

Conditions for English Language Teaching and Learning in Asia

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Edited by

Kiwan Sung and Bernard Spolsky

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P U B L I S H I N G

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Dedicated to Ikuo Koike, in recognition of his ten years
of service as Vice President of AsiaTEFL

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PREFACE

RECOGNIZING CHANGING CONDITIONS

BERNARD SPOLSKY

It is one of the pleasures of age to sit quietly and think about earlier events in one's life. For a scholar, this can involve looking again at earlier published work – I heard of one famous linguist who in his old age said he read nothing else but his own writings. It is an even greater pleasure to find that others continue to read and ponder one's written production. It was therefore a very special event for me to have listened to the presentations by leaders of the Asian Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language reflecting on a book I wrote many years ago (Spolsky, 1989) and to read these revised versions of those presentations.

At the annual conferences conducted by the Asian Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language, national Associations have been invited to recommend a senior scholar to present a paper on a selected theme. Edited versions of these papers have been published subsequently. The first volume reported the history and policies of English education in Asia, the second dealt with the development of English curriculum in the various regions, the third was about teacher education, and the fourth dealt with the topic of assessment. The papers from the 2010 annual conference were about primary school English language education in Asia; this was the first volume to be commercially published (Spolsky and Moon, 2012). Also in final stages of editing is a volume on Secondary School English teaching in Asia (edited by Kiwan Sung and Spolsky).

Hearing the presentations and reading the revised versions published in this volume has provided me with the opportunity to think again about the issues I dealt with then and to wonder how I would tackle the same task again.

Some background will help. The first two decades of my professional career were mainly focused on second-language testing and learning. In 1985, an unexpected gap in our department's teaching program gave me

the opportunity to prepare a dozen or so lectures on language learning. I later wrote a condensed version for an invited conference paper (Spolsky, 1985a, 1985b), and it was the topic for my research over the next few years. A sabbatical leave in 1987 gave me the time to develop that preliminary work into a book, which I called *Conditions for Second Language Learning* and which was published by Oxford University Press (Spolsky, 1989).

My central goal was to write a general theory of second language learning. But in tackling this enormous project, I was particularly afraid of simply coming up with another new method, another single panacea for the problem of language learning and teaching. The time was ripe for the acceptance of complexity, for we were just starting to realize the inadequacy of the Audio-lingual method and all the many other methods being proposed to replace it. I rephrased my question in a form favored by my colleague, friend, and mentor, Joshua Fishman as: “who learns how much of what language under what conditions?” In the process, I came up with a list of 74 conditions, each of which had some relevance to second-language learning. Some were necessary conditions: without them, no learning could occur. Most were typicality conditions, usually but not always occurring in successful learning. Many were gradient: their degree of strength made a difference to the results. Thus, some exposure to the new language was necessary, but more exposure was better than less. The conditions model I took at my wife’s suggestion from contemporary writing by Ray Jackendoff, who used it in an account of categorization in semantics (Jackendoff, 1983).

It has been a great pleasure to learn the way in which my book has been interpreted by my distinguished colleagues. In particular, I have welcomed the updating of emphases that they have suggested. In the 1980s, second-language learning theory was largely influenced by psycholinguistics. After an earlier period in which the most significant approach had been linguistic (applied linguistics was at first seen in the development of contrastive analysis, where one assumed difficulty of learning reflected the differences between native and target language), we were now becoming particularly interested in what we had learned from the new psychological approaches preferred by Noam Chomsky with his model of natural language acquisition based on the existence of a language learning module in the brain. Our question was, how did this apply to second language learning?, which only happened after the so-called critical period had finished. Starting with this psychological focus, only one chapter of my 1989 book and a few conditions dealt with social aspects, although another chapter did concentrate on the translation of

social conditions into attitudes and motivation of the individual learner.

When you read the chapters in this book, you will note the enormous change in emphasis; just as my own research interest over recent years moved from focus on second language learning through a study of sociolinguistic questions (Spolsky, 1998) to a concern with language policy and language management (Spolsky, 2004, 2009, 2012), so most of the authors chose to deal with social and political aspects of English language learning in their home countries. I have no time for more than a brief reference to each paper, but they clearly deserve careful study to develop a full picture of the role of English and its teaching in our regions.

Let me pick out a few highlights. Phyllis Chew has shown how radical language management in Singapore, a response to a difficult multilingual situation, has reflected the needs of an active program of political and economic development. It turns out to be a clear application of my earlier suggestion that totalitarian governments have the power to change language practice, tracing the way in which a powerful prime minister modified his own and his family's language policy as he used changes in school language policy to switch to a bilingual (Mandarin and English) emphasis, keeping Malay as a symbolic language, and more recently to English as the dominant language. This is one of the few examples of successful language management, matching Kemal Ataturk's Turkish revolution (Lewis, 1999). It is a prime example of what some of my colleagues (Jernudd & Nekvapil, 2012; Neustupný & Nekvapil, 2003) called *complex* language management, the provision of teaching systems that modify the language capacity of those to whom it is applied. In contrast, Le Van Canh deals with what my colleagues called *simple* language management, the way in which the Vietnamese individuals he studied, recognizing their own lack of proficiency in English and fearing economic disadvantages, developed the motivation that helped them exploit any exposure to the language.

In the next presentation, Arifa Rahman argued for the importance of social conditions in Bangladesh, pointing out that language education policy is distributed unequally in a poor country, and drawing attention to the difference between students in urban centers and in the periphery. Unfortunately, the current political unrest in her country has prevented her from developing a publishable version of her paper, which we miss.

With a similar sensitivity to local differences, Marina Rassokha described the situation in post-Soviet Russia, where the changes in social and economic conditions and policies have been associated with a growing demand for access to English. Current English teaching in Russia is driven by this post-Soviet political change, but still influenced by a earlier

valuing of good literature and correct grammar.

Moving south, Bachrudin Musthafa surveyed a group of Indonesian English teachers and reported on the way in which the conditions model accounts for their approach to teaching. The presentation by Ravinder Gargesh also investigated the suitability of the conditions model for the complex English-teaching situation in India, at the latest official count with 880 living languages.

Susan Holzman wrote of the only slightly less complex sociolinguistic situation in Israel, a nation recognized for its exceptional revitalization of a heritage language; her concern is in particular how Hebrew impacts on the teaching of an international language. Writing about a theoretically monolingual nation, Masaki Oda reported on a series of interviews with the number of Japanese English language learners, in a study which made clear the important effect of social conditions on their motivations and attitudes.

Samina Amin Qadir and Fakhira Riaz described the linguistic complexity of Pakistan (with 300 dialects and languages, and its official Urdu a minority language) and the difficulty of achieving common standards for teaching English in four contrasting school systems. Hemamala Ratwatte presented the results of the study in which Sri Lankan English-language learners were encouraged to talk about the process of learning; allowing them to mix their four major languages (translanguaging) produced interesting and revealing results.

Dugarmaa Sandag who was unable to come to the conference or submit a paper because of family problems would have recounted how the Mongolian educational system has responded to the changed conditions since 1990 in developing a growing program in English language teaching. Young-In Moon (I admit a special interest as I taught her father when I was at Indiana University many years ago) reported on the varied opportunities for English exposure and learning of Korean students; she shows how the high demand for English proficiency cannot be met by the public education system, and leads parents to making financial and familial sacrifices in order to help their children learn more English.

Wang Haixiao analyzed the gap between native and localized proficiency and the challenges it sets for English teaching in China and elsewhere. Finally, Ganakumaran Subramaniam explained the way that English lost its importance in post-independence Malaysia, when it started to focus (like Israel) on establishing the role of its national language. However, in the new circumstances of endeavors to develop economic strengths, English has once again become the focus of school programs.

What I found particularly fascinating about all the papers was the stress

on the social and political dimensions of second language learning, especially the learning of English in Asia. When two decades ago I wrote *Conditions*, the closest we came to the social dimension was our concern for the learner's attitudes to the new language. Nowadays, we are much more likely to ask about the socioeconomic situation of the region in which the learner lives and the relevance of learning English to improving social and economic conditions. The emphasis has moved from methodology and psychology to sociolinguistics and language policy.

I have suggested that language policy has three key components. The first is language practice, in which we ask what people actually do, what languages they use for what purpose. From this point of view, the key issue within any given community is the general ecology of language – what languages are used by government, in business, in education, and by what section of the community. Only when we have the full language profile can we ask where English fits in. This used to be over-simplified as the contrast between English as a foreign language and English as a second language. To be more accurate, we need to detail the functions for which English is used, the role of the people who use it, and the appropriate levels of proficiency according to socioeconomic role. For example, those who wish to work with tourists or in call centers will need a higher level of oral competence than those who do not; those who desire higher education will need proficiency in academic English; while those who will work with tourists have somewhat different needs. Ideally, proficiency needs to take this into account, rather than being mapped on a theoretical single scale.

The second component in my model of language policy is language beliefs. Here again, it is not enough to simply notice the status of a language, but to distinguish between popular myths (such as that you will be more successful economically if you know English) and government ideologies (such as the belief of the Singapore and Malaysian governments that widespread knowledge of English is needed for economic progress). It is these beliefs that are translated into policy, in the form of goals for individuals and institutions. The gap between practice and beliefs is what determines management policy.

The third component, management, is our realm, for it recognizes both the simple management of the individuals who want to modify their language proficiency to meet situations they know or can predict, or the complex management of institutions (governments, businesses, schools) who wish to modify the proficiency of those under their authority. One part of this management is to try to change beliefs; the other is to provide situations for language learning. We also need to recognize that this occurs

at many levels in a modern state – not just national government but also local government, commercial and trade concerns, industry and agriculture, the neighborhood, the school, and the home. Each may have its own policy, leading to complexity and conflict.

Handicapping us in developing achievable management plans is an understandable but regrettable narrowness of goal. We still need a workable theory of what is involved in knowing (and so in learning) a language. Most of our thoughts are constrained by a top-down lexico-syntactical theory of language: a named language like English, we believe, consists of a number of lexical items (with phonological and orthographic shape) combined by a number of grammatical rules for combination. More useful models start rather with meaning, whether the usage based models of a growing school of linguists (Ellis & Larsen-Freeman, 2009) , or parallel architecture (Jackendoff, 2012). Jackendoff proposes assuming linguistic items (lexicon or grammar) which consist of meaning, form, and features defining variety, accounting for the mixed language of growing urban situations. If I were younger, that's where I would now concentrate my attention and efforts, and look especially at the languages of teenagers in cities, trying to understand the conditions that influence their development of rich language profiles.

Will I try to revise *Conditions*? I think of it occasionally, but it is too daunting a task, and would take me too far from my present major interests – for the foreseeable future, I expect to be kept busy by my interest in the current status and endangerment of the Jewish language varieties I came across in writing my latest book (Spolsky, 2014).

But I am deeply grateful to the Association, to the presenters of featured papers, to those contributors who have found time to polish their presentations, to the publishers of this book, and to my co-editor Kiwan Sung (who has borne the major weight of collecting and editing the contributions) for the chance to rethink my curiosity about the conditions for English and other language learning. It is a salutary reminder that our field progresses: that what once seemed an established state of the art will change; and that younger scholars will reshape and revise our work.

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CHAPTER ONE

FROM MULTILINGUALISM TO MONOLINGUALISM: LINGUISTIC MANAGEMENT IN SINGAPORE

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According to Bernard Spolsky (2004), language policy has three related but independently describable components – practices, beliefs and management. *Practices* are the observable linguistic behavior and choices which people make daily with regard to the languages and variety they will use. They are often regular and predictable and are very important not least because the language acquisition of children depends on what they are exposed to. *Beliefs* are in reality ideology and those significant to language policy and management are the values or statuses assigned to named languages, varieties and features. Finally, *management* refers to the explicit efforts made by an authority or authoritative group over the citizens to modify their practices or beliefs. I have used language “management” rather than “planning”, following Spolsky (2004), because it more precisely captures the nature of the phenomena, that is, that the management influences speakers to modify their practice or beliefs. Basically, language management starts with the individual while organized language management ranges from the micro (family) to the macro (nation-state) level (Neustupný and Nekvapil 2003). “Language is about choices” (Spolsky 2009: 1) and all three, the individual, family and nation will account for language choice but the most obvious form of language management is a law initiated by the nation state determining some aspect of language use.

Spolsky (2009: 7) is of the opinion that this is an “exciting and challenging time to attempt to write about language management”. It is my

opinion that this phenomenon is nowhere more exciting and challenging than in the Republic of Singapore, not least because within the space of a generation, the mother tongues has shifted from “dialects” to languages such as English and Mandarin. How was this effected without bloodshed or street protests bearing in mind that “language learning is not easy as it requires time and effort and a rare willingness to be open to completely new ways of thinking and even perceiving” (Spolsky 1986:188). In the Philippines, attempts to impose one language on all groups have been destructive and divisive (Tupas 2007). How then was Singapore able to succeed where others have failed? How were its management policies enacted and how were beliefs translated to practice so quickly?

Background to Singapore

Since achieving independence from the colonial masters in 1959, Singapore has become a relatively wealthy state. In 1959, Singapore had a per-capita GDP of around USD 2,200 per annum, no different from many sub-Saharan African states. However¹, by the 1990’s, it had left its third-world counterparts behind, having transformed itself into the “first world”, with a per-capita GDP of more than USD 60,000.² Its wealth has grown so large that the most innocent moves it makes has the ability to destabilize its regional ASEAN partners. The sum of its foreign exchange reserves and assets in its sovereign funds annually exceeds its GDP. Its low tax structure and strong currency ensure that the economy is one of the freest³, most innovative, competitive⁴, and business-friendly⁵. It has enjoyed the fruits of international trade and has exploited the benefits of globalization to the full. Part of its success must surely be due to its efficient use of English and Mandarin.

Most successful undertakings depend on the abilities of the manager to read trends, harness resources and direct processes. In a way, the political leader of a country acts like its Chief Executive Officer (CEO) – being concerned primarily with the allocation of resources, the finding of skilled personnel and the reading of trends in the world. It is therefore important to identify the manager (Spolsky 2009) and here Singapore’s chief manager and founding father is indisputably Lee Kuan Yew. As one of the world’s longest serving Prime Ministers, Lee’s name is synonymous with the history of modern Singapore and the Peoples’ Action Party (PAP) and any study on language sciences and the developing world must take this into consideration.

Hundreds of books have been written on Lee Kuan Yew but they have tended to focus on his trust in the rule of law, property rights and proper

accounting procedures (Tan et al. 1998, Han et al. 2011, Koh 2011); and on his promotion of Confucian values and work ethics (Heng 1992, Teo 2005). Relatively little is known about Lee's language strategies.

For Lee, language has always been a socio-economic and political resource to be managed well and his language policies have always been premised on achieving high economic growth. Very early in his career, Lee predicted that English and Mandarin would be the two foremost world languages and that their acquisition would provide Singapore with passports to both the East and the West (cf. Lee 2000). Lee is a native speaker of Baba Malay (a creole spoken by Chinese who have lived in the region for several generations) and was educated, like most Baba children, in an English-medium school. In such an environment, he played cricket, tennis and chess and was a member of the Boy Scouts. Similar to other political leaders such as Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru (India), Mohamed Llaquat Ali Khan (Pakistan), and Tengku Abdul Rahman (Malaysia) all of whom would later become prime ministers of their native countries, Lee graduated from Cambridge University. An Anglophile, he was mostly known as "Harry Lee" for the first 30 years of his life, and still is to his friends in the West and to many close friends and family. His wife, Kwa Geok Choo, attended the Methodist Girls School – an English-medium school set up by Methodist missionaries; and like her husband, won a scholarship to study at Cambridge where she also graduated as a barrister.

Because of his uncanny ability in the English language and immersion in its culture, it is not surprising that Lee was predisposed to believe that it was the "best "language" for Singapore's future. However, he saw this personal asset as a liability in the initial reach for power. This was because the majority of the electorate was Chinese-speaking and he was not. Thus began Lee's linguistic journey to master Hokien, the majority language and lingua franca of the Singapore Chinese as well as Mandarin, the national language of China and the lingua franca of the higher-educated Chinese-medium students. Quoting a Chinese proverb, he said that his linguistic journey to master Chinese was as "difficult as lifting the tripod brass urn in front of a temple" (Lee 1998: 354-355). He would mumble to himself words and phrases in Hokien while travelling in a car. Every spare moment he had were spent revising Chinese to get the sounds right, memorizing new words to get them embedded in his mind so that he could roll them off his tongue without looking at them (cf. Leong 2010). By using Chinese in his electoral campaigns, he managed to sideline the key mobilizers of the Chinese community such as the Chinese chamber of commerce, clan associations and powerful businessman, all of whom has considerable resources, commitment and charisma to exert influence on

local politics.

Names and naming narratives by which we describe ourselves influence our perceptions of others – and all these must consciously or unconsciously frame our personal and group identities. Here, Lee was careful not to forefront his privileged English-educated identity. He discarded his English name “Harry” and the foray into politics saw him using only his Chinese name. When queried about his identity, he would only say he was only “technically” a Baba and no more (Jurgen 1998). These were some of the means of playing down a pro-English-speaking, pro-British stand and instead adopting an anti-colonial culture by attacking the privileged position of the pro-British English-educated middle class, to which he himself belonged.

In the rest of this paper, I will continue to highlight the manager while discussing Singapore’s path from multilingualism to monolingualism. I have also deliberately taken a long-term macro sociolinguistic perspective - this will enable us to “stand back”, survey the landscape, and examine larger patterns not clearly discernible in a short-term close-up view. The 1960’s and 1970’s, a phase I have termed as “multilingualism”, was a time of experimentation where one sees a fledgling nation groping for solutions, experimenting with ideas which included a political merger with Malaysia (1963-1965) and an anxiety to maintain racial, religious and linguistic harmony through an ingenious but impractical multilingual platform of linguistic equality.

However, from the early 1970’s through the mid-1990’s, as the political climate stabilizes and the Peoples’ Action Party (PAP), tightens its grip on the island there is a policy of bilingualism – the use of English and one of the four official languages. In the 21st century, Singapore “restructures” its economy, politics and linguistics to the new world order. In its ambition to engage with the forces of globalization, its linguistic policies become essentially monolingual. In the following section, I discuss how language learning and teaching is greatly impacted by a nation’s political decision to give special status to a particular language or languages (Mackay and Rubdy 2009).

Multilingualism (1960’s- early 1970’s)

For Bernard Spolsky (1986), large cities are almost always linguistically complex with their inhabitants coming from diverse socio-cultural backgrounds and regions. Singapore was no exception. At the dawn of independence in 1959, 33 mother tongue groups were in place and 98% of the Chinese considered a dialect (other than Mandarin) to be

their mother tongue (Murray 1971:125, Chua 1964)⁶. At that time, less than 1% of the population spoke English at home compared with more than one-third of the population today⁷. This was far from Lee's vision of a first world state. Lee had to ensure that he remained in power long enough for his vision of two world languages as mother tongues to be realized.

Elected in 1959 as Singapore's first Prime Minister, Lee could not show his linguistic cards as he had only just gained power and his political position was tenuous. As Lee later explained in his biography: "To announce that all had to learn English when each race was intensely and passionately committed to its own mother tongue would have been disastrous....." (Lee 2000: 146). First things first, he had to reduce the 30 odd languages to just four official ones which could be recognized by the state and used in administration, in the courts, and at schools and for the civil service. This policy of "multilingualism" may be understood against the structural political changes in the post-war period – a time when a wrong move would result in a tinderbox going up in flames, as evidenced in Angola from 1975-2002, the Democratic Republic of Congo from 1960-1965 (Berman, Eyoh and Kymlicka 2004). In 1956, the government of Sri Lanka adopted the controversial anti-English law, the official Sinhala Only Bill, a decision which ultimately led to civil strife and over time contributed to the outbreak of civil war in 1983 (De Silva 1998).

A multilingual policy was understandably "the safest" although certainly not the most pedagogically practical bearing in mind that the newly elected independent government, despite scarcity of resources, had to pledge an equitable allocation of resources for all four language stream schools (Bell 1972: 621). While this appeared on the surface to be "fair and rational", it must be noted that the four languages chosen were not the mother tongues, as it would obviously appear to an outsider, but rather the "symbolic" languages of the different races. This is because the Chinese do not speak Mandarin, the Indians Tamil and the Malays Malay as might be presupposed; they instead are more likely to be speaking Hokien, Malayalam and Boyanese, respectively. To take one example, in 1957, the Chinese, having migrated from different regions of China, spoke the following, mostly mutually unintelligible, languages: Khek, Hainanese, Cantonese, Hokkien, Hakka, Teochew, and Hoklo.

As Malay was not in his plan for the first and second position, the Malays (15% of the population) had to be appeased in some other way, especially in view of the fact that Singapore's closest neighbours were Malay and Muslims. Hence, Lee declared Malay as the "national" language of Singapore knowing that its role would be more symbolic than

real. Today, the national anthem continues to be sung in Malay each morning although few children can understand the meaning of the words. The state crest, army commands and its currency notes also contain Malay inscriptions. An uprising by the minority pre-empted, Lee was now free to concentrate on more important issues.

Recognizing that the education system was the best platform for socialization, the government swiftly established a national school system to replace the many vernacular schools established by the communities during the colonial era (Tan 2007). The legitimization of four language-stream schools paralleled the newly declared four official languages of Singapore – English, Chinese, Malay and Tamil, which corresponded to the four major ethnic groups in the Republic. To make children learn well, all the four medium of instructions schools were provided with locally produced textbooks, and common-content syllabus, to promote a new identity, and to indicate a change of government from colonial to national. This contrasted sharply with the British era when each language stream had been inspired by different curricula, consistent with the colonialist divide-and-rule policy. Another innovation was the building of integrated schools. This meant the housing of different language-medium streams in the same building so as to foster common participation in sports and intermingling in the same canteen and school compound. New Town Integrated Secondary school which opened in 1965, for example, had the first two floors for Chinese-medium students and the upper two floors for English-medium students.

Multilingualism (early 70's- mid-90's)

Multilingualism was the appropriate policy as long as there was a perceived political threat from the different races and interest groups in Singapore. However, in 1966, an opportunity allowed the PAP to renege on this policy. In 1961, the *Barisan Sosialis*, a left-wing predominantly Chinese-speaking and Chinese educated group, then the opposition, resigned from Parliament after a number of their leaders had been arrested on charges of being Communists. Their resignation left the PAP as the only major political party, a dominant position which enabled Lee to fast-track his vision.

Further, in the subsequent elections of 1968, 1972, 1976 and 1980, the PAP won all of the seats in the parliament. Till today, opposition parties have not been able to gain more than 5% of the parliamentary seats. As an effectively one-party government, the stage was now set for more draconian measures with regards to language policy.

In 1972, Lee announced a policy of “bilingualism” rather than “multilingualism”. However, as was the case with the “multilingual policy”, it was not a bilingualism that involved the use of the “real” or actual mother tongues of the citizen. Neither was it a bilingualism that meant (logically) any two of the four official languages but rather a bilingualism which meant “English and one other official language. Kachru’s (1985) has termed this “English-knowing bilingualism” and Pakir (1991) has discussed the specific case of Singapore in his model. Under the cover of bilingualism, Lee had thereby sealed the dominant position of English once and for all. In this second phase of our history, English was designated as the first language of the school and so it was referred to as “the first language” while the other official languages such as Mandarin, Tamil and Malay were described as the “second language”. The *de facto* mother tongues, now designated clearly as “dialects”, such as Hokien, Teochew, Telegu, did not have any recognized status. In 1971, Lee was now able to present his policy more explicitly, without fear of political disadvantage:

“Suppression of the English language, which gives access to the superior technology of the West, will be damaging to the developing countries. Not only will it blindfold the next generation to the knowledge of the advanced nation, it will cause a brain drain. But so many new countries have stifled the foreign language they have inherited. Sometimes this is done, not so much to elevate the status of the indigenous language, but to take away an advantage a minority ethnic group has by having greater competence in the former colonial language. This has been damaging. It blindfolds the next generation to the knowledge of the advanced countries. Worse, it leads to an exodus of the professionally trained. They can emigrate to the advanced countries, and do because they do not intend to allow their children to be crippled by language blinkers. To get access to new knowledge, the best course would be to continue using the language of the former metropolitan power, particularly where this happens to be English” (Lee 1971: 4-5).

In 1973, the weight given to the “second” language paper in the Primary School Leaving examination (PSLE) was increased to “first” language level. Each of the two languages carried twice as much weight as Mathematics or Science. Good students were streamed to “EM1”, the best classes; the not so good ones to “EM2” and those who were performing badly to “EM 3”.

Second language papers were also offered at pre-university and tertiary levels (Gopinathan et al. 2004). Minimum language requirements formed the basis of admission to tertiary education.

Certainly, the pressure to do well not just in the “first” language but

also the second language was a source of anxiety to many parents. Private tutoring became a booming business especially in English and Mandarin.

By 1983, Lee was strong enough to unify the school system and nationalize English as the first language for all students and the medium of instruction for all schools. This spelt the end of Chinese-medium schools, which had a long history and tradition in Singapore society. So too, Nanyang University, a powerful symbol of Chinese achievement, language and culture (which used Chinese as a medium of instruction and trained many graduates) was merged with the University of Singapore in 1980 to form the *National University of Singapore* (Deterding 2007). The compulsory acquisition of English in schools under the rationalized cloak of “bilingualism” led to a dramatic rise in the enrolment of English medium schools from 47% in 1958 to 91% in 1979 to 99% in 1983 (Soon 1988).

The Speak Mandarin Campaign and the Eradication of Chinese Dialects

The Goh Report (Goh 1978), named after Goh Keng Swee, then the Minister of Education who worked closely with Lee, called for the restricted use of dialects. This was a means to propel Mandarin and to replace Chinese languages such as Teochew, Hakka, Cantonese, and Hokien which were labeled publicly as dialects, although such a classification is disputable by linguistics standards. To this end, the Speak Mandarin Campaign was instituted in 1978 and may be said to be the world’s most successful language campaign. Within a generation, most Chinese households had switched to either Mandarin (or English) as a mother tongue. It should be noted here that switching to Mandarin is like switching to another language, since the southern languages of China which most Singaporeans speak, are not mutually intelligible with a northern tongue like Mandarin.

The implementation of the campaign was marked by wide-ranging activities such as phasing out of dialect programs on the mass media, introduction of conversational Mandarin lessons over the air, and training for hawkers, taxi-drivers, bus conductors, postmen and clerks manning government counters (Teo 2005). In schools, exposure time to Mandarin was increased but seldom exceeded 40% since the key language was still English.

Responding to a system of rewards and punishments instituted in the education system, the percentage of Chinese households using Mandarin as the dominant language rose from 13% in 1980 to 30% in 1990, 45% in

2000 and 48% in 2010. On the other hand, the figures for Chinese dialects fell from 76% in 1980 to 49% in 1990 to 50% in 2000 and 20% in 2010 (Chua 1964, Dept. of Statistics 1981, 1991, 2011). These statistics are remarkable bearing in mind that the number of speakers speaking English and/or Mandarin at home in 1959 was less than 2% , the rest being dialect speakers.

Lee was able to implement such a policy by “walking the talk”. First, he had sent all his own children to Chinese-medium schools. By doing so, he has rejected the preferences of his own Baba background which had traditionally supported English-medium schools. This well-calculated move endeared him to the Chinese-speaking population. By this means he showed in his own words that he was “....as keen and anxious as anyone to retain the best features of Chinese education...” (Lee 2000: 173). On his children’s education, Lee recounts: “I make sure my three children will not suffer. So they have Chinese as their first language, then English, then Malay” (Han 2011: 262). Following their father’s dictates, Lee’s children (which include the current Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong) were schooled in Chinese:

“Therefore I could say, that I was convinced that Chinese schools were good for them because they were able to master English at home. However, for their university education, I said I would not send them to a Chinese-language university. Their future depended upon a command of the language of the latest textbooks which would be in English.” (Lee 2000: 1777).

Lee attributes his political success to his linguistic efforts:

“...because I learnt Chinese later, and they saw my intense efforts to master both Mandarin and the Hokien dialect, I was able to relate to the Chinese educated and have them accept me as a leader.” (Lee 2000: 173)

Lee (1998, 2000) spent much of his waking hours learning Mandarin and reminisced in his memoirs that in his lifetime, he had gone through the painful process of learning six languages. He sent his three children to Chinese-medium schools which taught Mandarin as a first language, a language in which they themselves were to excel, and a language which they did not speak at home. It was a wise move to signal his sincerity and belief in the political-economic potential of China; as well as an expedient stratagem to win political votes from his Chinese-speaking constituency. No one could accuse him of insincerity since he and his family had also to learn “new” languages to replace the ones that no longer mattered.

Monolingualism (Mid-90's onwards)

In the 21st century, Singapore sees itself as intrinsically global. This is shown in its achievement in the last decade as “the world’s most globalized country” (Kearney 2010). The government wants the nation to be a multifunctional cultural metropolis, and has asked its supporters to accept the undisputed dominion of global capital.

Singapore’s openness, cosmopolitanism, and heterogeneity may also be evidenced in its population policy. For example, there was a novel suggestion by the Parliament in 2004 to double the then population of 4 million to 8 million so as to enable it to gain a more competitive global edge. This is a proposal not to be taken lightly, being already in quiet practice even before its official pronouncement. Singapore’s population grew from 2.4 million in 1980 to 5.2 million in 2010. This doubling was not a result of the natural birth rate, since fertility had reached below replacement level as early as 1975, and is currently one of the world’s lowest at 1.26 in 2007 (Department of Statistics 2011). Population growth has come from migration, notably from China and India. The proposal is indeed unique, since no country in the world has ever wittingly sought to make its citizens a minority in the name of economic growth. Lee explains: “We are multiracial. So absorbing new migrants of different races and religions and cultures does not worry us. In fact, it makes us more attractive as a cosmopolitan center, and makes us more relevant to the world” (Straits Times, 2004: H6).

An openness to the global order has also led to the increased use of English. For example, Vaish’s (2007) survey shows that the number of children entering Primary 1 who spoke English predominantly has risen from 36% in 1994 to 50% in 2004. In schools, curriculum time in cultivating bilingualism has been reduced significantly. Gone are the forceful structures of bilingualism implemented in the 1980’s and 1990’s. For example, a second language no longer carried as much weight as Science or Mathematics. A second language is also no longer required for admission to schools, if the pupil cannot cope with the academic workload or is not linguistically inclined. In other words, Mandarin, Malay and Tamil scores are no longer counted as essential criteria for university admission as was the case in phase 2. There are no longer mandatory second language remedial camps in the university. In fact, the minimum qualification is not a bilingual criteria but a pass in English and those who are unable to attain this minimum grade in English have to take remedial classes. This has led scholars such as Liu, Zhao and Goh (2007), to predict that while the last school-going generation have seen the shift from

Chinese dialects to Mandarin, the next generation may see the shift from Mandarin to English. This trend is already seen in the significant decline in the readership of Chinese newspapers (Tan 2007).

The rise in the use of English in both private and public domains in Singapore has certainly led to a general decline in bilingual abilities. In his Memoir published in 2000, and with the PAP having been in power for more than 40 years, Lee was emboldened to pronounce to his citizenry that bilingualism has indeed held back some pupils who would have attained higher levels had they been able to go at their own pace in only one language: "If you use capacity to study one language, you have less brain capacity for other things" (Straits Times, June 24, 2004: H4). He quoted examples of Mauritius and Luxembourg where second language newspapers there revealed that standards for secondary languages were usually lower. Lee then proclaimed that bilingualism is possible only for "the exceptionally able and very determined" (Straits Times, June 24, 2004: H4) and that "while individuals can achieve equal fluency in two languages, the norm is for individuals to be dominant in one language." These pronouncements were given headlined in *the Straits Times*, the only newspaper company to survive Lee's regime: "Bilingualism: Many are masters of none" (Straits Times 12 Aug 2007).

Conclusion

Spolsky (2009) was correct in noting that the normal unmarked tendency of nation states and their governments is towards monolingualism not least because this serves for more efficient communication and mobilization for a unified national identity. Indeed, in a much earlier book, Spolsky (1986) had indicated that the presence of more than one official language would add an educational burden to educational systems in general. In view of these findings, Singapore's rational path from multilingualism can be said to be not totally unpredictable.

Spolsky (2009) also argued that government-sponsored initiatives often failed because they conflicted with the ideologies and practices promoted in other domains. For example, ambitious parents may reject the state's policy of mother-tongue medium schooling and prefer private English-medium schools because of the status of English in domains such as business. Yet the government-sponsored initiatives in Singapore have been very successful. Careful not to indulge in "linguistic nationalism," Singapore has emerged from colonial status to nationhood, experimented with multilingualism, bilingualism and monolingualism and restructured its economy several times over in its effort to keep pace with changing

“liminal” (Chew 2009) conditions in the world. Spolsky is likely to counter by arguing that only a determined totalitarian state can enforce at all levels the sweeping changes in language practices and beliefs. This is partly true in Singapore in view of the fact that the same party has been in control for over half a century. This powerful government has indeed set the conditions of language learning in Singapore through its total control among other aspects of the education system. Yet it must be noted that the local populace, including its academics, has believed in its ideology and showed its compliance through their personal practice with language change. The PAP has also been democratically elected since 1959 and The Global Corruption Barometer 2013 which captures the perceptions of the extent of corruption in the public sector in 176 countries, has ranked Singapore 5th in the world, surpassed only by Denmark, Finland, New Zealand and Sweden.

This chapter has not just presented a study of a nation but also of its manager. I have been offered a glimpse of how a linguistically attuned leader has managed to propel himself to power and to effect language shift within a generation. Singapore is a study of a post-ideological state. Long before the end of the Cold War, its astute managers committed the country to an engagement with multinationals at a time (1960) when such processes were critically described as neo-colonialist. It has been a complex journey, not least the willful destruction of several native tongues found unfit in a rationally managed economic stratagem. Yet its manager was the first to throw his mother tongue out despite the fact that Baba Malay was the lingua franca of Southeast Asia for a few hundred years. Abandoned by its foremost son, Baba Malay (and the distinctive Baba culture) is currently in imminent danger of extinction. Most Babas do not speak or use it in communication anymore and many of its formerly distinguished families who have disagreed with Lee’s policies have migrated to UK or Australia (Chew 2013). This leaves the electorate convinced that if Lee had thought that any of the 33 original native tongues had been the necessary keys to scientific and economic capital, he would have chosen them, but since they were not, they had to be ruthlessly eliminated and replaced by ‘winners’ such as English and Mandarin.

I would like now to give two short answers to two enigmatic questions posted by Spolsky (2009) in his seminal book on *Language Management*, which are: “Can language be managed?” and “If it can, should it be managed? In the Singapore situation, it has certainly been managed. We have seen how the PAP has set the conditions for language learning in Singapore through its total control of the education system and of the local media. Whether language *should* be managed is a more difficult question