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**Mandarinising Singapore: a Critical Analysis of Slogans in
Singapore's 'Speak Mandarin Campaign'**

by

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ABSTRACT

This paper spotlights one of Singapore's most enduring, well-known and controversial campaigns, the 'Speak Mandarin Campaign'. Its aim is to critically examine the ideologies embedded within the discursive structures of the slogans used in the Campaign from 1979 to 2000. Broadly adhering to the principles and orientations of 'critical linguistics', this study probes into the lexicogrammatical structure of the slogans as realised at the Textual, Ideational and Interpersonal levels. The analysis uncovers ideologies pointing to an asymmetrical power structure between the government and the people of Singapore, possible traces of linguistic chauvinism and a political leadership that is generally distant and aloof, imposing the burden of speaking Mandarin unilaterally on the people instead of constructing it as a shared responsibility. The paper concludes with a critical appraisal of the 'Speak Mandarin Campaign', focusing on the social, political and cultural ramifications that the Campaign may have produced.

KEYWORDS: National Campaigns, Slogans, Singapore, Critical Linguistics, Mandarin

INTRODUCTION

Over the last two decades, the tiny island-state of Singapore has been inundated with a flood of campaigns, including campaigns that promote civic-consciousness, healthy lifestyle, a clean and green environment, economic productivity and even a happy family. Little wonder then that Singapore has been referred to as a ‘country of campaigns’ (Lazar, 2000). This paper spotlights one of the longest-running, best known and most controversial campaigns (Newman, 1986) ever mounted in Singapore – the ‘Speak Mandarin Campaign’ – in an attempt to critically examine the socio-cultural and socio-economic ideologies imbricated within the discursive structures of the slogans that have been used in conjunction with the Campaign.

In the context of Singapore, a ‘national campaign’ can be defined as a government initiated and inspired movement which has an organised and formal course of action, used with the intent of arousing public awareness and influencing public behaviour (Tham, 1986: 41). The number and variety of campaigns and the vigour with which they have been promulgated over the past few decades reflect the Singapore government's commitment towards building a society in terms of the values and ideals espoused by these campaigns, values and ideals that every Singaporean is expected to embody and uphold. It is therefore interesting to examine Singapore's campaigns as a social practice, unique in the way they have permeated into every crevice of life in Singapore, to probe into the processes of how Singaporean society is constructed in and through these campaigns. As a highly salient and symbolic instantiation of campaign discourse, slogans encapsulate the ideologies embedded within them through the particular ways in which they have been constructed by the government and construed by the people.

Through a close textual analysis of all the slogans used in the ‘Speak Mandarin Campaign’ from 1979 (the year it was first launched) to 2000, this paper aims to deconstruct the discursive processes by which various ideologies surrounding Mandarin and the speaking of Mandarin are created and perpetuated in and through these slogans.

This paper is organised into four main sections. The first presents a brief background of the Campaign, outlining the socio-political circumstances that gave rise to it. The second discusses the theoretical framework of ‘critical linguistics’ within which this study is undertaken. The third and main section presents a textual analysis of the lexicogrammar of the slogans. The paper concludes with a critical discussion of the socio-political and socio-cultural ramifications of the government’s sustained efforts in the ‘Mandarinising’ of Singapore.

BACKGROUND

Singapore’s approximately four million population comprises a multiracial, multilingual people who are mainly descendents of immigrants from other countries like China, India and Malaysia. This pluralistic composition not only makes for a culturally rich and diverse society, but also one with many potential divisive lines. The dominant Chinese community, which comprises more than 70% of the total population, is itself made up of a heterogeneous mix of peoples whose forefathers came from different parts of China and spoke a multiplicity of dialects, including Hokkien, Teochew and Cantonese, many of which are mutually unintelligible. A need therefore was perceived by the government of Singapore to unify the various Chinese dialect-speaking groups via a common language – Mandarin – which can cut across dialectal barriers to make for

easier communication. The desire to promote Mandarin as a kind of social glue to unite the Chinese community is only one of the reasons that prompted the government to launch the *Speak Mandarin Campaign* (henceforth SMC). The promotion of Mandarin was also premised on the government's perception that Mandarin, with its rich cultural and literary heritage, was the natural choice with which to transmit cultural values and traditions to the ethnic Chinese and to guard against the 'onslaught' of 'western' values purveyed by the mass media. To put it in the words of Lee Kuan Yew, the then Prime Minister of Singapore and the Campaign's chief advocate:

It [Mandarin] reminds us that we are part of an ancient civilisation with an unbroken history of over 5000 years. This is a deep and strong psychic force, one that gives confidence to a people to face up to and overcome great changes and challenges. To be able to speak Mandarin and read the Chinese script, is reassuring. To look at Chinese characters, to see them as mysterious hieroglyphics, is to be emotionally disadvantaged. A little effort and the magic of the characters will reveal itself.... Parents want ... their children to retain traditional Chinese values in filial piety, loyalty, benevolence, and love. Through Mandarin, their children can emotionally identify themselves as part of an ancient civilisation whose continuity was because it was founded on a tried and tested value system (Lee, 1984: 3).

Echoing a similar sentiment at the 1994 SMC launch, Brigadier-General Lee Hsien Loong, Singapore's Deputy Prime Minister, expressed the hope that: '... through the use of Mandarin, Chinese Singaporeans can preserve and transmit values, culture and a sense of identity'. Official 'voices' like these construct Mandarin not only as a preferred but an inevitable choice for Chinese Singaporeans to embrace as the language with which they can identify themselves as Chinese, without which, it seems, they would be emotionally crippled and psychologically disadvantaged.

As in other national campaigns, the promotion of the SMC was considerably aided by various channels of mass communication. The media – in the form of publicity materials such as posters, stickers, television commercials and song filmlets – were utilised to encourage Chinese Singaporeans to use more Mandarin and less dialect. In addition, telephone and radio Mandarin lessons, focusing on Chinese idiomatic phrases and proverbs that often contained moral and cultural overtones, were made available to anyone who wanted to improve their grasp of Mandarin. These ‘Dial-for Mandarin’ lessons, as they were called, were also packaged in booklets and cassette tapes for sale to members of the public at nominal prices. To further create a conducive learning environment, all television and radio programmes in dialects were categorically phased out. This necessitated the dubbing of imported dialect programmes into Mandarin (much to the chagrin of the Chinese television viewers), while efforts to produce local programmes in Mandarin were concurrently stepped up.

The launch of the Campaign was also timed to coincide with the implementation of the bilingual educational policy in 1979, which makes it mandatory for all students to study English as a ‘first language’ and ethnic Chinese students to study Mandarin, their supposed ‘mother-tongue’, as a second language. In Linguistics, the term ‘first language’ refers to the ‘native language’ or ‘mother tongue’ acquired by a child through contact and interaction with other members of the same language group (Hartman and Stork, 1972). In Singapore, however, these terms are being used in a rather unique way. The government uses the term ‘first language’ to refer to the first *school* language, while ‘mother tongue’ refers to the *ethnic* language of the various races. Hence, under the bilingual educational policy, all students study English as their ‘first language’ with a compulsory ‘second language’ or ‘mother tongue’ education. For the Malays, this

designated 'second language' is Malay, for most Indians it is Tamil and for the Chinese it is Mandarin. This push for Chinese Singaporeans to learn and use Mandarin as part of the bilingual policy was given despite the fact that many Chinese Singaporeans at that time did not speak Mandarin at all and was therefore not a true mother-tongue for them, unlike Malay was (and still is) for the Malay community and, albeit to a lesser extent, Tamil was for the Indian community.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This paper represents research in the relatively new but fast-expanding field of 'critical linguistics' or 'critical discourse analysis'. Broadly construed, 'critical linguistics' is a branch of discourse analysis adopting a critical posture in its investigations that go beyond the description of discourse to an explanation of *how* and *why* particular discourses are produced. The term 'critical linguistics' was first used by Fowler *et al* (1979) and Kress and Hodge (1979), who believe that discourse does not merely reflect social processes and structures, but affirms, consolidates and, in this way, reproduces existing social structures. Linguistic interpretation then becomes 'the process of recovering the social meanings expressed in discourse by analysing the linguistic structures in the light of their interactional and wider social contexts' (Fowler *et al*, 1979: 196). Tapping on the semiotic model of language developed by Halliday (1978), 'critical linguistics' is a grammatically grounded analysis of ideology at work beneath discourse. Grammatical functions like 'Actor' and 'Patient' and constructions involving passivisations which obscure agentivity are highlighted and systematically linked to ideological positions adopted by the writer *vis-à-vis* the reader. Thus, if the indigenous people of a Third World nation consistently appear as goals or beneficiaries rather than as

active agents in newspaper reports, for instance, this may contribute towards the portrayal (and hence perception) of Third World people as helpless victims of circumstances beyond their control, rather than as agents actively engaged in struggle, for instance.

This critical approach to discourse analysis typically concentrates on data like news reporting, political interviews and doctor-patient interactions that describe 'unequal encounters' or embody manipulative strategies that seem neutral or natural to most people. For instance, Trew in Fowler *et al* (1979) showed how two British newspapers portrayed the same event in vastly contrastive ways that reflected their differing ideological standpoints. Similarly, Lee (1992) analysed the reporting of certain events in Zimbabwe by two British newspapers, *The Guardian* and *The Times*, to show how lexical choices (including metaphor and metonymy) and grammatical choices (such as thematic selection and nominalization) can and do mediate different perspectives, reflecting the different ideological positions adopted by these two newspapers. And by a close textual analysis of a series of reports on the Vietnamese 5T Gang in two Australian newspapers, Teo (2000) uncovered evidence of a systematic 'othering' and stereotyping of the ethnic community by the 'white' majority as well as evidence of a racist ideology manifest in an asymmetrical power discourse between the (ethnic) law-breakers and the (white) law-enforcers. Manipulative strategies were also uncovered in Fairclough's (1989) analysis of an interview with Margaret Thatcher, in which he described and explained how the discourse which combined authority with popular solidarity was able to create an 'authoritarian populism', which effectively persuaded her audience over to *her* vision by making it *their* vision. What these researchers working within the critical linguistic paradigm share is a common vision of the centrality of language as a means of sustaining and reproducing power structures in society. One fundamental theoretical idea that

informs 'critical linguistics' is the belief that social relations of power are discursively enacted and reproduced (Foucault, 1972), and therefore by analysing discursive structures, social processes and structures can be uncovered and elucidated to reveal the ideologies that may be at work beneath language. Ideology, in this context, can be defined as 'particular ways of representing and constructing society which reproduce unequal relations of power, relations of domination and exploitation' (Wodak, 1996: 18). In viewing discourse as part of social practice and social practice as (partly) discursively constituted, a dialectical relationship is implied between a particular discursive practice and the social structures within which the activity is framed. Put simply, this means that discourse is both socially constituted as well as socially constitutive. The focus of critical linguistics is not upon language or the uses of language in and of themselves, but upon the partially linguistic character of social and cultural processes and structures in modern societies. It follows then that as societies undergo transformations, the nature of the relationship between discursive practices and social practices also takes on a different texture and demeanour. According to Fairclough (1992), early critical linguists generally failed to 'historicise' their data by focusing on how wider *changes* in socio-cultural practices are constituted in discourse practices, thereby locating the data within the flux of change that society is constantly embroiled in. Thus, apart from unravelling the ideological imbrications within the discursive structure of campaign slogans, this study also attempts to locate the slogans within this 'flux of change' by comparing their discursive structures across the two decade history of the *Speak Mandarin Campaign* so far, focusing on the social, economic or political changes in Singapore that might impinge on the ways the slogans are constructed and construed.

The primary analytic mode adopted in this paper adheres to the framework described and explicated in Halliday's (1994) Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG), which is favoured by many analysts working within the critical linguistic paradigm. The choice of SFG is predicated upon its capacity to support a *multifunctional* representation of social reality. It provides a useful model aimed at probing into the textual representations of realities, relationships and identities because it sees language as multi-dimensional: texts simultaneously representing experience, enacting social relations and reflecting textual processes. In Hallidayan terms, these are known as the 'Ideational', 'Interpersonal' and 'Textual' Metafunctions of language respectively. Halliday's model is also preferred because it allows the critical analyst to interrogate not only what is in the text (i.e. how meaning is actually realised), but also what is *not* in it (i.e. what other possible meaning realisations there are but were not selected). Textual analysis in the traditional sense is often exclusively concerned with what is in the text and has little to say about what is excluded. Halliday's systemic approach to textual analysis, in contrast, emphasises *choice* from a range of possible meaning realisations and thus affords a richer analysis that takes into account why certain options are chosen over others. What is interesting and relevant to 'critical linguistics' about Halliday's theory of language is that it focuses not only on what is present or explicitly realised on the surface level of language but also on what is *absent*, but implied at a deeper but recoverable level of meaning. This sort of analysis which is oriented towards the explication of implicit meanings can provide valuable insights into what might otherwise be opaque or taken for granted simply because it is not explicit. For critical linguistic analysis, it is important to focus on these implicit meanings as the nature of ideologies is such that they tend to hide under implicit assumptions.

With this brief discussion of the general background of the theory that informs and underpins this research and the raison d'être behind the SMC, let us now turn to the analysis of the slogans proper, which are presented in Table 1 below (with the Mandarin version and its English translation in Table 1A):

Table 1: The Speak Mandarin Campaign Slogans

YEAR	TARGET GROUP/AREA	SLOGAN
1979	Chinese community	Speak More Mandarin and Less Dialect
1980	Chinese community	Nil
1981	Chinese community	Learn Mandarin, Speak Mandarin
1982	Work Place	Speak Mandarin while at Work
1983	Markets & Food Centres	Mandarin's In. Dialect's Out
1984	Chinese Parents	Speak Mandarin. Your children's future depends on your effort today
1985	Public Transport Workers	Mandarin is Chinese
1986	Food and Drinks Establishments	Start with Mandarin, not Dialect
1987	Shopping Centres	Start with Mandarin, speak it more often
1988	White Collar Workers	Better with more Mandarin, less dialect
1989	Chinese community	More Mandarin, Less Dialect. Make it a way of life
1990	Senior Executives	If You're a Chinese, Make a Statement – in Mandarin
1991	English educated Chinese Singaporeans	Mandarin for Chinese Singaporeans: More Than a Language
1992	English educated Chinese Singaporeans	Say it in Mandarin
1993	English educated Chinese Singaporeans	Speak Mandarin. It helps
1994	English educated Chinese and business professionals	Mandarin. Use It or Lose It
1995	English educated Chinese and business professionals	Mandarin. Use It or Lose It
1996	English educated Chinese working adults	Speak Mandarin, Explore New Horizons
1997	English educated Chinese working adults	Speak Mandarin, Explore New Horizons
1998	English educated Chinese working adults	Speak Mandarin, It's An Asset
1999	English educated Chinese working adults	Speak Mandarin, It's An Asset
2000	English educated Chinese working adults	Speak Mandarin, It's An Asset

Table 1A: Mandarin Version and its English Translation

YEAR	MANDARIN VERSION	HANYU PINYIN	ENGLISH TRANSLATION
1979	多讲华语，少讲方言	duo jiang hua yu, shao jiang fang yan	Speak More Mandarin, Speak Less Dialect
1981	学华语，讲华语	xue hua yu, jiang hua yu	Learn Mandarin, Speak Mandarin
1982	在工作场所讲华语！	zai gong zhuo chang shuo jiang hua yu	Speak Mandarin at the Workplace!
1983	华人讲华语， 合情又合理	hua ren jiang hua yu, he qin you he li	Chinese Speaking Mandarin, It's Only Natural and Logical
1984	请讲华语。儿女的前 途，操在您手里	qin jiang hua yu. er nu de qian tu, chao zai ning shou li	Please Speak Mandarin. Your Children's Future Lies in Your Hands
1985	华人，华语	hua ren, hua yu	Chinese, Mandarin
1986	先开口讲华语， 皆大欢喜	xian kai kou jiang hua yu, jie da huan xi	Be the First to Speak Mandarin, Everybody's Happy
1987	会讲华语，先讲常讲	hui jiang hua yu, xian jiang chang jiang	The Ability to Speak Mandarin, Speak It First, Speak It Frequently
1988	会讲华语，亲切便利	hui jiang hua yu, qing qie bian li	The Ability to Speak Mandarin, It's Friendly and Convenient
1989	多讲华语，自然流利	duo jiang hua yu, zi ran liu li	Speak More Mandarin, You'll Become Fluent Naturally!
1990	华人，华语	hua ren, hua yu	Chinese, Mandarin
1991	学习华语，认识文化	xue xi hua yu, ren shi wen hua	Learn Mandarin, Know the Culture
1992	用华语，表心意	yong hua yu, biao xin yi	Use Mandarin to Express Your Feelings
1993	讲华语，受益多	jiang hua yu, shou yi duo	Speak Mandarin, There Are Many Benefits
1994	华语，多讲流利	hua yu, duo jiang liu li	Mandarin, The More You Speak, The Fluent You'll Get
1995	华语，多讲流利	hua yu, duo jiang liu li	Mandarin, The More You Speak, The Fluent You'll Get
1996	讲华语，开创新天地	jiang hua yu, kai chuang xin tian di	Speak Mandarin, Explore New Horizons
1997	讲华语，开创新天地	jiang hua yu, kai chuang xin tian di	Speak Mandarin, Explore New Horizons
1998	讲华语，好处多	jiang hua yu, hao chu duo	Speak Mandarin, There Are Many Benefits
1999	讲华语，好处多	jiang hua yu, hao chu duo	Speak Mandarin, There Are Many Benefits
2000	讲华语，好处多	jiang hua yu, hao chu duo	Speak Mandarin, There Are Many Benefits

ANALYSIS OF SLOGANS

Textual Meaning

The notion of ‘Theme’ as ‘prioritising’ certain kinds of meaning (Berry, 1996) is an analytic component belonging with the Textual Metafunction in Halliday’s SFG, looking at the organisation of information within a clause. It is a key analytic construct in SFG and can be defined as the point of departure of the message or, to use Halliday’s words, ‘the starting-point for the message ... the ground from which the clause is taking off’ (Halliday, 1994: 38). The theoretical force behind this notion of ‘Theme’ lies in the argument that the positioning of a piece of information in a clause is indicative of the kind of prominence or foregrounding the writer wishes to attribute to it. A constituent that is thematised or fronted is one to which the writer/speaker wishes to attribute greater prominence or emphasis over the other constituents in the clause.

As Halliday has chosen the clause as the basic unit of analysis (Halliday, 1994: 37), slogans that comprise separate (i.e. two or more) clauses are analysed as having separate thematic structures. Halliday has also categorically stated that minor clauses such as vocatives and exclamatives (e.g. ‘John!’ or ‘good night!’) do not have a thematic structure (*ibid.*: 43). As such, slogans that comprise only a phrase such as *More Mandarin, Less Dialect* would have to be regarded as minor clauses without a thematic structure. However, elsewhere (*ibid.*: 38), Halliday has also stated that the ‘Theme’ can be identified as that element which comes in the first position (in the clause) and that although ‘Theme’ is not positionally defined, which would make it a grammatical rather than a functional category, its frontal position is the means whereby the function of the Theme is realised. Adopting the principle that the first position is the means whereby

the function of the Theme is realised but extending it to include analysis not only at the clause but also the phrase level, I have analysed the first phrasal element in non-clausal slogans as the Theme.

Referring to Table 2 below, we observe that out of a total of 33 clauses used in the Campaign slogans, there are 22 verbal Themes, such as ‘speak’, ‘learn’, ‘start’, ‘make’, ‘use’ and ‘explore’ with several (especially ‘speak’) used repeatedly. According to Halliday (1994: 43), there are two kinds of clauses that can have verbs as Theme: the polar interrogative and the imperative clauses. A polar interrogative clause functions pragmatically as a question, while an imperative clause functions pragmatically as a command. The preponderance of verbal Themes in the SMC slogans therefore implies that two-thirds of the slogans are formulated in the form of injunctions for the people to follow. These include ***Speak More Mandarin and Less Dialect*** (1979), ***Learn Mandarin, Speak Mandarin***, ***Speak Mandarin*** (1981), ***Start with Mandarin, speak it more often*** (1987) and ***Speak Mandarin, Explore New Horizons*** (1996-7). This propensity towards using commands constructs the government as being rather paternalistic, dictating the behaviour of Chinese Singaporeans in a direct and overt manner in getting them to learn, speak and use Mandarin.

Table 2: Thematic Analysis

YEAR	SLOGAN
1979	Speak More Mandarin and Less Dialect
1981	Learn Mandarin, Speak Mandarin
1982	Speak Mandarin while at Work
1983	Mandarin ’s In. Dialect ’s Out
1984	Speak Mandarin. Your children’s future depends on your effort today
1985	Mandarin is Chinese
1986	Start with Mandarin, not Dialect
1987	Start with Mandarin, speak it more often
1988	(It is) Better with more Mandarin, less dialect
1989	More Mandarin , Less Dialect. Make it a way of life

1990	If You 're a Chinese, Make a Statement – in Mandarin
1991	Mandarin for Chinese Singaporeans : More Than a Language
1992	Say it in Mandarin
1993	Speak Mandarin. It helps
1994	Mandarin . Use It or Lose It
1995	Mandarin . Use It or Lose It
1996	Speak Mandarin, Explore New Horizons
1997	Speak Mandarin, Explore New Horizons
1998	Speak Mandarin, It 's An Asset
1999	Speak Mandarin, It 's An Asset

Apart from verbal Themes, there is also a preponderance of topical Themes with the word 'Mandarin' in it (seven out of nine), such as *Mandarin is Chinese* (1985), ***More Mandarin, Less Dialect*** (1989) and *Mandarin for Chinese Singaporeans* (1991), which foregrounds the idea of Mandarin. This focus on Mandarin is further reinforced through a process which I call 'recursive thematisation'. This is accomplished by using the pronoun 'It' to refer back to its antecedent in slogans like ***Speak Mandarin. It helps*** and ***Speak Mandarin. It's an Asset***, where the thematic 'It' in the second clause refers back to 'Speak Mandarin' to re-accentuate the idea of speaking Mandarin. When seen against the light of slogans as highly compressed and 'parsimonious' discursive acts that serve to enhance the slogans' memorability (Dyer, 1982), this apparent redundancy and 'diseconomy' become even more incongruous. Instead of formulating the slogan in a more straight-forward and 'economical' way (by using fewer words) like 'Speaking Mandarin helps' and 'Speaking Mandarin is an Asset', we get a more complex structure, and the motivation behind this is arguably to accentuate the idea of speaking Mandarin so that it would leave a deeper impression on the people's minds. This deliberate foregrounding is opaque to most people and only becomes apparent when we realise that the same message in the slogans can be expressed using different forms, albeit with subtle changes in meaning and emphasis. This recalls the Hallidayan view of language as a system of choice, from which users can select different lexicogrammatical forms to

realise different meanings and intentions. Although this focusing on speaking Mandarin might have only been intended to raise the awareness of Mandarin among the Chinese in Singapore, the fact that the SMC is a national campaign that uses public forms of mass communication to promulgate its messages would probably mean that *all* Singaporeans including the non-Chinese population would also become more aware of Mandarin. While it is only natural for a campaign aimed at promoting Mandarin usage to go all out to raise public awareness about Mandarin, for it to do so on a *national* scale through mass communication channels that reach out to potentially every Singaporean of every race, culture and language over such a sustained period of time, in my opinion, smacks of insensitivity to the non-Chinese population in multiracial Singapore.

Ideational Meaning

While the Textual Metafunction expresses organisational meaning within a message, the Ideational Metafunction construes representational meaning in our world of experience. ‘Transitivity’ is a key analytic component of the Ideational Metafunction which provides us with the potential for categorising the infinite variety of occurrences or ‘goings on’ in our world of experience into a finite set of process types (Halliday, 1994: 106-7). According to Halliday, our mental picture of reality is composed of ‘outer’ experience – actions and events – and ‘inner’ experience – awareness and reflections of our states of being. Outer experience which comprises processes of the external world is represented by ‘Material’ processes, while inner experience which encompasses the processes of consciousness is represented by ‘Mental’ processes. Our picture of reality becomes more complex as we learn to relate one aspect of our experience with another in various ways such as to classify and identify. This third aspect of reality is grammatically captured in

terms of ‘Relational’ processes. Relational clauses function primarily to establish a connection, such as to identify as in ‘Molly is my sister’ and to attribute a particular quality as in ‘Melvyn is kind’. These semantic categories of our world of experience are collected and explicated within Halliday’s transitivity theory, which can be expressed simply in terms of ‘who does what to whom’ (Iwamoto, 1995). ‘Transitivity’ is thus a useful analytic tool that foregrounds the agency or, more accurately, the *attribution* of agency and process to the various participants in a text by the writer. In probing into the way language represents reality in terms of how experiences are related, how the primary participants are constructed, what they do or say to whom, within what circumstances and with what consequences, transitivity theory has much to offer.

Table 3: Transitivity Analysis

PROCESS TYPE	SLOGAN
Material	More Mandarin, Less Dialect. Make it a way of life (1989)
	Speak Mandarin, Explore New Horizons (1996-7)
	Mandarin. Use It or Lose it (1994-5)
Mental	Learn Mandarin, Speak Mandarin (1981)
Verbal	Speak More Mandarin and Less Dialect (1979)
	Learn Mandarin, Speak Mandarin (1981)
	Speak Mandarin while at Work (1982)
	Speak Mandarin. Your children’s future depends on your effort today (1984)
	Start with Mandarin, not Dialect (1986)
	Start with Mandarin, speak it more often (1987)
	If you’re a Chinese. Make a Statement – in Mandarin (1990)
	Say it in Mandarin (1992)
	Speak Mandarin. It helps (1993)
	Speak Mandarin, Explore New Horizons (1996-7)
	Speak Mandarin, It’s an Asset (1998-9)
Relational	Mandarin’s In, Dialect’s Out (1983)
	Speak Mandarin. Your children’s future depends on your effort today (1984)
	Mandarin is Chinese (1985)
	If You’re a Chinese, Make a Statement – in Mandarin (1990)
	Speak Mandarin, It’s an Asset (1998-9)

With reference to Table 3 above, we can see that there is a predominance of ‘Verbal’ processes used in constructing the slogans through verbs like ‘speak’, ‘say’ or, more generally, ‘make’ (a statement). While the use of ‘Verbal’ processes in the slogans is congruent with the aim of promoting Mandarin as a form of communication for social interaction, it does not seem to reflect the aim of promoting Mandarin as a means of cultural transmission. The word ‘culture’ is usually understood to refer to the sum total of the ideas, customs, artistic achievements, et cetera, of a given people in a given period. Williams (1993: xvi), for instance, refers to culture as ‘a whole way of life, material, intellectual and spiritual’. Culture is thus seen to incorporate all the shared knowledge, beliefs and practices of a group, of which language is merely a small part. If language is to be used for cultural transmission, it would clearly entail more than the ability to speak the language related to the culture. A whole spectrum of literacy skills and processes including reading and writing, which provides a basis for literary appreciation and understanding, would be necessary for one to gain access to the history and literary heritage of that culture. But from Table 3, we see that there are only five non-Verbal processes (one ‘Mental’ process ‘Learn’ and four ‘Material’ processes, ‘Make’, ‘Use’, ‘Lose’ and ‘Explore’), which imply more than the ability to speak Mandarin, compared to twelve instantiations of the ‘Verbal’ process. This predominance of ‘Verbal’ processes can be rationalised on grounds that the primary aim of the Campaign is to get Chinese Singaporeans to *speak* more Mandarin instead of Chinese dialects, so as to promote Mandarin ‘as a kind of social glue’ to unite the Chinese community. After all, the Campaign is a *Speak* Mandarin Campaign rather than a *Use* Mandarin Campaign, and hence the emphasis on *speaking* Mandarin, rather than reading, writing or thinking (in) Mandarin. But if that were indeed the case, then the Singapore government should not

have used ‘culture’ as an excuse to justify the choice of promoting Mandarin over the Chinese dialects.

Apart from the predominance of ‘Verbal’ processes, the next most common type of process evident in the SMC is the ‘Relational’. Referring to Table 4 below, we observe that the majority of ‘Relational’ clauses belong to the attributive type. One in particular stands out: *Speak Mandarin. Your children’s future depends on your effort today* (1984). The verb ‘depends’ creates a dependency relationship between ‘your effort today’ and the subject ‘Your children’s future’, although the basis of this relationship is not made explicit. Presumably, there is a tacit recognition of the role of the family in engineering language shift and that Mandarin-speaking parents would therefore have a direct influence over their own children’s mastery of the language. The slogan works by playing on the psychology of Chinese parents, who are anxious for their children to perform well enough in Mandarin in order to succeed in the intensely competitive education system in Singapore, as a means of getting them to brush up their Mandarin skills so as to provide a conducive home environment for their children’s own language-learning.

Table 4: Analysis of Relational Clauses

TYPE OF RELATIONAL PROCESS	SLOGAN
Attributive	Mandarin’s In, Dialect’s Out
Attributive	Speak Mandarin. Your children’s future depends on your effort today
Identifying	Mandarin is Chinese
Attributive	If You’re a Chinese, Make a Statement – in Mandarin
Attributive	Speak Mandarin, It’s an Asset

The slogan, *Mandarin is Chinese*, is interesting not so much because it is the only instantiation of an identifying 'Relational' clause but more because it represents an overt attempt by the government to infuse ideology into the language of campaigns. By making an overt link between the language (Mandarin) and the ethnicity (Chinese) in a reversible identifying clause ('Mandarin is Chinese' is reversible into 'Chinese is Mandarin'), the government is attempting to perpetuate the ideology that speaking Mandarin, among other things, identifies a person as being Chinese and that being a Chinese entails, among other things, the ability to speak Mandarin. Both statements are clearly falsifiable generalisations, which the government hopes to use as a means to persuade the Chinese Singaporeans to speak Mandarin. A similar ideology was purveyed in the 1990 slogan, *If you're a Chinese. Make a Statement – in Mandarin*, which can be similarly denounced for being insensitive to non-Chinese sensibilities. By highlighting the dominant Chinese community in Singapore, the slogan appears to marginalise the minority races and according to one observer, seems to regard the Chinese as if they are the sole inhabitants of the country (Pennycook, 1994: 256).

Interpersonal Meaning

The Interpersonal dimension of Halliday's SFG probes into the social relations that obtain between the writer and the reader, in terms of the speech roles that the writer adopts in relation to the reader in an exchange. These speech roles are signalled primarily through the grammatical Mood structure (of declarative, interrogative, imperative and exclamative), which is made up of the *Subject* and the *Finite* operator and the *Residue*, and the modality choices that are made within a clause. The grammatical Mood of a clause correlates with the particular role that a speaker is performing *vis-à-vis* the hearer through the clause (asking

a question, giving a command, etc.) and hence sheds light on the particular relationship between the speaker and hearer constructed by the speaker.

Referring to Table 5 below, we can see that the majority of mood structures belong to the imperative type. Out of a total of 32 discrete clauses, there are 19 with an imperative structure, the rest being declaratives. For instance, slogans like *Speak More Mandarin and Less Dialect*, *Learn Mandarin*, *Speak Mandarin* and *If You're a Chinese, Make a Statement – in Mandarin* are all constructed as imperatives. This parallels the observation made earlier about the preponderance of verbal Themes, with both pointing to the government adopting a rather top-down, authoritarian stance in issuing injunctions for the people to follow. Also, a vast majority of the slogans have 'you' as the Subject (21), as can be recovered from the Mood Tag. An example would be *Speak Mandarin. Explore New Horizons*, won't you? What is significant about this is that it creates the impression that the SMC slogans are being imposed on the people in a top-down, unilateral manner. It places the burden of speaking Mandarin squarely on the shoulders of the people of Singapore instead of constructing it as a shared responsibility between the government and the people, which can be achieved through reformulated slogans like 'Let's speak Mandarin to explore new horizons' or 'Let's speak Mandarin. It's an Asset'. Reformulating the slogans by using 'let's' repositions them as an invitation rather than a command and considerably attenuates the injunctive sense of the slogans. The difference becomes even more obvious when we re-write some of the other slogans to grammatically inscribe a sense of collective effort and responsibility into the slogans: **Let's** speak Mandarin while at work (1982); **Let's** start with Mandarin, not Dialect (1986); More Mandarin, Less Dialect. Make it **our** way of life (1989); **Let's** speak Mandarin. It helps (1993). Thus reformulated, the slogans immediately lose their sense

of top-down prescriptivism and take on the more polite tenor of a request for collaboration and shared responsibility. Of course, I am not claiming that merely changing the way the slogans are formulated changes in any substantive way the attitudinal stance that the government is adopting in the SMC; I am merely drawing attention to the relationship between the discursive structure of the slogans (and its alternative formulations) and the tenor of the government as implied through the SMC slogans. That not a single slogan is formulated using a 'let's' construction implies that the task of speaking Mandarin is to be construed as the sole responsibility of the people rather than one shared between the government and people. This construction of unilateral responsibility is further reinforced by the use of the second person pronoun in two instances – *Speak Mandarin. Your children's future depends on your effort today* (1984) and *If You're a Chinese, Make a Statement – in Mandarin* (1990). Thus, it would appear that the onus of learning and speaking Mandarin is the responsibility of the (Chinese) people of Singapore alone. The total exclusion of the government from the grammar of the slogans constructs the political leadership as being rather distant and uninvolved in a large-scale and long-term socio-political process that surely must include and involve the government.

Table 5: Mood Structure Analysis

MOOD		RESIDUE			MOOD TAG		
Subject	Finite	Predicator	Complement	Adjunct	Finite	Subject	Mood Type
(you)		Speak	more Mandarin and less dialect		won't	you	imperative
(you)		Learn	Mandarin		won't	you	imperative
(you)		Speak	Mandarin		won't	you	imperative
(you)		Speak	Mandarin	while at work	won't	you	imperative
Mandarin	's			in			declarative
Dialect	's			out			declarative
(you)		Speak	Mandarin		won't	you	imperative
Your children's future	depends			on it			declarative
Mandarin	is		Chinese				declarative
(you)		Start	with Mandarin, not dialect		won't	you	declarative
(you)		Start	with Mandarin		won't	you	imperative
(you)		Speak	it	more often	won't	you	imperative
(It)	(is)		Better with more Mandarin, less dialect				declarative
(you)		Make	it (more Mandarin, less dialect) a way of life		won't	you	imperative
If you	are		a Chinese				declarative
(you)		Make	a statement	in Mandarin	won't	you	imperative
Mandarin for Chinese Singaporeans	(is)		more than a language				declarative
(you)		Say	it	In Mandarin	won't	you	imperative
(you)		Use	it (Mandarin)		won't	You	imperative x 2*
(you)	(will)	lose	it (Mandarin)				declarative x 2
(you)		Speak	Mandarin		won't	you	imperative x 2
		Explore	new horizons		won't	you	imperative x 2
(You)		Speak	Mandarin		won't	you	imperative x 3
It	's		an asset				declarative x 3

* The number indicates the number of times the slogan (clause) has been repeated.

Lexicogrammatical Parallelism

An interesting feature of the SMC slogans that does not seem to fit neatly into any of the three Metafunctions relates to what I term as ‘lexicogrammatical parallelism’. Table 6 below shows a list of slogans exemplifying a distinct lexicogrammatical pattern, consisting of two distinct parts which are virtual mirror images of each other, both lexically and structurally. This is epitomised by the slogans – *Mandarin’s In, Dialect’s Out* and *More Mandarin, Less Dialect*. The two parts are constructed in a dichotomous way so as to reflect, simultaneously, a congruence in structure and an opposition in meaning. For instance, in *Mandarin’s In, Dialect’s Out*, the antonymous relationship between ‘In’ and ‘Out’ is extrapolated to create an opposition between ‘Mandarin’ and ‘Dialect’. While the opposition between ‘In’ and ‘Out’ is based on the opposite *meaning* of the prepositions and can thus be considered to be semantically predicated, that between ‘Mandarin’ and ‘Dialect’ is more ideologically motivated. What drives these and other similar slogans like *Start with Mandarin, not Dialect* (1986) and *Better with more Mandarin, less Dialect* (1988) appears to be the imperative to get people to switch from using dialects to Mandarin as a means to cohere the linguistically disparate Chinese community in Singapore. In fact, the government’s commitment towards the promotion of Mandarin at the expense of dialects was so strong that Lee Kuan Yew himself had proclaimed that ‘no Singaporean Chinese should speak dialect’ (*The Straits Times*, 20 October, 1981). However, the idea that a ‘language’ like Mandarin and ‘dialects’ like Hokkien, Cantonese and Teochew are *inherently* dichotomous is a simplistic and misleading one, as it understates the almost infinite complexities involved in the terms (Wardhaugh, 1992). Simple linguistic criteria like structural affinity and mutual intelligibility prove inadequate as the boundary between ‘dialect’ and ‘language’ tends to

blur, thereby leading sociolinguists like Hudson (1980) to reject the distinction between them, except in terms of prestige, which is a socio-political construct rather than a linguistic one. Thus, the idea that Mandarin is somehow inherently different from and even superior to the other Chinese dialects is an ideology borne out of the government's desire to promote Mandarin at the expense of dialects. This ideology is expressed through slogans like *Mandarin's In, Dialect's Out*, in which the government attempts to create a perception that 'Mandarin' and 'Dialects' are *necessarily* and diametrically opposed to each other and hence mutually exclusive in the sense that Mandarin can only flourish at the expense of dialects. In a way, polarisation of complex issues or relationships as seen here is not uncommon in slogans, as it is one means by which slogans express their persuasive function (Stewart et al, 1995).

Table 6: Lexicogrammatical Parallelism in Slogans

YEAR	SLOGANS
1979	Speak More Mandarin and Less Dialect
1981	Learn Mandarin, Speak Mandarin
1983	Mandarin's In. Dialect's Out
1986	Start with Mandarin, not Dialect
1988	Better with more Mandarin, less Dialect
1989	More Mandarin, Less Dialect. Make it a way of life
1994-5	Mandarin. Use It or Lose It

What is also interesting about this parallelism in the SMC slogans is that it appears to be a reflection of the Chinese couplet form, which the English slogans could have been derived from or at least influenced by. The couplet form is common in the Chinese language, especially classical Chinese, where the ability to write or speak in antithetical yet elegantly counter-balanced terms is a much admired skill, which was (and still is) a mark of high learning and wit. The dichotomous syntactic patterning

evident in the SMC slogans could simply be the result of a direct translation of the slogans in Chinese. However, this does not seem to be the case. While the structural and semantic parallel between the Mandarin and English versions is certainly apparent in some slogans, like Learn Mandarin, Speak Mandarin (学华语, 讲华语) Mandarin is Chinese (华人, 华语), the majority of the slogans in English do not appear to be transliterations from the Mandarin version. In fact, some of them do not even bear much resemblance, either in meaning or structure, to their Mandarin counterpart. An example would be the slogan, *Mandarin's In. Dialect's Out*, whose Mandarin version (华人讲华语, 合情又合理) roughly translates into: *Chinese Speaking Mandarin, It's Only Natural and Logical*. In light of these observations, one possible interpretation is that while the English and Mandarin versions of the SMC slogans appear to be independently constructed, there is perhaps some attempt by the government to exploit and mimic the lexicogrammatical parallelism of the Chinese couplet form to give the English version of the slogans a distinctively Chinese 'flavour' to enhance its appeal and hence impact on the Chinese population of Singapore.

DISCUSSION

A Review of the Findings

The analysis of the SMC slogans in the foregone has uncovered a number of interesting features not only about the structural and lexical patterning of the slogans but, more significantly, also the sorts of ideological meanings, assumptions and implications that have been imbricated within the discursive structure of the slogans. To review, we

observed at the Textual level a preponderance of verbal Themes, which constructs the government as being rather autocratic in issuing bald injunctions for the people to learn and speak more Mandarin rather than dialects. It therefore reflects an asymmetrical power structure assumed by the government in relation to the people of Singapore. At the Ideational level, 'Verbal' processes predominate, suggesting that the main interest of the government is to promote Mandarin as a *spoken* language – as a means of oral communication – thereby subjugating the other (cultural) aspects of the language. This stands in contradiction to the overt justificatory move taken by government officials to promote Mandarin not only as a lingua franca among the Chinese community in Singapore but also as a conduit for cultural transmission: 'through the use of Mandarin, Chinese Singaporeans can preserve and transmit values, culture and a sense of identity'. Though insignificant in number, the few instantiations of 'Relational' processes have been shown to harbour ideologies which are revelatory of the government's linguistic, if not ethnic, chauvinism, which has serious implications for multi-lingual, multi-ethnic Singapore. At the Interpersonal level, the high incidence of the imperative mood reinforces the top-down authoritarianism of the government, which has already been uncovered at the Textual level. Moreover, the total exclusion of the government from the grammar of the slogans creates an impression that the government has categorically relinquished its responsibility and role in the Campaign and projects an identity of the political leadership as being rather distant and aloof. Finally, ideologies that suggest an *inherent* supremacy and primacy of Mandarin over dialects and the indirect promotion of the status of Mandarin through the appropriation of features associated with classical Chinese discourse have been shown to inhabit in the lexicogrammatical parallelism evident in a number of the SMC slogans.

A Critical Appraisal of the SMC

The SMC stands today as a hallmark of the government's success in engineering language shift in Singapore. Within a relatively short span of twenty years, it has succeeded in getting a large proportion of the dialect-speaking Chinese to switch to Mandarin instead. Official statistics indicate that the percentage of Chinese households using Mandarin as the predominant language has been steadily rising from 13% in 1980 to 30% in 1990 and 45% in 2000 and the corresponding figure for Chinese dialects falling from 76% in 1980 to 48% in 1990 and still further to 30% in 2000¹. According to the 1990 Population Census Report, this greater usage of Mandarin instead of Chinese dialects reflected the success of the SMC and the emphasis on Mandarin as the second language among Chinese students (Lau, 1993: 5). Thus, it appears that the Singapore government has achieved unqualified success in engineering a large-scale language shift in Singapore. However, it is a success that is not untainted.

If we compare the development of the SMC slogans diachronically, a perceptible shift in emphasis is observable in the way Mandarin is being promoted in the more recent campaigns. While the emphasis of the SMC since its inception and throughout the 1980s had been the promotion of Mandarin as a lingua franca among the Chinese, the accent in the 1990s has shifted to the more general benefits of using Mandarin. This shift away from the value of Mandarin as a 'social glue' to unify the heterogeneous, dialect-speaking Chinese community to more pragmatic and utilitarian values that Mandarin can offer is captured in slogans like *Mandarin for Chinese Singaporeans: More than a Language* (1991), *Speak Mandarin. It helps* (1993), *Speak Mandarin, Explore New*

¹ These figures are taken from two sources: The 1990 and 2000 Census of Population Reports (for full references, please see Lau, 1993 and Leow, 2001).

Horizons (1996-7) and *Speak Mandarin, It's an Asset* (1998-9). These slogans, in varying degrees of specificity, hint at the pragmatic value of speaking Mandarin as a key that opens doors to education, culture, business and other opportunities. It is no coincidence that the expansion of business opportunities in China was being widely publicised at around the same time as this re-positioning of the SMC. Since the 1980s, China has started to adopt an open economic policy aimed at attracting foreign investments. This together with the enormous market potential of China's massive population have attracted the attention of entrepreneurs all over the world, including Singapore. The Singapore government recognised the huge economic potential in the Chinese market and, as early as 1985, started pointing to the economic value of learning Mandarin:

The Chinese [in Singapore] learn and speak Mandarin not only because it is the common spoken language of the Chinese community, representing our roots, but also because the economic value of Mandarin is increasing, particularly after China has started its economic transformation and adopted the open-door policy.

(excerpt of speech by Ong Teng Cheong, then Second Deputy Prime Minister of Singapore, at the opening of the 1985 SMC).

More recently, this same message was repeated and reinforced by the Prime Minister himself, Goh Chok Tong, at the launch of the 1993 SMC, when he observed that the:

economic value of knowing Mandarin has increased with China's opening up of her economy.... Hundreds of village enterprises are eager to upgrade themselves. They are looking for foreign partners, to gain additional capital and technical know-how.... The ability to speak Mandarin with Chinese businessmen and officials is a tremendous advantage.

A call was thus issued by the Singapore government for local businessmen and entrepreneurs to 'spread its second wing' to the hitherto untapped regional markets in Vietnam and, especially, China. The slogan, *Speak Mandarin, Explore New Horizons* (1996-7), can thus be read as pointing to the expanding business opportunities in the huge Chinese hinterland nearby and appealing to the entrepreneurial spirit of businessmen to master Mandarin as a means to penetrate the Mandarin-speaking market. The underlying message of these more recent developments of the SMC seems then to underscore the economic as well as the cultural and social benefits that accrue from speaking Mandarin. As the chairman of the 1994 SMC organising committee, Ho Kwon Ping, said in an interview with *The Straits Times*: 'Overall, we wanted to say that people should not be put on a guilt-trip if they didn't know Mandarin, although they should recognise that if they did, more doors would be open to them' (*The Straits Times Weekly*, 28 October, 1995). Such a guarded response betrays an awareness that the intensity and relentlessness with which the SMC has been organised for the past two decades or so may have caused some consternation among the non-Chinese ethnic minorities. In response to the question of the possibility of the Campaign bristling ethnic sensibilities, Ho has this to say:

If there is irritation on the part of the minorities, it is probably because come every September, the Speak Mandarin Campaign month, they are all made aware of their non-Chineseness. There may still be some irritation, but I truly do not believe the campaign is a Trojan horse used to sinicise all Singaporeans and to sinicise and assimilate the minorities.

(*The Straits Times Weekly*, 28 October, 1995)

Trojan horse or not, the SMC would certainly cause more than an 'irritation' to the non-Chinese ethnic minorities, especially when the ability to speak Mandarin is increasingly

associated with social and economic rewards like those implied by the more recent Campaign slogans. With the active promotion of trading ties between Singapore and China and the push for overseas trading ventures, businessmen and entrepreneurs are beginning to see the value of speaking Mandarin in terms of dollars and cents more than the ‘social glue’ or ‘cultural ballast’ that it was originally supposed to provide. Inevitably, then, the non-Chinese would feel disadvantaged and marginalised and, over the long-term, might even have the effect of tearing at the multi-ethnic and multi-cultural fabric that is an integral part of Singapore’s heritage.

It is not only the non-Chinese minority who have been sidelined in the SMC, even among the Chinese majority the Campaign has also stirred up some ill-will. When the Campaign was first introduced, it created a tension between Mandarin as the officially sanctioned means of cultural transmission and the dialects with which most Chinese had emotional affiliations. This is simply because the true mother-tongue for the majority of Chinese was and, albeit to a lesser extent, still is dialects, not Mandarin. In fact, although the use of dialects among Chinese households has been shown by statistics to be steadily declining, dialects are still widely used among the older generation of Chinese. According to the 2000 Population Census Advance Data Release, Chinese dialects are still the most frequently spoken language for nearly 72% of Chinese aged 55 and over in 2000, with the figure in 1990 being even higher at nearly 88%². One repercussion of this is manifest in a ‘generation gap’ split along linguistic lines. This is a situation where the older generation who is much more conversant in dialects than either Mandarin or English cannot communicate with the younger generation who find it hard to understand let alone communicate in dialects. In their study of language shift in a Singapore family,

² Singapore Census of Population, 2000, Advance Data Release No.3 – Literacy and Language, p. 6 at < <http://www.singstat.gov.sg/papers/c2000/adr-literacy.pdf>>

Gupta and Siew (1995) noted precisely this phenomenon in which exclusively dialect-speaking grandparents face difficulties communicating with their grandchildren, who vary widely in their dialect proficiency depending on age and upbringing. This once again calls into question the promotion of Mandarin as an instrument to facilitate the transmission of traditional and cultural values. If the government's push for Mandarin through the SMC results in a widening of the communication gap across generations, between grandparents and grandchildren for instance, then how can any transmission of culture or values take place, especially when much of this transmission typically takes the form of an oral transfer of values from one generation to the next? Thus, the aim of promoting Mandarin in order to strengthen traditional Chinese values is at best miscalculated and at worst questionable to begin with. This is because the traditional values that most Chinese in Singapore are familiar with are still very much encoded in the customs and practices that are dialect-based. As a writer for the local newspaper wrote:

At the end of the day, it is still one's affiliation with the dialect group that will give a sense of what one is. There are birth rites, wedding and funeral customs and the arts which are peculiar to certain dialect groups only and which best find expression in the dialect. Lose the dialect, and you lose the very access to that bit of your roots.

(The Straits Times Weekly, 9 September, 1995)

Thus, it would appear that it is the dialects rather than Mandarin per se that hold the key to traditional Chinese values. It follows then that instead of strengthening the people's cultural ties and sense of ethnic identity, the government's efforts to promote the use of Mandarin may in fact backfire.

A recent survey by Chang Han Yin, a sociology lecturer at the National University of Singapore, found young Chinese Singaporeans scoring the lowest in terms of ethnic pride compared to the Malays and Indians. It found that only 78% of Chinese would keep their ethnicity as compared to 92% for the Malays and 82% for the Indians. What is perhaps even more alarming is that the survey also found that a significant 12% of Chinese would rather be a Caucasian³. Looking at these preliminary survey findings which only point at a trend but do not probe into the cause or motivation behind it, a causal relationship between the SMC and this apparent weakening of ethnic pride among young Chinese Singaporeans is difficult to establish. What is possibly more evident from these findings is that the SMC has *not* succeeded in using Mandarin as a cultural ballast against the ‘onslaught’ of western values, since a significant 12% of Chinese Singaporeans would rather be a Caucasian. If anything at all, it appears that young Chinese Singaporeans have become more enamoured with ‘western’ or, more specifically, Caucasian values and ideals than before. Hence, the government’s belief that knowledge of one’s ‘mother tongue’ (assumed, in this case, to be Mandarin for Chinese Singaporeans) is an important part of a person’s sense of identity and self confidence, in that ‘someone who knows that he [sic] belongs to a rich and ancient culture will not easily be seduced by plausible but unsound ideas derived from superficial understanding of another culture’ (excerpt of speech by the Deputy Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong at the 1994 SMC launch) appears to be a misplaced one. As pointed out by educator, S. Gopinathan, the identification of English with the values of a technological, modernising culture and of the various mother tongues (i.e. Mandarin, Malay and Tamil) with more enduring moral and social values which are seen as uniquely eastern is simplistic; this neat compartmentalisation of the western versus eastern values as seen to

³ These preliminary survey findings were reported in *The Straits Times*, 14 and 15 December 1999.

be transmitted through those languages does not quite square with reality for cultural identification and practice are much more complex than suggested by a listing of supposedly characteristic values. 'Such cultural formulae' he contends, 'ignore the obvious fact that truly human values exist in every major culture. Further, talk about the superficialities of western culture seems to have blinded us to the quite evident triviality and pseudo-moralising of much of what passes for Asian culture [as such], one needs to talk about cultural values with a great deal more caution' (Gopinathan, 1979: 292-293).

CONCLUSION

From this critical appraisal of the SMC, it is clear that its success, so often touted by the Singapore government, is a tainted one, owing to the ramifications it has produced both politically in terms of fanning minority discontent and culturally in terms of language (or dialect) and possibly even culture loss. While a national campaign like this may engineer a superficial shift in the language used by a certain sector of the population, it must be implemented with adequate sensitivity so that fundamental and deep-seated national and cultural values are not undermined. The 'Mandarinising of Singapore' will doubtless continue with the government's unrelenting promotion of Mandarin, and there will come a time when the dialects and the culture they embody will be irretrievably lost. The 'generation gap' problem will eventually pass when the present generation of 'bilingual' students grow into adulthood and become parents and grandparents themselves. They will then no longer face the awkward communication rift that their parents and grandparents had encountered. But neither would they have known the rich

ethnic and cultural heritage that was part of their forefathers' culture. And neither would they be as proud to be a Chinese.

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