

Standard English and Singlish: The Clash of Language Values in Contemporary Singapore

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Abstract. Singaporean English or Singlish, as it is better known to the local populace, is an English creole that has long been a contesting issue between pro-Singlish and anti-Singlish proponents. This paper uses Fairclough's (1995) 3-dimensional framework, which has been originally developed for critical discourse analysis, to show how discourses and texts have been used by pro-Singlish and anti-Singlish advocates to impart their attitude and in some cases, to promote their values of Standard English and Singlish to the masses. Culling examples from *Mr. Kiasu* (a comic title), *Speak Good English Movement (SGEM)* and *Talking Cock* websites, one is able to see how attitudes are reflected through discourse and text. Essentially, the real clash between both anti- and pro-Singlish advocates is one of values. Anti-Singlish advocates strive for economic pragmatism whilst pro-Singlish advocates strive for identity.

Keywords: Singlish, ideology, diglossia, discourse, Singapore

1. Introduction

In many societies, the High (H)-variety code (language, dialect or language register) is idealised whilst the Low (L)-variety code is frowned upon by language policy makers as well as language purists (cf. Labov 1966, 1978; Wardhaugh 1992; Hudson

1996; Holmes 2001). Such is the case of the Singaporean English variety, or Singlish, as it is fondly known by its advocates and users, which is loathed by those who see it as the corruption of “standard” English, chiefly the Singaporean government (Gupta 2001:7). In contemporary Singapore, anti-Singlish advocates are generally calling for the abolishment of Singlish, and on the other hand, pro-Singlish advocates have been resisting such calls as they do not want to lose Singlish. In essence, the different attitudes towards Singlish stem from the different needs of both groups. The anti-Singlish advocates strive for economic pragmatism and the maintenance of an elite status-quo, and these advocates strongly associate Standard English with high education, elitist culture and wealth. On the other hand, pro-Singlish advocates see Singlish as a language that reflects one’s identity and communal membership. To get their message across and to influence the perception of mainly Singaporeans, anti- and pro-Singlish advocates utilise a wide variety of discourses and textual means.

Culling examples from *Mr. Kiasu* (a comic title), the *Speak Good English Movement (SGEM)* and *Talking Cock* websites, this paper uses Fairclough’s (1995) 3-dimensional framework of analysis to study the ways the two conflicting ideologies are presented in discourse and text. The *SGEM* is anti-Singlish whilst *Mr. Kiasu* and *Talking Cock* are pro-Singlish.

It should be noted that this paper will not dwell on the structures of Singlish, as there is extensive documentation on the language (Deterding et al. 2003; Platt & Weber 1980). Instead, this paper will analyse some of the ways the attitudes towards Singlish have been propagated in popular media by anti-Singlish and pro-Singlish advocates.

2. Brief account of Singapore’s linguistic demography

Singapore today has a population of nearly 4.5 million. 76.8% of Singaporeans are Chinese, 13.9% are Malay, 7.9% are Indian and 1.4% belong to other ethnic groups, including Europeans, Eurasians and Arabs (as of CIA 2009). There are four official languages in the city state: English, Malay, Tamil and Mandarin. Linguistically, the Singaporean Chinese community is the most heterogeneous group, as many of its members speak one or more of the following dialects: Hokkien, Teochew, Cantonese, Hainanese, Foochow, Mandarin and other less-known Chinese dialects (cf. Lim &

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Foley 2004:2). Unlike the Chinese community, the Malay community is linguistically the most homogeneous group with 85% speaking Malay as their mother tongue. The Indian community is less heterogeneous than the Chinese; 59% of the Indians' mother tongue is Tamil whilst the remainder speaks one of seven other dialects. 71.6% of other ethnic groups speak English as their mother tongue (Platt & Weber 1980:5). Rubdy (2005:56) observes that of the four languages selected to be the official languages of the nation, only 18.6% of the population grew up speaking one of the four languages as their first language (Mandarin 0.1%, Malay 11.5%, Tamil 5.2% and English 1.8%).

| Ethnic group/language | Primary | | Secondary | | Post-secondary | | University | |
|-----------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|----------------|------------|------------|------------|
| | 2000 | 2005 | 2000 | 2005 | 2000 | 2005 | 2000 | 2005 |
| Chinese | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| English | 46.5 | 44.9 | 27.5 | 38.7 | 25.1 | 35.9 | 29.9 | 39.2 |
| Mandarin | 59.3 | 52.8 | 63.8 | 57.8 | 60.5 | 58.4 | 53.1 | 52.9 |
| Chinese dialect | 3.9 | 2.0 | 8.2 | 3.3 | 14.1 | 5.5 | 16.9 | 7.6 |
| Others | 0.3 | 0.3 | 0.4 | 0.2 | 0.3 | 0.2 | 0.1 | 0.3 |
| Malays | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| English | 9.2 | 17.6 | 8.4 | 14.1 | 12.2 | 17.6 | 26.4 | 32.8 |
| Malay | 90.3 | 82.3 | 91.0 | 85.7 | 87.3 | 82.1 | 73.1 | 67.2 |
| Others | 0.5 | 0.1 | 0.6 | 0.1 | 0.6 | 0.2 | 0.5 | - |
| Indians | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| English | 43.5 | 47.8 | 41.4 | 46.7 | 46.2 | 51.9 | 56.7 | 64.2 |
| Malay | 13.2 | 9.4 | 14.7 | 14.4 | 11.9 | 11.9 | 6.1 | 4.9 |
| Tamil | 35.9 | 32.8 | 38.0 | 33.5 | 33.9 | 29.6 | 26.9 | 26.7 |
| Others | 7.4 | 10.0 | 5.9 | 5.5 | 8.0 | 6.6 | 10.2 | 4.2 |

Table 1. Students by language spoken at home and level of education attending (Percent)
(Government of Singapore n.d.)

According to the data obtained by the Singaporean government in Table 1, there was an increase of English usage as the predominant home language among all the major ethnic groups in 2005, when compared with 2000. English is emerging as the language of the young among the resident population while there is a decline in the

proportion speaking the vernacular languages (Mandarin, Chinese dialects, Malay and Tamil) at home.

English is officially the only language of instruction in Singapore's education system. However it is not unheard of for older teachers to instead use other languages, especially when the school in question historically has a non-English language as the main medium of instruction.

3. Diglossia: Standard English and Singlish

Ferguson (1959) states that diglossia occurs when two speech varieties are used in a speech community side by side, each fulfilling different functions. The High (H)-variety is often considered a "standard" code that is used in formal functions and in domains such as government offices, courts, religious and educational institutions whilst the Low (L)-variety on the other hand is often considered a "sub-standard" code commonly used amongst friends and low level social meetings (Tongue 1979).

Even in the days of British colonialism in Singapore, it became apparent that knowledge of English was for many reasons a desirable asset; English was the H-variety code, as opposed to other vernacular languages in Singapore, in administrative, judiciary purposes as well as foreign and local businesses (the latter at higher levels). Not surprisingly, non-British participants who were unable to converse in English soon found themselves at a socioeconomic and political disadvantage (Platt & Weber 1980:6). English had also established itself as the dominant language of the media, as readership of English newspapers was more popular in contrast to other local vernacular papers (Platt & Weber 1980:6).

Over the years, the English in Singapore inevitably evolved due to circumstances like the presence of other languages, interethnic mingling, socioeconomic differences and the need for the local population to accommodate to the British (cf. Platt & Weber 1980; Platt et al. 1983:14; Kachru 1986). Singlish is an English-based creole that is commonly said to be similar to the Malaysian English variety, Manglish, because of the close proximity between the two countries, shared cultural experiences and geosocial history. Gupta (1992:62) defines Singlish as a contact variety and points out that "the main difference [of Singlish] from Standard English is syntactic, and the lexis is dominated by English". Like Manglish, Singlish consists of English,

Malay, Chinese dialects and, to a lesser extent, Indian lexical items. However, what makes Singlish slightly different from Manglish is that the former demonstrates a certain amount of influence from Chinese dialects (Trudgill & Hannah 2002:136). Slang and colloquialism in Singlish originate from other forms of Englishes including American slang which have been introduced through television series.

Platt et al. (1983:12) state that Singlish is typically spoken by the English-medium educated sector of the community. Singlish is usually not spoken by those who are educated in Chinese-medium schools, or who received a Malay or Tamil-medium education. In addition, the older population with vernacular education would use their mother tongue and Bazaar Malay, whilst younger Singaporeans who had English as a second language (and not as the medium of instruction), would speak English more as a learner's language.

The term "Standard English" warrants debates and invokes controversy. However, in the case of Singapore, "Standard English" generally refers to either British English (as documented and promoted by BBC and the British Council) or American English (cf. Platt & Weber 1980; Rubdy 2005). Platt et al. (1983:14) wrote that those who have had a tertiary education and are in higher status occupations speak the H-variety (which is closest to Standard British English) whereas those who have had only a few years of English-medium education and lower status occupation speak Singlish, which is distinctive from Standard British English.

This "rhetoric of failure", as Gupta (2001:7) points out, is used by the Singaporean government to persuade Singaporeans to embrace Standard English and avoid Singlish. The Singaporean government has been pushing for the removal of Singlish in everyday domains because it deems the code to be a poor reflection of Singaporean society, which in turn, can damage Singapore's image on the world stage. So much so, Singlish has been described by those in the official circles as English "corrupted by Singaporeans [that] will put the less-educated half of the population at a disadvantage" (Rubdy 2005:65).

However, there are those who continue to use Singlish because Singlish to them is part of their identity as Singaporeans and because it is an important social rapport code amongst its users. Singlish has been widely used in popular Singaporean culture, performing arts, literature, TV shows and films. Some notable titles include

Phua Chu Kang (TV), *Under One Roof* (TV), *Talking Cock the Movie* (film), *I not Stupid* (film), *Emily of Emerald Hill* (play) and *Oi! Sleeping Beauty* (musical).

4. Methodology

Because discourse and text are related to sociocultural practices, Fairclough’s (1995) 3-dimensional framework serves as a useful tool to analyse how anti-Singlish and pro-Singlish advocates use text and discourse to impart their attitude towards Singlish. Figure 1 presents Fairclough’s 3-dimensional framework (Fairclough 1995:98).

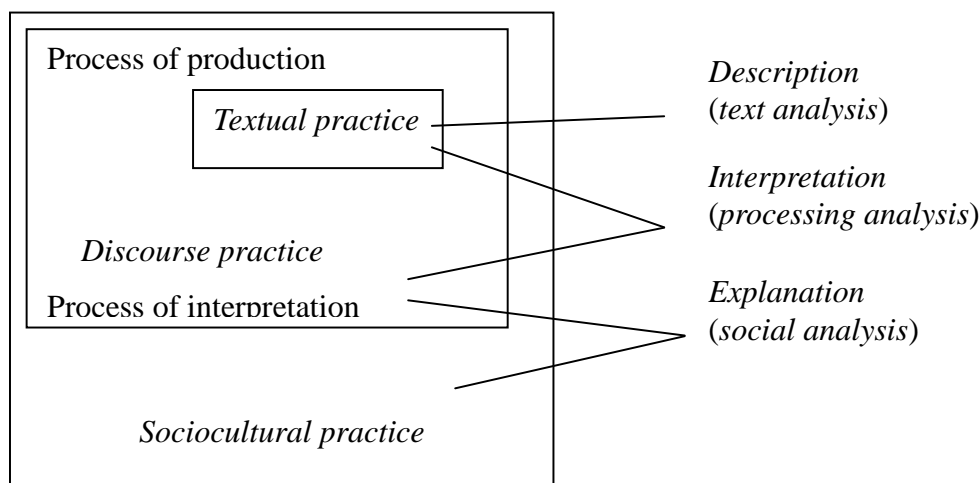


Figure 1. Fairclough’s 3-Dimensional framework of analysis

Fairclough’s 3-dimensional framework is commonly used in Critical Discourse Analysis to study how ideology is reflected in language use as well as how language use shapes ideology. In essence, this framework provides a method to explain how texts (be it spoken or written) are linked to the larger sociocultural practices.

The “sociocultural practice” level refers to the “sociological” explanation of groups. In the case of this research, the sociocultural practice points to attitude and general outlook of both anti-Singlish and pro-Singlish groups. The “discourse practice” level refers to the production, dissemination and distribution of texts, based on the socio-cultural practice level. On this level, the analysis looks at the different discourses used to reflect the sociocultural practices. Discourses here refer to what Fairclough (1995:135) calls “ways of signifying experience from a particular perspective”.

Some examples of discourses include medical discourse, legal discourse and comedy discourse. The end product is distributed through different means such as the internet, television, books, and advertisements. And finally, the “textual practices” level refers to the use of structural features of the language in text in the production of the different discourses. Textual practices are realisations of discourse practices. This includes the selection of grammatical and lexical items.

Apart from the sociocultural practices influencing the textual practices (top-down), it should be noted that discourses can also work in a dialectical fashion i.e. the textual practices influence the sociocultural practices (Fairclough & Wodak 1997:258). Texts can reinforce or challenge the incumbent sociocultural practices.

5. Analysis

The analysis is divided into two groups; anti-Singlish and pro-Singlish proponents. The *Speak Good English Movement* (henceforth *SGEM*) belongs to the anti-Singlish advocate side, whilst *TalkingCock.com* and *Mr. Kiasu* belong to the pro-Singlish side. For an overview, the application of the three dimensional framework of anti-Singlish and pro-Singlish advocates is shown in Figure 2.

This analysis of anti- and pro-Singlish advocates is categorised as follows:

- Anti-Singlish advocates: Sociocultural practices (Section 5.1.1)
- Anti-Singlish advocates: Discourse practices (Section 5.1.2)
- Anti-Singlish advocates: Textual practices (Section 5.1.3)
- Pro-Singlish advocates: Sociocultural practices (Section 5.2.1)
- Pro-Singlish advocates: Discourse practices (Section 5.2.2)
- Pro-Singlish advocates: Textual practices (Section 5.2.3)

Section 5.1 is dedicated to the analysis of anti-Singlish advocates. Section 5.1.1 discusses the sociocultural practices of anti-Singlish advocates (chiefly, the Singaporean government) and the reasons they do not endorse the use of Singlish. Section 5.1.1 looks at how anti-Singlish advocates produce and disseminate their ideology through the *SGEM* and a musical event called *Rock Your World: Express Yourself (RYW)*. Section 5.1.3 describes the textual manifestation of the *SGEM* and *RYW*.

In contrast, Section 5.2 is devoted to the analysis of pro-Singlish advocates. Section 5.2.1 describes the sociocultural practices of pro-Singlish advocates and the reasons they support the use of Singlish. Section 5.2.2 illustrates the ways pro-Singlish advocates (*TalkingCock.com* and *Mr. Kiasu*) impart their ideology through discourses. Section 5.2.3 describes the textual manifestations of *TalkingCock.com* and *Mr. Kiasu*.

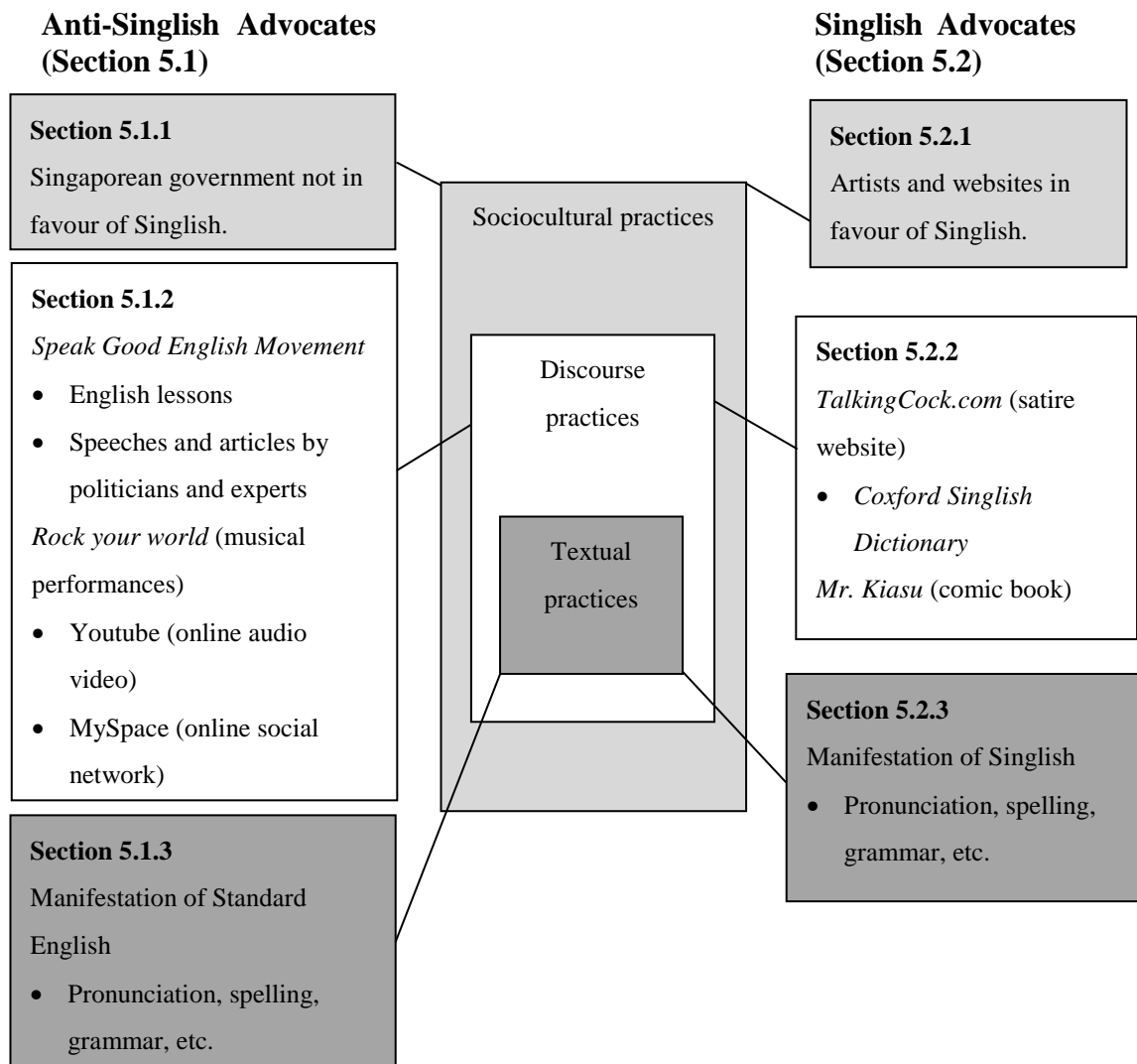


Figure 2. Application of Fairclough's 3-dimensional framework in the analysis of anti-Singlish and pro-Singlish advocates

5.1. Anti-Singlish Advocates

The following subsections (Sections 5.1.1, 5.1.2 and 5.1.3) explain the sociocultural, discourse and textual practices of anti-Singlish advocates.

5.1.1. Sociocultural practices

As mentioned before, the Singaporean government's attitude towards Singlish is not a favourable one because they see Singlish as an inferior code and a threat to the development of the nation. As noted by Rubdy (2005:55-7), one of the main reasons English remains an important language is because Singapore seeks to "attract and sustain transnational investment and new entrepreneurial initiative" in order to gain a competitive edge over its regional neighbours. In fact, top politicians have been labelling Singlish as a dysfunctional and corrupted language over the years. Former Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew once called Singlish "a handicap we must not wish on Singaporeans" and his successor, Goh Chok Tong echoed this pessimistic view that the continuation of Singlish will cause future Singaporean generations to fail to speak any language properly (Burnside 2000). Goh said, "[Singaporeans] cannot be a first-world economy or go global with Singlish" (Rubdy 2005:65). The next Prime Minister, Lee Hsien Loong also once said that Singlish need not be a part of the Singaporean identity (Au Yong 2007).

In the latest development, the Singaporean government initiated the *SGEM* to get Singaporeans to:

- Speak in Standard English so as to be understood by all English speakers in this globalised and highly-interconnected world.
- Pay attention to accurate pronunciation. However, this is not about acquiring a new foreign accent.
- Speak English in many domains of everyday life; home, work, play and school, i.e. make speaking good English a lifestyle choice.
- Encourage everyone, especially youths, to express themselves not just with functional language, but also with the language of the heart, to say what they feel, not just what they think and analyse.

The *SGEM* targets four main groups, parents, teachers, frontline staff (e.g. educators) and youth. At the time of research which was carried out in 2007, the focus was on Singaporean youths.

5.1.2. *Discourse practices*

The *SGEM* features some press releases of politicians arguing for the promotion of Standard English. In addition (and perhaps not surprising), the *SGEM* website offers pedagogy discourse in English and linguistic lessons, such as pronunciation (phonetics and phonology) and “appropriate” styles in conversation and grammar (word formation, sentence structuring, syntax, etc.). Interestingly, the website also provides counselling discourse to parents on methods to foster Standard English habits in their children’s language acquisition.

The *SGEM* has incorporated various online media and entertainment activities to garner support and interest from the youths using various discourses. These discourses include live music performances by Singaporean youths, the *Rock Your World: Express Yourself (RYW)* event which are posted on Youtube.com (entertainment discourse) and forging ties with *RYW* fans and supporters through MySpace (social networking discourse). It should be noted that it is perhaps ironic that the *RYW* event has no direct bearing on English language learning. It serves a means of reaching out to Singaporean youths and associate “coolness” with this government initiated project. One can postulate that the creation of this association is meant to get Singaporean youths to support the *SGEM*. The textual realisation of these discourses is detailed in the next section.

5.1.3. *Textual practices*

On May 13, 2005, the Singaporean Prime Minister, Lee Hsien Loong, delivered a speech at the launch of the *SGEM*’s 5th anniversary. In it, he mentioned various underlying pragmatic issues relating to Standard English, such as the economic benefits of Standard English, as shown in (1).

- (1) [...] It is important for all of us to speak good English, because English has become the lingua franca of international commerce. English is our bridge to the world, and helps Singapore to maximise our opportunities [...] Today, English, plus knowledge of our mother tongues, has given Singaporeans an important competitive advantage over many other Asian countries. [...]

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The benefits of good English are much more than you think. It may mean impressing an interview panel and getting a better job with better pay. It may mean convincing a customer who brings you more business. [...]

A good example is TV programmes. American sitcoms can easily be broadcast and understood in Singapore. But Singapore programmes, like *Phua Chu Kang* or *Police and Thief*, are not as easily exported. A Malaysian audience may appreciate them, but it is not easy for audiences further afield to understand them. [...]

We have two major events coming up, when thousands of important visitors will be gathering in Singapore. In July, we are hosting the International Olympic Council's session to select the city for the 2012 Summer Games. We expect 5,000 visitors, including political leaders and major sports stars. Many more tourists will come to take in the atmosphere. We do not have to set learning quotas like the PRC Chinese. But many of the visitors will understand English, and our people should speak to them in good English, especially people working in the hospitality industry – hotel receptionists, salespersons or taxi drivers. In September 2006, we will stage an even bigger event when the International Monetary Fund and World Bank hold the annual meetings of their boards of governors here. This will be the biggest ever conference hosted here, with about 16,000 top finance and central bank officials and business leaders attending. Let us be gracious hosts to our guests, greet and serve them using clear and grammatical English, and leave them a lasting impression of Singapore, and make them want to come back to Singapore again. [...]

(Lee 2005)

In (1), Lee identifies Standard English as a code that will give users a competitive edge from a commercial view point regardless of industry. Because of this reason, he argues that it is imperative for users to have a good command of Standard English. In doing so, he indirectly implies that Singlish does not provide the same economic benefits as Standard English.

Apart from the economic perspective, Lee also mentions that Singlish is less intelligible than Standard English, as show in (2).

(2) I recently met the son of an Australian friend of mine. The young man had just graduated from a very good school in Melbourne. I asked him if he had any schoolmates from Singapore. He said there were a few. He then commented that they spoke a

strange type of English among themselves. It sounded like English, but he could not make out the meaning at all. In fact, they were speaking Singlish! [...]

When our English becomes too mutated, we become unintelligible to others. We then have a big problem. Because in the real world, whether we are serving customers, making presentations, giving instructions to employees, arguing a case in court, negotiating an agreement, teaching a class, or even singing a song or acting in a TV programme, we are much better off doing so in proper, grammatically correct English. Then we can make our meaning clear, and others can understand us, including non-Singaporeans. If instead we speak in a dialect which only some Singaporeans can understand, then we are handicapping ourselves, and cutting ourselves off from the rest of the world. [...]

(Lee 2005)

In (2), Lee states that having a good command of Standard English would allow interlocutors to reach out to more audiences as the code is universally understood and accepted. Singlish on the other hand, according to him is “mutated” English that exclude others and it is not appropriate in many domains.

In turn, Lee calls for the prevalent use of Standard English in many domains of language use, such as the home and in friendship discourse amongst others and urges teachers, parents and employers to accomplish this objective, as shown in (3).

(3) Teachers should be paragons of good, spoken English themselves. Encourage your students to speak good English too. Try different ways to make language classes fun and lively so that the lessons can be easily absorbed. Even pop songs, hip hop or rap can be used as a medium for teaching good English. In fact, one organisation in Japan teaches English through the singing of English pop songs. The textbook is a songbook. [...]

Parents too have an important role. Parents who are English speaking should read aloud to their children more often, so that their children absorb the sounds, rhythms, and grammar of English, at an age when their brains learn language easily and proper habits will be ingrained for life. [...]

Employers too, especially those in the service industry, can play a part, by putting an emphasis on good spoken English at the workplace. Send workers for training if need be. You can even set proper English as a service standard. [...]

(Lee 2005)

By mentioning how vital the roles of individuals are, i.e. teachers, parents and employers, Lee urges them to do the “right thing” and to take responsibility to ensure that future generations are able to perform well in Standard English. Interestingly, although Lee is not a linguist or language teacher, (3) contains brief language pedagogy/applied linguistic advices aimed at teachers, parents and employers.

Perhaps Lee has the power to do so because he is first and foremost the Prime Minister and he is the beacon of authority, i.e. Lee has extended his social power to cover even the roles of language counsellors.

On the issue of identity, Lee also notes that speaking Standard English instead of Singlish does not make a Singaporean less Singaporean, as shown in (4).

- (4) Speaking good English does not mean using bombastic words or adopting an artificial English or American accent. We can speak in the normal Singapore tone, which is neutral and intelligible. But speak in full sentences, with proper sentence structure, and cutting out all the lahs and lors at the end of each sentence. [...] We are no less Singaporean by speaking good English.¹

(Lee 2005)

Lee argues that Singlish can be discarded because it does not make Singaporeans lose their identity as a Singaporean. By arguing so, Lee is saying that Singaporeans will be able to maintain their identity even as they acquire and improve their command of Standard English.

On the *SGEM*'s website, there are a few Standard English lessons. In delivering these lessons, it is perhaps interesting to note that Standard English is often contrasted with Singlish. In a pronunciation lesson of the word *penalty*, for instance, the “wrong” way of pronouncing this word (Singlish) is compared to the “right” way (Standard English). This is shown in (5).

¹ *Lah* and *lor* are common Singlish discourse particles used to indicate the speaker's attitude.

(5) What's a per-NARL-tee?

This word is often mispronounced by Singaporeans, especially when emotions run high watching the game of football. Do you say PEN-url-tees or per-NARL-tees? Give yourself a pat on the back if you chose PEN-url-tees. Many people say per-NARL-tees. When the word is pronounced correctly, the stress is on the 1st syllable which is pronounced as 'PEN' and not 'per'. The 2nd syllable is pronounced as 'url' and not 'arl'. He was known as a goalkeeper who had a remarkable ability to anticipate penalty (PEN-url-tee) kicks.

Listen to this podcast to get the pronunciation right.

[Podcast transcript:]

The semi-finals of the ASEAN Football League were very exciting. The many penalties [ˈpen.əl.tɪs] and penalty [pəˈnæl.tɪ] kicks add a lot of drama to the matches. Notice how I pronounced the word penalty [[ˈpen.əl.tɪ] once? After saying penalties [pen.əl.tɪs] the first time round, I switched to saying penalty [pəˈnæl.tɪ] kicks. That is incorrect. So the next time you watch a football match, don't join the crowd to say [pəˈnæl.tɪ], but make sure you say it right. It was the penalties [ˈpen.əl.tɪs] and the penalty [ˈpen.əl.tɪ] kicks added an excitement to the matches.

[Transcript end]

(Speak Good English Movement n.d. a; podcast transcript mine)

Not surprisingly, when providing lessons on appropriate English conversational styles, Singlish is often considered to be inappropriate, wrong and at times, rude, whilst Standard English is considered to be most apt, polite and professional. This is shown in (6).

(6) **Avoid:** Cannot try. Dirty how?

Say: I'm sorry but we do not allow customers to try these on for hygiene reasons.

“Cannot try” or “Cannot try. Dirty how?” are probably most used by sales assistants in apparel shops. Both are grammatically wrong and it isn't very pleasant for customers to be turned down this way.

“Dirty how?” as a question will also not make any sense to foreigners who aren't familiar with the non-standard English phrases common in Singapore.

Help Your Customer To Understand Your Company Policy

It is for practical reasons that customers are not allowed to try on the items on sale. But that doesn't give the sales assistants the right to be rude when declining the request.

It is better to say, "I'm sorry but we do not allow customers to try these on for hygiene reasons".

(Speak Good English Movement n.d. b)

If one were to visit the downloads section and watch the "Singlish with *angmoh* (Caucasian) slang" clip, Singaporean actor, Hossan Leong is seen poking fun at Singlish. Some of his arguments that Singlish is an inferior code include:

Can you imagine if our air stewardesses, you know, were not speaking Standard English, how could they be ambassadors for Singapore, right?

You have to speak Standard English. Even worse, can you imagine all the hungry passengers [if spoken to in Singlish]?

(Leong n.d.; transcript mine)

Also, apart from stating that accent has nothing to do with pronunciation (albeit not an accurate statement as accent is a manner of pronunciation, cf. Roach 1991 for instance), he associates Singlish with rudeness (or what Brown & Levinson 1987 would term as "bold on record"). When talking about air stewardesses addressing passengers, he mimics them saying in a quick paced condescending tone: *What you want to eat. Soya bean ah? Kopi O ah* ['coffee minus the milk']? *Eh Bobby, kopi O sieh* ['prepare coffee minus the milk'], *down there*. It is clear though, that downplaying Singlish is a means of "empowering" Standard English, and this is in fact, an ideological message. This message coming from an actor-orator gives (pseudo) weight in enticing and persuading the audience to embrace *SGEM*'s cause.

As mentioned earlier, the *SGEM*'s *RYW* musical event is another way the *SGEM* has attempted to reach out and appeal to youths. This event has many discourse extensions:

- Youtube.com, an audiovisual website (infotainment discourse)
- MySpace, a social networking website (networking discourse)
- Live performances (entertainment discourse)

Videos uploaded by the *RYW* (or the *SGEM*) staff into Youtube.com are mostly featured interviews and musical performances by youths. The event is held regularly every Wednesday evening at a venue called the “Timbre music bistro and bar”. There is generally no specific English lesson (i.e. pedagogy discourse) featured on Youtube.com, however there are some videos that comes to close to achieving this, just like the one shown in (7).

Hi, we are Stentorian. Stentorian is spelt s-t-e-n-t-o-r-i-a-n and it means a very loud sound. How we got our name is, we were looking for a word, a word to define our sound and... which is a very loud sound and, so we went to the thesaurus to find [in-audible] [video performance of the band]

(Rock Your World Express Yourself 2008; transcript mine)

In (7), a band member introduces a not so popular English word, *stentorian*, as it is the name of their band. Typically, the videos promote certain bands and artists and there are times during the interviews that the youths are asked how they acquired “good” English. (8) is a transcript of one of those videos.

(7) I learnt to speak good English through music mainly so, you know, literature and all that, poetry, so. Urm, it’s quite enjoyable learning English through music. [Video moves to next band member]

[...] How I learnt to speak good English, in general is, when I was young I used to read a lot of books and watch a lot of TV in general, so I guess along the way I picked up on my grammar and vocab. [...] [Video moves to next band member]

[...] so where did I learn English. OK. English is not my first language so every time I speak English is always a struggle for me so I learnt in fourth grade of primary school and until now I’m still learning. [Video moves to next band member]

[...] Actually, I realised that by speaking good English, you tend to get your point through faster and easier and people tend to understand you. [Video moves to next band member]

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[...] Currently, I run my own IT company and I notice something. When pitching for sales it is very important to have a good command of English because that gives you credibility, so speak good English.

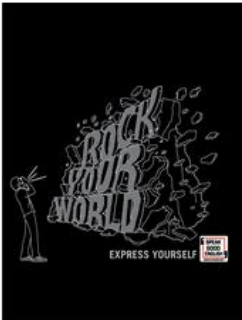
(Rock Your World Express Yourself 2008; transcript mine)

The interview in (8) serves as the band's testimony on their experience of acquiring and improving their English language skills. It is also plausible that the interview also serves to provide tips to the viewers on ways and methods to learn and improve their English, in addition to motivating viewers to embrace Standard English, especially if fans of the bands see the band members as role models. By embracing Standard English, fans too can be part of the "hip" in-group.

Browsing through the *RYW*'s MySpace reveals that in addition to displaying youths who are listed "friends" of *RYW*, there is contact information and a "comments" section posted by "friends" of *RYW*. (9) shows some of these textual elements on MySpace.

(8) RYW MySpace

Rock Your World



Rock Your World!
Express Yourself..

Female
22 years old
All
Singapore

Last Login:
8/04/2009

View My: [Pics](#) | [Videos](#)

Contacting Rock Your World

| | |
|-----------------|-------------------|
| Send Message | Forward to Friend |
| Add to Friends | Add to Favorites |
| Instant Message | Block User |
| Add to Group | Rank User |

MySpace URL:
www.myspace.com/rywexpressyourself

Rock Your World's Details

| | |
|--------------|--------|
| Status: | Single |
| Zodiac Sign: | Leo |

Rock Your World is in your extended network.

at 3:38 AM 16 Jan 2008

[view more](#)

Rock Your World's Latest Blog Entry [[Subscribe to this Blog](#)]

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Rock Your World's Blurbs

About me:

Rock Your World is a regular weekly programme brought to you by the Speak Good English Movement 2007 every Wednesday evening at Timbre music bistro & bar, promoting good English by creative expression through oratory, drama, and music.

With its presence as a locus of homegrown talents in music and performing arts, Timbre is the perfect venue for Rock Your World as an outlet of creative expression!

Rock Your World! Express Yourself.

Rock Your World lives on!

We'll be popping up around the island so keep a look out for Rock Your World!

Check out exclusive Rock Your World performances at the [Rock Your World youtube channel!](#)

for more information, visit: [Speak Good English Movement](#) or email: rockyourworldexpressyourself@gmail.com

Who I'd like to meet:



- 17 -

Rock Your World's Friends Comments

Displaying 25 of 33 comments (View All | Add Comment)

8 Sep 2008 04:18 PM

Invasion Productions



IN ROCK WE TRUST!

SCHOOL INVASION TOUR 2008 FINALE

PERIOD TICKETS \$12

STAGE SEATS \$15

SUN, 14 SEPT 2008

DOORS OPEN AT 4:30 PM

THE REPUBLIC CULTURAL CENTRE, THEATRE REPUBLIC POLYTECHNIC

FEATURING THE SCHOOL INVASION TOUR BANDS WEST GRAND BOULEVARD, ALIEN, THE FIRE FIGHT, JACK & KAT & A VACANT AFFAIR

WITH GUEST PERFORMANCES BY PLAINSMEN & THE GREAT SPY EXPERIMENT

HELLO EVERYONE!

After invading over 20 schools in the past 8 months, the school invasion tour 2008 finale show is finally here! Get ready to enjoy your favorite school invasion tour bands playing a full set and sharing the same stage on the same day. Its gonna be a really explosive and rocking show!

Ironically there is no hint of the promotion of English and there is no English pedagogy on the MySpace website. The only thing that points to the word “English” is the *SGEM* campaign. This suggests that the main aim of the *RYW*’s MySpace is to solicit youths to attend this musical event and to indirectly support the *SGEM*. The use of online media also imparts the message that the government is “cool” or that speaking good English is “cool”.

There is a reason for the promotion of the idea of “coolness”. As shown in various social psychology studies, people tend to conform to the majority in order to be part of the in-group, as being part of the in-group is empowering to the self (cf. Asch 1955; Macionis 2001; Yoong 2006). In relations to the *SGEM*, when there is support for the group’s movement, the movement is likely to succeed.

In sum, anti-Singlish advocates impart their attitude and their beliefs of Singlish (i.e. ideology) to the masses using various discourses e.g. pedagogy, counselling, persuasive discourses amongst others, and the *SGEM* program also targets youths through its sub-program, the *RYW* event. The main purpose of the *RYW*, it appears,

is not to teach youth English, rather it is to solicit their attention and support, and in the process attempt to provide youths with Standard English improvement tips through featured band members.

5.2. *Pro-Singlish advocates*

The following subsections (Sections 5.2.1, 5.2.2 and 5.2.3) explain the sociocultural, discourse and textual practices of pro-Singlish advocates.

5.2.1. *Sociocultural practices*

Unlike the *SGEM* and its sub-group, *RYW*, *TalkingCock.com* and *Mr. Kiasu* generally display a positive attitude towards Singlish. At this juncture it is perhaps important to note that these pro-Singlish advocates are not calling for the removal or condemnation of Standard English, nor are they pushing for the implementation of Singlish in the Singapore language policy. Instead, their main shared objective is to use Singlish through their art, since they see the code as a useful means of invoking a positive emotional response (i.e. humour and laughter) from their audiences.

TalkingCock.com is a Singaporean satirical and humour website that was started in August 2000 by Colin Goh and the website is extremely popular as it receives 4 million hits per month. The term *talking cock* is a Singaporean slang that means to speak nonsense or to engage in casual banter. In a nutshell, *TalkingCock.com* pokes fun at Singaporean politicians and current affairs. *TalkingCock.com* has also produced both an online and printed dictionary called the *Coxford Singlish Dictionary*. Its online edition has over 500 entries and it claims to have the most complete repository of Singlish and dialect phrases on the internet. The website has also inspired a movie called, *Talking Cock the Movie*.

The comic *Mr. Kiasu* was created by Johnny Lau and its authors are Yu Cheng and James Suresh. *Kiasu* is, by the way, a Hokkien word for 'not wanting to lose out'. The comic was first created in 1989 and released in 1990 at the Singapore International Book Fair. In 1993, Johnny Lau, together with McDonald's, promoted the *Kiasu* burger, and it was a huge success; 1.2 million burgers were sold within 2 months. In 2001, a Singaporean broadcasting company, Mediacorp adapted the comic and produced *Mr. Kiasu* as a live action sitcom. After the McDonald's campaign, the target age demographic for *Mr. Kiasu* went down from 16 to 13 to 10

years old. Lau's path to success has not been easy. He mentioned that he initially could not find a publisher who would accept his comics because the publishers he approached said that, because the Singaporean government is critical of Singlish, it may subject the publishers to censure if they were to publish material that propagates and elevates the status of Singlish.

Between the two pro-Singlish titles, *TalkingCock.com* is perhaps the most outspoken advocate of Singlish. It even has a manifesto written by a (plausibly pseudo-) group called the *SPAS (Society for the Preservation of Authentic Singlish)* that fights for the conservation of Singlish. *Mr. Kiasu*, on the other hand, is more "docile" and it does not challenge the Singaporean English language policies.

5.2.2. Discourse practices

One discourse feature shared by both titles is entertainment. *TalkingCock.com* and *Mr. Kiasu* are both comedy titles with the first being a satirical website. Singlish is used quite liberally in *TalkingCock.com*, whilst *Mr. Kiasu* appears to be more restrained. Perhaps one reason behind this is the fact that *TalkingCock.com* operates predominantly over the internet whilst *Mr. Kiasu* is published through a local Singaporean publishing house. The latter is subjected to the policies and criteria of the Singaporean publishing industry.

Following a typical online newspaper format (cf. <http://www.theage.com.au>, <http://www.thestar.com.my>, <http://www.nytimes.com>), *TalkingCock.com* has a number of sections such as the "news", "columns" and "features" sections. The latest articles (mostly, if not all) posted by columnists and writers are presented on the main page of the website in a blog style (i.e. entries are displayed in reverse chronological order; latest entry first). The satirical and comical "news" section is divided into local news, international news, politics, business, sports and arts, whilst the "columns" section features articles, poems, and comics posted by columnists. The "features" section has "special" entries like online political satire games, the online merchandise store, and the online *Coxford Singlish Dictionary* that documents Singlish lexical items. In other words, *TalkingCock.com* is an amalgamation of written journalism discourse, satire discourse and political discourse that uses Singlish as its code of choice. Furthermore, its *Coxford Singlish Dictionary* follows

the format of a standard dictionary, with lexical items spelt out and a brief description of the items i.e. the dictionary is presented in an academic discourse fashion.

Mr. Kiasu is a serialized published comic book that captures various dimensions of the middle class Singaporean's lifestyle, such as dating, work, domestic relationships, friendships and even commuting by public transportation. As such, discourses vary and they are diverse (e.g. friendship discourse, corporate-business discourse, care-giving discourse, etc.).

The textual realisation of these discourses is detailed in the next section.

5.2.3. Textual practices

TalkingCock.com is most outspoken in its views on Singlish. It advocates the use of Singlish and generally argues that Singlish is a code that reflects the Singaporean identity. This is implied in (10), which comes from the *SPAS* manifesto (italics for Singlish items mine).

- (9) [...] But why not ask the *ang mors*² to learn to speak like us? What makes them so *atas*³? Not only that, now all our shows will have these *bleddy chia'h kantang*⁴ drama club types that we used to *hantam*⁵ in school! Who wants to see? Why can't we have shows where the actors speak like normal people? Those who argue that our shows will sell better if they are in standard English (like Nicholas 'Under One Roof' Lee) should be reminded who their immediate audience is. What kind of message will this kind of argument send to Singaporean viewers? "We're not really interested in making shows for you; what we really want is to sell overseas." [...]

And what's wrong with Singlish anyway? It's how Singaporeans speak in casual company. If Londoners can speak Cockney or Liverpudlians can speak Scouse, why can't we speak Singlish?

² *Ang mors* (Hokkien) 'Caucasians'.

³ *Atas* (Malay) 'up', here: 'elite'.

⁴ *Bleddy* (Singlish) 'bloody'; *chia'h kantang* (Hokkien) 'eating potatoes', here (derogatory): 'RP-speaking Asian'.

⁵ *Hantam* (Malay) 'hit', here: 'criticise'.

We're not asking schools to start teaching Singlish as a subject (although that might make kids stay awake: "Class, today, we'll all learn how to use the phrase *kio tio goo lan*."⁶

But surely we Singaporeans are not so stupid that we cannot tell the difference between the kind of language acceptable in casual settings and the kind expected in business or official correspondence. (When was the last time you used *lah*, *leh* or *wah piang eh*⁷ in a formal letter or report?)

After all, the British still write grammatically despite watching programmes like Eastenders, which use colloquialisms. Are Singaporeans less sophisticated than the British? Also, why do we accept programmes from the USA, with their own deviations from standard English? Why are Americanisms acceptable, but not Singlish? Why is it okay to speak like the Nanny but not Phua Chu Kang? TCS should dub over all the US imports! *Fair is fair, what!*

S.P.A.S. has been set up to promote art that is relevant to Singaporeans, not just propaganda! Singlish is a language that is unique to us and we should celebrate it:

SAVE OUR SINGLISH! Say it, *LAH!* And say it proud!

(Talking Cock n.d.)

The manifesto challenges the notion that Singaporeans must always accommodate to others instead of others accommodating to Singlish. The manifesto also contrasts with the Prime Minister's speech regarding the part that Singaporeans should improve or pick up Standard English to accommodate to others, especially foreigners and business delegates. Furthermore, it also states that there is a form of hypocrisy in the language policy because even the British and American have their own L-variety, such as Cockney, Scouse and other English varieties, as shown on Singaporean television. However, it should be noted that this manifesto does not call for the use of Singlish in the education setting nor does it call for the abolishment of Standard Eng-

⁶ *Kio tio goo lan* (Hokkien) 'grab a bull's testicles', here: 'receive a booby prize'.

⁷ *Wah piang eh* (Hokkien) 'oh my goodness'.

lish. It basically argues that Singlish is part of the Singaporean identity and it plays a vital part in casual and intimate discourse.

Interestingly, while the manifesto criticises the curbing and censorship of Singlish, the bulk of the manifesto has been written in Standard English with the exception of few Singlish phrases (e.g. *fair is fair, what*) and lexical items (e.g. *ang mors* ‘Caucasian’, *chia’h kantang* ‘RP-speaking Asians’, *bleddy* and the particle *lah*). Perhaps this has been done to convey to the audience that members of the *SPAS* are not an “uneducated/unpolished” lot as they are able to use Standard English and Singlish with ease. In other words, the message is this: even those with a good command of Standard English can use Singlish.

Almost every entry in *TalkingCock.com* has Singlish features, and one example is the article *ISD Sees Malaysian Minister Sex Scandal as Growth Area* written by Pak Cham Kai, as shown in (11) (italics mine).

(10) **ISD Sees Malaysian Minister Sex Scandal as Growth Area**

Posted on Thursday, January 10, 2008

Topic: Business

by Pak Cham Kai

The surreptitious footage of the Malaysian Health Minister engaging in extra-marital sex may open up international business opportunities for Singapore’s Internal Security Department.

“Dr Chua’s case has shown how surveillance equipment can have very powerful effects”, said ISD spokesperson Mr. Secret Lee. “And which country has the most expertise on surveilling people? *Ha? Ha?* Which country?”

Mr. Lee said its CCTV cameras are so powerful, for example, that they can catch opposition candidates slipping a sheet of paper into their briefcase from 1 km away, well beyond the range of most RF detection devices. “So to catch some *lao ah peks* [‘uncles/old Chinese man’] shagging is no problem.”

“We can also tap phone lines, monitor email trails, arrow men in white to tail you ... our experience in this field is endless”, he added. “And to reassure Malaysians that we’re not interfering in their political system, we’ll offer our services to everyone, whether UMNO, Barisan Nasional or opposition.”

Mr. Lee did concede, however, that their audio services were not as good as their visual services. “*We Singaporeans not very good at listening, mah*”, he explained.

Mr. Lee also said that the ISD was able to supply counter-surveillance solutions. “Singapore is on the cutting edge of anti-transparency technology. Nobody knows how to keep potential scandals from scrutiny like us.”

Mr. Lee said that a business development team would be headed to Kuala Lumpur to scout for opportunities.

“*Just going to looksee-looksee* (i.e. to observe)”, he said with a smile.

(Pak 2008)

Note that in (11), the style of writing follows newspaper conventions and the main article itself has been written in Standard English whilst Singlish (in italics) appears in the quotation markers. Stereotypically, newspapers tend not to include L-variety codes. By including them (even as quotes), this pseudo news article intends to invoke humour. Some of the Singlish elements in this pseudo news article are:

- *Ha* and *mah*: According to Low & Deterding (2003:59), *ha* is a tentative particle that is used to assume and suggest whilst *mah* is a contradictory particle that is used as explicit rebuttal.
- *Lao ah pek*: A derogatory term in Hokkien, meaning ‘old man’ or ‘uncle’.
- *Looksee-looksee*. A blend of the English *look* and *see* and the Malay duplication plural marker.

The use of Singlish is to conjure a sense of comedy (and to a certain degree, absurdity) because, as a spokesperson of what seems to be a formal group, the Internal Security Department representative should be using a H-variety (i.e. Standard English) when giving an interview.

TalkingCock.com’s *Coxford Singlish Dictionary* is an elaborative effort to document Singlish, and it reflects *TalkingCock.com*’s intention to preserve Singlish. The dictionary features a large corpus of over 500 words and phrases and it has been presented in a dictionary format. (12) shows some of the entries in the online dictionary.

(11) EX

Although sometimes used to describe one's former girl-friend/boyfriend/whatever, in current Singlish, *ex* is more often a short form of *expensive*, and used to express incredulity, or in some cases, envy.

1. Wah lau, original DVDs a bit the ex one, man, better go JB and buy.
2. Julie very high-class one you don't know meh? She always dress very ex.

CHING-CHONG

Another derogatory term for someone who is very *cheena*. Usually used with the suffix *Chinaman*. There is probably a shade of difference between *ching-chong* and *cheena*, but it is subtle. *Ching-chongness* tends to be comical, whereas *cheena* leans more on the sleazy.

1. You don'ch know meh? His father very ching-chong Chinaman one, always wearing pajamas at home.

See also: Cheena Cheenapiang Cheena Gherk

CHEENAPIANG/CHEENAPOK (Contributed by Crab)

A derogatory term used by Singaporeans who are more well-versed and comfortable in English to describe (insult) those who are more well versed in Chinese and who cannot speak English properly.

1. Wah lau! He's super cheenapiang, man. Hear the way he speaks English!
2. Ah Lians and Ah Bengs are all cheenapoks!

See also: Cheena Cheena Gherk

(The Coxford Singlish Dictionary n.d.)

According to the compilers of the dictionary, there is no consistent spelling for Singlish words, especially those originating from the Chinese dialects, and they adopted a spelling which is both intuitive and approximate to English. There are a number of parts to each entry in the dictionary. Firstly, each entry is marked by the lexical items themselves (also see Romaine 1989:141 on marked items), and they are all spelt in the Roman alphabet although some of the words are Hokkien. Secondly, the lexical items are given an explanation (or definition) and some of them have a

brief commentary. The entries are also at times supplemented with pronunciation in parentheses, and examples of usage are provided. If certain words have similar meaning to other words, these entries are cross-referenced to other words within the dictionary, such as the words *dun* and *don'ch*. The dictionary is also built around the contribution of other Singaporeans, and these individuals are credited beside the entries they submitted (e.g. Contributed by Crab). The examples of word use may appear hilarious to Singaporeans because they are conventional colloquialism used amongst close knit social groups and they deviate from the formal dictionary conventions. The association of Singlish with humour may perpetuate its acceptance and use.

Unlike *TalkingCock.com*, *Mr. Kiasu* is not published on the internet, but on paper through a publishing house, and this may be one of the main reasons that *Mr. Kiasu* does not extensively use Singlish. In his interview with *Youth.sg* (@Loud 2007), author Johnny Lau mentions that in the initial stages, he found it difficult to find a publisher who would get his comics published because the government does not support Singlish. When his book finally got published and reviewed by the Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts, he said, “they were okay [with it], but were on the verge of telling me to relax [on the Singlish] a bit”. (13) shows the use of Singlish in Lau’s comics.

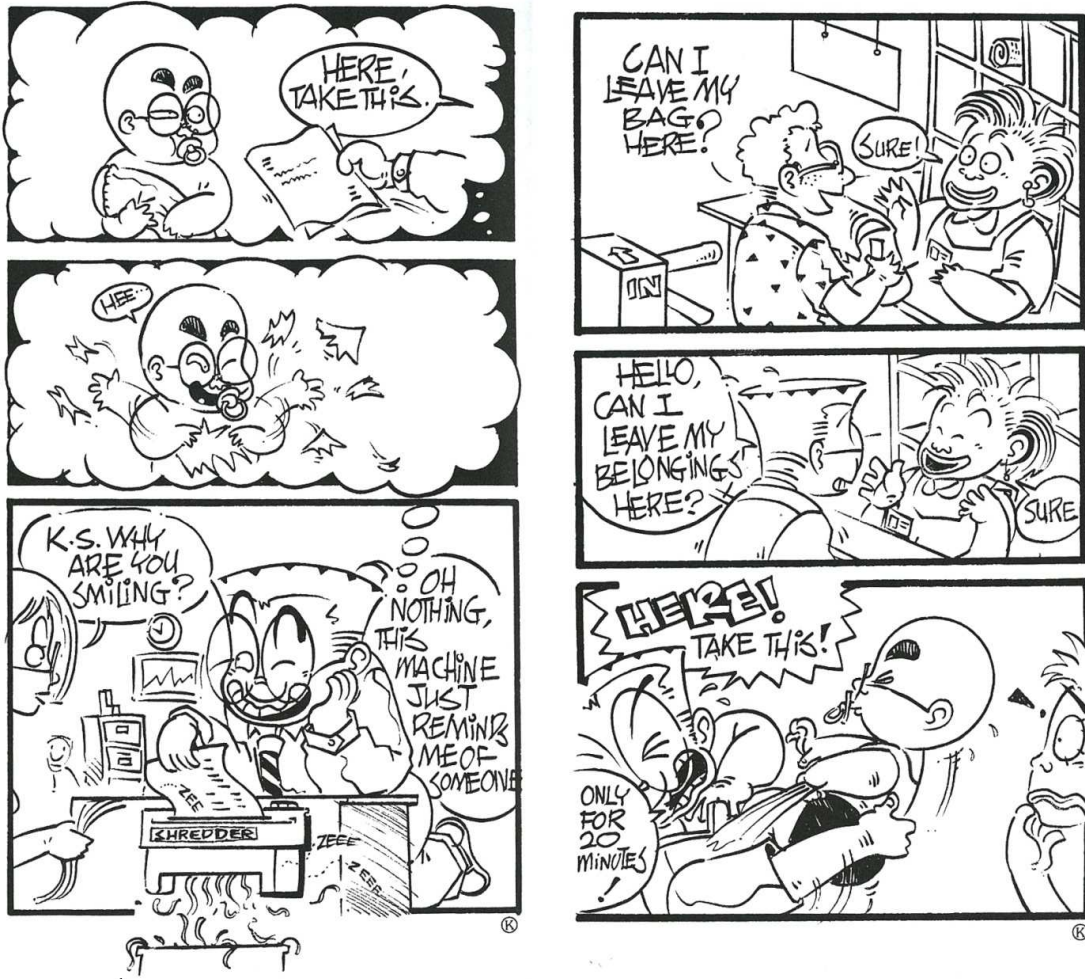
(13) Singlish in *Mr. Kiasu* (Source: Lau 1991:84, 1992:43)



Oei (or spelt as *oie* or simply *oi*) in the comic on the left of (13) is a way of attracting the attention of another person in Singlish; its equivalent is the Standard English, 'hey', whilst *tahan* is a Malay word for 'bear it'. *Kiasee* is the name of the character in the gas mask, and in Hokkien, *kiasee* means 'paranoia'. Singlish interjections on the right of (13) are, *aiyah* and *wah lau* (in the context of use, both indicate annoyance) and *sometimes got toilet but no toilet paper* (in Standard English, it would perhaps be expressed as, *sometimes toilets are available, but there is no toilet paper*). Like the previous two excerpts, Singlish here is associated with humour; being used in the contexts of toilet problems, i.e. unable to void one's bowel and having no toilet paper despite the presence of many public toilets, and the use of an L-variety in a TV interview.

But as mentioned in Section 5.2.1, the author was advised to tone down on his inclusion of Singlish in his comics. Hence, *Mr. Kiasu* also provides a balanced mix of Standard English, as (14) shows.

(14) Standard English in *Mr. Kiasu* (Source: Lau 1992:92-93)



It is arguable that in (14), Lau could have used Singlish instead of Standard English, for instance, *Nah, take this, K.S. Why you smiling?, Nothing lah. This machine remind me of someone, Hello, can leave my belongings here?* and *Nah, take this! Only 20 minutes.*

In sum, pro-Singlish advocates impart their attitude and their beliefs towards Singlish to the masses using various discourses, chiefly humour discourse. *Talking-Cock.com* however goes a step further by having a manifesto that challenges the

English language policies and it has entries written in Singlish. It also has a Singlish dictionary, published both online and in a book, to further document and preserve the code. Being an entity that exists predominantly on the internet, *TalkingCock.com* is subjected to less socio-political pressure than *Mr. Kiasu*, and it is thus able to exert considerable influence on the preservation of Singlish.

6. Discussion and Conclusion

Using Fairclough's framework of analysis, one is able to see how anti- and pro-Singlish ideologies reside in texts and the use of different discourses. According to Fairclough (1995:73), ideologies are constructions of reality which are built into various dimensions of the forms and meanings of discursive practices, and that such constructions of realities are used to establish, sustain or change power relations in society.

The *SGEM* and *TalkingCock.com* both push one step further than merely expressing their general attitude towards Singlish, to encouraging Singaporeans to either avoid Singlish (the *SGEM*) or to embrace the code (*TalkingCock.com*). The *SGEM* uses various discourses to achieve this objective, and that includes eliciting the support of younger generations through entertainment means like the *RYW* event. Moreover, Singlish is commonly criticised, mocked and stigmatised in the official *SGEM* website in one form or another. At the other end, *TalkingCock.com* is seen resisting attacks from anti-Singlish advocates, and has gone as far as to appeal to the masses to defend Singlish from being completely erased from Singaporean society.

Entertainment discourse seems to be a common means that both groups use to enact their attitude towards Singlish. Perhaps imparting ideology through entertainment is most effective in making an audience more receptive to an idea, because entertainment aims to amuse an audience. Moreover, *TalkingCock.com* uses discourses such as a manifesto, satirical journalism, and a dictionary, amongst others, to propagate the use of Singlish. In comparison, the comics in the *Mr. Kiasu* books appears to be more "docile" and "careful" in the use of Singlish, and there is no hint of ideological mobilisation, i.e. garnering support to embrace Singlish. This is because the author was advised to tone down on his usage of Singlish by publishers, for fear of censure

from the Singaporean government. *TalkingCock.com* is able to operate freely because it operates on the Internet and presents itself as a satirical website.

Essentially, the real clash between anti- and pro-Singlish advocates is one of values. Anti-Singlish advocates strive for economic pragmatism, whilst pro-Singlish advocates strive for identity. Gupta (in Burnside 2000) states that anti-Singlish advocates resist Singlish because of socially motivated reasons. According to her, “[Singapore] has a tradition of elitism and perfectionism [hence] Singapore must be perfect, and Singlish is seen as an imperfection”. But the same socially motivated reason can also be said of pro-Singlish advocates. Singaporeans who subscribe to Singlish and have a positive attitude towards the code see Singlish as a language that transcends social barriers. To them, Singlish can be used to forge rapport and perhaps more importantly, the Singaporean identity, that users of Singlish can associate with.

Acknowledgments

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