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Language Loss and Nationhood: Examining Language Shift among the Chinese community in Singapore and its Implications for Singapore

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Abstract

Singapore's logistic situation has attracted widespread scholarly attention due to the language policies implemented since independence. With English traditionally receiving much of the focus, there appeared to be less interest in language maintenance and shift of other official languages of Singapore. Henceforth, this paper aims to examine language shift among the Chinese community in Singapore and its implications for Singapore which have yet to be further explored in past studies. In this study, three members from a multi-generation Chinese Singaporean family (aged 22 to 84) were interviewed. Participants involved were required to indicate their language preferences across five different domains: family, friends, school/workplace, public space and media. The results indicated a gradual shift in linguistic preferences over generations, especially evident in some domains, but that there is also language maintenance for Chinese dialects in others. Overall, there are clear negative implications for the future of Chinese dialects locally.

Keywords: Singapore; Language Loss; Language Maintenance and Shift; Chinese Language; Chinese Community; Implications

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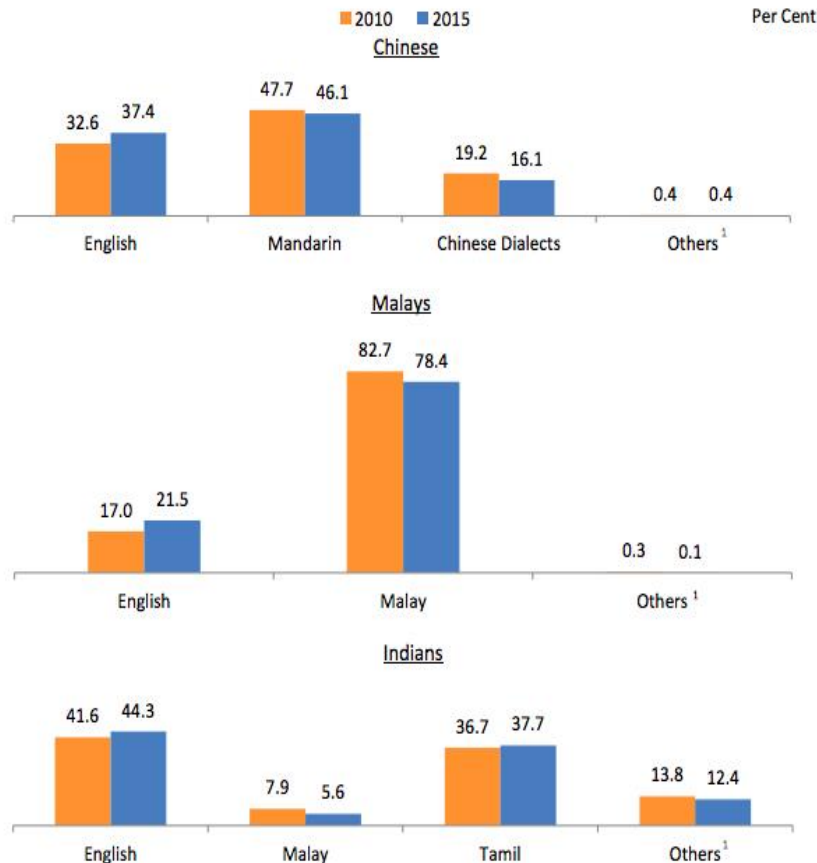
I would like to express my sincere gratitude towards my research supervisor, Dr. Viniti Vaish who encouraged me to pursue this topic and spent extra time helping me achieve a clearer structure for the paper. Her active guidance and sharing of valuable advice allowed me to overcome all odds and complete this research exercise.

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INTRODUCTION

Being a migrant nation, language policies introduced by the Singapore government in the early years of nation building were deeply centered on raising the status of English as an auxiliary language. These policies were so successful that English is now the dominant home language for over half of youths aged 5-14 years in Singapore (Department of Statistics Singapore, 2015). Figure 1 depicts the language usage trends among the three main ethnic groups in Singapore.



¹ Refer to other languages not elsewhere listed under respective Ethnic Group. For example, "Others" under Chinese include Malay, Tamil etc. and "Others" under Malays include Mandarin, Chinese Dialects, Tamil etc.

Figure 1: Language Usage Trends among the Three Main Ethnic Groups in Singapore

Particularly among Singaporean Chinese population, the Census of Population 2010 revealed that concurrent with the rising level of English usage, its prevalence as the home language of youths also increases. In turn, their “mother tongue” or heritage language (Vaish, Gopinathan, & Liu, 2007) of Mandarin Chinese becomes their second language (L2) i.e. not their native language or the first language they master. This results in their “mother tongue” proficiency taking a downturn, a process known as language shift where one’s mother tongue or ethnic language is replaced by another language due to economic, political, social or cultural changes (Holmes, 2001).

Notably, the language shift appears to occur at a faster rate among the Chinese community. The 2015 General Household Survey showed that over four in five Malays and Indians are multi-language literate, while this is true for only 70% of Chinese residents. According to Holmes, a crucial determining factor of the speed of shift is individuals’ socio-economic goals in the community. For instance, when more opportunities are offered by a second language, rapid language shift may occur as people are anxious about not losing out on opportunities.

A result of this rapid language shift over the last twenty years is that many youths today lack a common language with their grandparents (Department of Statistics Singapore, 2015). Consequently, the country is increasingly concerned about this trend among the youths and how to reverse it. This study hence, aims to examine the language shift, notably among the Singaporean Chinese community and reflect on the implications of this change for the ‘nation’ as a symbolic entity.

LITERATURE REVIEW

One of the first questions to examine when dealing with language shift in Singapore is to determine the extent of mother tongue loss in the country, particularly among the target ethnic group.

STUDIES ON LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE AND SHIFT IN SINGAPORE

Existing literature shows that language shift locally seems to mirror the global trend of intergenerational language shift, but few are as rapid as in the local context. Numerous studies show rapid language shift observed across the three main ethnic groups in Singapore within the next two to three generations. (Li, Saravanan & Ng, 1997; Gupta & Siew, 1995; Cavallaro & Serwe, 2010).

In one such study, Li, Saravanan & Ng (1997) used a combination of participant observation and in-depth interviews to study 72 Teochew speakers of different educational, social and economic backgrounds. The study showed that while Teochew used to be the main language used in most Teochew families locally, it is now replaced by Mandarin and English. The study also identified key reasons for this language shift, namely:

- 1) Institutional factors – mainly government language policies that promote English, followed by Mandarin, as auxiliary languages among various Chinese dialect groups
- 2) Societal Status – stigmatized language with no economic or instrumental value, and being associated with backward traditions
- 3) Subcultural factors – Teochew is not transmitted as the primary language to younger generation and progressively more individuals seek to communicate in English and Mandarin rather than Teochew
- 4) Sociocultural factors – Individuals perceived pragmatic attitudes towards the practical value of English and Mandarin, causing the absence of Teochew transmission and separation between ethnic identity and its corresponding languages.

Cavallaro and Serwe (2010), who surveyed 233 Singaporean Malays on language use behaviour in different domains, also identified economic reasons as a contributing factor of increasing English use and diminishing native language (Malay) use among youths. One such reason cited is the increase in international business endeavours.

Gupta & Siew (1995) examined the attitudes and societal pressures in a study involving 15 members of a Singaporean Chinese family that lead the family moving from Cantonese as the dominant language to English, and shows how family members deal with discrepancies in language repertoire. Daily conversations were collected over 14 weeks through tape recording and speech diary by the researchers to analyse. In addition, interviews were also conducted on family members regarding their speech use pattern. The study identified conflicting issues in the communication between the first and third generation as there is no common language, consequently appearing to have a negative impact on their relationship. Older generations also expedite the loss of the ancestral language when they willingly accommodate to the linguistic preferences of younger generations. The switch to English in this family led to less communication across generations, leading to barriers in passing on traditional and cultural values across generations.

Evidences from these studies suggest that there are three main factors that influence language shift locally:

- 1) Government policies
- 2) Individual attitudes
- 3) Familial attitudes and interactions

STUDIES ON LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE AND SHIFT IN OTHER COUNTRIES

Another point of reflection is language shift and maintenance in other countries, and consequently, lessons we can learn draw from them.

In a study done by Fishman (1966, 1991, 1999) on the language shift process, he focused on immigrant groups in the USA, including the Chinese community. He noted that immigrants are largely monolingual speakers of their native language, their children are bilingual speakers of the native language and national/common language (i.e. English), and their grandchildren being monolingual speakers of English. An important link to this language shift is the corresponding shift in their perception of ethnic identity. In the process of language shift, younger members of an ethnic group increasingly believe that fluency in their native language is no longer a benchmark of one's ethnicity (Fishman, 1991).

Watson identified a similar situation (1988) when investigating the language shift from Gaelic to English. Those who shift from Gaelic are only able to discuss certain topics in the language and converse in English when the topics are more complicated. He attributed the shift to 'generation gap' due to the younger generation failing to "benefit from the interaction with the oldest generation of speakers". Dorian (1981) echoed this view in his study, which showed how strong cross-generational effects can partially alleviate the passing on the native language from parents to children. Findings also showed

that the ‘generation gap’ could both result from and/or cause a lack of common language between the older and younger generations.

Considering the wide amount of literature on language shift in both Singapore and overseas, this study targets particularly the intergenerational relationship dynamics that have not been explored in detail previously. With this in mind, this study aims to explore the following research questions:

1. What are the changes in language behaviour observed in different generations of a Singaporean Chinese family?
2. What are the attitudes of the 3 generations towards identity?
3. What are the implications of how this change on the nation and its identity?

METHODOLOGY

PARTICIPANTS AND SAMPLING METHOD

Three members of a multi-generation Singaporean Chinese family (aged 22 to 84), one from each generation, were interviewed for this study. Refer to Appendix 1 for detailed demographics. Family interaction is the most central unit for the development of social interactions, especially amongst the Chinese families. Hence, this motivates the focus to be on the family domain. Moreover, most studies examine language shift in a greater environment while only a handful study the shift within one family. As such, examining the ongoing language maintenance and shift within the Singapore Chinese community with predominate multi-generation families would provide an interesting setting.

Recruitment notices were posted on social media platforms e.g. Facebook and Instagram to look for a three-generation Singaporean Chinese family where (1) at least one grandparent is fluent in Chinese dialect(s) and (2) the grandchild is above 21 years of age.

The final set of participants had differing language competency. Refer to Appendix 2 for detailed language fluency of each participant. The grandparent is competent of communicating only in Chinese dialect (Teochew), while both parent and child are competent of communicating in Mandarin, English and Chinese dialects to varying degrees of fluency.

PROCEDURE AND INSTRUMENT OF RESEARCH STUDY

Each semi-structured interview, conducted in a language of their choice i.e. English, Mandarin and/or Chinese dialect (Teochew), lasted approximately 20 to 35 minutes and were recorded on a digital recorder for transcribing purposes. Interview questions¹ were provided ahead of time to allow participants to prepare the interview so as to achieve optimal input. No personal questions, like participant’s income and sexual preferences, were asked to ensure that participant felt comfortable with providing honest and reliable information. Refer to Appendix 3 for detailed interview schedule of each participant. The interview questions are provided in Appendix 4.

ANALYSIS

As each participant was allowed to talk in a language of their choice, the recorded interviews were transcribed manually from the language used directly into English, with discourse particles such as “la” and “loh” excluded in the transcript. Refer to Appendix 5 for a copy of the interview transcripts (G1 – G3). The participants were also referred to by G1, G2 and G3 to preserve their anonymity.

One method of analysis the results of a qualitative research study was to identify key words/phrases relevant to the research questions. Responses provided by the participants were then consolidated based on the similarity, and justifications provided.

A simple card sorting technique was employed to analyse the first research question, where each response mentioned by each respondent was put on a separate index card. Similar cards were then grouped together e.g. languages used by each respondent, reasons why they used these languages. Answers will then be tabulated and represented in table form for analysis.

To analyse the second research question, phrases containing positive words like “important”, “benefit” and “essential” were identified and classified into one category and coloured green in the transcripts, while those with negative words, for example “disagree”, “insignificant” and “extinct” were grouped together and coloured red in the transcripts.

¹ The interview questions were adapted from *Bilingualism Without Diglossia: The Indian Community in Singapore* by Dr. Vinita Vaish, Associate Professor of National Institute of Education (Singapore).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

RESEARCH QUESTION 1 — CHANGES IN LANGUAGE BEHAVIOUR OBSERVED IN DIFFERENT GENERATIONS OF A SINGAPOREAN CHINESE FAMILY

Table 1: Family

Interview Questions	G1	G2	G3
1. In what language(s) do you speak to your parents?	Teochew	Teochew & Hakka	Mandarin Chinese
2. In what language(s) do you speak to your grandparents?	Teochew	Hakka	Teochew & Mandarin Chinese
3. In what language(s) do you speak to your siblings/ cousins?	Teochew	Mandarin Chinese	English & Mandarin Chinese

Table 1 illustrated that within the family domain, the choice of language used is largely dependent on the person that they are talking to. Not surprisingly, Chinese dialects received the highest score for communication with grandparents. The results also show that the older generation are competent only in using their “mother tongue”. As such, G1 uses her “mother tongue” of Teochew to communicate with her descendants; G2 uses Chinese dialects when communicating with the older generation but uses Mandarin Chinese with her siblings/ cousins; and G3 uses Chinese dialects predominantly with her grandparent.

Table 2: Friends

Interview Questions	G1	G2	G3
4. In what language(s) would you use with your friend of the same race when you talk to him/her about homework/ work?	Teochew	Mandarin Chinese, Teochew & Hakka	English
5. In what language(s) would you use with your friend of the same race when you want to express your emotions (e.g. you are feeling happy or sad) to him/her?	Teochew	Mandarin Chinese	Mandarin Chinese

Table 2 shows variability in language use from the domain of friends. Chinese dialects and Mandarin were chosen by G1 and G2 as preferred languages when speaking with friends of the same ethnicity. Notably, G3 mentioned that English is preferred when discussing homework/ work with friends of the same ethnicity, but Mandarin is preferred for expression of her emotions to the same group of friends. She further elaborated on the reason for this in the excerpt below:

“It is a norm in school to speak to our friends in English. I guess it is easier to communicate, for example when we brainstorm ideas for assignments... I speak more Chinese than English, so it naturally becomes my preferred language to express my emotions. It is easier to use Chinese to express myself, for example in terms of the choice of words or idioms that I can use to express my happiness or sadness. English may have different expressions that can be used in place of “happy” or “sad” etc. But when it comes to Chinese, certain phrases simply cannot be translated into English, as it loses the meaning and feeling that the phrase “carries” behind it.”

Table 3: School/Workplace

Interview Questions	G1	G2	G3
6. In what language(s) would you use when you speak to teachers/ classmates/ colleagues of the same race in school/ at work?	N/A	Mandarin Chinese	English & Mandarin Chinese
7. In what language(s) would you use when you are writing a note to teachers/ classmates/ colleagues of the same race in school/ at work?	N/A	Mandarin Chinese	English & Mandarin Chinese
8. In what language(s) would you use when you speak to teachers/ classmates/ colleagues of the different race in school/ at work?	N/A	Malay & English	English

Table 3 shows that in the school/workplace domain, there is very high language maintenance of Mandarin. Results in the above table show that Mandarin is almost exclusively used when speaking or writing a note to people of the same ethnicity. It is also fairly reasonable to expect that when speaking to someone of a different ethnicity in school/workplace, English is used. G3 also shared that English is used frequently when discussing group work with her classmates.

Table 4: Public Space

Interview Questions	G1	G2	G3
9. What language(s) do you use when buying things at the wet market/ hawker centre/ coffee shop?	Teochew	Mandarin Chinese & Teochew	Mandarin Chinese
10. What language(s) do you use when buying things at the shopping mall/ restaurants/ cafes?	Teochew	English	English
11. What language(s) do you use with staff at the bank/ government offices e.g. HDB, CPF?	Teochew	Mandarin Chinese	English

The public space domain also suggests a shift towards English across the generations. Table 4 indicates that Mandarin and Chinese dialects received the highest ratings in more traditional and informal public settings, namely wet markets, hawker centres and coffee shops. On the other hand, English is the dominant language in more western and formal public settings, namely restaurants, government offices and banks.

Table 5: Media

Interview Questions	G1	G2	G3
12. What language(s) is your favourite TV programme or movie in? What language(s) do you usually watch TV programmes or movies in?	Teochew	Mandarin Chinese & Hokkien	Korean, Mandarin Chinese & English
13. What language(s) is your favourite song in? What language medium are the songs that you usually listen in?	N/A	Hokkien	Mandarin Chinese & English
14. What language(s) is your favourite book in? What language medium do you usually read books/ magazine/newspapers in?	N/A	Mandarin Chinese	English

Similarly, in the media domain, there is a shift towards English. Table 5 shows that G3's literacy preference is predominantly English, which she attributed to being more uncomfortably with reading Chinese characters. In contrast, there are still signs of language maintenance for TV programmes, movies and songs, where she listens and watches them in Mandarin as much as in English.

In conclusion, it is evident that English is present in all the domain compared to the other languages that may be present in a particular domain(s) and not all in this current perspective. This highlight its importance and practical values within the Singapore Chinese community. The Chinese community used to rely extensively on codeswitching for all its functions. However, with the passing of older generation, there will be a reduced need to speak exclusively in Chinese dialects.

RESEARCH QUESTION 2 – ATTITUDES OF THE 3 GENERATIONS TOWARDS IDENTITY

Attitudes towards the importance of Mandarin Chinese

All participants perceived the importance of Mandarin Chinese, in terms of its functional purpose in this modern society. The excerpt below shows a response from G2 on this point:

“Firstly, China’s booming economy resulted in more China Chinese going to other countries for business and investment. Hence, for our younger generation to do business with them, Mandarin becomes the essential communication tool that they should acquire. Secondly, I feel that the culture behind Chinese is beautiful and enriching, hence it serves as a culture tool as well. If I were to educate my grandchildren in the future, I would definitely turn to my strongest language – Chinese. Through the use of Chinese, I am able to cultivate and pass down moral values. Thirdly, the bulk of Singapore’s population is Chinese. If we do not know how to speak our own language – Chinese, not to mention Chinese dialects, I consider this a tragedy for our race.”

Attitudes towards the importance of Chinese Dialects

Participants indicated a variety of different perception towards the importance of Chinese dialects. G1 felt that there is an absence of functional purpose in Chinese dialects, especially in comparison to English and Mandarin Chinese:

“Chinese dialects are not important in today’s society. Few Singaporeans know how to speak dialects, not to mention the younger generation. Singaporean youths nowadays can only speak two languages, English and Chinese. I am already old, and cannot control how the younger generation thinks. It is their decision whether they want to learn dialects, or even Chinese. In my family, for the third generation, their Teochew ability varies. My first and second daughters’ children can communicate with me in Teochew, but the rest can only use basic Teochew.”

G1 was generally pessimistic about the future of Chinese dialects. Since Chinese dialect have been extensively displaced by English and Mandarin Chinese locally, the declining number of Chinese dialects speakers around her is evidence of language loss. One possible reason is that there were no benefits for maintaining the use of these languages, and there is no official support for it either.

In contrast, other participants seemed to think more highly of Chinese dialects, expressing more positive sentiments in terms of its uniqueness, communicative value and emotional importance. G2 commented that:

“Majority of Singapore’s population is made up of Chinese, but we are further divided into different dialect groups. Each Chinese individual has his/her own ancestry, which comes with its own unique culture and tradition behaviour/ customs. While the official language for Chinese is Mandarin, but as a Chinese, I feel that it is essential to know how to speak his/her own dialect. Language is very important, as it is still our roots. I feel a little sad that in today’s society, younger generation do not know how to speak their own dialect... younger generation are missing the beauty of Chinese dialects and understanding the meaning behind it, as English is the common language in both work and home environment in today’s world.”

That said, they were also passive towards the maintenance of Chinese dialects in future generations. The excerpt below shows a response from G3 on this point:

“For practical reasons, I don’t see the need. It is a language (dialect) in which my children wouldn’t be able to use it in school nor at work. As such, I don’t find it necessary to teach them in the future.”

Attitudes towards Identity Constructions

While identity is perceived as multi-dimensional, it is widely agreed that language is a central feature of our identity and this view is often researched (Spolsky, 1999; edited volumes by Fishman, 1999; Fishman & Garcia, 2010).

In local context, a Singaporean Chinese could have an identity associated to their dialect group i.e. Hokkien, Teochew or Hakka or they could just identify themselves as a ‘Singaporean Chinese’ or simply ‘Singaporean’ which does not include their ancestral vernaculars. Of which, the latter two are the desired outcomes of the ‘Speak Mandarin Campaign’ (Tarulevicz, 2008). The personal discourse on language and identity in this study exemplifies very clearly the loosening hold the vernaculars have on retaining a place in the “language identity space” of Chinese Singaporeans.

However, there are differing opinions within the family with regards to their identity construct. This was especially evident in their responses to the question: “How do you identify yourself? Why?”

It was clear that G1 and G2 associate themselves to the Chinese dialect group identity, but not as part of the Chinese mainstream identity. The excerpt below shows a response from G1 on this point:

“I identify myself as Teochew, my genes, ancestors and parents are all Teochew. Teochew is just Teochew, there are no other answers to this question.”

G2 further elaborated on the above:

“I identify myself as a Hakka, this was the first answer that came to my mind... I am brought up in a Hakka family and the culture that my family practices during festive seasons etc. made me identify myself as a Hakka instead of being a Singaporean Chinese.”

Interestingly, G3 saw herself as having a dialect group identity, co-existing with a Chinese mainstream identity:

“I identify myself as a Chinese because Mandarin is my mother tongue; I grew up in a Mandarin-speaking environment. While I can speak and understand English fluently, I feel closer to a Mandarin-speaking person as compared to someone who is English-speaking... In terms of my ancestry, I also identify myself as a Teochew as my father is Teochew, this distinguishes me from other Chinese dialects in Singapore. Chinese dialects are part of the Singaporean Chinese culture and heritage; it is only right to identify myself as a Teochew in a growing English-speaking environment to prevent a loss of an intrinsic part of the identity among Singaporean Chinese.”

This shows that while Teochew is not the main language spoken by G3, it does not impact her attitudes towards her dialect group identity.

RESEARCH QUESTION 3 – IMPACT OF LANGUAGE SHIFT ON THE NATION AND NATIONAL IDENTITY

In discussing the impact of language shift on the nation and national identity, this study considers not just the primary data collected but also the writer’s own views as a member of the Chinese community, as the data collected here is too small to make generalizable comments.

An impact that language shift may have on the nation is the loss of identity in society. For example, consider a class of students who all belong to the same ethnicity – Chinese. Apart from identifying themselves as ‘Singaporeans’ or ‘Singaporean Chinese’, which likely is the predominant identity for most Singaporean Chinese youth today, individuals may also identify themselves by other trait descriptors such as dialect groups or religion to distinguish. Such is the case for many older Singaporean Chinese who usually distinguish themselves by dialect groups, i.e. ‘Hokkien’, ‘Teochew’ etc., as they grew up with the knowledge that these are distinct cultures (Kuo, 1985). However, with the implementation of ‘Speak Mandarin Campaign’, many young Singaporean Chinese now associate themselves as ‘Singaporeans’ because they grew up in more homogenous ‘Singaporean’ or ‘Singaporean Chinese’ cultures (Yeo, 2016). Thinking back about the earlier example, the class of Chinese students may now lose another type of identifier. However, it should also be noted that the extent of identity loss may not be as widespread as previously envisioned, as primary data collected from this study showed that even without being a fluent speaker of a particular Chinese dialect, some members may still identify themselves to be part of that dialect group.

Another implication of the language shift could be the loss of culture in our country. Dialect group-specific practices in Chinese festivals, events and celebrations could eventually be lost as the Chinese community becomes more homogenous. Furthermore, for youths who have a preference for communicating in English over Chinese, Chinese-based festivals and celebrations in general could also lose its meaning as they cannot understand the language and its accompanying culture well enough. Once a culture is lost, it is usually unredeemable as cultures takes a long time to build up.

Lastly, the language shift could lead to economic loss for our society. Singapore and China currently maintain close relations and many local companies work extensively with businesses in China. Undeniably, one of the key factors driving the extensive business relations would be the bilingualism trait of many Singaporean Chinese and correspondingly, the ability to communicate with Chinese clients and working partners with ease. However, with the language shift among the youths, this would without a doubt have a negative impact on business and employment opportunities for Singaporean Chinese youths when working with Chinese businesses, and such losses will have severe economic impact on a cosmopolitan country such as Singapore.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study has provided a small glimpse into the language shift among the Singaporean Chinese community and its implications for Singapore. However, it should be noted that the research results may not be indicative of the larger Chinese community in Singapore due to its small sample size. That said, it is hoped that this study contributes some initial data and observations on language shift within a multi-generation Singapore Chinese family and its implications for Singapore, thereby providing a prelude to larger-scale of language loss studies locally.

In summary, this study has identified that with English and Mandarin being used at increasing frequency by younger Singaporeans, the difference in language repertoires between members of different generations has impeded communication and interaction between them, leading to reduced ability to cultivate traditional and cultural values across generations. The findings from the interviews conducted for this study confirms that there is gradual shift in linguistic proficiency over generations, especially evident in some domains, but that there is also language maintenance in others. The study also shows that there are clear implications for the future of Chinese dialects locally, as Mandarin is preferred over dialects for all but the oldest generation. The current outlook that Chinese dialects to inherited beyond another generation are pessimistic. Despite the fact that Mandarin Chinese is currently promoted through Singapore's bilingual education policy as well as extensive promotional campaign and programmes implemented by our Singapore government, it still raises concerns to whether Mandarin Chinese will be effectively maintained. This is especially so when the language is being taught mainly as a second language in schools and is not the medium of instruction for other core subjects at any levels.

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Language Loss and Nationhood: Examining Language Shift among the Chinese community in Singapore and its Implications for Singapore

Appendix 1: Detailed Demographics of Each Participant

Table 1: Participant's Demographics

Participant's Name	Generation	Gender	Age
A	1	Female	84
B	2	Female	46
C	3	Female	22

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Appendix 2: Detailed Language Fluency of Each Participant

Language proficiency or linguistic proficiency refers to a person’s ability to use a language for a variety of real-world purposes including speaking, listening, reading, and writing, so as to accomplish real-world linguistic tasks across a wide range of topics and settings.

Participants will have to indicate their language fluency using the six-point scale where 1 is “Not at all” and 4 is “Excellent”.

Notably, the following table is translated into Chinese, as G1’s English proficiency is not well.

1	2	3	4
Not at all	Well	Good	Excellent

Table 2.1: Language(s) Proficiency of Participant A

Code	Language skills	English Fluency	Chinese Fluency	Dialect Fluency	
Oracy	A	Listening	1	2	4
	B	Speaking	1	2	4
Literacy	C	Reading	1	1	N/A
	D	Writing	1	1	N/A

Table 2.2: Language(s) Proficiency of Participant B

Code	Language skills	English Fluency	Chinese Fluency	Dialect Fluency	
Oracy	A	Listening	1	4	3
	B	Speaking	1	4	3
Literacy	C	Reading	1	4	N/A
	D	Writing	1	4	N/A

Table 2.3: Language(s) Proficiency of Participant C

Code	Language skills	English Fluency	Chinese Fluency	Dialect Fluency	
Oracy	A	Listening	3	4	2
	B	Speaking	3	4	2
Literacy	C	Reading	3	4	N/A
	D	Writing	3	4	N/A

Language Loss and Nationhood: Examining Language Shift among the Chinese community in Singapore and its Implications for Singapore

Appendix 3: Interview Schedule

Table 3: Interview Schedule

Participant's Name	Generation	Scheduled Interview		Location
		Duration	Date	
A	1	19 minutes 35 seconds	23 rd July 2017	G1's House, Tampines
B	2	27 minutes 51 seconds	26 th July 2017	G2's House, Sengkang
C	3	38 minutes 15 seconds	23 rd July 2017	G1's House, Tampines

Appendix 4: Interview Questions

Language Loss and Nationhood: Examining Language Shift among the Chinese community in Singapore and Its Implications for Singapore

The following questions are for the grandparent, parent and grandchild.

Questions marked with an asterisk (*) is not applicable to the grandparent.

First Category:

Family

1. In what language(s) do you speak to your parents? If you use more than one language, please rank them in order of most used to least used. Why do you use these language(s)?
2. In what language(s) do you speak to your grandparents? If you use more than one language, please rank them in order of most used to least used. Why do you use these language(s)?
3. In what language(s) do you speak to your siblings/ cousins? If you use more than one language, please rank them in order of most used to least used. Why do you use these language(s)?

Friends

4. What language(s) would you use with your friend of the same race when you talk to him/ her about homework/ work?
5. What language(s) would you use with your friend of the same race when you want to express your emotions (e.g. you are feeling happy or sad) to him/ her?
6. If a different language is used, asked why there is a difference.

School/ Workplace

7. *What language(s) would you use when you speak to teachers/ classmates/ colleagues of the same race in school/ at work? If you use more than one language, please rank them in order of most used to least used. Why do you use these language(s)?
8. *What language(s) would you use when you are writing a note to teachers/ classmates/ colleagues of the same race in school/ at work? If you use more than one language, please rank them in order of most used to least used. Why do you use these language(s)?
9. *What language(s) would you use when you speak to teachers/ classmates/ colleagues of a different race in school/ at work? If you use more than one language, please rank them in order of most used to least used. Why do you use these language(s)?

Public Space

10. What language(s) do you use when buying things at the wet market/ hawker centre/ coffeeshop? If you use more than one language, please rank them in order of most used to least used. Why do you use these language(s)?
11. What language(s) do you use when buying things at the shopping mall/ restaurants/ cafes? If you use more than one language, please rank them in order of most used to least used. Why do you use these language(s)?
12. What language(s) do you use with staff at the bank/ government offices e.g. HDB, CPF? If you use more than one language, please rank them in order of most used to least used. Why do you use these language(s)?

Media

13. What language(s) is your favourite TV programme or movie in? What language(s) do you usually watch TV programmes or movies in? If you have more than one preferred language, please rank them in order of most to least preferred. Why do you prefer these language(s)?
14. *What language(s) is your favourite song in? What language medium are the songs that you usually listen in? If you have more than one preferred language, please rank them in order of most preferred to least preferred. Why do you prefer these language(s)?
15. *What language(s) is your favourite book in? What language medium do you usually read books/ magazine/ newspapers in? If you have more than one preferred language, please rank them in order of most to least preferred. Why do you prefer these language(s)?

Second Category:

16. How do you perceive the importance of Chinese dialects in our society? Why do you say so?
17. How do you perceive the importance of Mandarin Chinese in our society? Why do you say so?
18. With an increasing number of youth who cannot speak Chinese dialects and even Mandarin Chinese, what do you think are the implications of the current language shift on our society?
19. How do you identify yourself? Why?

Language Loss and Nationhood: Examining Language Shift among the Chinese community in Singapore and its Implications for Singapore

Appendix 5: Interview Transcript - G1

Transcript Details:

Date: 23rd July 2017

Place: G1's House, Tampines

Total Duration: 19 minutes 35 seconds

Date Complete: 6th August 2017

Speakers in the Audio Files:

Interviewer: Lim Natalie

Responder: G1

Transcript Results:

1	Interviewer	In the past fifty years since independence, Singapore has undergone a massive language shift from a multitude of ethnic languages to a selected number of national languages. This is contributed largely by language planning and policies which regulate language use among the population. In particular, the eroding effect on ethnic languages is strongest and fastest in the Chinese community where government policies promote the use of English and Mandarin over Chinese dialects. This results in a shift in the dominant home language used among Singaporean Chinese families. In today's context, most young Singaporean Chinese no longer have a language in common with their grandparents. The study aims to document the changes in the language behaviour of different generations of a Singaporean Chinese family and examine the attitudes and societal pressures which have led to this. It will also look into the implications of this change on the 'nation' as a symbolic entity. The interview consists of two parts; the first category of questions aimed at documenting the language shift between the different generations by understanding the dominant and preferred language(s) used by each
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		respondent in various domains, while the second category of questions aimed at understanding the implications of respondents' current language behaviour on the nation. Shall we begin with the interview?
2	Responder	Yes, please.
3	Interviewer	Firstly, can you tell me more about yourself, i.e. what is your age, dialect group and how many language(s) can you speak?
4	Responder	I am 84 this year, and I am a Teochew. I speak a total of 3 languages - mainly Teochew and a little of Chinese and Malay.
5	Interviewer	Next, we will begin with the first set of questions. In what language(s) do you speak to your parents in? If you use more than one language, please rank them in order of most used to least used. Why do you use these language(s)?
6	Responder	My parents were Teochews and they only speak Teochew. Hence, I will speak Teochew to them. The situation remains the same when I married my husband, as both his parents were Teochews too. During my generation, Teochew was the common language among us and vice versa for the other dialects groups.
7	Interviewer	In what language(s) do you speak to your grandparents in? If you use more than one language, please rank them in order of most used to least used. Why do you use these language(s)?
8	Responder	Teochew. My grandfather passed away before I was born. Thus, since my grandmother is a Teochew, we communicate using Teochew.
9	Interviewer	In what language(s) do you speak to your siblings/cousins in? If you use more than one language, please rank them in order of most used to least used. Why do you use these language(s)?
10	Responder	Teochew. The reason why Teochew was the only language used among my siblings/cousins was partly due to family environment that we were brought up in. Also, during my time, Singapore government have yet to promote Mandarin Chinese to be the lingua franca among the Chinese. Thus, it is natural that we communicate using the language that we were comfortable in expressing ourselves.
11	Interviewer	Next up, what language(s) would you use with your friend of the same race when you talk to him/ her?
12	Responder	Teochew. Older generations usually communicate using his/her own dialects.

13	Interviewer	In other words, do you meant by you only communicate using Teochew, and not in other dialects such as Hokkien and Cantonese?
14	Responder	Yes. Though I have friends, i.e. my neighbour who are Cantonese, we communicate using Teochew too.
15	Interviewer	What language(s) would you use with your friend of the same race when you want to express your emotions (e.g. you are feeling happy or sad) to him/ her?
16	Responder	Teochew.
17	Interviewer	Am I right to say that you do not use a mixture of other languages or dialects?
18	Responder	Yes.
19	Interviewer	What language(s) would you use with your friends of the different race? For instance, to your Malay friends?
20	Responder	They were not able to understand my dialect; hence I will communicate with them using simple Malay. The intention is simple: they are able to understand the message that I am conveying.
21	Interviewer	What language(s) do you use when buying things at the wet market/ hawker centre/coffeeshop? If you use more than one language, please rank them in order of most used to least used. Why do you use these language(s)?
22	Responder	Teochew.
23	Interviewer	Do you use other language(s) such as Malay?
24	Responder	No. During my time, it may seem surprise to you that there were few Malays that speaks simple Teochew. Hence, instead of speaking Malay, I will use Teochew to communicate when buying groceries from them.
25	Interviewer	Have you come across any instances when buying things at the wet market/hawker centre/coffeeshop, yet no one is able to speak in your native language - Teochew? For instance, when you buy curry leaves?
26	Responder	No, those curry leaves that I bought was from a Chinese stall. I usually buy my daily necessities from Chinese stalls, and not from Malays or Indians stalls.
27	Interviewer	What language(s) do you use when buying things at the shopping mall/ restaurants/cafes? If you use more than one language, please rank them in order of most used to least used. Why do you use these language(s)?
28	Responder	My daughters and grandchildren take turns to bring me out for lunch every

		Sunday. Thus, I rarely need to speak to these people. Upon reaching the place for lunch, my grandchildren find seats for me and I will tell them what I want to eat, so that they are able to get it for me. Usually I will get them to buy food from the shortest queue, or else it may take a long time before I get to have my lunch.
29	Interviewer	What language(s) do you use with staff at the bank/government offices e.g. HDB, CPF? If you use more than one language, please rank them in order of most used to least used. Why do you use these language(s)?
30	Responder	Teochew. The same reason as before, some Malay staffs that work in government sectors were able to speak Teochew.
31	Interviewer	For instance, where the staff is not able to speak or understand Teochew, what would they usually do?
32	Responder	They will get other staffs, for example the older ones to attend to me. I remember that there was one incident happened last week when I made a trip to Tampines CPF building. I was there to enquire about a scheme implemented by the government. A young lady attended to me upon my arrival. However, we were not able to communicate as she cannot understand Teochew. Henceforth, she approached a senior staff who later assisted me with the enquires that I have, and I truly appreciate the effort that young lady made.
33	Interviewer	What language(s) is your favourite TV programme or movie in? What language(s) do you usually watch TV programmes or movies in? If you have more than one preferred language, please rank them in order of most to least preferred. Why do you prefer these language(s)?
34	Responder	Chinese. It is not my favourite show, but the TV drama that I am watching recently is a Taiwan (Hokkien) drama that shows every weekday at 4pm.
35	Interviewer	What language(s) is your favourite song in? What language medium are the songs that you usually listen in? If you have more than one preferred language, please rank them in order of most preferred to least preferred. Why do you prefer these language(s)?
36	Responder	I do not listen to songs. When there is a Getai (歌台) show in my neighbourhood during the Chinese seventh month, I do not go down to watch

		too.
37	Interviewer	What about those Indian shows/drama that you have watched?
38	Responder	I do not have the chance to watch such shows as the TV programmes now were mixed up. However, I do remember such shows do air every Saturday around noon on TV.
39	Interviewer	Do you enjoy watching those Indian dancing shows?
40	Responder	Yes. It is a long time since I last watched them. During weekdays, I enjoy watching Chinese TV programmes, and during weekends, it will be Indian TV programmes.
41	Interviewer	Do you enjoyed watching Teochew TV programmes back then?
42	Responder	Yes, I enjoyed watching such TV programmes since young.
43	Interviewer	If the local Singapore media were to show such Teochew TV programmes now, will you continue watching them?
44	Responder	Yes.
45	Interviewer	Following, we will proceed with the second category of questions. Firstly, how do you perceive the importance of Chinese dialects in our society? Why do you say so?
46	Responder	Chinese dialects are not important in today's society. Few Singaporeans know how to speak dialects, not to mention the younger generation. Singaporean youths nowadays can only speak two languages, English and Chinese. I am already old, and cannot control how the younger generation thinks. It is their decision whether they want to learn dialects, or even Chinese. In my family, for the third generation, their Teochew ability varies. My first and second daughters' children can communicate with me in Teochew, but the rest can only use basic Teochew.
47	Interviewer	How do you perceive the importance of Mandarin Chinese in our society? Why do you say so?
48	Responder	Mandarin Chinese is important in our society. In Singapore, apart from individual should know how to speak both English and Mandarin Chinese. It is the essential tool for Singaporeans to survive in today's society. Moreover, the learning of Mandarin Chinese is a pragmatic choice, in terms of attaining economic advantages in view of the recent emergence of China as an economic superpower.

49	Interviewer	With an increasing number of youth who cannot speak Chinese dialects and even Mandarin Chinese, what do you think are the implications of the current language shift on our society?
50	Responder	Firstly, when youths cannot speak Chinese dialects, it is difficult to communicate with the older generations. This may distance the relationship between the grandchildren and grandparents. Secondly, Chinese dialects may eventually extinct in Singapore, when it is not being pass down to our youths. Lastly, there may also be a loss of culture diversity in Singapore. People who are interested to find out more about their roots might face difficulties in the near future.
51	Interviewer	How do you identify yourself? Why?
52	Responder	I identity myself as Teochew, my genes, ancestors and parents are all Teochew. Teochew is just Teochew, there are no other answers to this question.
53	Interviewer	Correct me if I am wrong. Since birth, you were brought up in a Teochew family. As such, the culture that your family practices during festive seasons etc. made you identify yourself as a Teochew, but not a Chinese or Singaporean Chinese?
54	Responder	Yes.
55	Interviewer	Before we end this interview, is there anything that you wish to add on or comment about?
56	Responder	No.
57	Interviewer	With that, it brings me to the end of the interview. Once again, thank you for taking your time off to participate in this interview!
58	Responder	Thank you!

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Appendix 5: Interview Transcript – G2

Transcript Details:

Date: 26th July 2017

Place: G2's House, Sengkang

Total Duration: 27 minutes 51 seconds

Date Complete: 11th August 2017

Speakers in the Audio Files:

Interviewer: Lim Natalie

Responder: G2

Transcript Results:

1	Interviewer	In the past fifty years since independence, Singapore has undergone a massive language shift from a multitude of ethnic languages to a selected number of national languages. This is contributed largely by language planning and policies which regulate language use among the population. In particular, the eroding effect on ethnic languages is strongest and fastest in the Chinese community where government policies promote the use of English and Mandarin over Chinese dialects. This results in a shift in the dominant home language used among Singaporean Chinese families. In today's context, most young Singaporean Chinese no longer have a language in common with their grandparents. The study aims to document the changes in the language behaviour of different generations of a Singaporean Chinese family and examine the attitudes and societal pressures which have led to this. It will also look into the implications of this change on the 'nation' as a symbolic entity. The interview consists of two parts; the first category of questions aimed at documenting the language shift between the
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		different generations by understanding the dominant and preferred language(s) used by each respondent in various domains, while the second category of questions aimed at understanding the implications of respondents' current language behaviour on the nation. Shall we begin with the interview?
2	Responder	Yes, please.
3	Interviewer	Firstly, tell me more about yourself, i.e. your age, dialect group and how many language(s) can you speak?
4	Responder	I am 46 this year. My dialect is Hakka. I can speak 4 languages - mainly Chinese, Teochew, Hakka and a little bit of English.
5	Interviewer	We will begin with the first set of questions. Firstly, in what language(s) do you speak to your parents in? If you use more than one language, please rank them in order of most used to least used. Why do you use these language(s)?
6	Responder	Chinese dialects.
7	Interviewer	Could you further elaborate on this?
8	Responder	My parents are Hakkas, so I speak Hakka to them. My in-laws are Teochews, so I speak Teochew to them.
9	Interviewer	You used both Hakka and Teochew, so could you rank them in order of most used to least used.
10	Responder	The most used language will be Teochew followed by Hakka.
11	Interviewer	Why do you rank these language(s) in such an order?
12	Responder	It greatly depends on the audience that I am speaking to. When I speak to the older generation, I will definitely use Chinese dialects as it is the easiest and most comfortable way when communicating to them. Chinese dialects were deemed to be their native language (as they were brought up in the environment where their family members speak Chinese dialects). Thus, older generations may feel at ease when expressing themselves.
13	Interviewer	Do you meant that it is easier to communicate using their own dialects?
14	Responder	Yes, definitely. I believe most, if not all of the old generation feel comfortable when we are able to communicate in their native language.

15	Interviewer	In what language(s) do you speak to your grandparents in? If you use more than one language, please rank them in order of most used to least used. Why do you use these language(s)?
16	Responder	That was a very long time ago. During then, there is no other option but to communicate with them using Chinese dialects.
17	Interviewer	In what language(s) do you speak to your siblings/cousins in? If you use more than one language, please rank them in order of most used to least used. Why do you use these language(s)?
18	Responder	Chinese.
19	Interviewer	Could you further elaborate on why is there a language difference when you speak to two different generations?
20	Responder	Firstly, I view myself as a second generation. Hence, being someone who was born in the 1970s, we are definitely younger than the older ones. Secondly, I attended Chinese school. Back then, Singapore government implemented the “Speak Mandarin Campaign” that encourages Singaporeans to speak Chinese Mandarin instead of Chinese dialects. When these reasons combined together, it influences our thinking in a way or another. Thus, the common language used among my generation became Chinese.
21	Interviewer	Do you use other language(s) when you speak to your siblings/cousins?
22	Responder	No, Chinese is the only language that we use.
23	Interviewer	Next up, what language(s) would you use with your friend of the same race when you talk to him/ her?
24	Responder	We use a mixture of language(s), such as Chinese, Teochew and Hakka. However, it will still depend greatly on the people that I am communicating to.
25	Interviewer	Could you please rank them in order of most used to least used?
26	Responder	Chinese, Teochew, Hakka.
27	Interviewer	Please further elaborate on why do you rank them in such order?
28	Responder	The language choice depends on several factors, i.e. age group that one hangs out with and what language(s) would they prefer to use. Most of my friends are of a different dialect group, thus I will speak Chinese to

		them. I go for singing classes during weekdays, and the people there are mostly Teochews. Hence, Teochew naturally became the preferred language. Lastly, I speak Hakka to people who share the same background (dialect group) as me.
29	Interviewer	What language(s) would you use with your friend of the same race when you want to express your emotions (e.g. you are feeling happy or sad) to him/ her?
30	Responder	Chinese. When I was schooling, Chinese was lingua franca. Hence, I naturally use Chinese when I want to express my emotions to my friends of the same race. I guess it is easier and there are many ways to express the same meaning.
31	Interviewer	What language(s) would you use when you speak to teachers/classmates/colleagues of the same race in school/at work? If you use more than one language, please rank them in order of most used to least used. Why do you use these language(s)?
32	Responder	Chinese.
33	Interviewer	Do you use other language(s) when you speak to them? If no, then solely Chinese?
34	Responder	When I was schooling, Chinese was the only language used. As such, this influences me to use Chinese when I speak to these people. Moreover, during the 1970s, government encouraged Singaporeans to speak Chinese than Chinese dialects. In addition, one would also have to put into consideration about the language(s) used by the people around you. For instance, when my friends speak Chinese, I will reply them in Chinese too. I believe it is the same of other languages too.
35	Interviewer	What language(s) would you use when you are writing a note to teachers/classmates/colleagues of the same race in school/at work? If you use more than one language, please rank them in order of most used to least used. Why do you use these language(s)?
36	Responder	Chinese. It is easy to communicate and express my views to them.
37	Interviewer	What language(s) would you use when you are writing a note to teachers/classmates/colleagues of the different race in school/at work? If you use more than one language, please rank them in order of most

		used to least used. Why do you use these language(s)?
38	Responder	In the case that I am writing to a Malay colleague, I will then use basic Malay as my Malay is not as fluent as it is, as long as I am able to get my message across. As for Indian's, I will use basic/simple English.
39	Interviewer	Since you have mentioned that you use both English and Malay, could you please rank them in order of most used to least used. Why do you rank them in such a way?
40	Responder	I would use more Malay as compared to English, reason being that my English isn't as good as it is, and it is also not the language that I used often. Even when I communicate with my children, I will use Chinese. As for now, the chances of me using English to speak is nearly zero. If you consider words such as "Hello" and "Bye-bye" as one, then it will be these basic English daily words that I use.
41	Interviewer	What language(s) do you use when buying things at the wet market/hawker centre/coffeeshop? If you use more than one language, please rank them in order of most used to least used. Why do you use these language(s)?
42	Responder	For instance, if I were to go nearby wet markets to buy my daily groceries, those sellers are usually Teochews, then we will communicate in Teochew. If the stall seller speaks to me using Chinese, then I will use back the same language. Overall, I think it greatly depend on what kind of language(s) the other party communicate in, and in turn, it will affect/influence the language that I used as well.
43	Interviewer	If you use more than one language, please rank them in order of most used to least used. Why do you use these language(s)?
44	Responder	It will depend on the location as well. If you are saying wet market, then it will be Teochew. If you are saying hawker centre/coffeeshop, it will then be Chinese. Hence there isn't a rank to the language(s) that I used.
45	Interviewer	What language(s) do you use when buying things at the shopping mall/restaurants/cafes? If you use more than one language, please rank them in order of most used to least used. Why do you use these language(s)?
46	Responder	Usually, if I were go to such places, I will then rely on my children in terms of buying things etc. Without them, I wouldn't go to such places.

		At most, if there's a need for me to go such places alone, I will then use basic English. I personally feel that there isn't much to communicate with the salesperson, where I can just those items that I need and head to the cashier to pay.
47	Interviewer	What language(s) do you use with staff at the bank/government offices e.g. HDB, CPF? If you use more than one language, please rank them in order of most used to least used. Why do you use these language(s)?
48	Responder	I usually will get Chinese staff to attend to me.
50	Interviewer	Why?
51	Responder	Since young, I am being brought up in a Chinese family and attended Chinese schools afterwards. Hence, when you compare between Chinese and English, I would say that Chinese is my dominant language, and thus, as a result of me speaking more Chinese, my English then isn't that fluent nor strong. I feel that I couldn't/not able to express what I want when I use English, hence I will turn to a language that I am more comfortable speaking in - that is Chinese. In the case where there's isn't any Chinese staff that could attend to me, I would then approach a Malay staff, where at least I could use some basic Malay words or phrases to communicate through. If neither of the above work, English will become my last solution.
52	Interviewer	What language(s) is your favourite TV programme or movie in? What language(s) do you usually watch TV programmes or movies in? If you have more than one preferred language, please rank them in order of most to least preferred. Why do you prefer these language(s)?
53	Responder	It will mostly be in Chinese. Occasionally, there will also be some Hokkien TV programmes. My first choice would be Chinese, followed by Hokkien TV programmes. We usually will watch TV programmes shown by Mediacorp. If we came across any TV programmes shown by other countries, then it will be Hokkien. From what I observed in today's society, there are fewer or rather none of the TV programmes that are in dialects, hence Chinese eventually become my first choice. For families who subscribed to cable TV, then we will have the opportunity to watch Hokkien TV programmes. On the other hand, for

		those who didn't subscribe, I believe that Mediacorp TV programmes will only be their source of entertainment in today's society.
54	Interviewer	Would you wish/hope that there will be more Chinese dialects TV programmes being shown on TV?
55	Responder	I think it is good, as it is a good opportunity for the younger generation, like my children to learn more about their dialects and in turn, able to teach my grandchildren about their culture, even till the extend of passing down to future generations.
56	Interviewer	What language(s) is your favourite song in? What language medium are the songs that you usually listen in? If you have more than one preferred language, please rank them in order of most preferred to least preferred. Why do you prefer these language(s)?
57	Responder	Hokkien songs, as I attend singing classes and they will teach us to sing Hokkien songs too.
58	Interviewer	What language(s) is your favourite book in? What language medium are the book that you usually read in? If you have more than one preferred language, please rank them in order of most preferred to least preferred. Why do you prefer these language(s)?
59	Responder	If you are referring to newspaper, then it will be Xin Ming Daily News. I do not understand or comprehend English newspaper; hence Chinese newspaper would still be my first choice. The words recognise me, but I don't recognise them.
60	Interviewer	Was it because during the time when you were schooling, there isn't much opportunity for you to learn English?
61	Responder	Yes, partly due to the environment and the school that I attend last time.
62	Interviewer	Next up, we will proceed with the second category of questions, which aim to understand the implications of respondents' current language behaviour on the nation. Firstly, on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the least important and 10 being the most important, how do you perceive the importance of Chinese dialects in our society?
63	Responder	8.
64	Interviewer	Why do you say so?
65	Responder	Majority of Singapore's population is made up of Chinese, but we are

		<p>further divided into different dialect groups. Each Chinese individual has his/her own ancestry, which comes with its own unique culture and tradition behaviour/customs. While the official language for Chinese is Mandarin, but as a Chinese, I feel that it is essential to know how to speak his/her own dialect. Language is very important, as it is still our roots. I feel a little sad that in today's society, younger generation do not know how to speak their own dialect. Wouldn't they feel embarrassed that they do not know how to speak his/her dialect? How can they consider themselves as a Teochew, Hokkien or Hakka when they cannot speak their dialect? Younger generation are missing the beauty of Chinese dialects and understanding the meaning behind it (diverse culture), as English is the common language in both work and home environment in today's world.</p>
66	Interviewer	<p>Could you further elaborate why you did not give 10/10? Where did the remaining 2/10 goes to?</p>
67	Responder	<p>Some Singaporeans may feel that Chinese dialects is insignificant. In today's society, because of the demand in social and working environment, English become the top language choice. Moreover, there isn't much opportunities for Singaporeans to use Chinese dialects.</p>
68	Interviewer	<p>Base on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the least important and 10 being the most important, how do you perceive the importance of Mandarin Chinese in our society?</p>
69	Responder	<p>7.</p>
70	Interviewer	<p>Why do you say so?</p>
71	Responder	<p>Firstly, China's booming economy resulted in more China Chinese going to other countries for business and investment. Hence, for our younger generation to do business with them, Mandarin becomes the essential communication tool that they should acquire. Secondly, I feel that the culture behind Chinese is beautiful and enriching, hence it serves as a culture tool as well. If I were to educate my grandchildren in the future, I would definitely turn to my strongest language – Chinese. Through the use of Chinese, I am able to cultivate and pass down moral values. Thirdly, the bulk of Singapore's population is</p>

		Chinese. If we do not know how to speak our own language – Chinese, not to mention Chinese dialects, I consider this a tragedy for our race.
72	Interviewer	With an increasing number of youth who cannot speak Chinese dialects and even Mandarin Chinese, what do you think are the implications of the current language shift on our society?
73	Responder	Firstly, policies implemented during the 1970s may have contributed to the current language shift in Singapore. Singaporeans, especially the younger ones, may view English to be more superior than Chinese. Thus, they speak more English, hoping that this will open up more opportunities for them. As their thinking gets more westernized, younger generation may turn out to be more selfish, where they do not spare a thought of others. Secondly, Chinese teachers may face difficulties teaching the future generations as the number of Singaporeans who are able to converse fluently in Chinese may decrease over the next few years or decades. Lastly, the Chinese community in Singapore may also face a lost in heritage, in terms of roots and culture. One would not know where their ancestors came from. Every culture has its own unique points/value that we should preserve. It is not something that we cannot take granted for and something to be remove easily too. In essence, it is okay that Chinese is not proficient in Singapore. However, this is not the case if a Singaporean Chinese cannot speak Mandarin Chinese. Though the older generations from Japan and Korea feel that English is of important, they did not neglect their own culture and continue to instill such values to the younger ones. It is pointless to learn other languages when an individual has yet to master their own language. In the case that they are able to, it is still not their origin.
74	Interviewer	How do you identify yourself? Why?
75	Responder	I identity myself as a Hakka, as this was the first answer that came to my mind. The question did not ask “where are you from” or “which country are you from”. If so, my answer would then be “I am a Singaporean”.
76	Interviewer	Correct me if the following is interpreted wrongly. There are many

		reasons to the above, of which one maybe because of your family background and/or the culture that your family practices during festive seasons etc. makes you identity yourself as a Teochew, instead of a Chinese or Singaporean Chinese?
77	Responder	Yes.
78	Interviewer	Before we end this interview, is there anything that you wish to add on or comment about?
79	Responder	No.
80	Interviewer	With that, it brings me to the end of the interview. Once again, thank you for taking your time off to participate in this interview!
81	Responder	Thank you!

Language Loss and Nationhood: Examining Language Shift among the Chinese community in Singapore and its Implications for Singapore

Appendix 5: Interview Transcript – G3

Transcript Details:

Date: 23rd July 2017

Place: G1's House, Tampines

Total Duration: 38 minutes 15 seconds

Date Complete: 15th August 2017

Speakers in the Audio Files:

Interviewer: Lim Natalie

Responder: G3

Transcript Results:

1	Interviewer	In the past fifty years since independence, Singapore has undergone a massive language shift from a multitude of ethnic languages to a selected number of national languages. This is contributed largely by language planning and policies which regulate language use among the population. In particular, the eroding effect on ethnic languages is strongest and fastest in the Chinese community where government policies promote the use of English and Mandarin over Chinese dialects. This results in a shift in the dominant home language used among Singaporean Chinese families. In today's context, most young Singaporean Chinese no longer have a language in common with their grandparents. The study aims to document the changes in the language behaviour of different generations of a Singaporean Chinese family and examine the attitudes and societal pressures which have led to this. It will also look into the implications of this change on the 'nation' as a symbolic entity. The interview consists of two parts; the first category of questions are aimed at documenting the language shift between the different generations by understanding the dominant and preferred language(s) used
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		by each respondent in various domains, while the second category of questions are aimed at understanding the implications of respondents' current language behaviour on the nation. Shall we begin with the interview?
2	Responder	Yes.
3	Interviewer	Firstly, could you tell me more about yourself, for instance what is your age, what is your dialect group and how many language(s) do you speak?
4	Responder	I am 22 this year. My dialect is Teochew. I can speak 4 different languages – English, Chinese, Teochew and Hokkien.
5	Interviewer	Alright, let's begin with the first set of questions. In what language(s) do you speak to your parents in? If you use more than one language, please rank them in order of most used to least used. Why do you use these language(s)?
6	Responder	Mandarin Chinese.
7	Interviewer	Could you further elaborate on why Mandarin Chinese is the only language use when you converse with your parents?
8	Responder	There are mainly two reasons. One, my parents' English proficiency is not good. Henceforth, Chinese naturally became the language that we use to communicate with one another. Two, since young, I'm brought up in a Chinese family. As such, being a Chinese, it is natural for us to use Chinese to communicate.
9	Interviewer	Moving on to the second question, in what language(s) do you speak to your grandparents in?
10	Responder	Teochew and Chinese.
11	Interviewer	I noticed that there is a use of more than one language. Could you rank them in the order of most used to least used? Why do you use these language(s)?
12	Responder	My grandmother can only speak in Teochew. With that, I will try my best to speak in Teochew first. If I have difficulties expressing myself, then I will switch to Chinese.
13	Interviewer	Could you provide any instances to further illustrate the above situation?

14	Responder	I ask her questions like “what she is going to do/she did over the weekend” or “where she bought these food from” etc. However, there were times when I find it difficult to express in Teochew. As such, I will switch to Chinese and repeat the question by saying “阿嬷，你这个是哪里买的？”
15	Interviewer	When you speak Chinese to your grandmother, she will still reply you in Teochew?
16	Responder	Yes.
17	Interviewer	Interesting! Moving on, in what language(s) do you speak to your siblings/cousins in?
18	Responder	I will speak English to my brother, but I speak Chinese to my cousins.
19	Interviewer	Could you explain why is there a difference in the language(s) used?
20	Responder	When my brother talks to me, he will speak in English. So naturally I felt the need that I have to reply him in English too. Another reason is that we seldom speak in Chinese, as we mostly communicate in English.
21	Interviewer	In the above situation, the choice of language used will firstly be English and followed by Chinese?
22	Responder	Yes.
23	Interviewer	Will you use Chinese dialects to communicate with him?
24	Responder	The use of dialects between us would be minimal, or rather none at all. It will mainly be English and Chinese.
25	Interviewer	Now that your audience have changed from your siblings to your cousins, what language(s) do you speak with them in? Kindly rank them from the most used to least used.
26	Responder	Chinese will be the languages most used, followed by English.
27	Interviewer	Interesting! Why is there a language difference between these two group of audience?

28	Responder	Honestly, I have never thought of this before. I guess certain things just happened naturally, thus, I just follow the norm/environment.
29	Interviewer	There is no specific reason to why you would use this particular language first, and not the other one when you are speaking to either your siblings or cousins?
30	Responder	Yes. From what I have recalled, my cousins and I mostly meet at my grandmother's house during occasions like Chinese New Year or the death anniversary of my grandfather. In my family, everyone communicates using Chinese. I guess it is natural for me to converse in Chinese too. I believe an individual may feel "isolated" or "ostracized" when he/she is the only member that speaks English or any other languages?
31	Interviewer	Next up, we will move to the second domain – friends. What language(s) would you use with your friends of the same race when you talk to him/her about homework/work?
32	Responder	English.
33	Interviewer	Why so?
34	Responder	It is a norm in school that despite being a Chinese, we speak to friends of the same race in English. For instance, when my classmates and I want to brainstorm ideas for our group projects, it is easier to articulate our ideas and thoughts in English. I am sure that my group members will appear to be shocked if I explain my ideas or thoughts using Chinese.
35	Interviewer	What language(s) would you use with friends of the same race when you want to express emotions (for example, when you are feeling happy/sad) to him/her?
36	Responder	That is easy! In this case, it will be in Chinese.
37	Interviewer	I have noticed that there is a language difference between these two questions. Could you further elaborate on why so?

38	Responder	Assignments are given in English, and thus, one is required to answer them in English too. Hence, I feel that it is not wise to discuss academic work in Chinese, which later require one to translate into English for submission purposes.
39	Interviewer	Based on what you have said, can I infer that when you are discussing academic work with your classmates, 90% of your conversation will be in English and the remaining 10% will be in Chinese, because you may not find the proper word or phrase to express in English?
40	Responder	Yes.
41	Interviewer	Back to the previous question, could you further elaborate on the reason why Chinese became your preferred language choice when it comes to expressing emotions?
42	Responder	It is a norm in school to speak to our friends in English. I guess it is easier to communicate, for example when we brainstorm ideas for assignments... I speak more Chinese than English, so it naturally becomes my preferred language to express my emotions. It is easier to use Chinese to express myself, for example in terms of the choice of words or idioms that I can use to express my happiness or sadness. English may have different expressions that can be used in place of “happy” or “sad” etc. But when it comes to Chinese, certain phrases simply cannot be translated into English, as it loses the meaning and feeling that the phrase “carries” behind it
43	Interviewer	Moving on, what languages would you use when you speak to your teachers, classmates/colleagues of the same race in school or at work? If you have more than one language, please rank them in order of the most used to least used. Why do you use these language(s)?
44	Responder	Firstly, English is used in school environment my groupmates consist of other races like Malays and non-Singaporeans like Vietnamese etc. However, when I speak to my colleagues, the most used language will be Chinese followed by English. Most of my colleagues are Malaysians and their command of English is not that fluent. Thus, it is easier to communicate

		and convey one's message when use Chinese. The use of English during work will mainly be when I am speaking to a Singaporean of my age or customers of another race.
45	Interviewer	Given the same situation above, what language(s) would you use when you are writing a note to the same group of people this time round?
46	Responder	The answer is the same as the previous question. I will use English when I am writing to my teachers and/or classmates. However, it will depend on the situation that I am in when writing to my colleagues.
47	Interviewer	Interesting! Could you provide me with an example of when/what kind of situation you would use English and Chinese respectively?
48	Responder	The main reason is due to the nature of my job, as I work as a retail assistant in a printing company. Part of my job scope requires me to reply customer's emails upon any enquires or clarifications that they have. Additionally, we do have customers who calls in to ask for quotations too. For instance, when customers call, and the person-in-charge is not around, I will have to take down the customers enquires, their name and where are they calling from. After which, I will pass the information when he is back. Henceforth, it makes more sense for me to write in English.
49	Interviewer	When customers communicate with you over the phone using Chinese, what language would you write down the requirements in?
50	Responder	English.
51	Interviewer	Why is this so?
I. 2	II. Responder	III. There are only 26 alphabets in English, whereas for Chinese characters, it is made up of many different strokes. When we have many customers to attend to during peak periods such as project submissions etc., we do not have the leisure to jot down customers' requirements in Chinese. In such circumstances, and to speed up our work progress, English naturally became our preferred language choice. Moreover, we uses "airtable" to document/take in customer's order(s). It is in English, hence it is more

		convenient if my colleagues need to refer to any order made by the customers. Furthermore, though few of my colleagues are Singaporeans, some may not be proficient to read Chinese characters. Therefore, due to all these reasons, when it comes to writing a note, English naturally became the preferred language choice.
IV. 2	V. Interviewer	VI. Moving on, what language(s) would you use when you speak to teachers/classmates/colleagues of a different race in school/at work?
VII. 3	VIII. Responder	IX. English. They do not understand Chinese, and neither do I understand their language(s).
54	Interviewer	Next up, have you ever bought things from the wet market, hawker center or coffee shop?
55	Responder	Yes.
56	Interviewer	What language(s) do you use when you buy things from/in such places? If you use more than one language, please rank them in order of most used to least used.
57	Responder	Normally I would use Chinese.
58	Interviewer	Why so?
59	Responder	I'll purchase my things from Chinese shops. The shop owner are usually uncles or aunties. Thus, to avoid any miscommunication, I will converse with them using Chinese. Moreover, there seems to be an increase number of food stalls by foreigners in hawker center/coffeeshop. Therefore, I feel more comfortable to express myself when using Chinese.
60	Interviewer	That is to say Chinese is your preferred language choice?
61	Responder	Yes.
62	Interviewer	Is there any circumstances that requires you to use English?

63	Responder	No. In the case that I am not able to pronounce any Chinese word/phrases, I will tell the uncle/aunties the number respecting the food that I want in Chinese like “我要 2 号”, and not like English like “I want number 2”.
64	Interviewer	Earlier on, you mentioned that you are being brought up in a Chinese speaking family, and Chinese is your preferred language choice. Could that influence you in terms of the language choice when you are buying things at such places?
65	Responder	I don't think so. I speak Chinese is because of the place that I am at and the audience, which in this case is wet market, hawker center or coffeeshop.
66	Interviewer	Let's change the place to shopping mall/restaurants/cafes, what language(s) do you use when you are buying things at such places?
67	Responder	English.
68	Interviewer	Why is there a difference in terms of language choice between these 2 places?
69	Responder	The person that I am speaking to is of a different age. When you are at the wet market or hawker center, people there are usually uncles and aunties. This, it will make more sense to speak to them in Chinese. However, younger generations are the one who usually go to or work at restaurants or cafés. Since they are of the same generation as me, I assume that they may not be proficient in Chinese, and thus, English seems to be the preferred choice that I will use to communicate with them.
70	Interviewer	Could you explain why when you are buying things at such places, you use English instead of Chinese?
71	Responder	Over the past decades, there are more Singaporeans coming from English speaking families. This is proven by many researches done locally or internationally, and even the local media reported about it. It seems like younger generations feel that there is no value in learning Chinese/do not think that Chinese is an important language to learn. Moreover, since Chinese characters are made up of many different strokes just further

		decrease their interest in learning Chinese. With such mindset, it is natural that they preferred to speak English than Chinese, although China's economy is rising that may contribute to Chinese becoming the next global language.
72	Interviewer	What language(s) do you use with staff at the bank/government offices such as HDB or CPF?
73	Responder	English.
74	Interviewer	Why?
75	Responder	English is the main language in Singapore. People use it both in school and at work. Therefore, it is understandable that we will use English as a form of communication when we visit such places. Those working there may also be more proficient in English. Also, the documents would most probably be in English, which naturally make more sense to communicate in English.
76	Interviewer	Moving on to the last sub-category, what language(s) is your favorite TV programme/movie/drama in? What language(s) do you usually watch these TV programme/movie/drama in?
77	Responder	First would be Korean. Next would be Chinese followed by English.
78	Interviewer	Why do you prefer these language(s)? Why would you rank them in this sequence?
79	Responder	I love Korean culture. Thus, I prefer Korean dramas over Chinese or English dramas. Though sometimes I do not understand what the actors are saying (as there are no subtitles), I still enjoy watching them. I guess the beauty of the Korean language attracts me to continue watching such shows. In addition, the way that the actors or actress speaks the language do contribute to why I prefer Korean dramas as well.
80	Interviewer	Why doesn't English and Chinese dramas attracts you the same way as Korean dramas does?
81	Responder	Korean dramas generally have lesser episodes (usually 16 episodes) as compared to Chinese and English dramas, which makes it less boring to

		watch. Korean dramas also talk about everybody day to day dreams and struggles that one faces in life, which makes me feel connected and relatable.
82	Interviewer	Moving on, what language(s) is your favorite song in?
83	Responder	Chinese.
84	Interviewer	What language medium are the songs that you usually listen in?
85	Responder	First would be Chinese, followed by English.
86	Interviewer	Could you explain why is there a difference as compared to your pervious question? Previously you mentioned that Korean dramas attracts you more than Chinese/English dramas, so why doesn't Korean songs attracts you too? Could it be because you may not understand what they are singing?
87	Responder	Firstly, for Korean dramas, though I may not understand their language (when subtitle for a drama is not out yet), I depend on graphics to guess and understand what is going on. However, this is not the same for Korean songs. I am not able to comprehend the meaning/message that the singers/composers want to convey through the song. However, when I listen to Chinese songs, I am able to understand the message behind the lyrics. Some of these songs are relatable to the situations that I am facing. Hence, Chinese will definitely be my preferred language choice for songs.
88	Interviewer	What about English songs? Why would you rank them second?
89	Responder	Personally, I think that Chinese songs have an unusual propensity towards depth and form in its lyrics when compared to English songs. I can also relate more to Chinese songs, where I may see myself in the situation that the song is depicting. I guess it's more of the emotional reasons.
90	Interviewer	What language(s) is your favorite books?
91	Responder	English.
92	Interviewer	Why is this so?
93	Responder	English is way easier to read as compared to Chinese. Reading English books is not as time consuming as those in Chinese.

94	Interviewer	We have done with the first part of our interview, and will continue with the second part of the interview. Firstly, on a scale of 1 to 10, how do you perceive the importance of Chinese dialects in our society? Why?
95	Responder	6, it is significant, yet insignificant at the same time. It is important as one need to know how to communicate with grandparents, whom may only speak Chinese dialects. If one does not know how to speak dialects, he/she to a large extent, may not be able to communicate with the older generations, and vice versa. Secondly, Chinese is made up of different sub-groups like Hokkiens, Cantonese and Hakkas etc. Different groups have different cultures and traditions. That is it essentially the reason that make each group different from the other. Chinese dialects are part of our Chinese culture. It is essential that we keep this part of our culture. The difference in the dialects are the unique factors that Chinese have in terms of the different tradition behavior. It is through all these different dialects tradition that make up the whole “ 华人文化 hua ren wen hua”. On a sad note, younger generation are missing the beauty of Chinese dialects and understanding the meaning behind it as English have been common use language in both working and home environment in today world.
96	Interviewer	On a scale of 1 to 10, how do you perceive the importance of Mandarin Chinese in our society? Why do you say so?
97	Responder	9. Mandarin had an interesting history and it trace long way back to different Chinese culture evolved to be where we are today. It is an important part for Chinese as we always want to know where are roots are from and how our ancestors had been through and came a long way to ne where we are today.
98	Interviewer	With an increasing number of youths who cannot speak Chinese dialects and even Mandarin Chinese, what do you think are the implications of the current language shift on our society?
99	Responder	For a country such as Singapore which has Chinese as its native language, there will be a great loss of culture in our country with its mother tongue lost

		<p>to time. This will implicate us as this leads to a loss of culture due to many of Singapore's festivals, events and celebrations being Chinese-based, which will lose its meaning to youths who have lost interest in Chinese as they cannot understand the language well enough to even speak it. Once a culture is lost, it is usually unredeemable as cultures takes a long time to build up.</p> <p>Another implication will be the economic loss with the language shift on our society. As many of us knows, Singapore has close ties with many Chinese business and this shift of language away from Chinese will undoubtedly affect this area of interest. An example of this will be how jobs out in the market usually requires the applicants to be bilingual and with many youths not knowing how to speak Mandarin Chinese, the lack of interactions between said company and their Chinese clients will close out on many opportunities. Such losses will undeniably have severe economically impacts on a cosmopolitan country such as Singapore.</p> <p>One other possible implication will be the loss of identity in our society as we bend away from Chinese Dialects and towards English-speaking western countries. Singapore has always been a country with majority of its people being Chinese, but with a language shift away from its mother tongue in our youths like this, it may be hard to recognize us as a Chinese community anymore. Instead, one might easily mistake us as a non-Chinese community for putting so much emphasize in English and being somewhat associated with the English-proficient western countries in the near future should this trend of our youths being unable to speak or even understand our mother tongue continues.</p>
100	Interviewer	How do you identity yourself?
101	Responder	I am a Chinese.
102	Interviewer	Why?
103	Responder	I identify myself as a Chinese because Mandarin is my mother tongue; I grew up in a Mandarin-speaking environment. While I can speak and understand English fluently, I feel closer to a Mandarin-speaking person as compared to someone who is English-speaking. In terms of my ancestry, I also identify

		myself as a Teochew as my father is Teochew, this distinguishes me from other Chinese dialects in Singapore. Chinese dialects are part of the Singaporean Chinese culture and heritage; it is only right to identify myself as a Teochew in a growing English-speaking environment to prevent a loss of an intrinsic part of the identity among Singaporean Chinese.
104	Interviewer	Before we end this interview, is there anything that you would like to add on?
105	Responder	My parents speak mainly Chinese to me, but they converse in Teochew amongst themselves. Through hearing their conversations, it is indirectly teaching me how to speak Teochew too. I learn new words or phrases and often took the opportunity to clarify pronunciations of words or phrases that I previously had problem with. Sometimes, when I heard a word or phrase that I am unsure of, I will seek help from them. In essence, it takes two hands to clap. Though Singapore government implemented policies like “Speak Mandarin Campaign” to encourage older generations to speak more Mandarin Chinese and less Chinese dialects, family members, especially the older ones play a vital in language maintenance and language shift.
106	Interviewer	With that, we have come to the end of this interview. Once again, thank you for your participation!
107	Responder	Thank you.