Abstract

There is a recent trend for Singapore Chinese Comedian to mock the speech of 2\textsuperscript{nd} language speaker of Mandarin from Hong Kong (Hong Kong Putonghua) in their performance. The fact that locals readily accept such performances shows that the Hong Kong style Mandarin as portrayed in these Mandarin comedy must to a large degree coincide with the local stereotype of Hong Kong Putonghua.

Comedians apparently select and/or exaggerate certain features from Hong Kong Putonghua and represent them in their performance. This paper seeks to investigate this unusual language phenomena on two levels. On the first level, to locate from the modified comedian speech, speech features that are salient to Singaporeans. On the second level, using the Cooperative Principle (CP) and the General Theory of Verbal Humour (GTVH), the humour of such comedy show is inspected.

It is found that the portrayed Hong Kong styled Mandarin deviates from Singapore Mandarin almost only in the use of utterance particles. There were limited deviation in the pronunciation of initial
consonants and 5th or Ru tone, and there were no evidence of the borrowing from Hong Kong vocabulary. Interestingly, code-switching into English vocabulary display noteworthy deviation in terms of pronunciation.

It is also found that the humour generated in these performances was not exploiting the salient features of Hong Kong Putonghua, but instead relied on the flouting of CP to generate incongruity which is a basis for humour.

It is possible to conclude from these results that Singaporeans are highly tolerant towards phonological features that deviates from Standard Mandarin but not in Singapore English; while utterance particle could play significant role in local speech such that differences as perceived in Hong Kong Putonghua are seen as highly salient and thus selected by comedians as an important identifier for "Hong Kong-ness" in their performance.

Using GTVH analysis, it is also established from the humour found in such comedian speech that there were no disparagement between local Singaporeans and Hong Kong immigrant community. Instead, the portrayed image of a Hong Kong immigrant in our
subject speak and behave almost entirely like a Singaporean.

This result suggest that the Hong Kong immigrant community has already settled down in Singapore and that Singaporeans have readily accept them as part of the local community.