Competing forces in language maintenance and language shift: Markets, hierarchies and networks in Singapore

Li Wei
University of Newcastle upon Tyne
United Kingdom

This paper proposes an analytic model which attempts to understand the process of language maintenance and language shift relation to the concomitant processes of socio-cultural changes of the society, and furthermore to evaluate the effectiveness and effect of language policies. This model is based on the recent work of political economists and is known as the 'market, hierarchy and network' (MHN) model The model will be discussed with reference to the sociolinguistic situation in Singapore, where socio-cultural transformation is simultaneously taking place as a generational language shift from community and ethnic languages to national and international languages. Implications for language planning will also be discussed.

Este artículo propone un modelo analítico que trata de explicar los procesos del mantenimiento y del desplazamiento de lenguas en relación con los procesos de cambio sociocultural. También trata de evaluar los éxitos y los efectos secundarios de la política del lenguaje. El modelo está basado en el trabajo reciente de economistas políticos, y se conoce como "el modelo del mercado, jerarquía y redes". El mismo se analizará a través de la situación sociolingüística de Singapur, donde la transformación sociocultural se está llevando a cabo paralelamente con un desplazamiento generacional de lenguas étnicas por lenguas nacionales e internacionales. De esta manera también se analizarán las implicaciones para la planificación lingüística.

Palabras clave: *language maintenance, language shift, markets, hierarchies, networks, Singapore.*

Li Wei, PhD Director, Centre for Research in Linguistics Department of Speech, King George VI Building, University of Newcastle upon Tyne. NE1 7RU, Great Britain, *correo electrónico:* Li.Wei@newcastle.ac.uk

Introduction

One of the perennial questions in social and polticial sciences has been 'how is society coordinated?' and indeed 'is it coordinated?'. When it applies to multilingual and multicultural societies, such questions cannot be fully answered without considering the issue of language and its role in social life. Perhaps for this reason, language maintenance and language shift (LMLS) in multilingual and multicultural societies has established itself as one of the key areas of sociolinguistic research, which also attracts much attention from politicians and social scientists generally. There now exists a large body of literature documenting the linguistic fortunes of a range or communities in different parts of the world, as well as the impact of language policies on social coordination (*e.g.* Williamson and van Eerde 1980; Dow 1987; 1988; Dorian 1989; Fase Jaspaet and Kroon 1992).

Much of this literature, however, focuses on the experiences of minority groups, especially immigrants who may also be socially and/or economically disadvantaged. Although considerable progress has been made from that vantage point, a different perspective which examines ongoing variations and change in the patterns of language use of the majority and the socially and economically powerful groups may provide interesting insights into the socio-cultural processes of LMLS. In this regard, Singapore presents a particularly interesting case.

Bilingualism in Singapore is not associated with minority groups, or with immigrants. It is characteristic of the majority group —the Chinese. While the vast majority of Singaporeans are bilingual or multilingual, the most multilingual individuals are likely to be from the Chinese community who make up over 78 percent of the population. Detailed documentation and principled analysis of the changes in the language behaviour of different generations of speakers within the Chinese community in Singapore and of the socio-cultural transformation which is simultaneously taking place in the country as, a whole would not only provide fresh new data for LMLS research, but also contribute to the development of analytic methods and models which may have wider theoretical implications.

In reviewing over thirty years of research on societal multilingualism, Fishman (1991) suggests that there are three key aspects which an 'informed evaluation' of language maintenance and language shift (LMLS) should consider: habitual language use, behaviour towards language, and socio-cultural change processes. He argues that most progress has been made in conjunction with the measurement of habitual language use, or in his famous question 'Who Speaks What Language to Whom and When', and least in conjunction with socio-cultural change processes. This, in Fishman's opinion, 'reflects the greater precision of scholarly work with language as a result of the more highly systematic nature of language and language behaviour', while the 'social sciences in general and sociology in particular simply have not reached the same level of precise and systematic analysis' (1989: 253). Whether or not one accepts Fishman's assertion, the only coherent analytic model which has been widely used in the study of LMLS has been Fishman's *domain analysis* which focuses on the habitual language use of indivi-

dual speakers. In contrast, no similar model is available for analysing the socio-cultural processes associated with LMLS.

Research to date has been concerned primarily with isolating those factors which accelerate language shift from those which inhibit it and favour maintenance. While such lists of factors may help clarify what contributes to LMLS, they have little to say about the relative importance of the various factors, or about how individual speakers and their communities respond to macro-level societal pressures. What seems to be needed is an integrated approach which addresses the social, political and economic change processes at large as well as the ways in which individual speakers deal with the changes in everyday interaction. In other words, we need to move from an essentially descriptive account of who speaks what language to whom and when to a critical evaluation of[4] who maintains/relinquishes which language how and why'.

In this paper, I shall comment on some of the key issues emerging from the existing LMLS research. I shall also propose an analytic model which attempts to understand the process of LMLS in relation to the concomitant processes of socio-cultural changes of the society, and furthermore to evaluate the effectiveness and effect of language policies. This model is based on the recent work of political enonomists and is known as the 'market, hierarchy and network' (MHN) model. I shall discuss this model with reference to the sociolinguistic situation in Singapore.

Who?

The most obvious question in LMLS research is who has maintained the traditional community language and who has given it up in favour of some other language(s). Research to date has repeatedly found that there are age-related patterns of LMLS; in other words, older speakers tend to maintain the traditional language better than do younger speakers. While correlations between age and patterns of language use provide some of the clearest evidence of LMLS in specific communities, they are the least interesting findings of all, because all they can tell us is that the community in question has changed its patterns of language use. They have almost nothing to say about the social, political, economic and linguistic reasons for the change to take place. Moreover, many more detailed studies have revealed that speakers of the same age groups do not always behave linguistically in the same manner at all times. 'Atypical' speakers and 'atypical' patterns can easily be found in all domains. Our studies of the Cantonese-English bilingual community in Tyneside in the northeast of England, for example, discovered a number of 'anomalous' speakers whose language choice patterns are very different from those of similar ages in their generations (*e.g.* Li Wei, *et al.* 1992; Li Wei 1994; Milroy and Li Wei 1995). We have tried to explain the apparent anomaly in terms of the social network patterns of individual speakers. Similarly, Pauwels (1995; 1997), have shown that women and men of the same age group often display different language choice patterns.

This particular issue —gender differentiations in LMLS— brings me to my second question about which language speakers maintain or relinquish.

Which language?

This is in fact a highly complex issue, but somehow it has not received much attention in the existing literature on LMLS. In relation to gender, there have been contradictory findings. Some suggests that women in bilingual communities lead the shift, usually from the minority language to the majority language when there is clear social differentiation between the languages co-available in the community; others seem to suggest that women in ethnic minority communities tend to maintain their 'ethnic' language more than men. Some of the contradiction and confusion can be explained reasonably easily, if the researchers provide sufficient information about the overall sociolinguistic structure of the communities in question. For instance, in some communities women's higher level of language maintenance is a matter of monolingualism, *i.e.* they have not acquired the 'majority' language for a variety of reasons. Such a situation would be very different from one in which the women are bilinguals and continue to use the ethnic language more than their male counterparts. In other communities, however, the question is not simply whether women maintain the traditional community language or replace it with a different language, but which language they actually maintain or relinquish.

We have recently carried out a small survey, as part of a larger, on-going research project, on the Hakka-speaking families in Newcastle upon Tyne and have found that all of the 14 Hakka-first-language-speaking women we have studied have acquired Cantonese, the *linguafranca* of the Chinese community in Britain, and use it regularly in social interaction, but only 3 of them claimed to be able to speak English. However, only 3 out of the 9 Hakka-first-language-speaking men whom we studied have acquired Cantonese, yet all of them can speak English. Furthermore, all the children of the Hakka-speaking families that we have studied have acquired Cantonese and English, although only 6 out of a total of 22 claimed to be able to speak Hakka.

Findings of this kind would naturally raise the question 'why?', but there is one further question which is often missed out in LMLS research and which needs to be addressed before we can adequately address the why question: how one language replaces another as the dominant language in a community and how one language manages to maintain its dominant role despite all the socio-linguistic pressures.

How?

The how question can be dealt with at different levels. At the individual level, we can ask how the socio-cultural change that is taking place in the community comes to be

interpreted by the speakers themselves in a way that affects their everyday language use. Research evidence shows that the way(s) in which different speakers and speaker groups deal with LMLS lead to linguistic innovations, structural changes, and new varieties of language. At the community level, the transmission of particular languages has long been an issue of concern, and sometimes conflict. As far as the Chinese community in the UK is concerned, Hakka, which has the second largest native-speaker population in Britain, is never formally taught in the community schools, whereas Mandarin, a language variety which is officially recognised by all the Chinese-speaking countries (e.g. China, Taiwan and Singapore) is being promoted alongside Cantonese. I shall return to the community-level issues of LMLS shortly, but the how question needs to be addressed most critically at the societal level. Here, we can examine how multilingualism is managed through legislation and/or educational provisions. What may be particularly interesting here is to see how different languages are treated differently. In Britain, for example, not airthe Asian languages and varieties of Chinese which are routinely used in the community receive institutional support. GCSE and A-Level examinations are available for Urdu, Hindi, Punjabi, Cantonese and Mandarin, but not others, despite the fact that some of these, for instance, Mandarin, have only a very small number of native speakers in the country.

It has been argued that language is a form of cultural, or more generally, symbolic, capital, which is exchangeable in the marketplace of social interaction. One's ability to use the appropriate language in the appropriate manner *(i.e.* according to conventions established in the interests of the groups that dominate the interaction) affects one's chances of gaining access to situations where valuable resources are produced and distributed, and once there, to participate in the processes of production and distribution, indeed to benefit from them. As a result, linguistic and cultural capitals acquire a value of their own, and become sources of power and prestige in their own right (Heller 1989, 1994). In multilingual societies such as Singapore, therefore, language planning *(i.e.* how the use of language is managed at the societal level) becomes a vital issue in the overall control of recourses and opportunities as well as in the coordination of individuals' everyday life. Social scientists, especially political economists, have identified three agencies which are central to the contemporary societal structures and which seem to have important implications for language planning and management in multilingual and multicultural societies. These three key agencies are: markets, hierarchies, and networks.

Market

The market is characterised by a process of selection and change. We normally think of the market as consisting of a large number of buyers and sellers, voluntarily exchanging goods and services at an agreed price. This, however, is an extreme case - perfect, free competition where no single party is large or powerful enough, relative to the market overall, to have any direct control over the value of the goods that are exchanged is in fact rare. There are usually a range of market conditions that economists call monopolistic

competition. Here, a number of competitive enterprises have at least some control over the market price, though not total control, while others, although allowed to exchange their goods, have virtually no say on the market price. In the meantime, the market system overall, which is often regulated by the government and government-sponsored financial institutions, acts as a kind of social auctioneer, providing unseen but vital links between the buyers and sellers and helping to set the market price. A possible long-term outcome of the market is monopoly where a single party sets the market price.

When applied to language, we can see societal multilingualism as the market where different speech communities, or competitors, negotiate and exchange their own languages, the linguistic capital. While different groups will have differing goals in mind (*e.g.*simply maintaining a presence or share in the marketplace, or gaining some quick profit), their ultimate aim is to gain overall control of the market price, in this case to set the social conventions of language use. Language planning can be seen as 'auctioneering', which does not fix the conventions of language use, but declares what these conventions are and encourages the competition. For a variety of historical, social and political reasons, the market value of the different languages will not normally be the same, and there is little opportunity for truly equal exchange. The market force determines that there will be winners and losers, each having to calculate their short- and long-term costs and benefits.

Hierarchy

Although the market is clearly a key component of modem society, individuals and groups working in a highly competitive market framework have to organise their activities internally and this is likely to be done in a manner that evokes the attributes of a hierarchy in one way or another. Indeed, the market requires individuals and groups to have more sophisticated organisational systems to enhance their competitiveness.

The term "hierarchy" immediately conjures up the ideas of tradition and bureaucracy. This is because hierarchies invoke a stratification of authority and the following of rules. Thus each level of a hierarchy directs the action of those ' lower down', ultimate authority residing with those at the 'top', and at each level those involved carrying out more narrowly defined tasks with less and less autonomy. What is particularly important, however, is that hierarchy also presupposes an already determined outcome or purpose. Planning and management, language or otherwise, can therefore be more effective when hierarchies are utilised, usually by breaking down the ultimate outcome into a set of sub-processes for the different layers. So hierarchy depends upon ideas of organisation, task specialisation and rationality. Social scientists have suggested therefore that despite its problems, hierarchy remains the most efficient mechanism for integrating the activities of large groups of people and for making large organisations work effectively.

For language policies to be effective, then, hierarchies need to be utilised. The various levels of social structure, profession organisation, school, neighbourhood, family, etc., will all have to be coordinated. This implies not only identifying the influential agencies

(*i.e.* individuals and groups, or even organisations) but also the organisational and administrative apparatuses, the decision-making routes, and most importantly perhaps the specified functions and capacities (or task specialisation) of each level of the hierarchy.

Network

It might be tempting to think that market and hierarchy exhaust the possible mechanisms of social coordination and so long as they are 'under control', the expected outcome is guaranteed. The reality is that individuals operate in their immediate, localised networks. The informal relationships people develop through social interaction form web of ties, with distinctive pattern and feature. Network members share a common ethic and outlook and can discuss and decide policy informally between themselves. Networks therefore not only act as norm enforcement mechanism to their members, but also build up resistance to external pressure. Yet, the very informality of networks makes it difficult for the outsider, including government and other formal institutions, to monitor and control their activities. Most networks are highly exclusive of outsiders, and they are not subject to any obvious accountability.

Sociolinguistic research to date has confirmed that localised, close-knit networks facilitate language maintenance. They give their members a sense of belonging. Local norms of language behaviour can be developed, in opposition of the standard norms, within such networks. In a recent discussion on the so-called 'reversing language shift' efforts by some communities whose languages are at risk, Fishman (1991:4) comments that:

> societally based RLS [reversing language shift] cannot be accomplished at all if it is not accomplished at the immediate family and local community levels. ... Indeed, for RLS to 'take hold' these 'lower levels' constituting face-to-face small-scale social life must be pursued in their own right and focused upon directly, rather than merely being thought of as obvious and inevitable by-products of 'higher level' (more complex, more encompassing, more power-related) processes and institutions.

Language maintenance and language shift in Singapore

Singapore is a city-state of 226 sq. miles and a population of 3 million. 78% of the population are ethnic Chinese, 14% Malay, and 7% Indian. Each of these three main ethnic groups can be further distinguished into sub-communities according to place of origin and the so-called 'dialect' they speak. The Chinese group, for example, comprises Hokkien (43.1%), Teochew (22.1%), Cantonese (16.4%), Hakka (7.4%), Hainanese (7.1%) and smaller communities of Foochow, Henghua, Shanghainese, and Hokchia. Each of these sub-communities has its own 'dialect', some being more closely related to each other (in linguistic structural terms) than others. The official languages of Singapore are English, Mandarin Chinese, Malay, and Tamil.

Until the mid twentieth century, a resident of Singapore could sustain a lifestyle which operated largely in a mono-ethnic enclave. It was even possible to live and work within a community that was virtually mono-dialectal (Gupta 1994). This was particularly true in the Chinese community, where different 'dialect' groups had their own identifiable settlements in various parts of the country. The early Teochews, for example, settled in Sembawang, Upper Thompson and Punggol areas, all in the north of Singapore, while the Hokkiens lived in the southern areas, along the Singapore River. Members of the Malay community whose ancesters had emigrated from what is now Indonesia also lived in communities that were almost exclusively Beginese or Javanese.

Such geographical compartmentalisation was reinforced in the nineteenth century by a policy of segregation, which was laid down by Stamford Raffles in his original plan for Singapore. This gave rise to areas such as Chinatown and Little India, which were intensely urban, and the *kampongs* (from the Malay *kampung,* 'village'), which had a more rural character. There were some mixed areas too, but they tended to be English-oriented, in the sense that the English language was used as the *lingua franca* for communication among people of different ethnicities. Clarice (1992), for example, described some neighbourhoods in which Eurasians and Jews lived side by side and where major English-medium schools congregated.

For the Chinese at least, the segregated settlement reinforced their "bang", or clan, consciousness. Members of a "bang" usually had the same surname and place of origin and spoke the same dialect. They grouped themselves together to maintain their ethnic tradition and promote their group culture. An important offshoot of the "bangs" were the language schools, which served not only as a place to educate their children but also as a centre for mutual support, exchange of information and organisation of community activities among their members. Admission to these schools was strictly according to dialect divisions. The "bang" structure was institutionalised in 1889 with the establishment of the Chinese Advisory Board and further strengthened in 1906 with the setting up of the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Among the various "bangs", the Hokkiens were by far the most powerful economically and consequently played a leading role in the Chamber as well as within the Chinese community generally. Second in position were the Teochews (see Cheng 1985 for a historical view of the Chinese communities in Singapore).

Over the course of the twentieth century, mono-ethnic living has become progressively harder. Now virtually all Singaporeans live in ethnically mixed areas. According to the 1990 census, 86% of all households live in HDB flats, flats built and controlled by the Housing Development Board. The policy in these vast estates is, as it has been since the sixties, to mix the racial groups, preventing the formation of ethnic ghettos (Gupta 1994). Limits have been placed on the percentage representation of the races in each neighbourhood, which presumably reflect the ethnic ratio of the country as a whole (87% Chinese, 25% Malay and 10% Indian and others). Multi-ethnic living provided the opportunity for extensive contacts between different groups, which in turn led to bilingualism and multi-lingualism.

Yet, bilingualism and multilingualism have different meanings for different ethnic groups in Singapore. A bilingual speaker of the Malay or Tamil community, for instance, is normally proficient in English and either Malay or Tamil, all of which are official languages of Singapore. A typical bilingual speaker of the Chinese community, on the other hand, would be someone who speaks his/her ethnic 'dialect' (*e.g.* Hokkien, Teochew, Cantonese, etc.) and either Mandarin, the officially sanctioned Chinese language, or English, while a typical multilingual Chinese would speak one or more 'dialects' and *both* Mandarin and English. As in mainland China, the notion of 'dialect' in Singapore is not based on any sound linguistic ground. Rather, it is a status symbol, *i.e.* only Mandarin Chinese is recognised offically as the national language and languages other than Mandarin are assigned the status of 'dialects' whose use is discouraged in public domains. We shall see shortly the government policies towards languages and language varieties in Singapore. Before that, let us look at some facts and figures of the recent changes in language use in Singapore.

Over the last two decades, Singapore has undergone phenomenal socio-economic changes, rising to become a major international economic power. Parallel to the socio-economic changes has been a massive language shift from ethnic to national and international languages. Table 1 below is taken from the 1990 Census of Population, which illustrates the changes in predominant household language in Singapore between 1980 and 1990.

Table 1. Predominant household language, 1980 and 1990

Language	Per Cent	
	1980	**1990**
Total	100.0	100.0
English	11.6	20.3
Mandarin	10.2	26.0
Chinese dialects	59.5	36.7
Malay	13.9	13.4
Tamil	3.1	2.9
Others	1.7	0.7

Source: Department of Statistics, Singapore: Advance data release (1991:17)

As we can see, the percentage of household in Singapore with predominant use of 'Chinese dialects' declined from 60% in 1980 to 37% in 1990, while the percentage of

household speaking Mandarin more than doubled from 10% to 26%. In the meantime, the percentage of household speaking English at home increased from 12% to 20%.

This set of data also suggests that the changes in household language use have been more significant for the Chinese and Indians than for the Malays. Further details of the differential language shift are given in Table 2.

Table 2. Predominant household language by ethnic group 1980 and 1990

Language	Per Cent	
	1980	1990
Chinese Households		
English	10.2	20.6
Mandarin	13.1	32.8
Chinese diatects	76.2	46.2
Others	0.5	0.4
Malay Households		
English	2.3	5.5
Malay	96.7	94.3
Others	1.0	0.2
Indian Households		
English	24.3	34.8
Malay	8.6	13.5
Tamil	52.2	43.7
Others	14.9	8.0

Souce: Department of Statistics, Singapore: Advanced data release (1991: 18)

While all three communities have increased their use of English, the Malays have maintained their overall language use pattern. The Chinese have shifted significantly from 'dialects' to Mandarin, and the use of Malay has apparently increased in the Indian community.

Within each of the three main ethnic groups, there are some interesting variations in the extent of language shift in different sub-communities. In the Malay population, for example, the native speakers of the Polynesian languages (*e.g.*Javanese, Boyanese) have shifted to English more significantly than die Bahasa Malay speakers. The extent

to which different sub-groups of the Chinese community have been affected by language shift is illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3. Language shift among the Singaporean Chinese

	Language claimed as principal language to spouse (% of Chinese living in same household as spouse)	
	1980	1990
Hokkien	34	26
Teochew	17	11
Cantonese	15	10
English	12	20
Mandarin	13	28
Other Chinese dialects	9	5

Souce: Department of Statistics, Release No.8 (1991), and Statistical release No. 3 (1990)

Bearing in mind that there has been no significant in-migration to Singapore since the early 1960s, such large-scale, complex changes in the sociolinguistic patterns in Singapore can be attributed largely to the deliberate and often forcefully-implemented government policies towards language and language varieties.

Language shift and language policy in Singapore

In reviewing the language policies of the Singaporean government since independence, Gopinathan (1988) points out two key factors which seem to have influenced the government's thinking: the first is the need for social and political stability in a highly multi-racial society, and the second is the need for rapid economic growth.

It is clear from the literature that in many multilingual societies, language-bred hostility is a major source of social tension (*e.g.* Nelde 1980). During Singapore's colonial years, there was already some awareness among the ordinary people as well as the government that some means for linguistic interaction must be found, given the multiethnic and multilingual nature of the Singapore society. It was assumed that English had the most potential as a link language. However, the colonial authorities were not prepared to expand English-medium schooling, and after 1920 a sizable proportion of the Chinese population demanded Chinese-medium education. The government then faced building Chinese schools, training teachers and the like.

Since independence, the Singaporean government has successfully transformed English from a colonial language and an object of suspicion among ordinary citizens into a *de facto* national language. This transformation has been achieved by identifying English not simply as a "neutral" link language between the various ethnic groups, but as a major source of economically valuable knowledge and technology. From the early seventies to the late eighties, the Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew repeatedly argued that knowledge of an international language such as English would give the nation access to world markets and the people better living standards. Over the years, the goverment has sought to shape a vision of Singapore as a rational, modernising society. Rapid economic growth since the eighties seems to have helped convince the vast majority of the population that knowledge of English provides better opportunities for them as individuals, as well as for the country as a whole. There is now remarkable acceptance of English as a national language of Singapore. We shall look more specifically at people's attitudes towards language later in the paper.

As Singapore moves towards a more centralised administrative structure, with an economy dominated by multinationals and power in the hands of an English-educated technocratic elite, traditional power brokers such as family businesses, clan associations, and trade unions are likely to feel alienated. The government is fully aware that the retention and promotion of ethnic heritage, including ethnic language, at this time is likely to ensure, as Gopinathan (1988:397) puts it, 'that these groups will have something to hold on to and, if not support, at least acquiesce in large-scale social engineering'. Language is thus seen as a valuable tool for managing the effects of social dislocation brought about by modernisation.

What is particularly interesting, however, is that, with regards to the Chinese population, the government has chosen to promote Mandarin, which is not spoken as a native language by any of the Chinese groups in Singapore, instead of the various ethnic Chinese languages. In 1978, the Singaporean government launched the well-known "Speak Mandarin Campaign". Once again, the need for ethnic unity and the need for economic development combined in influencing the govemement policy. It was argued that using the so-called 'dialects' would fragment the Chinese community and would prevent the nation from accessing the growing, potentially huge market of mainland China (it is interesting to note that the Speak Mandarin Campaign coincided with the Open Door Policy in China in 1978). The government has repeatedly emphasised Singapore's funda-mental nature as an Asian society and the importance of playing a leading role in the developing economies of Asia. To be able to speak Mandarin, as Prime Minister Lee puts it, would give 'confidence to a people to face up to and overcome great changes and challenges' (as quoted in *The Straits Times*, 22 September, 1984). The Speak Mandarin Campaign has since been an annual event and has become more forceful over the years. Among the measures taken have been public campaigns which aimed at service personnel (*e.g.* postmen, government office clerks, bus conductors), as well as the more ordinary workers (*e.g.* taxi drivers and hawkers), the organisation of public forums, panel discussions, seminars on the Speak Mandarin theme, and eradication of television and radio programmes

and commercials in 'dialects' and dubbing popular Cantonese programmes from Hong Kong into Mandarin. Mandarin is now widely spoken in domains which were once reserved for 'dialects' (*e.g.* family) or English (*e.g.* schools).

In sum, the linguistic market of Singapore can be characterised by the co-existence of four languages - English, Mandarin-Chinese, Malay and Tamil, each having its specific market value. There are many other ethnic and community languages and dialects which, although do not compete directly on the national market, are popularly used and have their own special symbolic value. As with other types of market, the linguistic market is a process of constant selection, competition and change. Recent accounts of the sociolinguistic patterns in Singapore have described a 'post-diglossia' situation, in which the functional distribution of languages and language varieties becomes less distinctive and a new generation of speakers have begun to take on a positive attitude towards code-switching indiscriminately between different languages and language varieties (Xu & Tham 1997). Such a situation is clearly a result of the market competition.

To regulate the market, language planning and language policies have been initiated, usually through a number of inter-related, complex hierarchies, including government agencies, educational institutions, and community organisations. It is not entirely clear at the moment how effective language planning has been in Singapore. No evaluative research has been carried out to date.

In the meantime, there are units of society which may work against the hierarchies which in turn work against the market. Such units tend to be the informal, localised, personal networks. It is the networks that ultimately decide whether a language is maintained or relinquished and whether a particular policy towards language use and language education is implemented (see Li Wei, *et al.* 1997 for a example). It may be the case therefore that for language planning to be effective, focus needs to be redirected to such informal, localised, personal networks.

The role of the network raises the why question in the study of LMLS.

Why?

No research on LMLS is complete without addressing the why question, of course. For a long time, investigators have focused their efforts on finding (ultimately universal) patterns of causality. Social changes such as industrialisation, urbanisation, and government policies have been suggested as responsible for a group's giving up its traditional language use pattern. However, as Kulick (1992:9) points out, to evoke macro-sociological change as a "cause" of language shift is 'to leave out the crucial step of understanding how that change has come to be interpreted by the people it is supposed to be influencing'. Kulick argues that shift in language use is caused by shifts in personal and group values and goals. What urbanisation or industrialisation may do to people is to lead them to revise their perceptions of themselves and their world, or, in more familiar terminology, their attitudes, and these

revisions may eventually lead to their change of language use. Far too often, work on language shift has concentrated on examining the end result of change. The process of the change, *i. e.* 'why and how do people come to interpret their own identity in such a way that they abandon their language in favour of another language?' has not received enough of the attention it clearly deserves.

Conclusion

Since Fishman's seminal paper in 1964, LMLS has become a pivotal topic in sociolinguistic research. There now exists a large body of literature documenting the linguistic fortunes of a range of communities in different parts of the world. Nevertheless, the analytic approach to the topic has remained predominantly the one from which Fishman originally proposed, which takes LMLS as a by-product of higher-level, power-related social processes. The capacity of individual speakers to make use of the linguistic and social resources available to them in producing and reproducing social structures and social order is often underestimated. LMLS is a complex and dynamic process. It involves people's rethinking of their identities, goals and values. LMLS research should therefore be a 'study of a people's conceptions of themselves in relation to one another and to their changing social world, and of how those conceptions are encoded by and mediated through language' (Kulick, 1992:9). Viewed in this way, LMLS research should not be a merely descriptive discipline but a more evaluative, even critical, area of social science.

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