Abstract

The standardization of Singapore Mandarin has always been a controversial issue in the local Chinese society. This therefore invites a pressing need to compile a complete set of standards for Singapore Mandarin in terms of lexicons and syntaxes based on wide-spread surveying.

In this study, a thorough survey of the main local Chinese newspaper, Lianhe Zaobao (联合早报), was carried out with the main objective of investigating the characteristics and usage trends of Singapore Mandarin lexicons. The widely accepted traits and usages, as well as the commonly made mistakes of the language were captured in hope of providing some insights for its standardization.

Data for this study were collected from the commentary section (言论版) of Lianhe Zaobao for a period of 1 year, from 1 January 2004 to 31 December 2004. Articles from the same newspaper, taken between 1 January 2000 and 1 January 2005 (a period of 5 years), and the Google website, were further used in the verification and analysis of lexicon.

For lexicons, it was found that besides tapping more loan words from other languages, Singapore Mandarin has also created its own new vocabularies and assumes new meanings to the existing Putonghua vocabularies, indicating a kind of self-development in the language itself. The use of suffixes to form new lexicons has also revealed some interesting dividing trends in which the desired
expression can sometimes exist in both forms – with or without affixation.

This study also attempted to give an account on the current state of lexicon usage by highlighting some changing trends of lexicon grouping in Singapore Mandarin. Common mistakes made in both lexicon grouping and written expressions of the language were also further discussed near the end of the dissertation with the aim of raising awareness to these avoidable errors.