ABSTRACT

Singapore Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew made a speech titled “Mandarin or Dialects?” in the grand opening of the “Speak Mandarin Campaign” on September 1979. It thus marked the official start of speak Mandarin promotion. Since then, this language planning policy through “Speak Mandarin Campaign” has been carried out every year. As a result, this campaign has a significant impact on Singaporeans’ language choice and usage over these 30 years.

Language is closely related to society, culture, politics, as well as the economy. This long-term Speak Mandarin Campaign, which is heavily endorsed by the Singapore government, has great implications for Singaporeans’ language appearance, language manner and application, as well as its effect on cultural identity and recognition among Singaporean Chinese.

This paper, therefore, focuses on the discussion of the change of the status of Mandarin in Singapore through “Speak Mandarin Campaign”, together with its effects on societal, political, economical, educational and cultural factors. Additionally, this paper also investigates the changes in Mandarin’s functional usage, adjustments in Singapore’s language policies and also the relevancy to cultural identity of Singaporean Chinese through this language campaign.