-20090327-ENG.pdf](http://www.mandarin.org.sg/2009/downloads/TCC2009-Launch-News_Release-20090327-ENG.pdf)
- Pakir, A., 1991. The range and depth of English-knowing bilinguals in Singapore. *World Englishes*, 10(2), 167-179.
- Pakir, A., 1993. Two Tongue Tied: Bilingualism in Singapore. In Jones, G. M. and Ozóg, C. K. eds., *Bilingualism and National Development*. (pp. 73-90). Clevedon: Multilingual Matters Ltd.
- Pakir, A., 1994. The Role of Language Planning in Education in Singapore. In Abdullah Hassan (ed.), *Language Planning in Southeast Asia*. (pp. 148 – 178). Perpustakaan Negara: Malaysia.
- Pakir, A., 1997. Education and Invisible Language Planning: The Case of the English Language in Singapore. In Tan, J., Gopinathan, S. and Ho, W. K. eds. *Education in Singapore: A Book of Readings*. (pp. 57-74). Singapore: Prentice Hall.
- Pakir, A., 1999. Bilingual education with English as an official language: Sociocultural implications. Paper presented at the Georgetown University Round Table on Languages and Linguistics. (pp. 341 – 349). USA: Georgetown University Press, Digital Georgetown, and the Department of Languages and Linguistics.
- Rappa, A. L. and Wee, L., 2006. *Language Policy and Modernity in Southeast Asia: Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand*. USA: Springer Science+Business Media Inc.

- Platt, J., (1987). Communicative functions of particles in Singapore English. In R. Steele and T. Threadgold, eds. *Language Topics* 1. (pp. 391-401). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Platt, J., 1991. Social and linguistic constraints on variation in the use of two grammatical variables in Singapore English. In J. Cheshire, ed. *English around the world: sociolinguistic perspectives*. (pp. 376-387). Cambridge: CUP.
- Platt, J. and Weber, H., 1980. *English in Singapore and Malaysia*. Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press.
- Platt, J. and Ho, Mian-Lian., 1993. *Dynamics of a Contact Continuum: Singaporean English*. Oxford Studies in Language Contact. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Promote Mandarin Council, 2004. Speak Mandarin Campaign – History and Background. Retrieved on 06 August 2009 from: <http://www.mandarin.org.sg/smc/history.html?pg=8&mlid=8>
- Ramiah, K., 1991. The pattern of Tamil language use among primary school Tamil pupils in Singapore. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 11(2), 45-53.
- Roksana bibi Abdullah, 2000. Pemilihan dan penggunaan bahasa di kalangan masyarakat Melayu di Singapura. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: University of Malaya.
- Rubdy, R., 2007. Singlish in the School: An Impediment or a Resource?. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 28(4), 308 - 324.
- Rubdy, R., 2001. Creative destruction: Singapore's 'Speak Good English Movement'. *World Englishes*, 20(3), 341 - 355.
- Saravanan, V., 1995. Linguistic and cultural maintenance through education for minority groups in Singapore. In M. L. Tickoo (Ed.), *Language and culture in multilingual societies: viewpoints and visions. Pathology series, 5*. Singapore: SEAMO Regional Language Centre.
- Saravanan, V., 1999. Bilingual Chinese, Malay and Tamil children's language choices in a multilingual society. *Early Child Development and Care*, 152, 43-54.
- Schiffman, H. F., 1997. Diglossia as a sociolinguistic situation. In F. Coulmas (Ed.), *The handbook of sociolinguistics*. London: Basil Blackwell. Retrieved on 08 April 2010 from: <http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/~haroldfs/messeas/diglossia/handbuk.html>
- Schiffman, H. F., 1998. Standardization or restandardization: The case for 'Standard'

spoken Tamil. *Language in Society*, 27, 359-385.

Schiffman, H. F., 2003. Tongue-Tied in Singapore: A Language Policy for Tamil? *Journal of Language, Identity and Education*, 2(2), 105-125. Retrieved on 12 August 2009 from: <http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/~haroldfs/public/tongueti.htm>

Schiffman, H. F., 2007. Tamil Language Policy in Singapore: the Role of Implementation. In Viniti Vaish and Liu Yongbing (eds.) *Language, Capital, Culture: Critical Studies of Language in Education in Singapore*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers. Retrieved on 12 August 2009 from: <http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/~haroldfs/public/implement.html>

Singapore Department of Statistics, 2005. *General household survey*. Singapore: Department of Statistics.

Speech by Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong, 1991. Speak Mandarin Campaign Launch.

Speech by Mr. Lee Kuan Yew, former Prime Minister of Singapore, 1994. Addressing National University of Singapore students. (29 July 1994). Quoted in *The Sunday Times*, 31 July 1994.

Speech by Mr. Lee Kuan Yew, former Prime Minister of Singapore, 2009. 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Launch of Speak Mandarin Campaign, 17 March 2009. NTUC Auditorium, Singapore.

Tan, J., Gopinathan, S. and Ho, W. K. eds., 1997. *Education in Singapore: A Book of Readings*. Singapore: Prentice Hall.

Tay, M. W. J. and Gupta, A. F., 1983. Towards a description of Standard Singapore English. In R. B. Noss, ed. *Varieties of English in Southeast Asia*. SEAMEO Regional Language Centre Anthology Series 11. (pp. 173-189). Singapore: SEAMEO Regional Language Centre.

Tay, M. W. J., 1991. Southeast Asia and Hongkong. In J. Cheshire, ed. *English around the World: Sociolinguistic Perspectives*. (pp. 319-332). Cambridge: CUP.

Trudgill, P., 1999. Standard English: what it isn't. In T. Bex & R. J. Watts eds.

*Standard English: the widening debate*. (pp. 117-128).

London: Routledge.

Wei, L., Saravanan, V., & Hoon, J., 1997. Language shift in the Teochew community in

Language in India [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com)

26

10 : 12 December 2010

Tania Rahman, M.A.

Colloquial versus Standard in Singaporean Language Policies

Singapore: A family domain analysis. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 18(5), 364-384.

Wu Man-Fat, M., 2005. A Critical Evaluation of Singapore's Language Policy and its Implications for English Teaching. Hong Kong. Karen's Linguistics Issues, January 2005 issue. Retrieved on 06 August 2009 from: <http://www3.telus.net/linguisticsissues/singapore.html>

---

Tania Rahman, M.A.  
Department of English Language and Literature  
National Institute of Education  
Nanyang Technological University  
Singapore - 637616  
[rahman.tania3@gmail.com](mailto:rahman.tania3@gmail.com)