A matter of national (In)security: English language policy in Singapore

Foo, Amanda Limin

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**A MATTER OF NATIONAL (IN)SECURITY:
ENGLISH LANGUAGE POLICY IN SINGAPORE**

AMANDA FOO LIMIN

**SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
LINGUISTICS AND MULTILINGUAL STUDIES**

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**A Matter of National (In)security:
English Language Policy in Singapore**

Amanda Foo Limin

**School of Humanities and Social Sciences
Linguistics and Multilingual Studies**

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ABSTRACT

Linguistic insecurity is a sociolinguistic phenomenon that has been well-documented and studied since the mid-twentieth century. A speaker's negative perception of their own speech in comparison to the 'superior' variety can lead to an obsession with the 'standard' form and a discrimination against those who do not conform to it.

What then, when linguistic insecurity is not just manifested on a national scale, but is created and reinforced by the state? Such is the case with Singapore. The idea that her people speak sub-standard English is so ingrained amongst the populace that it seems part of the national identity, despite the nation's high proficiency in English. The nation's leaders have been heard bemoaning Singaporeans' poor command of the language since the 1980's, which ultimately culminated in the 2000 launch of The Speak Good English Movement (SGEM) language campaign.

The state's quiet but steady exonormative orientation towards its ex-colonial masters also raises important issues about regarding linguistic ownership of English, an international language in today's globalized world. This paper seeks to understand the nature and role of linguistic insecurity in Singapore through three areas of investigation: 1) language policies and policy makers, the 'producers' of the narrative of linguistic insecurity, 2) mass media and language campaigns, the 'medium' through which the narrative is disseminated and 3) the citizenry and language educators, the 'target audience'.

Initial findings suggest that while the people seem to have internalized the narrative of linguistic insecurity, their linguistic behaviours paint a dissonant picture. The population continue to negatively perceive the nation's standard of English, yet they also display confidence in their English language proficiency. More importantly, the findings show an ever-growing number of Singaporeans are exercising their linguistic ownership of English, in direct contrast to the state's categorization of English as purely a 'working language'.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In his 1999 National Day Rally, Singapore's then Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong proclaimed to Singaporeans that 'to become an engineer, a technician, an accountant or a nurse, you must have standard English' and that they 'should speak a form of English that is understood by the British, Americans, Australians, and people around the world'. Goh (1999) expanded on this idea in a later speech in the same month, stating unequivocally that 'Singlish is not English', referring to Singapore Colloquial English (henceforth referred to as Singlish), a variety of English popular amongst the population, but rather that it was 'English corrupted by Singaporeans'. He went on to urge Singaporeans to follow the 'rules of common usage', stressing the importance of educating children on the rules of grammar and good pronunciation (Goh, 1999). His speech culminated in an announcement of the Speak Good English Movement (henceforth SGEM), launched on 29th of April 2000 (Goh, 1999, Rubdy, 2001). Since then, for the past fifteen years, SGEM has been a yearly event. The theme and focus of each campaign has evolved over the years: speaking Standard English intelligible to all (2000-2006), effective communication (2007/2009), making a choice to use Standard English (2008), using 'proper' English (2010/2014), being ambassadors of 'good' English (2011), maintaining the habit of using 'good' English (2012) and improving one's proficiency in English in general (2013) (SGEM, n.d.).

While the Movement's fundamental message has remained unchanged thus far, the average Singaporean English speaker has not, leading to an ever-growing gap between the image and reality of a Singaporean English speaker. Before the start of the twenty-first century, a Singaporean student was characterized as an individual to whom English was a second, or even foreign, language (Goh, 1999). However, in the most recent Singapore Census of Population carried out in 2010, English is only second to Mandarin Chinese as the

most-spoken language at home (Singapore Department of Statistics, 2010). Furthermore, in the most recent 2014 Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) test – the most recognized measure of non-native speakers’ English proficiency – Singapore obtained a score of 98 out of a possible 100 (Educational Testing Service, 2015). Therefore, it would be fair to say that the typical Singaporean English speaker has learned the ‘rules of common usage’ that Goh spoke about. And yet, despite the fact that two decades has passed, discourses bemoaning Singaporeans’ poor command of English have remained a constant fixture. As recently as 2016, the Prime Minister’s Office (PMO) issued a sternly-worded rebuttal to an article in *The New York Times* discussing the possible growing acceptance of Singlish by the state: it asserted that the state’s ‘efforts to promote the mastery of standard English by Singaporeans’ should not be so lightly regarded as it is challenging for Singaporeans to acquire Standard English and articles such as these would set Singaporeans back (Li, 2016). In another article, *The Straits Times* reported on the ‘falling standards of English’ and asked what could be done to raise them again (Tan, 2009). Interestingly, the chairman of SGEM, Gok Eck Kheng, stated that ‘the British were around, people who spoke to them were more careful’, implying that the British were good linguistic role models that helped Singaporeans better their English by setting a good example to follow (Tan, 2009, p. 4).

The notion that the British compelled Singaporeans to be more mindful of how they spoke English is particularly telling, especially when considering the historical relationship between the two nations. For one, this colors the relationship between the two groups of speakers (the British and Singaporeans) with the uncomfortable implication that Singaporeans still remain beneath or lower in status when compared to her former colonial masters. Furthermore, Goh’s identification of the British, Americans and Australians as the key populations that one should aspire to be understood by is an additional layer to the state’s general exonormative orientation to native English-speaking countries. The idea that the

British, Americans and Australians are speakers of ‘proper’ or Standard English is particularly powerful when combined with the consistent narrative that Singaporeans speak bad English as it creates the axiom that Singaporean English speakers are inferior to English speakers from the populations identified. Such a narrative is one of linguistic insecurity.

The notion of linguistic insecurity was first discussed by linguist Robert A. Hall, which in his aptly-named 1950 publication pleaded with the people to ‘Leave Your Language Alone’. In it, Hall raises some key points regarding the social aspect of language varieties, namely being, 1) there is no ‘correct’ or ‘incorrect’ in language, 2) language use being determined by dictionaries and other similar ‘authorities’ is a primitive idea and 3) the fallacy of accrediting certain languages or dialects with special merit. When Hall’s three points are considered in the Singapore context, it seems that the nation seems to provide a negative example for all of them: 1) the entire SGEM is based on the idea of ‘good English’ which implies that there is a ‘correct’ standard English that is ‘good’, 2) examples of the key resources provided by SGEM include spelling tips, pronunciation guides and grammar rules, thus positioning the SGEM as a ‘language authority’ and 3) the ‘special merit’ accorded to the English spoken by the British, Americans and Australians.

While Hall identified the signs of linguistic insecurity, Dennis Baron (1976) identified the main factors that drove it. The first factor was the negative stereotyping of dialects – here the denouncement of Singlish as a corruption of English comes to mind – and second, ‘an educational system based on a doctrine of correctness and purity’ (p. 2). Others have suggested additional motivators of linguistic insecurity, such as a sense of cultural inferiority (Kovesces, 2000). This sense of inferiority can lead to ‘schizoglossia’, which is a ‘linguistic malady’ that results in speakers’ imbalanced interest in the form rather than the function and substance of the language (Haugen, 1972, p. 441). Haugen’s observation is uncomfortably accurate when one considers that the focus of the 2014 SGEM was on grammatical English,

specifically the rules of grammar that Singaporeans should be able to grasp as they are ‘so good at following rules’ (Goh, 2014).

Then, with the above observations in mind, one is compelled to ask, just what is the nature and extent of linguistic insecurity in the Singaporean context? There seems to be an ever-widening gap between the image of a Singaporean English speaker constructed by the narrative surrounding the English language in Singapore and the typical Singaporean English speaker on the street. This divergence is an issue deserving of attention as it has important implications for the linguistic identity of current and future Singaporean English speakers, the linguistic landscape of Singapore and the language planning and policies of the nation.

The debate surrounding the role and significance of the English language in Singapore has occupied a central role in the nation’s recent history and has captured the attention of government, citizens and scholars alike. Even before the launch of the SGEM in 2000, the promotion of ‘proper’ English from the Singaporean government has been unflinching over the years. On 10th July 1993, public broadcaster Singapore Broadcasting Corporation (SBC) announced that it would no longer allow Singlish to be used in its television programmes (Tan, 1993a). SBC also stated that it had identified three categories of English – Standard English (English with correct grammaticalization and pronunciation), Local English (correct grammaticalization and Singaporean pronunciation) and Singlish (incorrect grammaticalization) – and that while Local English was still permitted a presence in the station’s programmes, it was without doubt that Standard English was ‘the norm to aspire to’ (Tan, 1993a, p. 22). Next month, on 1st August 1993, SBC announced that it was banning Singlish commercials from its airwaves (Tan, 1993b). Towards the end of the millennium, then Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew declared Singlish ‘a handicap we do not wish on Singaporeans’, going on to elaborate on how Singlish would cause economic and social detriments to the ‘less-educated Singaporeans’ (*The Straits Times*, 1999, p. 26). Following

Lee's denunciation of Singlish, the Ministry of Education (henceforth MOE) released a report warning of Singlish's potential to erode standards of English and pointing to a link between Singlish and poor proficiency in English (Chua, 1999).

The report from MOE highlights the role of Singapore's language education policies as a key tool in Singaporeans' march towards ever-better English. A brief look at the English syllabi of 2001 and 2010 show that helping students attain or improve proficiency in 'Standard English' is the main goal of English language education. In the 2001 English language syllabus for primary and secondary levels, one of its aims was to ensure that students will be able to speak and write in 'internationally accepted English', which is defined to be 'the formal register of English used in different parts of the world, that is, standard English' (Curriculum Planning & Development Division (henceforth CPDD), 2001, p. 3). The syllabus also states that students would be exposed to the 'different standard varieties of English spoken in other parts of the world' (CPDD, 2001, p. 2). The notions of 'internationally acceptable English' and 'Standard English' are once again mentioned in the 2010 editions of the English syllabi. There are two versions of the 2010 English language syllabus: one for the Primary and Secondary (Express/Normal Academic) (henceforth referred to as PSENA) level and another for the Primary (Foundation) and Secondary (Normal Technical) (henceforth PFSNT) level. While the two syllabi differ in the complexity of language skills and speed of pedagogy, it is stated that the 2010 syllabi will 'continue to emphasize the teaching of internationally acceptable English (Standard English) to our pupils' (CPDD, 2010a; 2010b, p. 10). Additionally, on page 6 and page 7 of the PSENA and PFSNT syllabi respectively, the one of the expected outcomes of the syllabi is that twenty percent of the students will achieve a 'high proficiency in English'. More interestingly, it is believed that a smaller group within this twenty percent of students will 'achieve mastery in

their command of the language that is no different from the best in English-speaking countries' (CPDD, 2010a; 2010b).

The use of the phrase 'the best in English-speaking countries' is notable in that it suggests two important things: 1) Singapore is not an English-speaking country and 2) the majority of Singaporeans are not proficient English speakers. In the years between the implementation of the two syllabi, an English Language Curriculum and Pedagogy Review Committee (ELCPRC) was set up in September 2005 to assess the state of English Language education in Singapore. A report of their review findings and recommendations was published in 2006 and in the executive summary, the notions of 'international standards' of English continued to have a presence in the pedagogical discourse (CPDD, 2006). However, particularly interesting was one of the desired outcomes outlined. From the small group of students expected to attain the highest proficiency in English, it is stated that 'their command of English should be on a par with the equivalent group in countries such as the UK, US and Australia' (CPDD, 2006, p. 5). This statement is significant because it shows that the state currently considers the gold standard of English as of that spoken in the United Kingdom, United States and Australia, reflecting the brief discussion of this issue at the start of this section.

The narrative that Singaporeans' English is substandard is not one produced solely by the state. It is one that echoes through the citizenry as well. Recently, Sumiko Tan (2011), a prominent journalist and editor at The Straits Times Singapore, observed that Singapore was 'an inarticulate nation'. She bemoaned the standard of English in Singapore as 'low compared to other English-speaking countries' and lamented that Singaporeans speaking English was 'almost painful to hear'. The majority of the readers who sent in reaction letters to Tan's column agreed with her. Most of them echoed the sentiment that Singaporeans had a 'sub-standard' or even 'atrocious' command of the language, one even commented that

Singaporeans should stop believing that the ‘inability to enunciate’ was a national trait (*The Straits Times*, 2011). Then there are others who are not just concerned about Singaporeans’ standard of English, but also about which standard of English they adhere to. A letter sent in to *The Straits Times* Singapore forum called on the education system to address the difference between British and American English and more importantly, to teach standard British English (henceforth BrE) as so to help Singaporeans avoid a decline into a linguistic repertoire consisting of ‘a smattering of local dialects with an adulterated form of British English’ (*The Straits Times*, 2011).

A common point in all the various speeches and points of view from both state and citizenry is that British, American and Australian English and their speakers are taken naturally as the best. It is unsurprising that the state would look towards the British as the speakers of ‘good English’. After all, Singapore was a British colony and it would naturally follow that the English language would play a significant – and prestigious – role during that period of her history. Most scholars point towards the arrival of Sir Stamford Raffles in 1819 – and subsequently the British colonizing forces – as the beginning of English in Singapore (Lim & Foley, 2004). From the beginning, English was seen as a mark of superiority. In 1834, a Singapore Free School was set up to provide basic English language education and to instil in the local population ‘regular habits of subordination and study’ (Bloom, 1986, p. 351). Here, it can already be seen that the local Singaporean population was considered ‘subordinate’ to the British and the means to elevate oneself to a higher status was to attain proficiency in English. By 1900, English would be cemented as the language of the elites, who enjoyed greater occupational opportunities as a result of their higher proficiency in English (Lim & Foley, 2004). The role of English as the means to personal success was established then and has continued till the present day. The historical and political context of English in Singapore will be further detailed in Chapter 3.2.2.

However, it is not just the British that have been identified as the speakers of 'good' English, other countries like The United States and Australia are regularly mentioned as the speakers of the ideal standard of English as well. This is to be expected, given that the three are all what Braj Kachru would term 'Inner Circle nations'. In Kachru's widely-known 'Three Circles' of English model, countries are classified as part of the 'Inner Circle', 'Outer Circle' or 'Expanding Circle', according to the status of English and its speakers in the country. Braj Kachru's (1985) model of Three Circles of English classifies countries as belonging to either the Inner Circle, the Outer Circle or the Expanding Circle. The model aims to capture three things: 1) the various 'types of spread' of English globally, 2) the 'patterns of acquisition' in different countries and 3) the 'functional domains' English is utilized in, both nationally and internationally (Bolton, 2006b, p. 292).

The Inner Circle countries are those with speakers of English as a native language and prototypical members include the United Kingdom, the United States, and Australia (Sergeant, 2012). These countries are what Kachru (1985) terms the 'traditional bases of English' (p. 12), countries such as the United Kingdom wherein English is the primary language. The varieties of English in Inner Circle countries have also been described as norm-providing to the Outer and Expanding Circle countries (Bolton, 2006a). The Outer Circle countries are those in where the English language has some historical significance and is typically a working language in the government's administration (e.g. Singapore, India and the Philippines) (Bjorkman, 2013). Outer Circle countries typically have a complicated relationship with the English language, as they tend to be former colonies of Inner Circle countries and are seen as dominated by speakers of English as a Second Language. English has and continues to occupy a central and institutionalized role in both the state's and citizenry's linguistic repertoire (Kachru, 1985). Furthermore, due to the extended presence of English in these countries, Outer Circle varieties of English are endocentric norm-developing

in that they have distinct linguistic features and cultural salience (Bolton, 2006a). An important point about Outer Circle varieties of English is that the language has evolved in a largely non-English environment to possess wide range and depth across various social, cultural, political and economic domains (Kachru, 1985). Finally, the majority of countries fall into the Expanding Circle, in which English is a Foreign Language and not utilized in any official capacity by the government (e.g. China, Japan and Poland) (Bjorkman, 2013). Countries in the Expanding Circle are those wherein English is learnt as a foreign language but does not have an official presence in the country – e.g. China, Indonesia, Japan, etc. (Kachru, 1985). These countries are described as having varieties of English that are exocentric and norm-dependent (i.e. taking British or American English as the standard) (Bolton, 2006a).

The Three Circles are not clearly demarcated as countries can often straddle the line by changing English language policies. Outer and Expanding Circle countries, in particular, share many commonalities in regards to the role and nature of English in the community (Kachru, 1985). While there are no clear criteria for classification into any of the Circles, Singapore has steadfastly been provided as an example of a country in the Outer Circle. Indeed, Singapore does display the typical characteristics of an Outer Circle country: English is institutionalized in the political, educational and social sectors, Singaporeans are English-knowing bilinguals and there is Singapore variety of English (see Lim, 2004 and Low, 2015). Most important is that Outer Circle varieties of English are norm-developing and endocentric. However, this does not seem to be the case in Singapore, where English language norms are still largely based on Inner Circle varieties of English and features unique to Singapore English are perceived as bad English.

The ‘Three Circles’ model is particularly pertinent to this discussion because Inner Circle nations are typically considered the providers of language norms, which has far-

reaching implications on the linguistic norms, attitudes and identities of English speakers in general (Kachru, 1992). A good example of the adoption of Inner Circle language norms by Outer Circle nations is the fact that British Received Pronunciation (RP) was taught in Singapore classrooms until the late 1980's, well into the country's independence (Gupta, 2010). While Kachru (2006) classifies Outer Circle nations as 'norm-developing' and are both exonormative and endonormative in nature, he notes that in popular and pedagogical literature the Inner Circle varieties of English are viewed as the 'norm-makers' while the Outer and Expanding Circle varieties of English are deemed 'norm breakers' (p. 246). In the Singapore context, Kachru's observations are reflected in the dissonance between scholars who acknowledge and study what they term 'Singapore Standard English' (henceforth SSE) (see Lim, 2004 and Leimgruber, 2011) and the government's continued use of the term 'Standard English', as seen in the discussion above.

The concept of a single linguistic norm provided by the Inner Circle nations is also a key assumption of the dichotomy between 'native speaker' and 'non-native speaker', which is another factor adding to this debate. Over the most recent decade, Singaporeans have continued their steady shift towards English as their most-used language. Consequently, there are ever-increasing numbers of youth who have acquired the language at a young age and display possess the competency to use the language according to generally-accepted rules (Low, 2015). These individuals are thus 'native speakers' by technical definition. However, one of the key criticisms leveled at the dichotomy between 'native' and 'non-native' is not so much a linguistically-based boundary as much as it is a social construct (Higgins, 2003). As such, the dichotomy as it is has allowed the narrative that Singaporeans are naturally 'non-native speakers' of English to continue to this day.

The chairman of the 2006 SGEM, Koh Tai Ann, affirms in her opening speech for the campaign that Singaporeans were NNSs of the English language. She implicitly characterized

Singaporeans English speakers as second-language or foreign-language learners of English saying that they too had to ‘learn and use English in the standard form’ as just the mentioned language learners do (Koh, 2006). Koh (2006) made a further distinction between English NSs and Singaporeans by announcing that ‘native English speakers’ have remarked that ‘the standard of English in Singapore is comparatively high’. She also invoked the official role of English in Singapore as a tool for economic success on a global stage, emphasizing the idea that English has no use beyond economic factors and therefore, has no basis as a language of identity in Singapore (Koh, 2006). The ‘native’-‘non-native’ dichotomy also contributes to the linguistic insecurity in Singapore by creating negative assumptions about an Outer Circle English speaker’s language proficiency as well as their authority over the language in regards to their confidence and sophistication when using it (Bokhorst-Heng, Rubdy, McKay & Alsagoff, 2010). Furthermore, it ignores considerations of how the speakers themselves feel about their English-speaking identity and ownership of the language (Bokhorst-Heng, et al., 2010).

It is clear from the brief discussion of this overarching narrative of linguistic insecurity that seems to be coloring the role and nature of the English language in Singapore that it is a complicated situation with multiple stakeholders and multi-faceted contributing factors. The most prominent stakeholder would be the state, which has maintained an exonormative outlook in its language planning and policy. The second stakeholder is the Singapore citizenry, a dynamic population with English NSs (by technical definition) growing in number with every year. Mass media is the third stakeholder, occupying a crucial position as nation-building tool and gatekeeper of the public sphere (Bokhorst-Heng, 2002; Lim, 2015). Thus, this dissertation seeks to better understand the nature and extent of this linguistic insecurity in Singapore by examining the role of each of these three stakeholders. The first area of investigation is the ‘producer’ of the narrative of linguistic insecurity in

Singapore: the state. This area would examine both the state's stance on the role of the English language in Singapore as well as its language education policies to understand how the state's actions construct the aforementioned narrative. After which, the 'channels' through which the 'producers' disseminate the narrative will be analyzed: how do language campaigns and mass media seek to influence the public's opinion and linguistic behavior? Finally, the impact of both entities on the 'target audience' – i.e. the Singapore population – is studied to understand the extent to which the 'target audience' has accepted or even internalized the narrative of linguistic insecurity.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section aims to provide the background this dissertation is situated in. It begins with an overview of linguistic insecurity, before moving on to looking at how linguistic insecurity manifests in the different discourses surrounding the English language in the nation.

Additional factors unique to the Singaporean context (i.e. sociolinguistic issues related to the international spread of English) will also be discussed.

2.1 Linguistic Insecurity

As briefly mentioned in Chapter 1, Robert A. Hall, Jr was the first to comment on the idea of a ‘correct’ speech and how this concept could be used to naturalize prejudice towards certain varieties of languages. Hall (1950) observed the fact that ‘untutored and natural’ speech learned outside of the classroom is seen as markers of a speaker’s general ‘ignorance, neglect, carelessness and stupidity (p. 245). He also commented on the vastness of ‘snobbery and social discrimination which goes on in the name of “correctness”’ (p. 245). He suggested two possible factors for such judgment of an individual’s speech: 1) the desire for an easy way to quickly form an impression of a person and 2) the want for a means to feel superior to others (Hall, 1950). Hall provided an anecdote in which these two desires are demonstrated: two women ‘condemn’ a girl for having mispronounced various words, consequently evaluating her intelligence as lacking as they felt that ‘her speech reflected her personality traits’ (p. 245). Utilizing a person’s speech as a yardstick for their abilities, Hall argued, is ‘artificial, superficial and meaningless’ and to reject individuals from certain jobs on the basis of how they spoke is akin to cutting off one’s nose to spite one’s face (p. 245).

These ideas of a standard form and the discrimination that could arise from such notions are further explored by William Labov, who coined the term ‘linguistic insecurity’. In his work *The Social Stratification of English in New York City* (1966; 2006 version cited henceforth), Labov studied the English language within the social context it is spoken in. Specifically, he investigated the varieties of English spoken by the different classes (which can be broadly described as the lower, working, middle and upper classes) in New York City and the speakers’ perception of the varieties spoken by themselves and others. Labov (2006) showed that New Yorkers were aware of the variation between the varieties of English and more importantly, that they were keenly aware of stigmatized features and prestige features, evidencing the presence of a set of linguistic norms recognized by the whole speech community. This awareness of stigmatized features and prestige markers led one particular social stratum to hypercorrect their speech. Hypercorrection is a phenomenon in which speakers overextend the correction of non-standard forms to other forms to which the rules do not apply (Labov, 2006). This hypercorrection, Labov (2006) proposes, is motivated by ‘a profound linguistic insecurity’ (p. 318). While Labov’s original work does not provide a definition of linguistic insecurity, he later defined it as ‘an observable recognition of an exterior standard of correctness’ (Labov, 2001, p. 277).

Labov describes several characteristics that point towards to presence of linguistic insecurity. For example, certain behaviours have been identified as indicative of speakers with linguistic insecurity: great variation in linguistic style, a ‘hypersensitivity’ to and personal usage of stigmatized features of the language and an erroneous perception of their speech (Labov, 1972, p. 132). Furthermore, Labov also described the possible factors and consequences of linguistic insecurity. For example, linguistic insecurity was characterized by Labov (2006) as the inescapable adjunct of a speaker’s ambition for social mobility, specifically upwards social mobility in the socio-economic ladder. This link between

linguistic insecurity and social mobility was first discussed in a much earlier context, wherein rising members of the English middle class found that their native speech was inappropriate for the new social situations they found themselves in (Leonard, 1929). Speakers' desire to achieve social mobility through adopting a prestigious variety created a creed of correctness, which is another socio-linguistic phenomenon linguistic insecurity is said to accompany (Read, 1939; Labov, 2006). Therefore, it can be seen that there is a complicated interplay of individual behaviours, social contexts and socio-linguistic factors that surrounds the concept of linguistic insecurity, which is summarised in Figure 1 below:

Figure 1. Summary of sociolinguistic concepts and phenomenon associated with linguistic insecurity

While linguistic insecurity is most associated with Labov, there have been other scholars who have touched on the phenomenon. Dennis Baron (1976) paints a particularly scathing picture of linguistic insecurity, defining it as ‘the feeling that many if not all Americans have that their language is somehow not quite up to snuff, that it is out of control – riddled with errors – or simply unskilful and gauche’ (p. 1). He also identifies two primary factors that drive linguistic insecurity: 1) negative stereotyping of social and geographical dialects and 2) an educational system that creates and reinforces a strict dogma of ‘correctness and purity’ that conflicts with actual language use (Baron, 1976, p. 2). Baron (1976) also raises a provocative point by proposing that linguistic insecurity could be a sociolinguistic universal. He identifies a ‘self-appointed language elite’ who attempt to impose standards and regulate the speech of others as a key agent in reinforcing linguistic insecurity and ironically, often have the same insecurities themselves (Baron, 1976).

The notion of inferiority has been a common factor in many definitions of linguistic insecurity. One definition merely describes linguistic insecurity as ‘speakers’ feeling that the variety they use is somehow inferior, ugly or bad.’ (Meyerhoff, 2006, p. 172). Another characterizes it as ‘the belief that their language variety is inadequate or that their own speech and writing are somehow inferior’ (Hall, Smith & Wicaksono, 2011, p. 45). A third details linguistic insecurity as ‘the tendency to evaluate one’s language or mastery thereof overly negative when comparing oneself to others’ (Allard & Landry, 1998, p. 216).

Another dimension of linguistic insecurity is that of a ‘moral’ one, wherein speakers of the ‘standard’ variety of the language feel they have the authority to judge speakers they deem unproficient and thus discriminate against them on linguistic grounds. This was touched upon by Hall (1950) at the beginning of this chapter, but other scholars have also touched on this notion of moral judgment in the phenomenon of linguistic insecurity. Milroy and Milroy (2002) talk about the ‘complaint tradition’, wherein the proponents of the ‘standard’ variety emphatically oppose what they feel are unacceptable deviations of the language. Specifically, the authors outlined a particular type of complaint, in which the non-standard variety of the language or any forms of the non-standard variety are considered ‘illiteracies, or barbarisms’ and that the speakers who used these non-standard forms were displaying ‘signs of stupidity, ignorance, perversity, moral degeneracy’ (Milroy & Milroy, 2002, p. 33), thus justifying the discrimination of such speakers.

Cameron also explores the link between the variety of a language spoken by an individual and their morality. She details the ‘grammar panic’ that gripped the United Kingdom in the 1980’s, where the perceived decline in grammar was said to caused similar declines in other areas of society and that it was suggested that the explicit teaching of grammar be reintroduced to Britain’s public schools to ‘halt the rush toward anarchy and barbarism’ (Cameron, 2012, p. 86). Here, it can be seen that linguistic insecurity goes beyond

the notion of a linguistic inferiority, but can be employed to create the idea that the ‘standard’ variety of a language and its speakers are morally superior to the non-standard variety of a language and its speakers.

There are several key aspects of linguistic insecurity that can be distilled from the above discussion, all of which revolve around the idea of a ‘standard’ and/or ‘correct variety’ of the language and in contrast the local variety. This dichotomy extends to what seems to form the ideological foundation of linguistic insecurity: the inferiority of local variety of language and by extension the speakers of this variety and the contrasting superiority of ‘standard’ variety of language and its speakers. There are other sociolinguistic factors that may come into play – for example, the idea of a linguistic authority, a doctrine of correctness, etc. – but the fundamental idea of linguistic insecurity lies in the above dichotomy.

In the Singaporean context, linguistic insecurity manifests itself in two main discourses related to the English language. They are: 1) the poor English language standards of Singaporean English speakers as compared to the superior English of the ‘English-speaking’ Inner Circle countries and 2) the resultant superiority of the ‘native speakers’ of English in the aforementioned countries by association and their ownership of the language. These two discourses will be discussed individually in the following sub-sections.

2.1.1 English Language Standards. The discourse relating to the standard of English used by Singaporeans can be further broken down into two issues: English as used by Singaporeans is characterized as ‘bad English’ and the conflation of local English dialect Singlish with ‘broken English’. This first discourse places the English used by Singaporeans as inferior and can be taken as the foundation of linguistic insecurity in Singapore.

As seen in Chapter 1, Singaporeans are often urged by the nation’s leaders to speak ‘good’ and ‘standard’ English, implying that there is such an ideal English and that

Singaporeans were far from achieving this ideal. This image of the Singaporean who speaks bad English is one that has been in construction since the 1970's. The period was marked the start of the debate about the standards of English in Singapore. In 1977, the British Council and the Regional Language Centre (RELC) was tasked to examine the 'falling standards of English in Singapore' (Low, 2010, p. 232). Five years later in 1982, two varieties of English were identified: a formal standard variety of English and an informal colloquial variety, the latter of which better known as Singlish (Low, 2010). It would be fair to say that the infamous debate about English and Singlish began then and has continued since. Through the 1980's and 1990's, Singlish and English were conflated, with the former being cast as an inferior, or corrupt, version of the latter (examples of the rhetoric of that time can be found in Chapter 1). This is despite the academic validation from scholars that Singlish is a contact variety with its own developed lexicon and grammar (see Ansaldo, 2009). Nonetheless, the notion that Singlish was a linguistic blight on Singaporeans has persisted through the decades, continuing even to in the present day.

However, it was the start of the 21st century that saw the launch of the SGEM, the zenith of a debate that had been thus far had largely been playing out in ministerial speeches and public opinion. The SGEM is 'an annual media blitz of ministerial speeches, television features, radio programs, newspaper editorials, book releases, website launches, street banners and billboards, and Speak Good English contests', aimed at combating Singlish and to improve the standard of English used by Singaporeans (Liew, 2011, p. 115). Singaporeans' proficiency in 'Standard English' was paramount to policy makers as the English language has been, and continues to be, regarded as the door to economic success. Then Deputy Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong made it clear at the 2001 SGEM launch that English was 'the common language of global business, commerce and technology' and that the fact that it is widely-spoken in Singapore was 'an important competitive advantage' (Lee, 2001). Based on

the increasing use of English in Singaporeans' public and private domains (discussed in Chapter 1), it looked like Singapore would maintain and even increase that advantage. Lee (2001), however, states that the increased use of English was only 'half the battle' and that it was of more importance that Singaporeans spoke 'good, standard English, which will be understood not only by Singaporeans, but by English speaking people all over the world'. The call for Singaporeans to speak internationally-understood English in the interests of intelligibility is one that has been repeated numerous times throughout Singapore's contemporary history.

At the launch of the 2003 SGEM, Minister Lee Boon Yang urged Singaporeans not just to speak English, but to speak 'good English', which meant 'speaking simply and clearly and in a way that can be understood not only by fellow Singaporeans, but by English speakers around the world' (Lee, 2003). This was echoed nearly a decade later when then Minister of Education Lawrence Wong emphasized in 2011 that it was important for all Singaporeans to develop 'a form of English that will be clearly and readily understood in all countries' (Wong, 2011). However, these goals seem at odds with Singaporeans' proficiency in English. In the 2014 EF English Proficiency Index (EF EPI), the world's largest ranking of English proficiency, Singapore ranked 13th out of 63 countries and was labelled as having 'High Proficiency' (EF Education First, 2014). The 2014 Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), regarded as the most recognized measurement of a non-native speaker's English proficiency, saw Singapore scoring a 98 out of a possible 100 (Educational Testing Service, 2015). Here, we can see a growing dissonance between the English proficiency of Singaporeans as described by the state and as displayed by the population. While the first few decades after independence may have seen the lack of proficiency detailed by the state, it is clearly not the case at the turn of the century. The two varieties of English in Singapore – SSE and Singlish – have since matured and are used by the citizenry in complementary

domains. Additionally, the population of Singaporean English speakers has similarly matured and drastically improved their proficiency in English. Yet the state's poor evaluation of Singaporeans' English and push to improve the standards of English in the country is a stance that has remained unchanged since the 1980's.

As is apparent, the discourse surrounding English in Singapore not only displays several of the characteristics associated with linguistic insecurity, it has explicitly stated that English as spoken by Singaporeans is inferior. More importantly, it is asserted that English in Singapore and its speakers are inferior to their counterpart in the Inner Circle countries, evidenced by the state's call to action for Singaporeans to improve their English so as to be understood by the British, Americans and Australians in particular (refer to Chapter 1). Furthermore, this belief in the superiority of Inner Circle Englishes also seems to be held by the population, judging from the vocal few who recommend that these varieties – BrE especially – are adopted as the ideal standard in the country (e.g. *The Straits Times*, 2011).

The Singaporean situation is unique in that the discourse of linguistic insecurity is present on the state level, as compared to previous work in which it manifests in the speaker population (e.g. Labov, 2006; Owens & Baker, 1984; Preston, 2013). The fact that this linguistic insecurity about English in Singapore seems to be one reinforced – and maybe even created – by the state raises many questions as to why it would want to cast Singaporeans as inferior to the English speakers in the Inner Circle countries. This presents an important area of investigation: the motivations and repercussions of a state-created narrative of linguistic insecurity and the potential ramifications on the nation's language planning and policy. Such a large subject matter can be broken down into smaller issues. The first is the nature of the narrative of linguistic insecurity in Singapore, while there have been several examples of the discourse provided thus far, further investigation is needed to uncover the key messages in the narrative. Secondly, it must also be analysed how the aforementioned messages are

institutionalized through the various platforms available to the state, such public discourse, language education policy and mass media. Lastly, it is important to understand how the narrative of linguistic insecurity and its institutionalization (if any) impacts the citizenry.

Another remarkable aspect of the Singaporean context and it is that the superior variety of English is not one found in the country, but instead is the English spoken by the British, Americans and/or Australians (see Chapter 1). This is unlike most of the studies discussed in this section, wherein linguistic insecurity was investigated in a community that was part of the nation associated with the language of study. For example, while Labov's research discussed the negative perception some American speakers had of their own variety of speech, there was no question that these speakers were nonetheless native English speakers. However, as mentioned, Singapore does not have the historical background that accords it the label of 'English-speaking country'. Rather, she remains largely seen as a 'country in which English is spoken'. The comparison of Singaporean English speakers to those who are conventionally seen as native English speakers creates an additional and significant dimension to this situation of linguistic insecurity.

2.1.2: 'Native Speakers' and Language Ownership. The second discourse related to linguistic insecurity in Singapore is the more complex of the two: the notion of 'native speakers', their implied superiority and the ownership of the English language that is accorded to them. The notion of 'native speakers' as those who truly speak the ideal standard of English is one that is prevalent in Singapore. Chapter 1 already saw a brief mention of how Singaporeans are casted as inferior to the 'native speakers' of English (i.e. Americans, British and Australians). In fact, as recent as 2006, there were considerations from the state to hire 'native speakers' of English as language educators in Singapore, harking back to the past when British language educators were common in Singapore (The Straits Times, 2006). Then

Minister of Education Tharman Shanmugaratnam proposed that ‘native speakers of the English language’ be hired as English language educators ‘to strengthen the teaching of the English language’ in Singapore (The Straits Times, 2006). Even from these brief example, it can be seen that ‘native speakers’ are taken to be the ‘authentic’ speakers of the English language and that it is to their standard that Singaporeans should strive. This immediately casts Singaporeans into the ‘inferior’ role of ‘non-native speakers’, a powerful tool in undermining Singaporean English speakers and naturalizing the linguistic insecurity in the nation.

However, are Singaporeans really ‘non-native speakers’ of English? There are several definitions of what makes a native speaker, most of them involving considerations of language exposure since birth and linguistic ability (e.g. Bloomfield, 1933; Davies, 2003). Low (2015) distills the various definitions and puts forth that a native speaker is defined by ‘birthright, competence and proficiency in the language and by having received education through the target language as the medium of instruction in school’ (p. 134). It has already been shown earlier in this section that Singaporeans have a high proficiency in the English language, thus fulfilling the conditions of proficiency and competency. Secondly, English has been the medium of instruction (henceforth MOI) in Singaporean classrooms since 1987 (Tan, 1997). Finally, the most recent population census show that 32.3 percent of Singaporeans aged 15 and above used English as their household language, a figure that would only continue to grow as the English language continues its expansion into the private domains (Singapore Department of Statistics, 2010). This statistic illustrates that with time, more and more Singaporeans will have the birthright of having been exposed to English since birth and acquiring the language as their first. Therefore, it seems that while not all Singaporean English speakers are ‘native speakers’, there are certainly those who are. Why

then, does the dichotomy between ‘native speaker’ and ‘non-native speaker’ in Singapore continue?

The whole NS-NNS dichotomy can be linked back to one of the most common classifications of World Englishes, one that precedes the Three Circles model: the distinction of ENL-ESL-EFL countries: English as a Native Language (ENL), English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL). McArthur (1998) follows the ENL-ESL-EFL model back to a proposal from Barbara Strang (1970), who categorized speakers as ‘A-speakers’, ‘B-speakers’ and ‘C-speakers’. A-speakers were those whose mother tongue was English (e.g. speakers in the United States of American, the United Kingdom and Australia), B-speakers were those belonged to communities that had accorded English a special status (e.g. post-colonial communities) and C-speakers were those who learned English as a foreign language (Strang, 1970).

Strang’s simple categorization was then adapted by Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech and Svartvik (1972) in their authoritative publication *A Grammar of Contemporary English*, who formalized the distinctions: ‘as a native language, as a second language and as a foreign language’ (p. 3). This tripartite model was considered useful and extensively adopted, particularly by English-language professionals (McArthur, 1998). It is clear that Singaporeans are not considered ‘native speakers’ of English, both within and outside of the nation. Some examples of the nation-internal discourse regarding the ‘non-native speaker’ (NNS) status of Singaporeans has already been presented. Outside of the nation, Singaporeans are also considered NNSs of English. For example, even in academia, some scholars continue to consider Singapore English a non-native variety of English (Crewe, 1977; Wong & Thomas, 1993; Bao, 2011; Davydava, 2011).

However, there are several issues with the ENL-ESL-EFL distinction, most of them relating to the simplistic nature of categorization that fail to capture certain social realities.

The model does not acknowledge the presence of speakers from one category being in a country of another category: e.g. the expatriate community in Hong Kong (ENL speakers in ESL country) or the Spanish community in the United States (ESL speakers in ENL country) (McArthur, 1998). The ENL-ESL-EFL model also fails to capture changing speaker profiles, as such the increasing number of speakers in ESL countries that are claiming English as their first language (Schneider, 2007). However, the most important shortfall of the ENL-ESL-EFL model is its reinforcement of the division between ‘native speakers’ and ‘foreign learners’ and the implicit conferment of superiority onto the former (McArthur, 1998). This leads into the concept of language ownership, which is the origin of the ‘superiority’ of ‘native speakers’. ‘Native speakers’ are naturally assumed to ‘own’ the English language through their birthright and thus it is only they who have the authority over the language and by extension, the ‘non-native speakers’ of English (Hackett, 2012).

The concept of linguistic ownership is particularly pivotal in the Singaporean context as it can be easily used by those in power to naturalize certain narratives. By placing authority and legitimacy in the hands of the Inner Circle ‘native speakers’, the state is able to undermine any linguistic innovation from the Singapore English community as ‘bad English’, as well as to block Singaporean English speakers from laying any claims on the English language. This is crucial as it then invalidates the notion of English as a mother tongue in Singapore as well, a potent effect of linguistic insecurity in the nation and one that the state is happy to reinforce. In Singapore, English is characterized as a ‘working language’ that is ‘an instrumental necessity’ and thus devoid of any cultural ties to any of the ethnic groups in Singapore (Alsagoff, 2012, p. 143). In contrast, the other three official languages of Singapore – Mandarin Chinese, Malay and Tamil – are assigned as ‘mother tongues’ to citizens, meant to serve as ‘cultural ballasts’ against the ‘fads and fetishes, the disorders and aberrations of contemporary Western society’ (Rappa & Wee, 2006, p. 81; Gopinathan, 1976,

p. 77). This creates an almost-dichotomous relationship between English and the other official languages: the former is meant to only serve as a tool of economic competitiveness and inter-ethnic communication, while the latter group are intended to be the vessel of cultural and linguistic identity for Singaporeans. However, English is expanding beyond its intended domains and encroaching upon the territories reserved for the other official languages: the role of a 'mother tongue'. Besides the growing number of people who use English as their household language, some scholars have observed a growing population of Singaporeans who are in a position to claim English as their 'mother tongue' (see Tan, 2014).

This is in direct opposition to the state's views on the role of the four official languages in Singapore. Unsurprisingly then, the state has been thus far silent on the issue of English as a mother tongue, refusing to acknowledge that there exists a local standard variety of English, despite the fact that the presence of 'Singapore English' has been observed by linguists (Alsagoff, 2012; Lim, 2004). Instead, it has steadfastly only mentioned its goal of 'internationally-accepted English', pointing in particular to Inner Circle countries like the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia as the vessels of Standard English. This exonormative orientation towards the 'native speakers' is a key building block in narrative of linguistic insecurity as it creates the notion that only speakers from those countries have the sufficient proficiency in English and right to claim English as a mother tongue. This then creates a potent tool the state can use to deal with the growing number of Singaporeans who claim the English language to be an important aspect of their linguistic identity.

Given the significance of linguistic ownership in this situation has been demonstrated, some time must be taken to define the concept, particularly in the context of this dissertation. Several scholars have spoken about the notion of linguistic ownership and what it means to have ownership, particularly in regards to World Englishes. There are common themes raised in these discussion, specifically those of 'authority' and 'legitimacy'.

Ownership as authority over a language was first broached by Henry G. Widdowson (1994) who focused his attention on the parties that are accorded and exercise authority over the English language. Widdowson (1994) presents an analogy between the English language and champagne to highlight a commonly-held notion: while there are many sparkling wines around the world, there is only one proper champagne, similarly, while there are many varieties of English, there is only one 'original' English language (p. 378). He points towards the English as the possible 'custodians' of the language, given that it was from their land and history that the English language emerged (Widdowson, 1994, p. 377). More importantly, this custodial role naturally gives the English an authority over the language (Widdowson, 1994). Widdowson (1994) ultimately states that he does not endorse the idea that any one nation or community has a claim to ownership over the English language given its international status. Instead, he views a speaker's ownership of the language in terms of the extent to which they have adapted and shaped the language for their own use. However, a pertinent point in Widdowson's work is the 'authority' accorded to a speaker or community that is seen to own the language.

Another key notion in linguistic ownership is that of legitimacy. This was first seen in Norton's (1997) work. Although Norton herself was focused more on the pedagogical issues of English as a Second Language (ESL), she does echo questions from other authors regarding who can own English. Several populations are proposed as possible owners: 'native speakers of English, to speakers of standard English, to White people, or to all of those who speak it, irrespective of their linguistic and sociocultural histories' (Norton, 1997, p. 422). Norton then adds to the discussion by raising the relationship between language, ownership and identity, stating that speakers who cannot claim ownership of the English language resultantly do not consider themselves legitimate speakers of the language (Norton, 1997).

The concept of legitimacy in claiming ownership to a language was then continued in Higgin's (2003) work on institutionalized varieties of English (IVEs), wherein she defines linguistic ownership as 'the degree to which they project themselves as legitimate speakers with authority over the language' (p. 315). Higgins talks briefly about indigenization (speakers appropriating the language for their own needs) as a form of ownership, mostly in relation to Widdowson, but her focus is on legitimacy. Here we can also see that the concept of authority, mentioned previously by Widdowson, also emerges again in relation to linguistic ownership. Additionally, Higgins (2003) states that claims to ownership are complicated for IVEs as the situation typically sees an Inner-Circle variety of English in conflict with a typically-stigmatized local variety of English. As such, a speaker's determination of their legitimacy hinges on whether they are exonormatively or endonormatively oriented (Higgins, 2003). She also highlights another complexity: claims to ownership can be hindered by economic, social and political factors (e.g. the Singaporean government does not legitimize speakers' claims to ownership of the English language) (Higgins, 2003).

In fact, there have been a number of studies on linguistic ownership of the English language in Singapore. Bokhorst-Heng, Rubdy, McKay and Alsagoff (2010) drew on Higgin's work and replicated her study in the Singaporean context, drawing on both concepts of authority and legitimacy and taking linguistic ownership to be the extent to which speakers consider themselves as legitimate speakers who possess authority over the language. Earlier in 2002, Wee also talked about linguistic ownership in Singapore's linguistic environment, specifically in relation to the Eurasian community's claim of the English language as their mother tongue and the state's refusal of the claim. Wee (2002) states that the notion of ownership is simply 'a metaphor for reflecting the legitimate control that speakers may have

over the development of a language’ and when speakers claim ownership of a language, they are asserting ‘a specific relationship’ between themselves and the language (p. 283).

It seems that the concept of ownership is either viewed as authority or legitimization. While the authors have raised excellent discussions about linguistic ownership and its various sociolinguistic implications for the parties (e.g. speaker, state, educators), the concept of ownership itself still lacks a concrete definition. To view ownership as indigenization does not address the power imbalance between the ‘native’ and ‘non-native’ varieties. While the local speakers may have appropriated the language for their own uses does not necessarily mean that their variety of English is recognized. Widdowson (1994) provides an illustrative example: the word *prepone* in Indian English, contrasting in meaning with *postpone* is not considered ‘a proper English word’ by virtue of its origin in a non-English country (p. 384). Therefore, this shows that indigenization alone does not confer ownership. Legitimacy as ownership is also lacking as ‘legitimacy’ is itself in need of definition. The notion presupposes the existence of an ‘authority’ or other social entities in similar positions of power that confers such a legitimacy, which then leads to the equally ill-defined concept of authority. It is difficult to determine what a ‘legitimate speaker with authority over the language’ is precisely and harder still to ascertain if the speakers consider themselves such because of the circular relationship between all the two key concepts of ‘legitimacy’ and ‘authority’.

Therefore, in order to study the role of linguistic ownership in Singapore’s narrative of linguistic insecurity, I refine and use the term ‘ownership’ in this dissertation in the following way: ownership is ‘the right to use and manage the language in accordance with the nature and purpose of the language’. To allow for better understanding of this definition, an illustrative example is presented:

A speaker 'Alex' has linguistic ownership of Singapore English. This means that he has two rights in relation to Singapore English: 1) he can use Singapore English in speech and writing (the right to use) and 2) he has command over his own use of Singapore English (the right to manage). To further elaborate on the right to manage: for example, if Alex wishes to use the term chooses to use the greeting 'G'day mate!' instead of 'Hello' or to start using 'unicorn' to mean 'white elephant', he has the right to do so.

However, these rights are constrained by 'the nature and purpose' of Singapore English, i.e. the linguistic conventions of the variety of language. To continue with the above examples: the Singapore speech community would not recognize Alex's use of 'G'day mate!' – a greeting found more commonly in Australian English – as it is not in accordance with the nature of Singapore English. Furthermore, if the Singapore speech community does not recognize and/or accept Alex's use of 'unicorn' to mean 'white elephant', he has not used Singapore English in accordance with the communicative purpose of language in general.

With this definition of ownership, it naturally follows that the next order of business would be to define the conditions of ownership. Ownership is attained through inheritance and acquisition:

If Alex grew up in a household that spoke Singapore English (as the only household language or as one of a few) and was exposed to the language since birth, Alex is said to have inherited the language. If Alex has spent time and/or money learning to have acquired the language. In both cases, Alex has attained ownership of Singapore English.

Therefore, it follows that all speakers of a language have ownership. However, the speakers also have the right to reject that ownership or choose not to exercise it:

Alex can reject his ownership and choose to be exclusively exonormatively oriented in his English language norms, choosing to follow the linguistic conventions of British English instead of Singapore English. Alex can also decide to not exercise his ownership of Singapore English by deferring to an external language authority (e.g. grammar rulebooks, dictionaries) in his use of language.

Thus, the issue at hand is not how the narrative of linguistic insecurity in Singapore denies the people linguistic ownership of English, but rather how it stops them from exercising their ownership.

In conclusion, there are several additional aspects to the Singapore situation of linguistic insecurity that has not been seen thus far, such as the state's active involvement in fostering or maybe even creating a sociolinguistic phenomenon that usually originates from the speakers themselves. More importantly, another point of departure of Singapore's situation from what is typically observed in other cases of linguistic insecurity is that the state is propagating the ideology of linguistic insecurity, imposing it onto a people that have no reason to be insecure about their language proficiency. The history of English in Singapore – its development, role and nature – have implications that further impact the political and public discourse. In particular, the concepts of 'native speaker' and 'linguistic ownership' in the Singaporean context have an extremely significant impact on the manifestation of linguistic insecurity. For all intents and purposes, a significant portion of Singaporean English speakers fit the bill of a 'native speaker' and all English speakers have ownership of the language. However, the state has been unwavering in their repudiation of allowing Singaporean English speakers to claim such labels. Instead, the constant invalidation of Singaporean English speakers has proven to be a potent tool in constructing the supposed

inferiority of Singaporeans' English. It seems that the two concepts have two possible roles in the narrative of linguistic ownership in Singapore: 1) to emphasize and/or justify the supposed inferiority of Singaporean English speakers' use of the language and 2) as an additional behavioural characteristic of linguistic insecurity.

To investigate this narrative of linguistic insecurity in Singapore, this dissertation will be in three parts, investigating the various aspects of this issue. The first part will focus on the 'producers' of the narrative: language policies and policy makers. The chapter will discuss statal discourse relating to the role and nature of English in Singapore, as well as review the English Language education policies, in order to examine how the state propagates the ideology of linguistic insecurity through a particular narrative. This is followed by a section analysing the 'channels' through which this narrative is disseminated: the SGEM and print media. Messages regarding the English language – i.e. its role and nature, language standards, its speakers, etc. – will be examined. This chapter examines how the narrative and its underlying linguistic ideology is further reinforced and circulated by the SGEM and mass media in Singapore. Finally, the effects of this narrative on the 'target audience' consisting of the citizenry are investigated by analysing the results of a questionnaire – i.e. the chapter aims to measure the extent to which Singaporeans are suffering from linguistic insecurity. The research methods employed for each chapter will be explicated in the respective chapter.

3. PRODUCERS

This chapter examines the ‘production’ of the narrative of linguistic insecurity in Singapore and how the state propagates and reinforces the ideology of linguistic insecurity in the nation. The main method of analysis is textual analysis, as a means to uncover the underlying beliefs and motivations in the state’s language policies and discourse. Following which, the chapter details the state’s stance towards the English language in the nation and the steps it has taken to institutionalize this stance through English language policies. The materials examined in this section, broadly speaking, are ministerial speeches and language policies. Resultantly, the findings are presented in two sub-sections: Chapter 3.2 lays out the statal discourse that has shaped the role and nature of the English language over the years since Singapore’s independence and Chapter 3.3 looks at how the state’s linguistic ideology has been institutionalized into the English Language (henceforth EL when referring to the curriculum subject) education policy throughout the nation’s history.

3.1 Methods

Chapter 3 deals with the ‘producers’ of the narrative of linguistic insecurity in Singapore: the state. As such, the materials that are examined in the section are:

1. Ministers’ speeches pertaining to the English language in Singapore
2. EL education policies and related materials
  - a) EL curricula implemented from 1965 to 2015
  - b) Additional reports from international seminars with Singapore statal participation – i.e. the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education

Organization (SEAMEO) Regional Language Centre (RELC) international seminars

- c) Interviews with key personnel involved in the development of EL education policies

3.1.1 Ministerial Speeches. The first category contains speeches, commenting on the English language in Singapore, that were delivered by Singapore Ministers from 1965 to 2015. Speeches were selected for analysis on the basis of having made a statement about the role and/or nature of the English language in Singapore (e.g. a National Day Rally from the Prime Minister that touched on how English in Singapore is a working language). A total of 58 transcripts of the speeches were gathered from the National Archives of Singapore Online and the full list of speeches can be found in Chapter 1 of the bibliography. It is noted here that there are markedly fewer speeches mentioning the English language in Singapore delivered in the years 2000 to 2015. This is attributed to the fact that the SGEM was launched in 2000. As a result, most of the speeches concerning English in Singapore were delivered in relation to SGEM and thus are dealt with in Chapter 4 instead. The speeches were then analyzed for their discursive treatment of the English language and English speakers in Singapore, the findings of which are found in Chapter 3.2.

3.1.2: English Language Education Policy. The second category contains materials related to the EL education policies in Singapore. A significant amount of analytical attention is given to education policies as education is the main institution through which language norms are created and reinforced (Baldaquí Escandell, 2011). This gives language education the crucial ability to create and reinforce the language norms held by Singaporeans, therefore it is difficult to overstate the centrality of language education in this situation. Furthermore,

sociolinguist Michel Francard (1993) stresses the role of education institutions as creators of linguistic insecurity: ‘it would not be arbitrary to attribute to school institutions an essential role in the appearance of attitudes of linguistic insecurity’ (p. 40). Within this category of materials are three sub-categories.

The first is EL syllabi that have been implemented by the MOE from 1965 to 2015. Table 1 below contains the full list of EL syllabi and the respective year of implementation (full details of the various policy documents can be found in Chapter 2 of the bibliography):

Table 1.
English Language Syllabi and year of implementation

ENGLISH LANGUAGE SYLLABI IN SINGAPORE	
Syllabi	Year of Implementation
Syllabus for English: Primary 1 and 2	1971
Syllabus for English: Primary 3 and 4	
Syllabus for English: Primary 5 and 6	
English Syllabus for the New Education System: Primary 1 (Common Course)	1981
English Syllabus for the New Education System: Primary 4, EL1 (Extended Course)	
English Syllabus for the New Education System: Primary 4, EL2 (Extended Course)	
English Syllabus for the New Education System: Primary 4 (Monolingual Course)	
English Syllabus for the New Education System: Primary 1 to 6 (Normal)	
English Syllabus for the New Education System: Primary 4 to 8 (Extended)	
English Syllabus for the New Education System: Primary 4 to 8 (English Monolingual Course)	
New Education System Secondary: English Language (Secondary 1 – 4 Special/ Express course)	1982
New Education System Secondary: English Language (Secondary 1 – 4 Normal course)	1983
English Language Syllabus (Primary)	1991
English Language Syllabus (Secondary)	
English Language Syllabus 2001: Primary & Secondary	2001

English Language Syllabus 2001: Primary & Secondary (EM3 & Normal Technical)	
English Language Syllabus 2010: Primary & Secondary (Express/Normal [Academic])	2010
English Language Syllabus 2010: Primary (Foundation) & Secondary (Normal [Technical])	

The syllabi were then analyzed for the objectives and aims that specifically related to the English language standards, variety of English taught and used in the education system and English language proficiency of Singaporean students. Research focus is placed on the primary and secondary levels of education as the pedagogical structure and goals of these two levels are the most homogeneous. Resultantly, most Singaporean citizens will undergo largely similar EL education during these ten to eleven years (primary-level education is typically takes six years while secondary-level four to five) (MOE Communications and Engagement Group, 2015).

To supplement the analysis of language syllabi, documents from international language conferences were also included. Specifically, selected papers and reports from the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (henceforth SEAMEO) Regional Language Centre (henceforth RELC) international seminars held from 1965 to 2015 were also analyzed. These documents were included due to Singapore's status as a SEAMEO member and her participation in these seminars. Data was limited only to papers submitted by and seminar reports involving personnel from the MOE and the documents also had to explicitly address the EL policy in Singapore. These RELC documents were collected from two main sources: the RELC Seminar Anthology Series and RELC seminar reports. In total, there were eight documents retrieved from available sources. The full list of RELC documents can be found in Chapter 3 of the bibliography

3.1.3: Interviews. Lastly, the third category comprises of formal interviews with key MOE personnel involved in curriculum development and EL teachers. These interviews were meant to complement the textual analysis of policy documents by providing a direct account of EL education planning and policy from those who craft and implement it. As such, the interviews were only conducted after the textual analysis of the ministerial speeches was completed. Additionally, while the interviews are classified as a separate category of data, it would be more accurate to consider the data as supplementary to the ministerial speeches. Thus, the interview data will not be analysed independently, but instead will be used to further support the textual analysis of ministerial speeches.

The interviews were crafted in a semi-structured manner, meaning that there was an interview guide that contained key topics but still allowed a freedom for various responses. A semi-structured interview suited the fact that, due to the interviewees' hectic schedules, only one main interview session per interviewee was obtained (barring any follow-up clarifications) (Bernard, 2006). As there were two categories of interviewees, there are two sets of interview topics and questions. However, all the questions fell into three broad categories: 1) EL education policy, 2) English language standards in Singapore and 3) English speakers/students in Singapore. The full list of interview questions can be found in Appendix A.

The interviews were conducted in two ways: face-to-face and over email. The variance in interview type is due to the difference in the availability of each interviewee. However, the protocols for each interview remained unchanged. Prior to the interview, the interviewees were informed of the following: the purpose of the interview, the estimated duration of interview, that the interview was being recorded and their right to terminate interview at any moment. Official consent was also obtained from the interviewee before beginning the interview. The interviewer also addressed any concerns relating to

confidentiality during the interview. After the interview, the interviewee was informed that they could contact the interviewer for clarification and/or elaboration. In the case where the interviews were conducted face to face, a Zoom H4n Handy Recorder was used.

In total, there were five interviewees, Table 2 provides the details of the interviews and interviewees.

Table 2
Interviewees' Details

Interviewee's Demographic Information			
Code Name	Designation	Date/Time	Interview Format
Zoe	Policy Maker	14 th April 2016	Face-to-face
Anna	Educator	14 th April 2016	Email
Brooke	Educator	3 rd May, 2016	Email
Charlie	Educator	4 th May, 2016	Email
Diane	Educator	3 rd May, 2016	Email
Elle	Educator	30 th May, 2016	Email

There are two groups of interviewees: policy maker and educator. For the former, potential interviewees were identified through the Singapore Government Directory and several interview requests were sent to various personnel in the EL Curriculum Planning and Development Division, in order to gain a better understanding of the goals and objectives of the EL syllabi from those who craft, implement and review it. Of the prospective interviewees approached, Zoe was the only one who agreed to an interview. The other five interviewees are EL educators who are teaching in various Singapore schools. The five interviewees were identified through their respective schools – i.e. schools with differing student profiles were shortlisted in order to obtain responses from educators whose students run a gamut of linguistic background and abilities. This was done to avoid the potential pitfall of gathering skewed data due to only interviewing educators whose students' English proficiency was at either extreme end of the spectrum.

The analysis will be presented in Chapter 3.3.

3.2 Statal Discourse

Excerpts from the 58 ministerial speeches that commented on the English language and English speakers in Singapore were collected. These speeches were selected on the basis that it contained statements regarding the English language in Singapore and was delivered by individuals in the Singapore Parliament in a public setting (e.g. the Prime Minister, Minister for Education, Parliamentary Secretary). The aim of this discourse analysis is to understand the exact content of the narrative of linguistic insecurity – i.e. what is the state explicitly saying about English in Singapore. Additionally, such analysis will uncover the ideology that serves as the foundation for the narrative of linguistic insecurity. From these excerpts emerged several common discourse topics which were then sorted into larger themes. The tables below contain the excerpts, each tagged with the respective speaker and date and the excerpts are also chronologically presented to demonstrate the change – if any – in the discourse treatment of English in Singapore. The analysis revealed that there were three main themes in the statal discourse surrounding the English language in Singapore: 1) English as an instrument to progress, 2) English language standards and 3) linguistic ownership of English.

3.2.1 Theme 1 – English as an instrument to progress. The first theme is that of English as the means to progress, both for Singapore as a nation and for Singaporeans as individuals. Table 3 contains excerpts of speeches that characterize the English language as a crucial tool Singapore needs in order to enter the various international playing fields of finance, trade and technology. This sub-theme is the most dominant in the dataset, with 39 speech excerpts defining the role of English in Singapore in this manner.

Table 3.
Statal Discourse - Theme 1.1

Theme 1.1: English as Singapore's working language in local and global arenas of economic, technological and scientific advancements		
Date	Name / Designation	Comments
09/06/1969	Ong Pang Boon Minister of Education	It is the language <u>of administration, of commerce, of science and technology, and of international communication.</u>
05/07/1972	Lim Kim San Minister of Education	Our citizens...are aware that <u>Singapore's survival depends on trade and industry, on its becoming a centre of communications, of banking and finance.</u> They realize that, in all these economic activities, <u>English has a vital role to play.</u>
29/05/1974	Lee Kuan Yew Prime Minister	For <u>economic reasons, the English language is vital.</u>
23/07/1974	Lee Chiaw Meng Minister of Education	...it remains a fact that English is today acknowledged to be <u>the international language of science and technology, commerce and communications.</u>
18/04/1977	Lee Khoo Choy Senior Minister of State for Foreign Affairs	But for the purpose of efficient administration and the economic well-being of our people, we continue to use English - <u>the language of Science and Technology as the main language of administration and legal proceedings.</u>
31/05/1978	Lee Kuan Yew Prime Minister	Malays are fortunate that <u>English is our common working language.</u> Our special circumstances lead us rationally to accept the fact that <u>English is the working language of our society.</u>
01/09/1979	Ow Chin Hock Parliamentary Secretary (Culture)	...we cannot do without English for <u>it gives us an edge over non-English speaking countries in attracting investments.</u> Needless to say, <u>English serves a principal means of acquiring modern technology...</u>
17/09/1979	Ong Teng Cheong Minister of Communications	We want Singaporeans to be proficient in English because <u>it is the language of government and commerce as well as of science and technology.</u>
27/03/1980	Lee Kuan Yew Prime Minister	The English language has given us a head-start in our industrialization; it is <u>the foundation of our service sector, like banking, and in an international business like SIA...</u>

15/08/1980	Howe Yoon Chong Minister of Defense	...we need English <u>to communicate with people in the outside world, to promote trade and industry, to keep abreast of developments in science and technology.</u>
20/04/1981	Tay Eng Soon Minister of Education	The English Language today is widely accepted <u>as the language for international commerce, science and technology.</u>
19/08/1981	Tay Eng Soon Minister of Education	The role of English as <u>the major international language for commerce, science and technology</u> is widely recognised.
16/11/1983	Phua Bah Lee Senior Parliamentary Secretary (Defence)	It is quite necessary to acquire a basic literacy in English as it plays a vital role in our society. It is <u>an international language, a language used for trade and communication, a language of science and technology</u> and much more.
24/11/1983	Ahmad Mattar Acting Minister for Social Affairs	While English is <u>an international language and is an essential tool in international trade, finance and high-technology manufacturing...</u> English should serve as <u>a tool for us to plug our economy to the international grid...</u>
14/04/1984	Ho Kah Leong Parliamentary Secretary (Education)	We have adopted English as <u>the language of administration</u> and have recognised it as <u>the key to science and technology and international trade</u> . In our schools, English is learnt as <u>the first language</u> and is the medium of instruction for most of the content subjects.
05/07/1986	Tay Eng Soon Minister of State (Education)	English gives us <u>a link with many countries with whom we do business and a foothold on modern technology.</u>
13/04/1987	Tay Eng Soon Minister of State (Education)	English has not only served us well in giving us <u>access to international trade and technology...</u>
27/08/1987	Wong Kan Seng Minister for Community Development	English is important economically from the point of view of one's occupation and <u>for international trade, and for learning modern science and technology.</u>
18/03/1988	Yeo Ning Hong Minister For Communications and Information	We need the English language to survive in a world where English is <u>the common medium in communication, business and trade, in international diplomacy, science and technology.</u>
06/07/1988	Lee Hsien Loong Minister for Trade and Industry	Although <u>the working language in Singapore is English...</u> It [English] has also <u>enabled us to absorb information and technology from the West...</u>
30/08/1988	Yeo Cheow Tong	Through his [a Singaporean's] knowledge of English and familiarity with the culture of the

	Acting Minister for Health	English speaking world, <u>he gains access to the world of international trade and finance.</u>
29/08/1989	Seet Ai Mee Minister of State for Development and Education	It is undeniably <u>the language of international trade and finance, technology and modernization.</u> ...our proficiency in English may be viewed as <u>the external veneer which helps us function in the international arena.</u>
02/11/1990	Lee Kuan Yew Prime Minister	This policy has given Singaporeans <u>a common working language, English.</u>
02/03/1990	George Yeo Minister of State (Finance) and (Foreign Affairs)	Although the English language is now <u>the international language of trade...</u>
26/07/1991	Goh Chok Tong Prime Minister	English will be the common language of Singaporeans and <u>the principle language of commerce and official communication.</u>
27/08/1991	Goh Chok Tong Prime Minister	Knowing English has enabled us to communicate with each other as Singaporeans and with the world. We have successfully <u>plugged ourselves in the present global economic grid.</u>
02/11/1991	Ong Teng Cheong Deputy Prime Minister	<u>To keep abreast of scientific advances and technological developments in the world, to compete effectively in international business and commerce, we had to be proficient in English.</u>
01/02/1992	Ong Teng Cheong Deputy Prime Minister	When Singapore achieved independence in 1965, the Government adopted English as the working language of business and administration. This choice was not based on linguistic or ethnic grounds, but <u>for practical and economic reasons.</u> English is <u>the language of international business and commerce</u> in many parts of the developed world. It is also <u>the most effective medium through which we can keep abreast of scientific advances and technological developments in the world.</u>
24/08/1997 National Day Rally: English Speech	Goh Chok Tong Prime Minister	While English must be <u>our common working language</u> and every Singaporean needs to know English...
24/08/1997 National Day Rally Chinese Speech	Goh Chok Tong Prime Minister	To thrive as a city-state, we have to be open and outward looking, plugged into the world economy. <u>This is the way to attract talent, skills and technology. Singapore will be a regional centre for many economic activities.</u> ... To achieve this, every Singaporean needs a working knowledge of English.

22/08/1999	Goh Chok Tong Prime Minister	We learn English in order <u>to communicate with the world.</u>
15/01/2000	Lee Hsien Loong Deputy Prime Minister	Our common working language is English – <u>the language of global business, commerce and technology.</u>
14/08/2004	Chan Soo Sen Minister of State for Education	English has been <u>the main language of business in Singapore.</u> Indeed it remains <u>the lingua franca for exchanging ideas in commerce, trade and research and development.</u>
19/10/2004	Lee Hsien Loong Prime Minister	We use English as our working language <u>so that we can continue to compete for global opportunities, and soar high to catch the wind like a kite.</u>
16/12/2004	Goh Chok Tong Senior Minister	English is <u>our common and working language.</u> It is also <u>the language of commerce and international interaction.</u>
05/08/2005	Chan Soo Sen Minister of State for Education	...having a good grasp of English is even more crucial because <u>it is our working language and main language of instruction in schools.</u> English is used globally and remains <u>the lingua franca for exchanging ideas in business, science and technology.</u>
31/08/2007	Lui Teck Yew Minister for Education	...in today's global landscape where <u>English remains the lingua franca for exchanging ideas in business, science and technology.</u>
22/10/2009	S Iswaran Senior Minister of State (Education, Trade and Industry)	English is <u>the "Lingua Franca" of global commerce, science and technology.</u> In Singapore, we have come a long way since <u>we adopted English as the language of business and commerce, as well as for instruction in our schools.</u>
27/07/2012	Heng Swee Keat Minister for Education	Learning English allows us to access the perspectives and heritage of the English-speaking world, and <u>connects us with the world of science, technology and global commerce.</u>

As can be seen from Table 3, there is a sense of pragmatism surrounding English's status as a gateway to national progress. Many ministers mention that it was inevitable that English had emerged to be the international language of trade and it naturally followed that the nation had to adopt the language in order to advance. In the decade following Singapore's independence, the adoption of English was branded as imperative if the nation wanted to pull

through the turbulent years: ‘English [had] a vital role to play’ in ‘Singapore’s survival’, the nation could not ‘do without English for it gives us an edge over non-English speaking countries in attracting investments’ and that Singapore ‘need[ed] the English language to survive in a world where English is the common medium in communication, business and trade, in international diplomacy, science and technology’ (Lim, 1972; Ow, 1979; Howe, 1980). To date, this rhetoric has remained largely unchanged although the elements of ‘survival’ have been removed from the discourse as Singapore developed into a first-world country. Recent speeches since the 1990’s take a practical stance in stating that English is the nation’s ‘common working language’ as ‘it remains the lingua franca for exchanging ideas in business, science and technology’ and ‘connects us with the world of science, technology and global commerce’ (Chan, 2005; Lui, 2007; Heng, 2012).

More importantly, however, is the notion of ‘other-ness’ that English is appended with in statal discourse. As the international language of trade and commerce, English was a foreign tool that Singapore had to utilize for advancement. It was precisely the need to attract foreign corporations so as to stimulate economic growth in a young Singapore that motivated the state’s push for nation-wide proficiency in English (Abshire, 2011; Wee, 2010). The state’s othering of English remains subtle but steadfast through the years: in the 1980’s, it was a means of communication with those ‘in the outside world’ and even now, the language is still the passport that allows Singaporeans to access the ‘English-speaking world’ (Howe, 1980; Heng, 2012).

Such discourse portrays the English language as yet another instrument that allowed the nation to succeed after independence, which then had two effects. The first is that in positioning English as the international language of trade and technology, there arose a need for the population to gain proficiency – ‘a working knowledge – in English in order to contribute to the growth of the nation (Goh, 1997). Such discourse created an ideal – and

more importantly, foreign – English that Singaporeans had to achieve satisfactory proficiency in. The second is that such an instrumentalist characterization of English successfully purges the nation’s adoption of English as the main working language of any socio-linguistic significance, thus distancing the language from Singapore’s national heritage and culture. This in turn has impact on the notion of Singaporeans claiming English to be a ‘mother tongue’, which will be further explored below.

Related to the idea that English is a tool for Singapore’s national success is the image of English as a skill Singaporeans must master for their individual success.

Table 4
Statal Discourse - Theme 1.2

Theme 1.2: English as a means to Singaporeans’ personal progress		
Date	Name / Designation	Comments
29/05/1974	Lee Kuan Yew Prime Minister	We want to give our children the best combination of languages for their future...and <u>English for access to new knowledge, and for jobs.</u>
31/05/1978	Lee Kuan Yew Prime Minister	What you must make sure is that <u>your children master English for a good education and later a good job.</u>
20/08/1983	Shunmugam Jayakumar Minister of State (Law and Home Affairs)	...we will have succeeding batches of students...who will continue to <u>do poorly in EL1 and related subjects taught in English. What will happen to them? What kind of careers will they have? How will they contribute to the development of our nation?</u>
24/11/1983	Ahmad Mattar Acting Minister for Social Affairs	They have placed greater emphasis on the learning of English <u>so that their children can be assured of a bright future.</u>
06/07/1984	Lee Yock Suan Minister of State for Finance	Unless you master your English it will be difficult for you to do well in other subjects. <u>This will also affect your studies and work in future.</u>
05/07/1986	Tay Eng Soon Minister of State (Education)	...we have sought to raise the level of mastery of English by our pupils to enable them <u>to go on to higher education or to work in the new industries and services.</u>
30/08/1988	Yeo Cheow Tong	...English is the medium of instruction. Through facility in this language, <u>pupils are able to make full use of the educational opportunities</u> offered to

	Acting Minister for Health	them to tap the vast storehouse of knowledge contained in books.
02/11/1990	Lee Kuan Yew Prime Minister	In the end they all sent their children to English language schools <u>so that they make living when they grew up</u> . Parents have chosen English language schools <u>for their children's future prospects</u> .
22/08/1999	Goh Chok Tong Prime Minister	But <u>to become an engineer, a technician, an accountant or a nurse, you must have standard English</u> , not Singlish.

Although this sub-theme appears in statal discourse less frequently (nine speech excerpts), it is more intense in its association of English with progress. English is portrayed as an indispensable resource or tool to Singaporeans' educational and employment opportunities. Parents were urged to secure an English education so that their children could 'master English for a good education and later a good job' and 'be assured of a bright future' (Lee, 1978; Mattar, 1983). For those who did poorly in the language, there were concerns not just about their future prospects but their ability to 'contribute to the development of [the] nation' was questioned (Jayakumar. 1983). Even on a personal level, there echoes the notion that English is tied to Singapore's national progress. The act of establishing proficiency in English as the determining factor of an individual's achievements in the academic and career spheres opened Singaporeans' English language standards to scrutiny and subsequent regulation. Additionally, the characterization of 'English' as a skill Singaporeans must master to succeed resulted in the constructed image of an absolute and singular 'English', a notion that is in direct and startling contradiction with the actual linguistic situation on the ground. Quite clearly, this discourse sub-theme is extremely similar to the one above. In fact, it would not be inaccurate to describe the two as manifestations of the same rhetoric applied on two levels of society.

The discourse theme of English as an instrument of progress in Singapore is the largest in the dataset with a total of 48 speech excerpts from 58 speeches. The adoption of

English in Singapore for national and individual development seems at first pragmatic but unremarkable. However, this theme is the ideological foundation on which the other discourses about English that foster linguistic insecurity can rest on. Firstly, the instrumentalist characterization of English as a tool of progress means that it can be ‘evaluated, altered, corrected, regulated and improved’ like any other instrument (Tauli, 1968, p. 9). Consequently, this paves the way for the state to do precisely that with Singaporeans’ command of English and thus begins the negative evaluation of English language standards in Singapore and the naturalization of the state’s policing of Singaporeans’ use of English. This is demonstrated in the second theme of statal discourse discussed below. Secondly, the ‘other’-ing of English in Singapore hinders the notion that the English language has indigenized in the country. By repeatedly branding English as something inherently foreign to Singapore, the state can very effectively prevent any claims of linguistic ownership from within the nation. Statal discourse surrounding the indigenization of English and linguistic ownership in Singapore is explored in the third theme.

3.2.2 Theme 2 – English Language Standards. The next prevalent theme in statal discourse is English language standards in Singapore. Much like Theme 1, there are several smaller sub-themes that are nestled under the umbrella of Theme 2. Themes 2.1 and 2.2 examine discourse that touch on the standard of English in Singapore while Themes 2.3 and 2.4 look at what the state considers ‘good’ and ‘bad’ English in the country.

Table 5
Statal Discourse - Theme 2.1

Theme 2.1: Poor English Language standards in Singapore		
Date	Name / Designation	Comments

23/07/1974	Lee Chiaw Meng Minister of Education	...signs that <u>the standard of English in Singapore schools today has fallen</u> somewhat compared to that of the pre-Second World War period. We will <u>make a determined effort to improve the standards of English teaching</u> so that we may continue to use the language to our advantage.
07/05/1977	Chai Chong Yii Senior Minister of State for Education	<u>The low standard of English language should not remain a handicap to them</u> either for higher study, seeking employment or just to mix socially or self-improvement.
17/08/1977	Chai Chong Yii Senior Minister of State for Education	Recent comments on <u>the poor standard of English among pupils in the English stream</u> are an indication of the problems that you face in carrying out your responsibilities.
26/02/1983	Tay Eng Soon Minister of State for Education	...there is a need to help our teachers upgrade their <u>English proficiency</u> both for teaching the language itself and for teaching the other subjects most of which are taught in English. <u>English has been the weakest subject in our schools</u> , as judged by the fact that only 40 per cent of our pupils pass in English at 'O' level, the measures which I have described are urgent and important.
08/12/1986	Tay Eng Soon Minister of State (Education)	...the use of English as a working language has meant that <u>we must continually seek to improve the proficiency of our people in the English Language...</u>
22/08/1999	Goh Chok Tong Prime Minister	I know that <u>many of us do not speak English perfectly.</u>
26/05/2000	Lee Yock Suan Minister for Information and the Arts	In spite of this intensive concentration on English, <u>there is room for improvement in Singaporeans' general level of competence in the language.</u>
18/08/2001	Teo Chee Hean Minister for Education	...organisations...can organise activities and programmes <u>to help raise the standard of spoken English among Singaporeans of all ages.</u>
14/08/2004	Chan Soo Sen Minister of State for Education	There is still <u>much room for improvement</u> in Singaporeans' English.
22/10/2009	S Iswaran Senior Minister of State (Education, Trade and Industry)	It is, therefore, incumbent upon us, as individuals and as a society, to undertake <u>a deliberate and sustained effort to continually strive to improve the standard of English in Singapore.</u>

Table 6
Statal Discourse - Theme 2.2

Theme 2.2: Singaporeans as proficient speakers of English		
Date	Name / Designation	Comments
14/08/2004	Chan Soo Sen Minister of State for Education	The fact that <u>Singaporean workers are proficient in English</u> has been our competitive advantage.

Direct ministerial comments on the standard of English in Singapore are surprisingly low in number. There are only 11 excerpts gathered in Tables 5 and 6, with 10 excerpts and 1 excerpt relating to the state's negative and positive evaluation of the standard of English in Singapore respectively.

In the 1970's, the state unambiguously declares that Singaporeans' command of the language was weak, impacting personal and national progress. The 'low standard of English' in Singapore had to be remedied so that it would not remain a 'handicap' that hinders Singaporeans from pursuing higher study or jobs and Singapore from '[using] the language to [her] advantage' (Lee, 1974; Chai, 1977). Here, echoes of Theme 1 can be seen, albeit the focus has shifted: Singaporeans must attain the desired proficiency in English for the benefit of themselves and the country. In 1970's Singapore, the state's negative evaluation of the English language standards in Singapore were well-founded. Only 46.6 percent of the population in 1972 aged 15 and above could either speak or understand English, a figure that only increased by 15 percentage points to 61.7 percent by 1978 (Kuo, 1976; Kuo, 1980).

Over the next two decades, Singaporeans steadily improved in their proficiency of English: for example, the percentage of Singaporeans literate in English grew from 56 percent to 65.5 percent from 1980 to 1990 (Singapore Department of Statistics, 1993). The discourse surrounding English language standards in Singapore reflected the improvement. The state stopped characterizing Singaporeans' proficiency in English as 'poor' and begin to

urge for a continual improvement of language standards instead. Although the standard of English in Singapore was no longer low, Singaporeans still did not ‘speak English perfectly’ and that the citizenry should ‘continually seek to improve [their] proficiency’ of the language as there was ‘much room for improvement’ (Goh, 1999; Tay, 1986; Lee, 2000). Even as recent as 2009, then Minister of Education S. Iswaran reminded Singaporeans of their responsibility to make ‘a deliberate and sustained effort to continually strive to improve the standard of English in Singapore’ (Iswaran, 2009). Yet, as mentioned in Chapter 1, the proficiency of English in Singapore as a whole today has been shown to be considerably high. In the 2014 Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) test data summary, Singapore scored 98 points out of a possible 100 across the four categories of listening, speaking, reading and writing (Educational Testing Service, 2015). In another international measure of English language proficiency, the Education First English Proficiency Index (EF-EPI), Singapore was labelled as having ‘High Proficiency’ in English, ranking first out of 16 countries in Asia (Education First, n.d.). Beyond Singapore’s consistently high performance in English-proficiency tests, scholars also have commented on the nation’s remarkable standard of English. As early as 1991, Pakir commented that Singaporeans’ formal use of SSE was ‘almost no different from the variety used by knowledgeable speakers of English elsewhere’ (p. 174). Others have remarked on Singapore’s ‘strong reputation’ in the Southeast Asian region for the speakers’ high proficiency in English (Bolton, 2010, p. vii).

Thus, although the state has seemingly softened its negative evaluation of Singaporeans’ command of English, it has merely delivered the same message differently, that Singaporeans still have not attained a ‘good’ standard of English. This is in spite of the numerous measures evidencing a high proficiency of English in the nation. Then, this brings us to the question of just what is the standard of English that the state identifies as ‘good’?

Table 7
Statal Discourse - Theme 2.3

Theme 2.3: Ideal English Language standard in Singapore		
Date	Name / Designation	Comments
17/08/1977	Chai Chong Yii Senior Minister of State for Education	Whichever way English in Singapore evolves, we have to ensure that <u>the English spoken by our pupils is internationally intelligible</u> .
27/03/1980	Lee Kuan Yew Prime Minister	It is foolish to teach our children a Singaporean variety of English when, with some effort and extra cost, we can teach them <u>standard grammatical English</u> . The simple question is: Do we want the next generation to speak slovenly, mangled English, <u>or English that can be understood by English speakers the world over?</u> <u>Singapore is not ever going to set the standards in any of our four official languages.</u> There are centres of population bigger than ours which decide how these four languages are spoken, written and developed.
20/04/1981	Tay Eng Soon Minister of State for Education	...the English we speak and write <u>should be at least readily understood internationally</u> . To provide our schools with an external standard for comparison and to ensure that <u>our English does not depart too much from that spoken by English speakers</u> , we have recruited expatriate native English teachers...
27/08/1987	Wong Kan Seng Minister for Community Development	Our aim should be to attain <u>standard English that is internationally intelligible</u> .
22/08/1999	Goh Chok Tong Prime Minister	Our schools must teach <u>standard English</u> , and our children must learn and speak <u>standard English</u> . But we should speak a form of English <u>that is understood by the British, Americans, Australians, and people around the world</u> .
26/05/2000	Lee Yock Suan Minister for Information and the Arts	It is clearly very important for Singaporeans to have a high standard of general competence in English <u>of a standard form which foreigners can readily comprehend</u> . To communicate effectively, Singaporeans need to master <u>a form of English which can be readily understood by the international community</u> .

18/08/2001	Teo Chee Hean Minister for Education	Singaporeans should learn and know how to speak <u>a standard variety of English that is intelligible to all users of the English language.</u>
05/08/2005	Chan Soo Sen Minister of State for Education	We, as Singaporeans, should thus learn and know how to <u>speak a standard variety of good English that is comprehensible to all users of the language.</u>
31/08/2007	Lui Teck Yew Minister for Education	<u>Good English is about speaking clearly to be understood.</u> It is effective communication crystallized into unambiguous, simple and grammatical sentences.

Table 8
Statal Discourse - Theme 2.4

Theme 2.4: Local English as 'bad English' in Singapore		
Date	Name / Designation	Comments
17/08/1977	Chai Chong Yii Senior Minister of State for Education	You, as English teachers, have a direct role to play in <u>preventing the perpetuation of unacceptable and sub-standard local forms and usages in English.</u>
22/08/1999	Goh Chok Tong Prime Minister	Nicholas Lee cited one local production, "Forever Fever", which could not be released in the US market <u>because American audiences would not understand the Singapore English.</u> So now they are considering <u>removing the Singlish</u> , and dubbing "Forever Fever" in English that Americans can understand. Singapore is not unique in having <u>a local flavour to the English it uses.</u> Local types of English often sprout up in places where non-English speakers come into contact with English speakers... <u>These languages are called pidgin English, or Creole.</u> The examples have a serious lesson for us: if we carry on using Singlish, the logical final outcome is that <u>we too will develop our own type of pidgin English, spoken only by 3 million Singaporeans, which the rest of the world will find quaint but incomprehensible. We are already half-way there.</u>

The same asymmetry in ministerial comments encountered in the discourse about language standards in Singapore is seen in Tables 7 and 8 as well: there are nine excerpts

relating to the ideal standard of English and two excerpts relating to what is considered ‘bad’ English in Singapore.

A dominating element in the state’s description of the desired standard of English in Singapore is that of ‘international intelligibility’. There is an emphasis from the state that the English spoken by Singaporeans has to be intelligible to individuals outside of the nation. Even as early as 1977, this particular discourse sub-theme has been present when the language standards in Singapore were being touched on: ‘we have to ensure that the English spoken by our pupils is internationally intelligible’ (Chai, 1977). Almost thirty years later, this definition was still being presented as the ideal standard of English in Singapore (Teo, 2001). Indeed, the term ‘internationally intelligible’ has almost become a catchphrase for the state, appearing in some form in seven out of the nine excerpts in Table 7.

This leads back to Theme 1, specifically the notion that English is an instrument for international trade and commerce, and the effects of such discourse treatment of the language. Here, the ‘othering’ of English and the notion of an absolute standard in the language are combined to create this sub-theme: ‘good English’ is English that meets the standards of language users outside of Singapore. Here it can be argued that it is such a message from the state is unsurprising, given that English is the language that has allowed Singapore to participate in international arenas since independence. However, there is a difference between a desire for mutual intelligibility and purposefully designating the language standard in Singapore outside of the nation. Additionally, while rare, there is evidence that by ‘international’, the state means ‘Inner Circle countries’ or countries that have traditionally been regarded as ‘native English-speaking’ countries. Specifically, the ideal English in Singapore has been defined by the Prime Minister to be ‘a form...that is understood by the British, Americans, Australians, and people around the world’ (Goh, 1999). It is telling that the British, Americans and Australians are mentioned by name,

therefore highlighting the English language standards and norms of these groups of speakers as those that Singaporeans should strive towards. This is at odds with both the apparent English proficiency of Singaporeans and scholars' general categorization of Singapore as an Outer Circle country with its own developing linguistic norms (see Bolton, 2006; Lim, Pakir & Wee, 2010; Leimgruber, 2013).

That is not to say that Singapore has not developed any linguistic norms native to English in the nation; a local standard variety Singapore English has been acknowledged and studied extensively by scholars (e.g. Alsagoff, 2012; Lim, 2004). However, this standard Singapore English has not been acknowledged by the state at all. In fact, as Table 8 shows, local linguistic innovation in English has been branded as 'bad'. Teachers in 1970 were assigned the important duty of inhibiting the 'unacceptable and sub-standard local forms and usages in English' (Chai, 1977). Here it can be seen that the local variety of English in Singapore had already been labelled as 'sub-standard'. In the 1999 National Day Rally, this notion of local English being bad English was taken to the extreme. Goh (1999) spoke about a local production "Forever Fever" and its issues with international broadcast due to the American audiences' inability to understand 'Singapore English', which forced producers to dub over the 'Singlish' with 'English'. The descriptions used by Goh in the excerpt are telling: 1) Singapore English is equated with Singlish, disregarding the idea that there could be a local variety that is as standard as any other in the world and 2) the dubbing over of Singlish with 'English' again reinforces the idea that there is only one absolute variety and standard of English. Goh then continues on to talk about the 'local flavour' that develops in Englishes around the world, which he identifies as 'pidgin English'. If Singaporeans were to continue using the 'local flavour' of English, Goh warns, they too would become speakers of a pidgin English, one that the international community would find 'quaint but incomprehensible'.

Therefore, despite the fewer number of excerpts in Theme 2 as compared to Theme 1, the data reveals more about how the state creates the narrative of linguistic insecurity in Singapore. In Table 5, it is demonstrated how the instrumentalist treatment of English can create a platform on which the state can comment on Singaporeans' 'poor' standard of English. Excerpts from speeches delivered in the 1970's and 1980's typically followed their negative evaluation of Singaporeans' English with concern about how the citizenry's low proficiency in the language would hinder personal and national development. After which, in the 1990's to the present, the discourse has changed slightly, shifting to the call for Singaporeans to continually improve their English. The state's new message, although milder in comparison to that of the 1970's and 1980's, is one that nonetheless denotes Singaporeans' English as sub-par.

This leads to Theme 2.3, which pertains to the state's ideal standard of English. The state has consistently urged Singaporeans to speak an English that is 'internationally intelligible' over the years. In and of itself, such statal construction of the ideal standard is merely a result of English's status as an international language of trade, which does not quite form the basis for the narrative of linguistic insecurity. However, when taking into consideration both the state's apparent exonormative orientation towards Inner Circle countries and the casting of local English as 'bad' English, the narrative begins to take shape. The emphasis on being understood in particular by British, American and Australian speakers of English is interesting and points towards the state's normative orientation towards Inner Circle countries. Furthermore, the state's scathing association of the local variety of English with the notions of 'sub-standard' and even 'pidgin English' is something that reveals the statal stance towards Singapore English. Thus, from the various sub-themes, it can be seen how the state constructs the idea that there is an absolute standard in English and it is found outside of Singapore. In contrast, Singaporeans' local use and linguistic innovations in

English are almost condemned. Theme 2 is a strong illustration of how the state creates the narrative of linguistic insecurity.

3.2.3: Theme 3 – Linguistic Ownership of English. The third major discourse theme is that of linguistic ownership of English. This theme contains many sub-themes that seemingly do not relate to each other at first glance. However, they all contribute to the larger message of which parties have and do not have ownership of English in Singapore. In Chapter 2.1.2, it was illustrated how the lack of English linguistic ownership in Singapore could either be a cause or an effect of the linguistic insecurity in the nation. The excerpts in Theme 3 align along two dichotomies: 1) that between the roles of English and mother tongues in Singapore and 2) that between native speakers and non-native speakers.

Themes 3.1 and 3.2 deal with the state's definition of the 'native speakers' and 'non-native speakers' of English, an explicit approach to demarcating the owners of English in Singapore. Theme 3.3 shows the state's stance to the local variety of English. The next three tables comprise of excerpts relating to a more implicit designation of the owners of English through the construction of a dichotomy between the roles of English and the various mother tongues in Singapore. Table 9 comprises of the excerpts that designate English as a neutral working language in Singapore. In contrast, Tables 10 and 11 contain excerpts that touch on the role of languages as carriers of culture.

Table 9
Statal Discourse - Theme 3.1

Theme 3.1: Characterization of native speakers of English and Singaporeans as second/foreign language speakers		
Date	Name / Designation	Comments
09/06/1969	Ong Pang Boon Minister of Education	The English language has thus become the instrument for educational co-operation in a region where <u>English is not the mother tongue of a great majority of its people.</u>

		...English has the advantage that <u>it is nobody's native tongue</u> , and, at the same time, everybody's common language.
05/11/1972	Lee Kuan Yew Prime Minister	The average Chinese boy who goes to an English school is really learning two non-mother languages. He learns English, <u>which is not his mother tongue</u> .
27/03/1980	Lee Kuan Yew Prime Minister	... <u>to improve standards of spoken and written English</u> , we must recruit native English speakers.
20/04/1981	Tay Eng Soon Minister of State for Education	The problem which confronts countries such as Singapore is that English has to be taught and learnt by <u>people who are not natural users of the language</u> .
05/07/1986	Tay Eng Soon Minister of State (Education)	<u>English is not the natural tongue</u> of most of our school students. ...for the majority of our pupils, <u>English is still mainly a school language</u> which appears not to be used by many outside school.
27/08/1991	Goh Chok Tong Prime Minister	...most Americans I met when I studied in the States were surprised at my proficiency in English. They did not expect <u>a foreigner to speak English that well</u> .
02/11/1991	Ong Teng Cheong Deputy Prime Minister	Nonetheless, <u>English is not our mother tongue</u> .
01/02/1992	Ong Teng Cheong Deputy Prime Minister	While English is the working language of business and administration in Singapore, <u>it is however not our mother-tongue. English cannot be a substitute for our mother-tongue</u> .
22/08/1999	Goh Chok Tong Prime Minister	Most of our pupils still come from non-English speaking homes. For them, <u>English is really a second language, to be learnt almost like a foreign language</u> , and not their mother tongue.
26/05/2000	Lee Yock Suan Minister for Information and the Arts	Among <u>non-native-English countries</u> , Singapore is unique in adopting English as the common language of communication among Singaporeans and with the outside world. Despite our exposure to English from infancy, <u>English remains a foreign language to many Singaporeans</u> .
22/10/2009	S Iswaran Senior Minister of State (Education, Trade and Industry)	<u>Most of us are not native speakers of English</u> and we are immersed in a bilingual, if not multi-lingual, milieu.

Table 10
Statal Discourse - Theme 3.2

Theme 3.2: English as the first language of Singaporeans		
Date	Name / Designation	Comments
26/07/1991	Goh Chok Tong Prime Minister	Ideally, we should try and impart these values in Chinese to the Chinese. But since <u>English is the first language of younger Singaporeans</u> , I would add that we should use English as well...

Table 9 details the statal discourse that has defined Singaporeans as ‘non-native speakers’ of English. There are 11 excerpts in total, making it one of the smaller sub-themes. However, much like Themes 2.1 and 2.2, the relatively small number of excerpts does not accurately reflect the discourse power of this sub-theme.

Singaporeans are consistently defined to be ‘non-native speakers’ of English. At the beginning of Singapore’s national history, English was commended for being ‘nobody’s native tongue’, thus eliminating any inherent advantages provided by an individual’s linguistic ability (Ong, 1969). Singapore as a nation has also been defined to be a ‘non-native English [country]’ that is unique in adopting the language for international communication, echoing the instrumentalist approach seen in Theme 1 (Lee, 2000). Even as recent as 2009, when the population census carried out a year later would show that a third of the population spoke English as their home language, it would still be asserted that ‘most [Singaporeans] are not native speakers of English’ (Iswaran, 2009; Singapore Department of Statistics). While the home language may not be the most accurate means of ascertaining whether or not there are ‘native speakers’ of English amongst the population, it is worth considering that, in the same census, over 40 percent of the population aged 5 to 24 years spoke English as their home language¹, thus it is highly probable that there is a rapidly growing number of

¹ According to the Singapore Census of Population 2010, there were a total of 978,270 Singaporeans aged 5 to 24 years. In this age group, 418,063 Singaporeans spoke English the most frequently at home. Thus, 42.7% of Singaporeans aged 5 to 24 years of age have English as their home language.

Singaporeans youths who are ‘native speakers’ of English by technical definition. Although there is one excerpt in Table 11 that touches on how English is the first language of younger Singaporeans, it is in the context of these Singaporean youths losing touch with their cultural values due to lack of proficiency in their mother tongue (Goh, 1991). This acknowledgement is thus carries with it the negative connotation of Singaporean youths valuing the ‘other’ English over their mother tongue.

Beyond discourse relating to the ‘native’-‘non-native’ dichotomy in Singapore, there is also discourse that goes beyond classifying Singaporeans as ‘non-native speakers’, but rather foreign speakers of the language. Then Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong (1991) even went as far to characterize himself as ‘a foreigner’ who surprised Americans by ‘[speaking] English that well’. At the turn of the century, the state continued to touch on how, to the population, ‘English is really a second language, to be learnt almost like a foreign language’ and that despite the overwhelming exposure to English in almost all aspects of their daily lives, the language ‘remains a foreign language to many Singaporeans’ (Goh, 1999; Lee, 2000). A more scathing statal representation is that of Singaporeans as unnatural speakers of English. This was more prevalent earlier in Singapore’s history, when the state addressed the issue that English was ‘not the natural tongue’ of most of its people and that it had to be ‘taught and learnt by people who are not natural users of the language’ (Tay; 1986; Tay, 1981).

Theme 3.1 illustrates how the state continually casts its citizens as second or foreign language speakers of English – i.e. secondary to the ‘native speakers’ in the Inner Circle countries. This accordance of superiority to ‘native speakers’ is a key factor in the creation of linguistic insecurity in the nation. Furthermore, it also serves as a blockade to any possible claims of linguistic ownership on English as it allows the state to assert that ‘native speakers’ are the only speakers that have authority and ownership over the language and thus

Singaporeans do not have that authority and ownership. Here, the intricate relationship between linguistic insecurity and linguistic ownership in the Singaporean context can again be seen.

Table 11
Statal Discourse - Theme 3.3

Theme 3.3: Singapore English / Indigenization of English in Singapore		
Date	Name / Designation	Comments
09/06/1969	Ong Pang Boon Minister of Education	Whilst we have no qualms about the evolution of a kind of “ <u>Singaporean English</u> ”, so long as it is readily understood by speakers of other brands of English, we <u>must guard against the possible degeneration of English to a stage where it is no longer recognisable as such.</u>
06/04/1978	Lee Kuan Yew Prime Minister	His [a Singaporean child] teachers speak poor Mandarin and are even worse in English. He goes to school at six, and his teachers are far from ideal. The English taught him is <u>Singapore English</u> and the Mandarin, Singapore Mandarin.
27/03/1980	Lee Kuan Yew Prime Minister	<u>It is foolish to teach our children a Singaporean variety of English</u> when, with some effort and extra cost, we can teach them standard grammatical English. Native English speakers can help remove <u>the distortions in Singaporean English.</u>
04/11/1993	George Yeo Minister for Information and the Arts	Two conditions must be met if the position of the English language in the world is to be preserved despite the relative decline of the Anglo-Saxon world. First, its cultural content must be universalised or, to put it in another way, <u>the English language must be indigenised in many parts of the world.</u>

There is very little statal discourse on a local variety of English – i.e. Singapore(an) English – or the indigenization of English in the nation, with only 4 excerpts in Table 10.

Of those 4 excerpts, 3 are negative. There is caution from the state that while a ‘Singaporean English’ may be accepted in the nation, Singaporeans must take care to ‘guard against the possible degeneration of English to a stage where it is no longer recognizable as

such' (Ong, 1969). A decade later, a harsher stance was taken and the state characterized Singapore English as a lesser variety compared to 'standard English'. Then Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew (1978) lambasted the language teachers of the time, stating that they had poor language standards, speaking 'poor Mandarin' and were 'even worse in English' and a Singapore child was taught 'Singapore English'. Following that, in 1980, Lee stated that 'it was foolish to teach our children a Singaporean variety of English' when they could be taught 'standard grammatical English' instead, and that 'native speakers' could 'remove the distortions in Singaporean English'. Here it is clear that the local variety of English was poorly regarded by the state, taken to be the population's corruption of the absolute standard of English.

There is only one mention from the state of indigenization of English in Singapore, in which it is recommended that English be cleansed of its exclusive ties to the 'Anglo-Saxon' world and culturally expanded through indigenization in the respective nations and cultures that use it. However, this is not by any means an implicit approval, or even acknowledgment, of Singapore English from the state, given that the instrumentalist treatment of English in Singapore achieves the bleaching of the language mentioned.

Therefore, Themes 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3 clearly demonstrate how the state has steadfastly classified its citizens as 'non-native speakers' or foreign speakers of English, thus placing them in an inferior position as compared to the 'native speakers'. Furthermore, it also condemns the local variety of English, labeling it as a degeneration of 'standard English'. Beyond effectively creating linguistic insecurity, such discourse also denies any claims from Singaporeans of linguistic ownership on English. As mentioned, the causal relationship between linguistic insecurity and linguistic ownership in Singapore is complex: is the lack of linguistic ownership an effect of linguistic insecurity or vice versa, or could it be that linguistic insecurity is purposefully created to prevent Singaporeans from claiming ownership

of English? The next three sub-themes relating to the dichotomy between English and mother tongues provide possible insights.

Table 12

Statal Discourse - Theme 3.4

Theme 3.4: English as a neutral language for inter-ethnic communication		
Date	Name / Designation	Comments
31/05/1978	Lee Kuan Yew Prime Minister	...let us press on with English...It <u>cuts across all racial and linguistic groups</u> . It provides <u>a neutral medium</u> , giving no one any advantage in the competition for knowledge and jobs.
01/09/1979	Ow Chin Hock Parliamentary Secretary (Culture)	...English, being a common language, also <u>serves as a bridge between the various ethnic groups</u> .
16/11/1983	Phua Bah Lee Senior Parliamentary Secretary (Defence)	It is in this context that the English language plays <u>an important role in bridging inter-ethnic communication</u> .
06/07/1988	Lee Hsien Loong Minister for Trade and Industry	English was already the language of government. Using it has given Singapore <u>a neutral language which all races can speak</u> .
30/08/1988	Yeo Cheow Tong Acting Minister for Health	...English would normally be the medium of communication in the worlds of school and work, often serving as <u>the common language which brings together the different racial groups in Singapore</u> .
02/11/1991	Ong Teng Cheong Deputy Prime Minister	Since independence, English has gradually taken on <u>this role to facilitate inter-ethnic communications and understanding</u> .
18/08/2001	Teo Chee Hean Minister for Education	English...is the <u>common language of communication between people from different ethnic communities</u> and from different parts of the world.
05/08/2005	Chan Soo Sen Minister of State for Education	In Singapore, with its multi-racial, multi-ethnic and multi-lingual makeup, <u>the role English plays as the common, binding language</u> is apparent.
27/07/2012	Heng Swee Keat Minister for Education	In our multi-racial society, English is <u>the common language that binds us as one people</u> .

The state frequently mentions that one of the key roles of English in Singapore is to be the linguistic common ground on which all citizens can interact. At first glance, the discourse seems to be favourable. In the earlier decades of Singapore's national history, the language was 'a bridge between the various ethnic groups', [cutting] across all racial and linguistic groups' and [providing] a neutral medium' which did not give one ethnic group an edge over another (Hock, 1979; Lee, 1978). This would have been particularly important during the time, considering the issues of racial conflicts that plagued the nation during the 1960's (Musa & Mohamed Taib, 2016). In recent years, English has also been described as the language that 'binds' Singaporeans together (Chan, 2005; Heng, 2012). Such discourse would seem to suggest that English has an important cultural role to play in Singapore, being the language through which the various ethnic groups could form a common Singaporean identity. However, Themes 3.5 and 3.6 directly contradict this point.

Table 13
Statal Discourse - Theme 3.5

Theme 3.5: English as contrasted to Mother Tongues and Asian culture		
Date	Name / Designation	Comments
21/02/1967	Lee Kuan Yew Prime Minister	...know this: go to English schools, learn English. But, at the same time, never forget that you are not an Englishman, and I am not an Englishman. English is a language we learn and we use it. But we must keep <u>a part of ourselves – the part that leads us back to our histories, to our cultures, to our civilizations from whence we came...</u>
05/11/1972	Lee Kuan Yew Prime Minister	I am convinced that this effort [bilingualism] has to be made... <u>Or we will become completely deculturalised and lost.</u> If we become like some societies speaking pidgin English, mindlessly aping the Americans or British <u>with no basic values or culture of their own...</u>
09/11/1973	Chai Chong Yii Minister of State for Education	Having acquired the skill to speak English, to read English books and magazines, and to write down your ideas in English, <u>a person must not forget that he is still what he is culturally.</u>

		Our countrymen are <u>racially, linguistically and culturally different</u> from the English-speaking people.
29/05/1974	Lee Kuan Yew Prime Minister	But for our multi-racial, multi-cultural people to learn only English would be folly. For <u>this will detach them from their cultural roots.</u>
23/07/1974	Lee Chiaw Meng Minister of Education	Proficiency in the mother tongue – Chinese, Malay or Tamil – <u>is needed to ensure the preservation of our moral values and cultural heritage...</u>
18/04/1977	Lee Khoo Choy Senior Minister of State for Foreign Affairs	We shall have a <u>people rooted in their traditional value, culture and languages</u> , but also effective in English, a key to the advanced technology of the West from where nearly all our new and more advanced industries come.
06/04/1978	Lee Kuan Yew Prime Minister	If Singaporeans were to <u>speak only English, discarding our own cultural heritage and traditional ideas</u> , I think we would have difficulty overcoming our problems.
15/08/1980	Howe Yoon Chong Minister of Defense	...we need English to communicate with people in the outside world... We should also try <u>to retain our cultural heritage through the study of our own mother tongue.</u>
20/08/1980	Tony Tan Keng Yam Minister of Education	In time English will become the common language in Singapore. If we do not take vigorous measures to ensure that our children have at least some knowledge of their mother tongue <u>then they will grow up completely divorced from their cultural roots.</u>
19/08/1981	Tay Eng Soon Minister of Education	...what kind of people would our future generations become if they were monolingual in English only? It is possible that they would <u>become emotionally and intellectually cut off from their ancestral cultural roots.</u>
24/11/1983	Ahmad Mattar Acting Minister for Social Affairs	One who masters only English may lead a good material life, but <u>is in danger of losing his cultural ballast.</u>
08/12/1986	Tay Eng Soon Minister of State (Education)	...the use of English as a working language has meant that we must continually seek to improve the proficiency of our people in the English Language, <u>without of course losing sight of the mother tongue languages.</u>
13/04/1987	Tay Eng Soon Minister of State (Education)	We have, therefore, adopted a bilingual policy in which English is our working language while the mother tongue, in our case, Mandarin, Malay and Tamil, <u>the mother tongues of the major ethnic</u>

		groups in Singapore, is the vehicle of cultural <u>transmission</u>. English...has also <u>enabled</u> us to avoid racial <u>tension</u> which could have resulted if one of the local languages had become the working language thereby conferring an advantage to the particular racial group.
27/08/1987	Wong Kan Seng Minister for Community Development	As English is now the common language in Singapore, we need to take vigorous measures to ensure that our children have at least some knowledge of their mother tongue. <u>Otherwise, they will grow up completely divorced from their cultural roots.</u>
29/08/1989	Seet Ai Mee Minister of State for Development and Education	<u>Our mother tongue must be central to our very being</u> while our proficiency in English may be viewed as the external veneer which helps us function in the international arena.
26/07/1991	Goh Chok Tong Prime Minister	While English is our working language, we must never allow its convenience and value <u>to wipe off our Asian heritage.</u>
27/08/1991	Goh Chok Tong Prime Minister	If Singaporeans are proficient in both English and <u>their mother tongues</u>, they can have access to the world, and play a useful role in it, acquire up to date knowledge in science and technology, as well as <u>maintain a link with their own community and ancestral roots.</u>
02/11/1991	Ong Teng Cheong Deputy Prime Minister	English may be the language for growth, development and mobility, but <u>it is the mother tongue that give the people a sense of identity, self-respect and help them understand and preserve their cultural heritage.</u>
24/08/1997	Goh Chok Tong Prime Minister	While English must be our common working language and every Singaporean needs to know English, it will be a tragedy for Singapore if <u>Chinese language, culture, values and traditions are no longer a major component of our cosmopolitan society.</u>
15/01/2000	Lee Hsien Loong Deputy Prime Minister	Our common working language is English – the language of global business, commerce and technology. But <u>it is the mother tongue which gives us a crucial part of our values, roots and identity. It gives us access to our cultural heritage...</u>
16/12/2004	Goh Chok Tong Senior Minister	English is our common and working language. It is also the language of commerce and international interaction. <u>Learning the mother tongue is necessary to preserve our culture and retain our roots.</u>

Table 14
Statal Discourse - Theme 3.6

Theme 3.6: English as a carrier of Western culture		
Date	Name / Designation	Comments
09/11/1973	Chai Chong Yii Minister of State for Education	...many persons in the developing countries who are educated mainly in English <u>tend to identify themselves with the English-speaking world...</u>
10/02/1978	Lee Kuan Yew Prime Minister	... with the widespread use of English, TV, the cinema, magazines, books and tourists, <u>Western values, culture and attitudes to life have permeated our society, particularly the young.</u>
24/01/1979	Lee Kuan Yew Prime Minister	With English go <u>the cultural values, the philosophy of individualism and personal liberty of America and the West.</u>
26/07/1991	Goh Chok Tong Prime Minister	The English educated Chinese have a bigger window to the west than the east. ... They are <u>likely to give greater weight to cultural individualism than Confucian dynamism.</u>

Although Theme 3.4 seemed to point at English playing a vital cultural role in Singapore by being the language of inter-ethnic communication, Tables 13 and 14 contain discourse that seems to say otherwise. Table 13 comprises of excerpts that contrasted English as a working language with the ‘mother tongues’ in Singapore as the carriers of their respective cultures. As is often noted, ‘mother tongues’ in the Singaporean context is the language of an individual’s ethnic group, rather than the language that the individual acquires from his or her caretaker at home (Gupta, 1994). Next to Theme 1.1, Theme 3.5 was the largest in the data with a total of 21 excerpts. The excerpts in Table 13 have been included in the analysis as they make an implicit statement about the language by contrasting its role to that of the mother tongues. In Theme 3.5, the discourse that does directly address English is similar to that in Theme 1.1, describing English as the common language that allows Singapore to access the technological advances of the West. Such discourse usually then

contrasted with the various mother tongues, which are described as the cultural vanguards that help safeguard the moral and cultural values of Singaporeans.

As early as the 1960's, the state cautioned Singaporeans that though they might speak English, they were not 'Englishmen' and had to retain the essential part of their heritage and culture through the learning of their mother tongue, fitting words considering that the bilingual education policy was launched in 1966 (Lee, 1967; Silver, 2002). Thus begin this particular sub-theme, wherein English was acknowledged to be the language that allowed Singapore to advance in trade and technology (as discussed in Theme 1) but also presented as a cultural void in the Singaporean context. The next decade saw similar warnings to citizens that they 'must not forget that [they were] still what [they were] culturally' and to only learn English would 'detach them from their cultural roots' (Chai, 1973; Lee, 1974). Even in the twenty-first century, this theme continues: English is the nation's common working language, but it is 'the mother tongue which gives [Singaporeans] a crucial part of [their] values, roots and identity' and that it was 'necessary' to learn these mother tongues to maintain cultural heritages (Lee, 2000; Goh, 2004).

In a similar vein, English is also sometimes characterized as the carrier of foreign Western values, echoing the 'othering' of English seen in sub-theme 1a. Such discourse was mostly seen in the early years of Singapore's history, with 3 out of the 4 excerpts extracted from speeches made in the 1970's. The state reminded the citizens then that to speak and use English was to expose themselves to 'the cultural values, the philosophy of individualism and personal liberty of America and the West', subtly presenting English as a cultural danger to the Asian society of Singapore (Lee, 1979). However, as the population gradually gained proficiency in the language, excerpts related to English as an avatar of Western values similarly lessened.

Therefore, Themes 3.4, 3.5 and 3.6 serve to create a cultural distance between English and Singaporeans by demarcating an unyielding relationship between languages and respective values. This then allows the state to reject the notion that English could be used by Singaporeans to transmit their own ‘Asian values’. Furthermore, as discussed in Theme 1, the instrumentalist treatment of English also creates a false dichotomy between English and the various mother tongues. This thus presents an effective obstacle to any claims on English as a mother tongue, which achieves the larger goal of blocking Singaporeans’ linguistic ownership of English, something that has been touched on by other scholars (see Wee, 2002). It seems more likely then, that the state is making deliberate attempts to foster linguistic insecurity amongst the population in order to obstruct any claims of linguistic ownership on English.

In summary, Chapter 3.2 has demonstrated how the statal discourse surrounding the role and nature of English in Singapore and how it fosters linguistic insecurity through various themes: the instrumentalist treatment of English allows for language standards to be regulated and for the state to position Singaporeans as ‘non-native speakers’ inferior to the ‘native speakers’. It has also illustrated how linguistic ownership is a crucial factor in this narrative of linguistic insecurity, possibly even being the main reason for the creation of this narrative. Now that the statal discourse surrounding English has been analyzed, the language policies regulating the language in Singapore shall be examined.

3.3 English Language Education Policy

This section looks at EL education in Singapore, starting from the nation’s independence till the present day. As detailed in Chapter 3.1, there are three sources of data in this sub-section: EL syllabi from Singapore’s MOE, relevant documents from the RELC regional conferences

and interviews with both policy-maker and educators. The EL syllabi take the foreground in this discussion, while the other two data sources supplement the former in two temporal contexts. Three of the five sets of EL syllabi were implemented before the year 2000 and their examination are thus supplemented by the relevant RELC documents that detail RELC Regional Seminars that were held in the same time period. EL syllabi that were implemented after the year 2000, however, will be discussed in tandem with interview data as the interviewees are able to provide contemporary insights into EL educational policy.

This section will be largely split into two main discussions: 1) the state's treatment of English in the context of EL education and 2) the state's characterization of Singaporean English speakers. This allows for an examination of the state's stance on the role and nature of the English language and its speakers in Singapore, which in turn will provide an insight into how linguistic insecurity may result from EL policy and more importantly, how linguistic ownership of English may be accorded or denied to the Singaporean population by the state.

3.3.1 'English' and EL Education in Singapore. This sub-section deals with the characterization of the 'English' that is taught and used in the Singaporean education system. There are three aspects to the political treatment of 'English' in EL education: an insistence on a 'correct' English, the functions of English (for both speaker and nation) set forth in the syllabi and finally, varieties of English. Chapter 3.3.1 shall be organized into these three aspects accordingly.

The first element of discussion is the notion of 'correctness', which dominated the goals and objectives of EL syllabi implemented before the new millennia.

Table 15
EL Policy – Doctrine of ‘correctness’

‘English’ in EL Education – Correctness	
Syllabus	Goals and Objectives
1971	• This syllabus...is based on such centres of interest and activity as are closely related to the daily experiences of the learners so that they will be encouraged to think and speak about these experiences in <u>simple correct English</u> • To teach pupils to read simple sentences or groups of sentences already learnt with <u>the correct pronunciation (stress, rhythm and intonation) of the English language</u>
1981	• Pupils converse in English with <u>reasonable correctness</u> • Pupils write in <u>correct English simple sentences</u> using the language items they have learned
1991	• At the end of the course, pupils should be able to speak fluently, clearly and audibly, using <u>correct pronunciation, stress, rhythm and intonation</u> • <u>Using correctly the stress patterns and rhythm of English</u> in order to be understood properly

As can be seen from Table 15, the aims of EL education set forth in the three syllabi – 1971, 1981 and 1991 – were largely concerned with students writing in ‘simple correct English’ and speaking with ‘correct, pronunciation, stress, rhythm and intonation’ (MOE, 1971; 1991). With regards to the 1971 syllabus, such succinct definitions of the goals and objectives pertaining to English education were perhaps to be expected. The syllabus was written during the first decade of the nation’s independence when there was a massive surge of mass English-language education, thus the lack of elucidation or even consideration as to what yardstick was being utilized is unsurprising (Chew, 2012).

However, a decade on, when the 1981 syllabus was implemented, it continued in the footsteps of its predecessor in setting the pedagogical goal of getting Singaporean students to converse in English with ‘reasonable correctness’ and to write in ‘correct English’ sentences (MOE, 1981). As was the issue with the previous syllabus, the ministry did not reveal its yardstick, instead referring to a vague and perhaps idealized version of ‘correct English’. The role of the notion of correctness was previously discussed as a fundamental aspect in

linguistic insecurity because it allows for discrimination and prejudice against language varieties and speakers that do not conform to this artificial yardstick (see Chapter 2.1). Ironically, it was only just a few years ago during the 1978 RELC Regional Seminar that it was said it would be impractical to ‘aim at a non-existent purity’ (RELC, 1978, p. 74), demonstrating that the ministry was at least aware of the potential drawbacks of placing emphasis on ‘correctness’ in language.

Despite the aforementioned awareness, however, MOE would continue the stress on ‘correctness’ in its EL syllabi: students were expected to be able to speak with ‘correct pronunciation, expression, stress, rhythm and intonation’ at the end of their EL education (Curriculum Planning Division (henceforth CPD), 1991). Again, the state uses an absolute yardstick in regards to students’ language use, thus reinforcing the doctrine of correctness previously discussed above and contributing to the linguistic insecurity in the nation. At this point, a necessary question is: ‘correct’ to what variety of English? As was acknowledged by MOE itself above, there is no ‘pure English’, only varieties of the language as used around the world. Therefore, when the notion of ‘correctness’ is a central objective in EL education, the definition of what variety of English is being used must follow.

This leads to the next point of discussion: the variety of English used and taught in Singapore EL classrooms.

Table 16
EL Policy – Varieties of English

‘English’ in EL Education – Variety	
Syllabus	Goals and Objectives
1991	• Our pupils learn English in order to develop a sensitivity to, and an appreciation of, <u>other varieties of English and the cultures they reflect</u> • At the end of the course: ◦ pupils should be able to be aware of <u>different varieties of English</u> (e.g. American, British and Singaporean) ◦ recognize and distinguish between <u>Standard and non-Standard English</u>, and use them appropriately

	• Recognizing words, phrases and expressions originating from a <u>particular variety of English</u>, e.g. <u>Singaporeanisms</u> (such as <i>shake legs</i>) • Recognizing <u>non-Standard Singaporean usage of English words and expressions</u>, e.g. <i>stay</i> for <i>live</i>, <i>bring</i> for <i>take</i> • ...recognize that there are Standard and non-Standard varieties of English, <u>including the local variety ('Singlish')</u>
2001-2010	• Speak, write and represent in <u>internationally acceptable English (Standard English)</u> that is grammatical, fluent, mutually intelligible and appropriate for different purposes, audiences, contexts and cultures ◦ Internationally acceptable English that is grammatical, fluent and appropriate for purpose, audience, context and culture refers to the formal register of English used in different parts of the world, that is, Standard English

Although it was not till 1991 that MOE acknowledged that there were multiple varieties of English used around the world, the ministry had long ago discussed the variety of English that should be taught in Singaporean classrooms.

Going back to the 1971 syllabus and its goal of having students acquire 'simple correct English' at the end of their language education, it was not clear what variety of English was seen as the 'correct' one (although given that Received Pronunciation (RP) was taught in Singapore classrooms till the late 1980's, it would not unreasonable to assume that the 'English' in the syllabus was modelled after BrE and that it was the yardstick by which Singaporean students were measured (Gupta, 2010). Curiously enough, it was proposed during the 1977 RELC Regional Seminar that 'it was not necessary to use British Received Pronunciation or the native speaker as a model for the Singapore learner' as long as international communicability was achieved (REL, 1977, p. 48). In fact, there was even discussion of a linguistic description of an 'educated Singapore English', which could serve as a model for Singaporeans. Here, it can be seen that the ministry was not only aware of the varieties of English, there was even some attempt to work towards a local formal variety of English as the model in Singapore.

However, as was discussed above, the ministry continued to refer to a seemingly abstract ‘English’ in the 1981 set of syllabi. Much like the above situation, the lack of acknowledgement in the official education policy did not mean that the ministry was unaware of the numerous varieties of English. In the 1981 RELC Regional Seminar, a MOE Language Research Officer presented a paper investigating students’ language attitudes towards the varieties of English in Singapore, with the goals of refining language teaching and contributing to the literature on Singapore English. The paper compared respondents’ attitudes towards five varieties of English – one being BrE spoken by a British speaker and the others Singapore English spoken by Singapore speakers from varying linguistic background. The paper found that respondents’ overwhelmingly preferred Standard BrE as the variety they would like used in Singapore, but were also willing to accept the ‘lower high variety’: Singapore English spoken by English-educated speakers from English-speaking backgrounds (RELC, 1981p.12). More importantly, the paper concluded by reiterating that the educational norm was Standard BrE, but the students who were unable to attain such high standards could ‘still settle for the second best’ (p. 13). From this, it is clear that the ministry was still very much exonormatively-oriented at that point in time: although they might have acknowledged and even studied the local variety of English, it was taken as absolute that Standard BrE was the natural choice. Furthermore, the local formal standard was taken as second-best, something that weaker students would have to ‘settle’ for. The paper’s conclusion reveals that not only the state viewed BrE as superior to any local variety of English, but so did the citizens themselves, suggesting that the state’s message had already been firmly internalized by the population at this relatively early stage in Singapore’s history.

While the 1971 and 1981 EL syllabi had only referred to an abstract ‘English’ in their goals and objectives, the 1991 EL syllabus would in fact explicitly mention that there were multiple varieties of English. The ministry states that one of the aims of EL education was to

allow students to ‘develop a sensitivity to, and an appreciation of, other varieties of English and the cultures they reflect’ (CPD, 1991). However, the syllabus does not clarify what those aforementioned varieties of English are ‘other’ in relation to. Although the 1991 syllabus would acknowledge that there are varieties of English, it continues in the footsteps of its predecessors and does not define the ‘English’ that is being taught in Singapore classrooms. An illustrating example is the milestone set out for students at the end of primary-level EL education: ‘recognize and distinguish the basic sounds and phonological features of the English language’ (CPD, 1991). Once again, the ministry makes reference to undefined ‘English’. To make matters even more confusing is the syllabus’ aims at the upper secondary level of EL education, in which it states that students should be able to identify ‘a wider range of varieties of English and use these appropriately when required’. This objective raises a perplexing question: does the state expect Singapore students to attain proficiency in multiple varieties of English?

Another significant point in the goals and objectives of the 1991 syllabus is the implicit acknowledgement of local linguistic innovation and even the local variety of English. The syllabus outlines a set of language skills that each Singaporean student would ideally learn and one of these skills is the ability to understand words, phrases and expressions that originate from ‘a particular variety of English, e.g. Singaporeanisms (such as *shake legs*)’ (CPD, 1991). Although the syllabus merely mentions that there are expressions unique to the local context, it nonetheless seems an encouraging sign from the state, given its staunch refusal to acknowledge any indigenization of the language in official syllabi documents thus far. However, the next language skill outlined in the syllabus states that it aimed to allow students to ‘[recognize] non-standard Singaporean usage of English words and expression, e.g. *stay for live bring for take*’ (CPD, 1991). The state here conflates the local variety or use of English as non-standard English. The 1991 syllabus is also the first to mention the notion

of Standard English and it expands on this in the secondary level of the EL syllabus where an objective is for students to comprehend ‘that there are Standard and non-standard varieties of English, *including the local variety* (*‘Singlish’*)’ [emphasis added]. Here, the state explicitly refers to a local variety of English in Singapore, however, it is Singlish that is identified as the local variety. This has two critical effects: 1) it allows the disregard of a local standard variety (i.e. SSE) and 2) it creates the notion that the local usage of English is non-standard and therefore poor, a key aspect of linguistic insecurity.

The goals and objectives of the 2001 and 2010 sets of syllabi will be discussed in tandem as the latter built on the pedagogical aims of the former, resulting in much similarity between the two syllabi in this area. The most striking feature of the two syllabi is the definition of what kind of English students are expected to acquire during the course of their EL education: ‘internationally acceptable English’ (CPDD, 1991; 2010). Although only introduced officially into policy in the new millennium, the notion of ‘international intelligibility’ had been deliberated by the ministry as early as 1979. In the RELC Regional Seminar of that year, it was said there was a ‘need to decide whether the English learnt was for use internationally or for use in local situations’ and that this would in turn determine the variety of English to be used in education system (RELC, 1979, p. 77). Two years later at the 1981 Regional Seminar, it was concluded that it would be best to adopt the phonological features of Standard BrE that would ‘make [Singaporeans] easily comprehensible internationally’ (p. 62). Such a discussion seems to rest on the axiom that the local variety of English is unintelligible outside of Singapore, which would be a powerful idea in creating linguistic insecurity amongst Singaporean English speakers.

MOE goes on in both syllabi to elaborate on this ‘internationally acceptable English’, defining it as ‘English that is grammatical, fluent and appropriate for purpose, audience, context and culture’ refers to the formal register of English used in different parts of the

world, that is, Standard English' (CPDD, 1991; 2010). This description seems to suggest that the numerous standard varieties of English around the world could be distilled into an amalgamation to be taught in Singaporean classrooms or that there exists an abstract Standard English spoken globally, either of which does not exist. Zoe states that 'Standard English' was English that made a Singaporean child 'a Singaporean child intelligible, firstly to Singaporeans and then on a larger scale to foreigners (Zoe, personal communication, April 14, 2016). The educators mostly aligned with Zoe in their characterization of 'Standard English', stating that it was English that allowed its speakers to be understood by other English speakers. However, Diane characterized the 'Standard English' described in the syllabus to be the 'British standard of Standard English' and Elle stated that 'the 'Standard English' that is 'internationally intelligible' is 'British English', evidencing that there remains a strong exonormative orientation towards the Inner Circle countries in the nation's EL education (Diane; Elle, personal communication, May 3; May 31, 2016). Further proof is provided by the fact that all of the educators described the variety of English taught in classrooms as BrE or a mixture of BrE and Singapore English.

With regards to SSE, when questioned about the ministry's stance on the local formal variety, Zoe stated that it was not the place of education policy to try to regulate the 'lower register' of English spoken in private informal domains, indicating perhaps that the ministry continues to equate any local variety of English in Singapore to Singlish. The educators are somewhat more split on the issue: while Diane and Charlie firmly reject the existence of SSE, Anna and Brooke believe that a local variety of English has developed in the nation over time. However, it seems that they similarly equate any sort of local English as Singlish. For example, Brooke describes SSE as a 'form of English [that] defies the grammatical rules and borders on Singlish' (personal communication, May 3, 2016) and Elle is even more extreme in this regard, conflating SSE with Singlish and stating that while there may be a SSE in

informal situations, Singlish cannot be taught in classrooms as it is not the standard variety (Elle, personal communication, May 31, 2016). Thus, it seems that the state will be unmoving in its refusal to acknowledge that there is a local and standard variety of English in the nation, instead steadfastly conflating any local linguistic development in English with the colloquial and non-standard variety. This in turn subtly creates linguistic insecurity and invalidates any claim of linguistic ownership. The state only recognizes a non-standard colloquial variety – one that was once labelled as a corrupt English by the nation’s Prime Minister – this then constructs the belief that any local use of English is inferior to English use found elsewhere in the world (i.e. Inner Circle Englishes). Furthermore, the state’s stance also rejects linguistic ownership by Singaporean English speakers by simply removing the variety of language they can claim ownership of.

The final area of discussion is the function that English is to play on an individual and national level, as delineated in the various EL syllabi.

Table 17
EL Policy – Functions of English

‘English’ in EL Education – Function	
Syllabus	Goals and Objectives
1981	• The aims of teaching the English Language in the primary school are [sic] to enable pupils to acquire the basic skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing in <u>achieving functional literacy</u> • The aims of teaching English in Secondary 1-4 are [sic] to provide pupils with the language proficiency that will <u>enable them to learn their content subjects</u> • For the more capable children...the level of proficiency expected will be higher: they must <u>use English more effectively for social communication, for acquiring of knowledge and for their personal development</u> • However, underlying all our efforts in teaching English...it must be realized that it [English] is, and will remain, <u>a common medium of communication in our country as well as among other nations of the world</u>
1991	• English has <u>the status of a first language</u> in the national school curriculum

	• Today, English is, by and large, <u>the language of administration, communication, technology, higher education, commerce and industry</u> • Our pupils learn English in order <u>to acquire information and study skills to learn other subjects taught in English</u>
2001	• As the language of public administration, education, commerce, science and technology, and global communication, it has become <u>the medium by which most Singaporeans gain access to information and knowledge from around the world</u>
2010	• At the local level, it is <u>the common language that facilitates bonding among the different ethnic and cultural groups</u> • At the global level, <u>English allows Singaporeans to participate in a knowledge-based economy</u> where English is the lingua franca of the Internet, of science and technology and of world trade

The goals and objectives of the 1981 syllabus were very much of a utilitarian spirit. There are many documents in this set of syllabi and the documents pertaining specifically to the primary and secondary levels were published in different years (refer to Table 1). However, the goals and objectives are largely shared and thus will be referred to as the 1981 syllabus collectively for ease for discussion. There is a focus on ‘functional literacy’, a set of basic linguistic skills that would allow the Singapore students to use their English in a limited but useful manner, such as to ‘learn their content subjects’ or for ‘vocational purposes’ (MOE, 1981; MOE, 1982). Also, English was also designated as the ‘common medium of communication’ intra- and internationally (MOE, 1981). It can be seen that the earlier syllabi echo the same instrumentalist approach to English that was seen in Chapter 3.2.1. The syllabi do, however, briefly touch on students who may achieve a higher proficiency in the language, thus allowing them to ‘use English more effectively for social communication’ (MOE, 1981). The secondary-level EL syllabus even stated that it strove to equip students with the ability to comprehend ‘the more common speech conventions of social English’ (MOE, 1982). While the definition of ‘social English’ was not provided, the syllabus did at least acknowledge that the language was taking on an additional dimension. That said, it must be noted that only the ‘more capable children’ were allowed to utilize English for social purposes (MOE, 1981).

The prerequisite in language proficiency highlights the complicated relationship between linguistic insecurity and linguistic ownership in Singapore: is the creation of the image of the inferior Singaporean English speaker a means by which the state prevents most Singaporeans from utilizing English for more than strictly-function purposes?

The next revision of the EL syllabus, implemented in 1991, would further muddy the context of the above question. While the 1991 syllabus also had a functional element in its outline of the aims of learning English – ‘acquire information and study skills to learn the other subjects taught in English’ (CPD, 1991) – much like its predecessors, it placed far more emphasis on the communicative aspect of the language and generally moved beyond the utilitarian treatment of EL education previously seen. The syllabus categorized its ‘terminal objectives’ under four domains: 1) Communication and Language Development, 2) Thinking Skills, 3) Learning How to Learn and 4) Language and Culture (CPD, 1991). In fact, in the years between the implementation of the 1981 and 1991 syllabi, MOE’s views on language education, as well as its very nature and function in Singapore, underwent a paradigmatic shift. While its predecessors had taken an ‘English as a Second/Foreign Language’ to EL education in Singapore, the 1991 syllabus was designed for the teaching of English as a ‘first language’ (Foley, 1994). So drastic was this transformation that a specialist writer at the Curriculum Development of Institute of Singapore (CDIS) described it as having ‘caused a chasm between those who conceived and implemented the 1980 syllabus and those who [were] doing the same thing for the 1991 syllabus’ (Lim, 1995, p. 38). This can be clearly seen in the aims of the two syllabi. The 1981 syllabus (MOE) only concerned itself with a basic utilitarian goal: ‘to enable pupils on completion of their primary education to apply the basic skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing in achieving functional literacy’. In contrast, the 1991 syllabus accords English with ‘the status of a first language in the national school curriculum’ and describes it as ‘by and large, the language of administration,

communication, technology, higher education, commerce and industry'. Consequently, the syllabus was meant to 'help pupils to develop their linguistic and communicative competence to meet both their present and future needs in the personal, educational, vocational, social and cultural spheres' (CPD, 1991). This syllabus would also be the first to stop characterizing the English knowledge and exposure that students were entering classrooms with, focusing instead of the end goals instead of the starting point. Therefore, the 1991 syllabus was the first to acknowledge or even aim for a more social function of English, a drastic departure of its predecessors. Although the 2001 and 2010 set of syllabi do not make the same explicit statements according English its status as a first language, it is nonetheless understood that English is the dominant language in the nation. With this shift in the role of English in the nation, how are Singaporeans affected in regards to their linguistic identity as speakers of the English language?

This sub-section has examined the goals and objectives of the EL syllabi implemented in Singapore throughout the years since independence in regards to the definition of 'English'. The analysis provides an insight into how the narrative of linguistic insecurity and the denial of linguistic ownership were developed. The most striking observation is the consistent lack of specific definition of the English taught and learnt in classrooms. Throughout the five sets of EL syllabi, the state has referred continually to an abstract and undefined 'English', even in the two most recent syllabi, the 'internationally acceptable' English is defined in a circular and ultimately incoherent manner. The lack of a specific description that allows the state to create a linguistic standard that Singaporeans would never be able to meet as the standard can simply be shifted beyond the current English proficiency of the population, thus creating and reinforcing the image of the sub-standard Singaporean English speaker. Also, as previously discussed, the steadfast rejection of SSE and conflation of any local linguistic development by the state not only reinforces the insecurity by

characterizing local English use as inferior, but additionally serves to deny any claims of linguistic ownership. Furthermore, the quiet but unyielding exonormative orientation of the state towards the Inner Circle countries – particularly to the English spoken by Singapore’s former colonial master – also feeds into this insecurity by casting Singaporean speakers as inferior to the ‘native speakers’ of Britain, something that will be examined in Chapter 3.3.2.

3.3.2 English Speakers and Environment in Singapore.

Table 18

EL Policy – English speakers in Singapore

English speakers in Singapore	
Syllabus	Goals and Objectives
1971	- The majority of our pupils have <u>very little previous knowledge of English</u> and hardly any opportunity to absorb it outside of school - A <u>small percentage</u> of the pupils comes from English-speaking backgrounds
1981	This syllabus assumes that most of the children entering primary school are <u>meeting English for the first time</u> and that they are in fact <u>learners of English as a second language</u>
2001-2010	- The majority of our pupils will attain <u>a good level of competence in English</u>, in both speech and writing. Some in this group who have a flair for the language will find this an advantage in frontline positions and various service industries - At least <u>20% will attain a high degree of proficiency in English</u>. They will help Singapore keep its edge in a range of professions, and play an important role in teaching and the media. Further, within this group, we can expect a smaller group of Singaporeans to achieve mastery in their command of the language that is no different from the best in English-speaking countries

When the bilingual policy was introduced in 1966, English was essentially a foreign language in the newly-formed nation, with little to no speakers and no linguistic infrastructure to meaningfully facilitate the acquisition of the language (Chua, 2012). This was reflected in the 1971 EL syllabus, in which the majority of students were described as entering the education system with ‘very little previous knowledge of English and hardly any opportunity to absorb it outside school’ (MOE, 1971). It was not just the students who had

little exposure and knowledge of English, the educators too were ill-equipped to teach the language. In the 1973 RELC Regional Seminar, a background paper on Singapore detailed the extensive re-training EL educators had to undergo in order to teach English as a Second Language. In particular, those without graduate degrees were enrolled into ‘an English language course that helps them to use English effectively, both in written and oral communication’ (p. 123). All this was done to achieve the ultimate goal of ‘[raising] the standard of teaching’ in a country that was trying to have its population adopt a new language necessary for its planned industrialization (RELC, 1973, p. 124; Silver, 2002). The status of English learned by its people as a second or foreign language remained unchanged for a decade, when the 1981 EL syllabus was implemented. The syllabus characterizes Singaporean children who were just entering the education system then as ‘meeting English for the first time and that they are in fact learners of English as second language’ (MOE, 1981). However, that was set to change drastically in the next syllabi revision.

As discussed in Chapter 3.3.1, the 1991 EL syllabus differed from its predecessors by explicitly according English with the status of Singapore’s first language. With this shift in policy, the role of English in Singapore experienced a corresponding change, expanding into private domains and increasingly becoming not just the first language of the education system, but also the first language of Singaporeans: even in 1990, 19 percent of the population aged 5 years and above used English as their household language (Singapore Department of Statistics, 1993). This point in Singapore’s history can reasonably be described as when Singaporeans would increasingly become speakers of English as a first language and a small but ever-growing segment of the citizenry would grow up as native speakers by technical definition.

However, despite the potential shift in the linguistic identities of Singaporean English speakers, the next syllabus to comment in specifics on Singaporean students’ potential

English linguistic abilities would in fact be the 2010 EL syllabus. It states that a desired outcome is that ‘at least 20 percent will attain a high degree of proficiency in English’ and of that modestly-sized group, a smaller group of pupils would ‘achieve mastery in their command of the language that is no different from the best in English-speaking countries’ (MOE, 2010). Policy-maker Zoe elaborated on this goal, describing such a proficiency as one that would allow ‘students take on good jobs overseas’, not just in countries in which English is still largely a foreign language, but in ‘native English-speaking countries’ and assimilate into these countries in both official and social domains (Zoe, personal communication, April 14, 2016). The other interviewees also included linguistic ability beyond a functional level in their description of this proficiency. For example, Elle includes in their definition of a ‘high proficiency in English’ ‘the ability to carry out a fluent conversation with another, including a native speaker’, while Charlie commented that a highly-proficient student would be ‘able to understand puns at a higher level and process complex information and perhaps even make relevant cultural references: academic papers, critics’ writings, Eddie Izzard (a British comedian), *Whose Line Is It Anyway* (an American improvisational comedy television program)... etc.’ (Elle; Charlie, personal communication, May 4; May 31, 2016). Here, a familiar observation is made: the use of Inner Circle countries as the yardstick by which Singaporeans are measured. Charlie is perhaps the most extreme in this, citing the recognition of multiple artefacts from the cultures of Inner Circle countries as a mark of having achieved a higher level of English proficiency.

Here, it is clear that the exonormative orientation of EL education in Singapore implicitly seen in policy documents manifests rather explicitly in policy makers and educators. The interviewees’ responses indicate an underlying belief that the English language still belongs to the ‘traditional bases of English’ (Kachru, 1985, p. 12), which would explain the use of these countries and groups of ‘native speakers’ as the benchmark of

English ability here in Singapore. Furthermore, the syllabi's expectation that only 20 percent of the Singaporean student population will reach this level of proficiency is built on the artificial axiom that Singaporeans are generally poor speakers of English and that only a select few of the population would attain high proficiency in the language.

The use of English-speaking countries and their native speakers as a yardstick in Singapore leads to examination of the possibility that some Singaporeans may be native English speakers themselves. Here, the opinions between educators and policy-maker diverge quite drastically. Of the three educators that answered the question of whether or not they would consider any of their students to be native speakers of English by technical definition, all three answered in varying degrees of agreement: Diane and Anna agreed that some of their students are native speakers, whereas Brooke said that only a few of their students could be considered native speakers (Anna; Brooke; Diane, personal communication, April 14; May 4; May 4, 2016). However, Zoe stated firmly that Singaporeans were unable to claim native-speaker status in their use of the English language as they do not possess the English proficiency required. Zoe asserts that although an individual may claim that English is their first language both in terms of acquisition and dominance, they 'may not actually be functioning at the same kind of fluency as their foreign counterparts' (personal communication, April 14, 2016). Zoe assesses the current linguistic abilities of Singaporean students' to be lacking when compared to their counterparts in Inner Circle countries, despite the fact that half of the incoming student population coming from English-speaking households (personal communication, April 14, 2016).

The difference in opinion between educators and policy-maker provides a potential insight into the complicated relationship between linguistic insecurity and ownership in the nation. In Chapter 2.1.3, it was stated that a native speaker was defined by his or her 'birthright, competence and proficiency in the language and by having received education

through the target language as the medium of instruction in school' (Low, 2015, p. 134).

Given that the official MOI has been English since 1987 and that there is an ever-increasing number of Singaporeans who were born into English-speaking households and thus acquired the language as their first, it is only the alleged sub-standard English proficiency of the aforementioned group of Singaporeans that is barring them from claiming native speaker status of English and thus linguistic ownership of the language. This would then give further credit to the idea that the state creates and reinforces the narrative of linguistic insecurity to as a means to prevent claims of linguistic ownership from the people.

Zoe also provided another reason as to why Singaporeans are unable to claim native-speaker status: Singapore is not regarded as an English-speaking country. Zoe explains that native speakers are 'defined by their country of birth' and that only individuals 'specific to countries where English is the predominant language' could be described as having native-like fluency (personal communication, April 14, 2016). When asked which countries were considered to have English as the predominant language, Zoe listed Inner Circle countries, such as North America, Britain, Australia, etc.

This leads to the next area of discussion: Singapore's identity in regards to the use of English in the nation – i.e. can Singapore be considered an English-speaking country or merely a country in which English is spoken? While the two descriptions seem as though they differ only in the arrangement of words, the label of 'English-speaking country' carries a crucial significance as 'native speakers' are typically accorded such a status due to their birth and long-term residence in such a country. Although most scholastic definitions of native speakers tend to hinge more on factors such as age of acquisition and linguistic and communicative competence (see Bloomfield, 1933; Davies, 2003; Mukherjee, 2005), the conventional notion of a native speaker is still very much tied with the speaker's country of birth. Even Kachru, in his earlier works, tended to define native speakers based on their

country of birth (as cited in Low, 2015). The problematic nature of the conventional concept of native-speaker identity and status – i.e. its tendency to be a political distinction instead of a linguistic description – has already been discussed in Chapter 2.1.3, wherein it was detailed how such a concept could be used to naturalize the narrative of linguistic insecurity in Singapore.

The exact conventional notion of what constitutes a ‘native speaker’ could be seen in Zoe’s statements. Even when Zoe elaborated on fluency as another factor, they used the term ‘native-like fluency’, suggesting that there were non-linguistic factors involved in the conferment of the ‘native-speaker’ label. The views expressed by the educators fall along a similar vein. Only Anna regarded Singapore as an ‘English-speaking country’ due to English’s prominent status in the nation, while Brooke, Charlie and Diane all expressed that Singapore was only a ‘country in which English is spoken’ due to her multilingual society. Elle view on this is the most explicit:

Language thrives in an environment where it is used and unless the child is exposed to the language from the day he is born and grows up in an English-speaking environment, he will never be able to use the brand of English which is used in English-speaking countries. As long as there is some interference from another language, in this case, Mother Tongue, the English he uses will be tainted and will never be as ‘pure’ as that used in English-speaking countries.

- Elle, personal communication, May 31, 2016

It can be seen from Elle’s response that underlying the state’s perception of who is and is not a native speaker is the prerequisite of a monolingual society, something that Singapore would never be. Additionally, Charlie stated firmly that Singapore was not a native English-speaking country due to the pragmatic nature of English in Singapore, which echoes the instrumentalist treatment of English in statal discourse in Chapter 3.2.1. However, more

significant are Brooke's, Charlie's and Elle's perceptions as to why Singapore is not an 'English-speaking country': her multilingual society. This seems to suggest that only effectively-monolingual countries could be native 'English-speaking countries', which thus removes any possibility of Singaporeans claiming the identity of native English speakers as Singapore. This notion, along with the idea of a 'purity' in English what was mentioned in Chapter 3.2.1, brings the discussion back to a familiar point: the 'doctrine of correctness' and its contribution to linguistic insecurity in Singapore.

In conclusion, Chapter 3 has shown the myriad of ways the state has created and reinforced the narrative of linguistic insecurity in Singapore through discourse and policy. Chapter 3.1 illustrated how the instrumentalist treatment of the English language in Singapore allows for its strict evaluation and regulation. This instrumentalism then provides the state with the foundation on which to construct the image of Singaporeans as bad speakers of English and also allows the state to set an absolute but abstract standard of English that Singaporeans could not meet, two of the most powerful aspects of the linguistic insecurity observed in the nation. Furthermore, such a treatment serves as an effective obstacle to possible claims of linguistic ownership of English in the country by 'othering' English while designating the respective mother tongues as vessels of linguistic identity and equating local linguistic development to 'bad English'. The invalidation of Singaporeans' claims of linguistic ownership on English is further strengthened by the nation's English language policies. The same absolute but abstract 'English' is used as a yardstick in order to ensure that Singaporeans would always fall short, thus remaining inferior to speakers in the Inner Circle countries. The state's subtle but unyielding exonormative orientation to Inner Circle Englishes and the conventional idea of a 'native speaker' also casts Singaporeans as second-class English speakers that have no claim to the language beyond a functional dimension. All the aforementioned is then institutionalized in the nation's EL policy, which is

in turn executed by EL educators who themselves seem to have internalized the narrative of linguistic insecurity.

Thus, a complicated relationship between linguistic insecurity and ownership has been uncovered in this chapter and tentative analysis points towards the state is utilization the former in order to prevent the latter. The next question is: how does the state achieve its politico-linguistic aims in shaping the role and nature of the English language in Singapore through this narrative of linguistic insecurity? This will be discussion in the next chapter, wherein the ‘channels’ involved in the dissemination of the aforementioned narrative are examined.

4. CHANNELS

While Chapter 3 has explored the ‘producers’ of the narrative of linguistic insecurity in Singapore and their views on the role and nature of the English language in Singapore, Chapter 4 will examine the ‘channels’ through which the state disseminates the various messages regarding the English language in the nation and further reinforces the narrative of linguistic insecurity and its underlying linguistic ideology in Singapore.

4.1 Methods

While Chapter 4 looks at the ‘producers’ and their messages regarding the English language and its speakers in Singapore, Chapter 4 examines the ‘channels’ through which these messages are spread. There are two main ‘channels’: the SGEM and mass media. The aim of Chapter 4 is to compare and contrast the ‘channels’. The list of materials being analyzed in Chapter 4 is as follows (the full list of sources can be found in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 of the bibliography):

1. The Speak Good English Movement (SGEM)
2. Newspaper articles on topics involving the English language in Singapore from the following newspapers:
  - a) The Straits Times
  - b) The Business Times Singapore
  - c) The New Paper
  - d) TODAY
  - e) My Paper

The first area of research interest in Chapter 4 is the SGEM. Launched in 2000 by then Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong, the movement has been a yearly affair designed to urge Singaporeans to better their English. Although launched by a Prime Minister and supported by the state, the SGEM is considered a ‘channel’ rather than a ‘producer’ due to the lack of direct governmental involvement. Instead, the SGEM is spearheaded by a committee comprised of ‘key academics and professionals in Singapore’ (SGEM, n.d.). This is reflected in the chairpersons for the various SGEMs thus far:

1. 2000 – 2004: David Wong, senior adviser with professional services firm Ernst and Young
2. 2005 – 2007: Koh Tai Ann, English professor at Nanyang Technological University
3. 2008 – present: Goh Eck Kheng, managing director of publishing company Landmark Books

The data gathered from the SGEM website is split into two main categories: publicity materials (e.g. speeches, media briefings, fact sheets, etc.) and language resources. As mentioned in Chapter 3.1.1, much of the ministerial speeches relating to the English language in Singapore were delivered in the context of SGEM, given that all of the Guests of Honor were Members of Parliament at the time. Speeches from the chairperson were also included. In total, there were 28 speeches. In addition to the speeches, other materials such as fact sheets and press releases were included due to the fact that they are available on the SGEM website and thus publicly accessible. There were a total of 28 publicity materials, bringing the total number of SGEM texts to 56.

The other area of research interest in Chapter 4 is mass media in Singapore, specifically print media. The extensive reach of mass media and the authority accorded to particular outlets (i.e. eminent newspapers and broadcasters such as the New York Times or

the British Broadcasting Company) results in a great amount of influence over the public (Cameron & Panović, 2014). Another consideration is the role of media in Singapore as a nation-building tool, which differs considerably from Western media that acts as the ‘watchdog of the government’ (Bokhorst-Heng, 2002, p. 560). A clear illustration of the role of media in Singapore can be seen in statements from two of Singapore’s prime ministers. In 1971, Lee Kuan Yew stated in a speech the general assembly of the International Press Institute that press freedom in Singapore was ‘subordinated to the definition and integrity of the nation’ and to the ‘purposes of the elected government’ (Lee, 1971). In another instance, while speaking to members of the press, Goh Chok Tong stressed that the ‘media has an important role in nation-building’ (Goh, 1998). Thus, the state has defined the ‘proper’ role of the press in Singapore to be one that communicates, educates and advocates for government policies and the related ideas and values (Mauzy & Milne, 2002, 137). For example, editorials that the state deems inappropriate will be censured and an ‘Out of Bounds’ marker raised to denote that the content has overstepped the limits of what is politically acceptable (Mauzy and Milne, 2002). Resultantly, the press in Singapore must ‘accept the subordinate role given to it by the Executive’ (Tey, 2008, p. 882). This subordination of the press can be observed in the existence of the Newspaper and Printing Presses Act (NPPA), which allows the Minister to grant or withdraw a license for the ownership and operation of a printing press at his or her own discretion (Tan, 2011). As can be seen, the media is a crucial site in which state discourses about the English language in Singapore are interpreted, reinforced or even constructed. Therefore, while the SGEM is the most explicit ‘channel’ for the ‘producers’ to disseminate their messages, the mass media can be considered as its implicit counterpart.

Specifically, newspaper articles from five English newspapers in Singapore formed the objects of analysis, the detailed curation of such materials allowing for more accurate

analysis. All the news articles analyzed were gathered from the *LexisNexis Academic* and *Factiva* databases and contained one or more of the keywords '(good/bad) English', 'language standards', 'language education', 'mother tongue' and 'native speaker(s)'. As the aim was to compare and contrast the two 'channels', the collection of the news articles was constrained to a particular timeframe: 10 years before the launch of the SGEM (1990) to the present day. Articles written up to ten years before the launch of SGEM were included to see if elements of the SGEM could be seen in mass media discourse in the years leading up to the launch of the movement.

A total of 59 articles were collected. 51 of them are hard news articles covering an event related to the English language in Singapore, while 8 were commentaries about the language from the various papers' editorial staff. Given the contentious status of English in Singapore, there was a considerable amount of opinion pieces consisting of public letters and guest writers. However, those were excluded due to the fact that the writers were not official staff and articles produced by them therefore could not be considered to be representative of the newspaper. 51 articles were written after the launch of the SGEM and 8 were written up to ten years before.

4.1.1 Frame Analysis. Frame analysis is the method utilized for this chapter. Robert Entman (1993), whose work is generally regarded as the starting point of media frame analysis, states that to frame the content an audience will receive is to 'select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described' (p. 52). Jamieson and Waldman (2003) expand on the metaphor at work, describing a media frame as 'a fixed border that includes some things and excludes others', thus '[determining] what information is included and what

is ignored' (p. xiii). Thus, what makes media frames such a powerful tool is not that they are able to dictate what the audience thinks, but that they can shape public knowledge and opinion through the process of regulating the audience's attention and their perception of facts (Gandy, 2002).

It must be noted here that frame analysis differs from the discourse analysis employed in Chapter 3. The latter merely aims to understand the role and nature of the English language in Singapore by analysing all the statal discourse and language policy that has been created by the state. In contrast, the former is meant to unearth the implicit intentions of the two channels through the analysis of what content (related to the English language in Singapore) the channels choose to present and how they present it. That is, while discourse analysis examines content, frame analysis concerns itself more with the management of content and how this helps to achieve certain goals or agendas. This leads to the next difference between the two types of analysis: frame analysis is critical in nature as compared to discourse analysis' investigative one. Frames analysis operates on the assumption that the mass media have an agenda or particular goals and aims to uncover these agendas and/or goals, whereas discourse analysis does not have such considerations and merely explores and examines discourse.

In the Singaporean context, the two channels' use of frames to mold public perception and opinion of the role and nature of English in the nation can be particularly potent, as the frames have the potential to naturalize the axioms on which the narrative of linguistic insecurity rests. Even if the message from a channel is clear (e.g. that of the SGEM, which is to speak better English), frames analysis would reveal the means by which the movement justifies and naturalizes the need for Singaporeans to heed its message. This analytical method is similarly effective when applied to the other channel, as it would uncover how Singapore media frames news relating to English in Singapore and the effects of such frames.

It also complements the discourse analysis of ministerial speeches in Chapter 3.2 in providing an insight into how closely do the ‘producer’ and ‘channel’ align in their presentation of the narrative of linguistic insecurity: does Singapore media really frame its journalistic coverage of English in Singapore according to the aims of the state?

There are two general types of frames that are sought after in frame analysis: issue-specific frames and generic frames. Issue-specific frames, much like the name suggests, are frames that are only salient when activated in the context of a particular topic or event (de Vreese, 2003). For example, Reese and Buckalew (1995) explored the specific frames that were activated by the American media during the Persian Gulf War in order to position any opposition of the war as unpatriotic. The frames utilized during this period, however, were only functional during the war. On the other hand, generic frames are those that can be utilized in different issues, temporal periods and even cultural contexts. (de Vreese, 2003). Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) are credited with the identification of the five generic frames that appear across all news media: ‘conflict’, ‘human interest’, ‘attribution of responsibility’, ‘morality’ and ‘economic consequences’. Given the nation and culture specific nature of the linguistic insecurity in Singapore, this paper sought issue frames during the analysis of the data. While some scholars approach analysis with the frames already predicted, an inductive approach was adopted for this study. This was so as to avoid undue influence of any pre-conceived notions and expectations held by the researcher. It must be noted that frame analysis remains a subjective research method, due to its dependence on the researcher’s identification and interpretation of frames. However, measures to lessen the impact of such subjectivity were taken: a set of frame criteria was utilized in the process. The frames must (adopted from Capella and Jamieson, 1997, pp. 47):

- 1) Possess distinct conceptual and linguistic features – That is to say that the frame must not only be identifiable from its effects on the audience in telling them what to think about, but also from linguistic characteristics in the text.
- 2) Be ‘commonly observed’ – In the context of the present study, it means that the frame must be observable in at least 20 percent of the data, rounded to the nearest whole number (i.e. appearing in at least 11 SGEM texts out of 56 and appearing in at least 12 news articles out of 59).
- 3) Be reliably differentiated from the other frames – This criterion is meant to ensure that the frames would be recognized by, and therefore affect, the average media consumer.

In both sets of texts, 7 frames were identified. Frames achieve the objectives motivating their utilization through four processes: 1) specify the issue, 2) determine the causes, 3) make judgments through evaluation of causal agents and their effects and 4) offer solutions (Entman, 1993). More than one process can be and often is carried out within a single frame. In the interest of organization, the frames discussed in this chapter will be sorted according to their most explicit process. For example, the frame ‘Reading’ is clearly offering a solution by stating that the act of reading would improve an individual’s proficiency in English. However, it is also implicitly defining a problem: an individual’s proficiency in English needs improvement.

This chapter will be organized into two broad sub-sections, each discussing the frames uncovered in the two sets of data detailed: texts from the SGEM and print articles from the five English newspapers in Singapore. The SGEM is the main anchor of this chapter, with print media serving as a complementary data source (i.e. only articles published up to 10 years before and during the run of the SGEM will be analyzed). This is due to the SGEM’s prominence and support from the state. As such, the aim of this chapter is to analyse

the means through which the SGEM disseminates and reinforces the narrative of linguistic insecurity. After which the newspaper articles published 10 years before and during the SGEM are similarly analysed in order to ascertain the degree of congruency between the two ‘channels’ in their propagation of the narrative of linguistic insecurity. Each sub-section will be further arranged according the various functions of each frame.

4.2 Speak Good English Movement

Figure 2. Frames and frequency of utilization in SGEM texts

There were a total of seven frames in the SGEM texts. Of those seven frames, one specified an issue (Frames 1), and six offered a solution (Frames 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7). The various frames will be discussed in that order. Figure 1 below provides an overview of the seven frames and their respective frequencies.

A point of consideration here is the nature of the SGEM. The very foundation of the movement is the axiom that the English spoken and used in Singapore does not meet a particular standard and needs improvement. This could also provide some explanation as to why the majority of frames employed in SGEM texts offer a solution.

4.2.1 Frame 1 – ‘English as Capital’. The first frame is hugely centered on English’s economic and cultural capital, derived from its status as both the international language of trade and technology and Singapore’s working language of administration. Here, some time must be taken to define ‘capital’, a concept most associated with French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. Bourdieu viewed certain forms of power in society as ‘capital’, a concept he repurposed from economics, and there were two types of capital that he felt were crucial: economic and cultural (Benson & Neveu, 2005; Hanna, 2016). Economic capital is rather straightforward in referring to either money or asserts that could be converted into such, while cultural capital revolves around the idea of knowledge and skills that can be embodied in an individual or distilled into an object (Benson & Neveu, 2005; Hanna, 2016). Cultural capital can also be converted to economic capital in certain circumstances (Hanna, 2016). In this context, English is presented as having immense economic capital as it is the international language of trade and Singapore’s working language, as well as possessing an almost equal amount of cultural capital as it is also the foremost language in the arenas of science and technology. This relates to what was discussed in Chapter 3.2.1 as well.

The ‘English as capital’ frame is employed in the majority of the texts, appearing in 30 out of the 56 SGEM texts and focuses heavily on the economic capital the English language possesses. Often it is used to highlight the importance of English due to its international status and can either explicitly or implicitly point out the economic losses to both nation and individual if Singaporeans either 1) continued to speak and use bad English or 2) did not take actions to improve their proficiency of the language. This frame is often employed both implicitly and explicitly. Typically, when the frame is applied in the national context – i.e. English is the working language of Singapore – it is done so in an implicit manner.

The thirst for English across the globe exists for a reason. English is the international language of scientific and technical discourse, as well as the language of global business and diplomacy. It is the language of the Internet. Given its widespread use, the ability to speak good English is clearly a distinct advantage when doing business and communicating with the world. This is especially so for a country like Singapore, which is both a hub city and an open economy. Speaking good English translates into a key competitive advantage for us as we vie in the global marketplace for trade, talent and investment. It enables us to escape our small geographical confines and reach out to the rest of the world.

- Teo Chee Hean, 18 April 2002

Over the years, our people have made good progress in learning English. English has been key to Singapore's competitive edge in a globalized economy. However, our neighbors and the Asian economies are working hard to improve the standard of English of their workforce. The Chinese in PRC are learning English in droves and a percentage of them are highly proficient users of the language. As the economy diversifies and as we look towards opportunities outside of Singapore, it is imperative that we take the learning of English and our mother tongue very seriously.

- Lui Tuck Yew, 25 July 2006

Such texts echo the characterization of English seen in Chapter 3.2.1, positioning English as the international language of trade that allows Singapore to progress in today's global economy. It is the use of English and thus access to the language's economic capital that has provided the nation with her 'key competitive edge'. This in turn demarcates an issue: Singaporeans would cause Singapore to lose this 'competitive advantage' if they did not

speak what the SGEM defines as ‘good English’ (the definition of ‘good English’ will be discussed below). Even when the text seems to present a positive comment on the nation’s standard of English, the message remains unchanged: Singaporeans must continue to work on their proficiency in the language, implying that the ideal standard remains out of reach.

But achieving wider English usage is only half the battle. It is equally, if not more important, to get Singaporeans to speak good, standard English, which will be understood not only by Singaporeans, but by English speaking people all over the world, rather than Singlish, a local dialect unique to Singapore. We need to plug into the global economy, developing ourselves into an attractive hub for foreign MNCs and talent, and linking up with the rest of the world through trade and investments.

- Lee Hsien Loong, 5 April 2001

This frame is employed not just to impress upon Singaporeans to improve their standard of English, it can also be employed to discourage the use of Singlish by highlighting the colloquial variety’s lack of economic capital. Consequently, Singlish can then be identified as a problem due to its negative impact on Singapore’s potential as an international trade hub.

This year, we are focusing on our youth and young working adults. We hope to drive home the importance of having a good command of English at the workplace. English is our working language, and it is important that we are able to communicate effectively in English. At work, the wrong choice of words can lead to misunderstandings and potentially costly mistakes. The inability to present clearly can lead to your proposal not getting accepted by your bosses. This would be a pity, since

many of us actually do have good ideas to contribute, but may stumble when we try to convey them clearly and concisely

- Lawrence Wong, 15 May 2013

Employment of this frame can also be applied to define problems at a smaller scale and it is often done in an explicit manner. While the first three excerpts detailed issues that could arise from Singaporeans' 'bad English' at the national level, the above excerpt addresses detriments of 'bad English' at a personal level. An individual's lack of proficiency in the language could lead to 'costly mistakes' that have adverse effects on their career. The message here is that 'bad English' could potentially hinder an individual's progress, echoing the aforementioned problems highlighted by this frame.

Thus, it can be seen how of Frame 1 'English as capital' can be utilized to define several problems that need addressing in the English language situation in Singapore. The problems defined using this frame very much parallel Theme 1 discussed in Chapter 4.1. The economic losses to both nation and individual brought about by the use of sub-standard English rests on the same foundation as the instrumental characterization of English in Theme 1, thus achieve the same effects: creating the notion that Singaporeans must speak a SGEM-defined 'good English' in order to solve the problems defined by Frame 1. This in turn feeds into the narrative of linguistic insecurity by reproducing the notion of a singular and absolute standard in an idealized but abstract 'English', a standard that cannot be met and only serves to undermine Singaporean speakers' linguistic abilities.

4.2.2 Frame 2 – 'Effective communication'. The central idea of Frame 2 is the notion of effective communication, something that can only be accomplished through the use of 'good English'. This frame is closely linked to Frame 1 and the two frames are often

employed in tandem. Also, Frame 2 relates to the same point brought up by Zoe in Chapter 3.3, in which Zoe talks about how Singaporeans remain ineffective communicators due to their lacking language standards. Frame 2 then, suggests a remedy to two problems: 1) potential economic losses to nation and individual due to the use of ‘bad English’ and 2) the poor standard of English in Singapore. As such, there are two levels to Frame 2: 1) achieve effective communication and 2) speak ‘good English’ for effective communication.

The remedy offered in the first level of Frame 2 performs a functional role, whereas Frame 2 is invoked to highlight the necessity of effective communication to counter the economic losses that the use of ‘bad English’ may incur.

Singapore had a head start in business and trade because we chose English as our working language. Indeed, when I meet overseas counterparts, they often ask how we have been able to achieve the good standard of English in Singapore. We need to keep this competitive edge by continuing to speak well and communicate effectively in English.

- Teo Chee Hean, 28 August 2009

Recently, I had a meeting with several Singaporean bankers – these are people who have done well in their careers and are now in management positions in their banks. I asked them how we can nurture more Singaporeans like them to become future leaders in our financial sector. And I was struck by their reply. No one mentioned the need to get a good business degree. Instead, all of them emphasized the importance of communication skills.

- Lawrence Wong, 15 May 2013

As can be seen, Frame 2 can be employed to address the issue of economic losses on both national and individual level, thus providing a solution to the multiple problems brought up in Frame 1. The message in both excerpts is that the skill of communication will provide a crucial economic advantage that must be learnt. The emphasis on the notion of ‘effective communication’ then brings about the question: what exactly does the SGEM define as ‘effective communication’?

"This has been an exciting project for Dream Academy and there was never a dull moment for us. It has certainly heightened our awareness of the importance of communicating effectively in Standard English. As theatre practitioners, communication is important and we should all aim towards a proficiency in Standard English. Even if we were to use any colloquialisms in our performances, we must have the ability to differentiate Standard English from broken English. That foundation is critical for effective communication." says Selena Tan of Dream Academy®.

- SGEM 2014 Press Release

The tagline also conveys our message that communicating well goes beyond the use of correct grammar and accurate vocabulary. It means using words and expressions suitable to the occasion. Speaking good English is not just about being understood but about also expressing oneself well.

- Goh Eck Kheng, 24 August 2009

According to the SGEM, ‘effective communication’ is achieved through the use of ‘good standard English’. The movement creates an unyielding one-to-one relationship between the

two, implying that Singaporeans would be unable to communicate if they were to remain as sub-standard speakers of English. Here, the remedy presented in the second level of Frame 2 is visible. Through the equation of ‘effective communication’ to ‘good English’, SGEM is able to address the larger problem of poor English in Singapore. However, Frame 2 is remarkable in that the notion of ‘effective communication’ attempts to move beyond the functional and prescriptive approach that has characterized most of the state’s treatment of the English language and talks about ‘expressing oneself well’ for its own sake.

Thus, the utilization of Frame 2 still serves the larger purpose of impressing upon Singaporeans the need to speak ‘good English’. However, it is utilized in a different manner as compared to Frame 1, despite the similarities in goal. Beyond the difference in explicit function (identification of problem vs. offering of solution), Frame 2 differs from Frame 1 in its divergence from the state’s customary functional approach to the role of the English language in Singapore, providing additional evidence of what seems to be the state’s growing acceptance of English’s expansion into more private domains.

4.2.3 Frame 3 – ‘Rules’. The first two frames pointed towards the use of ‘good English’ as the solution. This then raises the question of what is ‘good English’? Frame 3 answers this by presenting the definition of ‘good English’ as grammatical English pronounced accurately, i.e. English that follows the ‘rules’ of grammar and pronunciation. So strong is the emphasis on grammar rules as the pillar of ‘good English’ that it was the central theme of the 2014 SGEM (Goh, 2014).

Ladies and gentleman, we have no guest-of-honor for this year’s launch of the Speak Good English Movement. No, we have not been stood up. We did not invite one. This is because we want Grammar to take center stage. Today, grammar rules. For all the

years of the movement, we have encouraged Singaporeans to speak 'good English', 'Standard English', and 'English that is used and understood around the world'. This year, we feel that it is time to say that this English that we are promoting is also grammatical English. Grammar provides structure to the English language. It comes in the form of rules. And since we Singaporeans are so good at following rules, we think that it will work.

- Goh Eck Kheng, 28 May 2014

We are often asked what we mean when we say “speak good English” or “standard English”. I would like to reiterate that it is not about a “correct” accent or about “Singlish”: it is about pronunciation and using grammatically correct English that is generally acceptable as “standard”...

- Koh Tai Ann, 24 July 2007

Just by learning one grammar rule or how to pronounce a word a day will improve our English standard significantly.

- Yaacob Ibrahim, 27 September 2012

In this frame, the focus on grammar as the hallmark of ‘good English’ provides the solution to the problem of poor language standards in Singapore: Singaporeans merely need to grasp and utilize the appropriate grammar rules and their proficiency in the language will improve accordingly. It seems an exceedingly simple solution to the issue of the bad English in Singapore, especially ‘since...Singaporeans are so good at following rules’ (Goh, 2014).

However, this promotion of grammar rules and proper pronunciation is the poster child for the ‘doctrine of correctness’ discussed in Chapter 2.1, a creed used by the ‘self-

appointed language elite’ to discriminate against speakers whose speech does not conform to the ‘standard’ (Baron, 1976). Although the SGEM does not discriminate, by according such significance to language ‘rules’ and thus once reproducing the notion of an absolute standard in English, the movement is able to undermine Singaporeans as speakers of the English language and sustain the narrative of linguistic insecurity in the nation by using the ‘rules’ frame to highlight their supposed poor command of the language. Moreover, the use of ‘rules’ also naturalizes the notion of a language authority: the SGEM and/or the state. This then strengthens the SGEM’s ability to prescribe either itself or a sanctioned entity as the ‘language authority’ that Singaporeans should defer to. Given the general exonormative orientation towards the Inner Circle varieties seen in both the statal discourse of Chapter 3.2 and English language education policy in Chapter 3.3, it would be fair to say that the ‘language authority’ appointed by the SGEM would be the Inner Circle countries. This leads back to the invalidation of the notion of linguistic ownership in Singapore as well. The ‘rules’ frame invokes the idea that Singaporeans must adhere to the linguistic rules of others as they do not own the language.

4.2.4 Frame 4 – ‘Intelligibility’. The exonormative orientation indirectly promoted by the use of Frame 3 features more prominently in the employment of Frame 4. This frame is similar to Frame 3 in its provision of a definition for ‘good English’: English that is internationally intelligible. Frame 4 thus provides a solution to the larger problem of ‘bad English’ in Singapore.

Let me quickly state the objectives of the Movement. It aims to encourage Singaporeans to speak good English, that is, grammatically correct English; Standard English that is understood around the world.

- Goh Eck Kheng, 19 August 2008

This year, the Speak Good English Movement continues with its mission to encourage Singaporeans to speak Good English – English that is intelligible to English speakers all over the world.

- Koh Tai Ann, 25 July 2006

Guided by this year's tagline, "*Be Understood. Not only in Singapore, Malaysia and Batam.*" the Speak Good English Movement 2006 is urging Singaporeans to make a conscious effort to read, listen to, write and speak Standard English that is understood not just locally, but internationally.

- SGEM 2006 Press Release

Standard English is English that conforms to the rules (grammar and pronunciation) of the language and can be understood by English speakers anywhere.

- SGEM 2010 Fact Sheet

Frame 4 also presupposes and specifies another problem: the (local) English spoken by Singaporeans is not intelligible to the rest of the English-speaking world. The employment of Frame 4 is typically explicit. Most, if not all, of the 25 SGEM texts in which Frame 4 is activated mentions specifically that a central feature of 'standard/good English' must be understood by English speakers outside of Singapore. Unsurprisingly, Frame 4 and the effects of its utilization very much parallel Theme 2.3 discussed in Chapter 3.2.

However, research has shown that the English spoken by Singaporeans is very much intelligible to a large population of English speakers around the world. Tan and Castelli

(2013) demonstrated that Singaporeans' English speech was not only intelligible to participants from the Inner Circle countries, East Asia and Southeast Asia, it was more intelligible than Americans' English speech to participants in East and Southeast Asia. This demonstrates that the problem defined by Frame 4 – i.e. Singaporeans' English is unintelligible – is a non-existent one. Given the startling contrast between the SGEM's messages and the actual situation on the ground, it seems that the utilization of Frame 4 only serves to further the dissonance between the portrayal of English language standards in Singapore and the reality of it. More importantly, it also maintains the subtle exonormative orientation that has so far been evidenced repeatedly in Chapter 3.

4.2.5 Frame 5 – 'Environment'. Although Frame 5, along with the following Frames 6 and 7, proposes a remedy to the problem of bad English in Singapore, it is distinct in that it provides information on how to boost the use of 'good English' in Singapore rather than detail what 'good English' is.

The key focus for the 2012 movement is to continue to encourage Singaporeans to broaden the environment where Standard English is spoken and heard in Singapore.

- *SGEM 2012 Fact Sheet*

Thus, in this next phase of the Movement, we are expanding our scope to ask those who can speak Standard English to help us create an environment where good English is spoken and used everywhere.

- *Goh Eck Kheng, 31 August 2010*

To speak a language properly, it is vital to have a conducive social environment. We can only excel in a language if people around us speak it well and if we use it often enough. Each of us, as parents, teachers, community leaders, students and the media, have a role to play in upholding good language skills so that we can inspire others by example.

- Teo Chee Hean, 18 April 2002

“To encourage as many Singaporeans as possible to acquire proficiency in Standard English, we need an environment that will support the speaking and writing of good English.”... The objectives of this year’s Movement are to raise awareness of what Standard English is and to encourage Singaporeans to consciously choose and use it in their daily lives. The use of Non-standard English is widespread and can be found on television, in schools, homes and at workplaces.

- SGEM 2006 Press Release

The ‘environment’ frame presents a solution to counter the poor English in Singapore: speak ‘good English’ at all times. The SGEM essentially calls on all Singaporeans to make an effort to speak and use ‘good English’ in all domains, so as to develop a setting in which the use of Standard English is maintained continually. The employment of Frame 5 is thus an attempt to eliminate what the SGEM views as ‘bad’ or ‘broken’ English – i.e. Singlish – by appealing to the population to choose Standard English over non-standard English.

Frame 5 also paints the act of helping to create this environment as a positive moral act, in which individuals have ‘a role to play’ in helping other Singaporeans who lack proficiency in English to better themselves (Teo, 2002). It is here that lies the other function of Frame 5: to deliver moral judgment. The individuals who fulfill the ‘role’ given to them by

the SGEM would be positively judged, as they have carried out their duty in supporting other Singaporeans in improving their English. The other side of the coin, however, would be that individuals who do not contribute to the ‘environment’ through constant use of Standard English are doing a disservice to those around them.

The top 3 factors preventing respondents from speaking good English are: their non-English speaking environment; family, friends and colleagues do not speak good English; and their own poor command of English.

- SGEM 2008 Press Release

This is the 12th year of the Movement. Over the years, we have made good progress in learning and speaking English. But there is still much we can do to improve. We have to consciously and deliberately work hard at this because the linguistic environment in Singapore is complex.

- Lawrence Wong, 10 September 2011

The ‘environment’ frame is also occasionally utilized to pinpoint a contributing factor to the larger problem of bad English in Singapore: the multilingual environment of Singapore complicates the learning and maintenance of ‘good English’. However, the SGEM places the onus mainly on Singaporeans to overcome this obstacle. In the first excerpt, the SGEM identifies three reasons for Singaporeans’ poor English standards and the first talks about the lack of an English-speaking environment, suggesting that individuals who are striving to be better English speakers should endeavor to change that environment or remove themselves from it. The second excerpt is more explicit in its message: Singaporeans must ‘consciously

and deliberately work hard' to continue improving their English despite the 'complex' linguistic environment of the nation.

The employment of Frame 5 in the above manner could also be a subtle attempt to depict Singapore as a non-native English country as it has a 'complex' 'non-English' environment. This turn then allows for the invalidation of some Singaporeans as potential native speakers of English, as Singapore is a country lacking the English-speaking tradition and environment that the Inner Circle countries possess. This argument gains some merit when the comments from the interviewees in Chapter 3.3 are considered, wherein they express that Singaporeans can achieve 'native-like fluency' but will never be considered to be 'native speakers' as Singapore lacks a history and identity as an English-speaking country (Zoe, personal communication, 2016).

4.2.6: Frame 6 – 'Role Model'. Frame 6 is built around the idea of a 'role models', individuals who can lead by example in the quest towards better English in Singapore. These individuals are identified as Singaporeans who, by the SGEM's yardstick, possess a high proficiency in English. The movement then appeals to them to be 'good role models' and to help the Singaporeans who do not speak 'good English' to improve their command of the language and thus elevate Singapore to a 'nation that speaks good English' (Ng, 2004). Hence, this places a nationalistic responsibility on the proficient speakers of English of aiding their fellow countrymen advance their language abilities.

We invite all Singaporeans who speak English well to help us raise the standard of English in Singapore. We can do this by simply being good role models because it is a fact that having good role models is a key to learning languages.

- Goh Eck Kheng, 26 August 2006

So, if each person does his or her part in speaking good English, we will be so much closer to becoming a nation that speaks good English. I encourage all of us to take the first step. Start speaking good English today, and be a living example of how it can be easy to Speak Well and Be Understood.

- Ng Eng Hen, 21 April 2004

This nationalistic obligation reveals secondary process of Frame 6: moral evaluation of the target individuals. The SGEM makes frequent mentions of Singaporeans who ‘speak impeccable English when they are at work’ only to ‘lapse into broken, ungrammatical English’ when speaking in more private domains, the same individuals who are identified as ideal ‘role models’ (Lee, 2003). The employment of Frame 6 thus judges these individuals and paints them to be unnationalistic when they use English that diverges from the SGEM-defined ‘good English’.

Parents are very important role models, particularly so in the early years of a child’s development. I would encourage parents to read good books to their children so that their children develop an ear for good English. If they are not comfortable with English, they can speak their mother-tongues with their children so that their children will develop the ability to communicate well in their mother-tongue.

- Lui Tuck Yew, 25 July 2006

Frame 6 also identifies another group of Singaporeans as ‘role models’: parents. The solution offered in this context is that their children would reap the economic and personal benefits of speaking ‘good English’ if the parents maintain the use of ‘good English’ in their household.

Correspondingly, there is a moral judgment attached: individuals who did not speak ‘good English’ to their children were bad parents. The employment of Frame 6 in such a context is far more explicit and thus impactful than what was discussed in Frame 5. This also demonstrates the SGEM’s attempts to police the language used by Singaporeans even in private domains to ensure that the role and nature of the English language in Singapore can be thoroughly regulated.

4.2.7 Frame 7 – ‘Habit’. Frame 7 is perhaps the most unique frame, which may explain its infrequent utilization in comparison to the six other frames. Its immediate function is to offer a solution: make a habit of speaking and using ‘good English’ and the English language standards in Singapore will improve.

Cultivating good speaking habits has to start from a tender age. Children emulate their parents and teachers; they learn through the examples set for them. When parents and teachers speak good English, children and students will instinctively pick up good speaking habits too.

- Ng Eng Hen, 21 April 2004

It is easy to speak good English. The first step is just to speak it the way we all have been taught in English class at school. The more one speaks standard English, the more confidence one gains in speaking it. In time, it becomes habitual," said Professor Koh.

- SGEM 2005 Press Release

We must make speaking good English acceptable at all levels. Those who already speak good English should not be shy about doing so. In the same way you would not speak broken English to a child learning to speak, you would not want to pass on bad speaking habits to those whose command of the English language is not so good.

- Lee Boon Yang, 2 July 2003

There is much congruence between Frames 5, 6 and 7 in that the solution being offered encourages the constant use of the ‘standard’ English. Habits typically follow a ‘cue-behavior-reward’ process and the employment of Frame 7 aims to instill that process: a Singaporean hears Standard English spoken around him (cue), he or she starts speaking Standard English (behavior) and thus reaps the benefits of speaking Standard English (reward) (Wendel, 2013). This thus disseminates a similar message that speaking in anything other than the defined ‘good English’ is doing harm, except that in Frame 7, the harm is done to oneself rather than to others. As such, it can be seen that the secondary process in Frame 7 is to impose moral judgment on Singaporeans who do not speak ‘good English’.

However, this frame is remarkable in the nature of the moral judgment made. The concept of habit features prominently not just in the field of human behavior (as seen above), but also in the field of philosophy, in which habit is tied to the notion of virtue. A habit that results in correct behavior – i.e. speaking Standard/‘good’ English – is a virtue, whereas a habit that results in incorrect behavior – i.e. speaking a variety of English deemed as ‘broken’ – is a vice (Peterson, 2008). Consequently, the utilization of Frame 7 paints any Singaporean that does not speak in ‘good English’ as having committed a moral failing, a vice. This makes Frame 7 the most extreme in the set of frames used in the SGEM texts, despite the seemingly benign excerpts above.

Therefore, it can be seen that the frames utilized in the SGEM texts all contribute to the reinforcement of the narrative of linguistic insecurity. Beyond the axiom that Singaporeans speak poor English that forms the bedrock of the SGEM, the seven frames are utilized to deliver a myriad of messages that add to the narrative. Frames 1 and 2 reiterate the rationale behind the push for Singaporeans to speak and use ‘good English’: the status of English as the international language of trade and technology mean that Singaporeans must speak a variety of English defined by an external authority (the SGEM or the state) in order to tap into the potential economic power of the language. Frames 3 and 4 then define ‘good English’. In the two frames, the notions of correctness and intelligibility are exploited to once again invalidate the possibility that Singaporeans may already be proficient speakers of English. Finally, Frames 5, 6 and 7 cast judgment on Singaporeans who do not speak the ‘good English’ and depicts these individuals as unnationalistic or full of vice.

The findings discussed in Chapter 4.2 would perhaps come as no surprise to many. Although the SGEM has always been careful to portray itself as a bottom-up movement, scholars regard it to be a language campaign launched by the government (see Rappa & Wee, 2006; Velayutham, 2007). As such, it is of little wonder that the objectives and goals of the SGEM would so closely align with that of the state and that the messages disseminated by the former would essentially echo the latter’s. What then of an institution that is further removed from the state? This leads to the next sub-section, wherein texts produced by the print media relating to the English language in Singapore will be examined.

4.3 Mass Media

Figure 3. Frames and frequency of utilization in print media texts

In the 61 news articles, seven frames were identified. Of these seven frames, three defined a problem (Frames 1, 2 and 3), two suggested a solution (Frames 4 and 5) and two performed a dual function in identifying causes and providing solutions (Frames 6 and 7). Figure 2 below provides an overview of the frequency of each frame's employment.

It is immediately obvious that the frames utilized in print media largely coincide with those used by the SGEM to the ends discussed above. All but one frame is identical between the two 'channels'. This preliminary observation suggests that the motivations behind the employment of such frames are similar. However, there are some differences between the SGEM's and the media's use of the various frames. The most notable one being that while the SGEM typically utilizes a frame for one explicit purpose (e.g. to offer solutions as largely seen above), the media achieves two or more equal objectives through the activation of one frame (e.g. to both highlight an issue and suggest a remedy). Resultantly, the manner in which the media contributes and/or reinforces the narrative of linguistic insecurity in Singapore is more complex and multi-faceted.

4.3.1 Frame 1 – ‘Poor language standards’. The first frame is based on ‘poor language standards’ in Singapore. Frame 1 clearly defines a problem in Singapore: The English language in Singapore either does not meet a particular standard or is undergoing a decline.

For the dispassionate observer (and listener) of the local linguistic landscape, there can be no doubt about it: Singlish is a problem. To be sure, there are many varieties of Singlish, and part of the confusion arising from the debate on declining standards of English is that people take Singlish to mean different things.

- *The Straits Times*, 2/8/1999 [Article]

I wonder where we are going with our language policies because the approach is being tried out at a time when schools have yet to fix the problem of good spoken and written English.

- *The Straits Times*, 9/3/2003 [Commentary]

How much progress has the Speak Good English Movement made, as it enters its fifth year today? It is hard to say. But I continue to hear bad English spoken every day.

- *The New Paper*, 14/5/2005 [Commentary]

The best thing that has emanated from the annual “Speak Good English” movement is not how important the use of proper English is in today's world, but instead, the truth of how badly our standard of the language has deteriorated.

- *TODAY*, 22/9/2009 [Commentary]

Frame 1 has been rather steadfastly utilized through the years to highlight the problem of poor and/or falling standards of English in Singapore. This is a very explicit frame and it serves to lay the foundation on which other frames can be employed. In a sense, Frame 1 is the explicit counterpart of the axiom that propels the SGEM as well as the narrative of linguistic insecurity in Singapore, which may also explain why it is one of the most commonly utilized frames.

Unsurprisingly, numerous articles in which Frame 1 was utilized included mentions of the SGEM. However, a somewhat unexpected observation is that of SGEM not being presented as a solution to the problem of bad English identified by Frame 1. Furthermore, there even seems to be a slight criticism about the SGEM from *The New Paper* (2005), in which the efficacy of the movement is being called into question. *TODAY* (2009) takes a more neutral stance by stating that the most positive impact of the SGEM was not that it highlighted the importance of the English language in Singapore, but that it revealed the ‘truth’ that the English language standards in Singapore had greatly declined. Although *TODAY* (2009) had not criticized the efficacy of SGEM, it also did not point to the movement as a solution.

4.3.2 Frame 2 – ‘English as Capital’. The employment of the ‘English as capital’ by the media is largely similar to that of the SGEM’s. Frame 2 accomplishes the objectives of defining a problem. It does this by reiterating the same message from the state and the SGEM: that English is the international language of trade and technology and Singapore will suffer economically if her people were not proficient in the language. This functional characterization of the English language has consistently featured in the majority of the data examined and the media continues the trend.

There is a strong link between good English and economic survival, according to Dr Jennifer Jenkins, a British socio-linguist from King's College in London. 'Frankly, money talks and at the moment it speaks through English,' she said in an interview.

- *The Straits Times*, 9/3/2003 [Commentary]

Said SRA's executive director, Ms Lau Chuen Wei: 'There have been complaints that our service standards are dropping and sales assistants are rude. 'On many occasions, they don't even realise that the Singlish phrases they use may sound rude and abrupt.'
She added that improving the standard of English of service industry workers was crucial, especially with 16,000 visitors arriving for the International Monetary Foundation-World Bank meetings in September.

- *The Straits Times*, 19/7/2006 [Article]

English gave Singapore a head start over its neighbours, but this competitive edge will eventually be lost, former Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew said yesterday. ... In order to forge ahead strongly, it is essential for Singaporeans to raise their standard of English because “it is the language of business, science, diplomacy and academia”, he added.

- *My Paper*, 7/9/2011[Article]

It (The Speak Good English Movement) hopes to help working adults remain proficient in English, in order to keep Singapore competitive in the global economy.

- *The Straits Times*, 28/5/2013 [Article]

However, the newspapers' narrative does differ from the state's rhetoric and the SGEM's objectives in focusing solely on how Singapore as a nation can benefit from the economic power of the English language. This is unlike the SGEM, which employed the 'English as capital' frame to detail how Singapore and Singaporeans can both achieve progress through better English proficiency.

Another difference between the SGEM and the media in their use of this frame is that the media tends to employ it in more of a cautionary manner, which was absent from Chapter 4.2.1. While the SGEM mentions how English is instrumental in Singapore's economic success and implies that progress will be eroded by the use of 'bad English', the media explicitly warns the audience of these losses. *The Straits Times* (2003) in particular uses the term 'survival' to invoke a strong imagery, depicting 'good English' as the life force behind Singapore's presence in the global economy. The same connotation remains in use a decade later, when the paper states that working Singaporeans must 'remain proficient' in the language to maintain Singapore's competitive edge, implying that if the standard of English were to fall, so too will Singapore economically. Likewise, *My Paper* (2011) admonishes its readers for their failure to raise their standard of English, for Singapore will lose her 'competitive edge' as a result.

It can be seen that the instrumental characterization of English as a tool for ensuring Singapore's economic and national progress is one that has been reproduced by both 'producers' and 'channels'. The effects of this characterization were discussed previously in Chapter 32 and will not be repeated here. However, it is safe to say that the media's utilization of this frame definitely reproduces and reinforces the linguistic insecurity surrounding the English language in Singapore.

4.3.3: Frame 3 – ‘Effective communication’. The notion of ‘effective communication’ is also employed by the media as a frame. The main function of Frame 3 is to allow the media to define specific problems related to Singaporeans’ lack of communication competency.

An increasingly sophisticated economy needs fast and efficient communication. To ask a rhetorical question, can Singapore afford to have the high proportion of people, as in SIA, who have little or no English?

- *The Straits Times*, 28/10/1990 [Article]

The ‘effective communication’ frame is employed in the above excerpt that Singapore would not be able to evolve into a ‘sophisticated economy’ if Singaporeans did not achieve effective communication by improving their English language standards. The excerpt was taken from the oldest news article in the data set, which was produced a decade before the launch of the SGEM, which would explain why *The Straits Times* (19901) would characterize the Singapore population as speaking ‘little to no English’. The age of this particular text also raises interesting questions regarding the commonality between the sets of frames used by both ‘channels’: was the SGEM influenced by the media, or did both ‘channels’ take their cues from the larger institution of the state? Given the congruence of narratives and messages constructed about the English language in Singapore between the state, SGEM and media, it would seem that the latter is more likely.

In an interview with *The Sunday Times*, he (Minister of State for Education, Rear Admiral (NS) Lui Tuck Yew) said Singaporeans were short-changing themselves by being strong in substance, but not in style. ... ‘At the end of the day, what you want to

be able to do with language skills is to communicate ideas and connect with people. If you don't develop your language skills fully and adequately, there is a tendency to short-change yourself. ...'.

- *The Straits Times*, 6/8/2006 [Article]

'To be able to communicate well will become increasingly important in their working lives, whether they work here or abroad,' he (Education Minister Ng Eng Hen) said. 'At the basic level, those who can communicate to market their ideas and products, or convince others, will have an edge.'

- *The Business Times Singapore*, 18/9/2009 [Article]

After the turn of the century, however, the media changed in its utilization of Frame 3 and begin defining the same problem on the individual rather than national level. *The Straits Times* (2006) outlines this problem through the use of a quote, stating to the audience that one would 'short-change' themselves if they could not communicate their thoughts due to their poor English. There is also slight moral judgment in *The Straits Times'* use of the frame above: it is the fault of the individual if they miss out on opportunities because they were unable to communicate well. However, unlike the SGEM, the media does not use the 'communication' frame to urge for the improvement of English for personal purposes. In Chapter 4.2.2, the SGEM encouraged Singaporeans to better their English so as to 'express oneself well' and moved beyond the commonly-seen instrumental stance on English (Goh, 2009). However, the media sticks firmly to the functional role of English and the respective benefits that can be accessed with a proficiency in the language.

While the SGEM uses both the 'English as a working language' and 'effective communication' frames to highlight potential disadvantages to both Singapore and

Singaporeans, the media distinctly uses each frame to address each problem in different contexts.

... the mistaken notion of young people that bad English is acceptable so long as they are understood by their peers. But isn't that what communication is all about, and language is but one of its tools? The end justifies the means, so to speak, however poorly constructed the means? What our youth do not realise is how this mentality will create a linguistic in-breeding problem that at it's extreme, make us incommunicado with the rest of the world.

- *TODAY*, 22/9/2009 [Commentary]

Notably, the media does address the argument that communication is achieved as long as interlocutors are able to comprehend one another. In *TODAY* (2009), the article talks about how Singaporean youths view that the use of non-standard English is 'acceptable' as long as they are able to achieve understanding and communication amongst one another. However, the article paints such a situation in an extremely adverse light through terms such as 'mistaken notion' and 'bad English', thus imbuing the argument, that communication has been achieved as long as all interlocutors understand each other, with negative connotations. Beyond the unfavorable treatment of such a notion, the article also utilizes the next frame – 'intelligibility' – to define the communication amongst youths through 'bad English' as a problem: Singapore would be unable to engage the 'the rest of the world'.

4.3.4 Frame 4 – 'Intelligibility'. Unlike the SGEM, one of the ways in which the media utilizes the 'intelligibility' frame to define a problem. Here, the issue is that

Singaporeans are unaware that the English they are speaking may be unintelligible to those outside of Singapore.

What vexes Professor Koh Tai Ann is that Singaporeans believe they are speaking English well, as if it is their native language. ... In her typically 'all-fired up' mode, she said: 'They become complacent and assume that others understand us. But we are actually speaking a local variety wholly intelligible only among ourselves.'

- *The Straits Times*, 15/5/2005 [Article]

“We want to give them (younger Singaporeans) the thought that they can communicate better, not only just be understood but also to use the language well,” said chairman of the movement Goh Eck Kheng at a media briefing yesterday. “I think some people don’t realise they are not speaking good English, and they don’t feel the need to speak good English because they feel they can get by with bad English, and they don’t realise that out of Singapore, they will have problems if they don’t speak English well.”

- *TODAY*, 25/8/2009 [Article]

The falsity of this claim has already been addressed in Chapter 4.2.4. However, the effects of this frame are still very much real and feeds the narrative of linguistic insecurity by incubating doubt in Singaporeans through asserting that they may be speaking ‘bad English’ and not realize as those around them suffer from the same linguistic malady. The utilization of Frame 4 in such a manner is alarmingly effective in invalidating the Singaporean individual and society as speakers of English in one fell swoop. Furthermore, the frame only accepts an exonormatively-oriented variety of English as ‘good English’. However, this

abstract variety of English remains undefined and thus can be as a yardstick to disregard the use of any local variety of English, be it Singlish or SSE.

The media also employs the ‘intelligibility’ frame in a similar manner to the SGEM to offer a solution: Singaporeans should speak and use English that is ‘internationally intelligible’ in order to overcome the problems that may be brought about by the use of ‘bad English’.

On whether language standards here are on the decline, Mr Graddol said: 'In the past, not all attended English medium schools, but now every child is taught in English. So naturally, with English being used by the masses, you are likely to have varying standards.' He said Singaporeans should aim to speak and write English in a way that allows them to be understood internationally.

- *The Straits Times*, 15/12/2006 [Article]

But what teachers need to do is expose students to a wide range of English usage from all over the world to broaden their linguistic repertoire, and train them to communicate in an internationally intelligible variety of English (some call it Globish).

- *The Straits Times*, 19/9/2011 [Article]

The Straits Times (2011) asserts that language educators should improve their student’s linguistic abilities by exposing them to ‘a wide range of English usage from all over the world’. While the paper acknowledges that there is variance in the Englishes used around the world, it oddly does not recognize the possibility that a local variety of English may have developed here in Singapore. Instead, it is proposed that Singapore students learn an abstract

agglomeration of all the Englishes found around the world. This echoes the MOE syllabi's definition of 'Standard English' in Chapter 3.3 and thus falls into the same contradictory pitfalls. Thus, the media's use of the 'intelligibility' frame uncovers the maintenance of the exonormative orientation that has been observed steadily in both Chapter 3.2 and Chapter 3.3.

4.3.5 Frame 5 – 'Rules'. The media upholds the 'doctrine of correctness' discussed in Chapter 4.2.3 through the use of the concepts of grammar and pronunciation 'rules' as a frame. Frame 5 is often employed to identify a cause of the bad English in Singapore: Singaporeans do not have sufficient knowledge of grammar and cannot pronounce words properly – that is, they are failing at English because they are not following the rules, which once again acts to naturalize the idea of a language authority that should be deferred to.

When it comes to speaking English, many Singaporeans suffer this double jeopardy - bad grammar and poor pronunciation. On grammar, I am convinced that if they take some trouble to learn the tenses and understand subject-verb agreement, half their problems will be solved. On pronunciation, I remember that when I was in primary school, teachers took great pains to make sure we pronounced words well.

- The New Paper, 14/5/2005 [Commentary]

Last week, one reader wrote to the ST Online Forum to say she was appalled by the spoken English used by mathematics teachers at an Education Ministry event, claiming it was 'full of grammatical errors'.

- The Straits Times, 20/7/2006 [Article]

While Mr Huang says his grandchildren speak 'acceptably good' English, he notices that today's younger generation often uses poor English. He said: 'I think Singlish is great and there's a place for it, but many young people today are careless with their grammar and diction. It is not helped by the fact that they use shortcuts on the Internet and in text messages.'

- *The Straits Times*, 4/10/2009 [Article]

Beyond identifying reasons for Singaporeans' bad English, Frame 5 also delivers moral judgment on these individuals through various ways. In the first excerpt, *The New Paper* (2005) states that if Singaporeans just took some effort to 'learn the tenses and understand subject-verb agreement', they would be better English speakers. This casts fault onto these individuals by portraying their lack of grammar knowledge as a personal failing through laziness on their part. Similarly, *The Straits Times* (2006) singles out certain segments of the population. The second excerpt highlights the fact that, at a MOE event, the educators' speech was 'full of grammatical errors', contrasting the traditional position of educators as authority figures with the use of 'bad English', implying that these educators had failed in their duty. In the third excerpt, it is Singaporean youth who are attacked for being 'careless with their grammar and diction', a lamentation commonly heard in regards to declining language standards. Thus, the ability of this 'grammar and pronunciation' frame to create a strict creed of an ideal 'correctness' and reinforce linguistic insecurity is once again demonstrated.

Frame 5 also offers the learning of grammar and proper pronunciation as the solution to declining English standards in Singapore. In fact, it does so even more explicitly than the SGEM.

But language experts soon found that students in Singapore needed more explicit teaching in the rules and conventions of English grammar to be really proficient in the language. So grammar was eventually reinstated in the 2001 syllabus - although not to the depth to be found in the new syllabus that will be implemented in 2009.

- *The Straits Times*, 18/10/2006 [Article]

While the movement equated Standard English to grammatical English, the media paints the learning of grammar as the ultimate solution to poor English in Singapore. In the article from which the above excerpt was extracted, *The Straits Times* (2006) claims that ‘grammar [had reclaimed its] glory in English teaching’ with the upcoming implementation of the new 2009/2010 English Language syllabus. The background of the article gives an account of how language education in Singapore attempted to teach grammar through a ‘natural, contextual’ way, but found that it eventually had to return to the explicit instruction method of rote-learning grammar rules (Liaw, 2006). This suggests that Singaporeans as English-speakers could not achieve proficiency in English through immersion, unlike the British – Inner Circle speakers – who could do so as they were exposed to ‘a home environment rich in English linguistic input’ (Liaw, 2006). Here, the ‘environment’ frame (discussed below) is utilized to construct Singapore as a strictly non-native English-speaking country and Singaporeans as second or even foreign language learners who need the explicit instruction of grammar rules to learn English.

Thus, Frame 5 not only undermines Singapore as an English-speaking country, it also sets Singaporean English speakers back by casting them as second/foreign language learners. This creates linguistic insecurity by stating that Singaporeans do not have the linguistic ability to be proficient in English without such educational measures, unlike the British.

Additionally, and perhaps more importantly, is that it extinguishes any notion that there could be linguistic ownership of English in Singapore.

4.3.6 Frame 6 – ‘Environment’. The ‘environment’ frame is employed in the news to offer the same solution discussed in Chapter 4.2.5: to improve the English language standards in Singapore, a good English-speaking environment must be created.

Other things that Mr Yeow does to help create a good English-speaking environment at home include watching television programmes from the Discovery or National Geographic channels and getting his sons to read extensively.

- *My Paper*, 8/2/2012 [Article]

The communicative approach made sense for Britain, where almost all children are immersed in a home environment rich in English linguistic input. Linguists believe that at birth, the brain is wired to automatically programme the rules of any language. For which language the brain ultimately programmes, the algorithm depends on what input it receives from its surroundings.

- *The Straits Times*, 18/10/2006 [Article]

Of course, the manner in which this solution is offered in the news varies from the SGEM. While the SGEM takes a more direct approach in stating to its audience that an ideal environment must be created, the media is subtler in its employment of the ‘environment’ frame to suggest the same remedy. The two excerpts above demonstrate this indirect approach. In the first, *My Paper* (2012) highlights the act of watching television programs from science-oriented channels and reading as the actions that can be taken by an individual

to improve his or her standard of English. However, these actions are performed in the context of adding to the 'good English-speaking environment at home'. In the second excerpt, *The Straits Times* (2006) explains why the communicative teaching method is more suitable for an Inner Circle country like Britain, as a majority of the population 'are immersed in a home environment rich in English linguistic input'. This implies that a less structured language-teaching method can only be applied in a 'good English-speaking environment'. In both cases, the 'environment' appears in the background, but is a fundamental factor in the high English language standards. This frame is employed to have what is almost a subliminal effect.

Throw in the quagmire of languages the typical Singapore student has to operate in,
the lack of home and community support for standard English, and it becomes easy to
understand the sheer magnitude of the problem.

- *The Straits Times*, 2/8/1999 [Article]

"If we do nothing, it (losing our advantage) will happen, and it'll happen relative to Chinese cities, especially," said Mr. Tharman. "We've a great advantage of a society where languages are not just taught in the classroom, but you can also use it outside ... (It) has meant also, to some extent, some pollution in the languages. So, Chinese isn't spoken very well and English is also not spoken very well."

- *TODAY*, 6/6/2006 [Article]

The English-language learning environment in Singapore is a hodge-podge: There are those who pick it up as a first language at home and those who learn it in school.

Then, there is also a group for whom the process of acquiring the language at home might be corrupted by another language.

- *The Straits Times*, 18/10/2006 [Article]

In such a "rojak" linguistic environment - there, I'm just as guilty - it is an uphill task trying to teach or master any language in its unadulterated form.

- *The Straits Times*, 7/7/2013 [Commentary]

The media also utilizes the 'environment' frame to point towards a cause of the poor English standards in Singapore: the multilingual environment in the nation. Frame 6 emphasizes how the influence of numerous languages in Singapore's social and in a Singaporean's home environments could lead to linguistic 'pollution' between languages, thus making it difficult for an 'unadulterated' Standard English to be spoken and used in Singapore. As such, it can be said that Frame 6 is used both to promote an ideal and criticize the reality.

At first glance, it seems remarkable that the Singapore print media would suggest that Singapore's multi-racial and multilingual society, as well as the nation's bilingual education, as factors that contribute to the problem, given that the two are part of the hallmarks of Singapore as a nation. However, it can be seen that the excerpts are not identifying the presence of multiple languages in Singapore as a cause of the issue, but rather the language contact that occurs between these languages. The imagery invoked by terms such as 'pollution' or 'hodge-podge' is that of a mess, or contamination, the anti-thesis of the 'pure' Standard English. This would then transform the application of Frame 6 into an implicit attack on Singlish, which is the singular product of language contact between the plentiful languages found in Singapore's linguistic ecology. This argument gains more merit when one considers that the media has described Singlish as having a syntax distinct from that of

standard English, with roots that may be traced to the influences of Chinese dialects, Mandarin or Malay' (Chua, 1998). Thus, the employment of Frame 6 also serves to achieve a goal shared by the state and SGEM: to discourage the use of Singlish.

The utilization of this frame is also a means to invalidate any claims of linguistic ownership through two points. The first is that the 'messy' multilingual environment of Singapore means that it is not an English-speaking country and quite naturally, Singaporeans cannot be native speakers of English. The second is that it undermines any local linguistic development by casting such developments as a 'pollution' and therefore invalidating the notion of a local variety of English and removing a potential site wherein Singaporeans can claim linguistic ownership.

4.3.7 Frame 7 – 'Role model'. Frame 7 is very much alike Frame 6 in that its employment serves to offer a similar solution as that of the SGEM's own utilization of the frame, but also attempts to specify a cause for the problem of bad English in Singapore.

"Parents can help by being role models. They should make the effort to speak proper English and undergo training if they can't."

- *The Straits Times*, 20/9/1999 [Article]

Teachers have to be role models and use good English when they speak and write, and seek to improve their own command of the language. Principals, too, are key to building a school culture 'where good English permeates every classroom and every interaction'.

- *The Straits Times*, 7/9/2011 [Article]

In Frame 7, the media identifies parents and teachers as the ‘role models’ that should set the example to those under their care by speaking ‘good English’. The media foregrounds the traditional role of parents and educators as authority figures with a significant set of social and moral responsibilities and then, through the employment of Frame 7, attempts to ascribe the additional task of speaking ‘good’/Standard English to this set of responsibilities (Scott, 2002). Hence, the employment of Frame 7 in the various articles carries a similar moral judgment seen in Chapter 4.2.5: parents and teachers who do not speak Standard English have effectively failed in their responsibilities as figures of authority to their children and students respectively.

For those who are not proficient in English, try to surround yourself with people who know the language well so that you can model yourself after them, and they can correct you whenever you make a mistake.

- *My Paper, 15/2/2012 [Article]*

Besides identifying the ‘role models’ who should help those around them to speak better English, the media also uses Frame 7 to place some pressure on individuals to take actions that will help them better their English. This places Singaporeans whose English proficiency require improvement in an active role as compared to the SGEM’s use of the ‘role model’ frame: to learn how to speak Standard English, an individual has to seek out the ‘role models’ and develop their English language abilities. This contrasts with the SGEM’s use of the frame, which casts these individuals in the more passive role of requiring the assistance and influence of the ‘role models’. Here, a moral judgment can also be discerned: it would be the fault of the individual as well, if he or she failed to take actions to speak and use better

English.

Said a lecturer from the English Language and Literature Department, who has been teaching for more than 20 years: "Everybody knows the standard of English has gone down. It's because there are more users of the language, many of whom are poor users, including teachers and parents who will influence their children."

- *The Straits Times*, 15/1/1992 [Article]

So, unlike the highly trained Nasa engineers and their astronauts, some of our primary school teachers are not well-equipped for launching the school careers of young boys and girls. There are those who not only speak and write wonky English, according to some in the teaching profession I spoke to, but who also hardly read after they are done with their O levels or junior college.

- *The New Paper*, 23/7/2005 [Commentary]

We need to take a hard look at the root of the problem. I cringe when parents speak poorly to their children. The problem is compounded when day-caregivers, kindergarten teachers and sometimes school teachers speak as carelessly.

- *TODAY*, 22/9/2009 [Commentary]

As just how Frame 7 proposes the solution of 'role models' leading by example to improve the overall English standards of those around them, it also points out how these 'role models' can be one of the causes of deteriorating English language standards. By establishing parents and teachers as 'role models' by virtue of their position as an authority figure, Frame 7 then measures these 'role models' with the yardstick of the ideal but abstract Standard English and

depicts them as having failed as ‘role models’ when these individuals do not meet the standard.

The New Paper (2005) in particular paints a scathing picture of educators who do not fulfill their duty of imparting the use of Standard English to their students. The primary level of education is likened to the launching pad of life and if improperly handled ‘problems will set in later, perhaps even stay for life’ for students (Lee, 2005). This delivers a hefty moral judgment onto the educators whose English does not cut the mustard: their poor English may inadvertently set their students back by not placing them in a position to reap the benefits Standard English brings. In fact, the media places an overwhelming majority of the blame on teachers in comparison to parents. Out of the 13 articles that depict parents and/or teachers who use bad English as a contributing factor to the falling English standards in Singapore, 10 single out teachers.

Thus, it can be seen that Frame 7 operates similarly to Frame 6 in that it proposes an idealistic goal as the solution while simultaneously diagnosing what seems to be a reality as the cause of a bigger problem. As such, Frame 7 contributes to the narrative of linguistic insecurity by portraying key groups of authority figures as lacking in English proficiency, which then implies that the following generation of Singapore English speakers would be similarly handicapped due to the harmful influence of the former.

It has been demonstrated that the media heavily contributes to the narrative of linguistic insecurity. Frame 1 constructs the foundation of the narrative by featuring the supposed poor standard of English in the country. Frame 2 and 3 reiterate the instrumental treatment of English, tying the use of the language to economic progress for both nation and individual, allowing for Singaporeans’ English to be constantly evaluated and regulated. Frame 4 maintains the exonormative orientation seen in both the state and the SGEM as well, similarly invalidating any local English linguistic development in Singapore. Frame 5

operates to maintain the call for a ‘correctness’ in English, which is one of the key factors in creating linguistic insecurity. Frames 6 and 7 are the most complex, working in a myriad of ways to construct an image of Singapore as a country with a poor English environment and even poorer English speakers.

In fact, it seems that the media reproduces and reinforces the narrative of linguistic insecurity to an even greater extent than the SGEM. This is a surprising fact, given that the entire motivation of the movement is to improve the supposedly poor standard of English in Singapore. The media’s multi-faceted utilization of the seven frames is more effective in naturalizing the notion that Singapore is a nation full of bad speakers of English, which is extremely potent in powering the narrative of linguistic insecurity in Singapore. Furthermore, the media’s ability to reach a large number of readers every day is another factor that contributes to the ‘channel’s’ clout.

To conclude, it is clear that the ‘channels’ very much align with the state – the ‘producers’ – in working to create linguistic insecurity in Singapore. The messages from both parties aim to achieve largely similar goals: to create linguistic insecurity so as to undermine Singaporean English speakers, which in turn would serve as a preemptive measure to guard against any claims of linguistic ownership on English in the nation. However, it is not a given that the Singaporean citizenry – the ‘target audience’ – are susceptible to the messages disseminated. This leads to Chapter 5, where the findings of the questionnaire will be discussed and it will be revealed just to what extent the narrative has been accepted, or even internalized, by Singaporeans.

5. TARGET AUDIENCE

This section examines the impact of the narrative of linguistic insecurity on the population of Singapore. While the previous two sections have laid out how the narrative is produced and disseminated in the nation, this section will reveal just how receptive Singaporeans have been to it and the extent to which they suffer from linguistic insecurity.

5.1 Methods

While Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 were concerned with the production and distribution of the narrative of linguistic insecurity, Chapter 5 seeks to understand its impact on the ‘target audience’: the Singapore population. There were two main areas of investigation: 1) what was the degree, if any, of linguistic insecurity experienced by the general population and 2) if Singaporean English speakers exercised linguistic ownership.

To uncover the answers to the two questions above, a set of conditions was created to test for the presence of linguistic insecurity in a speaker and if they exercised linguistic ownership:

For a speaker to be classified as displaying *linguistic insecurity*, the following conditions have to be met:

- Speaker’s sense/perceived inferiority of:
  - I¹ – his/her own language abilities
  - I² – other speakers’ language abilities
  - I³ – the local variety of language spoken by his/her speech community
- Speaker’s sense/perceived superiority of:

- S¹ – the language abilities of speakers from another speech community that speaks the same language
- S² – another variety of the language
- In the case that Conditions I², I³, S² and S³ while I¹ is not, the speaker can still be described as displaying linguistic insecurity, however, this insecurity does not extend to his/herself.

For a speaker to be classified as having exercised their *linguistic ownership*, the following conditions have to be met:

- Ability:
  - A¹ – the speaker is proficient in their variety of the language
- Confidence:
  - C¹ – in language use (i.e. comfortable and competent in their use of their variety of language across different situations and interlocutors)
  - C² – in language judgment (i.e. while the speaker may *refer* to external language references, he/she does not *defer* to them)
- Identity: The language is part of their linguistic identity
  - ID¹ – The language is used in the speaker's private domains
  - ID² – The speaker identifies as a speaker of that variety of the language
  - ID³ – Speaker feels that their speech community can be identified by that variety of the language

After which, a questionnaire incorporating the above conditions was crafted. The questionnaire method was chosen as large numbers of respondents were needed in order to reliably identify general trends. Excluding biographical questions, the questionnaire contained a total of 36 questions, which were organized into six broad areas: 1) language

repertoire, 2) English language use, 3) English in Singapore, 4) English language education in Singapore, 5) external language authorities and 6) language campaigns.

The first section of questions related to the respondents' linguistic repertoire, to gain an understanding of where the English language stood in relation to the other languages spoken by respondents. Respondents were asked what languages they speak and which of those they had learned from birth so as to obtain data on the respondents' 'inheritance' or 'acquisition' of English. Also, questions regarding which of the languages in their repertoire was most important to them were included to understand the dominance (or lack thereof) of English. This first section contains questions mainly designed to obtain demographic data.

The second section delved specifically into the respondent's English language use, gathering data on the domains and contexts in which they used English as well as their perception of their own English use. Questions regarding the extent to which respondents used English in their private domains – e.g. in the various branches of their social network and in their consumption of mass media – were posed to the respondents. Respondents were also asked to characterize the English they spoke and to self-rate their proficiency in English in order to gain insights into how respondents viewed their use of English. Also, hypothetical conversational scenarios were presented to the respondents, so as to obtain data on respondents' confidence in their English. This section was designed mainly to measure the linguistic ownership the respondents exercised over their use of English, but also included some measures of linguistic insecurity.

The third section contained questions meant to solicit respondents' opinions and perception of the English language in Singapore. This group of questions were designed to illicit a multitude of opinions and perception of English in Singapore, other Singaporean English speakers and the nation's linguistic identity. Attitudinal questions regarding English language standards in Singapore were posed to the respondents in order to uncover their

beliefs about the subject. Following that, respondents were also asked to rate what they perceived to be the average English proficiency in numerous countries, ranging across the Three Circles (e.g. Australia, India, China) so as to gain data on respondents' perception of the English language standards of Singapore in relation to other nations. Respondents were also asked to characterize the kind of English spoken in the nation and the kind of English they felt should be spoken. Furthermore, questions relating to Singapore's linguistic identity were designed. For example, respondents were asked which of the four official languages they most associated with Singapore and if they viewed Singapore as an 'English-speaking' country. Such questions relate to the discussion of the multilingual 'environment' of Singapore in Chapter 3.3.2, Chapter 4.2.5 and Chapter 4.3.6 as a hindrance to Singaporeans' English proficiency, as well as to Singaporeans' ability to claim the status of a 'native speaker'. Additional questions relating to the respondents' language attitudes towards the local English were included. All these questions were aimed at measuring the extent of linguistic insecurity experienced by respondents regarding English in Singapore, as well as to obtain data indirectly related to their linguistic ownership of English.

The fourth section was related to the English language education in Singapore. This group of questions are relatively small, simply containing questions regarding the variety of English that respondents thought to be taught in Singaporean classrooms today and the ideal variety of English that should be taught. These questions were mainly aimed at uncovering the respondents' perception of EL education.

The fifth section contained questions related to external language authorities that the respondents may refer to – e.g. dictionaries, grammar rules. Respondents were asked to judge the grammaticality of a sentence and the pronunciation of a word. After which, they were asked a series of questions regarding the likelihood of them referring to various language

resources. This was to test for the respondents' confidence in their own language knowledge and judgment, which is in turn related to their linguistic ownership of the language.

The final set of questions relates to the respondents' opinions and perception of the SGEM. These questions were meant to obtain respondents' perception of and attitudes towards the language campaign. This would in turn provide a measure of the linguistic insecurity the respondents experienced based on the respondents' acceptance of and belief in the language campaign. For the full questionnaire, please refer to Appendix B.

The questionnaire was administered online through the use of online form website Typeform to collect for ease of dissemination and data collection, Respondents were informed of the nature of the questionnaire, as well as of their right to terminate the session whenever. The data was collected over a period of 5 months in 2016, starting from 3rd January 2016 to 16th May 2016.

There was a total of 343 respondents. There were only two criteria that respondents had to meet in order to qualify as suitable respondents to the questionnaire: age and education level. Of these criteria, only the effects of age on the questionnaire results were considered during data analysis. The reasons for setting the two criteria and for only considering the effects of one social variable in data analysis are the same. The first criterion, age, was set due to the fact that this dissertation only concerns itself with English language policy post-independence. Therefore, potential respondents that enrolled in the primary education system before the 1966 English-knowing bilingual education policy was launched were rejected. The respondents were then grouped into the following age brackets: 18 to 22, 23 to 36 and 37 to 50. These age brackets are labelled Groups 1, 2 and 3 respectively. These divisions are motivated by the change in English language policies over the years, specifically those relating to the language of instruction in schools. In 1966, bilingual education – in the form of English and one other language – was made mandatory and respondents who entered primary

school education during and after this year belong to Group 3 (Silver, 2002). Twenty-one years later, the year 1987 saw English become the language of instruction across the national school system and respondents who began their primary education during and after this year form Group 2 (Vaish & Teck, 2008). The next division in 2001 is made along similar lines. Although there was no policy change, this division was made on the basis that the policies have matured and that there was the launch of the new EL syllabus and thus respondents who entered primary school during and after this year are in Group 1. The breakdown of respondents by age is provided in Table 19 below (additional demographic information about the respondents can be found in Appendix C):

Table 19
Number of respondents in each age bracket

Breakdown of respondents' age			
Group	1	2	3
No. of respondents	154	101	88

The other criterion was education level. All speakers were required to have obtained a minimum qualification of a Singapore-Cambridge GCE O-level to ensure that they have received at least ten years of education in the respective language(s) of instruction of the time, ensuring sufficient exposure. An additional consideration for the control of this factor was the relative homogeneity of EL education in the primary and secondary levels (discussed in Chapter 3.1.2).

Although other demographic information – such as gender, ethnicity and income level – about the respondents were collected as well, the information was not considered during the analysis of the data as the central focus of this chapter is the impact of language education policy changes on the respondents' perception of and attitudes towards their own and others' proficiency in the English language.

The findings of Chapter 5 are split into two sub-sections. Chapter 5.2 will present and discuss the level of linguistic insecurity experienced by the respondents, both as a whole and as three segments. The results from Chapter 5.2 will then be compared with the findings in Chapter 5.3, wherein the linguistic ownership exercised by Singaporeans will be analysed.

5.2 Linguistic Insecurity

As a whole, it seems that the respondents experienced linguistic insecurity about the standard of English in Singapore, expressing that they felt the English language standard in the nation needed improvement. This insecurity is further heightened when respondents compare the English in Singapore to those spoken in Inner Circle nations. However, the linguistic insecurity exhibited by respondents about Singapore's language standards does not extend to their own linguistic abilities: they are self-assured in their own English proficiency. This not only points towards a deep dissonance between the respondents' perception of their own and the nation's English language standards but also proves that the narrative of linguistic insecurity seems to have only a limited effect.

5.2.1 Linguistic Insecurity – National. To test for the linguistic insecurity respondents experienced regarding the English language standards in Singapore, they were asked to rate their agreement on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree) to the following statements:

- 'The standard of English in Singapore should be improved'
- 'The Speak Good English Movement (SGEM) is a necessary campaign in improving the standard of English in Singapore'

- ‘Employing native speakers as English language educators will help improve the standard of English in Singapore’

The threshold of agreement was set at 3.5 – i.e. if the average agreement level was 3.5 and above, respondents would be considered to have agreed with the statement and if the agreement level was less than 3.5, respondents would be considered to have disagreed with the statement.

Respondents generally felt that the English language standards in Singapore needed improvement. The respondents’ mean level of agreement to the notion that English language standards in the nation were lacking was 4.48. However, as seen in Figure 3, the three groups did differ significantly ($p=0.00$) in their mean level of agreement, with the younger respondents in Group 1 evaluating the English standard in the nation more kindly than their older counterparts. Although the mean ratings of the three groups are not drastically different, Group 1’s lower level of agreement could mean that Singaporeans in that age group are less insecure about the English language standard in the nation. To consider these results further, the lower mean rating of Group 1 points towards the possibility that the perception that Singapore’s language standard is lacking is diminishing over time and generations. This suggestion is bolstered by the fact that a post-hoc Tukey test then revealed that while there was a significant difference in rating between Groups 1 and 2 ($p=0.01$), as well as between Groups 1 and 3 ($p=0.00$), there was no significant difference between Groups 2 and 3 ($p=0.53$).

Figure 4. Respondents' level of agreement to the statement 'The standard of English in Singapore should be improved'

Figure 5. Respondents' level of agreement to the statement 'The Speak Good English Movement (SGEM) is a necessary campaign in improving the standard of English in Singapore'

A curious finding is that while respondents agree the English language standard in Singapore would benefit from improvement, not all of them feel that the language campaign SGEM was essential to this. While the respondents from Group 3 perceived the SGEM as being necessary, the respondents from the other two groups significantly differed in their sentiments ($p < 0.05$) (Figure 4). In fact, respondents in Group 1 held the opposite opinion: the SGEM is not needed. The respondents from Group 2 were the most neutral, which aligned with the overall mean level of agreement of 3.55, a rather neutral stand between ‘somewhat disagree’ and ‘somewhat agree’.

Group 3 respondents’ significant divergence ($p = 0.00$) from respondents in the other two groups could suggest that the one of the main ‘channels’ in disseminating and reinforcing the narrative of linguistic insecurity in the nation is not well-received, if it is in fact received at all, by more than half the nation’s population. However, the more notable finding from is that while respondents from Groups 1 and 2 believe the standard of English in Singapore requires improvement, they do not feel that the SGEM is necessary. That is to say that although these individuals believe that the English in Singapore requires betterment, they do not support a language campaign designed to do just that. A possible reason for this incongruity is that the SGEM has had a history of decrying Singlish, which younger Singaporeans tend to view as a marker of national identity, thus leading to the responses seen above (De Costa, 2016).

Figure 6. Respondents' level of agreement to the statement 'Employing native speakers as English language educators will help improve the standard of English in Singapore'.

In contrast, respondents were more accepting of the notion that employment of native English speakers would aid in the improvement of English in Singapore, with an overall mean level of agreement of 3.88 in contrast to 3.55 above. Figure 5 above shows the mean level of agreement for each of the three respondent groups, between which there were significant differences ($p < 0.05$). Group 3 yet again differed significantly ($p < 0.05$) from the other two respondent groups in the respondents' higher level of agreement. A possible reason for Group 3's higher level of agreement could be that the respondents in the group received their EL education during a time when EL education in Singapore was heavily modelled after that of her past colonial master – the education system was utilizing pedagogical resources from Britain throughout the 1950s and 1960 and the local-centric content did not appear in English textbooks till the 1970 (Chandrasegaran, 2005). Thus, Group 3 respondents could still regard the native speaker as the superior language educator.

The finding that the respondents – albeit some more than others – believe that hiring native English speakers would aid in improving the English language standard in Singapore more so than a national language campaign does point towards respondents' perception of native English speakers and their respective English variety and community as superior.

Indeed, findings do evidence the fact that respondents view Inner Circle nations and their English speakers as such in comparison to Singapore and her own population of English speakers.

When asked to rate on a scale of 1 (elementary) to 10 (full mastery) the level of English proficiency they perceived a nation to have as a whole, respondents rated the English proficiency in Singapore to be significantly lower than that of the United Kingdom and Australia ($p=0.00$) (Figure 6).

Figure 7. Respondents' rating of the average English proficiency in various countries.

Notably, unlike the findings discussed above, there was no significant difference between the three groups in their rating of the English proficiency in Singapore ($p=0.56$). This indicates that there is a common perception of the average language standard in Singapore amongst the respondents, one that cut across various changes in EL policy. This result suggests that the narrative of linguistic insecurity has remained consistent throughout the years and, more importantly, it also points towards respondents' internalization of the message that the English language standard in Singapore is poor. In Chapter 3, the 'producers' consistently pointed towards Inner Circle nations – in particular the United Kingdom – as the societies that spoke the standard and ideal English. Despite the fact that

most of this rhetoric was presented as the need for Singaporeans to speak an ‘internationally intelligible’ English, Chapter 3.3 especially showed that the model ‘internationally intelligible’ English was in fact BrE. Such messages from the state are manifested in this finding: although the groups of respondents differed in opinion with regards to Singapore’s English language standards in general, they all responded similarly with comparing the nation’s English proficiency to that of Inner Circle nations.

Besides their perception that the English language proficiency in Singapore is inferior to that in Inner Circle nations, respondents also felt that an Inner Circle variety of English – or a model of such a variety – was the ideal variety of English for Singapore. The respondents were asked which of the five varieties of English below they felt should be spoken in Singapore (an ‘Others’ option was included to allow for open-ended responses):

- British English
- American English
- British English with Singaporean features (local accent and some local vocabulary)
- American English with Singaporean features (local accent and some local vocabulary)
- A standard Singapore variety of English (local accent and local vocabulary)

The majority (60 percent) of respondents felt the ideal variety of English is a British-based variety, with 20.1 percent and 39.9 percent of respondents selecting ‘British English’ and ‘British English with Singaporean features’ respectively.

Table 20

Respondents' ideal variety of English that should be spoken in Singapore

Ideally, the English that is used in Singapore should be?				
	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Total
British English	17 (11%)	23 (22.8%)	29 (33%)	69 (20.1%)
American English	3 (1.9%)	2 (2%)	2 (2.3%)	7 (2.0%)
British English with Singaporean features (local accent and some local vocabulary)	63 (40.9%)	42 (41.6%)	32 (36.4%)	137 (39.9%)
American English with Singaporean features (local accent and some local vocabulary)	10 (6.5%)	1 (1%)	4 (4.5%)	15 (4.4%)
A standard Singapore variety of English (local accent and local vocabulary)	57 (37.0%)	31 (30.7%)	20 (22.7%)	108 (31.5%)
Others	4 (2.6%)	2 (2%)	1 (1.1%)	7 (2.0%)
Total	154 (100%)	101 (100%)	88 (100%)	343 (100%)

A significant segment of respondents felt that BrE with Singaporean features was the ideal variety of English that should be spoken in Singapore ($X^2 = 22.769$, $p = 0.01$). The most evident trend is the increasing number of respondents who picked BrE and the decreasing number of respondents who chose a 'standard Singapore variety of English' (i.e. SSE) as the ideal variety across the three respondent groups (from Group 1 to Group 3). It would seem that this trend could mean that younger Singaporeans are less exonormatively-oriented as compared to their older counterparts. This would suggest that the younger respondents are more comfortable with the notion of an indigenized English, perhaps due to their increased exposure to the use of English in local formal contexts after it had been accorded the status of first language in the nation and education system. However, it must be noted that the majority

of respondents in all three groups still felt that BrE with Singaporean features is the most ideal variety of English that should be used in Singapore.

Another interesting point in this data is that very few respondents across all groups felt that American English (henceforth AmE) or AmE with Singaporean features was the ideal variety of English to use in Singapore, with only 6.4 percent of all respondents picking either of the two options. Thus it seems that while the discourse surrounding English in Singapore tends to be exonormatively-oriented towards Inner Circle nations in general, the respondents are oriented towards the British specifically. This is not surprising, as the British were once the colonial masters of Singapore. However, the number of respondents who are inclined towards AmE is lower than expected, considering the public debate that has been ongoing in recent years regarding the supposed encroachment of AmE into Singapore (see Cheong, 2013 for an example).

However, despite the respondents' exonormative orientation towards Inner Circle nations with regards to their linguistic insecurity about the national English language standard, they do not wish to have completely foreign linguistic elements in their linguistic landscapes. When asked how acceptable it was for speakers on public platforms (e.g. interviewee/interviewer on mass media) to have the following degrees of accent:

- No local accent
- A slight local accent
- A strong local accent
- A foreign accent (e.g. British accent)

The respondents significantly preferred the speakers to have no local accent or a slight local accent over a foreign accent ($p=0.00$ and $p=0.00$ respectively) (Figure 7). Furthermore, respondents were equally accepting of a strong local accent and a foreign accent, a surprising finding in light of the nature of the linguistic insecurity displayed by the respondents in the findings discussed so far. Although the respondents felt that the language standards in Inner Circle nations were higher than in Singapore, the perceived superiority of Inner Circle nations did not translate fully into the respondent's acceptance of foreign accents in their linguistic landscape. This suggests that the respondents may view the local accent as an identity marker to some extent.

Figure 8. Respondents' acceptance of local and foreign accents on public platforms.

Figure 9. Respondent acceptance of local and foreign accents on public platforms (Groups).

However, this desire for a marker of local identity is constrained by respondents' linguistic insecurity about the standard of English in Singapore: they were significantly far less accepting of a strong local accent and would rather prefer no accent at all in this case ($p=0.00$). This finding reveals an intriguing dissonance in respondents. While they felt that the English in Singapore was inferior, the respondents also desire some degree of its presence as an identity marker.

That said, not all the respondents felt this way. Respondents from Group 3 were significantly less accepting of a slight local accent as compared to no accent at all ($p<0.05$), in direct contrast to the other two respondent groups who desired a slight local accent over no accent. Additionally, Group 3 was significantly less accepting of both a slight and a strong local accent ($p=0.00$ and $p<0.05$ respectively), signifying that Group 3 respondents seem to view any local accent negatively. This finding could suggest that respondents who have undergone education after English was made the MOI are more comfortable with local English use due to the increased use and thus indigenization of English. The younger respondents' acceptance of the indigenization of English in the nation may signal that these

respondents exercise more ownership over their use of the language, this will be further explored in the next sub-section.

5.2.2 Linguistic Insecurity – Individual. Although respondents seemed insecure about the English language standards in Singapore, and by association the linguistic proficiency of the other speakers in the community, they were confident in their own linguistic abilities. When asked to rate their proficiency in English in four areas (listening, speaking, reading and writing), the respondents rated themselves an average of 8.13 on a scale of 1 (elementary) to 10 (full mastery). This high mean self-rating was mainly the result of respondents from Groups 1 and 2 rating their English proficiency significantly higher than those in Group 3 ($p < 0.05$) (Figure 9).

Figure 10. Respondents' self-rating of English proficiency.

This difference between Group 3 and Groups 1 and 2 suggests that the language policy change in 1987 designating English as the MOI, and a few years later as the first language of Singapore, had a considerable impact on Singaporeans' relationship with English. The consequent increase in the respondents' English exposure at a relatively young age may have shaped them into the self-assured English speakers seen in the findings. That said, even Group 3 respondents who had undergone the bilingual education system of 1966 to

1986 viewed themselves as relatively proficient speakers of the language, thus proving that the respondents had little to no insecurity about their own language abilities.

This then raises the question of whether there is a mismatch between the respondents' perception of their own language proficiency and of the language proficiency of their speech community. There was a significant difference between the respondents' rating of their own English proficiency and the average English language standard they perceived Singapore to have ($p=0.00$) (Figure 10).

Figure 11. Respondents' rating of their own and Singapore's English proficiency

Figure 12. Respondents' rating of their own and Singapore's English proficiency (Groups).

This disparity between respondents' perception of their own English proficiency and that of other speakers in the speech community on average was observed across all three respondent groups (Figure 11), demonstrating that the narrative of linguistic insecurity has only been accepted by respondents to a certain extent. Although the respondents are still insecure about the language standard on a national standard, there is a growing individual confidence. This may prove to have interesting implications for linguistic ownership, something that will be discussed in the next sub-section.

Therefore, this sub-section has demonstrated that the respondents view themselves as proficient speakers of English and can be described as secure in their own language abilities and use. With regards to respondents' insecurity about the language abilities of other speakers and the average language standard in Singapore, the findings show that respondents exhibit significantly more insecurity. Most of the findings discussed show that respondents are still largely exonormatively-oriented towards their past colonial-masters, viewing BrE – albeit BrE with some Singaporean linguistic features – as the most ideal variety of English. More importantly, respondents rated the average English language standard of Singapore much lower than the two Inner Circle nations, the United Kingdom and Australia. The respondents all rated Singapore's English language standards similarly, indicating that the narrative of linguistic insecurity had been accepted by them in some aspects. However, further analysis showed that there was a significant difference between their perception of their own language proficiency and Singapore's, evidencing that the acceptance of the narrative of linguistic insecurity does not extend to the individual level. The other finding in which respondents displayed this sort of dissonance was their acceptance and preference of a slight local accent over a foreign accent in their linguistic landscape, but relative rejection of a strong local accent, once again displaying the limited extent to which respondents seem to have internalized the narrative of linguistic insecurity.

The fact that the narrative of linguistic insecurity is ineffective on an individual level has potentially huge implications on the linguistic ownership in Singapore: will the lack of individual linguistic insecurity mean that Singaporeans also claim linguistic ownership of English in direct opposition to the apparent aims of the state?

5.3: Linguistic Ownership

Thus far, the dissertation has discussed the possibility that the underlying goal motivating the continued reproduction of the narrative of linguistic insecurity in Singapore's contemporary linguistic landscape is to deny the claim of linguistic ownership from the population. By reiterating the notion that Singapore and her people have poor English language standards, the state could persist in their subtle but crucial exonormative orientation to the Inner Circle nations. This accords the ownership of English to those nations and by extension, the English speakers in that nation. Resultantly, Singaporeans are denied their linguistic ownership and their potential status as native speakers, thus allowing the state to maintain the delicate balance in the roles played by the Mother Tongues and English.

However, as was seen from the previous sub-section, the narrative of linguistic insecurity did not have an effect on the respondents' perception of their own linguistic abilities. Indeed, the respondents' security in their own English proficiency did translate into their ownership of the language being exercised. The respondents were extremely confident in their language use and judgment. That said, this was tempered by the respondents' exonormative orientation towards the Inner Circle nations. With regards to their own linguistic identity, respondents view themselves as speakers of a local standard variety of English, one that they state is their first language and use in private domains. When it comes to the nation's linguistic identity, however, while some respondents seem to view Singapore

as an ‘English-speaking’ country, the findings still point towards an overall rejection of the label.

5.3.1 Confidence. Respondents are extremely confident in their use of the English language across a variety of situations, however this confidence dips when speaking to interlocutors typically regarded as superior English speakers: the English Language educator and the native English speaker. In particular, the insecurity displayed by respondents in the previous sub-section manifests in a pronounced drop in confidence when speaking to a native English speaker.

On a scale of 1 (not at all confident) to 6 (very confident), respondents were asked how confident they would feel speaking English in six different situations:

1. Ordering food in a restaurant
2. Purchasing an item from high-end store
3. Speaking on the phone to customer service
4. Speaking to an English language teacher
5. Giving a presentation in a formal setting
6. Giving directions to a tourist from the United Kingdom

Situations 1, 2 and 3 were designed to obtain the respondent’s to obtain overall confidence in their English language use – a respondent’s ratings from the first three situations were then averaged out and used in the analysis. Ratings of Situation 5 were omitted as it had an element of public-speaking, which was absent from the other situations. The respondents had a mean confidence level of 5.50, a notably high number.

Figure 13. Respondents' average confidence in their use of English (Groups).

There was a significant difference between the three groups in their average confidence in speaking English across the three situations ($p < 0.05$) (Figure 12). Surprisingly, while there was a significant difference between Groups 1 and 2 ($p = 0.01$) and between Groups 2 and 3 ($p = 0.00$), there was no significant difference between Groups 1 and 3 ($p = 0.08$). It was expected that Group 1 respondents would be more confident in their English language use given that they seem to experience less linguistic insecurity as compared to the other two respondent groups. However, it is a possibility that their younger age would mean that they have had less experience with the three situations above and thus are less confident not about their language use, but about their ability to deal with situations in general.

Figure 14. Respondents' confidence in their use of English across different situations

Figure 15. Respondents' confidence in their use of English across different situations (Groups).

Respondents were less confident when speaking to an English language teacher ($p < 0.05$), as well as when giving directions to a tourist from the United Kingdom ($p < 0.05$). However, respondents were significantly more confident about speaking to an English Language educator than speaking to a tourist from the United Kingdom ($p < 0.05$). The fact that respondents are somewhat less confident when speaking to an English language teacher echoes Baron's (1976) claim that linguistic insecurity is what compels individuals to feel as

though they must ‘watch [their] grammar’ when speaking to English teachers (p. 2), evidencing the fact that while respondents may feel very confident about speaking English in both situations, they do feel some apprehension when speaking to a language educator. However, the more striking result is the considerable drop in confidence respondents report when giving directions to a tourist from the United Kingdom, a manifestation of the exonormatively-oriented linguistic insecurity experienced by respondents above. Furthermore, this finding also indicates that respondents may feel that native speakers are superior to language educators in their language proficiency, thus explaining the even greater dip in confidence when speaking to the former.

However, respondents from Group 3 do not fall into this pattern (Figure 14), reporting similar levels of confidence (or lack thereof) when speaking to both interlocutors. This is as opposed to respondents from Groups 1 and 2 who are less confident about speaking to a native English speaker as compared to an English Language educator. The fact that Group 3 did not rate their level of confidence in Situations 4 and 6 differently indicates that the respondents in that group viewed the English proficiency of the language educator and native speaker equally, thus the similar levels of lower confidence when speaking to either party. Thus, while Group 3 viewed both the English language educator and native speaker as an interlocutor with superior English proficiency, Groups 1 and 2 are more comfortable with speaking with an English language educator as compared to the native speaker. This seems to suggest one of two things: 1) the image of English language educators as individuals with superior proficiency has weakened over time or 2) the respondents from Groups 1 and 2 regard native speakers more highly than the older respondents in Group 3.

While the linguistic insecurity experienced by respondents resulted in their lack of confidence when speaking to native English speakers in particular, it did not impact the respondents’ confidence in language judgment. Respondents were asked to judge the

grammaticality of a sentence, as well as the pronunciation of a word. The aim of these questions was not to assess the respondents' language abilities, but rather to obtain the likelihood of them referring to the respective resources in their judgment above (on a scale of 1 (not likely at all) and 6 (very likely)):

- Grammar rules / pronunciation guides
- English Language teacher
- Native English speaker
- Speak Good English Movement (SGEM) resources
- Own language knowledge and/or judgment

Respondents were significantly more likely to refer to their own language judgment than to refer to any of the other four resources ($p<0.05$) (Figure 15).

Figure 16. Likelihood of respondents referring to various language resources.

Figure 17. Likelihood of respondents referring to various language resources (Groups).

This finding was similarly observed when the responses were analyzed according to groups, except in the case of Group 3 respondents. Similar to above, most of the respondents were more likely to refer to their own language judgment and knowledge, except in the case of Group 3 respondents, who were equally likely to refer to language rules, a language educator and their own language judgment. This result does somewhat align with the above finding that Group 3 respondents were equally less confident when speaking to an English Language educator and to a native speaker. Along with the finding that Group 3 speakers are equally likely to refer to language rules as well as their own language judgment, it does indicate that Group 3 respondents are less confident as English speakers. Furthermore, respondents from Groups 1 and 2 were significantly more likely to refer to their own language judgment than those from Group 3 ($p < 0.05$)

These findings are in line with the previous ones discussed indicating that respondents from Group 3 seem to be more linguistically insecure, which leads to them not exercising as much language ownership as their younger counterparts in the other two respondent groups. A possible explanation for this finding is that Group 3 respondents were educated under the bilingual education system and thus received comparatively less exposure to the English

language, resulting in less confidence in both their language use and judgment. Another point of consideration is that Group 3 respondents were shown to be more receptive to the SGEM in the above sub-section, which could in turn mean that they be more accepting of the narrative of linguistic insecurity. However, it must be pointed out that with respondents in Group 3 in particular, the causal relationship between their linguistic insecurity and their acceptance of the narrative of such from the ‘producers’ is unknown: are these respondents already insecure about their English proficiency and thus are more receptive to the narrative due to their limited exposure to English in the early years of education, or is it that these respondents simply have had more exposure or are more receptive to the narrative and are thus more insecure about their English use?

Therefore, it seems that the respondents are extremely confident English speakers – albeit slightly less so when faced with interlocutors perceived as superior to themselves. This then raises the question: although the respondents are confident in their English use and judgment, how do they perceived the English they speak? Also, what functions does English play in their lives?

5.3.2 Identity. This next sub-section discusses the findings from questions relating to linguistic identity: do the respondents view themselves as English speakers in that the language serves more than an instrumental purpose for them and do they feel that the English they speak is a distinct variety unique to their speech community?

In contrast to their choice of a locally-augmented BrE as the ideal variety of English that should be spoken in Singapore, a majority of the respondents described themselves as speaking ‘a standard Singapore variety of English’ (Table 21).

Table 21
Respondents' description of the English they speak

How would you characterize the English that you speak?				
	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Total
British English	0 (0%)	6 (5.9%)	15 (17%)	31 (6.1%)
American English	2 (1.3%)	1 (1%)	1 (1.1%)	4 (1.2%)
British English with Singaporean features (local accent and some local vocabulary)	42 (27.3%)	39 (38.6%)	29 (33%)	110 (32.1%)
American English with Singaporean features (local accent and some local vocabulary)	12 (7.8%)	10 (9.9%)	4 (4.5%)	26 (7.6%)
A standard Singapore variety of English (local accent and local vocabulary)	95 (61.7%)	44 (43.6%)	39 (44.3%)	178 (51.9%)
Others	3 (1.9%)	1 (1%)	0 (0%)	4 (1.2%)
Total	154 (100%)	101 (100%)	88 (100%)	343 (100%)

Significantly more of the younger respondents in Group 1 reported themselves as speaking ‘a standard Singapore variety of English’ as compared to the older respondents in Groups 2 and 3 ($X^2 = 37.936, p = 0.00$). Although Group 1 had the largest proportion of respondents who felt they were speaking a local standard variety of English, the majority of respondents in the other two groups also characterized the English they spoke as such. Furthermore, none of the respondents in Group 1 perceived the English they spoke as BrE, as compared to the 5.9 and 15 percent of respondents in Groups 2 and 3 respectively who did. This finding is in line with the trend that has been observed thus far, Group 1 respondents are the most comfortable and accepting of the notion of a local standard variety of English, thus suggesting that they are less insecure about their English as compared to their older counterparts in Groups 2 and 3.

Additionally, respondents felt that the English spoken in Singapore was a distinct variety. Respondents rated their level of agreement on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree) to the following two statements:

- ‘The English spoken in Singapore is different from the English spoken in other countries’
- ‘English in Singapore is a distinct variety of English with local vocabulary and accent’

The first statement was designed to test if respondents did perceive the English spoken in Singapore as divergent from the other Englishes around the world and had its own set of unique linguistic features. After which, the second statement was meant to assess if respondents felt that the English spoken in Singapore is a distinct variety or merely a non-standard form of an ideal ‘English’.

Figure 18. Respondents’ level of agreement to statements about English in Singapore.

Unexpectedly, the mean level of agreement for the second statement was significantly higher than the mean level of agreement for the first statement ($p < 0.05$) (Figure 17). A possible explanation for this somewhat unexpected result is that the respondents conflated the notion of a distinct local variety with Singlish, given the tendency to conflate any ‘local English’ with Singlish (e.g. Zoe’s comments regarding a local variety of English in Chapter 3.3.1). However, the two findings do point towards the respondents’ perception of the English in Singapore as unique to the nation. This is in direct opposition to the state,

which has thus far refused to acknowledge the presence of a local standard variety of English, choosing instead to urge Singaporeans to attain proficiency in an abstract and ill-defined ‘internationally intelligible’ English.

In fact, besides the acknowledgement and acceptance of SSE, the ‘target audience’ also seems to use English to fulfil numerous private functions that clash with what the state had explicitly laid out for the language in Chapter 4.1. However, that is not to say that the respondents have entirely rejected the state’s characterization of English: the linguistic identity of Singapore as perceived by the respondents is still in line with the state’s description.

5.3.2.1: Individual Identity. At the start of the questionnaire, respondents were asked a series of questions about their linguistic repertoire. The aim of these questions were to ascertain the relative importance of English to the other languages in a respondent’s repertoire, thus gaining an understanding of the functions served by English for that individual.

Figure 19. Respondents’ first language.

When asked to list the first three languages they spoke in order of importance, there was an overwhelming number of respondents that listed English as their first language (Figure 18). A total of 83.1 percent of the respondents felt that English was the most important language in their linguistic repertoire, evidencing that English likely plays more than an instrumental function for these speakers. A point of consideration is that respondents could have interpreted the ‘importance’ in an instrumental sense and thus it would be entirely expected that the majority would list English as the first language. Nonetheless, it does indicate the extent to which English dominates in the nation currently.

Therefore, respondents were also asked which of the three languages they would use if speaking to an interlocutor equally fluent in all the languages the respondent listed. This was to determine that the language they picked is in fact be their first language in terms of personal importance as well.

Table 22
Respondents’ choice of language if speaking to an interlocutor with an identical linguistic repertoire

If speaking to someone equally fluent in all the languages you know, which language would you speak to them in?							
	English	Chinese	Malay	Tamil	Dialects	T. Dialects	Others
Group 1	115 (74.7%)	28 (18.2%)	4 (2.6%)	1 (0.6%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.6%)	5 (3.2%)
Group 2	79 (78.2%)	15 (14.9%)	4 (4.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (1.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (2.0%)
Group 3	54 (61.4%)	19 (21.6%)	4 (4.5%)	0 (0.0%)	10 (11.4%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (1.1%)
Total	248 (72.3%)	62 (18%)	12 (3.5%)	1 (0.6%)	11 (3.2%)	1 (0.6%)	8 (2.3%)

As can be observed from Table 22, English is the language of choice for an overwhelming majority of the respondents even when they are able to use any of the languages in their repertoire. The younger respondents in Groups 1 and 2 choose to use

English significantly more often than the older respondents in Group 3 ($X^2=32.286, p=0.00$) (Table 22). This shows that the younger respondents view English as their first language, not just in terms of functional importance but also on a personal level. Again, this finding aligns with the trend observed thus far: younger respondents are more secure in and exercise more ownership over their use of English. That said, although less respondents in Group 3 picked English, these respondents still formed the majority. With both findings, it would not be unreasonable to state that English fulfills more than instrumental functions for these speakers and it would not be unreasonable to say that the language is a core part the linguistic identity of many respondents.

Besides regarding English as their first language, the respondents also extensively used English in the following levels of their social network:

- Immediate family
- Extended family
- Spouse/Significant Other
- Close Friends
- Colleagues/Peers
- Acquaintances

Figure 20. Respondents' use of English in various branches of their social network.

With the exception of the extended family, respondents on average would speak English very often within their social network (Figure 19). This finding is yet again in opposition to the state's instrumentalist characterization of English, which designated the language for use in public and formal domains. More importantly however, is that the respondents who do have children speak English to them very often as well, meaning that these children would grow up with English as their household language, and more importantly, as the language that they learn from birth as well.

This then relates to the discussion of the potential native-speaker status of some Singaporeans, something that the 'producers' had vehemently stated was not possible in Chapter 4 due to Singaporeans' poor language standards. It has already been shown in the previous sub-sections that the respondents were confident and proficient in their English. Here, it can be observed that 238 respondents had been exposed to English since birth (Figure 20). This means that a considerable majority of 69.4 percent of the respondents 'inherited' the language (in Chapter 2.1.2, it was defined that an individual attains linguistic ownership through the 'inheritance' or 'acquisition' of a language).

Figure 21. Respondents' exposure to English

Figure 22. Respondents' exposure to English (Groups)

There was also a significant trend in the proportion of the respondent group that had 'inherited' as opposed to 'acquiring' it, a growing number of respondents had 'inherited' English throughout the years ($X^2=80.724$, $p=0.00$). This finding aligns with data from the trends seen in the population census and with the information given by policy-maker Zoe: more and more Singaporeans were being exposed to English as a household language from birth. Although the means through which an individual acquires English does not impact their

ownership of the language, the fact that an ever-increasing majority of Singaporeans ‘inherit’ the language as opposed to ‘acquiring’ it further cements that some Singaporeans are native English speakers (having fulfilled all other conditions). This finding merely echoes what has been known for quite some time: a growing number of Singaporeans are essentially native-speakers of English by technical definition.

5.3.2.2 National Identity. Beyond the respondents’ individual linguistic identity and the role that the English language plays in relation to that, there is also the linguistic identity of the speech community of which they are a part of – i.e. Singapore’s national linguistic identity. This also relates to the notion of some Singaporeans as native speakers of English, as it was asserted by the interviewees in Chapter 3.3.2 and the two ‘channels’ in Chapter 4 that Singapore’s multilingual society meant that her people could never be considered as native speakers of English. However, it seems that the respondents only agree to a certain extent with the ‘producers’ and ‘channels’.

When asked which of the four official languages – English, Mandarin Chinese, Malay and Tamil – did they most associate with Singapore, an overwhelming majority of respondents in Figure 22 thought of English in conjunction with Singapore’s national image.

Figure 23. Official language respondents associate most with Singapore.

This is in spite of the fact that the national language of Singapore is officially Malay. This finding illustrates the dominant position of English in Singapore: not only it is the language of administration for the nation and her people, it is also the language of identity, both on the individual and national level. Furthermore, there was no significant difference between the three respondent groups in the language they associated most with Singapore, showing that individuals of different ages and who have undergone different English Language policies felt similarly. Another point of consideration is that this skew towards the English language is in spite of the fact that a key aspect of Singapore is her multiracial, multicultural and multilingual society and image. As such, this not only proves that English is indeed the first language of Singapore in most sense of the term, but it also may have implications for the national identity of Singapore in general.

The other aspect of Singapore's linguistic identity is the question of whether it is a nation in which English is widely spoken, or an English-speaking country. This relates to the prior discussions in Chapter 3.3, Chapter 4.2.5 and Chapter 4.3.6, wherein it was asserted by the 'producers' and 'channels' that Singapore could not be considered an English-speaking nation as it had a multilingual society, which in turn nullifies the possibility of Singaporeans attaining native-speaker status. Thus, respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with the following two statements:

- 'Singapore can be described as a country where English is widely spoken'
- 'Singapore can be described as an English-speaking country'

Figure 24. Respondents' level of agreement to statements about Singapore's linguistic identity

While the respondents agree with both descriptions of Singapore, they are significantly slightly less amenable to the idea of labelling Singapore as an 'English-speaking country' ($p=0.00$). There are no significant differences between the three respondent groups in their mean levels of agreement to both statements, indicating that there has been no change in the perception of Singapore's linguistic identity in this regard despite the changing role and nature of English in the nation over the years. This finding is somewhat similar to those in Chapter 6.1, wherein respondents were secure about their own English use, but insecure about the language standards in Singapore. Here, respondents exercise linguistic ownership in their individual language use and linguistic identity, but their perception of their own language use does not apply quite as strongly to Singapore and her national identity. The respondents seem slightly more comfortable with the more neutral definition of Singapore as a country in which English is spoken' than the more definite label of Singapore as an 'English-speaking country'.

In conclusion, the questionnaire data has shown that the narrative of linguistic insecurity has been accepted by the populace only to a certain extent. The respondents view themselves as proficient speakers of English who are confident in their language use.

However, this confidence does not extend to Singapore as a nation. The two Inner Circle nations – the United Kingdom and Australia – were regarded as having a higher average English language standard compared to Singapore. The exonormative orientation that has been seen thus far in the prior two chapters manifests in the respondents as well. Here a dissonance can be observed: respondents are linguistically insecure about the language standards in Singapore, in direct contrast to the security displayed by them in their individual proficiency.

This same dissonance plays out in regards to linguistic ownership as well. The findings show that respondents exercise their linguistic ownership of English on the individual level. Respondents are extremely self-assured in their language use across most situation, although this confidence dips slightly when speaking to interlocutors who are conventionally regarded as superior English speakers, such as English Language educators and native speakers (an effect of the insecurity seen above). Nonetheless, respondents largely rely on their own language judgment and do not defer to external language authorities. Also, it was clearly demonstrated that English has long evolved beyond the state's instrumentalist stance towards it to play a central role in respondents' personal and social spheres, forming a fundamental aspect of the respondents' linguistic identities. English was also perceived as central to Singapore's national linguistic identity, however, respondents did not view Singapore as an 'English-speaking country' in alignment with the views of the 'producers' of the narrative of linguistic insecurity.

Thus, although the findings paint an encouraging picture of Singaporeans' growing linguistic security and ownership, the fact remains that the overall image of Singapore is that of a country wherein English is widely but badly spoken. The internalization of this image by the respondents indicates that the narrative of linguistic insecurity has nonetheless been

successful in achieving its goals of reinforcing linguistic insecurity amongst Singaporeans and denying the notion of linguistic ownership of English.

6. CONCLUSION

As the previous chapters have demonstrated, the political, social and linguistic contexts in Singapore have collided to result in a linguistic situation rarely – if ever – studied: the seemingly purposeful creation and maintenance of a narrative of linguistic insecurity, which has in turn resulted in a denial the means by which citizens can exercise their linguistic ownership. While both phenomena – linguistic insecurity and linguistic ownership – have been extensively studied in their own right, the two have not been observed to be entangled in this manner before.

Linguistic insecurity has thus far been studied as an erroneous belief in the inferiority of one's own language variety and the superiority of another's. Labov's (2006) widely-known work on the subject examined the manifestation of social class stratification in the speech of the lower and working class New Yorkers, who hypercorrected their speech in a bid to model themselves linguistically after the 'superior' upper class. Other scholars touched on the same markers of linguistic insecurity: a sort of linguistic 'low self-esteem' regarding one's local variety that led to an overemphasis on correctness in language in an endeavour to achieve linguistic proficiency in what these individuals deem to be the 'standard' variety of the language. The linguistic insecurity in Singapore presents many of the same features touched on above: Singaporeans bemoan that speaking sub-standard English had become an unsightly aspect of the national identity and that the remedy to this problem was to adopt the 'correct' standard English of Inner Circle nations, such as the United Kingdom, the United States and Australia.

However, a key difference between the previously-studied communities and Singapore is that a major proponent of this message is not the speakers themselves, but rather the state. Language has always occupied a dominant place in the nation's public discourse, so

it is hardly surprising that the state would play a central role here as well (Stroud & Wee, 2011). What is shocking is that the state seems to be actively seeking to reinforce this insecurity amongst the population, by reiterating the stereotypical image of Singapore as a nation with poor English language standards and negatively evaluating the citizens' linguistic proficiency despite evidence to the contrary. Indeed, both internationally-regarded proficiency tests and the nation's own population census point towards an extremely proficient population with a growing segment that is acquiring English as their first language, both of which are at odds with the image painted by the state and occasionally the citizens themselves.

The other unusual element in Singapore's situation of linguistic insecurity is that the 'superior' variety and speech community is outside of Singapore. Most of the research that has been done thus far on the subject has been within a society or country. While there has been some research on linguistic insecurity in multicultural and multilingual contexts (e.g. Bucci & Baxter, 1984), the 'superior' standard variety was nonetheless one encountered inside the community. Whereas in the case of Singapore, the 'superior' varieties of English – and by association the groups of native speakers who speak the variety – are those spoken in Inner Circle countries. A variety of English in particular that has been singled out as the ideal 'standard English' is BrE. As is commonly known, Singapore was a colony of the British Empire for nearly a century from 1867 to 1942 and it was in fact the British that brought the English language to the nation (Abshire, 2011; Lim & Foley, 2004). It is Singapore's past as a crown colony that invokes a degree of discomfort when the Singaporeans are painted as inferior to their past colonial masters by their own government in today's contemporary society, albeit only linguistically. The post-colonial context of English in Singapore has been extensively and expertly discussed by Edgar Schneider (2007) and while Schneider does observe that there seems to be 'a fear of falling standards' (p. 158), this fear is described to be

aimed largely at Singlish. However, Chapter 3.1 and Chapter 3.2 revealed the state's tendency to conflate anything sort of 'local' English with the informal variety was so as to reinforce the narrative of linguistic insecurity and to also overlook the existence of SSE.

It is the state's characterization of individuals conventionally regarded as native speakers, as well as their denial of SSE that leads to the next subject: linguistic ownership. Although many scholars (e.g. Widdowson, 1994; Norton, 1997; Higgins, 2003) have discussed linguistic ownership of English in the context of its contemporary status as an international language, a revised definition of the concept was proposed in order to avoid the pitfalls that the subject's accompanying concepts of 'authority' and 'legitimacy' present. While the aforementioned concepts have been effective in describing how ownership can be conferred and denied to an individual or groups of speakers, they suffer from a lack of concrete definition and thus can – and often do – fall into a circular relationship. Therefore, the concept of linguistic ownership has been refined for this dissertation: a speaker inherently possesses 'the right to use and manage the language in accordance with the nature and purpose of the language' once they have either 'inherited' or 'acquired' the language and they can choose whether or not to exercise their ownership of the language.

However, the state in this situation has forcefully denied Singaporeans of their linguistic ownership of English through the narrative of linguistic insecurity: the poor language standards of the population means that they must defer to the linguistic norms of the 'superior' native speakers and any local linguistic innovation is sub-standard English. The other detrimental effect of this denial of linguistic ownership is also the lack of acknowledgement from the state that an ever-growing segment of the population are in fact native English speakers by technical definition. The notion of 'native-ness' has also been bought under scrutiny by the situation observed in Singapore. Despite some Singaporeans meeting all the criteria of what constitutes a native speaker (refer to Chapter 2.1.2), they are

labelled as ‘non-native speakers’ by (dis)merit of Singapore’s multilingual society. This raises interesting questions about the concept of a ‘native speaker’: has the concept been altered from a linguistic label into a political distinction, one that serves to maintain power imbalances amongst different populations of English speakers?

While it can be clearly seen that there is a complex relationship between linguistic insecurity and ownership, it is yet unknown if the denial of linguistic ownership is an objective or merely a side effect of the narrative of linguistic insecurity. If it is the case of the former, a possible reason is that the state is utilizing the narrative of linguistic insecurity to deny Singaporeans linguistic ownership of English so as to maintain the delicate but largely arbitrary relationship between the former and the various Mother Tongue languages. If Singaporeans were to claim that English serves for them the functions that the Mother Tongues were designated to fulfil, it would upset the balance between the two. Either way, the exact nature of this relationship is a subject that would benefit greatly from additional academic attention.

Another remarkable aspect of this situation in Singapore is the mismatch between the scholastic view of Singapore’s linguistic identity and the state-constructed image of the nation. While Singapore is firmly regarded as an Outer Circle nation by most academics (see Bolton, 2002; Kachru & Nelson, 2006; Leimgruber, 2013; Low, 2015), the state’s exonormative orientation and the resultant language policies have led to Singapore exhibiting linguistic behaviour typically seen in Expanding Circle nations instead (e.g. the high regard of ‘native English speakers’ as ‘authorities’ of the language). If the situation on the ground is incongruent with the scholastic description, it would be prudent to consider other theoretical approaches to understanding Singapore’s unique linguistic situation.

English as a Lingua Franca (henceforth ELF) is one other prominent framework in the field of English as an international language. While both World Englishes (henceforth WE)

and ELF view the linguistic development of different kinds of English around the world as independent of the 'native' Englishes, the two paradigms differ in that the former studies the distinct varieties according to nation while the latter eschews from the notion of national boundaries and views the different kinds of English as communication on a global scale (Jenkins, 2013). As such, ELF is defined to be 'English when it is used as a contact language between people from different first languages (including native English speakers)' (Jenkins, 2013, p. 2). ELF also asserts that the diverse use of English across borders by speakers of varying linguistic repertoires means that it is inappropriate to attempt categorization and study of individual varieties of the language and should instead viewed as an 'English that transcends boundaries, and that is therefore beyond description' (Jenkins, 2015, p. 55).

Such a description of English seems to relate to the role and nature of English in Singapore: it is an international language of trade and diplomacy meant to allow Singaporeans to work and live around the world, as well as the common language of communication amongst citizens of different ethnicities in her multilingual society. An ELF approach is even more fitting when one considers a recent development in the field which positions English as being within a framework of multilingualism and thus moves away from the inherent advantage accorded to the monolingual native speakers by other theoretical frameworks (Jenkins, 2015). Furthermore, English has been described as both a 'national' and 'international' lingua franca in Singapore, given its role as the international language of trade and technology and the intra-national neutral language of inter-ethnic communications (Pakir, 2010). Adoption of this outlook may then resolve the linguistic insecurity in the nation by shifting the focus from Singaporeans' proficiency in the language in and of itself to what they can achieve through communication in the language.

However, as has been demonstrated, it is precisely the tenets of ELF that the state has and continues to utilize in order to consistently reproduce and reinforce the narrative of

linguistic insecurity in the nation. The English that ‘transcends boundaries’ and is ‘beyond description’ in the ELF framework bears a striking and unsettling resemblance to the ‘internationally intelligible’ English that is ‘grammatical, fluent and appropriate for purpose, audience, context and culture refers to the formal register of English used in different parts of the world, that is, Standard English’ defined by the MOE in Chapter 3.3 (Jenkins, 2015; CPDD, 1991; 2010). It is this abstract ideal English that has been wielded by the state to place Singaporeans on the back foot through the creation of an undefined language standard, one that can be shifted as needed beyond the reach of citizens to maintain the stereotypical image of an inarticulate Singaporean. Furthermore, the communication-centred approach of ELF can easily be misappropriated into the instrumentalist treatment of English seen in statal discourse that lays the very foundation on which the narrative of linguistic insecurity rests (refer to Themes 1.1, 1.2 and 3.4 in Chapter 3.2). As such, the ELF approach represents an idealization of the role and nature of English in Singapore, but this idealization is one that can be wielded by entities such as the state to create adverse linguistic situations such as the narrative of linguistic insecurity that is the subject of this dissertation.

Another reason why the ELF approach is unsuitable for the Singapore situation is that it does not account for a speaker’s construction of linguistic identity through their use of English. The dominant view in ELF with regards to the notion of speakers’ linguistic identity is that English serves as a carrier of speakers’ cultural values in a communicative event. For example, a speaker may use a literal translation of a culture-specific idiom in an ELF situation (Dröschel, 2011). However, as English is merely the instrument of communication amongst speakers who typically will have different first languages, it would unlikely that speakers would consider it to be their ‘language of identification’ (House, 2003). This is in odds to the findings discussed in Chapter 5.3.2.1, wherein respondents viewed English as their most important language for personal functions and used it extensively in their private

domains. ELF's lack of consideration regarding English's potential role as a 'language of identification' for speakers is yet another shortfall of the framework in the Singapore context. This could also potentially explain why ELF is typically discussed in socio-linguistic contexts common to nations wherein English is neither a first nor institutionalized English, and less so in situations like the one observed here (Rubdy & Saraceni, 2006).

The findings of this dissertation also has socio-linguistic and political implications for Singapore on multiple levels. On a national and societal level, as was mentioned, the state has been seeking since the late 1980's to construct a national identity that was not based on economic growth (as it had been from 1965) (Ortmann, 2010). However, the state's 'campaign' to manufacture a national identity that would foster a sense of belonging within the citizens has been met with resistance from the latter, due to the former's repudiation of popular identity markers that did not conform to their desired image of Singapore (Ortmann, 2010). Singlish is perhaps the best example of this. Although the colloquial variety has fondly claimed by citizens as a marker of their Singaporean identity, the state has staunchly viewed it as an economic threat (see Chapter 4.2.1) and thus vehemently rejected it (Alsagoff, 2010).

However, SSE as a national identity marker would cause no such problem for the state as it is a 'standard' variety. It has been demonstrated in Chapter 6 that a significant proportion of respondents viewed the English in Singapore as a distinct variety and themselves as speaking 'a standard Singapore variety of English', indicating a strong possibility that SSE may be viewed by citizens as a linguistic emblem of their national identity. The adoption of SSE as a national identity marker gains further merit when one considers that it would also be a better alternative to the foreign and exonymic 'internationally intelligible' English that is meant to serve as a common neutral language of communication between the various ethnicities in Singapore now. That said, further research is required to better assess the potential status of SSE as a symbol of national identity.

Besides the debate over Singapore's contemporary identity, the findings of this dissertation also pertain to her historical identity as a crown colony. As was pointed out, this extensive part of Singapore's past makes the state's casting of Inner Circle nations – especially the United Kingdom – as the superior English-speaking societies in the narrative of linguistic insecurity even more problematic. To make matters worse, it is this aspect of the narrative that Singaporeans seemed to have internalized the most. In Chapter 5.2.1 and Chapter 6.3.1, respondents perceived the United Kingdom and Australia to have significantly higher English proficiency on average than Singapore and on an individual level, their self-confidence as English speakers dipped significantly when speaking to a tourist from the United Kingdom. It has been said that '[language] is a fundamental site of struggle for post-colonial discourse because the colonial process itself begins in language' (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2003, p. 285). Despite the success Singapore and Singaporeans have found with English, the language remains something brought to Singapore by the British and the 'othering' of the language by the state seen in Chapter 3.2.1 only serves to emphasize this fact. So while Singaporeans had supposedly long since shrugged off the inferiority complex they once suffered from as the result of colonization, linguistic vestiges of that inferiority complex remain – and are maybe even fostered by the state – even after the nation celebrated her fiftieth year of independence (Sie, 1997).

Much like with the question of Singapore's national identity, the state's acknowledgement of SSE and that Singaporeans are proficient speakers of the nation's own formal variety may go a long way in resolving the last remnants of the effects of Singapore's colonization. English's domination in the nation is an inescapable fact and the state's current stance on the role and nature of the language will only serve to negatively impact citizens. As was discussed in Chapter 3, the state has created a false dichotomy between the roles of English and the various Mother Tongues, one that hinges on the rejection of a local standard

variety of English. Consequently, Singaporeans are speaking and using a language that is supposedly ‘foreign’ to fulfill increasingly personal functions. Additionally, this issue also raises the uncomfortable question of whether this linguistic inferiority complex may potentially extend to Singaporeans’ interaction with the citizens and/or culture of the Inner Circle nations. A question of this scale is beyond this dissertation, but linguistic research on the potential impact of a nation's re-appropriation of the ex-colonial masters’ language on their post-colonial identity may prove to be enlightening.

The other national-level implication relates to that of Singapore’s language policy. Chapter 3.3 showed that there were discrepancies between the policy-makers’ and educators’ interpretation of the EL education policy, particularly in regard to what exactly is ‘internationally intelligible’ English. Such differences in interpretation is to be expected, according to policy-maker Zoe, as ‘the policy goes through another level of translation and the teacher would look at the situation in the schools’ (personal communication, 14th April 2016). However, Zoe expressed that sentiment in relation to the varying choice of pedagogical resources amongst different schools and classrooms. Here, what is observed is an incongruity between the policy-makers’ and educators’ notions of the ‘English’ that is between taught to young Singaporeans on a national level: while the policy-makers describe it to be a form of English that allows Singaporeans to participate in the global arena of trade, educators seem to view it essentially as – or a close relative of – BrE. This provides rather convincing evidence that the state has maintained its exonormative orientation towards BrE from the days of old despite its outward shift towards a more ‘neutral’ definition of English in the EL syllabi.

The gulf between the intention and execution of language policy may have ramifications for the subject on a scale beyond Singapore. The divide between policy and pedagogy like the one seen in this dissertation may result in detrimental effects on the

population. Language policies are typically crafted to achieve several macro-goals (e.g. national integration, economic development) through the three language processes of corpus, status and acquisition planning (Davis, 1994; Kaplan & Baldauf, 2013). If the execution of the language policy is inconsistent throughout the nation or region, the achievement of these macro-goals may be delayed or hindered. Such a problem most likely would be exacerbated in a multilingual society as well, due to the multiple language policies that may be misinterpreted. Problems regarding interpretation of language policy has been studied before (see Bolton, 2011). However, the issue stemmed from the lack of explicit articulation of policy which resulted in a deficiency of cohesive and well-defined political documents that could inform major societal domains of the larger language policy. In contrast, the problem observed here is the misinterpretation of language policy that leads to disparity between the intended goals and actual results of a policy. Therefore, this additional dimension of language planning and policy is one that would benefit from more academic attention.

As briefly mentioned above, another implication for Singapore's language policy is the changing relationship between English and the various Mother Tongues in Singapore. In Chapter 3.2, it was emphasized repeatedly from the nation's independence to the current day that while English was a common working language, it was the Mother Tongues that would provide Singaporeans the means to maintain their cultural heritage and by extension, their Asian identity (refer to Theme 3.5). However, it is undeniable that English has encroached onto almost all the domains, both public and private, in the lives of Singaporeans. Chapter 5.3.2.1 provided a brief glimpse of the extent to which respondents used English in their social network. When asked about the possibility of English taking over the roles that the Mother Tongue languages are meant to play, Zoe declined to answer the question directly, but did point out the fact that while there was a simplified 'B'-version of Mother Tongue syllabi that catered to students who struggled with their Mother Tongue, there is no such

alteration made to the EL syllabus (personal communication, 14th April 2016). This raises substantial questions about the success of Singapore's bilingual policy. On one hand, it has been extremely effective in equipping Singaporeans with linguistic proficiency in two or more languages. On the other, the findings from this dissertation prove that the policy goals set out by the state wherein English and the Mother Tongues would play complementary roles may no longer be achieved. However, it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to put forth any more than a speculation. Although it has evidenced the domination of English, the exact relationship between English and the Mother Tongue languages will have to be investigated in further studies.

On a societal level, the congruity in the messages relating to English in Singapore displayed between Singapore's print media and the SGEM language campaign raises some questions as to the impact of mass communication on a populace's language attitudes. In Chapter 4, it was demonstrated that the two 'channels' shared common utilization of six out of each channel's seven frames. However, the relationship between the two 'channels' – if there is any at all – is yet unknown. It would be entirely possible that such similarity in frame utilization is due to the print media reflecting a larger discourse surrounding English in Singapore. This then leads to the question of whose discourse this is and the answer seems to be 'the state's', considering that all of the frames were utilized by the print media and the SGEM to disseminate messages similar to those of the states reinforcing the narrative of linguistic insecurity. Although its role as a nation-building tool has been discussed briefly in Chapter 3.1, the extreme asymmetry observed in print media between articles and commentary that are negative and positive about English language standards in Singapore do bring up weighty questions about the role of mass media in Singapore and its relationship with the state.

That said, there is the possibility that Singaporeans are not even receptive to the messages disseminated by the two ‘channels’. The younger questionnaire respondents in Groups 1 and 2 were significantly less agreeable than those in Group 3 to the notion that the SGEM was necessary in improving the language standard in Singapore (refer to Chapter 5.2.1), suggesting that one of the ‘channels’ was somewhat ineffective. This raises the possibility that print media is equally unsuccessful: if the respondents were unreceptive to the SGEM, they would be unlikely to be receptive to similar messages from print media. However, mass media in Singapore remains trusted by younger Singaporeans (the same segment of the population respondents from Group 1 are part of) in its role as a gatekeeper and a source of credible information (Lin & Hong, 2016). Although many studies have touched on the role of mass media in Singapore in creating and strengthening certain public discourses (e.g. Rubdy, 2001; Chng, 2003), there has not been a study done investigating the link between an individual’s language attitudes and their consumption of the corresponding public discourse circulated in mass media. As such, Singaporeans’ perception and consumption of mass media, especially that of younger Singaporeans’, and the resultant impact on their language attitudes is a subject of study that would be enriched by further research.

The findings discussed in Chapter 5 also raise interesting questions for the Singaporean linguistic environment. It was demonstrated that younger respondents were significantly more secure in their English language proficiency and may even have a burgeoning sense of identity as a Singapore English speaker, evidencing that the respondents’ age had a considerable impact on their linguistic identity. However, there are other demographic factors that may prove to have similar effects. For instance, Labov noted that New York women possessed a ‘much greater linguistic insecurity than men’ (Labov, 2006, p. 335), which other scholars have attributed to women’s preference of the overt prestige that is

accorded to them when they speak the standard form of the language (Coates, 2016). This then raises the question if Singaporean women are more receptive of the narrative of linguistic insecurity in the nation. This in turn leads to the question of if gender is able to override the effects of age on a Singaporean's sense of linguistic insecurity – i.e. are younger female Singaporeans more insecure than older male Singaporeans?

Another demographic dimension worth considering is that of socio-economic background and its potential impact on an individual's linguistic insecurity. It has been noted before that Singaporeans of a higher socio-economic status tend to be more proficient in English as compared to their counterparts of lower socio-economic status (Kuo, 1985). If that be the case, would it follow that Singaporeans of higher socio-economic status are also less insecure about their English proficiency and/or would the narrative of linguistic insecurity be less effective on these individuals? While these questions, as well as the ones above, are unfortunately beyond the research focus and scope of this paper, they nonetheless present interesting avenues of future research.

Finally, on an individual level, the findings of this dissertation may have meaningful implications for Singaporeans' linguistic identity. As has been mentioned, Singaporeans are increasingly utilizing what they are told is essentially a 'foreign' language to fulfill personal functions. English was the language which 83.1 percent of the respondents felt was the most important language in their linguistic repertoire and the language 73.2 percent would use if speaking to an interlocutor equally fluently in all the languages they spoke. Furthermore, respondents on average would speak to their family and friends very often in English. Despite such intimacy displayed in the respondents' English language use, the state has maintained its characterization of the language as a foreign tool purely for instrumental purposes. Such a gulf between rhetoric and reality may result in a disharmony between their image and use of the English language in their lives. However, although the findings discussed in Chapter 5.3.2.1

show that respondents were overwhelmingly speaking English as their first language in private domains, the exact factors motivating their use of English is as of yet unknown. As such, the nature of the dissonance – if Singaporeans will experience any at all – remains a speculation. It is recommended that a similar study regarding Singaporeans' perception and use of English be carried out, one that focuses on qualitative data instead of the quantitative data gathered here in order to gain a more in-depth understanding.

Likewise, the impact of the state's denial of a 'native speaker' status to Singaporeans who are technically such may also inflict a mental conflict in Singaporeans that would benefit from academic attention. Many young Singaporeans have grown up in the recent years with English as their household language and are thus exposed to the language from birth – evidenced by the 85.7 percent of Group 1 respondents who had 'inherited' English in Chapter 5.3.2.1. This then makes them the very native English speakers the state asserts are superior to them. Another finding that would be enhanced from further research is the difference between the academic and political definition of what makes a native speaker. Despite the fact that a growing number of young Singaporeans are technically native speakers, Zoe rejected the notion and asserted that a person's 'country of birth' is also a determining factor (personal communication, 14th April 2016). This sentiment was echoed by the other interviewees, indicating that there was an additional criterion in the state's definition of what constitutes a native English speaker. This also raises the question of what the layperson's perception of a native English speaker is: would the conventional idea of a native speaker held by Singaporeans align with that of the state's? Subsequently, the larger question relating to the nature of the concept of a 'native speaker' could potentially be addressed as well: is the concept a linguistic description or political distinction?

In conclusion, this situation of linguistic insecurity in Singapore has major implications not just of an academic nature, but more importantly, a national and social scale

as well. Singapore has just recently celebrated her fiftieth year of independence in 2015 and the nation's transformation from struggling third-world nation to contemporary cosmopolitan city in this relatively short period of time has been extolled all around the world. However, it is precisely the nation's remarkable progress that makes the linguistic insecurity experienced by Singaporeans all the more unfortunate. Singapore has already found her place in the world politically and economically and perhaps in time, the state may allow the astonishing progress that has propelled Singapore and her people so far to take place linguistically too.

APPENDIX A

Interview Questions: MOE Curriculum Development Personnel

General

1. How would you say the aims of Singapore's EL education policies have changed over the years (since independence/since 2000 depending on interviewee's ability to answer the question)?
2. What is the typical Singaporean student these policies are catered for – i.e. what is their command of English, what is their home language (Mother Tongue or English), etc.
- 3.

Variety of English in SG

4. How would you characterize the variety of English that is used/taught in Singapore?
5. What exactly is the 'Standard English' that is 'internationally intelligible'? Additionally, what are the 'other standard varieties' of English that is referred to in the 2001 English syllabi?
6. Is there a Singapore Standard English? If yes, why is it not taught in Singapore schools?
- 7.

English Language Standards

8. What would you say is the standard of English in schools today?
9. What is considered a 'high proficiency of English' and why is it that the syllabus predicts that only 20 percent of students will attain this level of proficiency?
10. What exactly is the 'best in English-speaking countries' and why is it that this is considered the highest standard of English?
- 11.

Ownership-Related

12. Is Singapore considered an 'English-speaking country' or 'country in which English is spoken'?
13. Would it be accurate to describe some young Singaporeans as 'native English speakers' by definition?

Interview Questions: English Language Teachers

EL Education

1. What would you say is the standard of English in schools and/or Singapore today?
2. What is the average linguistic profile of the students you teach – i.e. what is their command of English, what is their home language (Mother Tongue or English or others), what was the first language they learnt, etc.?
3. Would it be accurate to describe some of your students as 'native English speakers' by definition (i.e. English is the first language they learned, it is the language they best express themselves in, they would say it is their most important language)?
- 4.

2010 EL Syllabi

5. What is the 'Standard English' that is 'internationally intelligible' given that there are many standard varieties of English in the world?
6. What is considered a 'high proficiency of English' and would you agree with the syllabus' prediction that only 20 percent of students will attain this level of proficiency and that even less would be 'no different from the best in English-speaking countries'?
- 7.

English in Singapore

8. How would you characterize the variety of English that is used/taught in Singapore (i.e. is it British English, American English, Singapore English)?
9. Would you say that there is a Singapore Standard English? If yes, why is it not the variety taught in Singapore schools?
10. Would you personally consider Singapore to be an 'English-speaking country' or 'country in which English is spoken'?

APPENDIX B

Questionnaire

Questions: Demographic

1. What is your age: _____
2. What is your sex:
  - Male
  - Female
3. What is your race:
  - Chinese
  - Malay
  - Indian
  - Other: _____
4. What is your citizenship status:
  - Singaporean Citizen
  - Permanent Resident
  - Non-Singapore Resident
  - Other: _____
5. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
  - Primary school (PSLE)
  - Secondary school ('O' Levels)
  - Junior College ('A' Levels)
  - Polytechnic (Diploma)
  - Institute of Technical Education (ITE Certificate / Diploma)
  - University (Bachelor Degree)
  - Advanced Studies (Graduate Degree: e.g. Master's, PhD)
  - Other: _____
6. What is your monthly household income?
  - Below S\$1,000
  - S\$1,000 - S\$1,999
  - S\$2,000 - S\$2,999
  - S\$3,000 - S\$3,999
  - S\$4,000 - 4,999
  - S\$5,000 - S\$5,999
  - S\$6,000 - S\$6,999
  - S\$7,000 - S\$7,999
  - S\$8,000 - S\$8,999
  - S\$9,000 - S\$9,999
  - S\$10,000 - S\$10,999
  - S\$11,000 - S\$11,999
  - S\$12,000 - S\$12,999

- S\$13,000 - S\$13,999
- S\$14,000 - S\$14,999
- S\$15,000 and above

Questions: Languages Spoken

7. What languages do you speak? (If more than three, please list them in order of importance and usage)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

8. How would you rate your proficiency in the languages listed above?
(1 being elementary, 10 being full mastery)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Language One										
Language Two										
Language Three										

9. Which of the languages listed above did you learn from birth?

- ☐ Language One
- ☐ Language Two
- ☐ Language Three
- ☐ Others (please specify): _____

10. If speaking to someone equally fluent in all the languages you know, which language would you speak to them in?

- ☐ Language One
- ☐ Language Two
- ☐ Language Three
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

11. Which of the languages do you best express yourself in?

- ☐ Language One
- ☐ Language Two
- ☐ Language Three
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

Questions: English

12. How would you rate your proficiency in English in the following areas:
(1 being elementary, 10 being full mastery)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Listening										
Speaking										
Reading										
Writing										

13. How often do you speak English to:

	Never	Rarely	Often	Always	N/A
Immediate Family					
Extended Family					
Spouse/Significant Other					
Close Friends					
Colleagues/Peers					
Acquaintances					

14. How would you characterize the English that you speak?

- British English
- American English
- British English with Singaporean features (local accent and some local vocabulary)
- American English with Singaporean features (local accent and some local vocabulary)
- A Singapore variety of English (local accent and local vocabulary)
- Other (please specify): _____

15. How much of each of the following media do you consume in English

	None	Some	Most	All
Video Media (e.g. television, movies, online videos)				
Audio Media (e.g. radio, music, podcasts)				
Print Media (e.g. newspapers, books, magazines)				
Other Entertainment (e.g. video games)				

16. How confident would you be speaking English in the following situations:
(1 being not confident at all, 6 being very confident)

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Ordering food in a restaurant						
Speaking on the phone to customer service						
Speaking to an English language teacher						

Giving a presentation							
Giving directions to a tourist from the United Kingdom							
Purchasing an item from high-end store							

Questions: English in Singapore

17. Which of the four official languages do you most associate with Singapore?

- English
- Malay
- Mandarin Chinese
- Tamil

18. How would you rate the average standard of English spoken in the following countries?
(1 being elementary, 10 being full mastery)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
United Kingdom										
Australia										
Singapore										
Malaysia										
India										
China										
Vietnam										

19. Singapore can be described as a country where English is widely spoken'
(1 being strongly disagree, 6 being strongly agree)

1 ---- 2 ---- 3 ---- 4 ---- 5 ---- 6

20. 'Singapore can be described as an English-speaking country'
(1 being strongly disagree, 6 being strongly agree)

1 ---- 2 ---- 3 ---- 4 ---- 5 ---- 6

21. The English spoken in Singapore is different from the English spoken in other countries'
(1 being strongly disagree, 6 being strongly agree)

1 ---- 2 ---- 3 ---- 4 ---- 5 ---- 6

22. 'English in Singapore is a distinct variety of English with local vocabulary and accent'
(1 being strongly disagree, 6 being strongly agree)

1 ---- 2 ---- 3 ---- 4 ---- 5 ---- 6

23. The English that is used in Singapore is best described as:

- British English
- American English
- British English with Singaporean features (local accent and some local vocabulary)
- American English with Singaporean features (local accent and some local vocabulary)
- A Singapore variety of English
- Other (please specify): _____

24. Ideally, the English that is used in Singapore should be:

- ☐ British English
- ☐ American English
- ☐ British English with Singaporean features (local accent and some local vocabulary)
- ☐ American English with Singaporean features (local accent and some local vocabulary)
- ☐ A Singapore variety of English
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

25. 'I consider Singlish to be an informal variety of English unique to Singapore'

(1 being strongly disagree, 6 being strongly agree)

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6

26. 'I consider Singapore to be ungrammatical English with non-standard vocabulary and pronunciation'

(1 being strongly disagree, 6 being strongly agree)

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6

27. The standard of English in Singapore can be/should be improved

(1 being strongly disagree, 6 being strongly agree)

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6

28. 'The accent of a Singaporean English speaker is immediately identifiable'

(1 being strongly disagree, 6 being strongly agree)

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6

29. How acceptable is it for a Singaporean public speaker in a formal setting (e.g. someone being interviewed for the news) to have:

(1 being totally unacceptable, 6 being totally acceptable)

	1	2	3	4	5	6
No local accent						
A slight local accent						
A strong local accent						
A foreign accent (e.g. British accent)						

30. How acceptable is it for a Singaporean entertainer on a mass media platform (e.g. a newscaster) to have:

(1 being totally unacceptable, 6 being totally acceptable)

	1	2	3	4	5	6
No local accent						
A slight local accent						
A strong local accent						
A foreign accent (e.g. British accent)						

Questions: English Language Education

31. What do you think best describes the English taught in schools today?

- British English
- American English
- British English with Singaporean features (local accent and some local vocabulary)
- American English with Singaporean features (local accent and some local vocabulary)
- A formal Singapore variety of English
- Other (please specify): _____

32. What do you think best describes the English that should be taught in schools today?

- British English
- American English
- British English with Singaporean features (local accent and some local vocabulary)
- American English with Singaporean features (local accent and some local vocabulary)
- A formal Singapore variety of English
- Other (please specify): _____

33. 'Employing native speakers as English language educators will help improve the standard of English in Singapore'

(1 being strongly disagree, 6 being strongly agree)

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6

Questions: Language Resources

34. How likely are you to refer to each of the following resources?

(1 being least likely, 6 being most likely)

- Oxford English Dictionary
- Collins American Dictionary
- English Language teacher
- Native English speaker
- Speak Good English Movement (SGEM) resources
- Own language knowledge and/or judgment

• 1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6

35. Do you feel that the sentence 'Every time we go to the movies, my father bought popcorn for us' is problematic?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

36. If asked to judge the grammaticality of the sentence 'Every time we go to the movies, my father bought popcorn for us', how likely are you to refer to the following resources?

(1 being least likely and 6 being most likely)

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Grammar Rules						
English Language teacher						
Native English speaker						

Speak Good English Movement (SGEM) resources						
Own language knowledge and/or judgment						

37. If someone were to pronounce the word *children* as ‘cheew-ren’, would you find it problematic?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

38. If asked for the pronunciation of ‘children’, how likely are you to refer to the following resources?

(1 being least likely and 6 being most likely)

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Pronunciation guide in dictionaries						
English Language teacher						
Native English speaker						
Speak Good English Movement (SGEM) resources						
Own language knowledge and/or judgment						

39. Which of the following attribute is the most important to you when referring to language resources?

- Reliability (i.e. the experience of those who produced the resource)
- Accuracy (i.e. whether or not the resource aligns to the variety of English you use)
- Accessibility (i.e. the medium of the resource and how easy it is to refer to it)
- Other (please specify): _____

Questions: Language Policies

40. ‘The Speak Good English Movement (SGEM) is a necessary campaign in improving the standard of English in Singapore’

(1 being strongly disagree and 6 being strongly agree)

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6

41. How would you rate the success of the Speak Good English Movement (SGEM) in improving the standards of English in Singapore?

(1 being not successful at all and 10 being very successful)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

42. ‘The Speak Good English Movement (SGEM) provides useful resources to improve a person’s standard of English’

(1 being strongly disagree and 6 being strongly agree)

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6

43. How often do you refer to or utilize the language resources from the Speak Good English Movement (SGEM)?

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Often
- Always

APPENDIX C

Respondents' Demographic Information

Sex	
Male	91
Female	252
Ethnicity	
Chinese	288
Malay	27
Tamil	12
Other	16
Citizenship Status	
Singaporean Citizen	330
Permanent Resident	13
Highest Level of Education Completed	
Secondary School ('O'/'N' Levels)	20
Junior College ('A' Levels)	114
Polytechnic (Diploma)	109
Institute of Technical Education (ITE Certificate/Diploma)	10
University (Bachelor Degree)	66
Advanced Studies (Graduate Degree)	18
Other	6
Monthly Household Income	
Below S\$1000	27
S\$1000 - S\$1999	23
S\$2000 - S\$2999	25
S\$3000 - S\$3999	35
S\$4000 - S\$4999	26
S\$5000 - S\$5999	43
S\$6000 - S\$6999	28
S\$7000 - S\$7999	17
S\$8000 - S\$8999	18
S\$9000 - S\$9999	21
S\$10000 - S\$10999	26
S\$11000 - S\$11999	3
S\$12000 - S\$12999	7
S\$13000 - S\$13999	4
S\$14000 - S\$14999	3
Above S\$15000	37

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