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The Impact of Singapore's Language Policies on Singaporean Chinese Youth's Language Attitudes Toward Mandarin Chinese

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Tiivistelmä

Tässä kandidaatintutkielmassa tarkastelen Singaporen kielipolitiikan vaikutuksia singaporenkiinalaisten mandariinikiinaan kohdistuviin kieliasenteisiin. Käsittelen kirjallisuutta Singaporen kielipolitiikan ideologisista taustoista ja siitä, miten ne heijastuvat singaporenkiinalaisten asenteisiin. Tämän lisäksi käsittelen mandariinikiinaan kohdistuvia asenteita ja pohdin muiden Singaporessa puhuttavien kiinan kielen variaatioiden merkitystä kieliasenteiden muodostumisessa.

Tutkimus mandariinikiinaan kohdistuvista kieliasenteista Singaporessa on vielä vähäistä, joten tämä tutkielma kokoaa yhteen olemassa olevaa tutkimusta aiheesta ja tuo uuden näkökulman kielipoliitikan ja kieliasenteiden yhteyteen. Tutkittu kirjallisuus painottaa Singaporen kielipolitiikan pragmaattisuutta, jonka mukaisesti kieliä priorisoidaan niiden käytännöllisten hyötyjen perusteella. Tämä pragmaattisuus näkyy myös singaporenkiinalaisten kieliasenteissa, sillä tutkimuksien tulosten mukaan singaporenkiinalaiset kokevat mandariinikiinan hyödylliseksi ja tarpeelliseksi ja suosivat sitä suhteessa muihin Singaporessa puhuttaviin kiinan variaatioihin. Tutkimukset osoittavat kuitenkin, että osallistujat eivät yleisesti liitä mandariinikiinaan suurta kulttuurista arvoa vaan arvostavat sitä nimenomaan siihen miellettyjen ekonomisten mahdollisuuksien vuoksi. Niissä pohditaan englannin ja muiden kiinan kielten variaatioiden merkitystä kieliasenteiden muotoutumisessa ja niiden merkitystä singaporenkiinalaisen yhteisön identiteetin kehittymisessä.

Jatkossa tarvitaan laajempaa tutkimusta mandariinikiinaan kohdistuvista kieliasenteista, ja tutkittavien otantaa tulisi monipuolistaa saadakseen luotettavampien tulosten saavuttamiseksi. Lisäksi tutkimusta voisi syventää Singaporessa puhuttaviin kiinan variaatioihin ja niiden suhteesta mandariinikiinaan.

Key words: language attitudes, language policies, Singapore, Chinese linguistics.

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1   Introduction

When examining language policies, it is important to recognize the intentions and goals that drive policymaking and consider the beliefs that influence these policies. In stratified societies, perceptions play a critical role, as power and status can translate social differences into social deficiency (Edwards, 1999). Language policies, therefore, have the potential to shape people's language attitudes.

The language policy of Singapore is of particular interest as it reflects the country's multiracial and plurilingual society. The population of Singapore comprises 74.0% Chinese, 13.5% Malay, 9.0% Indian, and 3.4% other ethnicities (Singapore Department of Statistics, 2023). Singapore has four official languages: Malay, Mandarin, Tamil, and English, each holding de jure equal status. Malay is chosen as the national language, while English serves as the state's lingua franca, the working language, and a significant medium of instruction (Shang & Zhao, 2016). Additionally, Malay, Tamil and Mandarin Chinese are chosen as Mother Tongue Languages (MTLs) of the three major ethnic groups in Singapore, with various other languages spoken within the ethnic communities of Singapore (Shang & Zhao, 2016).

Scholars have explored the ideological underpinnings of the language policy of Singapore, connecting it to lie within the need to create a clear and unified nation (Wee, 2003; Bolton & Ng, 2014). A clear example of such efforts is the Speak Mandarin Campaign, which specifically targeted the Chinese community, recommending that they give up their dialects and replace them with Mandarin in order to unify the community (Wee, 1999). Hence, the following question arises: Have the government's language policies influenced the language attitudes of the Singaporean Chinese community towards Mandarin Chinese? This literature review seeks to address this question, focusing specifically on the perspective of Singaporean Chinese youth, who are likely to shape the future trajectory of the language policies of the country.

While the language policy of Singapore has been a relatively researched subject, there is a notable gap in the literature concerning the language attitudes of citizens, particularly regarding the influence of language policies. In this thesis, I aim to address this gap by examining the language attitudes toward Mandarin Chinese within the Singaporean context, providing a foundation for future research on the development of language attitudes among the Singaporean Chinese youth. I will examine the literature regarding language attitudes in Singapore, discuss their connection to existing language ideologies, and what it reveals about the attitudes of the Singaporean youth. I will

highlight the potentially growing interest of the Singaporean youth toward Chinese dialects, indicating a shift in attitudes. By analysing the relationship between the Singaporean language policies and connecting them to the language attitudes of the Singaporean Chinese youth, I intend to deepen the understanding of existing research.

The study of language attitudes is crucial for analysing language use in social contexts. Strategic language use is a type of social behavior that heavily bases itself on stereotypical language attitudes — language attitudes also might play a role in social situations such as courtroom proceedings, school teaching, doctor-patient communication, and job interviews (Soukoup, 2012). Understanding the dynamics of language attitudes in a specific linguistic context offers insights into the different socio-political contexts within diverse groups. Investigating the language attitudes of the Singaporean Chinese youth enriches sociolinguistic studies by providing insight into how young Singaporean Chinese individuals perceive their linguistic identity within Singapore's multicultural context. In a rapidly globalizing and modernizing society, research on language attitudes offers perspectives on how cultural and linguistic values are negotiated and adapted. Furthermore, language attitudes reveal the extent to which Singaporean Chinese youth are connected to their cultural heritage and traditions, as well as their commitment to maintaining linguistic and cultural practices across generations.

Researching the language attitudes of the Singaporean youth toward Mandarin Chinese allows us to gain perspective on the language shift within the Singaporean Chinese community and the broader sociolinguistic phenomena. By understanding the attitudes of the speakers, we can promote linguistic diversity, address prejudices toward different language varieties, and understand the ideologies that shape future language policies. The findings of this research have practical applications for policymakers, community leaders, language educators, as well as linguistic communities, helping them develop more informed language planning strategies.

Throughout the thesis, I intend to explore the central question of this literature review: What influence do Singaporean language policies have on the language attitudes of Singaporean Chinese youth toward Mandarin Chinese? The scope of my thesis is limited to the Singaporean Chinese ethnic group within Singapore. It will not explore other variations of the Chinese language or consider the attitudes of other ethnic groups or the broader Chinese diaspora in Singapore. Within the field of Chinese linguistics, my thesis will contribute specifically to the sociolinguistic research

on language attitudes toward Mandarin Chinese, focusing on the standard in Singapore rather than other regions.

This thesis begins with a historical overview of the formation of Singapore's language policies, followed by some theoretical context to the studies of language attitudes and language ideologies in sociolinguistics. The linguistic context of Singapore will be explained, mapping out the linguistic landscape of Singapore and the multilingualism of the Singaporean Chinese community. This will serve as a foundation for my thesis as I will then explore existing research on the language attitudes of the Singaporean Chinese youth and the language policies' effect on the attitudes. The literature review will also highlight scholarly analyses of the ideological motivations in policymaking, as well as discuss the role of Chinese dialects in the discourse. Following this exploration, I will critically evaluate the findings and point out gaps in the research. Finally, I will conclude by summarizing key insights and proposing future directions for this area of research.

Through this literature review, we will gain insights into the perceptions of Mandarin Chinese in Singapore, starting with its role in the country, progressing through studies on language attitudes, and critically analysing their contributions. My review will conclude with insights that pave the way for future research in this area.

2   Background and context

In this section, I will provide background and context to my thesis by first explaining crucial historical developments in Singapore's language policies and their effect on the language shift in Singapore. This is followed by an explanation of the research fields of language attitudes and language ideologies in sociolinguistics. Next, I will present the linguistic landscape of Singapore to gain a better understanding of the multilingual background of the Singaporean Chinese community.

2.1   The history and the standardization of the Singaporean language policy

Historically, Singapore has been a center of cultural and linguistic diversity. Bolton and Ng (2014) note that in pre-colonial times, the island of *Singapura* (meaning "Lion City" in Malay) served as a port and a meeting place for Arabs, Chinese, Malays, and traders from the Indonesian islands and elsewhere in Southeast Asia. This historical context suggests that Singapore had a long tradition of multilingual contact before the British colonial period. Singapore was a British colony up to 1955, during which English was the language of government, administration, and the state (Tan, 2005), though only a minority of the population spoke English at the time, with Hokkien and Malay being the most widely spoken languages in the small island state in the 1950s and 1960s.

During this period, it was not common for the Singaporean Chinese community to widely speak Mandarin. The majority of Chinese immigrants to Singapore originated from southern China, where various other Chinese languages were more commonly spoken. The predominant languages among the Chinese community included Hokkien, Teochew, Cantonese, Hainanese, and others. The Malay and Indian communities, while more linguistically homogenous, also had their ethnic languages within their respective groups (Bolton & Ng, 2014).

Malay was adopted as Singapore's national language in 1959, during the period of self-government, and later, it was merged with Malaysia in 1963. It remained the national language even after Singapore gained sovereignty in 1965, though English was chosen as the common working language (Tan, 2005). Since its separation from Malaysia, Singapore's language policies have continued to play a crucial role in the nation-building efforts led by the People's Action Party (PAP), which has held political power in Singapore from the 1960s to the present. The language policies of the PAP, primarily reflecting the vision of post-colonial leader Lee Kuan Yew, have been instrumental in shaping the language policies of the nation.

2.1.1 Bilingual policy

The linguistic and cultural diversity of Singapore presented unique problems to its leaders. Bokhorst-Heng (1999) argues that the PAP adopted multiracialism as a defining factor of the Singaporean nation to separate itself from neighboring countries. Multiracialism has indeed affected the education policy of the nation, in which bilingualism was introduced as a way to unify the nation and nationalize the education system. In the Singaporean context, bilingualism refers to proficiency in English as the first language and a second language known as the "Mother Tongue Language," defined by the student's ethnicity — Mandarin for Chinese students, Malay for Malay students, and Tamil for Indian students. In this way, the bilingual policy has assigned specific roles to English as the language with economic value and MTLs as transmitters of cultural heritage (Wee, 2003; Tan, 2005).

In 1978, a committee led by then Defence Minister Dr. Goh Keng Swee evaluated the bilingual education policy. The committee reported that the policy was a failure, with less than 40 percent of students having reached the minimum competency level in two languages. The committee concluded that the primary reason for this was the use of dialects at home, which interrupted students' learning of the official languages. In response, the government restructured the education system, stratifying it according to students' language abilities. Weaker students received monolingual education, while the most proficient students received intensive bilingual training (Bokhorst-Heng 1999).

The bilingual policy has indeed affected family language practices. Curdt-Christiansen (2016) highlights the conflicting language ideologies held by parents and the hierarchical reality of languages in Singapore. Her study revealed that most parents wish their children to speak their mother tongue, having internalized its assigned purpose as a cultural transmitter. Nevertheless, families tend to prioritize their children's learning of English over their mother tongues for better opportunities in society. This strong bias toward English inside Singaporean families implies that despite promoting bilingualism, the language situation in Singapore shows a tendency toward a more linguistically homogenous society where English is predominantly used (Curdt-Christiansen, 2016).

2.1.2 The Speak Mandarin Campaign

A pivotal element of Singapore's language policy is the Speak Mandarin Campaign, an ongoing national campaign established in 1979 to promote the use of Mandarin among Singapore's Chinese

community. Bokhorst-Heng (1999) defines the campaign as having three key official arguments as its basis: (1) to restrict the use of dialects at home to lessen the burden of children having to learn two languages at school, (2) to re-ethnicize Chinese Singaporeans through Mandarin, (3) to have a lingua franca other than English for the Chinese Singaporeans.

The Speak Mandarin Campaign has been attempting to change the language behavior of Chinese Singaporeans and achieve its goal of unifying the community for nation-building purposes and has been successful in shifting the language attitudes particularly regarding Chinese dialects. The campaign has long encouraged Singaporean Chinese to abandon dialects in order for students to learn Mandarin (Bokhorst-Heng, 1999). Various studies show that there has indeed been a shift inside families in language attitudes, and dialects are valued less than before. For example, Curdt-Christiansen (2016) found in her research conflicting ideas regarding children learning dialects. While some family members sensed feelings of regret in the language loss of the dialect, the participating families agreed that it was most important to learn English and Mandarin. This results in families making decisions based on what is the most convenient for the child to learn (Curdt-Christiansen, 2016). Therefore, it is clear that The Speak Mandarin Campaign has played a role in shaping language attitudes and practices inside families.

2.1.3 The effects of the policies

As a result of the language policy and planning efforts, as well as the influence of the Speak Mandarin Campaign, a notable language shift has happened in Singapore's Chinese community since independence. Initially, the community was linguistically heterogeneous, with various Chinese languages spoken. However, research shows a shift toward Mandarin and English, showing the effectiveness of the Speak Mandarin Campaign and educational language planning in changing the status of Mandarin Chinese to an MTL in modern Singapore (e.g., Bolton & Ng, 2014; Wong & Tan, 2017; Starr & Hiramoto, 2019). These language shifts reflect changes in language attitudes, highlighting the success of the language policies in promoting Mandarin as the representative language of the Chinese community.

Indeed, the language shift from dialects to Mandarin Chinese has been significant. In the 1960s, only 0.1% of Singaporeans spoke Mandarin Chinese at home. In the 2000s, the language shift has changed this number to 35% (Tan & Ng, 2011). However, some studies have observed a renewed interest within Singapore's Chinese community, particularly among the younger generation, toward the dialects that were lost during the language shift (Tan & Ng, 2010; Starr & Hiramoto, 2019). The

evolving attitudes toward these languages will be discussed in greater detail in the following literature review.

The dominance of English has also had an impact on language attitudes. Leimgruber et al. (2018) discuss the impact on students' language attitudes in higher education caused by the shift in language use and planning in education. Overall, the participants in their study agreed that proficiency in English is more important than proficiency in their mother tongue. However, the preservation of bilingualism and the mother tongue was also seen as necessary. English was prioritized by all participants in the study, but social and ethnic background played a role in which degree languages in the study were valued. Their research gives us insight into how bilingual policy has helped shape the language attitudes of Singaporeans.

2.2   Language attitudes and ideologies in sociolinguistics

This thesis is grounded in sociolinguistic theory. Sociolinguistics, as defined by Spencer (2011), examines how language interacts with human society, especially in relation to factors such as race, ethnicity, class, sex, and social institutions. I will focus specifically on language attitudes and language ideologies, both of which are areas of study within sociolinguistics.

2.2.1   The study of language attitudes

The study of language attitudes has been a significant area within sociolinguistics. At its core, language attitudes study people's reactions toward different language varieties (Soukoup 2012). This area of study is crucial for understanding the social evaluation of language use and individual's reactions to linguistic variation, both of which play a role in constructing the human social life. As Edwards (1999) notes, social perceptions of speech serve as "particular sorts of windows through which we can view social structures" (p. 102). In other words, language attitudes are reflective of the underlying social environment and its structures.

Research methods in the study of language attitudes are classified as either direct or indirect. Direct methods include questionnaires and interviews, in which participants are directly asked their opinions on the languages or language varieties involved in the study. Indirect methods seek to reveal these opinions by measuring participants' reactions to different languages or varieties, often using the matched guise and verbal guise methods (Cavallaro et al. 2017).

The matched guise method involves participants listening to speech samples that differ based on some variation in language use. Afterward, they will evaluate the speakers of the samples based on

different qualities (Soukoup 2012). The qualities are usually placed in categories, which are usually divided by the social status and solidarity of the speaker. In the matched guise method, the speech samples are typically produced by the same speaker, which ensures that the judgments are explicitly based on linguistic variation rather than differences between the speakers. The verbal guise method uses different speakers for each sample and is used when the study involves a large range of languages or language varieties. This approach is useful when it is difficult to find individuals who are equally proficient in all the languages or varieties being studied (Cavallaro et al. 2017). All of these research methods can be observed within the studies I have analysed in this literature review.

2.2.2 Language ideologies

Another key concept discussed in this literature review is that of language ideologies. Language ideologies can be described as 'shared bodies of commonsense notions about the nature of language' (Rumsey, 1990). Blommaert (2005) defines them as the beliefs and conceptions of language users regarding languages and language use, guiding their communicative behavior. Tan (2012) notes that languages can be linked to values or structures within a social environment, also mentioning that for their pursued political purposes, political authorities and social movements are dependent on certain language ideologies. In the context of Singapore's language policy, there are certain conceptions about what the language of Singapore's Chinese community should be that can't be ignored. These ideologies are connected with the language attitudes of the speakers, shaping their linguistic practices and preferences.

2.3   Linguistic context of the Singaporean Chinese community

This literature review examines the linguistic context within the Singaporean Chinese community, focusing particularly on the roles of Mandarin Chinese and Singapore Mandarin among the youth. By exploring Singapore's cultural dynamics, we can gain a deeper understanding of the factors influencing the language attitudes of Singaporean Chinese youth.

2.3.1   The role of Mandarin Chinese, Singapore Mandarin, and "dialects" in Singapore

In Singapore, Mandarin is called *huayu* or *huawen*, distinct from what it is called in other regions, where it is known as *putonghua* in mainland China and *guoyu* in Taiwan. Due to linguistic shifts, Singapore has also developed its own Mandarin Chinese variation, often called Singapore Mandarin. For clarity in this literature review, "Mandarin Chinese" will refer to the general

understanding of the language, primarily based on *putonghua* as used in mainland China. The term Singapore Mandarin will be used when discussing the local spoken variety.

The other Chinese languages are also important to consider in the Singaporean context since they have historical significance. Since these languages are most commonly referred to as "dialects" within the Singaporean discourse, I will use the same term to refer to them in this literature review.

The role of Mandarin Chinese is complex in the Singaporean context. Since the 1970s, *putonghua* norms have generally been adopted in language planning, mainly in terms of pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, as well as simplified characters (Shang & Zhao, 2014). The norms based on *putonghua* have also been emphasized by political leaders and the Speak Mandarin Campaign (e.g., Bokhorst-Heng, 1999; Wong & Tan, 2017). However, Singapore Mandarin has some differences not only grammatically, but its vocabulary is also significantly different from standard Mandarin. Code-switching and mixing are also considered to be a unique variety to Singapore Mandarin, in which they not only code-switch between English and Mandarin but also with the other Chinese languages such as Hokkien, Teochew, and Hakka, as well as the official language Malay (Lin & Khoo, 2018). There seems to be a conflict between the state and the individuals in terms of what exactly the variety of Mandarin Chinese is that constructs the Singaporean Chinese identity.

2.3.2   The linguistic landscape of modern Singapore

Singapore's linguistic landscape is unique due to its plurilingualism. However, it is unlikely that all four official languages receive equal treatment within the country's social environment. A language shift toward English has been observed across all ethnic groups in Singapore (Curdt-Christiansen, 2016). Tang (2020) further highlights the dominance of English in comparison to MTLs within Singapore's linguistic landscape. In their study of linguistic landscaping of Singapore through street signs, English appeared in 96%, with 63% being monolingual English. Monolingual signs in Chinese accounted for only 4% of the total (Tang, 2020). It was also found in this research that English was preferred over the other three official languages, which was shown through it being always presented as the first language on the signs, as well as differing in size, font, and other actors. This indicates that English is chosen to be the official message to be translated into the other official languages (Tang, 2020).

An important aspect of Singapore's linguistic context is the prevalence of code-switching, which is a natural outcome of the country's multilingual environment. Code-switching, particularly between English and Singapore Mandarin, is prevalent because English is the medium of instruction in

education and the primary working language. Lee (2019) researched code-switching in Singapore Mandarin and observed frequent code-switching between English and Mandarin in discussions involving education, place names, Western food items, and students' social lives. Moreover, the study found that Hokkien and Malay were more commonly used when expressing emotions, and code-switching increased when speaking with grandparents (Lee, 2019). While the frequent use of English reflects the preference for English due to its perceived utility, the use of dialects in more personal contexts may indicate a deeper cultural attachment to these languages, reflecting the complexity of language attitudes in Singapore's multilingual society.

There are also other social influences that may have shaped the language attitudes of the locals. Lim et al. (2020) discuss the growing tensions between local Singaporeans and the increasing number of immigrants from mainland China. Although not yet proven by research, there are indications that this tension may have influenced language attitudes. Additionally, the growing interest in dialects within the Chinese community may also affect attitudes toward the standard variety of Mandarin. Furthermore, Tan (2005) notes that the bilingual education policy offers better socioeconomic opportunities for students proficient in both English and Mandarin Chinese. These social factors will be analysed in greater detail in the literature review.

3   Literature review

When it comes to research on Singapore's language policies, researchers have typically discussed and critiqued their ideological underpinnings (Bokhorst-Heng 1999; Wee 2003; Tan & Ng 2011, and others). Early studies on language attitudes in Singapore primarily focused on the attitudes toward English and its local variant, often referred to as 'Singlish' (Cavallaro & Ng, 2009).

This section aims to present an overview of the research on the language attitudes of Singaporean youth toward Mandarin Chinese. It will begin by analysing the language ideologies shaping the attitudes of the individuals. Then, I will present the current study regarding language attitudes toward Mandarin Chinese. For a more in-depth analysis, the section also covers the development of attitudes in relation to the dialects within the youth in Singapore.

3.1   The language ideologies shaping the language attitudes

The influence of language ideologies should be considered when discussing the language attitudes of the people. Although the link between language ideologies and language attitudes has yet to be directly addressed in the Singaporean context, I will argue in this paper that the literature reviewed in the following shows a considerable connection between them.

3.1.1   Establishing the role of Mandarin as the language of the people

Wendy Bokhorst-Heng's (1999) paper on Singapore's Speak Mandarin Campaign is a significant contribution to the study of Singapore's language policies, offering crucial insights into the ideological foundations behind these policies.

Bokhorst-Heng argues that Singapore's language policies emphasize homogeneity rather than heterogeneity despite the country's narrative of a multi-ethnic, multilingual society. The Speak Mandarin Campaign played a crucial role in homogenizing the Chinese community by promoting Mandarin Chinese while positioning it against dialects, encouraging the Singaporean Chinese community to give up these languages for the nation's good. English, in contrast, is portrayed as neutral and culture-less, while the MTL's main purpose is to culturally 're-ethnicize' the divided and heterogeneous Chinese community.

A notable aspect of Bokhorst-Heng's work is her discussion of public resistance to language policy. In 1980, the government announced that students would register with Hanyu Pinyin names in schools rather than the dialect names given at birth. Parents were also urged to begin giving their

children Mandarin names at birth. The response to this announcement was polarized, but ultimately, the biggest resistance was seen in the fact that, within a decade, Singaporeans still refused to give their children full pinyin names. This led to the policy being reversed in 1991, reallowing the registration of students in dialect names. This resistance suggests that while Singaporeans generally comply with government language policies, eradicating dialects is a particularly sensitive issue, indicating that the language attitudes of the individuals favor these languages in a deep cultural sense.

3.1.2 Linguistic instrumentalism of the language policy of Singapore

Scholars have often characterized Singapore's language policies as pragmatic and instrumental in nature. In this context, pragmatism refers to the perception of language based on its assumed utility, practicality, and economic value. Scholars have used different but related terms to describe these pragmatic underpinnings behind the language policies, such as 'pragmatic multilingualism' (Saravanan, 1995), 'linguistic instrumentalism' (Wee, 2003), and 'linguistic pragmatism' (Tan & Ng, 2011). Moving forward in this review, I have chosen to focus on Lionel Wee's definition of linguistic instrumentalism, as it is a widely cited work within the research on Singapore's language policies.

In his work, Lionel Wee (2003) introduces linguistic instrumentalism as a view of language that justifies its existence and value through its usefulness in achieving specific utilitarian goals, such as economic development or social mobility. Wee argues that this linguistic instrumentalism is evident not only in the emphasis placed on the pragmatic value of English but also in the evolving view of the MTLs. Initially, MTLs were promoted as cultural transmitters, as discussed earlier in Bokhorst-Heng's (1999) work, but later, they started to be increasingly promoted in their economic potential. This shift is especially noticeable in the case of Mandarin Chinese and its perceived economic opportunities with Mainland China. Thus, Mandarin Chinese was now promoted for both its instrumental value and cultural significance.

Wee further argues that this linguistic instrumentalism has had effects on the Singaporean Chinese community. Historically, the cultural significance of Mandarin Chinese alone has not been effective in motivating its use outside the classroom. However, by promoting its utilitarian (i.e. economic) value, there has been an increased interest within the community to learn and use the language. Wee claims that without pragmatic motivations, the survival of Mandarin Chinese within the Singaporean Chinese community may be at risk. His analysis supports then the notion that language

policies have effectively shaped language attitudes, making Mandarin Chinese pragmatically valuable for the individual.

Linguistic instrumentalism also influences dialects, as shown in Curdt-Christiansen's (2016) study on family language practices among three multilingual families in Singapore. In the case of a Singaporean Chinese family of Hokkien ethnicity, the family prioritized English and Mandarin Chinese as their child's language learning despite Hokkien being the child's mother tongue. Curdt-Christiansen identified a clear hierarchy between English, Mandarin, and Hokkien within the family, linking it to the underlying language ideologies that influence such choices. Her findings extend Wee's earlier work by examining how these language ideologies manifest in family language practices.

These findings suggest that linguistic instrumentalism shapes language attitudes by making speakers less likely to preserve a language if they perceive it to lack pragmatic value. Wee's (2003) influential research demonstrates that Singaporeans tend to favor languages with practical utility, such as English, followed by Mandarin due to its economic relevance and opportunities in mainland China.

3.1.3 Language ideology as a driving force for negative language attitudes?

Sylvia Ang's (2017) analysis of "Chinese-ness" through online debates between Chinese migrants and Singaporean Chinese provides insight into the linguistic tensions within Singapore. Ang argues that when criticized for their perceived low proficiency in Mandarin, Singaporean Chinese defend their identity by decoupling Mandarin proficiency from "Chinese-ness." They also utilize English and dialects to broaden the concept of "Chinese-ness," often using these defenses to describe themselves as a "better kind of Chinese," different from the mainland Chinese migrants. Ang suggests that language, in this way, is worsening the division of the heterogeneous Singaporean Chinese community (Ang, 2017). This study indicates the notion that Mandarin Chinese is viewed as less favorable than English and Singapore Mandarin in the Singaporean Chinese community.

Furthermore, Lim, Chen, and Hiramoto (2021) examined the linguistic-ideological shifts in Singapore, particularly regarding Mandarin and other linguistic varieties. Their study focuses on two viral videos where Chinese Singaporeans confront non-local Chinese migrant workers, using language to justify acts of racism and xenophobia. The authors argue that while Mandarin Chinese was portrayed negatively, English was simultaneously used to exclude non-local Chinese

individuals, highlighting the complex role of language in the construction of Singaporean Chinese identity.

Lim et al. (2021) also discuss the broader language shift in Singapore, noting that government policies have elevated Mandarin as an "artificial icon" of Singaporean Chinese identity. Simultaneously, a language shift can be seen in Singaporean households toward English. This complicates the Singaporean Chinese identity and is further complicated due to the increased awareness of the sociopolitical history of their ethnolinguistic heritage and the growing tensions toward immigration from mainland China. The researchers argue language has become a racialized tool to discriminate among groups that are otherwise hard to differentiate based on physical traits such as skin color (Lim et al. 2021).

These two studies bring a new perspective to the discussion of language ideologies behind language policies. Previous literature has mainly discussed the ideology as pragmatic and favoring Mandarin Chinese through its economic benefits. However, both studies by Ang (2017) and Lim et al. (2021) indicate that negative attitudes connected to Mandarin Chinese may exist. These attitudes seem connected with the multilingual identity of the Singaporean Chinese community and are utilised when discussing the growing tensions toward immigrants from Mainland China.

3.2   Research of language attitudes toward Mandarin Chinese

Research on attitudes toward Mandarin Chinese in Singapore has remained limited — interest in this area began to emerge in the 2000s, with Bokhorst-Heng and Caleon's (2009) study on the language attitudes of bilingual youth in Singapore toward their MTL and English. They found that Singaporean Chinese respondents generally favored their MTL over English in terms of both status and solidarity. Socio-economic factors also influenced the attitudes, showcasing that bilingualism in MTL and English was slightly more favored in lower socioeconomic homes. They also noticed that codeswitching was more frequent in lower socioeconomic homes in comparison to the more English-dominant, monolingual higher-class homes (Bokhorst-Heng & Caleon, 2009). The results of this study offer us initial evidence that the language attitude of the youth reflects the pragmatic language policies of the government.

Chong and Tan (2013) explored the Singaporean Chinese' attitudes toward different Mandarin accents, comparing the accents of Beijing, Taiwan and Singapore. They found no significant differences in the attitudes of the respondents, although the Beijing Mandarin accent was ranked higher than the Singapore accent. Their study showed that Beijing Mandarin was attributed more

prestige and competence traits than the other accents, making it the most likable of the three. In terms of solidarity traits, no significant differences were observed between Beijing Mandarin and Singapore Mandarin in friendliness and sincerity; however, Beijing Mandarin was surprisingly rated higher in trustworthiness than Singapore Mandarin. The study found no significant differences in perceptions of wealthiness or humour, indicating that participants did not associate these traits with the speaker's accent.

The research shows that the government policies have influenced the respondents, as although the Beijing Mandarin accent is foreign to the respondents, they tend to view it as a "symbol of prestige" (p. 134). Researchers proposed that Singaporeans hold a dual mentality toward the Singaporean Mandarin accent, likely influenced by their English-dominant bilingual background. While the Singaporean Mandarin accent is recognized and understood, Singaporeans seem to remain emotionally detached from it. As English continues to be dominant in everyday communication in Singapore, the role of Mandarin diminishes, being reserved for more formal settings where the "standard" variety is preferred.

Expanding on Chong and Tan's work, Wong and Tan (2017) examined the motivations behind the "Mandarinization" of Chinese identity in Singapore. They identify three primary reasons: unifying Singapore's ethnically and linguistically diverse Chinese population, challenging the dominant English language to preserve traditional Chinese values, and taking advantage of China's economic growth. To explore these dynamics, Wong and Tan conducted an online questionnaire targeting self-identified ethnically Chinese participants of various age groups. The study used the verbal guise method borrowed from Chong and Tan, using recordings of Beijing, Taiwan, and Singapore Mandarin accents to elicit participants' attitudes. Results indicated that while participants recognized Singaporean Mandarin as the way Singaporean Chinese typically speak, there was a strong preference for the Beijing accent. This preference was also higher among the younger participants.

The study also assessed participants' views on the importance of Mandarin Chinese and other varieties. The results showed that Beijing Mandarin was seen as the most important in terms of communication, followed by its cultural significance, with the least importance placed on the community. When evaluating specific language varieties, including English and other Chinese dialects, Beijing Mandarin was rated highest overall, particularly among younger respondents. However, when considering functions within the community, Beijing Mandarin was considered less important compared to other varieties, affirming the notion that Mandarin Chinese is valued more

for its instrumental utility rather than for its cultural significance. Interestingly, when assessing cultural importance, other Chinese dialects were rated highest, particularly among younger participants, further challenging the idea of Mandarin Chinese serving as a cultural marker for the Singaporean Chinese community.

To further explore attitudes toward Mandarin, Cavallaro et al. (2018) studied university students' attitudes toward the standard and colloquial varieties of Singapore Mandarin alongside Mandarin Chinese. Using a combination of matched-guise and verbal-guise tests, participants evaluated recorded speakers of the varieties based on status and solidarity traits. The matched-guise method was utilized to investigate differences in attitudes between the varieties of Singapore Mandarin. However, due to difficulty finding a convincing speaker for both Singapore Mandarin and Mandarin Chinese, a verbal-guise test was used. The strength of the indirect methods lies in their ability to reduce bias regarding factors that are not related to the language itself. However, these methods' limitations can occur depending on the participants' understanding of the status and solidarity traits being evaluated.

Despite the challenges associated with these indirect methods, Cavallaro et al. (2018) concluded that respondents favored Mandarin Chinese over the other varieties, with the attitudes toward the two local varieties showing variation in attitudes. Thus, the study further confirmed that Mandarin Chinese holds the highest status in comparison to Singapore Mandarin. However, the findings also revealed that all three varieties were rated higher for solidarity traits than for status, which the researchers suggested could indicate that English, rather than Mandarin, is associated with a higher status language in Singapore.

Overall, these studies consistently conclude that Singaporeans do not view Mandarin Chinese in a negative light. Even regarding solidarity traits, the Singaporean Mandarin variety was not significantly valued over Mandarin Chinese. Instead, Mandarin Chinese is viewed in a pragmatic manner, reflecting the government's language policies. Another consistent finding seems to be that despite the multiple attempts of the Singaporean government to add cultural value to Mandarin Chinese, Singaporeans seem not to view the language as a cultural transmitter. This pragmatic view aligns with the government's language policies but is contradictory to the negative attitudes observed in other contexts, such as those documented by Ang (2017) and Lim et al. (2021).

3.3   The Chinese dialects influencing language attitudes

Recent developments suggest that while Mandarin Chinese is still the predominant language alongside English within the Singaporean Chinese community, there is a growing interest among youth to reconnect with dialects traditionally spoken by their families. An article from The Straits Times (2024) points out precisely this, discussing how young Singaporeans are increasingly interested in learning these languages — even calling these languages their "grandmother tongues" (The Straits Times, 2024).

Tan and Ng (2010) interviewed English-Mandarin bilinguals with varying degrees of proficiency in dialects, which they have called "Chinese vernaculars." Their findings show that participants who often communicated with their grandparents in the Chinese vernaculars expressed a stronger attachment to these languages, while other participants expressed a sense of detachment from them. Across all groups, while there seemed to be feelings of sadness over the language shift away from vernaculars, participants didn't show special interest in the preservation of Chinese dialects and generally viewed Mandarin and English as most practical to learn, reflecting the effectiveness of government language policies in shaping the language attitudes of the participants that favor English and Mandarin Chinese over the dialects.

Additionally, Starr and Hiramoto (2019) surveyed the attitudes of Singaporeans from various backgrounds toward language education and race. Their findings affirmed the respondents' pragmatic view of Mandarin Chinese within the Singaporean Chinese community but also showed a rising interest in dialects, especially among those with Cantonese heritage. The study also pointed out the many grassroots initiatives to preserve Sinitic varieties by offering language classes that have started to gain popularity. This difference in the interest in language maintenance in comparison with Tan and Ng's study may indicate that Singaporeans are starting to increasingly be interested in their heritage languages, although even in this study, this interest wasn't particularly strong. It also suggests that while Mandarin remains the most widely spoken language and has been promoted with economic benefits, it doesn't seem to translate into Mandarin Chinese being perceived as a Mother Tongue in comparison to dialects.

In summary, both of these studies indicate a growing interest in dialects as well as feelings of loss over their decline. However, these sentiments don't seem to translate into negative attitudes toward Mandarin Chinese among the Singaporean Chinese youth, and while desire and initiatives for language preservation have grown, they remain in the minority among the group.

4 Critical evaluation and synthesis

The literature on language attitudes in Singapore generally presents consistent conclusions, with only slight variations in results due to differences in methods. However, some gaps and unanswered questions remain within the chosen literature. In this section, I will critically analyse the previously introduced literature and its findings, evaluate the methodologies utilized in them, as well as identify the gaps and trends within them.

The literature on language Singapore's language policies consistently highlights their pragmatic foundation. Bokhorst-Heng (1999) argues that these policies emphasize homogeneity, despite being a multiracial country, by framing languages in terms of their pragmatic value rather than cultural value. Wee (2003) supports this view, noting that the status of MTLs has also shifted from cultural toward more economic importance. Wee further suggests that Mandarin's survival is dependent on its perceived economical value by the Singaporean Chinese community.

While Mandarin Chinese is generally viewed positively among Chinese Singaporeans due to its association with higher status and economic opportunities, some studies, like Ang (2017) and Lim et al. (2021), present contradicting data on this. They observed that languages were sometimes utilized to express xenophobia toward Chinese immigrants, suggesting that language attitudes toward Mandarin Chinese are not uniformly positive. Interestingly, it might be that Mandarin Chinese is weaponized negatively based on the person who is being addressed, although more evidence is needed to support this statement. Across the literature, there is a consensus that Singaporeans have largely adopted the government's pragmatic ideology, which emphasizes the economic benefits of language, reflecting the effectiveness of language policies and The Speak Mandarin Campaign.

The role of English is also mentioned in various studies. Bokhorst-Heng and Caleon's (2009) study noted how especially higher sosioeconomic households were typically monolingual in English. Chong and Tan (2013) as well Cavallaro et al. (2018) pointed out the dominance of English and its chance of taking over the role of Mandarin Chinese as the lingua franca of the community.

The literature also explores the role of Chinese dialects in shaping language attitudes toward Mandarin Chinese. Bokhorst-Heng (1999), in her work, argues that promoting Mandarin Chinese was an effort to homogenize the community by positioning it against Chinese dialects, which she suggests were more closely tied to cultural values. Wong and Tan (2017) support this notion, finding that Chinese dialects were rated highest in cultural value among participants in their study.

Studies by Ang (2017) and Lim et al. (2021) indicate that English and Singapore Mandarin are used to differentiate Singaporean Chinese from Chinese immigrants, suggesting that Mandarin Chinese may not fully represent the cultural identity of Singaporean Chinese. Chong and Tan (2013) argue that Singapore Mandarin, while practical, feels detached from the community. Instead, the community appears to be defining its identity through other languages, such as English, Singapore Mandarin, or Chinese dialects. Despite this, Singapore Mandarin itself doesn't seem to hold deep cultural significance to Singaporeans. Across various studies, Singapore Mandarin tends to be rated lower than Mandarin Chinese in all traits (e.g., Chong & Tan, 2013; Wong & Tan, 2017; Cavallaro et al., 2018).

The role of language seems complex in the construction of the Singaporean Chinese identity. Thus, it remains uncertain whether any single language within Singapore's Chinese community can serve as a definitive cultural transmitter.

Studies of language attitudes typically use either direct or indirect methods, as well as content analysis, and all of them are reflected in the studies reviewed in this literature review. Indirect methods, such as matched guise and verbal guise methods, have been dominantly used by researchers and contributed largely to the field of language attitude research. These methods effectively focus participants' evaluations specifically on language variety, minimizing biases related to speaker characteristics such as gender or age. Bokhorst-Heng and Caleon (2009) employed the matched guise method, while Chong and Tan (2013) and Wong and Tan (2017) used the verbal guise method in their studies. Cavallaro et al. (2018) used a combination of both.

However, these methods are not without critique. Soukoup (2012) brings forward that the matched guise method is often critiqued due to the context-dependent nature of evaluative responses; the attitude elicited from the participant might change in a different setting. Soukoup suggests that to mitigate this issue, researchers should consider employing these methods across varied contexts to provide a deeper understanding of language attitudes. The verbal guise method's limitation lies in its use of different speakers for each language variety, which can inadvertently influence evaluations. Despite this, this method remains necessary because it is challenging to find a single speaker who can convincingly reproduce multiple language varieties. Chong and Tan (2018) addressed this by producing samples spoken by only female speakers aged 20-28, reducing potential biases.

Questionnaires, representing a direct approach to language attitude studies, are also used in the reviewed literature, including Tan and Ng (2010) and Starr and Hiramoto (2019), as well as partly

by Wong and Tan (2017). Questionnaires are effective in obtaining honest responses to specific questions and are relatively easy to conduct for larger samples. These studies generally included more participants than those using indirect methods, providing a broader overview. However, the main limitation of questionnaires is that respondents may not be fully aware of their underlying language attitudes, especially when they are rooted in prejudice. This can affect the reliability of self-reported data, which may not fully represent the implicit language attitudes of the participant.

Content analysis, employed in studies like Bokhorst-Heng (1999), Wee (2003), Ang (2017), and Lim et al. (2021), allows researchers to explore language attitudes in more natural settings, gaining insight into how language attitudes occur in a real-world context. However, the analysis provided by this method always reflects the researchers' own interpretations of socio-cultural and political contexts.

A common limitation across the studies on language attitudes is the small number of participants. For a densely populated country like Singapore, many studies in this review have drawn conclusions from a small number of participants, ranging from as few as 64 (Cavallaro et al., 2018) to the highest number of participants of 443 (Bokhorst-Heng & Caleon, 2009). Given Singapore's population of 5,92 million (Population Trends, 2023), these studies may not be fully representative of the Singaporean Chinese, particularly for a demographic like Singaporean Chinese youth. However, these studies have formed a foundation for future research that future research can continue. With further research, it is also possible to challenge this issue of the limited quota of participants and obtain more data to make conclusions.

While the focus on university students aligned well with my literature review's focus on youth, it may not represent valid generalizations of the findings. University students's views likely reflect the influence of the education system's promotion of Mandarin Chinese and English. Thus, there is a need to explore whether language attitudes differ among youth from diverse backgrounds or educational levels. Some studies, such as Bokhorst-Heng and Caleon (2009), consider socioeconomic factors and reveal differences in language attitudes among diverse groups. These findings suggest that more nuanced insights could be gained if future research included participants from a broader range of socioeconomic and educational backgrounds.

Overall, the studies provide support for the notion that Singapore's language policies have indeed influenced the language attitudes of the Singaporean Chinese youth. It can be firstly explored through studies like Bokhorst-Heng (1999) and Wee (2003), who discuss how language policies are based on pragmatic values. Further studies of language attitudes then show how the Singaporean

Chinese reflect this pragmatism in their own attitudes toward languages (Bokhorst-Heng & Caleon, 2009; Chong & Tan, 2013; Wong & Tan, 2017; Cavallaro et al., 2018). However, studies like Ang (2017) and Lim et al. (2021) provide insight into how these attitudes might not only be affected by policies but also by other sociopolitical contexts relevant to modern Singapore.

The perspectives presented in the reviewed literature are generally consistent. A crucial finding is that Mandarin Chinese is the preferred variety among Singaporean Chinese, whether based on accent or the language itself, over Singapore Mandarin, Chinese dialects, or even Mandarin Chinese spoken in Taiwan (Bokhorst-Heng & Caleon, 2009; Chong & Tan, 2013; Wong & Tan, 2017; Cavallaro et al., 2018). However, when English was included in the study, results differed slightly, as was seen in the study conducted by Cavallaro et al. (2018); they suggested that English may have a higher value in status than Mandarin Chinese. The studies also consistently suggest that Mandarin Chinese is not seen as a culturally significant language to Singaporean Chinese — some studies suggested that dialects or English might be more proper to fulfill this purpose.

A gap in research can be observed in terms of Chinese dialects. Studies like Tan and Ng (2010), as well as Starr and Hiramoto (2019), indicate a potential shift in language attitudes due to a growing interest in the heritage language among Singaporean Chinese. However, further research is needed to explore this shift in depth and to understand how Chinese dialects are perceived in modern Singapore. Researchers could explore the language attitudes of dialect speakers in more depth through direct methods, such as interviews of individuals, as well as conducting research through indirect methods. It would also be fruitful to compare language attitudes toward different dialects and how they differ; for example, how do the language attitudes of someone from a Cantonese dialect group differ from those of other dialect groups? Conducting interviews of dialect speakers' attitudes would give us deeper insight into how Mandarin Chinese, as well as the dialects, are perceived by the individuals.

In this section, I have provided a critical evaluation and synthesis of the literature reviewed on the language policies and attitudes in Singapore. The findings consistently suggest a pragmatic view toward language but also discuss the complexities of the role of language in the identity constructuion of Singaporean Chinese community. Future research is needed in this field of study to obtain broader and more diverse participant samples to capture the constantly evolving landscape of language attitudes more authentically and comprehensively.

5 Conclusion

In this thesis, I have explored the relationship between Singapore's language policies and the language attitudes of the Singaporean Chinese youth toward Mandarin Chinese. The reviewed literature consistently showed that Singapore's language policies are deeply pragmatic, prioritizing languages based on economic value rather than cultural significance. The findings suggest that this pragmatic ideology has influenced the Singaporean Chinese community, with Mandarin Chinese generally favored for its perceived economic opportunities rather than for its cultural significance.

Contrary to the government's objective of positioning Mandarin Chinese as a Mother Tongue Langue to act as a lingua franca and transmit cultural values to the community, the evidence suggests that Chinese dialects, rather than Mandarin Chinese, may be viewed as cultural markers. However, the language shift from dialects to Mandarin Chinese and English shows that the language policies have had an influence on language use and attitudes and highlights the complex role of language within the Singaporean Chinese community.

This thesis sets out to address whether Singapore's language policies have influenced the language attitudes of Singaporean Chinese youth toward Mandarin Chinese. Based on the reviewed literature, it is evident that language policies have significantly influenced language attitudes. Singaporeans have adopted the pragmatic mindset of the government, favoring Mandarin Chinese due to its economic benefits. Even in the studies discussing the role of Chinese dialects, while many of the participants experienced feelings of loss and sadness over the linguistic shift away from Chinese dialects, they still recognized Mandarin Chinese as practical, illustrating the impact of language policy in shifting attitudes away from dialects.

However, recent developments within the Singaporean Chinese community suggest a growing interest in dialect preservation initiatives, signaling a potential shift in the language attitudes of the youth. Earlier research indicated that dialect speakers tended to prioritize English and Mandarin Chinese due to practical reasons. Yet, in recent years, media outlets such as The Straits Times have highlighted a renewed interest among younger generations in reconnecting with their heritage languages, indicating a change in how dialects are perceived within the Singaporean Chinese community. Admittedly, it is important to acknowledge that the topic of Chinese dialects in Singapore is still under-researched, and more comprehensive studies are needed to confirm whether this interest represents a concrete change in attitudes.

Thus, the current field of research still needs to be expanded in scope. Many studies have small sample sizes in participants and focus primarily on university students, which may not represent the full range of language attitudes within the broader Singaporean Chinese youth. Future research should focus on exploring attitudes across more diverse demographic groups, including differences in socioeconomic status and educational background. Another interesting area of research would be to study differences in attitudes among speakers of various Chinese dialects. For example, would individuals with Hokkien heritage hold different attitudes toward Mandarin Chinese compared to those with Cantonese and Teochew heritage?

Future research is needed to understand the language attitudes toward Mandarin Chinese in more depth, as currently the studies existing within this area are scarce. Notably, the research on Chinese dialects in Singapore has been largely neglected. Future studies could make significant contributions to the field by exploring the relationships between Mandarin Chinese, English, and Chinese dialects in shaping language attitudes among Singaporean Chinese youth and by examining how these languages interact within the unique socio-cultural context of Singapore.

The findings of this thesis highlight that language policies can affect language attitudes, potentially causing language shifts at an individual level. This has broader implications beyond Singapore, suggesting that policymakers worldwide should take into consideration how language planning influences the attitudes of the individual. This literature review provides a foundation for further research on attitudes toward Mandarin Chinese and highlights the need to further explore the role of Chinese dialects in academic discourse. By examining language attitudes in detail, researchers and policymakers can better understand individual motivations and perspectives, leading to more effective language policies in the future.

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