Abstract

The main objective of this study is to investigate the influence of dialects in the syntax and lexicon of Singapore Mandarin. In this study, the term "dialects" includes not only Southern Chinese dialects, but also local English and Malay.

A comparison of Singapore Mandarin and 普通话 was carried out in order to observe the differences between them. This study attempted to account for these differences by identifying the influences of dialects. Data for the study of syntax and lexicon was mainly collected from 125 samples of recordings of actual conversations. Local Chinese newspapers and magazines were other sources used in the analysis of lexicon.

For syntax, 6 aspects of Singapore Mandarin were analysed. They include patterns of reduplication, sentence patterns, complements, word order and particles.

Of the various types of reduplicated patterns studied, some reduplicated nouns were found to assume adjectival meanings in Singapore Mandarin. In the discussion on sentence patterns, it is noted that guò 过, méiyǒu 没有 and gēi 给 are used very frequently in comparative sentences, interrogative sentences and disposal sentences respectively. Certain prepositions, in particular, gēn 跟 are identified to have similar functions as the coverb bā 把. In the analysis of complements, qù 去 is found to act as a resultative complement while de 得 is not found in many predicative complements.

For word order, xiān 先 and cái 才, together with adjectives duō 多 and shǎo 少 are found to appear only after action verbs. Particles namely me, hǎi, hā and wo are discussed. me and hǎi have similar functions as mā 妈, while hǎi and wo are usually used in narrative sentences.
For lexicon, attempts were made to find the sources of loan words from dialects. In addition, these words were studied to identify the influence of nativization. For instance, it was found that certain disyllabic words in Standard Mandarin have assumed a monosyllabic form in Singapore Mandarin. On the whole, the expressiveness of dialectal lexicon is reflected in the daily use of Singapore Mandarin.