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Author(s)	Vanithamani Saravanan
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Investigating socio-cultural processes in language maintenance and shift: a study of three generational families in Singapore”¹

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Vanithamani Saravanan, School of Arts, Nanyang Technological University, National Institute of Education, Singapore

e-mail saravananv@nievax.nie.ac.sg

Xu Daming, Beijing Language and Culture University, China

e-mail xudaming@cenpok.net

1.0 Recent Studies on Language Maintenance and Language Shift in Singapore

There have been several studies and surveys that have observed language and ethnic communities experiencing language shift in Singapore. Saravanan (1994, 1998) examined the relative status, the functional roles of the Tamil language and addressed the issues of language, culture and identity faced by the minority Indian language communities and concluded that language shift in the Tamil-speaking as well as the other Indian language communities has come about as a result of the dominant role played by English in the society, the expansion of English in domains of language use and the resulting loss of the use of ethnic languages in the home domain. Similarly, Kamsiah & Bibi Jan (1998) examined the changes in the status, and value of the Malay language, and depicted the language shift from Malay to English taking place in the Malay community. Xu, Chew and Chen (1998) report on a recent survey on language use and language attitudes amongst Singapore Chinese speakers. They found that the vernacular dialects experienced a sharp decline in a cross-generational manner even within the family domain. Mandarin has now been established as a public language among Chinese Singaporeans. English as a predominantly-used mono-code rather than as one of frequently-used multi-codes is only with a small proportion of the population. It is, however, the most widely used language by Chinese Singaporeans for dealings with the government despite the extensive use of Mandarin in public domains. Li Wei, Saravanan, and Ng (1997) investigated a number of Teochew families. This case study focused on the family domain with the rationale that the family is the most important domain for social interaction amongst Chinese Singaporeans. The family is also a traditionally Teochew speaking domain. The study reported that in the Singapore Teochew community most people still used their mother tongue as their primary language of communication in the family domain. However, Mandarin and English are now also used extensively in the family domain. As a clear sign of language shift, Li Wei, Saravanan, and Ng (1997) report that in many of those families

¹ This paper reports on an on-going 3-year project that was initiated between National Institute of Education Centre for Research in Education, Nanyang Technological University and the Depart of Speech, Faculty of Education, University of Newcastle Upon Tyne, in January 1997 (Research Fund: AcRE RP/9/96/VS). The project is entitled Language and Social Support Networks: A Comparative Study of Chinese, Malay and Tamil Speaking Children in Home, Community and School Contexts in Singapore (Saravanan, 1997). We would like to acknowledge the assistance of Wang Xiaomei in statistical analysis.

Teochew is no longer transmitted as the primary language of communication to the children. The main language that parents use towards their children tends to be Mandarin.

2.0 Methodology

Studies on LMLS have frequently referred to socio-economic status (SES) of the individuals under study. SES is computed using indices of income, occupation educational qualifications, residence and life style, etc. SES has also been used as an explanatory factor in studies of Singapore (e.g. Xu, Chew and Chen 1998). Although social class is the most frequent categorization in the perspectives of SES, it has been argued that the practice of segmenting people into upper, middle and lower classes does not always aptly reflect social divisions of a particular society (Quah et al. 1991). In view of the controversy over the universality of social class and especially that of its applicability in the Singapore context, we will stick with the more general more flexible definition of SES and avoid categories such as social classes. At the same time, rather small-scale, more concretely-defined categories than social classes and other measures of SES have now become available to researchers as alternative approach to study the co-variation of language and society. These alternatives seem to promise an equal or better explanation of the differentiation in language use patterns than the more traditional SES approach.

An alternative to social class in identifying speaker groups is the introduction of the concept of social network. The application of the social network analysis to the study of the social mechanism underlying language maintenance is made by Milroy (1987) and Li Wei (1994). It has been suggested that social network is capable of accounting more convincingly and more economically for patterns of language use than other variables such as social class, gender, educational level, etc.

Li Wei (1994:12) states that in the 1980s and 1990s the social network perspective has gained popularity among sociolinguists who have felt a need for a more dynamic and coherent model of language variation and change than available. He points out that social networks are created by people to serve special purposes. Therefore, members of a given network will intentionally or unintentionally develop distinctive patterns of behaviour and will expect all members of the network to conform to these patterns. The distinctive social behavior of given networks usually includes language behaviour.

In the present study we take up the social network approach. At the same time we keep the more traditional measures of SES as references in our quantitative analysis and explore the relationship between the SES and network variables.

On the practical side, our study aims at the projection of the pre-school children's language development in the multilingual context of Singapore. In order to do so, we investigate the relationship between children's language abilities and their familial social characteristics including social networking characteristics. As the first step in the study, we approached kindergartens to select children to be included in this study. It was decided that the children to be studied should be from K2 classes, those who were moving on soon to primary one. The information on this group of children may be the most valuable for the educationists who plan school strategies in fostering the linguistic future of the country.

The 1990 Singapore Census of Population provides the following information which largely sketches the linguistic profile of the population:

Table 1. Languages Most Frequently Spoken at Home (Source: Statistics Singapore 1992)

Languages	Number of Speakers	Percentage of the total population
Chinese Dialects	933,241	39.4%
Hokkien	458,229	19.3%
Teochew	202,577	8.6%
Cantonese	189,700	8.0%
Mandarin	558,564	23.6%
English	454,051	19.2%
Malay	338,647	14.3%
Tamil	68,269	2.9%

Base on the above information, we selected proportionately a number of families from each of the three major ethnic groups: Chinese, Malay, and Indian. To date 20 Chinese families have been interviewed, with a spread of Hokkien, Teochew, and Cantonese speaking families. From the Malay and Indian ethnic groups, 17 Malay-speaking and 17 Tamil-speaking families have been interviewed. It can be seen from the census data that a large sector of the population already consists of English-dominant families. However, our study focuses on those families which are in the transitional stage. To obviate the transitional process, we have included only the families with three generations all residing in Singapore and we extended the scope of investigation to members of the families in the three generations.

The data collection was essentially through a questionnaire plus interview schedule. Information gathered includes language use patterns of three generations of a family: the children' language use at home, in school and at play, the parents and the grandparents' language use at home and outside. The other important part of the data on the families under study is the information on their general social background and especially their social networks. Xu, Chew and Chen (1998) had found that mixed-code language use was common. We decided to include questions on both predominant uses of a language and on mixed-code uses.

The use of ethnographic interview procedures where informal conversation replaces a clinical mode of question-answer exchanges was found to be appropriate. Questions to establish network patterns were asked, for example:

“Is there anyone you talk to about your work or problems related to your work?”

“Is there anyone you would talk to about your family, or family related problems, for example, your children's education?”

“Who would you consult if you wanted to register your child in school?”

“Who would you consult if you had elderly parents who needed help?”

“Who would you consult in getting a maid or caregiver for your family?”

“Who are your friends with whom you speak/share your spiritual life?”

3.0 Case Studies

In the following we give two examples of the families investigated. The standardized and qualitative interviews give us information about the families' social networking patterns and about their language choice patterns.

Example 1: Tessa's family

Four members of the family were interviewed. The tables below give the three adult members' self-identified frequently-consulted friends. These are construed as their social networks of the exchange type as defined by Li Wei (1994).

Table 1. Tessa's Grandmother's Network

Age	Gender	Language Choice	Frequency of Contact	Occupation	Topic of Conversation
35	M	Hokkien	Weekly	Sales	Social
42	F	Hokkien	Monthly	Housewife	Social
32	M	English	Weekly	Computer Programmer	Computer
56	M	English	Weekly	Manager	Social
50	M	English	Weekly	Manager	Social
42	M	English	Monthly	Manager	Social
50	M	English	Weekly	Manager	Social
32	F	English	Daily	Secretary	Work

Table 2. Tessa's Mother's Network

Age	Gender	Language Choice	Frequency of Contact	Occupation	Topic of Conversation
38	F	English & Cantonese	Weekly	Housewife	Children
38	F	English & Mandarin	Weekly	TV Producer	Children
35	F	English	Weekly	Housewife	Children
36	F	English	Weekly	Nurse	Children
32	F	English	Monthly	Housewife	Children
34	F	English	Weekly	Housewife	Children
35	F	English	Weekly	Housewife	Children

Table 3. Tessa's Father's Network

Age	Gender	Language Choice	Frequency of Contact	Occupation	Topic of Conversation
45	M	English	Monthly	Sales Executive	Social
43	M	English	Weekly	Manager	Social
40	M	English	Weekly	Manager	Social

The following is the interviewer's summary of the content of the qualitative interview with the family:

Tessa's parents were critical of the education system, and that streaming was too early for the children, that the education system seemed to look after the gifted. Both accept English as a first language and Mandarin as a second language as a good combination, and that mastering them is sufficient. Both parents want to be identified only as Singaporeans. While they accept culture as important for awareness raising they do not think dialects are important. Both felt there has been shift in the languages used but they think it is a good move by the government in using two languages to improve communication.

Tessa's family interaction patterns show a frequent use of English and that English is dominant across all generations.

While the maternal grandmother uses Hokkien, Tessa's father speaks Cantonese and in fact speaks both English and Cantonese to his child, but chose Cantonese and Hokkien to speak to his parents-in-law. Tessa's mother reflected the same patterns, speaking English and Cantonese to her child and Cantonese and Hokkien to her mother. The grandmother spoke Cantonese all the time to the child but spoke Hokkien to her husband and Hokkien and Cantonese to other friends in the same age group.

Example 2: Liesl's family

Table 4. Liesl's Grandmother's Network

Age	Gender	Language Choice	Frequency of Contact	Occupation	Topic of Conversation
70	F	Hokkien	Daily	House wife	Family
65	F	Hokkien	Weekly	House wife	Family
76	F	Hokkien	Weekly	House wife	Religion
68	F	Hokkien	Weekly	House wife	Health
64	F	Hokkien	Monthly	House wife	Family

Table 5. Liesl's Mother's Network

Age	Gender	Language Choice	Frequency of Contact	Occupation	Topic of Conversation
42	F	English	Weekly	Surveyor	Social
38	F	English	Monthly	Administrator	Children
42	F	English	Weekly	Housewife	Church
39	F	English	Weekly	Housewife	Church
40	F	English	Weekly	Housewife	Church
42	F	English	Monthly	Surveyor	Children
43	F	English	Weekly	Housewife	Church
43	F	English	Weekly	Administrator	Church
36	F	English	Monthly	Administrator	Children
36	F	English	Monthly	Administrator	Children
42	F	English	Weekly	Housewife	Children

Table 6. Liesl's Father's Network

Age	Gender	Language Choice	Frequency of Contact	Occupation	Topic of Conversation
44	M	English	Weekly	Architect	Work
43	M	English	Monthly	Lecturer	Family
42	M	English	Weekly	Insurance	Finance
36	M	English	Monthly	Missionary	Family
31	M	English	Monthly	Engineer	Friends
34	M	English	Weekly	Surveyor	Church

37	M	English	Weekly	Sales	Church
47	M	English	Weekly	Administrative Officer	Church
42	M	English	Weekly	Builder	Social
33	M	English	Weekly		Church

Interviewer's summary:

In comments on the education system, Lisel's parents felt that the standard required for Chinese in the primary school was higher and commented that it added a great deal of pressure on the children. Lisel's mother suggested that lessons ought to be made interesting and it ought not to be tough for children would lose interest in the language.

Both parents wanted to identify as Singaporean Chinese. While both state it is good to know dialect but qualify it saying that it all depended on opportunity rather than putting in special effort to cultivate the speaking of dialects. Both commented that people in society used less dialect and noticed the shift to Mandarin. The mother in actual practice tries to teach the children Mandarin whenever she was free. Both parents felt that mastering two languages is difficult and felt that English as a first language and Chinese as a second language is a good combination. While the grandmother uses dialect for all her interactions, the rest of the family members use English.

Following the suggestion of Li Wei (p.c.), we distinguished two types of network: occupation-oriented and generation-oriented. If the majority of one's frequent interlocutors are of the same occupation, then the speaker has a occupation-oriented network. If the majority of one's frequent interlocutors are of the same generation, then the speaker has a generation-oriented network. In the above examples, with the exception of Tessa's grandmother, all the adult members have friends of their age group only. Even for Tessa's grandmother, the majority of her friends are also of her own age group. Clearly all these individuals have more generation-oriented networks than occupation-oriented networks, as can be ascertained from the information given in the table. In our analysis, we give each individual a numerical index in terms of percentage to represent his/her propensity in occupation or generation networking orientation. As the same time, a similar English network index is given by taking the percentage of the number of network members who communicate with the ego in English.

It can be seen that for Tessa's family the bilingual networks have been running for two generations, although the father's small network is exclusively English. There is a sharp break across the two generations of Liesl's family in their linguistic aspect of networks. The grandmother's exclusively Hokkien network contrasts with the father's and the mother's exclusively English networks.

Besides showing a general trend of shift towards English, the two examples show some variation across families in linguistic composition of social networks. By the interviewers' account, we know that both families seemed unconcerned about the loss of the original dialects of the family. While they both basically approved of the bilingual education policy which promotes both English and Mandarin (for the Chinese), Tessa's family seemed to keep both the dialects (Hokkien and Cantonese) and English alive at home, Liesl's parents were using only English and Mandarin to their child.

Li Wei (1994) points out that we need closer analysis of language use patterns if we are to understand the functional and social aspects of the bilingual speakers' interactional behaviour. Li Wei refers to a language shift from Chinese monolingualism to English-dominated bilingualism within a span of three generations, with older speakers maintaining their use of Chinese while children adopt English as their primary language for communication. The analysis of Chinese three-generation families in Singapore shows similar patterns. The parents of the pre-school children choose to use dialect only when talking to their elders or older speakers. They tend to choose English more often and Mandarin on other occasions when speaking to their children.

The findings have implications for language maintenance as this shows that ethnic communities which are trying to maintain community languages have to take into account the roles played by inter-generation transmission of language and culture. The interaction across the generations as illustrated by the above examples does promote maintenance of community languages. Nuclear families which have few contacts with the extended familial relations of grandparents, aunts and uncles will probably also find it more difficult to maintain their threatened language compared to families which belong to an active familial network including the grandparent generation.

4.0 Quantitative Analysis

The quantitative analysis of the data collected from 54 Singaporean families yielded some interesting results. Some pertain to the social network patterns of the group, others are on the correlation of social variables with language choice behavior, language attitudes, and language abilities.

The first finding is on the social network types. The two types of networks, occupation-oriented network and generation-oriented network are not evenly distributed. Among Singaporen families, generation-oriented networks are more common than occupation-oriented networks. In fact, generation-oriented network is the basic pattern. This is true for all three ethnic groups. However, these differences are neutralized for children, whose networks are practically equally occupation-oriented and generation-oriented.

Table 1. Network Types of the Chinese

Network Types	Occupation-oriented	Generation-oriented
Child Indices	84%	84%
Mother Indices	39%	96%
Father Indices	56%	98%
Grandparent Ind.	61%	74%

Table 2. Network Types of the Malays

Network Types	Occupation-oriented	Generation-oriented
Child Indices	97%	94%
Mother Indices	39%	95%
Father Indices	61%	99%
Grandparent Ind.	Data not available	Data not available

Table 3. Network Types of the Indians

Network Types	Occupation-oriented	Generation-oriented
Child Indices	86%	86%
Mother Indices	38%	81%
Father Indices	36%	90%
Grandparent Ind.	Data not available	Data not available

The above finding may show a general socializing pattern, which is simultaneously a communicative pattern. This pattern, when standing alone, can be an explanatory factor for language choice patterns, which will be discussed later. Conversely, the communicative pattern might have been shaped in part by the generation gaps in language communication, which in turn have been the results of the waves of language planning decisions and measures of the government. In lack of any conclusive evidence for a causal relationship, we can assume at the moment that the two, generation gaps in language predominance and generation-oriented network predominance, are in a push-pull relationship.

Following Li Wei (In press:8), we extracted 9 generalized patterns of language choice from the implicational scale for language choices of our 48 Chinese speakers. The interlocutors are labeled in the child's perspective: the child's friend, the child and his/her siblings, the parents, and the grandparents are distinguished as the major types of interlocutors in the home context for all the speakers. "Reading" is not an interlocutor, but is used here as a reference variable, since all the individuals investigated gave information in all these five variables.

Table 4. Generalized Patterns of Language Choice (Chinese Speakers)

Pattern	Interlocutors					Number of Speakers		
	Read- ing	friend	child	parent	grand- parent	mother	father	child
1	e	e	e	e	e	1	1	3
2	e	e	e	e	ec	1	0	2
3	e	e	e	e	c	1	4	5
4	e	e	e	ec	c	3	2	1
5	e	e	ec	ec	c	2	4	1
6	e	ec	ec	ec	c	3	2	2
7	e	ec	ec	c	c	4	1	0
8	e	c	c	c	c	0	0	2
9	c	c	c	c	c	1	2	0

The above table can be further reduced to the following table:

Table 5. Reduced Patterns of Language Choice (Chinese speakers)

Pattern	Description	mother	father	child	Total number of speakers
1, 2, 3	Basically English	3	5	10	18 (37.5%)
4, 5, 6	More English than Chinese	8	8	4	20 (41.7%)
7, 8, 9	Basically Chinese	5	3	2	10 (20.8%)

Instead of the three generation patterns found by Li Wei (In press), we have only two generations, since our sample gives practically exclusively monolingual dialect speakers for the grandparent generation. Like Li Wei, we selected three categories: the three groups of speakers are “mothers”, “fathers”, and “children”, and they align like the Li Wei’s “grandparent-parent-child” alignment. Hence we may suggest that the language shift in Singapore, can be an accelerated two-generation transition, although the differentiation in the pace of shift (as vs. across-the-board change) is the same as Li Wei has emphasized.

Since our investigation has much broader scope than the above patterns which include only five variables, we have used a simplified pattern ranking scoring system, which is as follows:

Table 6. Five-scale language choice pattern ranking (LCRP)scoring system

Pattern	Description	Score
1	Chinese only	0
2	More Chinese than English	25
3	Chinese and English Equally	50
4	More English than Chinese	75
5	English only	100

The following tables give the results of correlation test of the language choice pattern ranking scores with the subjects’ language ability scores.

Table7. Language Choice Pattern Ranking (LCRP) Scores Correlating with Language Ability

LCPR Score correlating with	English Speaking Ability	English Reading and Writing Ability	Chinese Reading and Writing Ability	Mandarin Speaking Ability
Children	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	-.583*
Mothers	n.s.	.512*	n.s.	n.s.
Fathers	.613*	.613*	n.s.	n.s.
Grandparents.	.907**	.912**	n.s.	n.s.

It is found that the language choice pattern ranking scores do not always correlate with language ability self-evaluations, but (i) highly significant correlation was found with English ability with the grandparent generation speakers, (ii) significant correlation was found for English abilities of the parent generation speakers, and (iii) significant negative correlation was found with Mandarin ability of the child generation speakers. These findings may show a gradual spread of the use of English across domains over the three generations. The generalized use of English has been completed with the child generation, when one’s language ability is no longer affected by one’s choice patterns. However, given the impact of the recent Speak Mandarin Campaigns (cf. Xu et al. 1998), the child generation is experiencing currently a domain-constrained introduction of Mandarin.

The next finding reminds us the relevance of generic social variables such as SES and education. It would be a hasty decision to dismiss SES analysis in the attempt at selecting and

using network analysis. It is found that language choice pattern scores are significantly correlated with SES and education².

² Our SES index was calculated with family income and dwelling type indices, without referring to education.

Table 8. Language Choice Pattern Ranking (LCRP) Scores Correlating with Non-network Social Variables

LCPR Score correlating with	SES	Education	Age
Children			n.s.
Mothers	.523*	.697**	n.s.
Fathers	.515*	n.s.	n.s.
Grandparents		n.s.	n.s.

The following findings do not support the proposed relevance of occupation-oriented and generation oriented networks. However, the correlation of choice pattern scores with English network strength is shown.

Table 9. Language Choice Pattern Ranking (LCRP) Scores Correlating with Network Variables

LCPR Score correlating with	Occupation-oriented network	Generation-oriented network	English-oriented network
Children	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
Mothers	n.s.	n.s.	.547*
Fathers	n.s.	n.s.	.505*

The following table gives the comparison between the correlation results of the simplified five-scale choice pattern scores and the interlocutor-defined nine-scale choice pattern scores. It can be seen that the two different ways of scoring had little consequences in the correlation results. Moreover, the two scores show highly significant correlation. The above findings on the relevance of SES and the English network, and the lack of correlation of occupation-oriented and generation-oriented networks are thus reinforced.

Table 10. Comparison of the Correlation Results of the Five-scale and the Nine-scale Scores (Chinese mothers)

Correlating with	LCPR Score (five scale)	Nine-scale Choice Pattern Score
English Speaking Ability	n.s.	n.s.
English Reading and Writing ability	.512*	n.s.
Chinese Reading Ability	n.s.	n.s.
Chinese Speaking Ability	n.s.	n.s.
SES	.523*	.543*
Education	.697**	n.s.
Age	n.s.	.505*
Generation-oriented network	n.s.	n.s.
Occupation-oriented network	n.s.	n.s.
English-oriented network	.547*	n.s.

Table 11. Comparison of the Correlation Results of the Five-scale and the Nine-scale Scores (Chinese fathers)

Correlating with	LCPR Score (five scale)	Nine-scale Choice Pattern Score
English Speaking Ability	.613*	.554*
English Reading and Writing ability	.613*	.554*
Chinese Reading Ability	n.s.	n.s.
Chinese Speaking Ability	n.s.	n.s.
SES	.515*	.541*
Education	.697**	n.s.
Age	n.s.	n.s.
Generation-oriented network	n.s.	n.s.
Occupation-oriented network	n.s.	n.s.
English-oriented network	.505*	.665**

Table 12. Correlation of the Five-scale and the Nine-scale Scores

LCPR Score correlating with	Nine-scale Choice Pattern Score
Mothers	.782**
Fathers	.921**

Following Li Wei et al. (1998), we also asked our subjects what were their preferred languages for reading, speaking and writing. The following table shows the correlation between the preference for English to Chinese and one's English networking patterns. For Chinese males of the parent generation, the preference for English to Chinese is also significantly correlated with SES, as well as with their English ability self-evaluations.

Table 13. English Preference Scores Correlating with Other Variables (Chinese speakers)

English Preference Scores Correlating with	Mothers	Fathers
English Speaking Ability	n.s.	.528*
English Reading and Writing ability	n.s.	.528*
SES	n.s.	.544*
Education	n.s.	n.s.
Age	n.s.	n.s.
Generation-oriented network	n.s.	n.s.
Occupation-oriented network	n.s.	n.s.
English-oriented network	.541*	.790**

To summarize the above findings, the parents language abilities in English and their preference for using English for reading, writing and speaking are all significantly correlated with their language choice pattern in general and their English network patterns in particular. At the same time, the choice patterns and language preference are found to be correlated with socio-economic status.

We subjected the children's language abilities and a number of the parents' variables to a correlation test, the only significant correlation found is between children's English speaking abilities and parents' language choice patterns for both fathers and mothers. Besides, children's English speaking abilities are also significantly correlated with mothers' English speaking abilities and mothers' education. Other parents' variables which were tested but were not found to be significantly correlated with children's language abilities are SES, network variables, reading and writing abilities, and Mandarin speaking abilities.

Table 14. Significant Correlations between Parents' Variables and Children's Language Abilities

	Mothers	Fathers
Children's English Speaking Abilities with Parents' English Speaking Abilities	.763**	n.s.
Children's English Speaking Abilities with Parents' Language Choice Pattern Ranking Scores	.623*	.769**
Children's English Speaking Abilities with Parents' Education	.577*	n.s.

Discussion

The use and spread of English in Singapore has been given explanations with many sociological factors (c.f. Gopinathan et al 1994 and 1998). However, those studies have not considered social networks as an explanatory factor.

The present study shows that the preference of English to Chinese and self-evaluated English abilities go hand in hand with the volume of English speaking component of one's social network. The intermediate link between one's social network and one's language preference and abilities is perhaps related to one's language choice patterns. The ultimate non-linguistic factor that determines linguistic behaviors may still be the socio-economic status of the speakers. However, this is realized and modified by the social networks.

Our analysis shows that mothers' education and English speaking abilities positively correlate with children's English speaking abilities but the same variables of the fathers' do not. This may show that the mothers have more influence in affecting the children's language development.

The only significant result for the correlation between children's language ability and parents' variables for both parents is that between the parents' language choice patterns and the children's English speaking abilities. This shows the importance of the role played by parents. It is not what the parents are, but what the parents do that shapes most their children's language attainment.

The correlation results of our analysis suggest the following causal relationships among the components of English spread in Singapore, which are represented in a flow chart as follows:

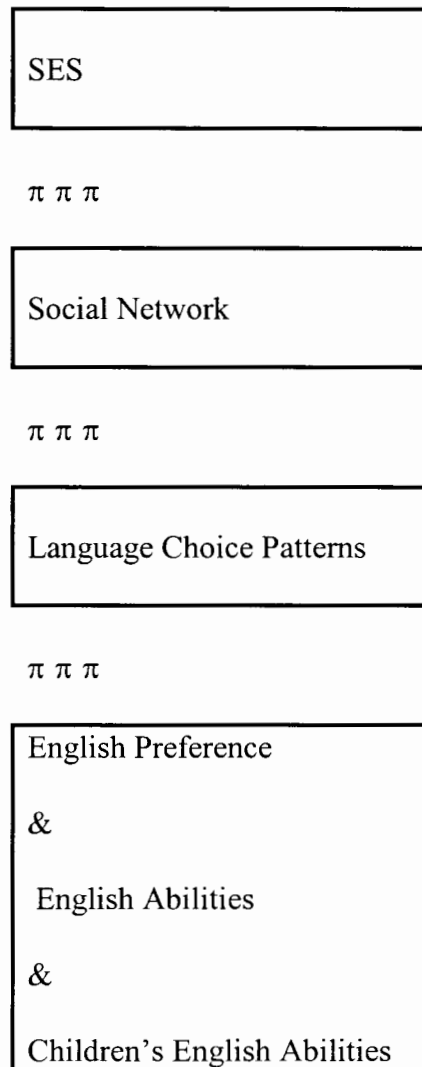


Diagram 1. The causal relationship of SES, social network, language choice patterns, and language preference and abilities.

In the Singapore context, the spread of English accompanies modernization and urbanization and a large scale upward social mobility. As a result, the majority of the population associate the language with power, status and richness, and many who have not mastered the language aspire for their offspring to do so for its perceived instrumental function in economic gains. The English-emphasizing bilingual education policy was made to respond to such parents' aims and hopes and are also based on the country's economic goals as a whole. The effects of the English-dominant bilingual education policies are now seen in the preferred patterns of interactions of the group of speakers investigated. They generally favour English over the community languages. Among them, some Chinese families are positive over the dominant use of English and show that on top of English they are also willing to use Mandarin in family settings. At present Chinese dialects remain very much in the private domain, with the elders using single or mixed dialects for most of their activities. The parent generation therefore has a larger repertoire of linguistic codes, being able to continue using dialect in their interaction with the older generation and at the same time using English and Mandarin with their children. The language use patterns show the success of the

bilingual policies implemented by the government. The encouragement of the use of both English and Mandarin has led to the replacement of a complex pattern of multi-dialect codes in the public domains. It is worth noting studies that report the extensive use of dialects amongst groups of speakers from the lower-income groups, (Xu et al. 1998). Recently a film producer has produced a film with 80% of the dialogue in mixed dialects with mainly Hokkien, aiming at a younger group of dialect speakers. Contrary to the government's usual dialect-censoring regulation, it was released and was generally well received. These facts remind us that language shift may not be a simple one-way development and at the same time socio-economic forces are behind language behaviors. As perceived by Li Wei (1994), a coherent model of language maintenance and language shift should encompass both large-scale, more abstract sociological factors and also more tangible units of social interaction such as social networks.

This study of Singapore case of language shift from community languages to English has shown that the fundamental socio-economic motivating forces for language shift are mediated and realized in social networks which prescribe and reinforce the language choice patterns of all individuals in the society.

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