Abstract

This study aims to investigate, identify and examine the characteristics of the Singapore Teochew dialect, through the collection of lexical corpus.

The Singapore Teochew dialect originated from Teochew area of the present Guangdong province in mainland China. The Teochew dialect was brought over to Singapore by Chinese immigrants between the late 19th century and early 20th century. The Singapore Teochew dialect has unique characteristics which differentiate it from that of Guangdong, as it has been influenced by other dialects and languages, such as Hokkien, Malay and English for more than a century. However the Singapore Teochew dialect and the Guangdong Teochew dialect have fundamentally the same lexical system.

The investigation was done through nine sessions of field work, firstly, on the phonological system of the Singapore Teochew dialect, and secondly, on the collection of lexical corpus. Through the analysis of the lexical corpus, it was concluded that the Singapore Teochew dialect consists of 3 levels:

First level, the borrowing of lexicon from foreign languages, such as English, Malay, making it different from the Guangdong Teochew Dialect;

Second level, the adapting of Chinese and Hokkien lexicon into the original body of the Singapore Teochew dialect, replaced the original Teochew lexicon.
Third level, the retention of a significant number of ancient Chinese lexicon in the Singapore Teochew dialect, so that the fundamental lexical system of both the Singapore and the Guangdong Teochew Dialect remains the same.