

TGIF

THE NTU LINGUIST CHATROOM

Inertia in Language Policy Reform: Why Singapore's Mother Tongue Policy is Unlikely to Change in the Foreseeable Future

This Talk suggests an explicatory model for language policy reform (or lack thereof) at the level of the state. This is accomplished by assessing the value of the 'punctuated equilibrium' model of public policy analysis (Howlett & Migone, 2011, p. 57), which I argue can be strengthened by a genealogical approach (Foucault, 1971). Singapore's Mother Tongue (MT) Policy is used as a case for illustration. There is a consensus amongst local Linguists (e.g., Tan, 2014; Wee, 2014) that the current MT policy of assigning an official MT based on one's race is essentialist and untenable in light of language shift toward English and increasing diversity through immigration. Using the model, the MT policy is argued to be part of a larger system of policies that ensure racial equality through a unique brand of multiracialism. The pressures of increasing immigration and diversity are insufficient as exogenous shocks that might lead to changes to the MT policy. Instead, partisan interests in maintaining this brand of multiracialism serves to entrench existing ethnolinguistic policy positions, contributing to inertia in language policy reform.

ABOUT THE SPEAKER



Luke Lu is, currently, a Lecturer at the Linguistics and Multilingual Studies Programme (LMS), School of Humanities (SoH), Nanyang Technological University (NTU), Singapore. He has completed a Linguistic Ethnography of academically *élite* students in Singapore, examining how they discursively positioned themselves to wider structures and discourses in local spaces. He is primarily interested in approaches to Interactional Sociolinguistics and Ethnography, pertaining to issues such as transnational mobility, education, language rights, language planning and policy, and ethnicity.

WEBINAR ●

26 March 2021
1:30pm - 2:30pm
Held on Zoom

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