

## MASTER'S THESIS

### Chinese language policy in Singapore: how it reflects the government's goals of economic development and multiculturalism

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**CHINESE LANGUAGE POLICY IN SINGAPORE:  
HOW IT REFLECTS THE GOVERNMENT'S GOALS OF  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND  
MULTICULTURALISM**

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## **Abstract**

With China's ascendancy as a major economic power, the economic opportunities made available in Singapore through the Chinese language are an important factor in raising the status of the language. This dissertation first underlines the Singapore government's interventionist stance on language policy by studying different factors which lead to changes in language attitudes and policies. The dissertation then studies how the changes are realised in government, mass media, education and business domains. Special attention is also given to the discussion on how the ethnic minorities and the English-educated Chinese perceive Chinese as a language possessing economic value. It is identified that Chinese is no longer considered solely an ethnic emblem of Chinese Singaporeans. Because of the principle of multiculturalism, the government has started extending pragmatic rationality to Malay and Tamil besides promoting the economic value of Chinese. But considering that the economic motivation for using Malay and Tamil is not as great as that for English and Chinese, the status of English and Chinese in Singapore will still be superior to that of the other two mother tongue languages. Even though Chinese in Singapore is valued for its economic potential, the status of English as the language of administration continues taking precedence over that of Chinese.

## 摘要

隨著中國經濟崛起及所帶來的經濟機遇，華語在新加坡的地位得以提高。本論文陳述了新加坡政府在不同因素的影響下，其語文態度及政策有所改變，以突顯其干涉主義的語文政策。本文更探究語文態度及政策的改變，對政府、大眾傳媒、教育及商業領域的影響。此外，從探索少數族裔和英校生對華語經濟價值的想法，確定華語不再只是代表華族的象徵。另外，新加坡政府奉行多元文化政策，雖然華語的經濟地位得以提高，馬來語及淡米爾語仍然具有一定的實用價值，但作為行政語言，英語依然佔有不可取代的地位。所以本論文認為，縱使華語的經濟地位得以提高，但英語在新加坡的地位仍將會佔優。

## Table of contents

1.	Introduction	1
2.	Review of related studies on language attitudes and policy in Singapore	3
3	Singapore and its people	7
	3.1 <i>Sociolinguistic overview</i>	7
	3.2 <i>Definition of the Chinese language in Singapore</i>	9
4	Aims of the present study	12
5	Research method	14
6	Singapore language policy	16
	6.1 <i>Interventionist stance on language policy</i>	16
	6.2 <i>Factors leading to changes in language attitudes</i>	20
	6.2.1 <i>Economic factors</i>	21
	6.2.2 <i>Political factors</i>	31
	6.2.3 <i>Educational factors</i>	33
	6.2.4 <i>Communicative factors</i>	34
7	Present functions and status of Chinese in Singapore	39
	7.1 <i>Language functions in four key domains</i>	39
	7.1.1 <i>Government</i>	41
	7.1.2 <i>Mass Media</i>	46
	7.1.3 <i>Education</i>	49
	7.1.4 <i>Business</i>	55
	7.2 <i>Language attitudes of Singaporeans</i>	61

7.2.1	<i>Ethnic minorities</i>	62
7.2.2	<i>English-educated Chinese</i>	64
8	Implications of the principle of multiculturalism for the status of Chinese	68
8.1	<i>Importance of being English-Mandarin bilingual</i>	72
8.2	<i>Inconsistent use of Chinese</i>	74
8.3	<i>Adherence to the principle of multiculturalism</i>	77
9	Reflection on English-knowing bilingual policy	83
9.1	<i>Uniformity and conformity</i>	83
9.2	<i>Cultural cost of supplanting Chinese dialects with Mandarin</i>	87
10	Conclusion	92
	<i>References</i>	97
	<i>Notes</i>	116
	<i>Appendices</i>	A1-A16