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CONTESTED SPACES IN POLICY ENACTMENT: A BOURDIEUSIAN ANALYSIS OF LANGUAGE POLICY IN SINGAPORE

Introduction

‘When one recognizes the social and political embeddedness of languages in a Bourdieusian way, their status and their use,’ May (2011) argues, ‘a different, more critical view of language policy immediately becomes possible’ (pp. 152-153). We contend it would be impossible to understand the paradoxes and dynamics of language policy and planning (LPP) without such embeddedness. We see this especially in the structure and rhetoric of national LPP in multilingual Singapore, which has remained essentially unchanged since the country gained independence in 1965. Following the assumptions of early European nationalism (Gellner 1983), Singapore’s leaders regard language as an essential component of nation building and identity, especially because of Singapore’s colonial past and migrant population. This led to the following decisions:

- Malay was identified as the national language to position the nation within the Malay archipelago.¹
- Four official languages were determined: Chinese (Mandarin), Malay and Tamil in alignment with the three primary ethnic communities, and English.
- There is an implied parity for the four languages, evident in Article 53 of the Constitution: ‘all debates and discussions in Parliament shall be conducted in Malay, English, Mandarin or Tamil’ (Attorney-General’s Chambers 1965).
- English was cast as a language for inter-ethnic communication based on continuity with Singapore’s colonial past and future economic positioning in a globalised world.
- Mother-tongue languages were highlighted as a ‘cultural compass to our sense of self, identity and values’ (Iswaran 2009: para.9) and as cultural ballast vis-à-vis the cultural pulses that come with English.

This quadrilingual policy translated into a bilingual education policy², officially adopted in 1966. A national curriculum currently designates English as the *first language* and medium of instruction for most school subjects, and *mother tongue* (MT) as the official language most closely associated with one’s ethnicity (Chinese, Malay, Indian - with some exceptions for ‘other’ minorities and for returning Singaporeans, [Ministry of Education 2014]).

¹ Though the ‘national language’, Malay has little status at the national level beyond its ceremonial role (national anthem and military commands). Its symbolic significance has to do with how it signals Singapore’s regional identity, rather than alignment with China, in spite of its predominantly Chinese population. Nationally, its real significance is its position as mother-tongue of the Malay community, on par with the other official mother-tongue languages.

² The education system is actually quadrilingual, echoing the national language policy (cf. author & Co-Author, forthcoming). However, we refer to the ‘bilingual education system’ emphasising that students must study at least two of the official languages.

Despite the persistent structure and rhetoric of national LPP since independence, there has been an active undercurrent of inconsistencies and subtle changes, suggesting that apparent top-down, uncontested LPP is an active, contested space. Some policy reforms have been primarily ‘local’, addressing Singapore-specific concerns (e.g., loosening the ‘ban’ on dialects, discussed below). Other policy shifts relate to broader international changes (e.g. inclusion of Indian diaspora languages in national schools as in South Africa). In order to understand the apparent tension between static quadrilingual LPP and the dynamic reality of policy shifts, we employ a Bourdieusian lens which is historical and interpretive (Gorski, 2013a) – or, using the words of Blommaert (2015: 4), an ‘*intersubjective* engagement negotiating the “objective” historically constituted positions from which each party acts and produces meaning.’ Specifically, we are interested in language shift, maintenance and medium of instruction policies, their consistencies and discontinuities, which we examine by adopting Bourdieu’s metaphor of *field*. In so doing, we take analyses beyond a more structural Fishmanian domain-based framework (Fishman 1965) which frequently informs language policy analysis in Singapore but fails to capture fully the paradoxical shifts and impacts that different fields have on each other with respect to language and the power dynamics involved (Savage & Silva 2013). We consider two contrasting examples – those of Chinese and Indian language varieties, their treatment over time by the government and by their respective ethnically-affiliated communities – as illustrations of the continuing contestations in Singapore language policy. Examination of these contrasts also shows how a Bourdieusian analysis can add insight to the dynamics of language policy.

We begin with a brief overview of Bourdieu’s central, interrelated concepts, or ‘thinking tools’ (Rawolle & Lingard 2013; Wacquant 2004): *habitus*, *field* and *capital*. ‘Strictly speaking,’ Swartz (2013) argues, ‘Bourdieu does not offer a theory of fields, a theory of capital, or a theory of habitus as stand-alone conceptual perspectives’ (p. 26). He notes that a common error is attempting to extract just one. In Bourdieu’s metaphor of ‘the game’, habitus, field and capital come together in a complex nexus to describe what happens in fields or sites within fields of social practice.

In his writing, Bourdieu himself often invoked the metaphor of the playing field (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). To make this metaphor more concrete, we have developed a visualisation of Bourdieu’s concepts of ‘field’ and ‘game’ as contested space which can change in shape and size yet maintain some fundamental integrity based on observations at a local university sports’ field:³

There are several multi-purpose sports fields at the National University of Singapore (NUS), all adjoining within one larger physical space which is ‘divided’ according to who is using which space for what purpose. When not needed for official or curricular purposes, the field(s) can be used by teams

³ We find the visualisation to be particularly resonant given Swartz’ explanation of the connection between fields and ‘rules of the game: ‘Entry into the field requires the tacit acceptance of the rules of the game, meaning that specific forms of struggle are legitimated whereas others are excluded’ (Swartz 1997: 125).

(official and unofficial) for recreation.⁴ But there are rules governing this. For example, more than one team might use adjoining fields at the same time (e.g., a softball team, a football team, and others with Frisbees can play concurrently). Also, even though a team is unofficial, it needs to be linked to NUS (e.g., members of the team should be members of the NUS community).

In a sense, the spaces are uncontested as the rules of use specify legitimate users, a reservation system, and agreement to share space based on the needs of each sport. However, different levels of legitimation are shown in actual use. For example, teams are often composed of some players who are members of the NUS community and some who are friends of members. The latter might be seen as legitimate members by their team, but as 'pseudo-members' by the NUS hierarchy or other teams.

Sub-division of space is also contested as the zones for each sport are loosely marked by appropriate equipment (e.g., bases, goals), specific boundaries are more imagined than demarcated. All teams recognize that softball is played where there are bases and a pitching mound, football where there are nets for goals, and Frisbee where the space is more open. However, as games ensue, players move in and out of these loosely marked zones. This usually works well with teams and individual players coming to unspoken agreement about boundaries. However, it can, and does, result in players overstepping the imagined boundaries of play. Reactions vary from apologies to verbal arguments about boundary demarcations and, occasionally, (physical) fights over perceived 'ownership' and legitimation. For example, when there is perceived overstepping, a team member of sport A might claim that sport B is not legitimate because the team is comprised of some 'pseudo-members' or because they have over-stepped too often and therefore should give up their rights to use the space.

There are a number of themes in this vignette that illustrate Bourdieu's conceptualization of field. We first note the individual games, each within an imagined field and within the larger game of group sports as played out in the physical field. The rules (which Bourdieu calls 'regularities') operating in the field are not particularly obvious or well-defined. There are multiple layers and nuances, and there is an undeclared understanding to guide participation and negotiations. What brings people together is not the shared understanding of rules themselves, but rather, a belief in the value of the game(s) (Swartz, 1997).

Second, it is in the moment of contestation that power dynamics and hierarchization of fields and of capital within fields becomes transparent. For example, what determines legitimacy becomes apparent in moments of negotiation and prioritization. This is where Bourdieu's notion of capital (economic, social, cultural, symbolic) becomes important. Capital is what structures a field; capital exists only in relation to the field. Bourdieu (1984) defines capital as 'the set of actually usable resources and powers' within a given field (p. 114). Resources of any kind become capital when they take on currency within the context of social relations of

⁴ Personal communication, Office of Sports and Recreation, Office of Student Affairs (17 February 2014); See also <http://www.nus.edu.sg/osa/fac/sports-facilities/sports-facilities>.

power; arrangement of capital constitutes and defines the field. As in our vignette, capital allows the possessor to wield influence and defines positions of power within a field. Furthermore, the value of capital can change, just as the boundaries of fields can shift. It is thus possible for one form of capital, such as linguistic capital, to be converted into other forms, such as education or employment opportunities. In the Singapore context for example, although the four official languages are promoted as having equal status, English is often considered to be ‘first among equals’ (Stroud & Wee 2011: 50). And although bilingualism is supported throughout education and society, it is English+Mandarin bilingualism that is perceived as having greatest capital (Gopinathan, Ho, & Saravanan 2004). The linguistic capital of English or of English+Mandarin bilingualism is convertible to other types of capital such as educational and professional capital.

Habitus is a third conceptual feature. Habitus is described by Bourdieu as a ‘way of being, a habitual state... and in particular, a disposition, tendency, propensity, or inclination’ (cited in Wacquant 1992: 18). As Blommaert explains, ‘Habitus shows itself in *every* social activity – we always embody the sociohistorical realities that formed us as individuals who take specific (nonrandom) positions in a social field, with degrees of access to the material and symbolic capital that characterizes these positions, and the relationships of dominance or subordination they involve with others (2015, p. 9). Habitus usually is internalised and unconscious, and mostly acquired as a result of an individual’s social and cultural experiences. The importance of habitus to the game is its connection to behaviour, predisposing individuals to behave in particular ways; it is having a ‘feel for the game’ (Bourdieu, 1990: 66). This is suggested in our vignette in the way the individuals see themselves as players of a particular game within a particular field and with the particular rights of that role. For example, a footballer or softball player presupposes the right to overstep the imagined spatial field of the game in order to get the ball and move the game forward. As Gorski (2013a) reminds us, ‘the alignment between the habitus and the expectations of field positions is seldom perfect. Expectations from the past seldom fit exactly with existing opportunities’ (p. 32). And so analysis of habitus is not just on positions or capital within the field, but also on adaptation, adjustments and change, and in some cases, even transformation.

Fields can be viewed in various ways, including academic fields (economics, finance) or, more broadly, political and linguistic fields. Language is seen as a unique kind of field since it transverses many social fields (Grenfell 2011): fields of education, the political field and so forth all involve the use of language. All fields define the meanings and values associated with language and linguistic capital with respect to their unique contexts, how they are valued and potentially convertible. Thus, the linguistic field itself is shaped by the power relations between people and the linguistic capital they wield within and across fields. The field of power (aligned with the state) is a kind of ‘meta-field’, operating at a different level than other fields in that it encompasses aspects of these other fields and thus is defined by ‘meta-capital.’ This allows the state to uniquely influence the rate of exchange between different forms of capital. It is particularly poignant then that this state meta-field is directly involved in border-crossing linguistic fields and capital, most clearly expressed in the relationship between the processes of nation-building and the construction of a national language as a key marker of its identity (Bourdieu, 1991; May, 2011). According to Bourdieu, (1991: 46) ‘Integration into a single “linguistic

community”, which is a product of the political domination that is endlessly reproduced by institutions capable of imposing universal recognition of the dominant language, is the condition for the establishment of relations of linguistic domination.’ This unique role of the state in determining the rate of exchange between capital and in shaping the game is important to understanding the dynamics of LPP in Singapore.

Field analysis of language policy

Field analyses of language policy involve three interrelated interpretive layers (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992: 104). The first is the position of the field of language policy vis-à-vis the field of power. ‘The field of power is the source of the hierarchical relations and structures in all other fields’ (Jenkins, 2002: 85). Thus field analysis requires a historicized approach to language (Bourdieu 1991; May 2011), allowing for consideration of how particular languages come to be dominant over others, why and in what contexts. Specifically with respect to the construction of national languages as a key component of nation building, analyses need to focus on the processes of *legitimation*, or the official recognition of a language by the state, and *institutionalization*, its adoption in key/public language domains. These wider socio-historical/political forces become the contexts within which people make choices about language use in their public and private lives (see also, May 2011; Nelde, Strubell, Williams 1996). This brings us to Bourdieu’s second analytical layer, which entails mapping out the structure of the relationships between different players who compete for the valued capital – who defines the field, what are the forms of capital specific to a particular field, and what is the distribution of this capital. Bourdieu’s third analytical layer involves analysing the habitus of these players. We refer to the key features of each layer (eg. legitimation, institutionalization, and contexts for language choices; relationships between players, structures of relationships, capital and field; player habitus) as we map the processes of change (Gorski, 2013b) in Singapore’s language policy. Also, as we work through these layers in our re-consideration of Singapore’s language policy, we illustrate with representative examples from public statements, speeches, and media reports. Singapore is obsessed about language, and the topic appears with incredible frequency and consistency in government speeches and the daily newspaper (Author, 1998).

Applying these layers of analysis to the LPP in Singapore, we note that one of the first policy actions of the newly formed nation in 1965 was the institution of its multilingual policy (as an action of the field of power vis-à-vis field of language policy). However, this decision was not wholly intuitive, for, among the options for Chinese languages, Mandarin was selected as the mother tongue of the ethnically Chinese population though it was not the most common Chinese variety (Chua 1962). This decision was legitimized based on an exonormative standard of Mandarin (Putonghua) as the standard in China, and the supposition that it was not charged with any local or divisive politics that might be associated a particular dialect (Tan 1995). Furthermore, even though they adopted a multilingual language policy, Singapore’s policymakers have always drawn on assumptions about language that emerged with the rise of modern nationalism, sociolinguistic homogeneity (one language = one nation) as the ideal against which linguistic diversity was a threat to nationhood. The twist in Singapore is that homogeneity is seen within the English Language (EL)/MT quadrangle (comprised of distinct and static languages), and linguistic diversity is constructed as any languages external to this structure. Within the official linguistic

quadrangle, each component is tasked with the establishment and promotion of linguistic (and cultural) unification toward the greater purpose of national unity. There is an assumption of linguistic purism and segregation, with the languages discursively compartmentalised: English as the unifying (national level) intra-ethnic language, the language of commerce, law and education, the language that links Singapore to the international/global community; Malay, Mandarin and Tamil as unifying inter-ethnic languages, rooted in cultural heritage, tradition and stability (for discussion, see; Author, 1999; Silver, 2005). The former is for modernisation; the latter are for cultural ballast to keep Singaporeans grounded within modernization's potential destabilizing effects (Lee, H.L.,1999). The former is public; the latter are private and community-based with a limited public portfolio. The Singapore government has actively promoted its language policies through various layers of institutionalization and through intense campaigning to align linguistic practices with its policy objectives. However, assumptions of linguistic parity, and notions of linguistic purism and stable diglossia, are not sustainable beyond the level of policy.⁵

In Singapore, language shift and maintenance has been dramatic, especially in relation to the rising dominance of English (Saravanan 1998; Co-author 2005; Author & Co-authors 2010), but also evident in shifts to the official languages from other languages. As May (2011) argues, it is in analyses of language shift that Bourdieu's application of field analysis becomes particularly potent, considering how the field of power influences the habitus (through processes that Bourdieu calls 'misrecognition') within which people make their language choices and the recalibration of capital. Wacquant summarizes Bourdieu's notion of field as 'space of play which exists as such only to the extent that players enter into it who believe in and actively pursue the prizes it offers' (1992: 19). The story of the paradoxes and inconsistencies in language shift and language maintenance is a story about who actively engages in the field, who believes in the worth of the game. It is to this story we now turn.

Language shift and maintenance

Table 1 shows comparative census figures by 'language most frequently used at home.' Rather than reiterate that narrative, we focus on another aspect of the story, positioning for and against language maintenance and shift for Chinese dialects and for non-Tamil Indian language (NTILs) by Chinese and Indian ethnicity (Table 2).

TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

Positioning

Mandarin was not only designated as the official language for the Chinese population, but, as shown by census figures, it has been broadly adopted. This was facilitated by a number of factors initiated by the field of power including an annual Speak Mandarin Campaign (SMC; Promote Mandarin Council n.d.) and

⁵ See May (2014) for an in depth exploration of this idea with reference to political theory and language policy.

institutionalization through medium of instruction policies. In contrast, while Tamil was designated the official language for the Indian ethnic community, it has not been promoted as a common ethnic language. In fact, policy has adjusted to support maintenance of NTILs.

A look at the SMC demonstrates how the field of power works to shape the hierarchy of language within the field of language policy in Singapore by influencing the habitus and realigning the relative value of linguistic capital, and introduces our discussion of language shift within the Chinese community as it pertains to dialects⁶. The SMC was launched by the government in 1979, shortly after an ad hoc committee tasked to examine the status of the bilingual education policy found the policy to be failing (the Education Study Team 1979). The continued use of Chinese dialects in the home was considered to be the primary cause: ‘The majority of the pupils are taught in two languages, English and Mandarin. About 85 percent of these pupils do not speak these languages at home. When they are at home, they speak dialects. As a result, most of what they have learned in school is not reinforced’ (The Education Study Team 1979: para 4.4).

While the SMC is a national campaign (ironically, given the Chinese community target), funded by the Ministry of Communication and Information⁷ and with ministry representatives on the Speak Mandarin Council, central to its success has been its partnership with the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCCI). In their first meeting after the launch of the SMC, members voted on their position concerning Mandarin. *The Straits Times* reported the results of the meeting: ‘Almost a thousand hands shot into the air at once, in the glare of TV lights. The silent eyes were decisive. Not a limb wavered... It was a historic moment, for the representatives – from Chinese clan, trade and civic organisations – unanimously voted to adopt Mandarin as the lingua franca of Singapore’s multi-dialect Chinese community’ (Lee 1979). This is not to suggest there was no controversy; letters to the editor in both the Chinese and English press indicated bitter dispute, and controversy continues. However, the agreement of Chinese clan associations and grassroots organisations - traditionally formed on the basis of shared dialect and ancestral roots, and central to the social and economic development of Singapore (Singapore Federation of Chinese Clan Associations, 2012) - set a significant precedent for language shift in the Chinese community.

As the campaign took shape, a number of arguments were presented and very particular ideologies put forward (Author, 1999; Author & Co-author, forthcoming) to shape the habitus and recalibrate the linguistic capital of the field. For example, a strong ‘communicative argument’ was put forward based on notions of linguistic and ethnic unity: ‘Strictly speaking, there is no common mother tongue as such among the Chinese in Singapore. Therein lies the importance and justification of the Speak Mandarin Campaign’ (Fong 1983: 8).⁸ As suggested in this quote, identity politics (the

⁶ Here and throughout this chapter we adopt the terminology of Singapore’s LPP, ‘dialects’ are all Chinese varieties other than Mandarin whereas ‘non-Tamil Indian Languages’ (NTILs) are five specific varieties associated with the Indian sub-continent.

⁷ Previously Ministry of Information and the Arts (MICA).

⁸ At the same time Fong (1983) notes that, while most Malays do speak Malay, ‘it is not so, however for the Indians and the Chinese. Here, the term ‘mother tongue’ does not have its normal denotation’ (p. 8)

making of a mother tongue) – both personal and cultural – are at the heart of recalibrating the linguistic capital in the field. Dialects were presented as corrupt, inferior, associated with uncouth persons, and contrasted with the superior cultural value of Mandarin, the more worthy mother tongue. As the campaign subsequently shifted its attention to English-educated Singaporeans, English was presented as the cause of impending social and moral decay, with Mandarin the ballast against such forces.⁹ Arguments were presented within the spectre of national vulnerability whereby national identity and viability were only possible through Mandarin. Such positions can of course be critiqued for their limitations and selective application (Author 1999; Ng 2006; 2011), but what is more important is how the intensity and prolific dissemination of the governments' arguments in effect precluded counter arguments in the public domain and, with its attendant policies, established the parameters of 'the game'. The rules of the game dictated that linguistic diversity was a problem, that language acquisition developed within an either-or range of possibility (dialects OR Mandarin – no other multilingual arrangement was possible), the vulnerability of the moral integrity of the nation which could be largely resolved by realigning Mandarin as one's mother tongue, and so forth (Author & Co-Author, in progress). The story of language shift is how various members of the community have responded to this game – how they value the game and position themselves within the field.

The overwhelming support by key business and grassroots leaders within the Chinese community is a direct contrast to the various Indian associations which individually continued throughout the 70's and 80's to maintain NTILs through private schools and to push for recognition of those schools. While the ideological framing of the quadrilingual policy and designated mother tongue languages through the SMC were presented at a national level, they did not have the same impact in recalibrating the linguistic capital of the Indian languages.

Like the Chinese dialects, the designated NTILs – Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Punjabi, and Urdu – are not official languages in Singapore. Nonetheless they were recognized as school languages in 1989 due to community efforts to distinguish themselves from Tamil (Figure 1). As of 1994, these languages can be taken in high-stakes examinations in lieu of one of the three official mother tongues, and since 2008 the government provides financial support for NTIL education (Ministry of Education [MOE] 2007). These shifts in policy were driven by the relevant sub-communities following a long tradition of community schooling and ethnic societies for the maintenance of their cultural heritage (e.g., the Hindi Society, the Gujarati Society). Similar to the SCCCI members working together, in their case to unanimously support government national policy over community/ethnic interests, the various Indian sub-groups banded together to negotiate with the government. However they argued to maintain their social and cultural distinctiveness and to press for educational reform related to the bilingual requirement (Gujarati School Singapore administrators, personal communication, November 29, 2010). As part of this effort, they formed the Board for Teaching and Testing South Asian Languages, which has played a key arbitrating role (Tharman 2003).

⁹ Today, LPP similarly denies Singlish, a local variety of English that many in Singapore regard as their language of cultural identity, any official recognition (Author, 2005; Co-Author 2005; Wee, 2010)

FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

Crucially, the Chinese dialects and NTILs do not fit as part of Singapore's legitimized quadrangle. In the name of linguistic homogeneity the Chinese dialects cannot be institutionalized as part of the school curriculum or elsewhere. Even though policy has adjusted to support NTILs, it is significant that they can only be institutionalized when circumscribed for use by small sub-sets of the population and only within particular fields (e.g., education, culture), and thus are not seen as a threat to the national quadrilingual policy.

Essentially, with different agendas and with different relationships to the field of power, the purpose of the SMC (sourced in the field of power) and the NTIL societies and schools (sourced in community, further away from the field of power) is to create habitus, to actively develop a set of dispositions that normalize particular linguistic choices – the former rationalizing the need for ethnic homogenization and the latter for ethnic diversification. There were also agendas to impact home language use: in favour of Mandarin in Chinese homes and, to some extent, in favour of NTILs in Indian homes (for members of those sub-groups). For Mandarin, this was explicit and top-down. At the launch of the first SMC in 1979, Lee Kuan Yew claimed: 'If, however, the majority of parents secretly believe they can have English-Mandarin plus dialect for their children, then administrative action will not be wholly successful, because administrative action cannot reach the home where dialects, already entrenched, will prevail' (p. 3). And so, the campaign – and policy action – institutionalised Mandarin in all other fields, in the hope that as these fields bumped against each other, the habitus and home practices would be influenced. Hospitals and clinics, government service counters, taxi-drivers, bus conductors, market place, and radio and television were instructed to use only Mandarin, not the dialects. For NTILs the agenda was more implicit and bottom-up since Indian families had the option of pursuing Tamil language at school (rather than a NTIL) or even of pursuing an NTIL that differed from the home language (e.g., Hindi instead of Gujarati). Most students who studied NTILs were from families who wished to maintain these languages via schooling – even if they did not use those languages at home (Shah 2013).

Re-positioning

More recently there have been calls within the Chinese community to maintain dialects; however, there is an explicit understanding of the rules governing the field with no assumptions that dialects be considered school languages. For example, Zhou, a research assistant at the Institute of Policy Studies, argued, 'Perhaps it is time for us to reconsider the reintroduction of dialects into our language environment — *not as subjects to be taken in schools*; rather, to acknowledge and support their various functional and social roles as well as to maintain them as living languages of Singapore' (emphasis added, n.d.). While not institutionalised, there have been some shifts in practice and government discourse. Already in 1992, BG George Yeo told parliament what would have been unthinkable ten years earlier: Mandarin's status within the Chinese community remains, he said, but dialects are also important to individuals 'in carrying out their business, cultural or political activities' (Hansard 17 March 1992). Later he said, 'We cannot totally reject dialects because they are about our roots' ('No change in govt policy on Mandarin' 1992). These accounts suggest an

on-going unease with a total ban on dialects both politically and culturally. They also demonstrate the interactive nature of adjoining fields: We see how, some aspects of the field can be influenced (e.g., how the meanings and the capital of dialects are defined in different fields), while others cannot (e.g., the quadrilingual policy as a national cornerstone).

Current calls for language maintenance of NTILs have also expanded to include the potential utility of these varieties economically and for ethnic identity, drawing on similar expanding discourses for the official languages. For example, then Minister of Education Ng Eng Hen (2010: para 3) told members of the Hindi community:

The reasons given for wanting to learn Hindi are varied. For some, it is simply so that they can better understand the lyrics of popular songs. Beyond its cultural role however, many recognise that Hindi is an economic asset, especially with the rise of India.

Schooling, community programmes and media are the most commonly mentioned avenues for language maintenance.

But there are also a number of differences in the types of arguments that surface. Primarily these relate to ethnic affiliation and habitus; fairness, linguistic difference and potential capital; exonormative standards and legitimization. These arguments show some of the ways in which the public discourse and governmental policies are supported and contested by referencing fields.

(a) Affiliation and habitus

Governmental support for maintaining the NTILs as community languages, in contrast to the Chinese dialects, is especially evident in the establishment of NTILs as school languages, with governmental funding, and with national exams to satisfy the mother tongue requirement (Ng 2010). Arguments in favour of establishing NTILs as school languages were successful in part because they highlighted the importance of personal choice while still playing by the rules of the bilingual education policy. For example, drawing on the habitus and capital associated with the official languages, the NTIL community successfully argued that language maintenance was an important part of preserving their unique traditions and roots, which are distinctly different from the Tamil community.

More importantly, they convincingly demonstrated that these efforts supported the national agenda, rather than suggesting priority of ethnic over national identity. Then Acting Minister for Education Tharman Shanmugaratnam alluded to this in comments to the Sikh community: 'These [cultural and language] are laudable activities that fit well with the national approach of imbuing in our young the virtues and strengths of the individual cultures while emphasizing the common bonds that draw us together and make every one of us a Singaporean' (2003: para 9). This theme appears again in his comments to the Gujarati community: 'An important reason why the Gujaratis have been able to maintain their unique cultural identity, while thinking of themselves as Singaporeans, is their determination to hold on to their language' (2004: para 8). By rationalizing the maintenance of NTILs on traditions and

cultural/historical roots towards the national good, the sub-communities positioned themselves in relation to each other and in relation to the broader Singaporean identity. That is, they acted through an ethnic identity that predisposed them to unify with the ethnic group, through and to the ethnic language in particular ways.

At the same time, they identified cultural and economic capital within the national discourses of language and ascribed it to their own non-official languages, through linguistic instrumentalism (cf. Wee 2003) and cultural rootedness. The government policy seems to set up delimited fields for individuals and the community to play up this habitus and play out their capital: celebrating NTILs in the fields of education and commerce but only with the broader recognition of 'thinking of themselves as Singaporeans.' This was done by continuing the diglossic discourse framing the bilingual education policy, the importance of a population of English-knowing bilinguals with English for inter-ethnic communication while maintaining an ethnic language for cultural heritage and values.

Like the arguments presented by the Indian community, the cultural arguments for Chinese dialects are made within the habitus framed by broader language policy. For example, deviating from their original commitment at the launch of the SMC to abandon their dialects in favour of Mandarin, some clan associations now offer their dialect classes as a type of enrichment where they previously offered Mandarin. This is external to the bilingual education system. As one clan chairman explained, 'Dialect classes offered by the clans can never be a substitute for Mandarin as it is taught in schools, but are meant to complement that foundation' (Oon 2009). There has been no assumption by community members regarding a place for Chinese dialects in the school or any attempt to challenge the bilingual education policy. Rather, there is an unspoken belief (*doxa*, in Bourdieu's terms) in the value of the game, and an acceptance of the rules. However, within the field of media, a field largely defined by cultural capital, there is a perceived possibility for renegotiating how language is taken up. Pointing out that foreign films have been allowed on local media, citizens are calling for reintroduction of dialects (e.g. Kwok 2005). Younger Singaporeans appear especially eager to reconnect with their heritage through dialects, a kind of re-ethnicization (Goh 2014; Kwok 2005; Zhou n.d.), and to communicate with the older dialect-speaking generation (Giam 2012; Yeo 2007). There is evidence of support among some government officials as well, including Member of Parliament Baey Yam Keng who told *Today* newspaper: 'I just think it's a waste if we don't make some effort to preserve dialects. They are a big part of Chinese culture, so to understand our own culture and roots and to promote it to other racial groups, you have to bring in dialects' (Lin 2008).

(b) Fairness, linguistic differences and capital

While there are contrasting arguments then between the Chinese and Indian communities, these positions are often linked to issues of national identity (rather than ethnic affiliation, as discussed above) and fairness. The latter is clearly linked to linguistic differences and associated linguistic capital, based on and derived from academic success for each group and the various language varieties. For example, over the years of politicking (language ideological debates within the national agenda and socio-political contexts) around language and dialects, citizens and policymakers have made contrasting arguments attempting to recalibrate the linguistic capital

associated with the dialects vis-à-vis Mandarin. There is the view that linguistic differences make it relatively easy for dialect speakers to shift to Mandarin, and thus will not undermine the bilingual education policy; others argue the reverse – that dialects present an unfair burden to students within an education system that prioritizes effective bilingualism. Arguments have also been made that differences in dialects make intra-ethnic communication difficult, therefore a common Chinese language is needed. On the other hand, NTIL groups have successfully argued that being required to learn Tamil as a mother tongue is unfair due to cultural and linguistic differences, thus there is an issue of unfairness in the educational system. This view is quite important in light of Singapore’s longstanding claim that bilingual education levels the playing field for all Singaporeans (Lee 2011, Ng 2014). These discourses highlight the educational field as contested space – who gets to study which language at what price and for what purpose?

(c) Exonormative standards and fields

Exonormative standards as a means of determining which varieties get ‘upgraded’ to ‘language’ status or downgraded as ‘dialect’ are also referenced in these arguments. This is essentially an argument about legitimization (cf. May 2011). Since educational policy typically bases discussion of language standards on exonormative standards (e.g., Malay as spoken and used in Malaysia, English as spoken and used in the UK or, to some extent, in the US), these same arguments have been used to establish the viability of maintaining other varieties. In the case of NTILs, since school and community leaders could make use of educational materials, syllabi, exams and teacher certification processes which are already accredited elsewhere (see Shah 2013 for an example of how this was done for the Singapore Gujarati School), they could appropriate the habitus and capital associated with those standards and claim pre-existing (bounded) fields for each variety. They also have legitimacy in India or elsewhere as official languages. Similar arguments have not been possible for Chinese dialects. Although many Chinese varieties are spoken in China, only Putonghua is designated as the national language taught in all schools throughout China (Lewis, Simons, & Fennig 2013). Furthermore, according to then Minister for Trade and Industry Goh Chok Tong, the dialects do not have their own unique writing system (“Speaking more Mandarin “will lessen problems”” 1981), thus limiting the possibility of exonormative legitimacy.

In addition, Indians are a small part of Singapore’s population; those who are part of the NTIL sub-groups are even smaller (Indians make up less than 10% of the Singaporean population of which 54% are Tamil, Department of Statistics 2011). Chinese are the dominant ethnic group in Singapore (74%), with large dialect sub-groups (the Hokkien dialect group comprises 40% of the Chinese population; Department of Statistics 2011). Thus, arguments of linguistic homogeneity have been used to encourage the Chinese population to identify as ‘Chinese’ (rather than Hokkien, Teochew, etc.), while the Indian population has been allowed to pursue the NTILs as a government-sponsored expression of their diversity. Most intriguingly, as of 2007 the government suggested that some languages, such as the NTILs, can help to fulfil the socio-historical role of multilingualism in Singapore – globalisation – by bringing in more Asian languages (MOE 2007), but this is not an option for the Chinese dialects. That role is reserved for Mandarin.

Concluding words: Autonomous and heteronomous poles

We started our chapter by noting the enduring national quadrilingual policy on the one hand, and the shifting and paradoxical undercurrents vis-à-vis habitus and capital on the other. We anchored our analysis in the way policies have changed and adapted differently for Chinese dialects and Indian languages in the LPP field. In discussing how NTILs have become legitimized as school languages while Chinese dialects continue to be side-lined, we see Bourdieu's notions of socio-historical and socio-cultural contexts at play: it is only through understanding the broader social, historical and cultural contexts that we can understand how the policies have evolved and are implemented. Crucially, the hierarchical power relationships of the (perceived) linguistic markets for different languages make exceptions possible.

In his work related to the French school system, Bourdieu develops the idea of the 'relative autonomy' of fields (Bourdieu & Passeron 1977), the degree to which the structuredness of positions within the field are or are not influenced by other fields. Central to this idea is the distinction between autonomous and heteronomous poles within a field (Swartz 1997: 127-128; Webb, et al. 2002: 107-108). Autonomous poles tend to be aspects within the field that are quite distinct and removed from the rest of society, that part of the field which operates according to the field's immanent logic and is not influenced by other fields. In contrast, heteronomous poles within that same field are aspects that are linked quite closely to relations in the rest of society as well as influenced by other fields (and influencing other fields). The distinction of autonomous and heteronomous *poles* is important as we think about how positions within the field are shaped by tensions between autonomous and heteronomous *forces*. Webb et al. (2002) note, for example, how heteronomous forces such as economics and commodification are increasingly impinging upon the field of schooling. Still thinking about schooling, they note: 'Teachers move between these extremes in order to negotiate the various forces and imperatives with which they are confronted' (p. 109). From Webb et al.'s examples, we can begin to see how autonomous and heteronomous poles and forces can reshape existing fields.

Thinking specifically about LPP in Singapore, the state seems to view national languages as autonomous poles. For example, the four national languages are distinct from each other with specific purposes in society. The government attempts to stipulate diglossic boundaries, which structure language use in society. In reality, languages are heteronomous and influence each other not only in terms of linguistic features (e.g., acquisition of new vocabulary, influence on phonological features), but also in terms of how linguistic fields intersect, collide and contradict. For example, government policy on the four official languages had traditionally assumed that families would continue to use their Mother Tongue at home and English at school, not taking into account the way that family language policies come into play alongside of and in contradiction to governmental policies (Curd-Christiansen 2013; Saravanan 1998). Clearly the story of language maintenance and shift is more complex than the dominant narrative of shifting to English-knowing bilingualism. Instead language shift and maintenance is a continuing area of contested space for governmental, school and family policy. We conclude with Savage and Silva (2013), by 'emphasizing that the most significant property of the field concept is that it simultaneously offers a theory of contestation and dispute – as various agents compete

within the field – but at the same time it provides a theory of social integration as the contestants become embroiled in the shared game itself, and learn its stakes, twists and nuances, hence its passions and intensities’ (p. 119).

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