Institutional attempts at language planning in Singapore: Sociolinguistic implications

Vanithamani Saravanan

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INSTITUTIONAL ATTEMPTS AT LANGUAGE PLANNING IN SINGAPORE: SOCIOLINGUISTIC IMPLICATIONS

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1. Introduction

The dynamics of socio-economic and sociolinguistic change in plural societies such as Singapore have led to attempts at constructing models to account for the role and function of social variables like language. Language planning efforts in Singapore have been described as language management of human resources (Kuo & Jernudd 1994, Gopinathan 1994) and as proactive intervention to support nonlinguistic goals (Kuo & Jernudd 1994). Singapore, having an ethnically mixed population of three million (Chinese 77%, Malays 14%, Indians 7.1%; cf. Census 1990), has selected four official languages: Chinese, Malay, Tamil and English. Twenty other 'dialects' (from the four major ethnic groups) are spoken. This paper will examine government participation and intervention in language planning policies, and how some of these policies have affected language use in the Chinese, Tamil and Malay linguistic communities and the sociolinguistic implications arising out of this social engineering.

English has been established as the dominant language of government, law and administration, commerce and industry in Singapore. The prestigious status and functions of English has contributed to the decline of community languages. It has brought about some of the societal shifts from the use of native ethnic language to the use of a dominant official language which is typical when languages are in contact in a dynamic social context.1

Review reports of educational achievement and underachievement have provided some of the impetus for government intervention in both language and education policies. In its discourse with the nation the government has frequently debated the place of Chinese dialects versus the place of Mandarin in Singapore. It has argued that support for all the Chinese dialects would lead to an inefficient and irrational use of resources for a multiplicity of languages and that, in fact, the use of high status Mandarin would add to the cohesiveness
and cultural identity of the Chinese. The government has justified these policy decisions as rational social and language planning policies, necessary for nation building and social cohesion. While part of the process of nation building has to do with economic development and economic growth, the other part of the process uses linguistic policies for homogenising disparate linguistic and ethnic communities into a nation. Likewise, the government frequently reminds its citizens that traditional values and communitarianism are responsible for the economic success of East Asia, implying that Singapore should also use such approaches to promote economic success.

2. Language management approaches to language planning

Kuo & Jernudd (1994), Batens-Beardsmore (1994) and Gopinathan (1994) have described the Singapore government's language planning efforts as approaches to language management. Language management is seen as less of a matter of linguistic intervention per se, but rather as a process aimed at improving access to human resource management. Gopinathan (1994) considers both the continuity and shifts in policies. Beginning with the 1956 report on equal treatment for all the four official languages the government has developed systematic rationales for language roles in the domains of school, work and economic domains, home and social interaction.

Government policy making is regarded as proactive intervention in language communities to support non-linguistic goals. Both macro-sociolinguistic and micro-sociolinguistic processes are seen as complementary to each other. This has evolved over the years as a policy of 'pragmatic multilingualism' used in the government's goals to shape the economic, social and cultural development of the nation. Politics in evolving multi-ethnic societies must of necessity seek the management of multi-ethnic communities, and language management activities are one such example of management (cf. Gopinathan 1994). Politicians who assume the role of language planners see language management issues less as issues of linguistics per se but more as changing power relationships and access to resources. In this vein, the presence of bilingual social brokers has helped to create a level of communicative integration across the various multilingual speech communities.

The formulation of language policies allowed for the rapid emergence and later strengthening of English as the major language of administration, commerce and education, and consequently enhanced the social status of English. The use and spread of English across the population has contributed to the development of a national identity, above and
beyond the ethnic and sub-ethnic levels. English has taken the place of Bazaar Malay for inter-ethnic communication. The extensive use of English and the shift to English amongst the various communities has resulted to some extent to a de-ethnification of the communities (cf. Gopinathan 1994 and Batens-Beardsmore 1994). But in order to balance the spread of English the government introduced ethnic mother tongue learning (in the 1950s) with the objective of maintaining ethnic and cultural traditions.

A large number of government organisations as well as educational institutions and community organisations in Singapore are directly or indirectly involved in implementing language planning and policy decisions. This is illustrated in the intervention and promotion of Mandarin during the 'Speak Mandarin' campaign and the suggested domains of language interaction and language use.

This proactive intervention is seen as politically rationalized language planning. Language policy and hence language management at the national level are used as parts of a larger process of nation building. Hence language planning at the national level is subsumed as an integral part of nation building processes.

At this point it will be relevant to consider how sociologists analyze the underlying processes of language planning policies. Chua (1995) in his critique of the ideology and discourse of the ruling party (PAP) in Singapore, rejects the depoliticisation thesis proposed by other academics and argues against the interpretation of PAP's governing strategies as non-ideological. One of the expressions of PAP ideology Chua argues is that of pragmatism. Singaporeans are persuaded and encouraged to accept particular policy decisions as they are pragmatic.

Education became a major instrument of the government's social engineering policies (cf. Wilson 1974). It was argued that vernacular schools divided the society along political, cultural and linguistic orientations, and that their divisive effects had to give way to a national system of education. The process started in the 1960s and continued till the 1980s. In 1987 English was established as the main medium of education. By this time the government began a debate on the cultural influences of 'westernisation and deculturalisation through consumerism, permissiveness and liberalism'. These trends, argued the government, were to be corrected through a bilingual education policy with four official languages, with children acquiring their cultural identity through their mother tongues.

Chua (1995) traces the path by which the process of nation-state formation in Singapore is reconfigured through its cultural sphere, so as to contribute to the development of an Asian identity rather than a hybrid variety of diverse ethnic, cultural and linguistic
identities signified locally by the term 'rojak culture', (rojak is a Malay term for salad). The cultivation of an Asian identity is supported by the introduction of compulsory mother tongue learning in order to secure racial identity and 'ballast' against 'negative' foreign influences. Formal education in the official languages has thus been used to reduce the hybridity of everyday language practices which in turn has led to various Chinese dialects, Hokkien, Teochew, Cantonese, Hakka (i.e. the mother tongues of the Chinese communities) to decline correspondingly. English, in turn, has become one of the main languages of inter-racial communication.

Chua (1995) argues that the formulation of race, language, and culture, for multiracial identity was introduced by the government as part of its ideological framework for national policy. This ideological approach is used to frame policy decisions to reduce language and dialect differences, thus enabling government policy makers to decide on the exclusive use of Mandarin in the place of Hokkien, Cantonese, and Teochew for Chinese, Malay for Malays rather than Javanese, Boawatsese and Arabic, Tamil for Indians rather than Malayalam, Telugu, Hindi, Punjabi, Bengali, or Urdu. Chua quotes the former prime minister, Lee Kuan Yew in 1971, summarizing his thinking on the role of Mandarin for Chinese Singaporeans, a group that was being unified under Mandarin and moving towards linguistic and cultural homogeneity:

We must give our children roots in their own languages and culture, and also the widest common ground through second language. Then we shall become a more cohesive people, all rooted in their traditional values, cultures and languages; but effective in English, a key to the advanced technology of the West. (Lee Kuan Yew, Straits Times 29 April 1971)

The government has always taken the lead in formulating policies for the economic, social, linguistic and cultural development of the country. Government-directed agencies, institutions and channels (media) are used to implement policies designed to bring about change and development.

One aspect of such decisions are the linguistic policies based on a pragmatic evaluation of a changing sociolinguistic environment. These are designed to bring about communicative integration across a diverse set of ethnic, linguistic and cultural communities. Policy makers have considered it unrealistic to prescribe equality of use of the four official languages in all public domains. Instead it has utilized English language education as an
essential ingredient of nation-building. It has been used to speed up the process of technological modernization which began in the 1960s.

Many other policies such as economic activities and manpower training are closely interconnected with other planning activities; the 'Look East' policy which introduced Japanese studies, the introduction of German and French language classes with the expansion of trade connections with Europe; and in the 1990s, courses in Business Chinese/Mandarin with the expansion of business connections with China have had an overwhelming success.²

The dominant role of English in Singapore's economic growth, social mobility and economic gain is established and accepted mainly by the English-educated. The focus is currently directed towards the creation of a supra-ethnic national identity, with the transition from separate ethnic identification to a national identity. The role of ethnic languages on the other hand is guided by the objectives of the bilingual educational policy; mother tongue learning is used to establish links between language and culture. The government has encouraged the use of English in all public domains, and to use it as a tool to mould a national identity, one that displays the Singaporean culture. It uses English as its working language, in its discourse to the nation, and in parliament.³

In the search for a Singaporean national culture and identity it can be argued that many Singaporeans have accepted and use Singapore English and its varieties such as Singlish as the preferred medium of inter-ethnic, intra-ethnic communication, in entertainment, in the media, and the arts. Inter-ethnic communication at the discourse level displays an indigenization of English that has been evolving as a result of contact with other languages, through the users and uses of English at all levels of the population. Singaporeans in turn now talk about a language, Singaporean English, that gives them a means to display their Singaporean identity and culture.

3. Language shift or language revival: the place of dialects and Mandarin in the Chinese community

There has been considerable reaction and criticism on the place of Mandarin by Chinese-educated groups, former Nantah graduates, and the Chinese Teachers' Union and Chinese cultural groups. One of the issues taken up by these pressure groups was the falling standards of Mandarin in schools.
To counter the arguments presented by the Chinese educated on the dominant status of English and the lower status of Mandarin, the government launched an annual 'Speak Mandarin' campaign, in order to assist Mandarin acquisition and the use of Mandarin amongst Chinese Singaporeans. During the 1995 Speak Mandarin campaign, government officials discussed various measures to raise the status of Mandarin to a higher level, establishing norms and standards to prevent it from becoming a low level 'patois' used only in everyday discourse.

The policy decision to select Mandarin as the common language of communication among the Chinese people has led inevitably to the decline in the use of Chinese dialects, the mother tongues of many Chinese speakers, except for a generation of Chinese educated Singaporeans who have switched to Mandarin as their mother tongue, as a home language and as a medium of social interaction. On the other hand, the effectiveness of the revival efforts for Mandarin may be vindicated by the decline in the use of dialects. Several surveys and reports on language use amongst the Chinese (Straits Times 14 June 1993, and Pakir 1992) present the following pattern. Chinese dialects declined sharply from 65% during the the 1980s to 4% in 1992, while the use of Mandarin increased from 26% to 65% in 1992. Fewer people reported using Chinese dialects at home, work and transactions. Dialects have been completely replaced by English and Mandarin in schools. Fewer grandparents (31% in 1993 compared to 42% in 1991) used dialects to their grandchildren. In 1993 it was reported that 53% used Mandarin and 16% English. The survey also showed that in schools, English increased by 13% to 53% and has replaced Mandarin (which lost 8% to 46%) as the language most often used by Chinese students in school. In the 1990 MOE Survey of 6 years olds (N = 38,259), it was reported that 34.6% of 6 year olds named English as their main home language compared to the national average of 20.3%, and 43.8% named English as the second most frequently used home language.

The emphasis on Mandarin in the domestic, home and social domains has in turn affected the choice of language code among the individual, the familial setting and everyday use and choice of language. Chinese dialects have been replaced by Mandarin over the media, radio and television and entertainment. The campaign, which began in phases, introduced Mandarin as a home language, as a language of social interaction and later as a language of communication and transactions during counter service at government departments. The 1993 SPH survey on Speak Mandarin campaign in the work place showed that the following languages were spoken: English (43%), Mandarin (36%) and dialects (declined to 21%).
The message and the campaign were later extended to common everyday occupations: food sellers, taxi drivers, bus conductors, using slogans such as 'if you are a Chinese make a statement in Mandarin' and 'Mandarin for Chinese Singaporeans - more than a language'. Both public and private organisations organise activities ranging from story-telling to joke-telling competitions, karaoke and beauty contests in Mandarin. The rationale provided by the government was to use a linguistic tool as part of nation building, to unify the Chinese community through Mandarin, strengthen their cohesiveness, and support the cultural identity and language claims of the Chinese-educated Singaporeans. Chinese-educated groups are positive about this support for Chinese language and culture.

The focus of current policy statements, according to Gopinathan (1994) has shifted from politics to economics. Chinese is being promoted as a language of business communication with the Chinese in East Asia, China and Taiwan. Formerly associated with Mainland China and Chinese communism, the Chinese language has now been depoliticised. The prospect of economic benefit through access to the enormous Chinese markets has increased the interest in Chinese across the whole of the region, with more Malaysians, Thais, Japanese, and South Koreans now learning and using the language (for example, 20,000 Malays and Indians are enrolled in Chinese schools in Malaysia).

It has been suggested that the 'Speak Mandarin' campaigns may become irrelevant one day, when the generation of hua xiao sheng (Chinese educated) disappears, and Chinese Singaporeans become bilingual in Chinese and English. The movement to promote Chinese would then become a civic movement. It would be a movement from the bottom-up rather than a top-down movement.

Notwithstanding the 'Speak mandarin' campaigns, there is some accommodation to the use of Chinese dialects, especially when these dialects are thought to be economically important. For example, the use of Cantonese in Hongkong and Hokkien in Taipei is tolerated for business contacts and business deals. Also, dialect heritage clans such as the Teochew clan association (there are 400,000 Teochew speakers in Singapore) get support for their cultural activities (it's been reported that Teochew is used during the annual 'Hungry Ghosts Festival'). This allows the government to ward off criticisms from dialect clan associations and dialect speakers targeted at the lack of support for dialect language and culture activities.

It would thus be one-sided to discuss the hegemonic place of English in Singapore without referring to governmental, institutional and community language and culture activities supporting the revival and spread of Chinese language and culture. It must be acknowledged, though, that Singapore lobbied for government endorsement to a language shift from English to a language shift from home domains.

4. Other community language studies

What about the other communities? The Indian, Malay, and Chinese communities continue to have both language and as lingua franca. The Brunei. But as more Malayan, social and economic strata in Singapore are integrated with the Chinese and the Chinese-educated groups are positive about this support for Chinese language and culture.

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acknowledged, though, that the impetus came from the Chinese community, who had
lobbied for government intervention and support. While the institutional support has lead
to a language shift from dialects to Mandarin, dialects are maintained in community and
home domains.

4. Other community languages in Singapore

What about the other community languages spoken in Singapore? The Malay language will
continue to have both an instrumental and an integrative value as a dominant regional
language and as lingua franca in Indonesia, Malaysia (Malaya, Sabah and Sarawak) and
Brunei. But as more Malays in Singapore move toward becoming part of the mainstream
social and economic structure, there will be some degree of shift from Malay to English (cf.
Bibi Jan 1994). Comparing census data, Malay as a household language declined from
96.7% in 1980 to 94.6% in 1990, while English rose from 2.3% to 5.5% during the same
period. More and more English-educated Malays speak English at home, thus hoping to
improve their children's academic performance. At the school level, English, mathematics,
and science are core subjects taught in English and used to measure academic achievement.
Academic achievement is thus strongly and closely correlated to English proficiency.

What is true of the Malay community also holds for the Indians in Singapore. The
Indian community is fragmented into 11 sub-groups, with the Tamils (63.9%), Malayalees
(8.6%) and Sikhs (6.7%) as major sub-ethnic components. Despite its official language
status, Tamil is in decline across the generations in Singapore. English has assumed an
increasing role as a medium of intra-ethnic communication (Census 1970, 1980, 1990,
Saravanan 1994). Census surveys showed that English as home language was spoken by
24.3% in 1980 and rose to 34.8% in 1990; 52.2% spoke Tamil in 1980 against 43.7% in
1990.

Tamil does not have the status and significance that English, Chinese and Malay have
in Singapore. The choice of language code whether Tamil or English is related to socio-
economic classification and the distinctive life styles that go with it. Tamil monolingualism
has been linked to low occupational status, associated with plantation, factory and
construction workers, low economic status and low prestige while English has become
associated with economic elitism and social elitism.

It is the institutional support provided by the government and school based learning of
the language that has prevented the massive loss and decline of Tamil. But despite the
institutional support for Tamil, middle-class Indians are aware that educational achievement is based on curricula taught in English. They accept a bilingual English-Tamil education. Ironically, as Gopinathan (1994) observes, the Indians are encouraged to be multilingual: the government recently allowed for community-run classes in Hindi, Punjabi, Bengali, and Urdu. Again, one can interpret this decision not only in terms of an expression of strengthening language and culture links, but also in terms of catering for an increasing Indian expatriate population. This is part of an economic equation in which expatriate Indian communities are encouraged to expand their business and investments, to take up permanent residence, and to settle their families in Singapore. Currently, 1,000 Indian pupils studying Malay or Mandarin are being encouraged to switch to community-run weekend Indian language classes. A number of recent surveys (Saravanan 1994; Ramiah & Govindasamy 1995) among Indian-Singaporean schoolchildren also testify to the increased awareness of Indian identities (as a sub-identity to Singaporean identity) and the growing importance of Indian languages alongside English. The revival process is however strongly school-based, and Ramiah & Govindasamy (1995) conclude that language mainly survives in the curriculum because of an educational requirement, rather than because of a genuine and conscious desire to maintain the ethnic languages and cultures.

Singapore Indians adopt a pragmatic approach to the linguistic formula, accepting the dominant place of English in Singapore at large and in the Singaporean education system in particular. Just like the Malays, Indian parents accept the dominant economic and social status of English in Singapore. There are continuing efforts at raising and maintaining cultural awareness and identity. Annual Malay and Indian Language Months, where language and cultural activities for the Malay and Indian communities speaking Tamil, Hindi, Punjabi and Bengali, have been organised by community organizations with support from government agencies.

6. Conclusion

Language planning is by definition interventionist, goal-oriented, and institutional. It can be argued that policy decisions in Singapore show that they are systematic and rational. At the same time, periodic policy adjustments have been made to accommodate and renegotiate. Political planners have attempted to accommodate the various strands, the linguistic, ethnic, cultural diversity in the country. This accommodation is sometimes governed by accommodations in the political ideology, accompanied by policy shifts in the language, cultural, educational, social, and economic development. Some of the approaches have been

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Numerous state visits to countries in East Asia (Chinese Singaporeans) in East Asia. It is the same with Cantonese in Hong Kong, who encourages the establishment of an economic equation in which expatriate Indian communities are encouraged to expand their business and investments, to take up permanent residence, and to settle their families in Singapore. Currently, 1,000 Indian pupils studying Malay or Mandarin are being encouraged to switch to community-run weekend Indian language classes. A number of recent surveys (Saravanan 1994; Ramiah & Govindasamy 1995) among Indian-Singaporean schoolchildren also testify to the increased awareness of Indian identities (as a sub-identity to Singaporean identity) and the growing importance of Indian languages alongside English. The revival process is however strongly school-based, and Ramiah & Govindasamy (1995) conclude that language mainly survives in the curriculum because of an educational requirement, rather than because of a genuine and conscious desire to maintain the ethnic languages and cultures.

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cultural, educational, social and economic spheres. There is an ongoing debate as to whether
some of the approaches used by policy makers were appropriate and whether further
accommodations need to be made. 

The government itself is one of the biggest bilingual business brokers in Singapore.
Numerous state visits have lead to the signing of memoranda of understanding with
countries in East Asia and with the rest of the world. Bilingual business brokers (mainly
Chinese Singaporeans) liaise on behalf of businessmen from the West with businessmen in
East Asia. It is the same business acumen that creates a degree of acceptance for the use of
Cantonese in Hong Kong and Guangzhou and of Hokkien and Teochew in Taiwan, and that
encourages the use of Malay in the neighbouring countries of Malaysia, Indonesia and
Brunei, as well as of Indian languages in South Asian business networks. The same spirit
encourages the establishment of bilingual power brokers in Asia, helped in these arguments
by the booming of the East Asian economies. The former prime minister Lee Kuan Yew,
who has been the architect of many of the language planning decisions, talked about the
revival of self-confidence in East Asia, the reaffirmation of Asian values and culture in East
Asia, a transformation of Singapore's political vocabulary by the renaissance of East Asian
civilization. Current political discourse is directed by the transformation of East Asian
economic development and industrial transformation.

The language-and-culture link, the justification for the bilingual, multilingual policy
now has to include a language-and-economy link, with culture identified as Asian identity,
an Asian way of doing things. But ironically, the policies for promoting Asianess are aimed
at economic growth. It is economics that gives the impetus to acquire Mandarin, seen in the
enrolment for business Chinese classes.

Gopinathan (1994) notes that socio-economic change has increased considerations and
raised new questions about equity. Language management processes need to remain flexible
to accommodate pressures in order to continue to promote, via language, greater
communicative integration. The government's active promotion of Mandarin aimed at
eliminating dialect differences has led some to suggest that this is an attempt to sinicise the
population and make Singapore into a Chinese nation. But this ideological argument may
be countered by Chua's (1995) observation that reinventing the traditional, linguistic
cultures would mean reinventing the various racial cultures. This puts another question at
the feet of the government: whether a move towards reidentifying separate ethnic and
linguistic cultures may prove detrimental to the social integration of Singapore as a nation.

The surveys for Chinese and Indians show that Singaporeans are bilingual and
bicultural. In conclusion, many Singaporeans like myself are products of the bilingual, bicultural policy. A Singaporean identity has evolved through Singaporean English and its many varieties. It is not an impoverished or inadequate language. In fact it has given us a way of expressing our Singaporean identity, in communication, in the arts, in playwriting, song writing, poetry, television programmes and musicals.

Notes

1. Goh Chong Tong (1991) made the following remarks: the dominance of English over Chinese in Singapore has already been settled by history, the market and force of circumstances. English will be the common language of Singaporeans and the principal language of commerce and official communication. This is a reality. Given that this is how do we preserve values, unless the English educated Chinese are taught and instilled with core Chinese values, cultural individualism will force out Confucian dynamism as Singapore’s value system (Speeches vol 15 1991, July 26, 1991).

2. Ministerial statements by Ker Sin Tze, Wong Kan Seng and Lee Kuan Yew point to Mandarin as the key to cultural and business links with China. Home Affairs Minister, Wan Kan Seng launching the annual Speak Mandarin campaign, message - 'Use it or lose it, Speak Mandarin', especially targeted at English-speaking Chinese Singaporeans made the following remarks: that the language was fast becoming a common, unifying tongue among the various Chinese dialect groups. Its status as a school language had made Chinese Singaporeans fairly competent. Mandarin was more widely used among the older speakers, shopkeepers and hawkers, and at Seven Moon auctions where it used to be dialects. This year's emphasis was on the richness of the culture. Mandarin has both cultural and economic significance, Mandarin as the key to Chinese culture and to business relationships and networking guanxi with China. The link to mother tongue-language was depicted with the use of the term mu (mother tongue). (Straits Times 12, 1995). Lee Kuan Yew in ‘Developing a global guanxi’ noted that the sense of closeness is reinforced when speakers share basic culture and language and this makes for easy rapport and trust (among the business community). (Speeches, Vol 17, Nov 22, 1993). Dr Ker Sin Tze, Minister of State for Information and the Arts and Minister of State for Education in ‘Raising the status of Chinese language teaching’, observed that today more people are aware of the economic value of the Chinese language and that the use of the Chinese language will help to narrow the cultural and management gap. (Speeches, Vol 17, Oct 22, 1993). ‘A key to a renaissance and the Chinese race...’ said that the government’s social philosophy is to promote the use of the Chinese language and culture centre Mandarin to promote economic and educational links, and the link to mother tongue-language materials have in Education policy’. (Speeches, Vol 17, Oct 22, 1993).

3. The government has at national day celebrations: the promotion of languages, helping to promote their use, and the government's social philosophy is to promote the use of the Chinese language and culture centre Mandarin to promote economic and educational links, and the link to mother tongue-language materials have in Education policy’. (Speeches, Vol 17, Oct 22, 1993).

4. Campaigns targeted at: standard bearers; civil servants; artists to bring about a positive attitude towards language and culture centre Mandarin to promote economic and educational links, and the link to mother tongue-language materials have in Education policy’.

5. The other aspect of the use of Chinese language and culture and its people master the media. Lee Kuan Yew in ‘East Asia develops there values... The western media documentaries and CNN build...’ said that these language and culture and its people master the media. Lee Kuan Yew in ‘East Asia develops there values... The western media documentaries and CNN build...’ said that these language and culture and its people master the media. Lee Kuan Yew in ‘East Asia develops there values... The western media documentaries and CNN build...’ said that these language and culture and its people master the media. Lee Kuan Yew in ‘East Asia develops there values... The western media documentaries and CNN build...’ said that these language and culture and its people master the media. Lee Kuan Yew in ‘East Asia develops there values... The western media documentaries and CNN build...’ said that these language and culture and its people master the media. Lee Kuan Yew in ‘East Asia develops there values... The western media documentaries and CNN build...’ said that these language and culture and its people master the media. Lee Kuan Yew in ‘East Asia develops there values... The western media documentaries and CNN build...’ said that these language and culture and its people master the media.

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Lee Kuan Yew in 'Promotion of Chinese culture in a multi-
racial society' said that the economic rise of East Asia will be accompanied by a cultural 
renaissance and the Chinese language will grow in importance. (Speeches vol. 16, 1992).

3. The government has attempted to forge a sense of identity through the month long 
national day celebrations: the annual national day parade of songs and dances in the four 
languages, helping to promote a Singaporean culture and identity, inclusive of Asian values
(censorship is used as an effective tool for excluding those activities that do not fit in with the government's social philosophy). One artist, Kuo Pao Kun described this as political theatre inclusive of political propaganda.

4. Campaigns targeted at the English educated have continued using the community's standard bearers; civil servants, teachers, professionals, diplomats, writers, calligraphers, and artists to bring about a positive change in attitudes. It has lead to the setting up of Chinese language and culture centres and heritage studies promoting the study of Chinese philosophy, traditions, customs and values, and current affairs, with an emphasis on promoting economic and entrepreneurial interests in China. Publishing interests in Chinese language materials have increased, leading to the re-printing of books from Taiwan and Hongkong using simplified characters, as well as computer software, audio-visual materials, and compilation of word lists (it was pointed out, for example, that to Singaporeans the term xia hai means bargirl, in China it means to plunge into the business world). It was reported that these language and cultural activities have brought greater awareness about Chinese language and culture and improved results amongst middle class English educated Chinese students who have expressed fewer reservations about speaking Mandarin.

5. The other aspect of the debate argues A. Latif, a journalist, is that it is one thing to critically evaluate the PAP's ideological framework and the constraints on the individual but another to suggest alternative policy decisions where the costs to the individual and to society is going to be lower and whether benefits would have been commensurate (Straits Times, September 1995).

6. Lee Kuan Yew in a 'Cultural Tide is Rising for Asia' made the following remarks: As East Asia develops there will be a reaffirmation of Asian culture, Asian tradition and Asian values... The western media has saturated our tv, radio and print media; American cartoons, documentaries and CNN bring the world into our sitting rooms. As East asia develops and its people master the media, Asian cartoons, documentaries and commentators will interpret the world from an Asian perspective. Singapore's lifestyles and its political vocabulary have
been influenced by the West. In 20 years this will shift, as East said produces its own mass products and coins its own political vocabulary. (1995 Speeches vol. 19.1)

7. George Yeo, Minister for Information and the Arts made the following remarks: even after many generations, the divisions of race, language and religion will remain. We can neither them disappear nor legislate them away. But we can certainly manage them. We need both top-down and bottom-up management. Top-down management is a matter of leadership, good government and fair policy, bottom-up management involves the individual in good inter-communal relations (1994 Speeches vol. 18.9).

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1. Introduction

The Singapore language planning concepts which co-existed with the established communic monic contestation, co (1968, 1972) on language bilingualism, society Singapore’s language demonstrate that while power to account for problematics in language power and ideology.

In raising such of social consent is ‘natural’ responses to policies seek to define

2. Language engineering

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