The curious case of linguistic rights silence in Singapore

Tang, Jerine Kit-Ling

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**THE CURIOUS CASE OF
LINGUISTIC RIGHTS SILENCE
IN SINGAPORE**

**TANG KIT LING JERINE
SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES**

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TANG KIT LING JERINE

School of Humanities and Social Sciences

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Abstract

This study calls into question the uncontroversial normalisation of the notions of language rights and linguistic justice as conceptual apparatuses in the scholarly discourse on the management of linguistic diversity. In highlighting the success of Singapore's linguistic regime in spite of its silence on language rights, the paper examined the existing linguistic regime to explore how it lines up with the theoretical rights discourse to explicate the state's orientation towards language rights. The study found that Singapore appeals to an alternative conceptual orientation to linguistic rights management that does not involve the recognition of rights. To investigate how the state-engineered multiculturalism and multilingualism in Singapore appears to sit comfortably with the citizenry, such that they reciprocate with a similar silence on language rights of their own, the language values and perception of language rights of the citizenry were examined. The results showed a congruence between Singaporeans' linguistic values and perception of language rights recognition and the state's linguistic regime, and analysed how this congruence was achieved. The study then discussed the implication of the success Singapore's linguistic regime has on the existing language rights debate.

Chapter 1 – The silence of language rights in Singapore

As one of the first states in the world to espouse multiculturalism as an official policy and declare itself a constitutionally multiracial state, the Singaporean government recognises certain civil liberties as necessary in facilitating harmony among its culturally diverse citizens. These liberties constitutionally promised by the state include the rights to freedom of religion and freedom from discrimination, and are recognised as civil liberties necessary in a multicultural state by state leaders despite their general scepticism towards liberalism's idealistic commitment to the inalienable rights of freedom and equality. Yet in spite of its steadfastness to multiculturalism, the state has rarely addressed the issue of language rights, which has been identified as one of the major issues that has dominated academic and public discussions of multiculturalism in other officially multicultural nations such as Canada and Australia (Chua, 1995), as well as other similarly officially multilingual nations with comparable economic success such as Belgium and Switzerland. The recognition of language rights in these economically advanced multicultural and multilingual nations is fiercely championed by language rights movements, and supported by official state policies that safeguard those very rights. These aforementioned nations have additionally gained significant prominence in the academic discourse of language rights, having been frequently spotlighted by political theorists (van Parijs, 2011; Patten, 2009; Réaume, 2003; May, 2008) as examples of nations that have developed language policies which exemplify theorized normative approaches to language rights, and in that regard, are model nations to be emulated. As a multilingual and multicultural nation that fulfils the sociolinguistic prerequisites of partaking in the language rights debate, Singapore should hardly be excluded from the discourse on language rights, or at least not ignored without comment, but yet language rights in Singapore has been given little attention by state and scholars alike.

The silence on language rights in Singapore, while not deafening, is curious. The advocacy of language rights by language rights activists is generally fuelled by concerns of equal economic opportunity and language use, as well as the belief that language hierarchies in multilingual or multicultural societies are socially and politically constructed processes imbued in wider unequal power relations (May, 2006; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000; Phillipson, 2000). As such, they believe that to address inequality and linguistic discrimination, greater representation and protection need to be extended to linguistic minorities, for the disavowal of such rights could exacerbate social tensions, potentially fragmentising the state (May,

2008). Couched in ethical considerations that claim to protect the weak from abuse, the arguments for the need for linguistic rights are difficult to disagree with. Concomitantly, political philosophers have built and defended normative theories of language policy that frame claims to rights as fundamental in upholding liberal democratic ideals, maintaining that a lack of political commitment to language rights undermines the notion of justice and engenders social conflict (Kymlicka and Patten, 2003). While these claims are supported by the prominence that language rights receive in the language policies of the previously identified model-esque nations such as Canada, alongside the social harmony they experience, the same cannot be said for Singapore, given how the state's reticence on rights is similarly complemented with a harmonious cachet.

Insofar as the Singaporean government has chosen not to adopt a language rights rhetoric, the lack of response in scholarship to this exclusionary move is also puzzling, and more so given that Singapore provides a peaceful sociolinguistic context of multiculturalism and multilingualism where linguistic issues receive much attention, paralleled by a very robust set of language policies. If the recognition of language rights is as fundamental to language planning and policy as it has been purported to be by its advocates, then the exclusion of Singapore in the language rights debate warrants questioning, especially when it has in place official policies of multiculturalism and multilingualism, à la the other nations prominently recognised in the ongoing debate.

State discourse and scholarship aside, a third dimension also seems to have been left out in the general language rights debate, and that is the citizenry. Insofar as the last decade has seen an expansion in the development of normative theories of language policies as well as the fierce championship of rights recognition by language rights movements, the resultant rhetoric is framed for and received by the state, namely the policymakers. While activists and theorists provide a cogent case for rights and a theoretical premise on which to base language policy, the execution of those policies necessarily involve the citizenry. And for all it is worth, the perception of language rights among citizenries has hardly made its debut in the language rights debate, and has gone largely unremarked by scholars. As language is considered an unavoidable social practice, citizens are then more than mere passive beneficiaries of abstract rights granted by the state. They are instead social actors who are engaged in the provisioning of rights to other citizens by way of actual language practices, which by implication suggests that in order for a successful implementation of language

rights policies, it is essential that the ideologies of rights that circulate among the citizenry are congruent to that of the state's. Over and above a conceptual congruence with the state, what is more imperative is a ground-level congruence with the paternalistic ideologies of language rights that activists and theorists champion as a universalism under the guise of concern for all. While the roles of advocates, theorists, and policymakers alike are presumably to bring about a "desired standard of living", the importance with which they regard language rights cannot be assumed to permeate the citizenry. Therefore, it seems necessary to explore the citizenry's perception of rights, to provide for an inclusive language rights dialogue, especially in Singapore, where the rights among the citizenry similarly echoes that of the state and scholarship – one of taciturnity.

The notion of language rights in Singapore is seemingly an absent subject matter in public and academic discourse; barely addressed, if at all, by the state, the citizenry, and scholars. Neither wholly rejecting nor endorsing the values and practices of language rights and linguistic justice espoused in literature, this dissertation goes beyond the traditional prescriptive rhetoric that has dogged the language rights debate, and draws on Singapore's own cultural and political traditions to explore the non-speak of language rights in Singapore, along three dimensions:

1. the state, by examining why the Singaporean government has not adopted a language rights rhetoric and execute policies pertaining to language rights;
2. the citizenry, by empirically explicating the local and cultural understandings of language and language rights, and contrasting them against the ideologies associated with dominant rights discourse to examine why Singaporeans have not responded to nor resisted the state's avoidance of language rights; and
3. scholarship, by exploring the implications of the language rights situation in Singapore, or its lack thereof, on existing scholarship.

This dissertation, in its exploration of a state-citizenry-scholarship congruence of language rights perception, aims to provide an empirical perspective of how rights are conceptualised by the community, and advances the existing literature on language rights that at present, dominantly considers language rights from an abstract theoretical perspective.

1.1 The language of language rights

While linguistic diversity as a historical and contemporary fact is well-recognised, “superdiversity” (Vertovec, 2007) in this current era of globalisation has brought to the fore its management by nation-states. As language is regarded as integral to nationhood (May, 2003), it is no surprise that the proliferation of linguistic diversity has been identified as a major source of political controversy, affecting the stability and sustainability of numerous political communities (Kymlicka and Patten, 2003). The growing range of political conflicts and challenges founded in negligence or suppression of languages in linguistically-diverse nations has resulted in the recent emergence of language rights to combat linguistic discrimination and maintain stability (*ibid.*). Within Europe for example, various governments and organisations have convened to develop recommended liberal democratic standards for dealing with language rights. These include the Council of Europe’s European Charter for Regional or Minority languages and its Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, as well as the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe’s Oslo Recommendations on Linguistic Rights of National Minorities (Kymlicka and Patten, 2003). On an international front, linguistic rights in the general sense, are also officially endorsed in the United Nations’ Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This acceptance of language rights in political discourse can be regarded as a natural outgrowth of the acceptance of human rights by the international community, as well as the increasing recognition of the democratic principles of freedom and equality as fundamental values within the international system (Spolsky, 2012).

As language rights gains traction in international politics (Bruthiaux, 2008), the management of linguistic diversity by nation-states also spurred the development of language rights as an academic paradigm. Two lines of research stand out among the growing number of studies on language rights. The most established of the two can be found within the disciplines of sociolinguistics and language planning and policy, where scholars recognise the disparity between often monolingual or delimited bilingual state policies, and actual multilingual language practices (Blommaert 2010; Pennycook, 2010), thus highlighting the need to consider the ethical implications of policymaking, especially with regard to minority communities and their languages. By drawing attention to questions of language choice and socioeconomic disadvantage, language and identity, and language endangerment and death, three distinct movements have developed to champion the recognition of language rights (May, 2005), namely the Language Ecology movement (Nettle and Romaine, 2000; Dalby,

2003) that is concerned with language preservation and revitalisation, the Linguistic Human Rights movement (Phillipson, 2003; Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas, 1995) that argues for greater institutional protection and support of minority languages and their speakers, and the Minority Language Rights movement (May, 2001, 2005) that focuses on the specific implementation of minority language rights as part of a general attempt to defend minority group rights. In this discipline, the engagement in the language of language rights is primarily driven by the belief that language diversity should be preserved, and that the recognition of language rights in policy planning is necessary in the management of linguistic diversity to circumvent linguistic inequalities and discrimination experienced by minorities.

The debate on language rights has also been taken up in recent decades in the field of political theory. The central concern of political theorists is with the rights attributable to citizens in modern nation-states, and seeing how public services and education have to be offered in some language(s) or other, the issue of language rights becomes inextricably linked to their focus on citizenship rights. Underpinned by liberal-democratic principles of freedom, justice, and democracy, their consideration of language has led to the development of normative theories of language policy, to define approaches through which states can justly manage linguistic diversity. The language rights discourse in political theory considers only the individual's (linguistic) rights and the fairness of his/her relationships with other individuals, and not the language per se (Alcalde, 2015). Consequently, where political theorists differ from sociolinguists is in their impassiveness towards the language outcome generated by language policies, so long as the standards of liberal democracy are satisfied in the policymaking process, and linguistic resources are equitably distributed. By and large, political theorists espouse the language of language rights via normative theorizing of language policy because its observance is regarded as necessary in the effective exercise of other sometimes more important liberal ideals like the equality of opportunity and freedom of choice (Patten and Kymlicka, 2003).

While the different fundamentals that ground the two lines of research have resulted in different orientations and theoretical trajectories towards language rights, they both regard language rights as an important consideration in the management of linguistic diversity and conception of language policy. The overarching concern for language rights in these disciplines is evidence of the purported attractiveness of a rights rhetoric, which has in and of itself come to be acknowledged as having developed a 'normal currency', and regarded as a

given, or at least expected, in political discourse (Waldron, 2000). However, the preference for the language of language rights does not imply that language rights are themselves acknowledged, accepted, and endorsed globally. While there is a groundswell of studies illustrating, through ‘success stories’ such as Canada and Switzerland, that observing language rights help regulate or manage conflicts (Grin, 1999; Twahirwa, 1994; Ricento and Burnaby, 1998; MacMillan, 1998), language rights remains a contested concept even in Western democracies such as France and Sweden (Oakes, 2011; Peled, 2011), and more so outside the democratic world, where linguistic diversity is regarded as subversive or divisive and language rights even less secured (Peled, 2011). It follows then, that engaging in the language rights discourse that dominates contemporary theorizing cannot be taken as a minimum standard, nor can it be regarded as a best practice in the management of linguistic diversity.

1.2 The non-speak

1.2.1 The right-less approach to language policy

What language activists and political theorists have largely failed to consider, are nations outside the liberal-democratic world that have not subscribed to the liberal concept of language rights in their management of linguistic diversity, but are yet seemingly successful at keeping the forewarned conflicts at bay. Singapore provides a case in point, wherein the language policy takes a right-less trajectory in spite of the state’s commitment to multiculturalism and multilingualism. Consistent with other multicultural nations, the Singaporean government has incorporated the concept of multiculturalism as a tool for governance, embedding it as a core rationale for many public policies including its language policies, but unlike the other nations such as Canada that utilise the concept of multiculturalism to uphold language rights, the political discourse regarding language in Singapore has never ventured in the direction of rights. To illustrate this, an introduction of the sociolinguistic profile of Singapore is in order.

Singapore today is made up of an ethnically diverse population approximating 5.47 million people, which can be loosely categorised into four ethnic groups, namely, 76.2 per cent Chinese, 15 per cent Malay, 7.4 per cent Indian, and the remaining 1.4 per cent categorised as “Others”, a miscellaneous category comprising mainly of Eurasians and Europeans (Department of Statistics, 2014). True to its multicultural ideals, it seems only natural that the state established multilingualism as the cornerstone of its language policy. Thus in assigning

Malay, Mandarin, and Tamil as the mother tongues of the Malays, Chinese, and Indians respectively, enshrining them as constitutionally equal, and further sanctioning each ethnic mother tongue as an official language alongside English, Singapore appears to have been more sensitive to its multicultural population than most nations, being one of the only three states of the 233 in the world to recognise more than three official languages (Lim, 2009). However, this language policy does not necessarily reflect the ethnolinguistic make-up of its population. For one, 33 specific mother tongue groups were identified in the 1957 population census, a mere eight years before the implementation of the Official Languages and National Languages Act in 1965 that instituted the four official languages.

The linguistically heterogeneous and ethnically diverse makeup of Singapore coupled with the imposition of an overly-simplified language policy, would have led one to expect language rights and its projection through state policies to surface in debates on language policies, if not forefronted. However, the fact of the matter is quite the contrary as the principles that underpin Singapore's language policies take an exclusionary approach to rights, leaving in its wake a curious silence on language rights. In fact, "the notion of language or even cultural rights is muted to the point where it is practically absent from Singaporean public discourse" (Wee, 2011:113). Against the backdrop of popular literature on language policy that is heavily rights-focused, that the Singapore state has never adopted a discourse on rights in the management of what was a complex linguistic situation from the inception of the nation, but has yet successfully managed a linguistically diverse multicultural population to date, is then noteworthy.

1.2.2 The reciprocal silence

Multiculturalism in Singapore, with its foundation rooted in the CMIO (Chinese, Malay, Indian, Others) model, is expressed through a manipulated multilingualism that manifests in the official language policy, through which the over-simplified ethnic and linguistic divisions are amplified in the public sphere. Yet in spite of the high visibility of the linguistic divisions that do not adequately reflect social reality, Singaporeans have neither resisted the language policy, nor challenged the state's non-speak of language rights by adopting a rights rhetoric of their own. This is in light of the gathering pace of public contestations and challenges to official policies on many fronts, such as income inequality, gender inequality, the nature of capital punishment, and intensified religiosity to name a few, and all of these contestations have everything to do with equality and rights, and are fuelled by Singaporeans' desire for

increased liberalism and democracy. If Singaporeans are open to challenging state policies that they find unjust, then their silence surrounding language rights and the lack of contestation with regard to the state's language policies can in fact be regarded as consent among the citizenry. This consensual silence has formed the basis of the apparent success of the linguistic regime, allowing the state maintain its silence on language rights, and still upkeep a sociolinguistic environment free of the social and linguistic conflicts cautioned by activists and theorists who espouse language rights as a necessity in the management of linguistic diversity. However, if language rights advocates are claiming that there is much to gain from recognising and activating one's language rights, then the citizenry's lack of resistance defies a multitude of scholarly arguments, and raises questions as to why Singaporeans are reciprocating the state's silence on language rights with a corresponding silence of their own and allowing the existing linguistic regime to reign.

Over and above reciprocating the state's silence on language rights, the state-engineered multiculturalism and multilingualism in fact appears to sit comfortably with the citizenry, and this is reflected in the ease with which Singaporeans readily describe the nation as multicultural, as evidenced by "cultural and linguistic guarantees and practices" (Chua, 2003:61). What is surprising in this case study on Singapore then, is not merely the apparent absence of anxiety towards the suppression of linguistic and cultural differences in the rights-less implementation of language policies, but also the "linguistic guarantees" the citizenry believes they are entitled to, especially when rights find no place in official and public discourse. Given that linguistic rights receive no mention from the state, much less granted to the citizenry, what then are these "guarantees" the citizenry believes they are entitled to? The idiosyncrasies of the citizenry then raise questions about their perception of language rights – is their lack of anxiety and passivity towards the state's non-speak of language rights the result of an unconventional conception of rights? Or is it perhaps the result of an absence of the concept altogether?

1.2.3 The comfortable silence all-round

Insofar as language rights has been an absent subject matter in the political and public discourse in Singapore, what is most striking about this situation of linguistic non-speak is the relative absence of any academic response to it, which brings the circle to a close, bolstering what appears to be a comfortable all-rounded silence.

Wee (2011; 2005) stands out as one of the few, if not the only, academics to have synchronously discussed the topics of Singapore and language rights. Most notably, he highlights Singapore's eschewal of a language rights discourse and its concomitant harmony as a case in point to illustrate his claim that an invocation of a rights discourse seemingly increases the likelihood of ethnic tension, while the converse allows for an environment of peaceful inter-ethnic coexistence that contributes to social cohesiveness (2011). While his case study on Singapore synchronously discussed language rights *and* Singapore in using the latter's lack of rights discourse to challenge the necessity of the former, it never sought to examine the case of language rights *in* Singapore, or account for its lack thereof. The parallel discussion of language rights and Singapore's language policies in his monographic critique of the notion of language rights however, is a step in the right direction towards questioning the normativity of language rights in language policymaking, and situating Singapore in the language rights debate.

In introducing Singapore as an example of a nation with a successful language regime that does not appeal to the discourse of language rights alongside his critique of the language rights framework, Wee (2011) made several implicit suggestions for Singapore's success, though he never pursued them with further examination. He challenged the fundamentals of the language rights framework by arguing that the unavoidability of language means that there will always be cases of discrimination, simply as a consequence of human interaction and communication, and cites intra-language discrimination as the most compelling evidence against the feasibility of language rights, wherein speakers of a non-standard variety of a particular language collude in the intra-language discrimination of their own language, rendering the discourse of language rights futile. He questioned the efficacy of a rights-based approach to alleviating linguistic discrimination and its associated conflicts and argued that linguistic discrimination inevitably occurs once individuals and communities are sufficiently enlightened about their rights to be included in social practices by way of language, or someone else's lack of that same right (2011:92). Language policies, he argues, will always differentially favour various individuals and communities, and there can be "outcomes that are *regrettable* without necessarily being *unjust*, and it would be overtaxing our institutions of justice intolerably to require of them that they never allow regrettable results" (ibid.). Wee makes the suggestion here that given the inevitability of linguistic discrimination, and given how a rights approach may heighten discrimination rather than alleviate it, a successful linguistic regime is not one that necessarily appeals to language rights, nor one that does not

discriminate, but rather one that is linguistically just. By extension, his subsequent discussion of Singapore's success in curtailing linguistic tension in a multilingual nation then further suggests that its language regime is linguistically just despite never engaging in a language rights discourse, although the reason for this was again never formally examined.

The dearth of academic attention to language rights, or its lack thereof in Singapore however, does not imply the lack of debate surrounding linguistic issues, for scholarship in that regard is fertile. Under the rubric of language management and planning, scholars have discussed the state's language and education policies and its limitations (Tan and Ng, 2011; Dixon, 2005; Wee, 2011b; Chua, 2010, 2011); explicated and examined the ideologies behind the promotion and demotion of languages in Singapore (Bokhorst-Heng, 1999; Wee, 2006; Chua, 2008; Teo, 2005); and critiqued the oppression of 'illegitimate' language varieties (Rubdy, 2001; Wee, 2010). These studies are further supplemented by a wealth of research on the effects of the state's policies and management strategies, with scholars examining linguistic identities of Singaporeans, especially in relation to mother tongues (Lim, 2009; Tan, 2014); investigating attitudes towards the officially discriminated languages and varieties and the resulting inequalities (Chng, 2003; Bokhorst-Heng and Caleon, 2009); and charting language maintenance and shifts (Gupta and Siew, 2010; Kwan-Terry, 2000; Li et. al, 1997).

What stands out from the research themes identified above is their striking similarity with the issues that have plagued language rights scholars, i.e., management of diversity, language loss, mother tongue and identity, discrimination and inequality. Yet in spite of the parallel, one would be hard-pressed to locate any sustained argument about language rights in Singapore. A survey of linguistic research done on Singapore suggests that most research take statal discourse as their point of departure, and as such, discussions and critiques are more often than not made in response to what the state has said and done. In doing so however, the trajectory of dominant research appears to problematize only the state's ideological viewpoints and its adopted rhetoric, and little is offered by way of understanding the relationship between the state and concepts that the state has chosen to take an exclusionary approach to, such as language rights. The lack of exploration of the silence that surrounds language rights in Singapore has to date left the nation unaccounted for in the wider language rights debate, and it is this lack that this dissertation seeks to redress.

1.3 The approach

1.3.1 Conceptual choice, not political deviance

Thus far, I have established that Singapore has side-stepped the language rights discourse on three dimensions hitherto, namely on the fronts of the state, the citizenry, and the scholarship. When considered alongside the lack of linguistic conflict and lack of demand for language rights, there then appears to be a disjuncture between the peaceful non-speak situation in Singapore and the existing scholarship on language rights that champions rights as a moral necessity, and markets it as a normative approach to language management.

To avoid endorsing values on either side of the discrepancy and maintain a neutral middle ground, this dissertation takes as a point of departure Peled's (2011) argument that language rights and the language of rights are merely conceptual foci that states have the option of adopting in their construction of language policies and related discourse. She maintains that the dominance of a language rights framework in policy theorizing is but the result of the contemporary success of liberal-democracy, and that complementary modes of reasoning for language management should be explored, especially outside the liberal democratic world (ibid.).

As such, in locating Singapore in the language rights debate and in its exploration of the silence surrounding language rights in Singapore, the first task of this dissertation is to explicate the state's orientation towards language rights, and examine the omission of language rights in the official discourse by contrasting it with scholarly discourses from the language rights and justice tradition, all the while considering the actual dispositions and concerns of the society according to its historical trajectory. The tenets of the linguistic rights paradigm and the conditions of linguistic justice will first be explicated in Chapter 2. Against the theoretical background laid out in Chapter 2, the state's language management practices will be analysed in Chapter 3 to examine how Singapore's linguistic regime lines up with the dominant rights and justice discourse in scholarship, to further explicate the state's orientation towards language rights.

1.3.2 The reality check

In accepting the argument that a discourse on language rights is a conceptual choice, what follows then is the belief that whether or not the state adopts the language rights framework in language management, the decision was made in good faith to bring about the desired

effect of a ‘good life’ for its people. Similarly, language rights advocacy and normative approaches to language policy put forth by language activists and political theorists are done so for the same intents and purposes.

Yet insofar as both the state and scholars are making moral and linguistic claims on behalf of the citizenry, there is a relatively marginal supply of existing literature, if any, that investigates what language and rights mean for the people involved in the debate, even though their perception provides the impetus for language planning efforts. The prevailing sentiment in existing literature more often than not constructs language rights observance as the responsibility of the powerful. While not erroneous, it has to be recognised that a mere provisioning of language rights in the legislation would not necessarily ensure that the goals of language rights are met. This is because for the most part, language rights observance goes over and beyond abstract rights granted by the state, and involves the extension of rights by one individual to another by way of actual language practices. As such, achieving the goals of language rights are very much dependent on the perception of rights held by individuals and communities, and their active commitment to its principles.

The second task of this dissertation is therefore to bridge this gap in the language rights debate that takes the form of a ‘real-world’ input by the citizenry. Chapter 4 will empirically explicate language values and practices that circulate among the citizenry in a complex multilingual context like Singapore, where discourse on language rights has been so muted, to elicit the perception of language and rights held by the people. This ground-level perception will then be contrasted against the ideologies and assumptions of language rights held by the state and associated with the wider language rights debate, to examine why Singaporeans have neither responded to nor resisted the state’s non-speak of language rights.

Consequently, Chapter 5 will address the third task of this dissertation, that is to examine the implications of Singapore’s impoverished discourse on language rights on existing scholarship, and in so doing, introduce an applied dimension to the debate that has been largely theoretical to date.

1.4 The urgency

Much as this dissertation has no intention of bringing about a seismic change in current political discourse in Singapore or dismantling the language rights paradigm, the task of

addressing the silence surrounding language rights is timely, considering how the state has yet to hop on the language rights bandwagon after half a century since it first claimed democratic status, and in light of the growing prominence of the language rights debate in recent decades.

Additionally, the present political climate in Singapore also marks an appropriate time to engage in this possibility of a language rights discourse. While Singapore's slow democratisation amid rapid economic development has constantly puzzled modernisation theorists, the results of the most recent 2011 General Elections showed a distinct shift in political landscape suggesting that the political regime is at a critical juncture. In 2011, the People's Action Party (PAP), regarded as one of the world's most durable hegemonic parties (Tan, 2014), displayed its worst electoral performance, garnering only 60.14% of votes, its smallest share of the popular vote since independence 50 years ago. While Singaporeans have been said to be contented with the nanny state engineered by the sophisticated PAP regime, the results suggest that the younger electorate is no longer content with relying on blind faith in an elite cadre. The pervasive social role long-assumed by the PAP in their social engineering project which has undermined the emergence of a system backed by liberalism, may be starting to crack under pressure as its population is now coming to expect, if not demand for, increased freedom and democracy at home, notions that the nation has little experience with under an authoritarian regime. The unprecedented election results and evolving demography, alongside the collapse of so many authoritarian regimes in recent decades, have led scholars to question whether the city-state is on the verge of democratizing, and predict for the first time, that there is a chance Singapore could become a liberal democracy (Ortmann, 2011). If there is potential in this prediction that Singapore is at a critical juncture and could become a liberal democracy, and if language rights and linguistic justice cannot be dismissed in a multilingual country seeking democracy, then this is a timely opportunity to engage in a discourse on language rights and introduce Singapore to the language rights debate, for better or for worse, lest the nation rests on the laurels of a status quo and accept an ideological neutralisation of present sociolinguistic arrangements.

Chapter 2 – The uncontroversial language of language rights

In the previous chapter, I highlighted that linguists and political theorists alike have displayed a partiality towards conceptualising language policy primarily through the prism of rights. The accommodation of complex multilingual repertoires in post-modern societies has today become one of the most integral and challenging tasks of contemporary linguistic policy, and it is in this ongoing debate on diversity management that discourse on language rights is often invoked.

The intimate discourse between diversity management and language rights arises as the latter has been championed as the answer to inequality and the marginalization of minorities (Stroud, 2001), and the linguistic rights paradigm posits the state as the perpetrators of linguistic oppression and discrimination, thus regarding rights as a necessary legal apparatus to be exercised against the state so as to guarantee the development of policies to observe those very rights for the benefit and well-being of state citizens (Blommaert, 2001). As the linguistic rights paradigm continues gaining traction, this overarching ideology and its associated rights rhetoric has come to be regarded as almost axiomatic in the language management debate, suggesting that scholars have conceptualised the rights vocabulary as the best approach to navigating linguistic diversity and regulating conflict.

Despite the axiom of the rights discourse and the advocacy of the importance and necessity of linguistic rights recognition, the seemingly successful management of a linguistically diverse population sans rights in Singapore, spotlighted in the previous chapter, goes against the grain of what rights activists have construed as a moral necessity in language management. It would be convenient to dismiss the silent exception that is Singapore as mere statistical noise, or a deviant, even, in commitment to an established rights framework, but a conservative dyed-in-the-wool disposition does nothing to fortify the tenability of the linguistic rights paradigm. Rather, I maintain that language rights in and of itself is a liberal democratic ideology, and is thus but one particular intellectual tradition and conceptual focus that states have the option of adopting in their conceptualization of linguistic management. While not endorsing language rights as the single answer to the problem of linguistic management, in acknowledging the prediction that Singapore could soon become a liberal democracy, and that the notion of rights should not be dismissed in a multilingual nation seeking democracy as a point of departure, I turn the attention to the way in which language rights is conceived

in Singapore, for in spite of its silence on language rights, its linguistic harmony is one many rights-based policies strive to achieve.

This dissertation places an emphasis on an empirical approach to explore the disjuncture between rights scholarship and the non-speak of rights in Singapore by examining the connections between the broader ideologies and principles that govern the linguistic rights paradigm and the actual, multi-faceted language values and use among the citizenry so as not to overlook the real potential and constraints of complex sociolinguistic contexts in the discussion of language rights in Singapore. The local grounding of this discussion is necessary as scholarly discourse of language rights has been argued to astutely take as its point of departure idealised and static conceptualisations of language and society, and language in society, to advocate the necessity of rights recognition (Blommaert, 2001). In so doing, scholars anchor these basic ideologies in the dominant discourse to favour a monolithic, uniform, and homogeneous conception of language vis-à-vis society, ignoring the possible existence of conceptual variations about language and divergent interests in more complex sociolinguistic situations (*ibid.*), thus leaving gaps in the theoretical scaffolding of a framework that at present cannot claim universality, or rather, does so, but only to be reduced to theoretical fiction until further reified by a variety of ethnographic evidence.

It has to be underscored that this approach in no way undermines the existing linguistic rights paradigm, but augments it by highlighting the need to consider varied sociolinguistic realities. Rights scholars too often slide from conceptual generalisations of language and society, to quasi-definitional characterizations of what the recognition of linguistic rights in a just society entails, and this is easy to do given the success of the language rights movement in regulating linguistic conflict in multilingual nations like Belgium and Canada. While looking to these model-esque examples in developing a language rights framework is not erroneous, stopping at the conceptual generalisations of language and rights and using them to roll out normative theories of language policy is inadequate, for neatly regulated multilingualism is the exception, not the norm. Thus, a localised inquiry into the silence on language rights in Singapore via an examination of the conceptualisation of linguistic rights among the citizenry on its own terms is called for as it could lead to the re-thinking of some basic assumptions that ground the existing principles of language rights, and by extension the formulation of language rights claims and normative language policy, and whether, and to

what degree, the state should recognise language rights in developing policies to manage linguistic diversity.

To pave the way for the exploration of how language and rights are conceptualised in Singapore, I will in the following explicate the ideologies that language rights scholars appeal to, and the underlying assumptions that bolster their arguments for rights-centred language policies. The explication of the tenets of the linguistic rights paradigm and its associated perceptions of language will provide a *mise-en-scène* against which the conceptualisation of language rights by the state and citizenry can later be contrasted to account for the uncontested silence on rights in Singapore.

2.1 The linguistic rights paradigm

Linguists have been engaged in the language of language rights to highlight the politics behind the decisions made by states regarding which languages to use in political, legal, and educational policies. This discursive orientation stems from an ideology in the linguistic rights paradigm which posits that language-based conflicts lie in the mismanagement of linguistic diversity, where language policies are not representative of a usually more multilingual population, resulting in linguistic inequality, and by extension social inequality.

The concern regarding linguistic inequalities invariably involves the protection and promotion of minority languages and their speakers, as they who are usually already socially or politically marginalised or subordinated by virtue of their minority status, would face further social, economic, and political consequences should they experience linguistic dislocation (May, 2006). Additionally, that they have come to be minoritised in the first place has been argued to be nothing natural, and the loss of their languages not a result of linguistic Darwinism, but rather the result of unequal power relations that created a contrived and arbitrary process of linguistic hierarchisation (May, 2005). It is these moral concerns that provide the *raison d'être* for the advocacy of minority language rights, for it is argued that “if the [linguistic] interests of minorities are ignored or trivialised by the state, then people will feel harmed – and indeed will be harmed – even if their civil, political, and welfare rights are respected” (Kymlicka, 2001:33).

In highlighting extensively the wider political and social processes underlying minority language loss and the urgency for language rights recognition (see May, 2005), scholars from

three distinct but cognate movements which I have previously introduced, namely the language ecology (LE), linguistic human rights (LHR), and minority language rights (MLR) movements, have developed a rhetoric under the linguistic rights paradigm championing the recognition of minority language rights. While these movements differ in their orientations and emphasis with regard to linguistic rights advocacy, they do broadly share some central tenets that I will explicate in the following.

2.2 Tenets of the linguistic rights paradigm

Right to protection of minority community

One of the motivations for minority language rights advocacy emanates from the ideology that “the importance of language for many minorities derives from the centrality of language to their social and cultural identity” (De Varennes, 1996:129). The influence of LHR scholars is most prominent here, given that they construe the right of linguistic minorities to maintain their language and ethnolinguistic identity as a human right “necessary to fulfil people’s basic needs and for them to live a dignified life”, and is “so basic, so fundamental, that no state is supposed to violate them” (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2006:273; Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson, 1995).

In advocating legal protection of minority languages on grounds that it is a fundamental component of identity, scholars tend to assume that language can be regarded as a principle indicator of group identity (May, 2003). The LE and LHR movements especially, tend to construct their arguments in a way that assumes the identity of linguistic minority groups as a given, and that all members of a minority linguistic group are, or want to be, principally identified and identifiable by their language (May, 2000). These arguments however, have often been charged with being too essentialistic, considering how the processes of language shift and loss are evidence that many members of minority groups can, and have chosen to abandon their language and/or any associated identification they may have had with it, refuting the language-identity link (ibid.). Criticisms notwithstanding, LHR advocates maintain their belief that language is intrinsic to one’s ethnic identity, and that minority group members that renounce their group and linguistic affiliations do so under the seduction of imperialistic languages (Phillipson, 1992) and the inter-language discrimination faced in the maintenance of the minority language (Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson, 1995). They present these minorities as victims who have been presented with false choices, and do not know better than to waive their rights to their ethnic language, thus reinforcing the need for legal

protections of these minority groups to prevent them from being manipulated into making such choices (ibid.).

Setting aside the essentialistic arguments and appeals to ignorance by LE and LHR advocates, advocates of MLR espouse a more moderate argument for the language-identity link. They acknowledge the principle of hybridity that proposes one's social, political, and linguistic identities to be invariably plural, complex, and enmeshed (Hall, 1992; Gilroy 1993, 2000), as well as contingency theories that argue that language is at most a contingent factor of one's identity, and therefore may not be important or necessary in identity construction, much less define one's identity in its own right (Eastman, 1984; Edwards 1985, 1994). They maintain, however, that while language may not be a deterministic factor of identity, it remains nonetheless a significant one in many instances (May, 2003). This claim is exemplified by the prominence language has in many political ethnic movements, and demonstrated by minorities such as the Catalans and Basques in Franco's Spain, as well as the Kurds in Turkey, who adhere steadfastly to their minority languages in spite of the fact that linguistic loyalty entails active discrimination and oppression (ibid.). That language has proved itself an important and constitutive factor of identity in minority communities such as these is therefore argued to be sufficient impetus to necessitate the recognition of minority language rights.

Additionally, the MLR advocates adopt Bourdieu's (1991) notion of linguistic habitus to further illustrate the point that while language may not define a group, it continues to hold significant purchase for their members, and thus warrants legal protection via linguistic rights (May, 2003). The argument goes that one acquires a set of dispositions, the habitus, through the learning of the language, by way of linguistic socialisation. The habitus provides parameters and a frame of reference that orients (as opposed to defines) an individual's actions and perspectives. This way, while the habitus does not determine individual behaviour, it provides a background, a worldview, against which individuals make behavioural choices, and these choices are also ultimately subjected to the influence of wider economic, social, and political factors. Choice then, is at the heart of the notion of habitus, and this avoids essentialising language and identity, for despite the influence of habitus, an individual is still free to renounce the language (ibid.). The notion of habitus thus explains how language can continue to hold much importance for particular ethnic identities without the charge of essentialism, while at the same time accommodating theories of hybrid

linguistic identities, for habitus would provide the parameters within which other non-linguistic factors of identity are constructed.

Cogent as the arguments are for the language-identity link upon which advocates champion the legalistic structure of language rights for minority protection, there are some assumptions underlying this tenet that have to be addressed. First, even if we do accept the arguments that make sense of language claims by analogizing language to identity, May (2003) argues that advocates of language rights have not addressed the possibility that not all minorities *want* to maintain this language-identity link, or if this desire is held by some members of the community, it cannot be assumed to be held by the entire community homogeneously. To champion for the recognition of language rights based on the assumption that all members of ethnic communities identify with their language and want to maintain that collective identity therefore risks espousing a chauvinistic vernacular ideology, or an argumentum ad ignorantiam à la the LHR advocates.

In using the language-identity link to call for the protection of minority languages, scholars are also assuming that it is the minority ethnic language with which individuals' affiliations lie. While this may be true for many minorities, the assumption is one that stems from a monolingual ideology that takes the individual as a monolingual or at least a sequential bi/multilingual, whose first language is the ethnic language learnt at the mother's knee, which holds a "special place" (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000) and provides the identity affiliation. The Kurdish and Catalan examples cited by May (2005) above to illustrate the link are also drawn from traditionally monolingual communities, where members strongly identify with the ethnic language that provides a linguistic demarcation and boundary which prevents them from being besieged when surrounded by a more dominant language and culture (ibid.). Cases such as these where identity may be threatened should the minority ethnic language be threatened certainly provides compelling justification for minority language rights. However, this assumption cannot be said to hold true in every sociolinguistic situation, not least in multilingual nations, where members of minority communities could very well be simultaneous bilinguals, who would then have more than one mother tongue in the technical sense. As such, it may or may not be the ethnic language with which they identify, and should the individual identify more with a dominant societal language, a threat to his ethnic language may not necessarily constitute a threat to his identity. In the same vein, if an individual's identity is an amalgamation of a dominant and ethnic language, then the

necessity of the linguistic demarcation and boundary that traditionally protects the identity of a monolingual speaker from the encroachment of a dominant language does not exist either. These possibilities in a multilingual nation thus pose a challenge to the advocacy of minority language rights for the protection of minority communities built on the identity argument.

Additionally, the habitus argument posits that in learning the language, the individual accrues the associated identity that holds such significant purchase that it guides the social action of the individual at the level of the subconscious (May, 2003). However, in arguing for the protection and maintenance of the minority language on grounds that it provides a disposition that guides an individual's way of life, assumes that should the individual not maintain the language, he/she "unacquires" the habitus and parameters initially acquired via linguistic socialisation when learning of the language. The claim that an identity structure purported to be so fundamental that it operates at the level of the subconscious can be lost when the individual stops speaking the language, is to date an assumption, and warrants further investigation.

Right to private + public multilingualism

In advocating minority language rights, scholars have also developed a set of rhetoric to address the "language replacement" principle (May, 2005) that so often underlies the processes of language shifts and loss. The principle construes dominant languages like national languages and English as invariably linked with modernity and modernisation, lauded for their instrumental value, while minority languages are often ascribed sentimental values of identity at best (ibid.). As such, it posits that speakers of minority languages should learn these dominant languages, even at the expense of their ethnic mother tongue, for the former accrues benefits of social mobility and progress to their speakers (ibid.). Consequently, the promotion of dominant languages and linguistic homogeneity has led to policies of public monolingualism, where states recognise only an official or national language, or in states with more than one officially recognised language, there remains a strong predilection towards a highly delimited form of public multilingualism (May, 2014). As a result, the development of educational policies in many states has excluded minority languages from the teaching and learning process, and construct student bi/multilingualism in subtractive rather than additive terms (ibid).

In light of the oppositional dichotomy that constructs dominant languages as instrumentally valuable and minority languages as sentimentally valuable which has led to the endorsement of policies detrimental to the survival of the latter (Wiley, 2014), language rights advocates highlight that this supposed lack of instrumental value of minority languages is but the result of the artificial social and political processes which have normalised the use of dominant languages in wider social, cultural, and linguistic domains, thus concomitantly relegating minority languages to the private domains and branding them less instrumentally valuable (May, 2000; 2005; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2006; Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas, 1996). Therefore, if the purported lack of instrumental value is not inherent in minority languages but the result of contrived linguistic hierarchisation, language rights advocates assert that minority languages, and their speakers, should be legally accorded some of the protections and institutional support that majority languages already enjoy, via the legitimisation and institutionalisation (May, 2000). This would serve to orient the relationship between dominant and minority languages, consequently enhancing instrumentality for the latter, thus increasing the mobility of its speakers, who would then not need to make their language the sacrificial lamb in pursuit of social and economic success (ibid.).

Language rights advocates have consequently proffered positions in favour of private and public multilingualism, and espoused them as rights that linguistic minorities should be entitled to to maintain and develop *both* instrumental and identity functions of their language to ensure linguistic security and survival (May, 2014; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2006). They argue that in addition to tolerance-oriented rights that allow minorities to continue speaking languages of their choice in the private domain, states should recognise promotion-oriented rights that require over and above the non-interference of private language use, the legal recognition of language rights within the public domain, or civic realm of the state (May, 2003). This necessarily involves an active state intervention through the recognition and conferment of official statuses to minority languages, as well as the support of these languages via their use in public legislative, administrative, and educational institutions, to allow them an ongoing public presence and sustained instrumental value, and their speakers the opportunity to exercise their rights and use the language if they so choose (ibid.). Of these institutional muscles advocated for linguistic minorities, the most fiercely championed is the legitimisation of minority languages (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2006; Philipson, 2009), through which formal recognition is accorded to the language by way of “official” language statuses, as well as the recognition of these languages in educational institutions via the right to a

bilingual education, or an education in the mother tongue. In championing the latter, LHR advocates have gone to the extent of claiming that the denial of mother tongue education is tantamount to “linguistic genocide” (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2006). Language education is claimed to guarantee the maintenance of the language and by extension the long-term survival of the linguistic minority group, by equipping members with the competence to use the language if they so choose, and to deny that is no different from killing the language (ibid.).

Fundamental to the advocacy of policies in support of promotion rights to regulate public and private multilingualism is the ideology that “if a language cannot be used, it will not be learnt, and it is difficult to identify with a language one does not know.” (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000:504). The link between use, proficiency, and identity that is argued for here assumes that one has to be proficient in the minority language to have access to its associated identity, and is not unlike the assumption highlighted above, by advocates who espouse the *habitus* argument, that an individual loses his identity and worldview if he stops speaking the ethnic language.

Furthermore, the call for the recognition of promotional rights to enhance the instrumental value of minority languages so as to counter language shift and loss (Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas, 1996) is also built on the assumption that it is the lack of instrumentality that has minorities giving up their languages in the first place, yet language shift research has suggested that the lack of instrumentality and limited mobility alone cannot fully account for language shift patterns, much less reverse it (Fishman, 2001), for the survival of a language is not merely dependent on utility, but very much so on its *ethnolinguistic vitality* which comprises of a combination of factors such as economic status, self-perceived social status, sociohistorical factors, and demographic factors of its speakers (ibid.). Most noteworthy here is the assumption that it is the lack of instrumental value that has minorities learning dominant languages at the expense of their mother tongue, which contradicts the argument held by advocates of language rights that the language-identity link is so significant that minorities would hold on to their language even when it entails negative social and political consequences for their speakers in the form of active discrimination or oppression. If the identity value of the minority language is as significant as it is purported to be, then it is bizarre that minorities will not learn the language merely because it lacks instrumental value.

State as protectors and violators

Language rights, as it has been presented in the above tenet, have been construed by rights advocates as mainly accessible through proactive statal policies and state-sanctioned institutions to promote the endorsement of widespread formal multilingualism, and the *raison d'être* for the fierce championship of rights by advocates is precisely because states have failed to implement these policies for which they have the power to execute, and in its failure to do so, necessarily violate those rights (Phillipson, 2009). The orthodoxy of the linguistic rights paradigm has then framed the state as the locus and focus of rights scholarship by construing it as both the protector and violator of rights (Wee, 2007). However this ideological slant that frames language rights as a protection from the top-down linguistic massacre and linguicism of the state (Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson, 1992) for the “good life” of minorities ignores not only the perception of language rights at ground level, but also the actual practices citizens engage in to negotiate language policies within micro-social domains either in their favour to “undo” statal violations, or that could very well make them perpetrators of linguistic violence too (Cardinal and Sonntag, 2015). It has been argued however, that it is the state that is placed under scrutiny in language rights scholarship because the notion of rights is itself a legalistic structure, and it is the state that has exclusive access to coercive instruments that are the legal system and the law enforcement system, which makes them a *determining* force in the sociolinguistic landscape within which citizens interact (Blommaert, 2005). Such scrutiny and pressure on the state to adopt rights-related policies however, have in some cases led to the manufacturing of “threats” in order to represent state-supported languages as “endangered” even when those languages need no protection (Heller and Duchêne, 2007). Scholars has found that in construing languages such as Swedish (Milani, 2007) and French (Moise, 2007) as “endangered”, states have legitimized the protection of the language rights of dominant language speakers, essentially discriminating the very minorities that the language rights paradigm set out to protect.

The perception that language rights protection is primarily the responsibility of the state has as a result led to the structuring of the language rights debate by advocates in terms of a discourse that espouse standards of rights observance that states are obliged to satisfy. Although it has been acknowledged that these standards are not easily achieved, nor necessarily achieved without countervailing tensions (May, 2000), advocates argue that language rights can nonetheless be successfully implemented when there is sufficient political will to do so (May, 2014; Phillipson, 2009). However, in light of the existence of

varied and complex sociolinguistic and sociopolitical situations that I have previously highlighted, it is doubtful if the standards formulated by language rights advocates upon idealised and static conceptualisations of language vis-à-vis society can be met by sheer political will. Ideological incongruence notwithstanding, complex sociolinguistic realities may restrict the successful pursuit of these standards, rendering them at best to be standards to which states can only aspire. If appeals to language rights have to be situated in local socio-political contexts, then at the core of the language rights debate stand several political questions - How can language policies be best implemented to observe language rights with minimal tension? What kind of compromises be made to protect language rights? What categories of speakers have a right to language rights? Under what conditions can one demand for language rights? In accenting the ideals for language rights and orientating itself to legal questions, language rights advocates have overlooked these necessary political questions that ultimately deal with how states can justly negotiate language rights in the policymaking process vis-à-vis their specific citizenries.

2.3 The linguistic justice paradigm

While the language rights discourse seems to have obscured questions on the complexity of policymaking in its bid to underscore the necessity for and ideals of rights recognition, political theorists, in recognising that the state is an unavoidable actor in upholding linguistic justice, have been engaged in a parallel debate that deals exclusively with the just statal management of linguistic diversity (Kymlicka and Patten, 2003). In taking justice as its core focus, the linguistic justice debate then differs from the language rights debate in its impassiveness towards the rights of minorities to preserve their languages and maintain linguistic distinctiveness, but is instead concerned with the extent to which language is equitably distributed among a linguistically diverse citizenry (ibid). Given Singapore's silence on language rights, an engagement with the linguistic justice debate is then necessary to examine if its existing policies can be considered linguistically just despite having side-stepped a discourse on rights, for this would have implications on larger questions of whether a language rights discourse is necessary in the state on the verge of liberal democratisation.

Before explicating the details of what a just linguistic regime constitutes, it has to be noted that while the linguistic justice debate has operated nearly entirely within the liberal democratic tradition, and liberalism as a political theory posits that liberal states, in their execution of policy, must cleave to a neutral, colour-blind method of policymaking so as to provide fair background conditions for every individual to pursue their conception of a "good life" without undue interference from the state, the policy positions of benign neglect and neutrality are impossible to establish in the domain of language (Kymlicka and Patten, 2003). Kymlicka (1995:111) has argued this point most forcefully:

Many liberals say that just as the state should not recognise, endorse, or support any particular church, so it should not recognise, endorse, or support any particular cultural group or identity. But the analogy does not work. It is quite possible for a state not to have an established church. But the state cannot help but give at least partial establishment to a culture when it decides which language is to be used in public schooling, or in the provision of state services. The state can (and should) replace religious oaths in courts with secular oaths, but it cannot replace the use of English in courts with no language.

Given that states have no way of disengaging from linguistic decisions in formulating statal policies, a fully a-linguistic state then does not exist (De Schutter, 2007). Under the circumstances where zero-option is not a possibility, the linguistic justice debate thus revolves around the question of how states can justly negotiate language policies for a linguistically diverse population. As political theorists differ in their conceptualisation of what linguistic justice entails, a spectrum of normative theories of language policy have been developed, ranging from liberal culturalists (Kymlicka, 2001; Tamir, 1995) to egalitarian (Weinstock, 2003; Pogge, 2003; Barry, 2001) to democratic (Laitin and Reich, 2003) theories of justice that define approaches through which states can justly manage linguistic diversity. These normative theories have independently underscored different conditions of justice that statal policies should not undermine or compromise in order for the language regime to be considered linguistically just. I will in the following explicate the dominant conditions of linguistic justice espoused by political theorists, and these conditions will later be contrasted with Singapore's language policies to examine if the language regime in Singapore can be considered to be linguistically just, to further investigate the social and linguistic harmony apparent in the nation.

2.4 Conditions of linguistic justice

Individual autonomy

The defining feature of liberalism is that it grants people the freedom to choose a conception of the good life, and as such the state must to the greatest extent possible avoid interfering with an individual's choice of language in private and public domains, so that he has the liberty to make linguistic choices in accordance to his beliefs about linguistic values, without discrimination or punishment (Kymlicka, 1995). While non-interference in the private domain is rarely contested, the unavoidable nature of language as previously highlighted dictates that the state endorses one or more languages in the provision of statal services (Kymlicka and Patten, 2003), and in so doing, limits the linguistic autonomy of the individual in the public domain to a set of publicly recognised languages (ibid.).

Acknowledging this constrain, liberal democratic theorists committed to autonomy as a condition for justice posit that the state should make no assumption as to the language interests of the citizenry, thus the decision of which languages to legitimise as official should be left to the citizenry via the process of democratic voting (Laitin and Reich, 2003). The democratic process recognises the right of every citizen to mobilise and express support for a

language community or a set of language policies, and this by extension, is purported to grant all linguistic communities, dominant or minority, an equal opportunity to demand for official recognition (ibid.). In allowing citizens to exercise individual autonomy via voting, whatever linguistic state of affairs that results from the democratic process are argued to be reflective of the citizenry's belief in linguistic values (Laitin and Reich, 2003). A statal commitment to the recognition and provision of these languages decided upon under democratic circumstances that recognise individual autonomy are therefore considered to be just (ibid.).

Additionally, while language policies and official languages decided upon via this process reflect the dominant perspective of the citizenry, they may not be representative of the desires of every individual, therefore autonomy as a condition of justice further demands that states should have no requirement that individuals develop full competence in the official languages of the state, leaving them the right to invest in linguistic repertoires that they believe to be in their best interest (Laitin and Reich, 2003). Ironically though, in spite of this supposed freedom of choice, the liberal perspective regards the choice to linguistic education in a minority language as a violation of autonomy, and demands that individuals be educated in language of wider opportunity, i.e., an official language, in addition to a minority language if so desired, for speaking a language that allows a broad range of mobility and vocational opportunities is considered a *sine qua non* of justice (ibid.).

While the liberal democratic position construes autonomy as a primary condition for justice and accords individuals the liberty to express their linguistic preference by way of voting, this process of democratic expression greatly favours dominant linguistic communities within the society, for a critical mass of speakers is necessary to vote any language into recognition (May, 2003). That minority language communities have little chance of voting their languages into power even if they should value their language and desire its use in public domains due to limited representation casts doubts on the extent to which respecting individual autonomy under the liberal democratic position can achieve justice (ibid.).

Recognition of minority language rights

Also espousing individual autonomy as a condition of linguistic justice are the liberal culturalists, who further argue that because the recognition of individual autonomy is necessary in achieving justice, it also demands by extension that language policies be designed to protect the conditions necessary for the exercise of this autonomy. One of these conditions has been argued to be a secure “context of choice” (Kymlicka, 1995; Reaume, 2003; Rubio-Marin, 2003). To be autonomous, a person needs access to an adequate range of options and alternatives from which to make choices, and this context of choice is supplied by a “societal culture” (Kymlicka, 1995). A societal culture here refers to a culture based on a shared language, which provides its members with options across a full range of human activities, including social, educational, and economic life, in both public and private spheres. Respecting the liberal condition of autonomy thus calls for the protection of vulnerable societal cultures, for its members’ opportunities to exercise autonomy and participate fully within the public or civic realm would be in jeopardy should it succumb to a more dominant societal culture, thereby undermining the notion of justice (ibid.).

That states invariably establish the language(s) of dominant groups as official language(s) gives members of those groups a guaranteed access to a secure context of choice, while concomitantly limiting or threatening minorities’ societal cultures, and by extension their context of choice and autonomy. Taking this as a point of departure, theorists argue for the statal recognition of minority language rights because justice requires that members of smaller linguistic groups be accorded greater protection so as to “put the various groups on more equal footing, by reducing the extent to which the smaller group is vulnerable to the larger” (Kymlicka, 1995:36). This external protection is necessitated by the ideals of justice to ensure the protection of a certain context of choice so that individual members of minority groups can avoid the linguistic obstacles that may curtail the enjoyment of freedom and opportunities that rest on the possibility of comprehensible linguistic interaction (Rubio-Marin, 2003). It additionally secures the autonomy of minority individuals to value and identify with their languages and contribute to its survival and vitality via an access to a secure societal culture that supplies their context of choice, thereby allowing them the option of maintaining a distinctive way of life if they so choose, without being prevented from doing so by the state and members outside their community (Kymlicka, 1995). Should they exercise their autonomy otherwise and choose to exit their societal culture given the fair background conditions that allow them civil participation in their own language, that will be regarded as

“renouncing something to which one is reasonably entitled” (Kymlicka, 1995:90), and would still be in accordance to the liberal ideals of justice. To illustrate, many Africans have chosen to exit the societal culture provided by their indigenous languages and instead learn new urban vernaculars, because the promotion and continued use of indigenous languages constitute a justification of the colonial structures that birthed those languages (Makoni and Pennycook, 2006). While the exercise of autonomy may have limited their context of choice and possibly put them in a worst off position, Africans who exit their indigenous linguistic community see the linguistic shift away from their indigenous as an opportunity for colonial “disinvention” and a social reconstitution (Makoni and Pennycook, 2006:27), an exercise of their renewed freedom, an essential principle of liberal democracy.

It has to be underscored that the recognition of minority language rights as a condition of linguistic justice presented above however, is defended only insofar as the loss of a minority language would jeopardise the autonomy of minorities, and by extension violate the liberal ideals of equality of opportunity and freedom of choice (Kymlicka and Patten, 2003). To this end, linguistic justice only necessitates the protection of minority language groups whose language supports or corresponds to a societal culture that is at present able to offer its members a range of options adequate for autonomy, but is at risk of deteriorating below the threshold of adequacy (Patten, 2008). Where a societal culture is vulnerable, a slight change in demographics or a small-scale collective shift towards a dominant language could cripple the culture’s ability to sustain an adequate context of choice for its members (ibid.). In cases such as these, minority language rights arguably help safeguard the vulnerable societal culture by raising the status of the at-risk language, and as such are consistent with, and even required by, justice (Kymlicka, 2001). The precondition of a vulnerable societal culture however, excludes many minority language communities, usually the ones most at risk of language shift and loss, in most multilingual societies from protection. Far from undermining justice, liberal culturalists argue that an assimilation to the dominant societal culture will provide minorities with a greater context of choice needed to support their individual autonomy, further highlighting that it is ultimately individual autonomy that minority language rights, as a condition of linguistic justice, seeks to protect.

Access to language of opportunity

The recognition of minority language rights as a condition of linguistic justice has been challenged by political theorists who argue that an ongoing maintenance of minority

languages entrenches social and cultural isolationism, as well as socioeconomic disadvantages for its speakers, delimiting their social mobility, and ultimately undermines their pursuit of a good life (Barry, 2001; Pogge, 2003). These theorists argue that linguistic minorities are being handicapped by their mother tongues, and minority rights that consigns them to social practices and education in minority languages wilfully delimits their longer-term mobility as speakers of minority languages “are more likely to stand permanently on the lower rungs of the socio-economic ladder” (Laitin and Reich, 2003). Policies that restrict linguistic minorities to their own language communities are thus regarded as illiberal and obstacles to equality of opportunity and full social participation.

Theorists who are of the opinion that the maintenance of linguistic diversity is a cost which militates against the accomplishment of social, economic, and linguistic justice, espouse the position that linguistic justice, especially one of a global nature, requires linguistic minorities to be given access to languages of wider communication, so as to equalise socioeconomic advantages and burdens ascribed to individuals on a global scale, and accorded linguistic minorities equal opportunities improve their life chances (Van Parijjs, 2011; Barry, 2001; Pogge, 2003; Archibugi, 2005). In light of the role and influence of English as the current world language, it is often English that is touted as the language of opportunity, and the principal basis of social mobility (Van Parijjs, 2011). The perception held by theorists of the essential need for English in a “high mobility, intense-communication world” has them espousing that linguistic justice requires minorities to opt to learn and use English, so as to tap on competitive advantages such as job opportunities in a globalising labour market, that at present are enjoyed by the native speakers of English, and the elite of non-Anglo nations who have had the privilege of being educated in English (Van Parijjs, 2011). Distributive justice thus calls for an accelerated spread of English beyond the elites of each country to promote equality of opportunities, especially among those linguistically handicapped by their minority languages (*ibid.*).

While these theorists advocate the learning of English or the dominant national languages as a condition of justice to ensure greater equality of opportunities and an increased advantage in the globalised world for minority language speakers (Van Parijjs, 2011; Barry, 2001), there are several assumptions underlying this perception that questions if linguistic justice can in fact be achieved with access to English. The first has to do with the unquestioned dominance of English as the language of opportunity. It has been argued that it is the pre-existing

conditions of power inequalities that allowed the dominance of English to start with (Reaume, 2015). English did not “slowly spread” across Britain, or rise to become a useful language through a benign “haphazard sequence of events” as Van Parijs (2011:222) puts it. Instead, its current dominance is the result of historical linguistic repression by the political and military power of first the British, and now the American Empire (Reaume, 2015). The failure of pro-English theorists in addressing the relationship between English and wider inequitable distributions does little to mitigate the existing linguistic hierarchies of prestige (Reaume, 2015; Pennycook, 1994). In advocating English as a language of opportunity, theorists are thus simply entrenching rather than subverting existing language hierarchies and inequalities that undermine the notion of justice to start with. Additionally, it has to be noted that the perspective of English as the language of upward mobility and equality draws on a monolithic view of English, and neglects the fact that there are various varieties of Englishes developed by non-native speakers, such as Indian English, or Singlish (May, 2014). As a result, the learning of English is unlikely to equalise opportunities for all and bring about linguistic justice by making multilingual speakers who speak English the new power brokers in a globalized world, for it is only the high-status forms of English that may bring upward mobility to its speakers (ibid.).

An alternative approach that questions if linguistic justice can in fact be achieved by establishing English as a global lingua franca was articulated by Wright (2015). Wright argues for a conception of language as a social behaviour, and a negotiation of meaning in context, and in so doing, provides a contrary perspective that English as a lingua franca could possibly place native English speakers at a disadvantageous position, and questions if the redistribution of English in fact equally redistributes justice (ibid.). She contends that multilinguals who learn English as a lingua franca and move between different linguistic systems are better equipped with communication skills to negotiate meaning in EFL situations, compared to monolingual native English speakers who are anchored by their perception of language as a system and lack the flexibility to deal with language as an action. As such English might fail to become a language of opportunity for monolingual English speakers in a globalising world, because they lack an understanding of the particularity of the lingua franca and the different approach needed to understand and make themselves understood in a lingua franca setting with all other non-native English speakers globally.

Parity of esteem

While theorists argue for the increased spread of English as a condition of linguistic justice, they do acknowledge that the creation and maintenance of a global lingua franca creates injustices in terms of unequal respect and recognition of languages and language communities, and threatens the dignity of non-Anglophones who might feel depreciated linguistically (Van Parijs, 2003; 2011). The concern about linguistic dignity stems from the view that using a language that one cannot claim ownership for, or affirming its status concomitantly affects one's personal self-respect and dignity. As self-respect is believed to inform an individual's perception of self-worth, and a belief in self-worth is essential to living a full life, linguistic justice then requires a linguistic regime to redress any disparity of esteem that emerges from the use of more dominant languages (Van Parijs, 2011).

Van Parijs (2011) argues that in order to secure the linguistic dignity of minority language speakers in the face of dominance by English, and express the equal recognition and respect of language communities called for by principles of justice, a territorially differentiated coercive language regime needs to be implemented. Under this regime, every majority language of a particular community is made a "queen" within the linguistic borders assigned to it by formally officialising that language in public education, media, politics, and commerce. Proficiency in the local language is expected of every individual settling on the territory, and this is made just by a reciprocal expectation that anyone who settles in a different language community be expected to learn the local vernacular language. As linguistic communities under this regime can enjoy a territory on which it is sovereign, parity of esteem is maintained, and linguistic justice is arguably achieved.

Although Van Parijs' (2011) proposed regime appears to preserve a parity of esteem for the communities that are appointed a territory, the demanding preconditions for territorial protection seem to ironically prioritise the parity of esteem of local linguistic majorities over minorities. Van Parijs claims that while each linguistic community has the right to opt for territorial protection, that right is only observed insofar as the community is willing to shoulder the cost of that protection. In this case then, poor, small, or scattered communities will find the price of protection simply prohibitive, although these are the very communities that are most threatened by the growing hegemony of English, and most in need of protection (Weinstock, 2015). In effect then, the theory of territoriality secures the interests and protects

the linguistic dignity of majority language speakers in the locality, bringing into question the extent to which this regime maintains a parity of esteem for all demanded for by linguistic justice (ibid.). Furthermore, even if the territorial solution allows for the protection of every linguistic community, the regime itself is argued to be fundamentally flawed in trying to solve unequal transnational status between English and local languages by giving each local linguistic community equal national status (Reaume, 2015). That English is cast as a more economically valuable language used for wider transnational communication in a diglossic situation, preserves the asymmetric linguistic status, drawing uncertainty once again, to the extent to which the dignity of non-Anglophones are preserved.

This chapter has been largely one of theoretical explication, and thus far I have highlighted the need to locally situate these theoretical debates so as not to overlook the real and potential constraints of actual complex sociolinguistic contexts in discussions of language rights and justice. In light of the growing traction of both debates, and Singapore's concomitant silence on language rights, the chapter first explicated the dominant tenets of the linguistic rights paradigm which will be contrasted with the state's language regime in the next chapter to explore and account for the state's non-speak of rights in Singapore. The conditions of linguistic justice put forth by political theorists were also explicated, and the next chapter will additionally bring together these explicated conditions and Singapore's language management strategies to examine if Singapore's language regime can be considered to be linguistically just in spite of its apparent lack of engagement in a rights discourse.

Chapter 3 - Exploring the orientation of Singapore's linguistic regime

Thus far, I have called into question the uncontroversial normalisation of the notions of language rights and linguistic justice as conceptual apparatuses in the scholarly discourse on the management of linguistic diversity, and emphasised that the orientation to rights is merely one approach in conceptualising language policy. Language rights, while in itself possibly indispensable in liberal political discourse, is not mutually exclusive with complementing modes of reasoning (Peled, 2011), and thus an inquiry into the non-speak of language rights in Singapore cannot rule out the possibility of a right-less conceptualisation of language policy. Within the dominant rights discourse, I also highlighted the insufficiencies of the theoretical debates of linguistic rights and justice, identifying the need to locally situate them. Local contextual grounding is necessary because the legally-mandated policies championed by rights advocates and political theorists as normative standards and obligations are founded upon idealised and static conceptions of language and society, and they belie the complexity of the sociolinguistic and socio-political contexts that could, and often do, constrain the extent to which language policies can be formulated on the basis of rights.

Using the above as a point of departure, we are confronted with two possibilities in accounting for the impoverished statal discourse on language rights in Singapore:

1. The state subscribes to an alternative conceptual orientation towards linguistic management, and regards a language rights rhetoric as extraneous to its linguistic regime.
2. The statal silence on language rights is simply the result of a discursal elision, and the language regime in Singapore is principally and ideologically aligned with those of the linguistic rights paradigm.

This chapter therefore seeks to locate Singapore in the language rights debate by examining how its existing linguistic regime lines up with the theoretical rights discourse to explicate the state's orientation towards language rights. Should the concept of language rights not be subscribed to, there is a need to further examine if the linguistic regime can be considered one that is just. This would shed light on how the policies were implemented without conflict, as the success of a right-less language management strategy would provide scholars with an impetus to explore an alternative space adjacent to and beyond the more conventional

framework of language rights in the theorising of linguistic policy. If, instead, there is a conceptual congruence between the state and the language rights paradigm, then the extent of this congruence needs to be explored, for appeals to language rights principles are subjected to the terms and conditions of the existing local political, social, and economic structures which the state would have to negotiate in its pursuit of the theoretical standards established by language rights advocates.

This exploration approach detracts from the tendency in much of literature to use principles derived from the rights paradigm as a factual premise, and then to formulate a comparative discussion on how a particular linguistic regime might grate against those “normative” principles. Rather, it addresses the state’s orientation towards language rights, and why this concept seems to have been omitted in official linguistic discourse, while considering the actual disposition and pressing concerns of the society under particular historically contingent conditions. Prematurely charging the state with gross violations of language rights is thus avoided, allowing for the examination of the lack of language rights discourse in Singapore on its own terms via a contextual understanding, and the pursuit of a fuller appreciation of the complexity of the state-citizenry-scholarship relationship, augmenting the conceptual rubric of language rights.

3.1 Conditions of a rights-based linguistic regime

The primary tenets of the linguistic rights paradigm explicated in the previous chapter defend the argument that the intimate relationship between language and the sense of self necessitates the protection of vulnerable languages. It posits that the state is morally obliged to accord linguistic minorities and their languages similar protections and institutional support that dominant languages already enjoy, and should therefore engage in *active* protection to maintain and develop both instrumental and identity functions of minority languages to ensure linguistic survival and security. Following this argument, a set of conditions that serve to protect minorities’ rights to private and public multilingualism can be deduced, and these are conditions that a language regime premised on the ideologies of rights must, or at least aspire to fulfil. I will in the following contrast these conditions against Singapore’s language policies to examine for congruence between the way the Singaporean government and language rights scholars conceptualise language management, to work out the state’s orientation towards language rights and later account for why a rights rhetoric seems to be omitted in official discourse.

Condition 1: Legitimation of minority languages

The status of minority groups and the degree to which their languages are recognised by the state have been argued to be variables most influential in language survival, thus the legitimation of minority languages have often been fiercely championed by language rights advocates as a fundamental right, and a necessary condition in linguistic regimes (May, 2003). Legitimation involves the formal recognition by the state of particular languages or language varieties, in this case minority languages, and is realised by constitutionally endowing those languages with official statuses. The corollary is that the marginalised status of minority languages will be elevated as a result of legitimation, enhancing their chances of survival.

In Chapter 1, I introduced the sociolinguistic profile of Singapore, and highlighted how the state established multilingualism as a cornerstone of its language policy at independence. To reiterate, the state institutionalised the ‘mother tongues’¹ of its three visible, component ethnic groups, namely Mandarin, Malay, and Tamil, of the Chinese, Malays, and Indians respectively, as official languages. These official ‘mother tongues’ are enshrined as constitutionally equal, alongside English, an ‘ethnically neutral’ language, which came to be the *de facto* lingua franca of public administration. Cloaked in the apparent neutral representation of a multicultural society that recognises even the language of its smallest minority group, the Indians, who make up a mere 1.4 per cent of the population, the state presents a language policy that seems to be in sync with the principles of the language rights paradigm by respecting the linguistic rights of its minorities and legitimising their language. However, this apparent congruity is challenged when the linguistic situation prior to the implementation of the Official Languages and National Languages Act that instituted the four official languages in 1965 is examined. A pre-independence census conducted in 1957 reveals a significantly more complex linguistic reality, where 33 specific mother tongue groups were reported, 20 of which were spoken by more than 1,000 people (Chua, 1962).

¹ The term ‘mother tongue’ in the Singapore contexts refers to Mandarin, Malay and Tamil even if they may not be the language of the home or the first language of Singaporeans. Henceforth, the Singaporean usage of the term ‘mother tongue’ will be flagged by single quotation marks.

Table 1. Mother tongue diversity in Singapore by ethnic group (1957)

Language	Total	%	Chinese	%	Malay	%	Indian	%	Other	%
Population	1,445,929	100	1,090,596	75.4	197,059	13.6	127,226	8.8	31	2.1
Sinitic (Chinese)										
Hokkien	443,718	30	443,718	39.8	-	-	-	-	-	-
Teochew	246,478	17	246,478	22.6	-	-	-	-	-	-
Cantonese	217,640	15.1	217,640	20.1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Hainanese	74,498	5.2	74,498	6.8	-	-	-	-	-	-
Hakka	66,597	4.6	66,597	6.1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Foochow	14,232	1	14,232	1.3	-	-	-	-	-	-
Henghua	7,866	0.5	7,866	7	-	-	-	-	-	-
Shanghai	7,273	0.5	7,273	7	-	-	-	-	-	-
Hokchia	6,443	0.4	6,443	6	-	-	-	-	-	-
Kwongsai	173	0.0	173	0	-	-	-	-	-	-
Mandarin	1,275	0.1	1,275	0.1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Malay-Polynesian										
Malay	116,931	11.5	-	-	116,931	84.7	-	-	-	-
Javanese	14,517	1	-	-	14,517	7.4	-	-	-	-
Boyane	14,344	1	-	-	14,344	7.3	-	-	-	-
Bugis	317	0.0	-	-	317	0.2	-	-	-	-
Banjarese	93	0.0	-	-	93	0	-	-	-	-
Menangkabau	47	0.0	-	-	47	0	-	-	-	-
"Indonesian"	407	0.0	-	-	407	0.2	-	-	-	-
Dravidian										
Tamil	75,617	5.2	-	-	-	-	75,617	59.4	-	-
Malayalam	20,063	1.4	-	-	-	-	20,063	15.8	-	-
Indo-European (Indo-Aryan)										
Punjabi	10,089	0.7	-	-	-	-	10,089	7.9	-	-
Hindustani. Hindi, Urdu	5,394	0.4	-	-	-	-	5,394	4.2	-	-
Bengali	1,210	0.1	-	-	-	-	1,210	1	-	-
Gujerati	1,022	0.1	-	-	-	-	1,022	0.8	-	-
Telugu	549	0.0	-	-	-	-	549	0.4	-	-
Pakistani	447	0.0	-	-	-	-	447	0.4	-	-
Indo-European (Germanic)										
English	26,599	1.8	2,287	0.2	164	0	1,927	1.5	22,221	71.6
Other	32,090	2.2	12,116	1.1	239	0.1	10,908	8.6	8,827	28.4

Source: Adapted from 1957 Census. (Chia, 1962)

With reference to Table 1, the Chinese community was the most heterogenous with 40 per cent claiming Hokkien as their mother tongue, 23 per cent Teochew, 20 per cent Cantonese, 7 per cent Hainanese, the rest one of the Chinese languages with smaller speakerships in the Chinese community. The Malay community was the most homogenous with 85 per cent claiming Malay to be their mother tongue, and the rest one of six other Malayo-Polynesian languages. 59 per cent of the Indian community claimed Tamil as their mother tongue, 16 per cent Malayalam, and the rest one of the other six Indo-Aryan languages with smaller speakerships.

Given the linguistic diversity of the population, and the impossibility of institutionalising every language, it is possible to rationalise the conflation of the linguistic differences within the three ethnic groups as an establishment of formal equality among the groups. This conflation could be construed to be necessitated by the constraints of social and political administration, and underpinned by the logic of a CMIO (Chinese, Malay, Indian, Others) multiculturalism. The legitimisation of one ‘mother tongue’ per ethnic group, could therefore still be argued as centred on a rights ideology, and the result of a compromise when the state had to negotiate between the principles of language rights, the complex sociolinguistic situation that it was confronted with upon political independence, and the state’s brand of multiculturalism that emphasises inter-ethnic parity, for it equitably recognises the rights of each ethnic group collectively.

However, casting doubt on this argument is the language variety chosen to represent each ethnic group. While the choice of Malay and Tamil could be justified by their corresponding number of speakers that make them the lingua franca within their respective communities (Bokhorst-Heng, 1997), the same cannot be said for Mandarin that was appointed to represent the Chinese community. Statistics alone cannot explain the decision to appoint Mandarin as an official language given that it was the mother tongue for only 0.1 per cent of the Chinese population, and when Hokkien and Cantonese clearly had larger representation in the population as a mother tongue at 30 per cent and 15.1 per cent respectively, with Hokkien, understood by 91.1 per cent of the Chinese community, serving the role as lingua franca among the Chinese population (Bokhorst-Heng, 1997). Yet instead of the formal recognition that would be advocated by the ideologies of language rights, the non-Mandarin Chinese languages were ideologically reduced to ‘dialects’ by the state, effectively delegitimising them instead.

If the analysis of Singapore's language policies are situated in the sociohistorical contexts in which it was formulated, it would appear that the policies were not shaped by the ideologies of language rights, but rather, by geopolitics and nation-building objectives. Geopolitically, Singapore is situated in the Southeast Asian Archipelago, which was also designated as the 'Malay' world, as Malays constituted the regional demographic majority. To de-emphasize Singapore's overwhelmingly predominant Chinese population, and to reduce the opportunities for the Malay population to make ethnic discrimination a political issue that could potentially cause not only internal strife but regional animosity, the recognition of Malay as an official language and mother tongue was thus symbolically necessitated (Chua, 2004). In the case of the Chinese, Mandarin was not only used to reassemble its linguistically diverse members, but also strategically chosen to suppress the power of 'dialect' clan associations and their respective speakers, among whom were some of the most influential community leaders who were intimately involved in and battered on left-wing politics (Chwee, 2003) and were considered a serious political threat. The recognition of Mandarin as an official language concomitantly relegated their languages to the status of 'dialects', and served to disempower them and limit the influence that they could exert on local politics (Tan, 2007). As the official language with the smallest speakership, Tamil, the lingua franca of the Indian community was legitimised in the constitution to give credence to the ideologies of multiculturalism and multilingualism in Singapore (Chua, 2005). If not for the recognition of Indians as an official ethnic group with an official language, the politics of Singapore would be reduced to a juxtaposition of two ethnic groups, the majority Chinese and minority Malays, subjecting every act of the government to potential dominant-subordinate scrutiny of dyadic politics (ibid.). Tamil was therefore recognised as a third official language to serve as an alibi for the ideology of multiculturalism and multilingualism.

It appears then, that while the policy of national multilingualism legitimises minority languages, and although the legitimising of one 'mother tongue' per ethnic group gives the *prima facie* semblance of a compromise that possibly resulted from a negotiation process when the ideology of language rights coalesced with the state's ideology of multiculturalism, the choice of Mandarin to represent the Chinese community is a smoking gun that keeps the policy from fulfilling the condition of a language rights regime in legitimising minority languages. By ignoring intra-group heterogeneity and delegitimising the other Chinese languages even when numbers warranted otherwise, Singapore's official language policy

cannot be said to be conceptually motivated by the ideals of language rights that advocate the right to formal linguistic representation in the public domain should numbers warrant (May, 2003).

Condition 2: Minority language education

The recognition of minority languages in educational institutions has also been aggressively advocated by the language rights regime as it is regarded as the key to their long-term survival in the modern world (May, 2003; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2006). In addition to the identity maintenance function that minority languages are purported to serve, minority language education is also argued to accord minorities with the necessary cultural and linguistic capital to engage in linguistic modernisation and to develop the instrumental functions of their languages (May, 2003). In order to ensure the linguistic security and survival of minorities and their languages, language rights advocates have championed for state-funded minority education, espousing it as fundamental to the recognition of language rights. In defending minority language education as a condition of language rights recognition, advocates have argued that (Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas, 1995:500):

1. Linguistic minorities should be allowed to identify with their mother tongue and have this identification accepted and respected by others.
2. Linguistic minorities should be allowed a bilingual education in the mother tongue and the official language.
3. Linguistic minorities should be educated through the medium of their mother tongue.
4. Any change of mother tongue should be voluntary, not imposed.

Before contrasting Singapore's education policies to these conditions set out by language rights advocates, I will first introduce the bilingual policy which has seen several evolutions since its inception. The present policy posits that English be taught as the first language to all students, and used as the medium of instruction in all content subjects. Students are additionally required to study their state-ascribed 'mother tongue' as a single subject, and this 'mother tongue' is assigned based on paternal ethnicity, regardless of whether or not the state-ascribed 'mother tongue' correlates to the language spoken at home (Dixon, 2005). Prior to 1966 when the bilingual policy was introduced, English-medium education had to compete with education in the mediums of a variety of vernacular languages, reflective of the diverse language ecology in Singapore then. Non-English medium education was provided

for by vernacular schools funded by community associations (Ng, 2008). Majority of Chinese attended Mandarin- or 'dialect'-medium schools that were set up by their respective 'dialect' groups and clans (ibid.). Malays typically went to Madrasah schools that were run religiously in the Malay language (Chelliah, 1940). Indians were reported to have had vernacular schools that educated in various Indian languages too, though proportionately fewer (Ng, 2008). In 1966, standardized public education was introduced and made available in all four official languages, and parents could choose one of four official media of education for their child, on the condition that students in 'mother tongue'-medium schools learnt English, and the converse was true for students in English-medium schools (Dixon, 2005). By mid-1980s however, all 'mother tongue'-medium schools had been replaced by government-funded English-medium schools to put in place the present national education system, wherein English is taught as a first language and used as the primary medium of instruction, and the 'mother tongue' relegated to a subject taught as a second language (Dixon, 2005).

Contrasted against a language rights framework that advocates the preservation of minority languages and the right of minorities to a basic education mainly through the medium of their mother tongue, the trajectory of Singapore's post-independence education system that had first undermined vernacular-medium schools, then replaced 'mother tongue'-medium schools with standardised English-medium education that consigns the learning of 'mother tongues' to a second language subject appears antithetical. However, it could again be argued that linguistic rights are recognised on the grounds of formal equality between the ethnic groups because they are still educated in their official 'mother tongues'. The bilingual education policy structure could also be said to be the result of a situated negotiation of rights, where the mainstreaming of autonomous vernacular-medium education to state-instituted national education was necessary to allow for the organisation of mass education, and that second-language education in the official 'mother tongue' is the only feasible way to recognise language rights whilst maintaining inter-ethnic parity through standardised education in the ethnically 'neutral' language of English. However, the following examination of the construction and execution of the bilingual policy will reveal that the Singaporean government and language rights advocates had essentially disparate conceptions about bilingual education.

The argument put forward by language rights advocates for bilingual education is premised on the rights of minorities to integrate with dominant society while maintaining and

developing both identity and instrumental functions of their languages, to ensure that these functions are not supplanted by the dominant culture and language (May, 2003). Bilingualism as a policy in Singapore however, was never established for the purpose of protecting the interests of minorities or the preservation of diversity that language rights advocates so defend. Instead, Lee Kuan Yew presented to the Legislative Assembly an argument for bilingualism that directly contradicts the language rights framework:

What are you going to do with the language, with the culture, and with the administration of this country? The only logical answer [...] is that ultimately there will be one dominant language and one dominant culture. [...] But when one gropes, however consciously, for the language, one comes up against all the primordial prejudices of the other group. So we suggested bilingualism, because it was one way of bringing about the pre-eminence ultimately of one language. (Singapore: LAD, 12 April, 1956)

In a debate for bilingualism, rather than presenting an argument for rights or diversity, Lee Kuan Yew argued that it was only through national multilingualism and individual bilingualism that a dominant language could emerge, and this language was predetermined to be English, no less.

To facilitate individual bilingualism and the eventual dominance of English, bilingual education was introduced, though it was never meant to be an education in any two of the official languages, as traditionally understood, but from the very beginning conceived as English plus one ‘mother tongue’, where the primacy of English is rationalised on the basis of its economic utility (Dixon, 2007), and the belief that education is an investment in human capital (Chua, 1985). In fact, then Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew suggested that the mastery of English alone for economic development was the goal of mass education (Dixon, 2007), but acknowledged that educational support for the ‘mother tongues’ was necessary as a peacekeeping strategy:

To announce that all had to learn English when each race was intensely and passionately committed to its own mother tongue would have been disastrous. Not wanting to start a controversy over language, I introduced the teaching of

three mother tongues, Mandarin, Malay, and Tamil, into English schools. (Lee, 2000:146)

‘Mother tongues’ were sequentially attributed the function of identity maintenance in statal discourse, and touted as cultural ballasts to keep Singaporeans rooted to their ethnic identities. Fathomed in a functional polarisation, the economic and identity functions of English and the ‘mother tongues’ respectively have therefore never been conceptualised as equal (Chua, 1985), and ‘mother tongue’ education was never introduced for the purpose of developing their instrumental function² the way in which language rights advocates champion for, save their instrumentality in maintaining harmony, for national cohesion was deemed necessary for economic development (Chua, 2005).

Whether or not ‘mother tongue’ education was introduced strategically to avert the protests of citizens who would have opposed an absolute English assimilationist education system, the construction of the ideology underlying the statal rhetoric for ‘mother tongue’ education nonetheless bears a resemblance to language rights ideologies insofar as the ‘mother tongues’ are similarly framed in an essentialistic language-identity equation which suggests that the state may recognise the right to linguistic identity and its corresponding culture. Statal discourse posits that heritage and culture are inherent to the ‘mother tongue’, with Lee Kuan Yew arguing that “[one’s ‘mother tongue’] is part of his culture whether he likes it or not. He was born into a home, born into a culture where these things become part of him” (Straits Times, 1978), therefore ‘mother tongue’ education is regarded as necessary for one to allow individuals to identify with their cultures (Bokhorst-Heng, 1999). While both the Singaporean government and language rights advocates promote mother tongue education on grounds of unalienable cultural identity that requires maintenance, the way in which the state executed the policy for cultural identification demonstrably placed its ‘mother tongue for identity’ conception on a course that diverges from the language rights framework.

When the bilingual policy was first implemented, only Malays were guaranteed a mother tongue education in their actual home language (Dixon, 2007). The official ‘mother tongue’ prescribed to many Indians was not in fact the home language, but the education policy

² The state has in recent years framed Mandarin as an economically valuable language with the rise of China’s economy, although this was never its intention when the bilingual policy was first introduced, and the evolution in statal rhetoric is a reflection of the state’s pragmatic ideology, not a realignment of ideologies to match the language rights framework.

eventually evolved to accommodate the true mother tongues of Indian students who spoke one of the Indo-Aryan languages at home (Dixon 2005). Although the state offers non-official Indian languages as subjects in national examinations, all classroom facilities, teachers, and teacher training for these subjects had to be funded by the Indian community itself (Kaur and On, 2001). While a community-funded mother tongue education is not in line with the active state promotion of minority languages that language rights advocates champion for, the fact that non-official mother tongues are recognised by the education system could arguably be evidence of the state's belief in the necessity of identity maintenance via mother tongues, in a manner analogous to dominant rights discourse. Yet this argument is contradicted when attention is turned to the Eurasians and Chinese.

As a fourth 'residual' category that makes up the population and labelled as "Others", the Eurasians never had an official mother tongue assigned to them. Although most, if not all, Eurasians belong to the English-speaking community, the state's need to maintain English as a 'neutral' language for fair and open economic competition (Chua, 1985) saw its renunciation of English as a mother tongue for the Eurasians (Wee, 2011). Consequently, Eurasian students whose mother tongue is English, are made to choose between Mandarin, Malay, and Tamil as a 'mother tongue' subject (Goh, 2011). However, it is worth noting that the choice of a second language carries the connotation of belonging to the ethnic group with which the particular 'mother tongue' is identified (Siddique, 1990), Eurasian students are thus inadvertently made to identify with a linguistic community with which they have little cultural ties, challenging the condition put forth by language rights advocates that minorities should be allowed to identify with their own mother tongue.

A similar imposition of mother tongue identity can be observed among the Chinese. Despite the heterogeneity within the Chinese community and the fact that Mandarin was not the home language of almost every Chinese student when the bilingual policy was first implemented (Dixon, 2007), the Chinese were never given an option to study their true mother tongues the way the Indians were. The Chinese 'dialects' which were the home languages for majority of the Chinese were not regarded essential in identity maintenance, and its use was not only discouraged, but targeted for elimination by a state organised campaign, the Speak Mandarin Campaign, that denigrated the 'dialects' which were regarded as the cause of poor academic performance in Mandarin (Lee, 2012). The state's commitment to the dismantling of the power structure of the left-leaning dialectal community that they saw as a political threat

resulted in the outlawing of ‘dialects’ as a source of cultural identity for those who consider it a mother tongue (Bokhorst-Heng, 1997). Thus Mandarin was imposed on the Chinese as an artificial ‘mother tongue’, and while it is still espoused as a carrier of cultural identity by the state, the Chinese identity that it is purported to embody is one that is state-engineered, and differs conceptually from the supposedly inherent and primordial identity that language rights advocates seek to defend, albeit articulated otherwise by the state.

In unpacking the construction of the bilingual policy in Singapore, its incongruence with the bilingual model advocated by the language rights paradigm is therefore revealed. While formally a bilingual system that promotes mother tongue as a necessity for identity maintenance, the grounds upon which the bilingual education policies were conceptualised and executed prevents it from aligning with the ideologies of language rights and fulfilling the conditions of minority language education for a rights-based language regime.

Condition 3: Effective and active engagement of minority languages in public domains

While the conditions of legitimation and education of minority languages are most fiercely championed for by language rights advocates, and regarded as the necessary first steps in the recognition of minority rights, the fulfilment of these conditions in and of themselves are insufficient to secure a central role for those languages within the nation, since it is arguably possible to legitimise a language and its place in the educational system without these having much influence on its actual use (May, 2003). What language rights advocates champion as a crucial condition for rights recognition is the state’s provision of access to and opportunities for effective engagement and participation in the minority languages within public legislative and administrative institutions, in addition to the educational institutions discussed in the preceding section. It is claimed that this provision will result in the normalisation of the language, such that it comes to be ‘taken for granted’ in both formal and informal contexts within the public domain or civil society (ibid). In fulfilling this condition, the state is purported to secure and contribute to linguistic security and survival of minorities.

Singapore’s constitution establishes English, Mandarin, Malay, and Tamil as official languages. However, a second clause states that this is done so on the provision that "nothing in this Article shall prejudice the right of the Government to preserve and sustain the use [...] of the language of any other community in Singapore” (Constitution of the Republic of Singapore, 1965). In theory then, the state can take measures to provide for the effective

engagement of non-official minority languages within the public domain, and potentially fulfil the corresponding condition of a rights regime espoused by language rights advocates. Yet the nationalist ideology of multiculturalism again prevents the possibility of state-initiated public engagement of these non-official minority languages from being fulfilled in practice.

Given that the ideology of multiculturalism necessitates the equal treatment of every ethnic group, the use of any other minority languages, presented in Table 1 above, by the state, would destabilise the 1 ethnic group = 1 language equation. As such, only the four official languages are legally provided for in public domains. However, recall that Hokkien and Cantonese were collectively the mother tongues of more than 45 per cent of the population, with Hokkien serving as the lingua franca of more than 90 per cent of the predominant Chinese community. The steadfastness of the Chinese to their true mother tongues meant that the presence of these ‘dialects’ in civil society persisted despite their non-recognition in the constitution and education system, and concomitant ‘illegitimation’. Yet instead of sustaining the active engagement of these ‘dialects’ in civil society, their currency and ongoing presence in the public sphere was believed to undermine the state’s commitment to multiculturalism and the official equality of the official languages, and the state thus suppressed these ‘dialects’ in public spaces by banning them in all broadcast media and official transactions (Chua, 2005b). In so doing, Mandarin was reinforced as the only official ethnic language of the Chinese recognised in public domains.

Despite the institutionalisation of its four official languages, the state’s commitment to multiculturalism only provides access to and opportunities for effective engagement in the official ‘mother tongues’ insofar as one cannot be denied service in public legislative and administrative institutions if one speaks any of those languages. While this technically allows all Singaporeans, including the minority Indian community, the opportunity to exercise their rights and use their ‘mother tongue’ if they so choose to, it cannot claim to be an *active* promotion of minority languages in the public domain, for the way the state ideologises the functions of its official languages sees the instituting of ‘mother tongues’ a token statal recognition. The state construes English as the language of inter-ethnic communication and national unity, allowing it to be promoted as the de facto lingua franca of Singapore, and the language of public administration. As a result, English has gained dominance in the public domain and civil society, to the extent “that there is no domain in Singapore where English is

not spoken” (Cavallaro and Serwe, 2010), and this is evident in its role as the leading language of administration, education, linguistic landscape, and everyday interaction (Ooi and Tan, 2014). In contrast, ‘mother tongues’ are construed as languages of cultural repositories. This ideological functional polarisation of English and the ‘mother tongues’ both conceals and legitimises the dominance of the former over the latter in the public sphere, and concomitantly delegates the latter to the domain of culture and family life. As such, while multiculturalism formally institutionalises English and the ‘mother tongues’, and officially provides for their engagement in the public domains should Singaporeans choose to use their minority ‘mother tongues’, this provision is a *prima facie* one that is constructed to legitimise the dominance of English, and does not fulfil the condition of effective engagement of minority languages in the public domain.

Condition 4: Non-interference of private language use

Alongside the preceding conditions that seek to protect promotion-oriented rights, what language rights advocates have established as a fundamental condition that a regime taking a minimalist approach to rights-based language policies must fulfil is the recognition of an individual’s right to use the language of his choice in private (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2006; May, 2003). Such tolerance-oriented rights are founded on negative freedom to ensure the right of minorities to the use and preservation of their languages in the private, non-governmental sphere of national life, be it at home or in public. The key principle of such rights is that the state does “not interfere with efforts on the part of the minority to make use of [their language] in the private domain” (Kloss, 1977:2).

I have previously established that in their steadfast imagining of the nation as a CMIO multicultural nation, the state artificially ascribed to a large portion of its citizens, most considerably the predominant Chinese community, a ‘mother tongue’ that was not their home language. As such, the government campaigned to *make* the ‘mother tongue’ languages of the three ethnic communities their true mother tongues (Bokhorst-Heng, 1997). Although all three communities were the focus of the state’s effort to align the ‘mother tongue’ with the language of the home, the Chinese community was especially targeted after a state-commissioned evaluation of the bilingual educational policy in 1979 reported poor academic performances of Chinese students who spoke ‘dialects’ instead of Mandarin at home (The Goh Report, 1979). Following this report, the state launched the Speak Mandarin Campaign (SMC) in the context of a ‘crisis-intervention’ to stamp out the ongoing maintenance of

‘dialects’ in the private domain, and *make* Mandarin the mother tongue of the Chinese community (Bokhorst-Heng, 1997).

As administrative action cannot intervene in private domains to modify the language of the home, campaign strategists launched an ideological warfare against the ‘dialects’ to “psychologically build up the citizenry” (Bokhorst-Heng, 1999:244), with campaign slogans that denigrated ‘dialects’ by labelling it vulgar, uneducated, and a handicap amongst other things, and by making Mandarin a necessary and highly visible aspect of everyday life (Bokhorst-Heng, 1999; Wee, 2010). At the inception of the campaign in 1979, Lee Kuan Yew outlined that the state will create a Mandarin-speaking environment at home, “by making sure that at peak hours, viewing time over the radio [sic] and TV [...] , they are speaking Mandarin.” (Straits Times, 7 April 1978). These plans materialised in the form of a ban on ‘dialects’ in the media, where television programmes and radio broadcasting officially eliminated the use of ‘dialects’, and ‘dialect’ films and videos were not authorised by the Media Development Authority unless they were dubbed in Mandarin (Wee, 2010).

While there is no legal coercion enforced to have the Chinese adopt Mandarin as a mother tongue, and in spite of the state’s concession that the home is where the government should not interfere, its intensely prescriptive effort to *make* Mandarin the mother tongue of the Chinese community is evident. A campaign whose “ultimate test [of success] is whether Mandarin is spoken at home between parents and children” (Straits Times, 26 October 1981) and its tight rein on free-to-air media are evidence of non-constitutional statal intervention on private language use. Statal intervention on private language use was in fact unabashedly admitted by Lee Kuan Yew in this 1986 National Day Rally Speech:

I am often accused of interfering in the private lives of citizens. Yes, if I did not, had I not done that, we wouldn’t be here today. And I say without the slightest remorse, that we wouldn’t be here, we would not have made economic progress, if we had not intervene on very personal matters – who your neighbour is, how you live, the noise you make, how you spit, or what language you use. We decide what is right.

(Quoted in Tremewan, 1994:2)

Thus formally, while the right of the citizenry to linguistic choices and preferences in the private sphere can be argued to be preserved, the state's non-constitutional micromanagement of household languages guarantees its failure to fulfil what is regarded to be the minimum condition of any language regime that grounds its policies in the ideology of rights.

3.2 Political (in)congruence with the language rights framework

In exploring the statal non-speak of language rights in Singapore, I began this chapter with the foundational question of whether (and if so, the extent to which), language management by the Singaporean state is rights-based, or alternatively, grounded in other sorts of political or moral justification. I then explicated the conditions of language rights observation defended by rights advocates in underpinning an ideal linguistic regime, and contrasted these conditions against the language policy practices in Singapore. In so doing, I situated the examination of the ideologies that govern the linguistic rights paradigm, which hitherto have been anchored in arguably chimerical conceptualisations of language and society, in a unique sociolinguistic context fraught with the complexities of a post-colonial inherited diversity. The contrasting of conditions with policies allows for an account of whether the absence of a political discourse on language rights in Singapore is a discursal one, in which case it would still conceptually appeal to the conditions laid out for a rights regime, albeit negotiated to fit the complexities of the local context, or if it is a conceptual one, in which case the state subscribes to an alternate conceptual model, and the omission of a language rights discourse is simply the result of sequential irrelevance.

The analysis in the preceding section revealed that Singapore's CMIO language policies present a *prima facie* congruence with the conditions for a rights-based language regime, in that it officially recognises the 'mother tongues' of each of its three ethnic groups, all of which can be regarded as non-dominant or minority languages when compared alongside English. However, an acknowledgement of the diversity within each ethnic group, compounded with the analysis of the execution of the language policies and management strategies, as well as the motivations underlying their conception, denies any congruence with the ideologies of language rights and the model set out for a rights-based language regime, even if wiggle room was made for negotiation compromises on the grounds of situational complexity. The conclusion proffered here then, is that Singapore's language regime does not fit the mould of a language regime modelled on rights-based conditions.

The four conditions explicated in the preceding section, namely the legitimization of minority languages; minority language education; the effective engagement of minority languages in public domains; and the non-interference of private language use, to which I will refer in this section as W, X, Y, Z for discursive simplification, were established as standards underpinned by language rights ideologies to observe rights and protect minority interests. This implies that only when a regime acknowledges the existence of language rights, and subscribes to the ideology that language policies need to be formulated to protect minorities that it has to agree that its observance requires conditions W, X, Y, Z to be fulfilled. By extension, that Singapore's language regime does not orientate its policies to fulfil conditions W, X, Y, Z, nor does its ideologies reveal an aspiration to fulfil those conditions, suggest that its language regime is not indoctrinated by the ideologies of language rights and the need to protect minorities. As such, the language policies and accompanying rhetoric that take an exclusionary approach to rights is therefore not merely the result of a discursal elision, but rather the manifestation of another orientation in conceptualising linguistic management.

The purpose of this dissertation however, is not to pit Singapore's approach and the rights-based approach against each other and engage in an abstract theoretical debate on which approach reigns superior. Doing so would risk overstating positions, simplifying realities, and destroy the utility of important language planning and management constructs in favour of one ideological position over the other (Canagarajah, 2005). Instead, it adopts the view that language management operates in the context of "irreducible value pluralism" (Weinstock, 2014:326), where each state has different social, historical, or political considerations that underpin its language management strategies. The disparate considerations between nations do not form a tidy set of mutually consistent political values, and thus the different values that states pursue, or even the different ways in which they prioritize those values, orientate the way they conceptualise their linguistic management strategies. There is thus no optimal 'right answer' to the management of linguistic diversity and the associated orientations of language management conceptualisation, for the different ways of weighing the relevant values can all be justified by the states as morally defensible (Weinstock, 2014).

To illustrate, I return to a juxtaposition I made in Chapter 1 between officially multicultural Singapore and officially multicultural Canada to contrast the silence of language rights in the former, with the salience of language rights in the latter. While both nations are officially multicultural and multilingual, they appeal to different orientations in the conceptualisation

of linguistic management. Canada is often touted as a model nation to be emulated by language rights advocates because its language regime observes the above conditions W, X, Y, Z closely in the protection of minority language rights. However, its commitment to these conditions stem from its history of discrimination against indigenous people, and non-Whites and non-Anglo peoples (Chua, 2010). Consequently, official multiculturalism was adopted, and language policies that appeal to minority language rights were formulated to address and redress the subsumption of minority languages in the civic and public domain before the 1970s, and to atone for and rectify the historical violence and discrimination faced by minorities (May, 2003; Chua, 2010). In contrast, Singapore was compelled to adopt a policy of multiculturalism and multilingualism from the very onset of its nationhood, not only by the need to accommodate and unite an ethnically and linguistically divided nation that was a result of colonial “*laissez-fairism*” (Bokhorst-Heng, 1997:51) and its geopolitical context, but also because the key factor for Singapore’s independence from Malaysia was the Singaporean government’s disagreement with the pro-Malay politics of the Malaysian government (ibid.). Given the grounds of independence, to be regarded as a legitimate player nationally, the government had to remain consistent with its pre-independence commitments. In particular, this meant a continued commitment to policies of multiculturalism and multilingualism. As such, the formal constitutional equality of the three ethnic groups is captured in the CMIO model that forms the basis of much of the politics in Singapore, and it is this model that significantly underpins and orientates the way in which language policies and management strategies are conceived of by the state. As the operational logic of multiculturalism that grounds the conceptualisation of linguistic management, inter-ethnic equality supersedes or supresses any value attributed to the ideologies of language rights and the particular protection of any one minority group, thus accounting for the lack of political discourse on language rights, and the concomitant lack of policies in Singapore pertaining to language rights.

Thus far, I have argued that the statal non-speak of language rights in Singapore is due to a conceptual orientation of linguistic management grounded in a model of multiculturalism that values formal ethnic equality over the ideologies of language rights as a result of the conflation of political antecedents, historical contingencies, and overarching nationalistic principles. While I have also highlighted that a prioritisation of values incongruent with those of the dominant language rights regime does not make Singapore’s conceptual orientation of language management any ‘less right’, simply stating the basic opposition between a rights-

based regime and a rights-free regime does not get at the full complexities that underlie the apparent success of Singapore's language regime. The question remains how Singapore and its rights-free language regime has managed to achieve the linguistic harmony that so many other nations appealing to the more glorified language rights framework have tried, but failed to achieve.

3.3 Rightless but just regime?

In the preceding chapters, I have acknowledged that language rights is merely one of many ways to conceptualise language management. If various conceptualisations of language management can be justifiably argued for, what then, decides whether or not a linguistic regime is successful? If rights are not adhered to, and people are in fact disadvantaged and discriminated based on the languages they speak, what then accounts for the linguistic harmony in Singapore? In Chapter One, I highlighted Wee's (2011) claim that all language policies, however formulated, will differentially favour individuals or communities in any given population, inevitably resulting in some form of discrimination. This discrimination, albeit *regrettable*, can be argued to still be *just*, and a linguistic regime such as Singapore's, that is seemingly successful, is suggestive of the justice it upholds.

However, Wee's insinuation that Singapore's language regime is one that is just was never formally examined. While he did highlight that the discrimination of the dialectal and Eurasian communities in Singapore were *regrettable*, his exploration of Singapore's language policies to rationalise its success largely mirrored the government's discursive rational for its policies, that is, justice based on a formal CMIO equality to manage race relations. However, uncritically accepting the government's ideological discourse and claim to justice as a fact in itself risks fallaciously reaffirming the very regime that this dissertation seeks to investigate. Therefore to further explore and account for the social and linguistic harmony apparent in Singapore, the next section will engage Singapore's language regime in the linguistic justice debate. It will do so by contrasting the policies to normative conditions of justice dominantly argued for by political theorists and previously explicated in Chapter Two to examine if Singapore's policies can be considered linguistically just.

3.4 The justness of Singapore's linguistic regime

The linguistic justice paradigm is underpinned by ideals of autonomy and equality, essentially liberal democratic principles to which the rights thesis is wed. While partial to the language of

language rights, it does not necessitate a rights discourse nor a recognition of minority language rights. As it is justice that is of primary concern to political theorists, it is then not inconceivable within this paradigm to formulate successful language policies that do not appeal to language rights, so long as an equitable distribution of linguistic resources among a linguistically diverse citizenry can be defended. Thus, in light of the apparent success of Singapore's rights-free approach to language management, I will in the following contrast Singapore's linguistic management strategies to the conditions of linguistic justice explicated in Chapter two, to examine if its policies can be considered linguistically just. Should Singapore's linguistic regime pass liberal muster, then the linguistic harmony in Singapore could be accounted for by the linguistic justice regime, and there exists potential in the state's maintenance of its commitment to rights-free language ideologies and management strategies should it evolve into the liberal democracy that it is predicted to become.

Before examining the justness of Singapore's linguistic regime, it should be noted that while Chapter two critiqued some of the policy approaches advocated by political theorists through which states can justly manage linguistic diversity, the underlying conditions of justice are not undermined by the insufficiencies of those approaches. As is often the case, language policies that claim normativity are limited in their applicability to more complex sociolinguistic realities, yet the relative weaknesses of those normative policies should not imply the invalidity of the ethical principles that ground them. The conditions of justice therefore remain effectual tools to examine the extent to which Singapore's linguistic regime is considered just, according to standards of liberal democracy. Additionally, as the linguistic justice debate is still at large and the conditions of justice themselves still contentious, it is the dominant conditions of the paradigm previously explicated that I will be contrasting against Singapore's language management strategies, namely access to language of opportunity; parity of esteem; and individual autonomy. Given that I have in the preceding section elucidated Singapore's right-less orientation to linguistic management, it then follows that Singapore defaults on the recognition of minority language rights condition. Also, because each of these conditions are underscored independently by different theories of justice, should Singapore's linguistic regime fulfil any one condition without casting doubt on the extent to which it satisfies the standards of liberal democracy, its regime then can be considered linguistically just.

Condition 1: Access to language of opportunity

Liberal egalitarian theorists espouse the access to a language of opportunity, usually languages of wider communication, as a condition of justice to equalise socioeconomic advantages and burdens between individuals in society, and to provide them with increased mobility and equal vocational opportunities to improve their life chances (Van Parijs, 2011; Barry, 2001; Pogge, 2003). As Singapore's language policy necessitates the learning of English as a first language, it appears then that not only do Singaporeans have equal opportunities to social and economic participation locally, for English is the language of public administration, commerce, and industry in Singapore, they are also placed on an equal footing with global players in the international English-dominated labour market. According to state rhetoric, the acquisition of English in and of itself is also purported to be equal. As English was adopted as a 'neutral' language and denied mother tongue status, the state argues that it is learnt as a 'foreign' tongue by every Singaporean, thus reducing each individual to an equal starting point, ensuring fair competition without prejudice, in the pursuit for English competency and subsequent economic success.

However, the provision of English education by the state as a means of maintaining justice is seemingly an ideological illusion. On the surface, the bilingual policy does indeed provide every Singaporean with an access to English via language education. Yet the claim by the state that everyone competes at school or at work on an equal footing, through their acquired skill in English because the language is a 'foreign' tongue is contentious. As Singapore was a British colony pre-independence, English was already a common language among the local elites, the privileged local population who worked for the colonial administration, and their children who had access to limited English-learning opportunities, or exposure to the language at the very least (Chua, 2003). As such, while the state's provision of access to English via formal education is equal, the access to the acquisition of the language in and of itself is not. It cannot be said that every Singaporean is reduced to the same starting point in the acquisition of English, because this elite group of Singaporeans have a privileged access to the language. Concomitantly, Singaporeans who have never had an exposure to the language, who come from non-English speaking households, have to learn a brand new language, and be made to compete for opportunities in a language that the elites already have a privileged access to.

As there was an unequal starting point in the acquisition of English, the resulting level of proficiency also differs. While English education is made available to all, it is often the tertiary-educated, upper and middle class speakers from the elite English-speaking households who are proficient in Standard English and have high-level literacy skills (Chua, 2005). For the many Singaporeans who did not have the advantage of an early access to English, or the privilege of an exposure to an English-speaking environment, the learning of English only extends insofar as the mastery of a non-standard variety. The resultant discrepancy in proficiency then poses a problem to the equal access of opportunities that English is purported to provide. This is because the state fostered the ideology that Standard English is the only form of English that brings economic opportunities and upward mobility. In so doing, the state essentially denies the equality of opportunity to those who speak a less standard variety of English. Therefore, opportunities are more readily available to those who are more proficient in the standard variety of English, that is, to the elites who were already advantaged to start with. It is then also this group of elites who experience accelerated upward social, economic, and educational mobility. Therefore, while the state's education policy does provide an equal access to English, the conditions under which this provision was established advantages and empowers those who were already privileged to start with, thereby undermining the condition of justice that seeks to equalise socioeconomic opportunities and advantages.

Condition 2: Parity of esteem

Theorists have also posited that a just linguistic regime necessitates the recognition and assertion of parity of esteem between the languages with which members of the society identify, on grounds that the equality of dignity as a dimension of equal respect is irreducible to the mere equalisation of opportunities (Van Parijs, 2011). While parity of esteem is a subjective matter, in light of its sensitivity to attitudes, framing, and interpretations of individuals within society (ibid.), it is possible to objectively identify state management strategies that serve to stigmatise or disparage members of the citizenry by virtue of the languages that they speak.

I have previously discussed how the state's commitment to multiculturalism led to the establishment of a formal constitutional equality between the three ethnic groups, and how inter-ethnic linguistic equality governs the language policies in Singapore. Taking into account that every Singaporean is assigned a 'mother tongue', in placing the 'mother tongues'

of each ethnic group on an equal symbolic footing, Singapore could be argued to have, on a constitutional level, ensured the parity of esteem between its linguistically diverse population. However, I have also highlighted how the CMIO multicultural model was not truly representative of the linguistic makeup of the population, especially where the Chinese population was concerned. To realise their particular vision of multiculturalism, the state not only had to manipulate majority of the Chinese community linguistically, but psychologically, and this was done via a state-initiated campaign, the Speak Mandarin Campaign. Such campaigns are regularly used by the state as salient tools in a deliberate attempt to influence people to behave in ways the government desires, and stamp out values and practices deemed undesirable (Bokhorst-Heng, 1999). To weaken the purchase ‘dialects’ held for an overwhelming majority of the Chinese community, the government instigated the stigmatisation of ‘dialects’ and their speakers by circulating ideologies that label ‘dialects’ as liabilities, vulgar, worthless, and the language of the uneducated, among others:

- (1) Dialect will hinder the learning of the child if he uses dialect... to speak dialect with your child is to ruin his future.
(Lee Kuan Yew, then Prime Minister, Straits Times, 17 November 1980)
- (2) People who speak in Mandarin tend to be more polite than those who speak in dialects.
(Goh Chok Tong, then First Deputy Prime Minister, 1986 Speak Mandarin Campaign launching speech)
- (3) [Dialects] have no economic value in Singapore. Their cultural value is also very low
(Lee Kuan Yew, then Prime Minister, Straits Times, 17 November 1980)

The official denigration of ‘dialects’ by a national campaign can be regarded as an assault on the dignity of ‘dialect’ speakers, who, at the time of the campaign initiation, made up the majority of the Chinese population, and by extension, the nation’s population. It would not be far-fetched to claim that the stigmatisation of ‘dialects’ and their speakers affected the opportunities opened to ‘dialect’ speakers, either through discrimination, or indirectly by undermining their self-worth and dignity, and thereby their confidence and capacity to undertake existing opportunities that were formally open to them. While the campaign has today, 36 years on, shifted its focus away from ‘dialects’, the ideologies disparaging ‘dialects’

have never been disengaged nor abandoned by the state, and still resonates among the citizenry to date (Tang, 2013). By extension, that means ‘dialect’ speakers of today, most dominant among the pioneer and baby boomer generations, are still subjected to an ideological stigma. Therefore, while Singapore’s seemingly rigorous maintenance of formal equality among its official ethnic groups appear to uphold parity of esteem as a condition of justice, that veneer of justice cracks when one considers non-legislative language management strategies like the Speak Mandarin Campaign that blatantly discriminates individuals by virtue of a, and sometimes the only, linguistic variety they speak, and the negative ideologies of which still permeates society today.

Condition 3: Individual autonomy

Individual autonomy is posited by liberal democratic theorists to be a necessary requirement of a just linguistic regime. It demands that states avoid making assumptions about the linguistic interests of their people, and leave individuals the freedom to invest in linguistic repertoires they believe to be in their best interest (Laitin and Reich, 2003). Over and above undue interference from political authorities, this condition of justice requires the state to protect the individual rights of the citizenry in providing space and resources for them to pursue their linguistic interests and construct meaningful individual lives on their own terms. (ibid.) Legislatively, it also champions for the citizenry to be involved in linguistic policymaking via democratic voting. The Singaporean government, in the paternalistic style of governance that has led to the description of Singapore as a “nanny state” (Mauzy & Milne, 2002:35), readily denounces the idea of individual autonomy, believing that it knows what is best for its people:

Supposing we had chosen Chinese or tried to sponsor Chinese, how would we make a living? How could we fit ourselves into the region and into the world? And if we had taken the vote, we could have had to adopt that policy. So when people say: “Oh, ask the people!” It’s childish rubbish. We are the leaders. We know the consequences...They say people can think for themselves? Do you honestly believe that the chap who can’t pass primary six knows the consequences of his choice when he answers a question viscerally on language, culture, and religion? But we know the consequences. We would starve, we would have riots. We would disintegrate.

(Lee Kuan Yew, 1997, *A Man and His Ideas*)

This ‘government knows best’ mentality held by the state has given rise to management strategies that have infiltrated even the sanctuary of the private home domain, as previously discussed, leaving Singaporeans with little autonomy to adopt and develop linguistic repertoires that are not in sync with the state’s ideologies. While it has dismissed democratic voting as an expression of individual autonomy in the policymaking process, and people have little to no allowance for deviation from the official language policies, especially in the domain of public education, the state has claimed to have incorporated active citizenship into the policymaking process to not only increase autonomy, but also to promote democratic reform (Barr, 2003). In light of projects to engage citizens in public participation exercises such as “The Next Lap” initiated in 1991; “Singapore 21: Together We Make A Difference” in 1999; “Remaking Singapore” in 2003; and “Our Singapore Conversation” in 2012, the state contends that they are open to taking the perspectives and preferences of the citizenry into consideration, and have sanctioned public deliberations and engagement exercises to co-opt the views of the citizenry to fine-tune policy (Singapore 21 Committee, 1999; Tan, 2013). It maintains that these initiatives give a voice to all Singaporeans and allow them to raise issues and problems of their communities. Consequently, policies that the state has in place, linguistic policies included, are regarded by the government as the best policies that are reflective of the citizenry’s beliefs, as their concerns and alternative opinions are purported to have been fairly considered (Lee, 2000).

Given that the aforementioned dialogic initiatives allegedly provide all Singaporeans equal chances to engage in debate should they have contention with the existing policies, these initiatives could arguably be said to fulfil the goals of liberal democratic theorists when they postulated individual autonomy as a condition of justice, that is, that individuals be allowed the space and opportunity to express support and demand for linguistic recognition (Laitin and Reich, 2003). However, while the state encourages public deliberations with these initiatives, the precedence given to ethnic harmony in Singapore has rendered the topic of language ethnically ‘sensitive’ and thus out-of-bounds in public dialogue, for it is said to threaten the stability and cohesion of society (Tan and Mahizhanan, 2008). While there is no legal standing against the public voicing of grievances within a discourse of language, it is regarded by the state as an irresponsible form of public engagement in social and political life. Constrained by statal censorship, public deliberations on the topic of language policies, could be regarded as a mere form of gestural politics, and the existing language policies

cannot claim to be reflective nor representative of the opinions of the citizenry. The informal rules of engagement that suppress metalinguistic discourses in public deliberations thus pose a handicap to individual autonomy and undermine the observance of justice.

3.5 Moving the debate forward

In taking Wee's (2011) suggestion that Singapore's policies may be just as a point of departure, the preceding section engaged the state's language management strategies with the conditions of justice proposed by the linguistic justice regime. In so doing, I examined if Singapore's linguistic regime is in fact just, and if the discrimination of minority languages and their speakers are merely inevitable and thus regrettable. Should Singapore's linguistic regime be just, the lack of linguistic conflict in Singapore could be account for, and gain credibility as a rights-free regime.

The contrasting of Singapore's language management strategies against the conditions of justice however, has revealed Singapore's linguistic regime to be less than just. This leaves the question previously posed, as to how Singapore and its rights-free regime has managed to achieve linguistic harmony, unanswered. Empirically, linguistic regimes that are considered unjust by liberal democratic standards have a purported tendency to be accompanied by linguistic and social conflicts (May, 2003; Kymlicka and Patten, 2003). Against this general tendency, the harmonious cachet that complements Singapore's linguistic regime is then all the more remarkable and enigmatic.

To continue the inquiry into the reasons behind the citizenry's lack of resistance to Singapore's linguistic regime and their reticence on language rights, I will in the following chapter examine how language and language rights are understood by the citizenry. While the language rights discourse by advocates is constructed in good faith to bring about the desired effect of a good life for the people, to understand why they are not engaging in the same discourse, there is a need to examine the perspectives of the people and how they understand rights, so as not to "make linguistic rights more than just a trope in political-linguistic discourse" (Blommaert, 2005:403).

Chapter 4 – Language values and rights perception among Singaporeans

In Chapter 1, I laid out the trajectory of this dissertation for its exploration of the absence of a language rights discourse in Singapore – to first examine why the state has excluded a language rights rhetoric and rights-based policies from its linguistic regime, and then to examine why the citizenry has not responded to or resisted the state's silence on language rights with a rights discourse of their own. Having analysed Singapore's linguistic regime, and having explicated the state's alternative orientation towards language management which views rights as extraneous, I will in this chapter spotlight the citizenry and examine their reciprocal silence to the state's non-speak of language rights.

The previous chapter established that the unique social, historical, and political considerations at the onset of Singapore's independence led to an adoption of a conceptual orientation of linguistic management by the state that prioritised formal inter-ethnic equality over the ideologies of language rights and the protection of minority groups. While I have acknowledged that the resultant rights-free linguistic regime is a valid one, it does not negate the fact that the linguistic policies that Singapore has in place, and the way in which they were formulated, does in fact discriminate certain linguistic groups, some of which were once dominant. In light of the lack of protest and resistance by the citizenry despite the inequality, I explored the possibility that the linguistic harmony experienced in Singapore could be the result of a linguistically just regime. After all, if a position of neutrality is impossible to establish in the formulation of any language policy, a linguistic regime with some form of discrimination could be arguably just. However, an analysis of Singapore's linguistic policies and management strategies alongside the conditions of linguistic justice unveiled that linguistic resources are not equitably distributed, and as such, the discrimination of linguistic communities like the dialectal community, cannot be justified. The reason behind the lack of rights discourse from the citizenry in Singapore and the harmonious success of a seemingly unjust linguistic regime that rejects the concept of language rights is thus still left wide open.

4.1 Language rights and the lack of engagement with the ground

The defence against linguistic inequalities such as those experienced by Singaporeans whose once-dominant languages are now relegated to non-recognition by the state's policies is often couched in the language of language rights by rights advocates. They posit the necessity of rights recognition by the state so as to protect minority linguistic communities from linguistic

dislocation and subsequent linguistic discrimination. This recognition of rights has been championed by advocates as so imperative that the campaign warns of possible social conflict and state fragmentation should language rights not be observed by the state. However, this prophesised conflict never seemed to have manifested in Singapore despite statal denigration of the unofficial dialects, and an official language policy that severely under-represented the linguistic diversity present at the time of formulation. Additionally, this lack of conflict and adoption of rights discourse by Singaporeans could be read as their consent of the existing linguistic regime, inequality notwithstanding. The suspicion of a consensual silence, as I have mentioned in Chapter 1, is fuelled by the fact that Singaporeans are not beyond challenging policies they find unjust when it comes to matters of rights and equality, and this is evident in their contestations against policies regarding illegal homosexuality, foreign immigration, and income inequality, to name a few.

Herein lies a paradox – if the *raison d'être* for the fierce championship of rights recognition by language rights advocates is to promote the well-being of the people and to protect them from abuse, how then can the passivity of Singaporeans towards language rights be understood? This paradox deepens further if the reticence of the citizenry is the result of consent to a linguistic regime wrought with inequalities. It appears then, that there is a gap between the highly-charged arguments made against the state by language rights advocates on one hand, and a general lack of informed engagement with the language and rights perception among the citizenry on the other.

In much of the literature on linguistic rights, macro principles of language rights are formulated based on a set of assumptions about language and society. They are then applied to complex microlinguistic contexts to not only expound on the importance of language rights, but also prescribe a certain set of expectations as an overarching mandate on states to observe. The most fundamental assumption made by language rights advocates to bolster their own position about language rights is that all linguistic minorities want greater representation and protection by way of language rights recognition. This assumption is brought into question when the dichotomy of community reactions to language rights observation by the state and its lack thereof, are considered. Where the state has forsaken language rights for reasons related to nationalism or deference to the economic and educational opportunities of globalisation in nations like Catalonia (Woolard, 1985), Turkey (Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas, 1995), Brazil (Rajagopalan, 2005), and India

(Ramanathan, 2004), there has been resistance by minority communities and a resurgence of localism, just as language rights advocates have predicted. Antithetically however, there is evidence of policy failure even when rights are constitutionally recognised, in nations like Malaysia (David and Govindasamy, 2005) and Iran (Riazi, 2005). In these nations, minority communities have their language rights recognised via the primacy given to their language in educational and social life to redress the disparities suffered during colonization (Canagarajah, 2005). Ironically, these minority communities have resisted the protection of their own language (ibid.). This dichotomy in desire for language rights highlights the need to examine how people understand language rights, before prescribing language rights as a 'bureaucratic fix' for linguistic inequality.

Additionally, in framing the state as the protector and violator of language rights as rights advocates are wont to do, professional ethicists overlook the fact that linguistic survival and security of any language and its speakers are not guaranteed by the mere recognition of rights and the passing of constitution on the part of the state. The protection of minority language speakers seems to depend just as much, if not more, on the active commitment of individuals to the recognition of the rights of minorities (Peled, 2011). This commitment is in turn dependent on how the citizenry perceives the languages present in society, and how they conceptualise language rights (Canagarajah, 2005). The citizenry is effectively engaged in the provision or denial of rights to other citizens when those ideologies are enacted and produced in everyday conversations and interactions, right down to the smallest unit of informal interpersonal communication. Thus, depending on what they consider appropriate languages to speak in specific situations, when and to whom the use of a particular language is acceptable, they effectively engage in the provision or denial of rights to other citizens. Therefore, to understand Singaporeans' silence on language rights in spite of a supposedly discriminatory linguistic regime, there is a need to first understand their language values and how they conceptualise rights by examining the way they negotiate language policies within micro-social domains.

The importance of the citizenry's values and perception of language to the understanding of the success of language policies is also highlighted by Spolsky (2004, 2009). He argued that language policy constitutes three interrelated but distinguishable components:

- (1) the actual language practices of the members of the speech community;

- (2) the value assigned by members of the speech community to different linguistic varieties; and
- (3) the management, or the exercise of authority, in an attempt to influence and shape the language practices of members in the speech community.

These three components taken together consider language policy from both the macro perspectives of the state and micro perspectives of the citizenry, and provide a glimpse into the complexities involving the citizenry that contribute to the success of any linguistic regime (ibid.). Therefore, to understand the success of Singapore's linguistic regime and the lack of rights discourse by the people, the rest of this study will examine the values Singaporeans assign to their languages and other linguistic varieties, as well as their language practices, to understand what language means to them and how they may perceive language rights.

4.2 The study

4.2.1 Participant design

To examine the language values and practices among the citizenry, a total of 279 Singaporeans were recruited to answer a set of questions by way of a questionnaire. The participants were grouped according to their ethnicities, namely Chinese, Malay, and Indian, and 3 questionnaires were designed, each with questions that catered to the ethnic groups accordingly. These questionnaires were administered via an online survey platform, and the links to the questionnaires were distributed via social media and personal networks of family and friends. Links to the online survey were closed after 3 months once there were at least 100 surveys collected for each ethnic group, especially the groups with a less dominant population. While there were more than 100 questionnaires collected for the Chinese that ensured the availability of 100 fully completed questionnaires for analysis, only exactly 100 were collected from both the Malays and Indians. 22 questionnaires collected from the Malays and Indians were unfortunately incomplete and had to be discarded and disregarded for analysis. Of the 279 participants whose completed questionnaires were used, 100 were Chinese Singaporeans, 99 were Malay Singaporeans, and 80 were Indian Singaporeans. While unequal, these numbers are reflective of the ethnic proportions of the Singaporean population. Table 2 shows the breakdown of the participants by ethnic group and age.

Table 2. Breakdown of participants by ethnicity and age

	Chinese	Malay	Indian
Generation 1 1945 - 1965	26	29	21
Generation 2 1966 - 1985	21	20	13
Generation 3 1986 - 1995	53	50	46

N = 279

The participants were grouped ethnically so that a comparison of their language practices and perception of language rights could be made, especially since the languages of each ethnic group have been so differentially managed by the state. Recall the census data previously presented in Table 1 in Chapter 3. The Chinese were the most linguistically diverse, but had a language spoken by only 0.1% of the population imposed on them as a ‘mother tongue’, and concomitantly had their real mother tongues officially discriminated against by official language management strategies. Majority of the Malays, at 84.7%, had their mother tongue recognised by the state as an official ‘mother tongue’, and thus the community would have experienced little to no linguistic discrimination by the state, and are linguistically secured. While only 59.4% of Indians considered Tamil, the state’s official language, their mother tongue, the non-Tamil minority language speakers of the Indian community were given the liberty to have a linguistic education in the other Indian languages that they considered their mother tongue. As such, both Tamil speakers and non-Tamil minority language speakers experience linguistic security, at least at the level of language maintenance for the non-Tamil minority language speakers.

The participants from each ethnic group were further sub-divided into three generations based on their age, with those born between 1945 and 1965 banded into Generation 1, those born between 1966 and 1985 banded into Generation 2, and those born between 1986 to 1995 banded into Generation 3. The generations were banded this way based on an approximate association of Singapore’s language policy history with the existing generational structure in Singapore. Participants in Generation 1 were born before the implementation of the official language policy post-independence in 1965 that instituted the four official languages. As such, they would have been exposed to the linguistically diverse community, and they were the generation who had their mother tongues illegitimised by the state’s language

management strategies. This is especially so for the Chinese, considering that at least 99% of the Chinese population, which made up 75.4% of the total population, claimed a ‘dialect’ as a mother tongue pre-independence. This is the generation whose lack of resistance towards the state’s supposed violation of their language rights is most unusual. Generation 1 also happens to be the parent generation of Generation 3, who were born into the current linguistic regime. Generation 3 would probably only be familiar with a linguistic landscape dominated by the four official languages, and would have been educated within the English plus official ‘mother tongue’ bilingual education system. As such, it would be interesting to observe how they regard minority languages and the rights of their speakers, especially so for the Chinese, if their parents from Generation 1 regard these minority languages as their mother tongues. Additionally, the language practices of Generation 1 Chinese with their Generation 3 children would be indicative of the extent to which they desire the maintenance of their repressed dialectal mother tongues. Generation 2 participants were born just after the official language policy was implemented, and would be the first generation to be officially assigned a ‘mother tongue’, whether or not it is the language of their parents. For the Chinese, the parents of Generation 2 are likely to be dialect speakers, and this official ‘mother tongue’ foreign to them. They may have been taught in that assigned ‘mother tongue’ taking into account that at that time, standard public education was made available in all four official languages, although English-medium schools were most dominant. If they were educated in English, which was essentially a foreign language to them, the newly instated bilingual policy would demand that they be taught the official ‘mother tongues’. Where the Indians were allowed to learn a non-Tamil Indian language, the Chinese community, where diversity was the largest, was only allowed to learn Mandarin. This means that a majority of Generation 2 Chinese received education or subject education in two languages what were regarded as foreign to their parent generation, and who most likely spoke a state-denigrated dialect at home. In this case, how they negotiated their linguistic identities or understand their rights to language would be intriguing.

4.2.2 Questionnaire design

Before I move on to describe this study, it has to be highlighted that 3 questionnaires were designed, one for each ethnic group. While the questions in each questionnaire were essentially the same, the details of the questions were tailored to the ethnic groups accordingly to elicit how they perceive the minority languages and the rights of minority language speakers of their ethnic community. How they view the rights of the minority

language speakers of their own ethnic community would shed light on why they are not contesting the state's policies and demanding for their rights to be recognised. Their perception of the rights of minority language speakers from their own community and the rights of other ethnic communities would also be investigated to locate the locus of linguistic discrimination, if any, and this analysis would factor into the understanding of how they conceive of language rights in general.

To understand Singaporeans' lack of resistance to the state's linguistic regime and their reciprocal silence on rights, I examined the perception of language and language rights held by the citizenry by investigating their language values and practices. These values and practices were explicated by way of a questionnaire, and an example of one of the questionnaires tailored for the Chinese community can be found in Appendix A. In addition to the basic questions requesting for the participants' nationality, ethnicity and age, the questionnaire was divided into four parts to examine:

- (1) Language and identity
- (2) Language maintenance practices and ideology
- (3) Perception of appropriate language use across public and private domains
- (4) Perceived importance of language rights

Language and identity

While this study does not challenge the existence of a language-identity link, there is a need to examine how this link manifests among Singaporeans. This is because in using the language-identity link to call for a protection of minority languages, scholars make the assumption that it is the ethnic language with which individual affiliations lie. To understand why Singaporeans have not made this call for protection via a language rights discourse, I examined how they have constructed their linguistic identity in a multilingual nation. Participants were asked to answer 3 sets of questions designed to elicit responses pertaining to how they identified with 3 different languages or class of languages, namely English, their official 'mother tongue', and the minority languages of their own ethnic community. These questions were tailored specifically for each ethnic community, so an example of a set of identity questions for the Chinese, to which they were required to respond with 'yes', 'no', or 'no opinion', would be:

- (1) I belong to the Mandarin-speaking community.
- (2) I enjoy the company of people who speak Mandarin.

- (3) I consider Mandarin my own language.
- (4) I consider Mandarin my mother tongue.
- (5) I think all Chinese should speak Mandarin.

This set of questions would also be repeated for English and the Chinese dialects. These questions would collectively locate the language affiliations of each ethnic community to help explain why Singaporeans are not engaging in a language rights discourse to call for the protection of their languages and associated identities.

Language maintenance practices and ideologies

To examine how Singaporeans value the maintenance of their mother tongue and its associated identity, household language practices were also examined. As active language management strategies by the state extend only insofar as the public sphere, language use in the household where administrative action cannot intervene is suggestive of the extent to which Singaporeans desire the maintenance of their true mother tongues, statal discrimination notwithstanding. It has to be noted, that the maintenance of mother tongue refers to the maintenance of the ethnic languages that were claimed as mother tongue before the introduction of the state's official policies. As discussed in the preceding chapters, the state's linguistic regime discriminated against languages that many Singaporeans, especially the Chinese, considered their mother tongues. To understand why Singaporeans never challenged the policies that discriminated against their languages with a rights discourse, this section will only examine how Singaporeans value the maintenance of the mother tongue languages pre-independence. As intergenerational transmission is most vital for language maintenance, it can be expected that if Singaporeans place a high value on the maintenance of their mother tongues and their associated identities, there would be congruence in their responses to language spoken with parents, and language spoken with children. To examine if Singaporeans practice intergenerational transmission of their mother tongues and further elicit their desire for the maintenance of minority languages, participants were therefore asked to indicate the main languages that they speak with their parents and their children.

The parental language use would be then contrasted against the language that participants use or would use at home with their children. Should the minority languages that were used with the participants' parents be the main languages they use with their children, there would then be strong evidence for a desire to maintain the minority languages. While the state cannot

regulate the language used in the private domain of the home, the possibility that household language use may be influenced by language ideologies espoused by the state cannot be ruled out. As such, participants were also asked to indicate their ideal home language, to see if there is congruence between actual language use and desired language use. Whether or not Singaporeans desire language maintenance would be suggestive of why they are not engaging in a rights discourse to claim statal recognition and protection of those languages.

To investigate how Singaporeans perceive the maintenance of mother tongues, their perception towards language maintenance via education was examined. Participants were asked to rate scenarios of language-in-education and subject teaching of a language. The questions were designed to elicit whether or not they think mother tongues should be maintained via education. Additionally, because maintenance via education requires statal action, this will elicit Singaporeans' perception on the extent to which the state should provide for language maintenance via education. Participants were asked to answer a series of questions that explicates whether or not they think a language ought to be maintained just because it is one's mother tongue. These questions were again tailored specifically for each ethnic community, and they were required to respond with 'yes', 'no', or 'no opinion'. Participants were presented with various scenarios of speakers with different home languages, and asked if they thought that the speaker should be educated in that language. A Chinese participant for example, would be presented with this set of scenarios:

- (1) Jun Hao is Singaporean. He speaks only Mandarin at home. He should go to a Mandarin-medium school where they teach important subjects in Mandarin.
- (2) Yuet Leng is Singaporean. She speaks only Cantonese at home. She should go to a Cantonese-medium school where they teach important subjects in Cantonese.
- (3) Ahmad is Singaporean. He speaks only Malay at home. He should go to a Malay-medium school where they teach important subjects in Malay.
- (4) Jean is Singaporean. He speaks only French at home. She should go to a French-medium school where they teach important subjects in French.

The scenarios presented the participants with speakers of their own official 'mother tongue' to examine if they would endorse the maintenance of the 'mother tongue' via education in that medium if that 'mother tongue' is one that is recognised by the state. The scenario was then repeated for a speaker of a minority language of their own ethnic community, to examine if participants endorsed the maintenance of their own ethnic minority language via

education in that medium. This would be contrasted against their perception of the maintenance of the official ‘mother tongue’, to see if a true mother tongue status or an official status legitimised maintenance via language-in-education. The scenario was repeated a third time for a speaker of an official ‘mother tongue’ from another ethnic community to allow for a contrast with the responses to speakers from their own community. This would allow for an analysis of how participants perceive the maintenance of other languages. The scenario was finally repeated again with a French speaker, to check if participants’ perception of language maintenance is based on linguistic prestige.

As language-in-education is perhaps the fullest extent to which the state can provide language maintenance via education, to examine Singaporeans’ perception of the extent to which they think the state should provide for language maintenance through education, participants were presented with a scenario on the teaching of the minority language as a subject. A scenario with an official ‘mother tongue’ speaker was also presented to allow for a contrasting analysis. An example of the question set to which Chinese participants have to respond with ‘yes’, ‘no’ or ‘no opinion’ is as follows:

- (1) Pei Yi is Singaporean. She speaks only Mandarin at home. She should be taught Mandarin as a subject in school.
- (2) Chee Hwee is Singaporean. She speaks only Hokkien at home. She should be taught Hokkien as a subject in school.

Collectively, the results in this section would suggest how Singaporeans value the maintenance of their mother tongue and its associated identity, and how they perceive the maintenance of a mother tongue, and the rights to maintenance of a mother tongue.

Perception of appropriate language use across public and private domains

To continue the exploration of how Singaporeans construe rights, this section examines how Singaporeans value different linguistic varieties, how they perceive the rights of minority language speakers, and how they might extend or deny language rights to minorities by way of action. The questions in this section are structured to examine the propriety of language use across domains as perceived by Singaporeans. Participants’ responses to which languages they deem appropriate in which domains will reveal how they perceive the rights of linguistic minorities to use their language in public domains. This section would investigate participants’ perception of appropriate language use in public domains providing emergency

services (hospital), legal services (court), and public services (government tax office), as well as language use in a private domain set in a public space which is beyond statal regulation (restaurant).

Additionally, the situational questions in this section examine what languages they deem acceptable in the provision of service, what languages they think should be allowed to be spoken across domains, and what languages they perceive would be best to serve certain language speakers in an ideal situation. Participants were offered a variety of languages to choose from for their responses, and they were allowed to select multiple languages if they thought a number of languages were appropriate for service, or if a service user should be allowed to speak in a variety of languages. They were only allowed one language choice in deciding which language would be best to serve a particular speaker. An example of a set of questions from this section for Chinese participants would like this:

Yiling goes to court because she has committed a crime. She prefers to speak in Mandarin.

(1) Her trial should be conducted in:

(multiple languages presented, from which they can select more than one)

(2) She should be allowed to defend herself in:

(multiple languages presented, from which they can select more than one)

(3) The best language to conduct her trial is:

(multiple languages presented, from which they can only select one)

Response to (1) above would be analysed as what participants perceive as acceptable public languages in that situational domain. As this response could be subjected to what participants perceive as possible social or political constraints, responses to (1) would be contrasted against responses to (3), and this would be suggestive of their awareness and recognition of the rights of the language speaker, depending on whether or not they consider the language preference of the speaker to be the best language in which to serve her. Should there be mutually exclusive responses for (1) and (3) with responses to (3) being the language preference of the speaker, it would suggest the participants perceive certain constraints that exist in public language use, possibly established by the state, that prevent the speaker from being served in the language that she prefers. Responses to (2) are also suggestive of participants' awareness and recognition of the rights of the speaker to seek service in a preferred language.

This question set was repeated for all 4 situational domains listed above, and in each situation, participants were presented with speakers whose language preferences were the official ‘mother tongue’ and a minority language of their ethnic community. These responses are suggestive of how they perceive language rights, and their regard for the rights of the language speakers of their own community. Given how actual language practices are often a manifestation of language ideologies, the perception of language rights elicited in this section could be suggestive of how participants actively observe or undermine language rights in actual social situations, thereby extending or denying the linguistic rights of minorities.

4.3 The local understandings of language and language rights

This section will present the findings of the study, and it will do so in the same four subsections that the questionnaire was divided into, starting with language and identity, followed by language maintenance practices and ideology, perception of appropriate language use across public and private domains, and finally perceived importance of language rights. It has to be noted that due to the variety of languages available as response options, to simplify the presentation of the results and for the sake of consistency, the label ‘minority languages’ would be used to classify all minority ethnic languages that are not legitimised as official languages in Singapore. Languages under this category from the Chinese community include the Chinese dialectal languages such as Cantonese, Hokkien, Teochew, and the likes. Likewise, non-Malay Malayan languages such as Javanese, Bawonese, and Bahasa Indonesia, and the non-Tamil Indian languages such as Punjabi, Hindi, and Malayalam.

4.3.1 Language and identity

This section examines how the language-identity link manifests among Singaporeans. A set of questions were posed to the participants to elicit the languages that they identify with, and Tables 3, 4, and 5 show the responses of the Chinese, Malay, and Indian participants respectively.

To identify if there is a language that forms the ‘ethnic identity’ of the ethnic group, I will first look at how Singaporeans identify with the official mother tongue prescribed to their ethnic group and their minority languages. Tables 4 and 5 show very clearly that it is the official ‘mother tongues’ that provide majority of the Malay and Indian Singaporeans with their ethnic identities. It can be observed from Table 4 that Malay Singaporeans identify strongly with Malay, with more than 70% across all three generations claiming to identify with the language across the five criteria used to elicit their linguistic affiliations, and almost 100% claiming Malay as their mother tongue. Their strong affiliation towards Malay is not surprising given the pre-independence demographics in Table 1 which shows Malay as the dominant language spoken by almost 85% of the Malay community to start with, and they have frequently been described as guardians of their ethnic language (Cavallaro and Serwe, 2010).

Table 3. Language identification of Chinese (%)

	English			Mandarin			Minority Ethnic Language		
	Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3	Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3	Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3
I belong to the language community	61.54%	42.86%	75.47%	7.69%	76.19%	66.04%	57.69%	61.90%	32.08%
I enjoy the company of people who speak the language	69.23%	61.90%	73.58%	57.69%	95.24%	54.72%	76.92%	66.67%	41.51%
I consider the language my own	46.15%	28.57%	81.13%	30.77%	80.95%	58.49%	61.54%	61.90%	33.96%
I consider the language my mother tongue	15.38%	14.29%	33.96%	23.08%	85.71%	67.92%	53.85%	52.38%	24.53%
I think all Chinese should speak the language	80.77%	85.71%	96.23%	50.00%	100%	69.81%	76.92%	76.19%	39.62%

Table 4. Language identification of Malays (%)

	English			Malay			Minority Ethnic Language		
	Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3	Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3	Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3
I belong to the language community	65.52%	40.00%	42.00%	89.66%	70.00%	92.00%	6.90%	0.00%	12.00%
I enjoy the company of people who speak the language	89.66%	65.00%	92.00%	100.00%	70.00%	92.00%	65.52%	40.00%	26.00%
I consider the language my own	27.59%	30.00%	48.00%	100.00%	70.00%	82.00%	13.79%	0.00%	4.00%
I consider the language my mother tongue	13.79%	15.00%	26.00%	100.00%	100.00%	94.00%	13.79%	0.00%	2.00%
I think all Malays should speak the language	75.86%	90.00%	92.00%	96.55%	100%	94.00%	31.03%	30.00%	28.00%

Table 5. Language identification of Indians (%)

	English			Tamil			Minority Ethnic Language		
	Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3	Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3	Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3
I belong to the language community	76.19%	100.00%	67.39%	61.90%	61.54%	50.00%	0.00%	30.77%	17.39%
I enjoy the company of people who speak the language	100.00%	100.00%	91.30%	61.90%	61.54%	50.00%	14.29%	38.46%	13.04%
I consider the language my own	61.90%	84.62%	50.00%	61.90%	100%	63.04%	0.00%	0.00%	17.39%
I consider the language my mother tongue	33.33%	46.15%	36.96%	85.71%	100%	73.91%	0.00%	0.00%	13.04%
I think all Indians should speak the language	85.71%	92.31%	95.65%	61.90%	100%	52.17%	14.29%	30.77%	4.35%

All three generations show very little affiliation to the minority languages of their community, and this is not unexpected considering their small speakerships pre-independence to date.

In the same vein, Table 5 shows that a larger proportion of Indian Singaporeans identify more strongly with Tamil over the minority languages of their community. At least 50% of Indians claimed to identify with Tamil across the five criteria, and at least 70% claimed it to be their mother tongue. This large proportion of Indians claiming to identify with Tamil comes in spite of the fact that Tamil was only the mother tongue of 59.4% of Indians pre-independence, as shown in Table 1. This could be due to the under-representation of non-Tamil-speaking Indians in the small sample size of this study, but this could not have been avoided given the small speakership of non-Tamil languages when their proportions are considered against Singapore's overall population.

While there was a distinctive language that provided the Malay and Indian participants with their ethnic identities, there is no one ethnic language or group of ethnic languages that the Chinese unanimously identify with. Rather than a single language or group of languages that can claim to inherently represent the Chinese ethnic identity, there seems to be a shift away from identifying with the minority languages to Mandarin across generations. It can be observed in Table 3 that Generation 1 Chinese identify most closely with the minority languages. A comparison of how Generation 1 Chinese identify with Mandarin and the minority languages reveal that 61.54% of this generation claimed a minority language as their own language, compared to the 30.77% who claimed the same for Mandarin. Only a mere 7.69% see themselves as part of the Mandarin-speaking community, and only 23.08% regard Mandarin as their mother tongue despite the state's unwavering rhetoric that Mandarin is the 'mother tongue' of the Chinese community and that there is only one uniform Chinese community that is characterized by Mandarin as its mother tongue since the implementation of the official language policy in 1965. On the contrary, despite statal denigration of the minority languages and the rejection of these languages as mother tongues of Singaporeans, 57.69% of Generation 1 still see themselves as part of the minority language community. Generation 1 Chinese's identification with the minority languages is reflective of their identification with their true mother tongues, and consistent with the 53.85% majority who claimed these languages as their mother tongues. It is this generation who was part of the linguistically diverse language ecology pre-independence, and were most likely to have been

speaking the minority ethnic languages before the state imposed Mandarin as a ‘mother tongue’ for the community.

Generation 2 Chinese also identify with the minority languages, but have a slightly higher identification with Mandarin. Table 3 shows that while 76.19% of Generation 2 Chinese see themselves as part of the Mandarin community, 61.90% also see themselves as part of the minority language community, which is in fact the largest proportion across three generations. Over 50% of participants in this generation identify with a minority language on all five criteria. Their affiliation with the minority languages can be explained if their inherited languages are considered. Recall that the pre-independence census in Table 1 showed that an overwhelming 99% of Chinese considered a minority language their mother tongue. Given that the parents of Generation 2 are part of this proportion of people, it is not unexpected for Generation 2 Chinese participants to identify with their inherited languages. What is striking though, is that despite inheriting the minority languages which technically makes these languages their true mother tongue, Generation 2 Chinese appear to identify more with Mandarin, which was essentially a foreign language to them, considering that less than 0.1% of their parental generation claimed Mandarin as a mother tongue in the 1957 census. Despite Mandarin being an artificially imposed ‘mother tongue’ by the state, 80.95% of Generation 2 Chinese claimed Mandarin as their own language, and 85.71% consider it their mother tongue. This is compared to the 61.90% who claimed a minority language, possibly their true mother tongue, their own, and 52.38% who consider it their own mother tongue. This pattern could be a manifestation of the success of the Speak Mandarin Campaign (SMC) since this generation experienced the SMC at its peak, when the minority ethnic languages were fiercely denigrated by the state and legislatively illegitimised, while Mandarin was ideologically championed as a ‘mother tongue’ and introduced into the national education system.

The continued success of the SMC in altering the language of ethnic identity among the Chinese can be observed in the continued trend towards an identification with Mandarin by Generation 3 Chinese participants, with more than 50% of them identifying with Mandarin on all five criteria. Where there is still a strong affiliation to the inherited minority languages by Generation 2, this affiliation was weakened in Generation 3 with only 32.08% of participants claiming to belong to the minority ethnic language community. Less than 45% of Generation 3 Chinese identify with a minority language on each of the five identity criteria

despite the strong affiliation Generation 1, their parent generation, have with these minority ethnic languages. Reason for this could be that Generation 3 Chinese were born into the existing language policies that only recognised Mandarin as the ‘mother tongue’ of the Chinese, and by the time they were born, the SMC had experienced considerable success in eradicating the Chinese minority languages from the public sphere resulting in little exposure to the languages. The success of the SMC could also have ideologically influenced Singaporeans into thinking negatively about the minority languages, and thus out of using these said languages.

Thus far, the results show that for the Malay and Indian communities, there is a clear language that forms their ethnic identity. For them, this language corresponds to their true mother tongues, and is congruent with the official ‘mother tongues’ assigned to their ethnic groups. Among the Chinese, there is no unanimous identification with a single language or group of minority languages that can be claimed to be that from which they derive their ethnic identity. It can however, be argued that it is the inherited minority languages that forms the ethnic identity of the Chinese, and that Generations 2 and 3 only identified with Mandarin due to a contrived manipulation by the state. This argument can be further supported by the observation that Generation 2 Chinese still strongly identified with the minority languages that were most likely their true mother tongues, even when they were the Generation that was most vulnerable to the state’s aggressive denigration of minority languages.

Therefore examine if Singaporeans can identify with languages that are not their ethnic mother tongues without state manipulation, and if their linguistic identities are derived from more than just their ethnic languages, I looked to see how they identified with English. English was chosen as a language for examination because majority of Singaporeans are English-knowing bi- or multilinguals. There appears to be a trend of general identification that Singaporeans have with English across ethnicity and generations, even though this language is not an ethnic language that they inherited. This can be observed in their response to how they perceive themselves as belonging to the English language community, and their good feeling for English speakers. Within the Chinese community, 42.86% to 75.47% of participants across 3 generations see themselves as part of the English language community. Similarly, 40% to 65.52% of Malays across 3 generations claimed to belong to the English language community. 67.39% to 100% of Indian participants see themselves as belonging to

the English language community. The higher proportions of people identifying with English in the Indian community could be because they have been using English since the colonial days, and were the first non-white population in Singapore to have acquired a high standard of English (Chua, 2003), before the implementation of the state's language policies. Singaporeans' identification with English can be postulated in spite of the low proportions of Singaporeans who consider English a mother tongue, and claiming it as their own language. The proportion of Singaporeans claiming English as a mother tongue ranges from a low of 13.79% by Generation 1 Malays, to 46.15% by Generation 2 Indians. The low proportions observed here could presumably be because they have been exposed to the unwavering rhetoric of the state that denies English as a language of affiliation for Singaporeans. The observation that Singaporeans identify with English suggests that Singaporeans can identify with languages without statal manipulation, and in spite of the state's insistence that they should not. It also shows that as bi- or multilinguals, there is more than just one language that contributes to their linguistic identity, and this language could be a foreign one such as English.

This section set out to examine how Singaporeans construct their language identities. The results revealed that Singaporeans do identify with their inherited mother tongues. As bi- or multilinguals, they can identify with more than one language, and the languages they can identify with need not be languages that they inherit.

4.3.2 Language and maintenance practices and ideologies

Inter-generational transmission of mother tongue

This section explores the language maintenance practices and ideologies of Singaporeans. To investigate how Singaporeans value the maintenance of their mother tongue and its associated identity, household language practices were examined for an active maintenance of mother tongues via intergenerational transmission of the language.

To examine if there was an intergenerational transmission of mother tongues within households, the participants were first asked to identify the main language they use with their parents. As observed in Figure 1, 84.62% of Generation 1 Chinese participants reported the use of minority languages with their parents. In a similarly large proportion, 86.21% of Generation 1 Malay participants reported the use of Malay, and 76.19% of Generation 1 Indians reported the use of Tamil. As previously mentioned, this section will only examine

Figure 1. Main language used with parents

how Singaporeans value the maintenance of the ethnic languages that were regarded as their mother tongues by large proportions of the population before the introduction of the state's official language policies. In light of how Generation 1 participants were born pre-independence, and that the languages they reportedly used with their parents coincide with the mother tongues claimed by majority members of their community in the 1957 census in Table 1, it is the intergenerational transmission of Chinese ethnic languages, Malay, and Tamil that will be analysed here.

A downward trend can be identified in the use of these mother tongues across generations, which is consistent with the introduction of the state's language policy. We can observe a fall in the use of the mother tongues by Generation 2 participants who were born post-independence. While the fall in use of Malay and Tamil was met with a corresponding increase in the use of English across Generations 2 and 3, the fall in the use of Chinese minority languages was met with a decrease in use of English and a surge in the use of Mandarin. The use of Chinese minority languages fell from 84.62% to 57.14%, and the use of Mandarin spiked from 0% to 33.33%. This trend is consistent with the introduction of the Speak Mandarin Campaign post-independence. The goal of the SMC was to eradicate the use of the Chinese minority languages and promote the use of Mandarin as a 'mother tongue'. It seems that while the state's administrative policy cannot be actively imposed within the

Figure 2. Main language used with children

private domain in the home, the rise in use of Mandarin and corresponding sharp decline in use of Chinese minority languages suggests that the ideological campaign was effective. While the upward trend in use of Mandarin did not continue into Generation 3, the use of Chinese minority languages as a main language in the household was completely eradicated by the time Generation 3 was born.

This lack of maintenance of Chinese minority languages as a dominant household language by the time Generation 3 was born is consistent with Generation 1 participants' complete non-existent transmission of the Chinese minority languages to their children, as shown in Figure 2. The previously dominant use of Chinese minority languages had given way to a rise in use of English. While Generation 2 and 3 Chinese reported some use of Chinese minority languages as the dominant language in the household with their children, it is worth noting that in the collection of the data, should the participants be childless, they were asked to hypothesize the language they would use should they have a child. Given the ages of the participants, the reported use of Chinese minority languages by Generation 3 participants is likely to be hypothetical. In the case where there are no hypothetical children involved in, the combined proportions of participants reporting a use of Chinese minority languages with their children is only 20.94%, a stark contrast to the 84.62% and 57.14% of participants who used the languages with their parents. The transmission of Malay and Tamil as dominant

Figure 3. Ideal home language

languages also saw a general decline that is met with a corresponding of English as the dominant household language. While the illegitimacy of the mother tongues of these ethnic communities were not actively challenged in light of their official ‘mother tongues’ status, the shift towards English could be understood to be the result of the linguistic security that and official status gives to a language. Given the knowledge that their mother tongues are not threatened, the need to actively maintain it gives way to the adoption of another language that is said to bring greater opportunities for success.

It appears then that across generations and ethnicities, where the ethnic mother tongues were once dominant, the use of these mother tongues had given way to the dominance of English within the household. Can it be said that Singaporeans do not value the maintenance of their languages? While they are not actively engaging in the intergenerational transmission of the mother tongues, they could very well still desire this maintenance, thereby still valuing the maintenance of the language. The results in Figure 3 shows this desire for mother tongue maintenance. The proportions of participants reporting their mother tongues as the ideal home language is very much greater than the reported use of dominant language with children. This general trend in the desire to maintain ethnic mother tongues as dominant household languages is most evident in Generation 1 participants. This does not come as a surprise they are the ones who used these mother tongues most dominantly, in and outside of

the home before the introduction of Singapore's language policy. Where there were absolutely no Generation 1 Chinese participants who reported the use of Chinese minority languages with their children, 46.16% reported it as an ideal home language. Even 15.10% of Generation 3 participants reported the desire to have Chinese minority languages as a home language. While this percentage is small, it comes from a generation that never had any claims to the Chinese minority languages as a mother tongue. In the same vein, 52.38% of Tamil participants reported Tamil as an ideal home language compared to the mere 4.76% who use Tamil with their children. 79.31% of Generation 1 Malays also saw Malay as an ideal home language, although only 34.48% actively used it with their children. What we can see here then, is the discrepancy between desire to maintain mother tongues and active maintenance of mother tongues.

Perception of mother tongue maintenance

The previous section has shown that Singaporeans desire the maintenance of mother tongues, but are yet not doing what it takes in the household to engage in the actual maintenance of mother tongues via intergenerational transmission. In this section, I continue to explore how Singaporeans understand language maintenance of mother tongues, and their perception of rights to language maintenance.

Figure 4 shows Chinese participants' responses to language maintenance via education in the mother tongue. The general trend shows that Chinese Singaporeans do not endorse education in a mother tongue. When asked if an individual who speaks only Mandarin at home should be allowed an education in the medium of Mandarin, less than 10% of participants Generations 2 and 3 responded with an affirmative. 0% of Generation 1 Chinese endorsed a Mandarin-medium education, even though vernacular-language schools were common for their generation. And this is in spite of Mandarin being an officially recognised language. This lack of endorsement is all the more so reflected in their perception of whether or not an individual who speaks a non-official Chinese minority language should be allowed an education in a minority language. Generation 1, who previously showed the greatest affiliation to the Chinese minority languages and whose mother tongues are the minority languages in the greatest proportions, are absolutely not endorsing the maintenance of their own mother tongue via language medium education. While Chinese Singaporean participants have previously espoused the desire for the maintenance of the minority ethnic languages, it

Figure 4. Chinese perception to language-in-education

Figure 5. Malay perception of language-in-education maintenance

Figure 6. Indian perception of language-in-education maintenance

is clear here that it is not through a language medium education that the language should be maintained, even though this has been purported to be the most effective way to recognise one's rights to language maintenance (Skutnabb-kangas, 1995). It is also not the lack of prestige of the languages that is the source for their lack of endorsement to mother tongue-medium education, for French speakers fare little better in having their rights to language maintenance recognised here.

This lack of endorsement for mother tongue-medium education does not only manifest among the Chinese. Figures 5 and 6 show the same general trend of the lack of endorsement for mother tongue-medium education by the Indian Singaporean participants, or by the Malay Singaporean participants. This lack of endorsement is also consistent across the variety of language mediums. It does not matter if the language in question is the participants' own mother tongue, their state-assigned 'mother tongue', the official 'mother tongue' of a different ethnic community, or a supposedly more prestigious language. The resounding lack of endorsement across all ethnicities and generations is a clear indication that Singaporeans do not recognise mother tongue-medium education as a strategy of language maintenance.

If language-in-education is regarded as so unacceptable by Singaporeans as a language maintenance strategy, I will examine how they perceive the subject teaching of their own

ethnic languages as a means of language maintenance. Figure 7 shows the perception Malay participants have towards language teaching via subject teaching. While there was previously an outright rejection of language maintenance via any non-English medium education, Singaporeans appear more receptive to the idea of language maintenance via subject teaching. When presented with an individual who speaks only Malay at home, all three generations largely endorsed the teaching of Malay as a subject in school, with more than 65% of participants from each generation responding with an affirmative to the teaching of Malay as a subject. However, when tasked to respond to whether or not a minority speaker from their community had the same right to language maintenance via subject teaching, the proportion were less agreeable. At least 80% from Generations 1 and 3 and 60% from Generation 2 rejected subject education as a means of maintenance of minority language.

The Indian participants showed a similar trend in endorsing the maintenance of the official mother tongue over the Indian minority languages in Figure 8. The proportion of participants endorsing the maintenance of Indian minority languages is higher than that of the Malay participants. This could be reflective of the more diverse mother tongue varieties within the Indian community.

Figure 8. Indian perception on language maintenance via subject teaching

Figure 9. Chinese perception on language maintenance via subject teaching

What is striking however, is that the Chinese participants show a similar trend in endorsing the maintenance of Mandarin via subject teaching over the same maintenance of the minority languages in Figure 9. The endorsement of Malay or Tamil maintenance via subject teaching by their respective communities corresponds to how Malay and Tamil are the mother tongues of a large proportion of those communities. In that sense, the Malays and Tamils are simply recognising the rights of their own mother tongue speaker, which aligns with their previously-expressed desire to maintain their mother tongues. However, the Chinese are endorsing quite the contrary by recognising the right of a speaker who speaks a ‘mother tongue’ essentially foreign to them. 92.31% of Generation 1 Chinese expressed a firm ‘no’ to endorsing language maintenance of the minority languages via subject teaching when 84.62% of respondents in this generation share the same mother tongue, and 53.85% expressed the desire to maintain the minority ethnic languages. Correspondingly, only 9.52% and 15.09% of participants from Generation 2 and 3 think a minority language speaker should be allowed to maintain his language via subject education. It is also noteworthy that alongside this small percentage of participants who do recognise that the minority language speaker should be extended the same right as the ‘mother tongue’ speaker in having his language preserved, are 52.38% and 43.40% of participants from Generations 2 and 3 respectively who have ‘no opinion’ on whether or not the minority language speaker should be allowed to be taught his minority language. In having ‘no opinion’, this large proportion of participants are suggesting that while they do not think that the minority speaker should be denied the right to the maintenance of his language, they are not quite sure if he should be granted that right. This uncertain footing, when compared alongside the steadfast endorsement of state official ‘mother tongues’, suggests that the younger generations do have an inkling of the maintenance rights of minority speakers that should be observed, but are not so sure about it, simply because these minority languages are not ‘official’.

Taken collectively, the findings in this section show that Singaporeans desire for maintenance of their mother tongues, but do not actively engage in inter-generational transmission. With regard to language maintenance via education, the findings show that Singaporeans recognise the rights to language maintenance of official ‘mother tongue’ speakers. Minority language speakers’ rights to maintenance are not recognised by Singaporeans, even the Chinese Singaporeans who claim to desire the maintenance of their minority ethnic languages. This is evident in their lack of endorsement for the maintenance of minority languages via education, even if it is only via subject teaching. This is possibly because those minority languages are

not constitutionally recognised by the state. While they do recognise the rights official ‘mother tongue’ speakers have to the maintenance of their language, Singaporeans only endorse maintenance strategies already undertaken by the state. This can be observed in their lack of endorsement for language-in-education as a management strategy even for official ‘mother tongue’ speakers, as this is not a strategy practiced by the state. In contrast, language maintenance of the official ‘mother tongues’ via subject teaching is endorsed because it is already a strategy undertaken by the state in its bilingual educational policy.

4.3.3 Perception of appropriate language use across public and private domains

To explore why Singaporeans have remained silent on the subject of rights, this section examines how they value different linguistic varieties, and how they perceive the rights of speakers from their ethnic community across various domains.

Restaurant

Table 6 shows the perception of Chinese participants to language use in a restaurant with a Mandarin speaker and a Hokkien speaker. Where the speaker’s language preference is Mandarin, there is a general trend of acceptability of service in both English and Mandarin across generations. There is no difference in proportion of Generation 2 participants who consider English and Mandarin acceptable service languages at 85.71%. Similarly there is no significant difference in acceptability of service in those languages as perceived by Generation 3 participants ($\chi^2=1.623$, $df=1$, $p\text{-value}=0.2027$). While 69.23% of Generation 1 participants regard English as an acceptable service language, a significantly higher proportion of participants from that generation regard Mandarin as a more acceptable service language at 96.15% ($\chi^2=4.8372$, $df=1$, $p\text{-value}=0.02785$). More than 90% of Chinese participants across the three generations believe that a speaker whose choice of language is Mandarin should be allowed to speak in Mandarin. These proportions match the proportions in which they think Mandarin is an acceptable service language. However, given the high proportions of acceptability for service in English, what this means is that while the speaker should be allowed to speak in his own language, this is not matched by a requirement of service in the same language. However, there is general consensus by the Chinese participants across generations that the best language to serve a Mandarin speaker is Mandarin.

Table 6. Chinese perception of appropriate language use in a restaurant

Speaker's language preference: Mandarin

Acceptable service language (%)				Speaker should be allowed to speak in (%)				Speaker is best served in (%)			
	Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3		Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3		Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3
English	69.23	85.71	84.91	English	53.85	71.43	90.57	English	7.69	4.76	13.21
Mandarin	96.15	85.71	94.34	Mandarin	100.00	95.24	94.34	Mandarin	80.77	95.24	86.79
CML	34.62	4.76	9.43	CML	50.00	4.76	24.53	CML	11.54	0.00	0.00
Malay	3.85	0.00	3.77	Malay	15.38	0.00	22.64	Malay	0.00	0.00	0.00
Tamil	0.00	0.00	3.77	Tamil	11.54	0.00	22.64	Tamil	0.00	0.00	0.00

Speaker's language preference: Hokkien

Acceptable service language (%)				Speaker should be allowed to speak in (%)				Speaker is best served in (%)			
	Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3		Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3		Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3
English	57.69	76.19	79.25	English	50.00	80.95	79.25	English	0.00	14.29	11.32
Mandarin	84.62	85.71	84.91	Mandarin	65.38	85.71	84.91	Mandarin	46.15	61.90	30.19
Hokkien	65.38	61.90	64.15	Hokkien	92.31	71.43	73.58	Hokkien	53.85	23.81	58.49
OCML	42.31	4.76	11.32	OCML	38.46	19.05	32.08	OCML	0.00	0.00	0.00
Malay	3.85	0.00	5.66	Malay	15.38	14.29	28.30	Malay	0.00	0.00	0.00
Tamil	0.00	4.76	3.77	Tamil	3.85	14.29	28.30	Tamil	0.00	0.00	0.00

Legend:

CML: Chinese minority language

OCML: Other Chinese minority languages

Where the speaker's language preference is a non-official minority ethnic language that is Hokkien, there is a general trend in perception of Chinese participants that in a restaurant, it is acceptable to serve the speaker in English, Mandarin, and Hokkien. Across generations, more than 80% of respondents regard Mandarin as an acceptable service language. However, only Generation 3 participants consider it more acceptable to serve a Hokkien speaker in Mandarin than in Hokkien ($\chi^2=4.9695$, $df=1$, $p\text{-value}=0.0258$). Generation 1 and 2 participants consider it equally acceptable to serve a Hokkien speaker in English, Mandarin, and Hokkien. In the same vein, Generation 3 participants also consider service in English and Hokkien to be equally acceptable (where $p>0.05$). The proportion of participants who believe a Hokkien speaker should be allowed to speak Hokkien match that of the proportion who consider service in Hokkien acceptable. However, the proportion of Generation 1 participants who believe a Hokkien speaker should be allowed to speak Hokkien is significantly greater than the proportion that recognise Hokkien as an acceptable service language ($\chi^2=4.1508$, $df=1$, $p\text{-value}=0.04162$). This suggests that for Generation 1 participants, the right of a Hokkien speaker to speak his language of choice is not matched by a right to service in his own language. With regard to the best language to serve a Hokkien speaker, there is no clear consensus across the generations. 46.15% of Generation 1 participants perceive Mandarin to be the best language to serve a Hokkien speaker, while 53.85% perceive the best language to be Hokkien. There is however, no significant difference between the two proportions. The proportion of Generation 2 participants however, who think Mandarin the best language to serve a Hokkien speaker in a restaurant is significantly higher ($\chi^2=4.7639$, $df=1$, $p\text{-value}=0.02906$) than those in the generation who think the same for Hokkien. Unlike the other two generations, a significantly higher proportion of Generation 3 participants regard Hokkien to be the best language to serve a Hokkien. Where there previously was a general consensus that the best language to serve a Mandarin speaker in a restaurant is Mandarin, the lack of a consensus to the best language to serve a Hokkien speaker is suggestive of a similar lack of consensus to the recognition of rights of an ethnic minority language speaker.

Table 7 shows the perception of Malay participants to language use in a restaurant with a Malay speaker and a Javanese speaker. Where the speaker's language preference is Malay, there is a high proportion of participants who regard English and Malay as acceptable service languages. However, the generations differ in what they think is the more acceptable language to serve a Malay speaker. Generation 1 participants think it is significantly more acceptable to serve in English ($\chi^2=4.7347$, $df=1$, $p\text{-value}=0.02956$), while Generation 2

Table 7. Malay perception of appropriate language use in a restaurant

Speaker's language preference: Malay

Acceptable service language (%)				Speaker should be allowed to speak in (%)				Speaker is best served in (%)			
	Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3		Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3		Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3
English	96.55	70.00	92.00	English	68.97	70.00	78.00	English	31.03	30.00	40.00
Malay	72.41	100.00	98.00	Malay	86.21	100.00	100.00	Malay	68.97	70.00	60.00
MML	17.24	0.00	8.00	MML	31.03	0.00	8.00	MML	0.00	0.00	0.00
Mandarin	0.00	0.00	2.00	Mandarin	0.00	0.00	2.00	Mandarin	0.00	0.00	0.00
Tamil	0.00	0.00	0.00	Tamil	0.00	0.00	2.00	Tamil	0.00	0.00	0.00

Speaker's language preference: Javanese

Acceptable service language (%)				Speaker should be allowed to speak in (%)				Speaker is best served in (%)			
	Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3		Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3		Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3
English	68.97	70.00	96.00	English	68.97	70.00	92.00	English	3.45	30.00	60.00
Malay	100.00	70.00	58.00	Malay	100.00	70.00	56.00	Malay	72.41	40.00	18.00
Javanese	34.48	55.00	40.00	Javanese	48.28	60.00	54.00	Javanese	24.14	30.00	22.00
OMML	13.79	0.00	10.00	OMML	13.79	0.00	12.00	OMML	0.00	0.00	0.00
Mandarin	0.00	0.00	2.00	Mandarin	0.00	0.00	2.00	Mandarin	0.00	0.00	0.00
Tamil	0.00	0.00	2.00	Tamil	0.00	0.00	2.00	Tamil	0.00	0.00	0.00

Legend:

MML: Malay minority language

OMML: Other Malay minority languages

participants think it is significantly more acceptable to serve in Malay ($\chi^2=4.902$, $df=1$, $p\text{-value}=0.02683$), while Generation 3 participants think it is equally acceptable to serve a Malay speaker in both English and Malay ($\chi^2=0.8421$, $df=1$, $p\text{-value}=0.3588$). More than 80% of participants across the three generations believe that a speaker whose choice of language is Malay should be allowed to speak in Malay. These proportions match the proportions in which they think Malay is an acceptable service language (where $p>0.05$). There is general consensus by the Malay participants across generations that the best language to serve a Malay speaker is Malay.

Where the speaker's language preference is a non-official minority ethnic language that is Javanese, there is a general trend in perception of Malay participants that in a restaurant, it is acceptable to serve the speaker in English, Mandarin, and Javanese. What is striking here is that 100% of Generation 1 participants think it is acceptable to serve a Javanese speaker in Malay, while a significantly lower proportion of participants at 34.48% regard the language of the speaker to be an acceptable language of service ($\chi^2=25.3603$, $df=1$, $p\text{-value}=4.756e^{-07}$). This generation of participants also regard it equally acceptable to serve a Javanese speaker in Javanese and English ($\chi^2=1.1248$, $df=1$, $p\text{-value}=0.2889$). Generation 2 participants regard it equally acceptable to serve a Javanese speaker in English, Malay, and Javanese ($\chi^2=0.4267$, $df=1$, $p\text{-value}=0.5136$). In contrast to the 100% of participants in Generation 1 who think Malay is the most acceptable language to serve a Javanese speaker, 96% of Generation 3 participants regard English to be the most acceptable language of service, which is significantly higher ($\chi^2=33.5018$, $df=1$, $p\text{-value}=7.12e^{-09}$) than the equal proportions of participants who consider Malay and Javanese acceptable service languages ($\chi^2=2.561$, $df=1$, $p\text{-value}=0.1095$). The proportion of Malays who think a Javanese speaker should be allowed to speak his own language is relatively low, with only 48.28%, 60%, 54% of participants from Generations 1, 2, and 3 respectively who recognise his right to speak his own language. This low percentage however, does match the similarly low percentages of participants who regard Javanese as an acceptable language of service. Correspondingly, less than 30% of participants considered Javanese the best language to serve a Javanese speaker. As with the Chinese participants' perception of the best language to serve an ethnic minority, there is a similar lack of consensus to the perception of the best language to serve a Javanese speaker among the Malays. Generation 1 is in the perception that Malay is the best language for service at 72.41%. Generation 2 participants see a three-way tie in their perception of Malay,

English, and Javanese as best service language ($\chi^2=0.1099$, $df=1$, $p\text{-value}=0.7403$), while Generation 3 participants favour English as the best service language at 60%. Again, the Malay participants seem to share the Chinese participants' the lack of a consensus to the best language to serve an ethnic minority language speaker. This is suggestive of a similar lack of consensus to the recognition of rights of an ethnic minority language speaker.

Table 8 shows the perception of Indian participants to language use in a restaurant with a Tamil speaker and a Hindi speaker. Where the speaker's language preference is Tamil, there is a general trend of acceptability of service in both English and Tamil across generations. There is no difference in proportion of Generation 2 participants who consider English and Tamil acceptable service languages at 100%. Similarly there is no significant difference in acceptability of service in those languages as perceived by Generation 3 participants ($\chi^2=0.1122$, $df=1$, $p\text{-value}=0.7377$). Although 52.38% of Generation 1 participants regard English as an acceptable service language, a significantly higher proportion of participants from that generation regard Tamil as an acceptable service language at 90.48% ($\chi^2=5.7167$, $df=1$, $p\text{-value}=0.0168$). More than 80% of participants across the three generations believe that a speaker whose choice of language is Tamil should be allowed to speak in Tamil. These proportions match the proportions in which they think Tamil is an acceptable service language (where $p>0.05$). There is general consensus among the Indian participants across generations that the best language to serve a Tamil speaker is Tamil.

Where the speaker's language preference is a non-official minority ethnic language that is Hindi, there is a general trend in perception of Indian participants that in a restaurant, it is acceptable to serve the speaker in English and Hindi. It is noteworthy that while the speaker's language preference is Hindi, 100% of Generation 2 and 3 participants think it is acceptable to provide service in English. It is then unsurprising that the proportions of participants who perceive English as an acceptable service language is significantly higher than that of Hindi in Generations 2 ($\chi^2=3.9619$, $df=1$, $p\text{-value}=0.04654$) and 3 ($\chi^2=18.4722$, $df=1$, $p\text{-value}=1.724e^{-05}$). The proportion of Generation 1 participants who regard English and Tamil as acceptable service languages are not significantly different ($\chi^2=0$, $df=1$, $p\text{-value}=1$). Indian participants do not strongly believe that a Hindi speaker should be allowed to speak his own language, as the proportion who believe he does is not high at less than 70% across generations. As with participants from the other two ethnic groups, Indian participants lack a general consensus for the best language to serve their minority ethnic speaker. Generation 1

Table 8. Indian perception of appropriate language use in a restaurant

Speaker's language preference: Tamil

Acceptable service language (%)

	Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3
English	52.38	100.00	91.30
Tamil	90.48	100.00	86.96
IML	0.00	38.46	0.00
Mandarin	0.00	0.00	0.00
Malay	4.76	0.00	2.17

Speaker should be allowed to speak in (%)

	Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3
English	57.14	53.85	84.78
Tamil	80.95	100.00	86.96
IML	0.00	38.46	6.52
Mandarin	0.00	0.00	17.39
Malay	0.00	0.00	17.39

Speaker is best served in (%)

	Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3
English	28.57	0.00	26.09
Tamil	71.43	100.00	73.91
IML	0.00	0.00	0.00
Mandarin	0.00	0.00	0.00
Malay	0.00	0.00	0.00

Speaker's language preference: Hindu

Acceptable service language (%)

	Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3
English	71.43	100.00	100.00
Tamil	0.00	38.46	8.80
Hindi	66.67	61.54	63.04
OIML	0.00	38.46	0.00
Malay	0.00	0.00	8.70
Mandarin	0.00	0.00	8.70

Speaker should be allowed to speak in (%)

	Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3
English	76.19	100.00	95.65
Tamil	0.00	38.46	13.04
Hindi	66.67	53.85	71.74
OIML	0.00	38.46	4.35
Malay	0.00	0.00	13.04
Mandarin	0.00	0.00	13.04

Speaker is best served in (%)

	Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3
English	66.66	46.15	26.09
Tamil	0.00	0.00	0.00
Hindi	33.33	53.85	73.91
OIML	0.00	0.00	0.00
Malay	0.00	0.00	0.00
Mandarin	0.00	0.00	0.00

Legend:

IML: Indian minority language

OIML: Other Indian minority languages

and 2 participants are in a tied perception between English and Hindi as best service language, while Generation 3 participants favour Hindi as the best service language ($\chi^2=19.1739, df=1, p\text{-value}=1.193e^{-05}$). Across ethnicities, appears that in a private domain like a restaurant, when the speaker's language preference is an official 'mother tongue', the languages regarded as acceptable services languages are the official 'mother tongues' and English. Participants also strongly believe that the speaker should always be allowed to speak in his preferred language if it is an official 'mother tongue'. This is perceived to be a recognition of his right to speak in a language of his choice. However, because they highly regarded English as an acceptable language of service, this means that while they recognise that he should be allowed to speak in the official language of his choice, it is acceptable if he is served in English. His right to speak a language of his choice is therefore undermined by a lack of guarantee to receive service in the language of his choice. Considering that his language of choice is an official language of the state, that right to service in that language should be guaranteed. However, they do understand that he has a right to service in a language of his choice when they conclude that the best language to serve him is in the official language of his choice.

Also across ethnicities, when the speaker's language preference is an unofficial minority ethnic language, the languages regarded as acceptable service languages are English, the official mother tongue of the speaker's ethnic group, and the unofficial minority ethnic language that is the language of his choice, all of which in varying degrees. While Chinese participants strongly recognise the right of a ethnic minority speaker to speak in own minority language, this recognition of right to speak in one's language of choice was lower in proportions among the Indian and Malay participants. This could be attributed to the low speakership of the minority languages of the Malay and Indian communities, unlike the prevalence of minority language speakers in the Chinese communities, especially among the older members of the community. Across all three ethnic communities, there is a general lack of consensus across generations on the best language to serve an ethnic minority. For the Chinese participants, the best language for service was a toss up between the minority language and official 'mother tongue'. For the Malay participants, it was a mix between English, the official 'mother tongue', and the minority language. For Indian participants, it was a mix between English and the minority language. This lack of consensus is suggestive of a corresponding lack of consensus on their perception of what language rights a minority language speaker has.

Government Tax office

Table 9 shows the perception of Chinese participants to language use in a government tax office with a Mandarin speaker and a Teochew speaker. Where the speaker's language preference is Mandarin, more than 80% of participants across three generations strongly regard Mandarin as an acceptable service language. More than 60% of Generation 2 and 3 participants also regard English as an acceptable service language. Generation 1 participants think it is significantly more acceptable to serve a Mandarin speaker in Mandarin ($\chi^2=12.5687$, $df=1$, $p\text{-value}=0.0003923$). This trend is repeated in Generation 3 participants who similarly think it is significantly more acceptable to serve in Mandarin ($\chi^2=4.7347$, $df=1$, $p\text{-value}=0.02956$). Generation 2 participants however, think it is equally acceptable to serve a Mandarin speaker in both English and Mandarin ($\chi^2=1.1812$, $df=1$, $p\text{-value}=0.2771$). More than 95% of participants across the three generations believe that a speaker whose choice of language is Mandarin should be allowed to speak in Mandarin. These proportions match the proportions in which they think Mandarin is an acceptable service language (where $p>0.05$). There is general consensus by the Chinese participants across generations that the best language to serve a Mandarin speaker is Mandarin.

Where the speaker's language preference is a non-official minority ethnic language that is Teochew, there is a general trend in perception of Chinese participants across generations that in a government tax office, it is acceptable to serve the speaker in English, Mandarin, and Teochew. Where there was previously a high proportion of participants who regarded the language of an official 'mother tongue' speaker an acceptable service language, this pattern is only repeated here with 88.46% of Generation 1 Chinese participants who think it is acceptable to serve Teochew speaker in Teochew. However, this generation of participants think it is equally acceptable to serve a Teochew speaker in both Teochew and Mandarin ($\chi^2=0.1477$, $df=1$, $p\text{-value}=0.7007$). There seems to be less conviction by Generation 2 and 3 participants that Teochew is an acceptable language to provide service in a public administrative office as only 61.90% and 67.92% of participants from Generations 2 and 3 respectively perceive Teochew to be an acceptable service language. Both Generation 2 participants perceive English, Mandarin, and Teochew to be equally acceptable service languages ($\chi^2=0$, $df=1$, $p\text{-value}=1$). This pattern is mirrored by Generation 3 participants ($\chi^2=2.4971$, $df=1$, $p\text{-value}=0.1141$). The proportion of participants who believe a Teochew speaker should be allowed to speak Teochew match that of the proportion who consider service in Teochew acceptable. With regard to the best language to serve a Teochew speaker,

Table 9. Chinese perception of appropriate language use in a government tax office

Speaker's language preference: Mandarin

Acceptable service language (%)				Speaker should be allowed to speak in (%)				Speaker is best served in (%)			
	Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3		Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3		Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3
English	46.15	66.67	67.92	English	30.77	66.67	73.08	English	3.85	14.29	5.66
Mandarin	96.15	85.71	96.23	Mandarin	100.00	95.24	98.11	Mandarin	96.15	85.71	94.34
CML	23.08	9.52	13.21	CML	26.92	23.81	32.08	CML	0.00	0.00	0.00
Malay	11.54	14.29	3.77	Malay	15.38	28.57	26.42	Malay	0.00	0.00	0.00
Tamil	7.69	14.29	3.77	Tamil	11.54	28.57	26.42	Tamil	0.00	0.00	0.00

Speaker's language preference: Teochew

Acceptable service language (%)				Speaker should be allowed to speak in (%)				Speaker is best served in (%)			
	Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3		Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3		Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3
English	50.00	57.14	66.04	English	53.85	52.38	71.70	English	19.23	9.52	9.43
Mandarin	80.77	57.14	83.03	Mandarin	73.08	61.90	83.02	Mandarin	30.77	52.38	30.19
Teochew	88.46	61.90	67.92	Teochew	88.46	76.19	73.58	Teochew	50.00	38.10	60.38
OCML	30.77	9.52	16.98	OCML	30.77	19.05	32.08	OCML	0.00	0.00	0.00
Malay	3.85	9.52	3.77	Malay	7.69	19.05	28.30	Malay	0.00	0.00	0.00
Tamil	0.00	9.52	3.77	Tamil	3.85	19.05	28.30	Tamil	0.00	0.00	0.00

Legend:

CML: Chinese minority language

OCML: Other Chinese minority languages

there is no clear consensus across the generations. Generation 1 and 2 participants are in a tied perception between Mandarin and Teochew as best service language, while Generation 3 participants favour Teochew as the best service language ($\chi^2=8.5668$, $df=1$, $p\text{-value}=0.003423$).

Table 10 shows the perception of Malay participants to language use in a government tax office with a Malay speaker and a Bawonese speaker. Where the speaker's language preference is Malay, 100% of participants regard Malay as an acceptable service language. More than 65% of participants across all three generations also regard English as an acceptable service language. Generation 1 participants think it is significantly more acceptable to serve a Malay speaker in Malay ($\chi^2=8.4172$, $df=1$, $p\text{-value}=0.003717$). Generation 2 and 3 participants however, think it is equally acceptable to serve a Malay speaker in both English and Malay (where $p>0.05$). Across all 3 generations, 100% of participants believe the Malay speaker should be allowed to speak Malay. 100% of Generation 1 and 2 participants also considered Malay to be the best service language, and a similar consensus of best language is found in 68% of Generation 3 participants.

Where the speaker's language preference is a non-official minority ethnic language that is Bawonese, there is a general trend in perception of Malay participants that in a government administrative office, it is acceptable to serve the speaker in English, Malay, and Bawonese. Noteworthy here is that while the language preference of the speaker is Bawonese, 100% of Generation 1 participants think it is acceptable to serve him in Malay, a significantly higher proportion to the perception that he can also be served in English and Bawonese ($\chi^2=19.4196$, $df=1$, $p\text{-value}=1.049e^{-05}$). Generation 2 think it is equally acceptable to serve the same speaker in both English, Malay, or Bawonese (where $p>0.05$). When asked for their response on the most acceptable language to serve a Bawonese, a significantly higher proportion of Generation 3 participants responded with not the language of the speaker nor the official 'mother tongue' of the group, but English ($\chi^2=29.7143$, $df=1$, $p\text{-value}=5.006 e^{-08}$). There seems to be low recognition in the right of the Bawonese to speak his language in the tax office. With the exception of 90% of Generation 2 participants who think the speaker should be allowed to speak his language of choice, the proportion of participants in Generation 1 and 3 who share the same perception are relatively low.

Table 10. Malay perception of appropriate language use in a government tax office

Speaker's language preference: Malay

Acceptable service language (%)				Speaker should be allowed to speak in (%)				Speaker is best served in (%)			
	Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3		Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3		Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3
English	68.97	90.00	70.00	English	55.17	90.00	58.00	English	0.00	0.00	32.00
Malay	100.00	100.00	86.00	Malay	100.00	100.00	100.00	Malay	100.00	100.00	68.00
MML	0.00	0.00	2.00	MML	0.00	0.00	2.00	MML	0.00	0.00	0.00
Mandarin	0.00	0.00	2.00	Mandarin	0.00	0.00	2.00	Mandarin	0.00	0.00	0.00
Tamil	0.00	0.00	2.00	Tamil	0.00	0.00	2.00	Tamil	0.00	0.00	0.00

Speaker's language preference: Bawonese

Acceptable service language (%)				Speaker should be allowed to speak in (%)				Speaker is best served in (%)			
	Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3		Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3		Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3
English	51.72	60.00	92.00	English	51.72	60.00	80.00	English	0.00	30.00	50.00
Malay	100.00	70.00	62.00	Malay	96.55	70.00	48.00	Malay	72.41	40.00	20.00
Bawonese	44.83	90.00	38.00	Bawonese	44.83	90.00	54.00	Bawonese	27.59	30.00	30.00
OMML	3.45	0.00	6.00	OMML	3.45	0.00	6.00	OMML	0.00	0.00	0.00
Mandarin	0.00	0.00	2.00	Mandarin	0.00	0.00	2.00	Mandarin	0.00	0.00	0.00
Tamil	0.00	0.00	2.00	Tamil	0.00	0.00	2.00	Tamil	0.00	0.00	0.00

Legend:

MML: Malay minority languages

OMML: Other Malay minority languages

Correspondingly, less than 30% of respondents perceive Bawanese as the best language to serve a Bawanese speaker. Consensus across generations with regard to the best serving language is not observed. While Generation 1 perceives Malay to be the best serving language, equal proportions of Generation 2 participants perceive Malay, English, and Bawanese to be the best language (where $p > 0.05$). Generation 3 participants also equally perceive Bawanese and English to be the best serving languages ($\chi^2 = 9.931$, $df = 1$, $p\text{-value} = 0.001625$).

Table 11 shows the perception of Indian participants to language use in a tax office with a Tamil speaker and a Punjabi speaker. Where the speaker's language preference is Tamil, there is a general trend of acceptability of service in both English and Tamil across generations. Across all three generations, there is no significant difference in the perception of English and Tamil as acceptable serving languages. ($\chi^2 = 0.1122$, $df = 1$, $p\text{-value} = 0.7377$). More than 85% of participants across the three generations believe that a speaker whose choice of language is Tamil should be allowed to speak in Tamil. These proportions match the proportions in which they think Tamil is an acceptable service language (where $p > 0.05$). There is consensus between Generation 2 and 3 participants that the best language to serve a Tamil speaker is Tamil. Generation 1 participants however, are equally split in their perception between English and Tamil as the best serving languages.

Where the speaker's language preference is a non-official minority ethnic language that is Punjabi, there is a general trend in perception of Indian participants that it is acceptable to serve the speaker in English and Punjabi. It is noteworthy that while the speaker's language preference is Punjabi, more than 95% of Generation 2 and 3 participants think it is acceptable to provide service in English. Naturally then, the proportions of Generation 2 and 3 participants who perceive English as an acceptable service language is significantly higher than that of Punjabi (where $p > 0.05$). The proportion of Generation 1 participants who regard English and Punjabi as acceptable service languages are not significantly different. While more than 70% of participants across the three generations believe that a speaker whose choice of language is Punjabi should be allowed to speak in Punjabi, there is no similar consensus to the recognition of the right of the Punjabi speaker to be served in that language. This is evident in how Generation 1 and 3 participants are equally split in their perception between English and Punjabi as the best serving languages, while Generation 2 participants are in the opinion that the best language to serve a Punjabi speaker is English.

Table 11. Indian perception of appropriate language use in a government tax office

Speaker's language preference: Tamil

Acceptable service language (%)

	Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3
English	57.14	100.00	91.30
Tamil	85.17	100.00	100.00
IML	0.00	0.00	0.00
Mandarin	0.00	0.00	0.00
Malay	0.00	0.00	2.17

Speaker should be allowed to speak in (%)

	Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3
English	57.14	100.00	91.30
Tamil	85.71	100.00	100.00
IML	0.00	0.00	6.52
Mandarin	0.00	0.00	15.22
Malay	0.00	0.00	17.39

Speaker is best served in (%)

	Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3
English	42.86	0.00	6.52
Tamil	57.14	100.00	93.48
IML	0.00	0.00	0.00
Mandarin	0.00	0.00	0.00
Malay	0.00	0.00	0.00

Speaker's language preference: Punjabi

Acceptable service language (%)

	Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3
English	57.14	100.00	95.65
Tamil	0.00	0.00	8.70
Punjabi	71.43	61.54	71.74
OIML	0.00	0.00	0.00
Malay	0.00	0.00	8.70
mandarin	0.00	0.00	8.70

Speaker should be allowed to speak in (%)

	Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3
English	57.14	100.00	93.48
Tamil	0.00	0.00	15.22
Punjabi	71.43	100.00	80.44
OIML	0.00	0.00	6.52
Malay	0.00	0.00	15.22
mandarin	0.00	0.00	15.22

Speaker is best served in (%)

	Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3
English	66.66	84.62	41.30
Tamil	0.00	0.00	0.00
Punjabi	33.33	15.38	58.70
OIML	0.00	0.00	0.00
Malay	0.00	0.00	0.00
mandarin	0.00	0.00	0.00

Legend:

IML: Indian minority languages

OIML: Other Indian minority languages

Across ethnicities, appears that in a private domain like a restaurant, when the speaker's language preference is an official 'mother tongue', the languages regarded as acceptable services languages are the official 'mother tongues' and English. Participants also strongly believe that the speaker should always be allowed to speak in his preferred language if it is an official 'mother tongue'. This is perceived to be a recognition of his right to speak in a language of his choice. However, because they highly regarded English as an acceptable language of service, this means that while they recognise that he should be allowed to speak in the official language of his choice, it is acceptable if he is served in English. His right to speak a language of his choice is therefore undermined by a lack of guarantee to receive service in the language of his choice. As his language of choice is an official language of the state, that right to service in that language should be guaranteed. However, they do understand that he has a right to service in a language of his choice when they conclude that the best language to serve him is in the official language of his choice.

Also across ethnicities, when the speaker's language preference is an unofficial minority ethnic language, the languages regarded as acceptable service languages are English, the official mother tongue of the speaker's ethnic group, and the unofficial minority ethnic language that is the language of his choice, all of which in varying degrees. While Chinese participants strongly recognise the right of a ethnic minority speaker to speak in own minority language, this recognition of right to speak in one's language of choice was lower in proportions among the Indian and Malay participants. This could be attributed to the low speakership of the minority languages of the Malay and Indian communities, unlike the prevalence of minority language speakers in the Chinese communities, especially among the older members of the community. Across all three ethnic communities, there is a general lack of consensus across generations on the best language to serve an ethnic minority. For the Chinese participants, the best language for service was a toss up between the minority language and official 'mother tongue'. For the Malay participants, it was a mix between English, the official 'mother tongue', and the minority language. For Indian participants, it was a mix between English and the minority language. This lack of consensus is suggestive of a corresponding lack of consensus on their perception of what language rights a minority language speaker has.

Court

Table 12 shows the perception of Chinese participants to language use court with a Mandarin speaker and a Teochew speaker. Where the speaker's language preference is Mandarin, more than 70% of participants across three generations strongly regard Mandarin as an acceptable service language. More than 60% of Generation 2 and 3 participants also regard English as an acceptable service language. Generation 1 and 2 participants however, think it is equally acceptable to serve a Mandarin speaker in both English and Mandarin (where $p>0.05$). Generation 3 participants however, think it is significantly more acceptable to serve a Mandarin speaker in Mandarin ($\chi^2=4.1279$, $df=1$, $p\text{-value}=0.04218$). More than 80% of participants across the three generations believe that a speaker whose choice of language is Mandarin should be allowed to speak in Mandarin. These proportions match the proportions in which they think Mandarin is an acceptable service language (where $p>0.05$). There is general consensus by the Chinese participants across generations that the best language to serve a Mandarin speaker is Mandarin.

Where the speaker's language preference is a non-official minority ethnic language that is Teochew, there is a general trend in perception of Chinese participants that in a restaurant, it is acceptable to serve the speaker in English, Mandarin, and Teochew. Across generations, more than 60% of respondents regard English as an acceptable service language, with 100% of participants in Generation 1 believing that English is an acceptable language to serve a Teochew speaker in court, even more so than Mandarin or Teochew (where $p>0.05$). Only a mere 15.38% of Generation 1 thinks it is acceptable to serve a Teochew speaker in Teochew. Generation 2 participants however, think it is significantly more acceptable to serve a Teochew speaker in Mandarin ($\chi^2=4.7369$, $df=1$, $p\text{-value}=0.02906$). Generation 3 participants however, think it is equally acceptable to serve a Mandarin speaker in both English and Mandarin (where $p>0.05$). The proportion of participants who believe a Teochew speaker should be allowed to speak Teochew is higher than that of the proportion who consider service in Teochew acceptable. More than 80% of participants across the three generations believe that a speaker whose choice of language is Teochew should be allowed to speak in Mandarin. However, the proportion of Generation 1 and 3 participants who believe a Teochew speaker should be allowed to speak Teochew is significantly greater than the proportion that recognise Teochew as an acceptable service language (where $p>0.05$). There is no common consensus on the best language to serve a Teochew speaker, and the

Table 12. Chinese perception of appropriate language use in court

Speaker's language preference: Mandarin												
Acceptable service language (%)				Speaker should be allowed to speak in (%)				Speaker is best served in (%)				
	Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3		Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3		Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3	
English	69.23	52.38	66.04	English	46.15	52.38	58.49	English	34.62	38.1	22.64	
Mandarin	84.62	71.43	84.91	Mandarin	92.31	80.95	90.57	Mandarin	65.38	61.9	77.36	
CML	11.54	0.00	5.66	CML	7.69	14.29	24.53	CML	0.00	0.00	0.00	
Malay	3.85	0.00	3.77	Malay	0.00	14.29	22.64	Malay	0.00	0.00	0.00	
Tamil	0.00	0.00	1.89	Tamil	0.00	14.29	22.64	Tamil	0.00	0.00	0.00	

Speaker's language preference: Teochew

Acceptable service language (%)				Speaker should be allowed to speak in (%)				Speaker is best served in (%)				
	Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3		Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3		Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3	
English	100.00	61.90	64.15	English	23.08	66.67	64.17	English	36.11	33.33	22.64	
Mandarin	50.00	23.81	62.26	Mandarin	38.46	42.86	69.81	Mandarin	25.00	28.57	41.51	
Teochew	15.38	52.38	49.06	Teochew	84.62	71.43	71.70	Teochew	11.11	38.10	35.85	
OCML	3.85	0.00	9.43	OCML	7.69	14.29	24.53	OCML	0.00	0.00	0.00	
Malay	3.85	0.00	3.77	Malay	0.00	14.29	24.53	Malay	0.00	0.00	0.00	
Tamil	0.00	0.00	3.77	Tamil	0.00	14.29	24.53	Tamil	0.00	0.00	0.00	

Legend:

CML: Chinese minority language

OCML: Other Chinese minority languages

proportion of participants who think Teochew is the best service language is below 40%.

Table 13 shows the perception of Malay participants to language use in court with a Malay speaker and a Bawonese speaker. Where the speaker's language preference is Malay, more than 70% of participants regard Malay as an acceptable service language. More than 60% of participants across all three generations also regard English as an acceptable service language. Generation 1 participants think it is significantly more acceptable to serve a Malay speaker in Malay ($\chi^2=5.9208$, $df=1$, $p\text{-value}=0.01496$). Generation 2 participants think it is significantly more acceptable to serve a Malay speaker in English ($\chi^2=4.902$, $df=1$, $p\text{-value}=0.02683$). Generation 3 participants however, think it is equally acceptable to serve a Malay speaker in both English and Malay (where $p>0.05$). Across all 3 generations, almost 100% of participants believe the Malay speaker should be allowed to speak Malay. Generation 1 and 3 participants also considered Malay to be the best service language, while Generation 2 participants have the same regard for English.

Where the speaker's language preference is a non-official minority ethnic language that is Bawonese, there is a general trend in perception of Generation 1 and 2 Malay participants that in court, it is acceptable to serve the speaker in English, Malay, and Bawonese. Noteworthy here is that while the language preference of the speaker is Bawonese, 100% of Generation 1 participants think it is acceptable to serve him in Malay, a significantly higher proportion are in the perception that he can also be served in English and Bawonese ($\chi^2=5.802$, $df=1$, $p\text{-value}=0.01559$). Generation 2 participants think it is equally acceptable to serve a Bawonese speaker in English, Malay and Bawonese (where $p>0.05$). While 90% of Generation 2 participants think a Bawonese speaker should be allowed to speak Bawonese in court, the same perception is only held by less than 60% of participants from Generations 1 and 3. Across generations, there is no common consensus on the best language to serve a Bawonese speaker, with Generation 1 believing it is Bawonese, Generation 2 being split over English, Malay, and Bawonese, and Generation 3 believing it is English.

Table 14 shows the perception of Indian participants to language use in court with a Tamil speaker and a Punjabi speaker. Where the speaker's language preference is Tamil, there is a general trend of acceptability of service in both English and Tamil across generations. Across all three generations, there is no significant difference in the perception of English and Tamil as acceptable serving languages. (where $p>0.05$). More than 85% of participants across all

Table 13. Malay perception of appropriate language use in court

Speaker's language preference: Malay

Acceptable service language (%)

	Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3
English	64.97	100.00	86.00
Malay	96.55	70.00	72.00
MML	0.00	0.00	0.00
Mandarin	0.00	0.00	0.00
Tamil	0.00	0.00	0.00

Speaker should be allowed to speak in (%)

	Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3
English	37.93	70.00	70.00
Malay	100.00	100.00	98.00
MML	0.00	0.00	0.00
Mandarin	0.00	0.00	0.00
Tamil	0.00	0.00	0.00

Speaker is best served in (%)

	Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3
English	0.00	60.00	38.00
Malay	100.00	40.00	62.00
MML	0.00	0.00	0.00
Mandarin	0.00	0.00	0.00
Tamil	0.00	0.00	0.00

Speaker's language preference: Bawonese

Acceptable service language (%)

	Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3
English	75.86	90.00	92.00
Malay	100.00	70.00	26.00
Bawonese	58.62	90.00	34.00
OMML	13.79	0.00	6.00
Mandarin	0.00	0.00	0.00
Tamil	0.00	0.00	0.00

Speaker should be allowed to speak in (%)

	Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3
English	58.62	90.00	72.00
Malay	96.55	70.00	30.00
Bawonese	65.52	90.00	62.00
OMML	13.79	0.00	8.00
Mandarin	0.00	0.00	2.00
Tamil	0.00	0.00	2.00

Speaker is best served in (%)

	Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3
English	3.45	30.00	68.00
Malay	27.59	40.00	6.00
Bawonese	68.97	30.00	26.00
OMML	0.00	0.00	0.00
Mandarin	0.00	0.00	0.00
Tamil	0.00	0.00	0.00

Legend:

MML: Malay minority languages

OMML: Other Malay minority languages

Table 14. Indian perception of appropriate language use in court

Speaker's language preference: Tamil

Acceptable service language (%)				Speaker should be allowed to speak in (%)				Speaker is best served in (%)			
	Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3		Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3		Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3
English	57.14	100.00	89.13	English	52.38	14.29	73.91	English	42.86	0.00	43.48
Tamil	71.43	100.00	82.61	Tamil	85.71	100.00	97.83	Tamil	57.14	100.00	56.52
IML	0.00	0.00	0.00	IML	0.00	0.00	6.52	IML	0.00	0.00	0.00
Mandarin	0.00	0.00	0.00	Mandarin	0.00	0.00	15.22	Mandarin	0.00	0.00	0.00
Malay	0.00	0.00	0.00	Malay	0.00	0.00	15.22	Malay	0.00	0.00	0.00

Speaker's language preference: Punjabi

Acceptable service language (%)				Speaker should be allowed to speak in (%)				Speaker is best served in (%)			
	Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3		Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3		Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3
English	71.43	100.00	91.30	English	57.14	100.00	82.61	English	61.90	46.15	63.04
Tamil	0.00	0.00	0.00	Tamil	0.00	0.00	15.22	Tamil	0.00	0.00	0.00
Punjabi	57.14	100.00	60.87	Punjabi	85.71	100.00	80.43	Punjabi	38.10	53.85	36.96
OIML	0.00	0.00	0.00	OIML	0.00	0.00	8.70	OIML	0.00	0.00	0.00
Malay	0.00	0.00	0.00	Malay	0.00	0.00	15.22	Malay	0.00	0.00	0.00
mandarin	0.00	0.00	0.00	mandarin	0.00	0.00	15.22	mandarin	0.00	0.00	0.00

Legend:

IML: Indian minority languages

OIML: Other Indian minority languages

three generations believe that a speaker whose choice of language is Tamil should be allowed to speak in Tamil. These proportions match the proportions in which they think Tamil is an acceptable service language (where $p > 0.05$). There is consensus between Generation 1 and 3 participants that the best language to serve a Tamil speaker in court is English, while 100% of Generation 2 believe it is best to serve a Tamil speaker in Tamil.

Where the speaker's language preference is a non-official minority ethnic language that is Punjabi, there is a general trend in perception across generations by Indian participants that in court, it is acceptable to serve the speaker in English and Punjabi. Noteworthy here is that when the language preference of the speaker is Punjabi, 0% of Indians participants think it is acceptable to serve the speaker in the official state-assigned mother tongue that is Tamil. This is suggestive of their recognition that the Indian languages are distinctly different, a distinction that the state also recognises. Generation 1 and 2 participants think it is equally acceptable to serve a Punjabi speaker in English and Punjabi (where $p > 0.05$). While Generation 3 participants think it is acceptable to serve him in Punjabi, a significantly higher proportion are in the perception that English is a more acceptable serving language ($\chi^2 = 10.0961$, $df = 1$, $p\text{-value} = 0.001486$). Across generations, more than 80% of Indians believe a Punjabi speaker should be allowed to speak Punjabi. Across generations, there is no common consensus on the best language to serve a Punjabi speaker, with Generation 1 and 3 believing it is English, and Generation 2 being split over English and Punjabi.

Across ethnicities, appears that in a public domain like court, when the speaker's language preference is an official 'mother tongue', the languages regarded as acceptable services languages are the official 'mother tongues' and English. However, it seems like a good proportion of Singaporeans believe that English is more acceptable in court, probably because English as the official working language of the state is regarded to take precedence in such an official domain. Participants also strongly believe that the speaker should always be allowed to speak in his preferred language if it is an official 'mother tongue'. This is perceived to be a recognition of his right to speak in a language of his choice. However, because they highly regarded English as an acceptable language of service, this means that while they recognise that he should be allowed to speak in the official language of his choice, it is acceptable if he is served in English. His right to speak a language of his choice is therefore undermined by a lack of guarantee to receive service in the language of his choice.

In light of his language of choice which is an official language of the state, that right to service in that language should be guaranteed. In a situation such as in court where the life of one may be at stake, there is no common consensus that the best language to serve an official language speaker is his own language.

Also across ethnicities, when the speaker's language preference is an unofficial minority ethnic language, the languages regarded as acceptable service languages are English, the official mother tongue of the speaker's ethnic group, and the unofficial minority ethnic language that is the language of his choice, all of which in varying degrees. Across all 3 generations, participants think the minority language speaker should be allowed to speak his own language. Across all three ethnic communities, there is a general lack of consensus across generations on the best language to serve an ethnic minority. For the Chinese participants, the best language for service was a toss up between the minority language and official 'mother tongue'. For the Malay participants, it was a mix between English, the official 'mother tongue', and the minority language. For Indian participants, it was a mix between English and the minority language. This lack of consensus is suggestive of a corresponding lack of consensus on their perception of what language rights a minority language speaker has.

Hospital

Table 15 shows the perception of Chinese participants to language use in a hospital with a Mandarin speaker and a Hokkien speaker. Where the speaker's language preference is Mandarin, there is a general trend of acceptability of service in both English and Mandarin across generations. There is no significant difference in proportion of Generation 1 and 2 participants who consider English and Mandarin acceptable service languages (where $p > 0.05$). Generation 3 participants regard Mandarin as an acceptable service language in a significantly higher proportion ($\chi^2 = 5.5132$, $df = 1$, $p\text{-value} = 0.01895$). More than 90% of participants across all 3 generations believe that a Mandarin speaker should be allowed to use his own language. There is common consensus among the participants that the best language to serve a Mandarin speaker in the hospital is Mandarin.

Table 15. Chinese perception of appropriate language use in a hospital

Speaker's language preference: Mandarin

Acceptable service language (%)				Speaker should be allowed to speak in (%)				Speaker is best served in (%)			
	Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3		Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3		Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3
English	65.38	90.48	86.79	English	30.77	71.43	86.79	English	15.38	3.78	14.29
Mandarin	84.62	85.71	100	Mandarin	100	95.24	98.11	Mandarin	84.62	96.23	85.71
CML	26.92	9.52	15.09	CML	34.62	23.81	37.74	CML	0.00	0.00	0.00
Malay	3.85	0.00	3.77	Malay	7.69	24.53	24.53	Malay	0.00	0.00	0.00
Tamil	0.00	0.00	3.77	Tamil	3.85	24.53	24.53	Tamil	0.00	0.00	0.00

Speaker's language preference: Hokkien

Acceptable service language (%)				Speaker should be allowed to speak in (%)				Speaker is best served in (%)			
	Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3		Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3		Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3
English	38.46	66.67	62.26	English	46.15	71.43	15.38	English	15.38	23.81	9.44
Mandarin	76.92	61.9	84.91	Mandarin	61.54	66.67	11.54	Mandarin	11.54	33.33	9.43
Hokkien	80.77	71.43	88.68	Hokkien	92.31	80.95	88.68	Hokkien	73.08	42.86	81.13
OCML	46.15	0	22.64	OCML	42.31	19.05	0	OCML	0.00	0.00	0.00
Malay	0	0.00	3.77	Malay	11.54	14.29	0	Malay	0.00	0.00	0.00
Tamil	0.00	0.00	3.77	Tamil	3.85	14.29	0	Tamil	0.00	0.00	0.00

Legend:

CML: Chinese minority languages

OCML: Other Chinese minority languages

Where the speaker's language preference is a non-official minority ethnic language that is Hokkien, there is a general trend in perception of Chinese participants that in a hospital, it is acceptable to serve the speaker in English, Mandarin, and Hokkien. Across generations, more than 60% of respondents regard Mandarin as an acceptable service language. However where Generation 1 and 3 participants consider it more acceptable to serve a Hokkien speaker in Hokkien ($\chi^2=3.3895$, $df=1$, $p\text{-value}=0.0428$). Generation 2 participants consider it equally acceptable to serve a Hokkien speaker in English, Mandarin, and Hokkien. While than 80% of participants believe that a Hokkien speaker should be allowed to speak Hokkien, only participants from Generations 1 and 3 regard Hokkien as the best service language. Generation 2 participants are conflicted in the language that they think the Hokkien speaker is best served by.

Table 16 shows the perception of Malay participants to language use in a hospital with a Malay speaker and a Javanese speaker. Where the speaker's language preference is Malay, there is a high proportion of participants who regard English and Malay as acceptable service languages. Generation 2 and 3 participants believe that it is equally acceptable to serve a Malay speaker in English and Malay in a hospital (where $p>0.05$). Generation 1 participants think it is significantly more acceptable to serve in Malay ($\chi^2=5.3347$, $df=1$, $p\text{-value}=0.0356$). 100% of participants across the three generations believe that a speaker whose choice of language is Malay should be allowed to speak Malay, and that the best language to serve him is in Malay.

Where the speaker's language preference is a non-official minority ethnic language that is Javanese, there is a general trend in perception of Malay participants that in a hospital, it is acceptable to serve the speaker in English, Malay, and Javanese. While more than 50%, of respondents in Generation 2 and 3 think that a Javanese speaker should be allowed to speak in Malay, only 20.69% of Generation 1 participants believe the same. Overall, there is a high consensus that the best language to serve a Javanese speaker is not Javanese, because less than 30% of participants across all 3 generations hold that opinion. The rest of the participants are conflicted in their opinion of the best language to serve a Javanese.

Table 16. Malay perception of appropriate language use in a hospital

Speaker's language preference: Malay												
Acceptable service language (%)				Speaker should be allowed to speak in (%)				Speaker is best served in (%)				
	Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3		Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3		Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3	
English	68.97	100	94	English	55.17	69	72	English	31.03	10	2	
Malay	89.66	100	96	Malay	100	100	100	Malay	68.97	90	98.00	
MML	20.69	0	12	MML	20.69	0	20	MML	0.00	0.00	0.00	
Mandarin	0	0.00	0	Mandarin	0	0	2	Mandarin	0.00	0.00	0.00	
Tamil	0.00	0.00	0	Tamil	0	0	2	Tamil	0.00	0.00	0.00	

Speaker's language preference: Javanese

Acceptable service language (%)				Speaker should be allowed to speak in (%)				Speaker is best served in (%)				
	Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3		Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3		Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3	
English	79.31	70	96	English	68.97	70	94	English	17.24	0	56	
Malay	86.21	70	58	Malay	86.21	70	54	Malay	72.41	70	24.00	
Javanese	20.69	75	52	Javanese	20.69	60	52	Javanese	10.34	30.00	20.00	
OMML	17.24	0	10	OMML	17.24	0	0	OMML	0.00	0.00	0.00	
Mandarin	0	0.00	2	Mandarin	0	0	0	Mandarin	0.00	0.00	0.00	
Tamil	0.00	0.00	2	Tamil	0	0	0	Tamil	0.00	0.00	0.00	

Legend:

MML: Malay minority languages

OMML: Other Malay minority languages

Table 17. Indian perception of appropriate language use in a hospital

Speaker's language preference: Tamil

Acceptable service language (%)				Speaker should be allowed to speak in (%)				Speaker is best served in (%)			
	Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3		Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3		Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3
English	52.38	100	97.83	English	38.1	100	84.78	English	28.57	0	0
Tamil	85.71	100	100	Tamil	85.71	100	95.65	Tamil	71.43	100	100.00
IML	0	38.46	2.17	IML	0	38.46	8.7	IML	0.00	0.00	0.00
Mandarin	0	0.00	0	Mandarin	0	0	9.57	Mandarin	0.00	0.00	0.00
Malay	9.52	46.15	4.35	Malay	4.76	0	21.74	Malay	0.00	0.00	0.00

Speaker's language preference: Hindi

Acceptable service language (%)				Speaker should be allowed to speak in (%)				Speaker is best served in (%)			
	Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3		Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3		Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3
English	85.71	100	100	English	71.43	100	97.83	English	33.33	46.15	30.43
Tamil	0.00	38.46	0	Tamil	4.76	0	15.22	Tamil	0.00	0.00	0.00
Hindi	71.43	100	67.39	Hindi	66.67	100	67.39	Hindi	66.67	53.85	69.57
OIML	0	38.46	2.17	OIML	0	0	8.7	OIML	0.00	0.00	0.00
Malay	0	0	0	Malay	0	0	15.22	Malay	0	0	0.00
Mandarin	0	0	0	Mandarin	0	0	15.22	Mandarin	0.00	0.00	0.00

Legend:

IML: Indian minority languages

OIML: Other Indian minority languages

Table 17 the perception of Indian participants to language use in court with a Tamil speaker and a Hindi speaker. Where the speaker's language preference is Tamil, there is a high proportion of participants who regard English and Tamil as acceptable service languages. Generation 2 and 3 participants believe that it is equally acceptable to serve a Hindi speaker in English and Tamil in a hospital (where $p > 0.05$). Generation 1 participants think it is significantly more acceptable to serve in Tamil ($\chi^2 = 4.3347$, $df = 1$, $p\text{-value} = 0.0156$). More than 85% of participants across the three generations believe that a speaker whose choice of language is Tamil should be allowed to speak Tamil, and more than 70% the best language to serve him is in Tamil.

Where the speaker's language preference is a non-official minority ethnic language that is Hindi, there is a general trend in perception of the participants across three generations that in a hospital, it is acceptable to serve the speaker in English and Hindi. While more than 65% of respondents in Generation 1 and 2 think that a Javanese speaker should be allowed to speak in Malay, a full 100% of Generation 2 participants believe the same. Overall, there is a high consensus between Generation 1 and 2 participants that the best language to serve a Hindi speaker in the hospital is Hindi, while Generation 3 participants are conflicted in their opinion of the best language to serve a Hindi speaker.

Across ethnicities, appears that in a public domain like the hospital, when the speaker's language preference is an official 'mother tongue', the languages regarded as acceptable services languages are the official 'mother tongues' and English. Participants also strongly believe that the speaker should always be allowed to speak in his preferred language if it is an official 'mother tongue'. This is perceived to be a recognition of his right to speak in a language of his choice. There is however, no common consensus that the best language to serve an official language speaker is his own language.

Also across ethnicities, when the speaker's language preference is an unofficial minority ethnic language, the languages regarded as acceptable service languages are English, the official mother tongue of the speaker's ethnic group, and the unofficial minority ethnic language that is the language of his choice, all of which in varying degrees. Across all there ethnicities, there is general consensus that minority speakers should be allowed to speak their own language, except for Generation 1 Malays, who do not perceive the right of its ethnic minority to speak his own language. This lack of consensus is suggestive of a corresponding

lack of consensus on their perception of what language rights a minority language speaker has.

4.4 Summary of results

The findings from this section collectively show that Singaporeans do seem to possess a general understanding about the concept of language rights. Especially with regard to the recognition of negative language rights, Singaporeans think that all language speakers should be allowed to speak their own language, whether or not it is an official language. This is reflected in their responses to the specific situational questions where their general opinion is that Singaporeans should be allowed to speak whatever languages of their choice.

With regard to positive rights however, it seems that they seem only perceive the rights of official language speakers. The finding from the situational questions collectively show a trend that when the speaker's language preference is an official 'mother tongue', the acceptable languages to serve the speaker in is his preferred language, which is an official language, and English, which is the de facto lingua franca in Singapore, and the state's official working language. While the high proportions of acceptability for services in English means that the speaker is not guaranteed service in his preferred language, Singaporeans seem to recognise the rights of an official 'mother tongue' speaker because they recognise that the best language to serve him in is his preferred language. When the speaker's language preference is not an official language, Singaporean's regard it acceptable to serve him in his preferred language, but also in English, and the official 'mother tongue' of his ethnic group. Again, the high proportions of acceptability for services in English and the official 'mother tongue' undermine his right to be served in his own language. Singaporeans also seem to be conflicted in their opinion of the best language to serve him, because his preferred language is not one that is recognised by the state. These findings suggest that in terms of positive language rights recognition, Singaporeans only recognise the rights of official 'mother tongue' speakers. This is in line with the state's recognition of the official 'mother tongues', because it is supposed to guarantee the provision of services in these languages, and therefore by extension, the recognition of the positive linguistic rights of official 'mother tongue' speakers. While the de facto lingua franca and working language that is English undermines the extent to which official 'mother tongue' speakers are guaranteed service in their 'mother tongues' in practice, constitutionally, their linguistic rights are recognised. As minority languages are not recognised by the state, the positive linguistic rights of speakers of these

languages are therefore not recognised by the state. This lack of recognition by the state is also reflected in Singaporeans' uncertainty about or lack of recognition for the positive linguistic rights of minority language speakers.

Chapter 5 – The legitimate silence on language rights

I started this dissertation by highlighting the uncontroversial normalisation of the language of language rights engaged in by linguists and political theorists alike in the scholarship of linguistic diversity management. In exploring the impoverished rights discourse in Singapore, the state's linguistic regime was examined to explicate its conceptual orientation towards language management. Chapter 3 revealed that the state's silence on language rights stems from a conceptual orientation of linguistic management that is grounded in the state's brand of multiculturalism which values formal inter-ethnic equality over the ideologies of language rights. I then went on to examine why the citizenry has reciprocated the state's non-speak of language rights in Singapore with a corresponding silence of their own in Chapter 4. An analysis of their language values and perception of language rights has revealed that the language practices Singaporeans' think of as acceptable, as well as their perception of language rights recognition, are very much in line with the languages and practices endorsed by the existing linguistic regime. In this chapter, I will discuss the congruence that is observed between Singaporeans' perception of language rights recognition and the state's linguistic regime. I will also proceed to discuss implications that the absence of a language rights discourse in Singapore has on existing scholarship.

5.1 State-citizenry congruence

The previous chapter found that while Singaporeans do have a general conception of language rights, evident in their recognition for negative rights, they do not recognise positive language rights the way the language rights advocate. Language rights advocates make rights claims on behalf of minority language speakers, positive rights claims to be specific, under the assumption that because these minority language speakers identify their languages, that they would want to maintain it, and would want the state to provide for their languages. The findings in the previous chapter are in agreement with the language rights advocates insofar as the minority language speakers do identify with their minority languages, and they do desire the maintenance of those languages. However, where the findings differ, is in its discovery that while minority language speakers who identify with their languages do desire maintenance, they do not actively engage in the maintenance of the language at home via intergenerational transmission, nor do they endorse the maintenance of their language via education. Additionally, minority language speakers like the Chinese Singaporeans, do not recognise or endorse the recognition of their own positive rights. This seems to suggest that

Singaporeans, minority language speakers especially, do not fully comprehend what the recognition of minority language rights entails.

While it would be an open and shut case to claim that the citizenry reciprocates the state's silence on language rights with one of their own because they don't understand language rights, doing so would do little to fortify the understanding of how a linguistic regime that takes an exclusionary approach to rights is so successful. Additionally, doing so would be committing the same transgression of espousing a fallacious argument that appeals to ignorance as some language rights advocates are wont to do. Rather, I take the observation that their perception of language rights and language values are congruent with what the existing linguistic regime endorses as acceptable as my point of departure. In so doing, the trajectory of this analysis then shifts to how this congruence was achieved. How did a linguistic regime that relegated a whole class of once-dominant languages to the status of a kitchen language gain such a significant purchase among the people? How did Singaporeans who had their mother tongues suppressed and denigrated come to orientate their linguistic values and perception of rights with the state's linguistic regime?

5.2 The diacritical significance of CMIO

In advocating minority language rights, May (2003) argues that language is important insofar as there is a diacritical significance attached to it, which provides a linguistic demarcation and boundary. This in turn provides members with a sense of linguistic belonging and security. His view is mirrored by Anderson (1991:133) who argues that 'the more important aspect of language is "its capacity for generating imagined communities, building in effect particular solidarities"'. As such, it can be deduced that because language has the ability to generate imagined communities within which one shares experiences and a sense of self, the lack of recognition of a language threatens that boundary, and by extension, one's sense of linguistic belonging and security. It is under this circumstance of threat to one's sense of self that people contest certain linguistic regimes.

In introducing the official language policy, the state conflated a very diverse linguistic ecology where languages already serving as demarcating features of identities. How then did the state avoid the conflict that would have arisen as a result of the blurring of those linguistic boundaries? This would surely have been regarded as a threat to the existence of various linguistic groups and their members. I will argue here that the CMIO model that grounds

much of the politics in Singapore and underpins and the way in which the linguistic regime is conceived, effectively preserves the diacritical significance of language that is purported to be so important. The operational logic of inter-ethnic equality governed by the CMIO model assigns one language to each ethnic group. Each Singaporean is assigned to one of these ethnic groups. Within each ethnic group, every Singaporean is assigned a 'mother tongue' with a linguistic demarcation that is equally recognised by the state, and as such, the linguistic representations and recognition of each individual by the state are purported to be equal. In homogenising linguistic differences within the category itself and prescribing a homogeneous ethnic 'mother tongue' to the group, an imagined community with which one would purportedly feel a sense of linguistic belonging to is created.

The ideology of inter-ethnic equality under the CMIO model also demands that all three 'mother tongues' are recognised in the linguistic practices of all official and unofficial public institutions. As a result, all three 'mother tongues' are highly visible in the public sphere, and their presence alongside each other signify the different but equal linguistic divisions within the nation that equally contributes to the construction of the Singaporean community as a whole. This reinforces the linguistic demarcation and strengthens the linguistic security that the language provides. The linguistic security of each linguistic group provided by the assigned 'mother tongues' are also held in such high regard by the CMIO's emphasis on inter-ethnic parity that public discourse on language has become a site of policing to ensure that there are no blurring of boundaries or fragmentising of the linguistic groups. Discourse that propose deviations to the state's official language policies have been publically dismissed (The Straits Times, 2009), and discourse appealing for the recognition of within-group diversity have been labelled or even criminalised as 'chauvinistic' (Chua, 2004).

It could be argued then, that while the establishing of the official language policy might have illegitimised the mother tongue of a Singaporean, the assigning of a 'mother tongue' under the state's CMIO model of inter-ethnic equality provides the individual with a language that has a stronger attached diacritical significance. In which case, it could possibly be argued that the assigning of official 'mother tongues' provide individuals with a level of linguistic belong and security that they would otherwise never have with a language not guaranteed to protection by the state. Over and above that, their linguistic rights would be observed by the recognition of their 'mother tongues' in the constitution, and in the provision for those languages in all government institutions, thus the lack of retaliation by the citizenry when

they had their sense of linguistic belonging threatened by the introduction of the official language policy.

This would not be an impossible justification if not for the fact that it is one matter to assign languages with secured linguistic identities to Singaporeans, and another to have Singaporeans identify with that language and experience that protected sense of belonging. Where the assigned ‘mother tongue’ coincided with the true mother tongue as it did for majority of the Malay and Indian communities, there would already be an existing identification with the newly officiated language, and the linguistic identity and security enhanced by the official status would have been welcome. However, majority of the Chinese population, Mandarin was effectively a foreign language, and not their ‘mother tongue’. The threat to their linguistic security presented by the language policy would only be compounded by their inability to identify with the language. While the findings in the previous chapter did reveal that Singaporeans can identify with languages that are not their mother tongues, there was no guarantee that they would form the identification. How then did the state influence Singaporeans who experienced a linguistic dislocation into identifying with their new assigned ‘mother tongue’, and in the process of doing so, gain credence of its linguistic regime?

5.3 Realignment of linguistic values

The state engaged in several strategies to realign the linguistic values of Chinese Singaporeans who experienced a linguistic dislocation as a result of the introduction of an official ‘mother tongue’. These strategies synchronously targeted to change the linguistic practices and ideologies of the people. To first equip Singaporeans with a proficiency in *their* language, the state provided a ‘mother tongue’ education via its bilingual education policy. For Chinese Singaporeans who were not in the school-going age category, the state engaged in other strategies that supported ‘mother tongue’ language learning. Mandarin classes were conducted for all Chinese Singaporeans. Mandarin lessons were also produced on cassette tapes and made available to the public, with an estimated 83,000 sets of two series of these lessons sold (Singapore Infopedia, 2013). Telephone Mandarin lessons were also made available on a 24-hour basis to members of the public, which was well received by Chinese Singaporeans, evidenced by the average of 40, 000 calls received during peak hours.

Additionally, the state introduced the Speak Mandarin Campaign in a deliberate attempt to stamp out the use of the minority languages, and the values Chinese Singaporeans still held for their minority mother tongues. The ideological campaign aimed to influence Singaporeans into sharing the state's linguistic values, and "ultimately to psychologically build up the citizenry" (Bokhorst-Heng, 1999:244). The campaign espoused ideologies that denigrated the minority languages in a bid to validate Mandarin. The state construed minority languages as cognitive burdens to children and a hindrance to their future success, and thus should not be learnt if the child wants to be successful. The state also construed the minority languages as vulgar, and associated their use with the less educated. Such discourses are often espoused by the state in official speeches:

- (1) Dialect will hinder the learning of the child if he uses dialect. I think every parent will be prepared to make a little sacrifice if it is for the future of the child. To speak dialect with your child is to ruin his future.

(Lee Kuan Yew, then Prime Minister, ST, 17 November 1980)

- (2) Singapore Hokkien is very crude and rough.

(Lee Kuan Yew, then Prime Minister, ST, 24 November 1979)

At the same time, the campaign constructed an essentialistic link between Mandarin, Chinese, and the Chinese culture to ideologically influence Singaporeans into thinking that Mandarin was *their* language, and the language of *their* culture:

- (3) To have no emotionally acceptable language as our mother-tongue is to be emotionally crippled...Mandarin is emotionally acceptable as our mother-tongue...It reminds us that we are part of an ancient civilisation with an unbroken history of over 5000 years...[parents] also want their children to retain traditional Chinese values in filial piety, loyalty, benevolence and love. Through Mandarin their children can emotionally identify themselves as part of an ancient civilisation whose continuity was because it was founded on a tried and tested value system.

(Lee Kuan Yew, then Prime Minister, 1984 SMC launching speech)

This ideological campaign proved successful as evidenced in the findings of the previous chapter, which showed that that Chinese Singaporeans did develop an identification with

Mandarin, and also discontinued use of minority languages in the household following the introduction of the Speak Mandarin campaign. Additionally, the hallmark ideology espoused by the state with regard to its governance has always been that Singapore progresses only by adhering to the state's values. As such it is not surprising that Singaporeans doggedly pursued practices endorsed by the state, and not only forsook their minority mother tongues, but also realigned their linguistic values.

While all of this was happening, Singapore was also experiencing a rapid economic development. That the state managed to achieve economic prosperity for the country in spite of the unenviable circumstances of the nation post-independence gave the regime, including the linguistic regime, a 'performance legitimacy' (Mutalib, 2010). Singapore's rapid economic achievements were also testament of the state's ideology that success would come to those who aligned their ideologies and practices with the state. This further aided in the ideological pursuits of the state, as Chinese Singaporeans adopted the use of Mandarin, and increasingly shared the state's ideology that Mandarin was their 'mother tongue'. As a rising tide lifts all boats, Singaporeans subsequently experienced the affluence of the economy, resulting in an even greater belief in the regime. Over time, the naturalisation of the state's ideologies into the only rational and universally valid ideas created an ideological reality for the Chinese community, such that the espousal of the state-endorsed ideology that Mandarin was their mother tongue became almost reflexive (Chua, 1983). In reflexively producing these ideologies, the citizenry inevitably validates the currency of the ideology that Mandarin is the 'mother tongue' tongue of all Chinese Singaporeans that goes unchallenged today. In construing Mandarin as their 'mother tongue', Chinese Singaporeans then perceive the linguistic regime built on the CMIO model as one that constitutionally protects their linguistic identity, providing them with linguistic security. Together with the Malay and Indian communities, Singaporeans collectively regard the CMIO linguistic regime as one that protects and guarantees the rights of their mother tongues, cementing their belief in the linguistic regime, thus giving it a political legitimacy. This accounts for why Singaporeans do not engage in a linguistic rights discourse and believe that they are entitled to linguistic guarantees.

5.4 Validity of alternative conceptualisations

The political legitimacy of Singapore's linguistic regime would be contested by advocates of liberal democracy who adopt the normative concept of political legitimacy which refers to a

benchmark of acceptability, usually a checklist of conditions for legitimacy set out by the liberal democratic regime. However, according to Weber (1964), a political regime is legitimate when the citizenry have certain beliefs or faith in it, and it is this faith in a particular social order that produces stability in society. As discussed in the preceding section, Singaporeans have come to believe in the regime, and have aligned their values and practices in accordance to it, such that the regime can be justified in terms of their beliefs, resulting in the harmonious cachet evident in Singapore. While the means to this end may be regarded as contrived by the liberal democratic regime, the resultant regime in which the citizenry has faith can be considered by Weber's descriptive concept of political legitimacy to be a legitimate one.

While Singapore's linguistic regime is regarded by Singaporeans as one that is legitimate, it would be ignorant or utopian to believe that its brand of multilingual policy can be enforced unilaterally or unconditionally. The linguistic regime worked for Singapore mainly because of the circumstances under which it was formulated. As a post-colonial nation-state, there was no entrenched national identity post-independence. This allowed for policies to be formulated to build national identities. The national identity decided upon by the state in light of its diverse ethnic and linguistic diversity then was one of a multi-ethnic and multilingual one, underpinned by the CMIO model. The linguistic regime built upon this model could fill and reconstruct identities of Singaporeans, simply because there was no language entrenched in a culture that has been rooted in the history of the nation-state. This void in national language and national identity, together with the government's competence in ideological leadership was what contributed to the success of Singapore's linguistic regime.

However, that is not to say that Singapore's CMIO linguistic regime is entirely unique, because while it is tailored to fulfil the political and nationalistic needs upon independence, the CMIO model is analogous to Stroud's (2001) concept of linguistic citizenship. Advocated as an alternative to the linguistic human rights framework, the concept of linguistic citizenship rejects the selective and preferential treatment of specific communities to defend their rights and identities. Instead, it posits that in a successful linguistic regime, linguistic identities should be explicitly engaged in the political, economic, and social discourses of the nation. In so doing, the interests and needs of the local linguistic communities are given pride of place, and what is argued to follow is a situation of equity established on a respect for language diversity (ibid). Singapore's linguistic regime could be argued to embody the

principles of linguistic citizenship insofar as issues of language policy, underpinned by the CMIO model, are recognised as questions of social and economic equity. In this regard, the concept of linguistic citizenship provides a possible alternative for the success of Singapore's linguistic regime.

As such, while Singapore's linguistic regime is not one formulated from a rights-based conceptual orientation, it is nonetheless successful and legitimate, and cannot be dismissed as invalid by language rights advocates and political theorists. In this regard, this study maintains that language rights is but one way to conceptualise policies, and alternative conceptualisation should be considered in the management of linguistic diversity. Despite the tremendous success of liberalism today (Peled, 2011), it is imperative that advocates of liberal democracy recognise rights as a particular ideology, and not a political meta-theory when they engage in the prescription and theorizing of rights-based policies. What is required above all, is the acknowledgement of the relevance of conceptual camps within and without the liberal democratic tradition in thinking about values such as equality, fairness, and justice.

5.5 Significance of findings

While extensive research has been done on the linguistic regime in Singapore (Wee, 2011; Bokhorst-Heng, 1999; Lim 2009; Chua, 2008), none explored the silence on rights in Singapore, and the success of its linguistic regime in spite of it. This study located Singapore in the dominantly theoretical language rights debate via an empirical approach, and found that not only do alternative conceptualisations to linguistic diversity management exist, they can be successful, and legitimately so. This highlights a shortcoming in the context of normative language policy and the linguistic rights paradigm, where political theorists often prescribe normative policies rooted in liberal democracy as the be all and end all of successful policymaking, and where language rights advocates champion moral claims on behalf of the people. The reciprocal relationship between the state and citizenry that contributed to the success of Singapore's linguistic regime underscores the ideological character of language policies. Thus while political theorists and language rights advocates formulate their discourses based on good intentions, actual politics are not always grounded in rational or moral choices. Or rather, the notions of justice, equality, and language can and are being interpreted differently by linguistic regimes in every nation, depending on their political purposes. This situational difference in interpretation then requires more nuanced bottom-up analyses, where scholars need to engage themselves with the people they claim to

defend, to better understand real world language concerns, needs, and challenges in the process of formulating moral arguments and policy recommendations.

While this study has found that the success of Singapore's linguistic regime was due to the ability of the state to reconstruct the ideologies of the citizenry, the question remains if the state would be able to indefinitely engineer the ideologies of its people for its own purposes and interests. The state has in fact acknowledged that it cannot use reasons it did 50 years ago to justify for its policies today (Lee, 2015). As the nation matures, and in light of its possible evolution into a liberal democracy, is it possible that the state might eventually appeal to and acknowledge language rights to redress past injustices as other matured nations do today? If the state does engage in processes of linguistic revitalisation of previously repressed dialects, would Singaporeans be receptive to language revitalisation? Or are the ideologies of the existing linguistic regime so rooted, that people cannot conceive of mother tongues in any way other than the one prescribed by the state, and dismiss the concept of revitalisation altogether? Should the latter be true, Singapore's *non-speak* of language rights could very possibly evolve into an Orwellian *Newspeak*.

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Appendix A: List of Questionnaire Questions

The sample questionnaire is taken from the questionnaire issued to Chinese respondents born between 1944-1980. The questions pertaining to language will therefore involve English, Mandarin and Chinese dialects.

-
- Year of Birth
- Which racial group do you belong to:
Chinese
Malay
Indian
Others
- What language(s) do you speak?
English
Singlish
Mandarin
Hokkien
Teochew
Cantonese
Other Chinese dialect (specify)
Others (specify)

Scale rating is based on proficiency, and listed in the following:

1. I can understand but cannot speak the language.
2. I can understand and give short responses.
3. I can have simple conversations, but with some difficulty.
4. I can have most everyday conversations, with no difficulty.
5. I can discuss complex issues (e.g. politics) with no difficulty.

Identity

(All questions are based on a dichotomous answer scheme with

Yes

No

No opinion)

English

- I belong to the English-speaking community.
- I enjoy the company of people who speak English.
- I consider English my own language.
- I consider English my mother tongue.
- I think all Chinese should speak English.

Mandarin

- I belong to the Mandarin-speaking community.
- I enjoy the company of people who speak Mandarin.
- I consider Mandarin my own language.
- I consider Mandarin my mother tongue.
- I think all Chinese should speak Mandarin.

A Chinese Dialect

- I belong to the dialect-speaking community.
- I enjoy the company of people who speak Chinese dialects.
- I consider Chinese dialects my own language.
- I consider a Chinese dialect my mother tongue.
- I think all Chinese should speak a Chinese dialect.

Language Maintenance

All questions are close-ended, with the choice of:

English
Singlish
Mandarin
Hokkien
Teochew
Cantonese
Other Chinese dialect (specify)
Others (specify)

- What is the main language that you speak to your parents in?
- What is the main language do/would you speak to your children in?
- I would like to speak _____ at home.

Language Education

(All questions are based on a dichotomous answer scheme with

Yes
No
No opinion)

Key words (such as the language type) are bolded to reinforce clarity of question.

Language of Education

- Wen Jie is Singaporean. He speaks only **Mandarin** at home. He should be **allowed to speak Mandarin in school**.
- Yuet Han is Singaporean. She speaks only **Cantonese** at home. She should go to a **Cantonese school**.
- Jean is Singaporean. He speaks only **French** at home. He should go to a **French school**.
- Ryoko is Singaporean. She speaks only **Japanese** at home. She should go to a **Japanese school**.

- Siu Keng is Singaporean. She speaks only **Mandarin** at home. She should go to a **Chinese school**.
- Fandi is Singaporean. He speaks only **Bahasa Melayu** at home. He should go to a **Malay school**.
- Ming Shi is Singaporean. She speaks only **Teochew** at home. She should be **allowed to speak in Teochew in school**.

Language of subject education

- Ming Shi is Singaporean. She speaks only **Teochew** at home. She should be **allowed to learn Math in Teochew** when she goes to school.
- Ming Shi is Singaporean. She speaks only **Teochew** at home. She should be **taught Teochew in school**.
- Wen Jie is Singaporean. He speaks only **Mandarin** at home. He should be **allowed to learn Science in Mandarin** when he goes to school.
- Wen Jie is Singaporean. He speaks only **Mandarin** at home. He should be **taught Mandarin in school**.

Private/Public Language Use

All questions are close-ended, but respondents may select more than one answer in some cases. They are offered the choice of:

English
Singlish
Mandarin
Hokkien
Bahasa Melayu
Tamil
Other Chinese dialect

Key words (such as the language type) are bolded to reinforce clarity of question.

Hospital Scenario

- Yi Ling prefers to speak in **Mandarin**. She goes to a **hospital**. It is acceptable if she is **served in:** (you may select more than one answer)
- Yi Ling prefers to speak in **Mandarin**. She goes to a **hospital**. She should be **allowed to speak in:** (you may select more than one answer)
- Yi Ling prefers to speak in **Mandarin**. She goes to a **hospital**. The **best** language to **serve her in** is: (select one)
- Yew Kuan prefers to speak in **Hokkien**. He goes to a **hospital**. It is acceptable if he is **served in:** (you may select more than one answer)
- Yew Kuan prefers to speak in **Hokkien**. He goes to a **hospital**. He should be **allowed to speak in:** (you may select more than one answer)
- Yew Kuan prefers to speak in **Hokkien**. He goes to a **hospital**. The **best** language to **serve him in** is: (select one)
- Priya prefers to speak in **Tamil**. She goes to a **hospital**. It is acceptable if she is **served in:** (you may select more than one answer)

- Priya prefers to speak in **Tamil**. She goes to a **hospital**. She should be **allowed to speak in:** (you may select more than one answer)
- Priya prefers to speak in **Tamil**. She goes to a **hospital**. The **best** language to **serve her in** is: (select one)

Restaurant Scenario

- Yi Ling prefers to speak in **Mandarin**. She goes to a **restaurant**. It is acceptable if she is **served in:** (you may select more than one answer)
- Yi Ling prefers to speak in **Mandarin**. She goes to a **restaurant**. She should be **allowed to speak in:** (you may select more than one answer)
- Yi Ling prefers to speak in **Mandarin**. She goes to a **restaurant**. The **best** language to **serve her in** is: (select one)
- Yew Kuan prefers to speak in **Hokkien**. He goes to a **restaurant**. It is acceptable if he is **served in:** (you may select more than one answer)
- Yew Kuan prefers to speak in **Hokkien**. He goes to a **restaurant**. He should be **allowed to speak in:** (you may select more than one answer)
- Yew Kuan prefers to speak in **Hokkien**. He goes to a **restaurant**. The **best** language to **serve him in** is: (select one)

Court Scenario

- Koon Meng goes to **court** because he has committed a crime. He prefers to speak in **Mandarin**. His **trial** should be **conducted in:** (you may select more than one answer)
- Koon Meng goes to **court** because he has committed a crime. He prefers to speak in **Mandarin**. His should be **allowed to defend himself in:** (you may select more than one answer)
- Koon Meng goes to **court** because he has committed a crime. He prefers to speak in **Mandarin**. The **best** language to **conduct his trial is in:** (select one)
- Koon Meng goes to **court** because he has committed a crime. He prefers to speak in **Teochew**. His **trial** should be **conducted in:** (you may select more than one answer)
- Koon Meng goes to **court** because he has committed a crime. He prefers to speak in **Teochew**. His should be **allowed to defend himself in:** (you may select more than one answer)
- Koon Meng goes to **court** because he has committed a crime. He prefers to speak in **Teochew**. The **best** language to **conduct his trial is in:** (select one)

CPF/Tax Office Scenario

- Mr Lim prefers to speak in **Mandarin**. He needs help understanding the CPF (Central Provident Fund) withdrawal process. He goes to the **CPF Office**. It is acceptable if he is **served in:** (you may select more than one answer)
- Mr Lim prefers to speak in **Mandarin**. He needs help understanding the CPF (Central Provident Fund) withdrawal process. He goes to the **CPF Office**. He should be **allowed to speak in:** (you may select more than one answer)

- Mr Lim prefers to speak in **Mandarin**. He needs help understanding the CPF (Central Provident Fund) withdrawal process. He goes to the **CPF Office**. The **best** language to **serve him in** is: (select one)
- Xin Hui prefers to speak in **Teochew**. She needs help with filing taxes. She goes to the **tax office**. It is acceptable if she is **served in**: (you may select more than one answer)
- Xin Hui prefers to speak in **Teochew**. She needs help with filing taxes. She goes to the **tax office**. She should be **allowed to speak in**: (you may select more than one answer)
- Xin Hui prefers to speak in **Teochew**. She needs help with filing taxes. She goes to the **tax office**. The **best** language to **serve her in** is: (select one)

General Perception of Rights

- What languages should Singaporeans speak in public spaces?
 - English only
 - English, Bahasa Melayu, Tamil, and Mandarin only
 - Any language they wish to speak in
- How important is it to you that you are allowed to speak the language of your choice in the following places?
 [This question is based on a five-point scale, with
 Not at all Important
 Very Unimportant
 Neither Important nor Unimportant
 Very Important
 Extremely Important]
 - At home
 - At work with colleagues
 - At a restaurant
 - In court
 - At the police station
 - At the CPF office
 - In school