

The Relationship between China-Singapore Development Cooperation and Singapore's Chinese Language Education: A Mini-Review

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Abstract. This review paper examines the intricate relationship between China-Singapore Development Cooperation and Chinese language education in Singapore. China's remarkable economic growth and its rising global influence have prompted many countries, including Singapore, to recognize the significance of Chinese language proficiency for fostering closer economic, cultural, and diplomatic ties with China. The paper aims to analyse the strategic considerations behind China's engagement with Singapore and how these considerations have shaped the development of Chinese language education in Singapore. The review explores various dimensions of this relationship, including the historical context, policy frameworks, curriculum design, pedagogical approaches, and the impact on students' language proficiency and cultural understanding. Through a comprehensive analysis of existing literature, this mini-review paper provides valuable insights into the dynamics between China's development strategy and the promotion of Chinese language education in Singapore, shedding light on the broader implications for language learning in the context of economic and geopolitical interactions.

Keywords: China-Singapore; Development Cooperation; Singapore Chinese Language Education; Second Language Acquisition.

1. Introduction

In the 1970s, China and Singapore began unofficial relations with the establishment of trade office and commercial air services, marking the beginning of their formal engagement. However, it was not until 1990 that diplomatic ties between the two countries were officially established. The significance of Singapore's first Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew's visit to China in 1976, which marked the beginning of bilateral relations and influenced China's vision for reform and opening up. China's paramount leader Deng Xiaoping's first official visit to Singapore in 1978 in candid discussions on various issues between the leaders of both countries. Deng's visit had ushered a new era for friendly relations and cooperation between the nations. Since then, the diplomatic relations were then delving into the extensive cooperation and exchanges between China and Singapore, including the establishment of the Suzhou Industrial Park and Lee's role as an advisor to China. It reflects on Lee's contributions to China's economic development and his efforts to strengthen bilateral ties. The relations between China and Singapore have improved throughout the years through agreements in free trade, education, foreign investment and technology, further strengthening the ties between the two countries.

Chinese language education in Singapore holds significant importance in several aspects of bilateral relations with China. Firstly, it enables a deeper cultural exchange by facilitating communication and understanding of each other's cultures. Secondly, proficiency in Chinese language enhances economic collaborations, providing Singapore with a competitive edge in engaging with Chinese businesses and navigating the Chinese market. Besides, it promotes educational partnerships and research collaborations, contributing to the development of human capital and intellectual exchanges. It also facilitates the effective communication in diplomatic relations, strengthening ties and cooperation between government officials. Lastly, it supports cultural

diplomacy initiatives, fostering mutual understanding and appreciation of arts and cultural heritage. In a nutshell, Chinese language education plays a vital role in fostering closer ties and facilitating various forms of engagement between Singapore and China.

This paper aims to examine the relationship between China-Singapore development cooperation and Singapore's Chinese language education, assess the impact of development cooperation on the promotion and development of Chinese language education in Singapore and also provide recommendations for enhancing the synergy between China-Singapore development cooperation and Chinese language education in Singapore. Extensive review of relevant academic literature, research studies, government reports, and policy documents was done to gain a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between China-Singapore development cooperation and Singapore's Chinese language education. In-depth case studies of specific initiatives or programs within China-Singapore development cooperation and their impact on Chinese language education in Singapore was also being conducted.

2. Overview of China-Singapore Development Cooperation

Since the implementation of the reform and opening-up policy in 1979, China has transitioned from a planned economy to a market economy. During this period, Singapore emerged as a prominent role model for China's economic transformation. Several collaborative initiatives were established between the two nations, resulting in Singapore becoming the largest foreign direct investor in China.

In the 1990s, China and Singapore sign an agreement to jointly develop the Suzhou Industrial Park (SIP), a flagship project aimed at promoting economic cooperation and industrialization (Interactive Zaobao, 2020). The SIP project was initiated with the purpose of establishing an industrial township in Suzhou, China. Its main objective was to facilitate the transfer of Singapore's industrial development model and public-administration experience to China. The project was originated from Deng Xiaoping's interest in Singapore's development model and Lee Kuan Yew's vision for bilateral cooperation. Numerous study visits were made by Lee to Suzhou and several cities in Shandong before this 'transfer', spending much time and effort in building up the SIP. SIP has now become a highly open and successful region, known for its exceptional development quality, innovation, and business environment. In 2020, the SIP achieved remarkable milestones, including a regional GDP of 290.7 billion yuan, public budget income of 37.73 billion yuan, total imports and exports value of 94.18 billion US dollars, and actual foreign investment of 1.97 billion US dollars (Suzhou Municipal People's Government, 2021). These accomplishments have earned the park numerous prestigious national and provincial awards, highlighting its status as a leading example of international cooperation.

China held a prominent position as one of Singapore's primary importers and served as a significant destination for Singaporean investors, with investments surpassing US\$21 billion in the 2000s (National Library Board Singapore, 2015). Both nations recognized the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) as advantageous for both nations in the long run, promoting regional cooperation and integration. Hence, in October 2008, China and Singapore signed the China-Singapore Free Trade Agreement (CSFTA) and it came into effect on January 2009. This agreement represents as a significant milestone in the bilateral relationship between the nations since their official diplomatic ties established in 1990. CSTFA is a bilateral trade agreement between China and Singapore that aims to promote trade and economic cooperation. It covers a wide range of areas, including trade in goods and services, investment, intellectual property rights, traditional Chinese Medicine education, free movement of professionals etc. CSTFTA eliminates or reduces tariffs and non-tariff barriers on goods and services traded between the nations, Starting from 1st January 2009, tariffs on approximately 85 percent of Singapore's exports to China were abolished, and an additional 10 percent of exports became duty-free from 2010 onwards (National Library Board Singapore, 2018). Besides, Singapore companies investing in China's healthcare sector are provided preferential access, allowing them to hold up to a 70 percent stake in mainland hospitals, creating a more favourable business environment

for companies from both nations. The agreement has strengthened economic ties and boosted bilateral trade and investment flows between China and Singapore, contributing to the deepening of their economic cooperation and integration.

In 2013, China unveils the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), a global development strategy aimed at enhancing connectivity and promoting economic cooperation with countries along the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road. In response, Singapore actively supports and participates in the BRI, positioning itself as a key hub for trade, finance, and infrastructure projects. Singapore leverages China's rise and its Belt and Road Initiative to position itself as a hub for regional connectivity and trade. Furthermore, China and Singapore launched the Chongqing Connectivity Initiative (CCI), an ambitious project aimed at enhancing connectivity between Western China and Southeast Asia in 2015. CCI is the third collaborative project between China and Singapore, focusing on four key areas of cooperation: financial services, aviation industry, transportation logistics, and information and communication. Aligned with the development strategies of the Belt and Road Initiative, the Great Western Development, and the Yangtze River Economic Zone, the project aims to achieve modern interconnection and a service-based economy. It has successfully facilitated the implementation of various China-Singapore cooperation projects, 16 cross-border financing projects were completed under the initiative, amounting to approximately \$1.08 billion in financing in 2018 (iChongqing, n.d.).

Following the establishment of Guangzhou Knowledge City (GKC) and the Joint Council for Bilateral Cooperation (JCBC), significant impacts have been observed in both China and Singapore. These initiatives have brought about notable changes and advancements in various aspects of bilateral cooperation and development between the two nations. China has gained valuable expertise from Singapore in areas such as urban planning, infrastructure development, and financial services, while Singapore has seized economic opportunities and gained access to the vast Chinese market. All development cooperation has fostered a win-win scenario, promoting growth and cooperation between China and Singapore.

3. Chinese Language Education in Singapore

With Singapore's independence in 1965, the government has proactively managed the country's multilingual society. Designating English, Chinese, Malay, and Tamil as official languages with equal status, they sought to strike a balance among diverse ethnic groups. English was selected as the common language to facilitate communication integration, forge a new national identity, and address sociocultural sensitivities. The government aimed to instil bilingualism in younger generations, with a particular emphasis on promoting Chinese within the Chinese community, aiming to replace various Chinese dialects like Hokkien, Teochew, and Cantonese. These language policies have been implemented in the education system and are evident through their influence on national examinations.

3.1 Historical Development of Chinese Language Education in Singapore

The historical development of Chinese language education in Singapore can be traced back to the early days of the country's establishment. As Singapore grew into an important trading post under British colonial rule, a significant influx of Chinese immigrants from Southern China occurred. To meet the educational needs of these immigrants, private Chinese schools were established with the aim of preserving Chinese language, culture, and values within the Chinese diaspora. However, the curriculum of these schools often revolved around classical Chinese literature and Confucian teachings.

The influence of Chinese revolutionaries, such as Dr. Sun Yat Sen, became evident after the Xinhai Revolution in 1911. Modern Chinese schools emerged in Singapore and other parts of Southeast Asia, adopting Chinese as the primary language of instruction and placing strong emphasis on Chinese culture, nationalism, and patriotism. Subjects like history, geography, mathematics, and science were taught in Chinese, contributing to the development of a comprehensive educational system. These

schools followed the structure of the mainland Chinese education system, comprising six years of primary schooling, three years of junior middle schooling, and three years of senior middle schooling (Koh& Liu, 2019). In 1931, the Hokkien Association initiated common examinations for students in Chinese stream schools, providing a standardized evaluation system. Senior Middle III examinations were conducted until 1961 when the government introduced the Government Secondary IV School Certificate (Chinese) examination. Students who excelled in these examinations had the opportunity to pursue higher education at Nanyang University, Singapore's sole Chinese language post-secondary institution established in 1955 (Koh& Liu, 2019). Overall, the historical development of Chinese language education in Singapore reflects the efforts to preserve the Chinese language and cultural heritage among the Chinese community. It showcases the evolution of educational institutions and the emphasis on Chinese language proficiency, cultural identity, and national pride within Singapore's multicultural society.

3.2 Policy Initiatives and Reforms Promoting Chinese Language Learning

The Singaporean government has implemented policy initiatives and reforms to promote Chinese language learning, driven by the country's commitment to pragmatism and global trends. Recognizing the expanding influence of the Chinese language and China's emergence as a major economic power, the government encourages Singaporean students to enhance their language skills to engage effectively with China. This goes beyond conversational fluency and extends to formal settings, considering the rising importance of China's market.

Government initiatives like the Speak Mandarin Campaign and Business China have emphasized the instrumental value of learning Chinese for trade and business dealings with China. Speak Mandarin Campaign was launched in 1979 to encourage the use and learning of Mandarin Chinese among Chinese Singaporeans. The campaign aimed to promote Mandarin as a common language among the Chinese community and enhance their overall language skills. Business China is an organization in Singapore that focuses on strengthening economic and business connections between Singapore and China. It promotes the learning of Chinese language and culture and facilitates collaborations between businesses in both countries. Business China organizes events, programs, and initiatives to enhance understanding and cooperation in areas such as trade, investment, and business opportunities. Its activities include business networking, language courses, mentorship programs, and cultural exchanges. The organization plays a crucial role in fostering bilateral relations and facilitating economic engagement between Singapore and China (Business China Singapore, n.d.).

The Singaporean government has taken an active role in standardizing the Chinese language curriculum across schools to ensure consistency in learning objectives, teaching methods, and assessment standards. The curriculum focuses on developing language proficiency, cultural knowledge, and effective communication skills. The government supports the professional development of Chinese language teachers through training programs and workshops and provides resources and teaching materials to enhance the quality of education. These initiatives demonstrate the government's commitment to promoting Chinese language education and fostering a strong foundation in language skills and cultural understanding. Furthermore, Chinese Language Elective Programme (CLEP) was introduced in 1990. It is an educational program designed to provide students with an in-depth and advanced learning experience in the Chinese language. Offered at the junior college level, CLEP aims to develop students' language proficiency, cultural knowledge, and critical thinking skills in Chinese. The program offers a comprehensive curriculum that includes language study, literature, and cultural components. It also provides opportunities for students to engage in immersive learning experiences and participate in cultural activities. The CLEP curriculum is designed to cater to students with a strong interest and aptitude in Chinese language and culture, preparing them for further studies and careers that require advanced Chinese language skills (Ministry of Education Singapore, n.d.).

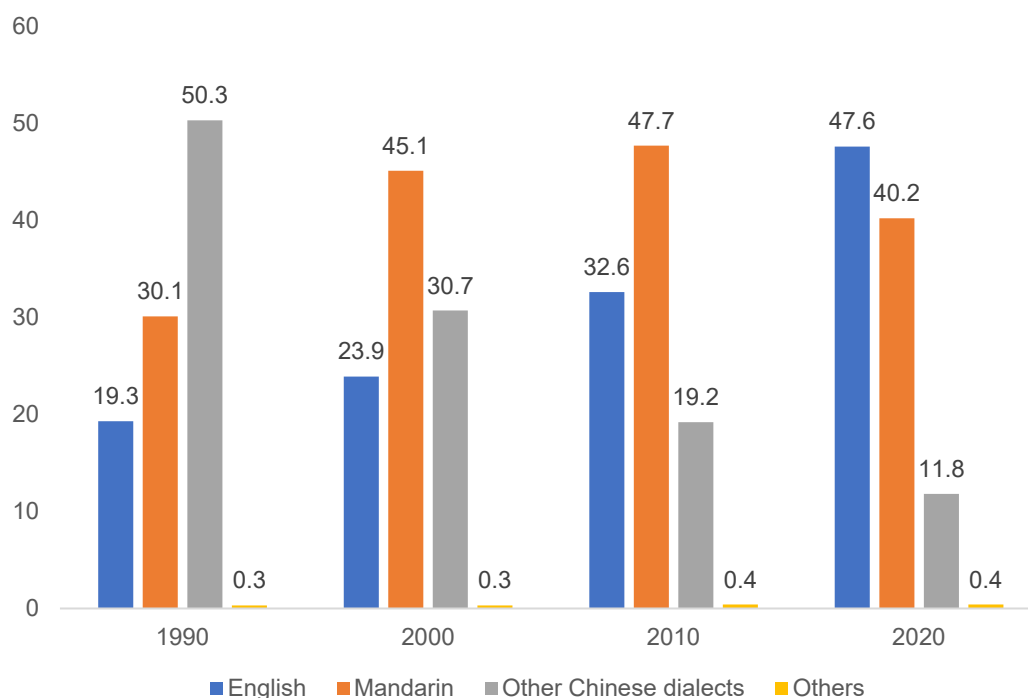


Figure 1. Chinese Resident Population Aged 5 Years and Over by Language Most Frequently Spoken at Home (%). Source: Lee (2013), Department of Statistics Singapore (2020)

The Speak Mandarin Campaign achieved remarkable success as it effectively led to a significant language transition from other dialects to Mandarin, as evidenced by Figure 1. Originally intended to promote the use of Mandarin over dialects, the campaign has evolved to encourage individuals to maintain their Mandarin proficiency instead of predominantly relying on English for communication. From the 2000 Official Census, we can observe that the percentage of Mandarin-speaking households had risen from 30.1% to 45.1% with an increase of 15%, while the percentage of other Chinese dialects as the language most frequently spoken at home showed a significant decline of 19.6%, from 50.3% to 30.7%. Moreover, the 2010 Official Census indicates that this pattern has persisted over time: the proportion of Chinese households using other dialects decreased drastically from 30.7% in 2000 to 19.2% in 2010. When comparing the data from 2000 to 2010, it becomes evident that the significant decline in dialect usage, 11.5% has only resulted in a marginal rise in Mandarin, 2.6%, while there has been a more substantial increase in the adoption of English as the primary home language by 8.7%. If we look at the trend from 2010 to 2020, English has taken over as the language most frequently spoken at home with a proportion of 47.6% in 2020 as compared to 40.2% Mandarin and 11.8% for other Chinese dialects. The trend of having the increase of the percentage of Mandarin-speaking households and decline of the percentage of other Chinese dialect speaking households has discontinued during this period of time. The domination of English over Mandarin as the language most frequently spoken at home can be explained by ‘Challenges and limitations in promoting Chinese language learning in Singapore’ in Part 6.

4. The Influence of China-Singapore Development Cooperation on Chinese Language Education in Singapore

4.1 Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) Education

TCM education in Singapore is another area where China-Singapore development cooperation has been significant. Singapore has collaborated with renowned TCM universities and institutions in China. One such collaboration is the Singapore College of Traditional Chinese Medicine (SCTCM),

which was established in 1953 in partnership with the Nanjing University of Chinese Medicine since 2001. Their collaboration began with a jointly-conducted five-year full-time Bachelor's degree program. In subsequent years, they expanded their collaboration to include jointly-conducted Master's and Doctoral degree courses in 2003 and 2005, respectively (Singapore College of Traditional Chinese Medicine, n.d.). In 2006, SCTCM also initiated collaboration with Guangzhou University of Chinese Medicine. This partnership initially involved a jointly-conducted seven-year part-time Bachelor's degree program. Later, in 2016, they further expanded their collaboration to include a jointly-conducted five-year full-time Bachelor's degree program, as well as Master's and Doctoral degree courses (Singapore College of Traditional Chinese Medicine, n.d.). Besides partnership, China-Singapore cooperation has also facilitated exchange programs between TCM educational institutions in both countries. These programs allow students and faculty members to engage in cultural and educational exchanges, enabling them to gain exposure to different TCM practices, research, and teaching methods. Overall, these collaborations have significantly contributed to the cultural exchange, collaboration in research and development, growth and recognition of TCM as a legitimate healthcare discipline in Singapore.

4.2 Free Mobility of the Professionals

The China-Singapore Free Trade Agreement (CSFTA) has had a profound impact on Chinese language education in Singapore, promoting collaboration, enhancing teaching methodologies, and fostering cultural exchange. The CSFTA enables the free mobility of professionals between the two countries, facilitating the exchange of Chinese language professionals and educators. Educators from both countries have worked together to refine teaching methodologies, develop engaging curricula, and incorporate the latest advancements in language education. These professionals bring extensive expertise, innovative teaching methods, and a deep understanding of Chinese culture and language nuances. This exchange of ideas and expertise has enhanced the teaching methodologies and effectiveness of Chinese language education in Singapore. Moreover, the partnerships and collaborations includes joint research projects, curriculum development initiatives, and the establishment of exchange programs for students and educators between educational institutions in China and Singapore. These collaborations provide opportunities for Singaporean students and teachers to gain first-hand experience and exposure to Chinese language education in China, further enhancing their language proficiency and cultural understanding. In conclusion, the CSFTA has played a vital role in promoting collaboration and enhancing Chinese language education in Singapore. Through the exchange of professionals, sharing of best practices, and collaborations between institutions, Chinese language education has flourished, ensuring that students receive a comprehensive and high-quality education in the Chinese language.

4.3 Chinese Language Elective Programme at the Pre-University Level (CLEP)

CLEP is available in specific junior colleges and aims to foster students' language proficiency, critical thinking abilities, and cultural understanding in Chinese. As part of the programme, students are required to enrol in Chinese Language and Literature at the advanced level higher 2 (H2). Additionally, those who are interested can choose to take another Chinese language-related subject like H2 Translation (Jurong Pioneer Junior College, n.d.). To enhance students' cultural immersion and deepen their knowledge of Chinese culture and society, the Ministry of Education's Curriculum Planning & Development Division organizes an annual 15-day CLEP Overseas Immersion Trip to Beijing/Shanghai and Taipei (Jurong Pioneer Junior College, n.d.). This overseas trip provides students with valuable first-hand experiences and insights. Furthermore, CLEP students benefit from a range of exclusive weekly activities organized within their respective colleges. These activities are designed to provide them with diverse opportunities for growth and exploration. Examples of such activities include song writing, tea art appreciation, mini-lectures by distinguished experts and academics, calligraphy, and more. These activities contribute to a holistic learning experience and allow students to engage with different aspects of Chinese culture beyond the classroom. In summary,

the CLEP goes beyond traditional language education by emphasizing critical thinking skills, cultural understanding, and experiential learning. It provides students with a comprehensive and enriching language learning experience that extends beyond the classroom, allowing them to develop a deeper connection with the Chinese language and culture.

5. Case Studies: Successful Models of Collaboration

5.1 Confucius Institutes

One successful model of collaboration between China and Singapore in Chinese language education is the establishment of Confucius Institutes in Singapore. Confucius Institutes are non-profit educational organizations that promote Chinese language and culture around the world (Confucius Institute Online, 2009). These institutes are typically formed through partnerships between Chinese universities and educational institutions in other countries. In Singapore, there are several Confucius Institutes that have been established in collaboration with prestigious Chinese universities, such as Nanyang Technological University (NTU) and Nanyang Polytechnic (NYP). These institutes offer a wide range of Chinese language courses and cultural activities to students, professionals, and the general public. Through these collaborations, Chinese language teachers and scholars from China are invited to Singapore to teach and share their expertise. They contribute to the professional development of local Chinese language teachers by providing training and resources. This exchange of knowledge and expertise helps to enhance the quality of Chinese language education in Singapore and ensures that teaching methodologies align with international standards. Furthermore, these collaborations foster cultural exchange and understanding between China and Singapore. Students and participants in the Confucius Institutes have the opportunity to engage in cultural activities, such as Chinese calligraphy, traditional music, and martial arts. These experiences deepen their appreciation and understanding of Chinese culture, further strengthening the ties between the two countries. The successful collaboration between China and Singapore through Confucius Institutes has contributed to the growth and popularity of Chinese language education in Singapore. It has provided access to quality Chinese language courses and resources, and has created a platform for cultural exchange and understanding. These initiatives have played a significant role in promoting Chinese language learning and fostering bilateral relations between China and Singapore in the field of education.

5.2 Nanyang Centre for Public Administration (NCPA)'s "Mayors' Class" Programmes

In 1992, marking a significant milestone in the early years of diplomatic relations between Singapore and China, NTU Singapore was designated as one of the first overseas universities to offer executive training programs for middle and senior-ranking Chinese government officials. This initiative was launched shortly after Deng Xiaoping's influential Southern Tour, during which he emphasized China's commitment to reform and opening up, encouraging officials to learn from Singapore's success and aim for even greater achievements. Recognizing the potential of this moment, NTU Singapore took the opportunity to organize informative briefings and engaging dialogues for the cohort of 36 Chinese officials who arrived in Singapore to participate in the executive training program (). The program provided them with valuable insights into Singapore's development model, governance structure, and harmonious multi-racial society. The initial training program proved highly successful and subsequently evolved into the esteemed "Mayors' Class" Masters' program. Over the years, the "Mayors' Class" has played a crucial role in nurturing 17,000 graduates from various regions in China, including government officials, businessmen, and tertiary institution officials in high-end training programmes ranging from two weeks to three months, or a one-year Master's degree programme in Singapore (Nanyang Technological University, n.d.)

Moreover, the Lien Ying Chow Legacy Fellowship has fostered reciprocal interactions between exceptional government officials, professionals, and academics from both China and Singapore, facilitating mutual understanding and knowledge-sharing. The Nanyang Centre for Public

Administration (NCPA), through its diverse initiatives, has effectively built bridges between China and Singapore. It organizes seminars, forums, and conferences that promote the exchange of ideas and perspectives, fostering scholarly exchanges and discussions on topics related to China's development and good governance. To adapt to the changing times, the center has expanded its offerings, updated its curriculum, and embraced online classes during the challenging period of the COVID-19 pandemic. Deputy Prime Minister and Coordinating Minister for Economic Policies, Heng Swee Keat, emphasized the importance of continuous innovation during his speech at the NTU's Nanyang Centre for Public Administration's "Mayors' Class" 30th Anniversary Gala Dinner. He encouraged the center to expand its role beyond China and deepen its ties with Asia and the region, ensuring its continued relevance. Heng also highlighted the need for the center to stay abreast of key issues such as digitalization, Industry 4.0, and climate change to equip graduates with the necessary knowledge and skills (Prime Minister's Office Singapore, 2020) In conclusion, over the past 30 years, the Nanyang Centre has successfully built bridges between China and Singapore. By embracing continuous innovation, engaging with its extensive alumni network, and adopting a regional focus, the center can further enhance mutual understanding, strengthen relationships, and make meaningful contributions to the development of China, Singapore, and the world.

6. Challenges and Limitations in Promoting Chinese Language Learning in Singapore

6.1 Pervasive Dominance of English as the Primary Language

Promoting Chinese language learning in Singapore is an ongoing endeavour that faces several challenges. Despite the efforts by the Ministry of Education to encourage extensive Chinese language study, challenges persist. One significant hurdle is the pervasive dominance of English as the primary language for education, business, and daily communication. English's global relevance and economic advantages have led to a greater emphasis on English proficiency in schools and society, overshadowing the importance of Chinese. Singapore capitalized on the global prominence of English in business, technology, and science by utilizing its existing colonial social and educational linguistic framework to encourage its widespread use. This initiative aimed to expedite the country's development and integration into the global economy. After gaining independence, there was a notable shift in language education as more students chose to enrol in English-medium schools. Consequently, Chinese parents, in particular, recognized the greater economic opportunities associated with graduates from English-medium schools, which motivated this trend.

Table 1. Chinese Resident Population Aged 15 Years and Over by Language Most Frequently Spoken at Home and Highest Qualification Attained (%), 2020

Language	No Qualification	Primary	Secondary	Post-Secondary	University
English	3.7	9.1	31.6	46.9	61.2
Mandarin	44.0	60.6	52.2	45.2	34.4
Other Chinese dialects	52.0	30.0	15.9	7.6	3.8
Other	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.7
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Department of Statistics Singapore (2020)

In general, the proportion of speaking English increases with higher educational qualification. As shown in Table 1, among Singapore Chinese residents aged 15 years and over with university degrees, English was the language most frequently spoken at home for 61.2%. In contrast, English was only used by less than 5% of those with no qualifications. Furthermore, for those with primary or secondary education, Mandarin tended to be the most common languages spoken at home by residents. Chinese dialects continued to be used predominantly by Chinese residents who had no qualifications. From the 2020 Official Census, it can be concluded that more speaking English among the better-educated.

6.2 Introducing the Chinese Language 'B' Syllabus

In 1999, the then Deputy Prime Minister, Lee Hsien Loong recognized the increasing number of English-speaking families in Singapore and introduced the Chinese Language 'B' syllabus as a more accessible option for students struggling with Mandarin (Lee, 2013). This syllabus focused on listening and speaking skills and was less demanding than the existing curriculum. However, passing the 'B' syllabus was still required for entry into junior college and university. In 2004, the Chinese Language 'B' syllabus was made available from Secondary One to address the challenges of teaching the "mother tongue" to students with limited exposure to it at home. The approach emphasized oral communication and reading, while a core group of bilingual individuals with strong Chinese language skills was also nurtured. Despite the requirement to pass the 'B' syllabus for university admission, the importance placed on Chinese language results by universities was minimal, except for those majoring in Chinese. This change has raised concerns among proponents of the Chinese language.

6.3 Influence of Western Media

Additionally, the influence of Western pop culture and media on Singaporean youth has fostered a preference for English over Chinese. The allure of English-language entertainment and the prevalence of English on digital platforms can diminish interest in learning Chinese and make it more difficult to engage students effectively. As a result, motivating students to engage actively in Chinese language learning becomes increasingly challenging. The allure of English-language media and the cultural associations tied to it may create a sense of disinterest or even resistance towards learning Chinese. Students may struggle to see the practical value or personal relevance of acquiring Chinese language skills in a context where English appears to be more influential and globally connected.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, China-Singapore development cooperation has indeed had a significant impact on Singapore's Chinese language education. The extensive cooperation and exchanges between both nations have strengthened their diplomatic ties and fostered economic growth. China-Singapore development cooperation initiatives such as the Suzhou Industrial Park (SIP), the China-Singapore Free Trade Agreement (CSFTA), the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), and the Chongqing Connectivity Initiative (CCI) not only advocating collaboration and enhancing bilateral trade and investment, but also promoting Chinese language education in Singapore. Proficiency in Chinese language not only promotes understanding and appreciation of each other's cultures but also provides Singapore with a competitive edge in engaging with Chinese businesses and navigating the Chinese market. The Singaporean government has implemented various policy initiatives and reforms to promote Chinese language learning, supported by organizations like the Speak Mandarin Campaign and Chinese Language Elective Programme (CLEP). The influence of China-Singapore development cooperation on Chinese language education in Singapore is evident in areas such as TCM education. Collaborations between Singaporean and Chinese TCM universities have resulted in joint degree programs and exchange programs, contributing to the development of human capital and the exchange of knowledge and expertise. Confucius Institutes in Singapore have been a successful model of collaboration between China and Singapore in Singapore's Chinese language education. These institutes enhance the quality of Chinese language education and promotes cultural exchange.

The Nanyang Centre for Public Administration (NCPA)'s efforts in training Chinese government officials through its "Mayors' Class" programs at NTU Singapore have built bridges, facilitated dialogue, and made valuable contributions to the development of both countries and the region.

To enhance the synergy between China-Singapore development cooperation and Chinese language education in Singapore, several recommendations can be considered. Firstly, there should be continued support for language curriculum standardization, teacher training, and the provision of resources and teaching materials from all stakeholders, with the strong enforcement from the government. Advance efforts should also be made to promote immersive learning experiences and cultural activities. Additionally, further collaboration in educational initiatives, research projects, and student exchanges can be encouraged to deepen the understanding and cooperation between educational institutions in both countries especially in higher education institutions. Lastly, the promotion of Chinese language education should be aligned with the evolving needs of the globalized world, considering the growing influence of English and other languages in Singapore.

In a nutshell, the relationship between China-Singapore development cooperation and Chinese language education in Singapore is a dynamic and symbiotic one. It contributes to the cultural, economic, and diplomatic ties between the two countries and plays a vital role in fostering closer relations and facilitating various forms of engagement. By continuing to strengthen this bilateral relationship, Singapore can further leverage its Chinese language proficiency and cultural understanding to enhance its position as a key player in the region and deepen its cooperation with China.

Data Availability

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Competing Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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