

DOI 10.36074/grail-of-science.25.06.2021.056

## MOTHER TONGUES IN THE EDUCATIONAL SPACE OF SINGAPORE

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Globalization has led to the convergence and interaction of different national systems and cultures and has significantly affected the language situation in the world. Bilingualism, a linguistic phenomenon that implies the acquiring of two language systems and the ability to operate them freely, is very common in multinational societies, where national minorities speak the language of the country's ethnic majority. Giving English the status of lingua franca in the global communicative environment has led to its introduction in the educational systems of many countries and high standards for assessing the level of English language proficiency. In this case, the native language is a means of preserving national culture and a marker of belonging to a certain ethnic group in a multinational country.

The Republic of Singapore is an example of a country with an officially adopted bilingualism policy. Singapore is a small multinational state that gained its full independence in 1965. The country's population is just over 5 million people of various nationalities, among which the most common are Chinese, Malays and Indians, as well as people from European countries. In the 1965 Act of Independence four official languages of the country - Chinese, Malay, Tamil, and English - were adopted by the government [1].

At the beginning of its existence as an independent state, the Singaporean government directed its efforts on the development of the country's education system, formation of successful and effective professionals in today's conditions of globalization and the dominance of the knowledge economy, on the one hand, and the preservation of ethnic culture and heritage of the country, on the other. The policy of bilingualism was officially adopted in 1966. According to Singaporean bilingualism, English is recognized as the language of official relations and the only language of the educational process. The second language is the mother tongue, one of the three recognized by the government - Tamil, Chinese, Malay - according to someone's nationality, which is also compulsory for learning from primary school.

The issue of the content and effectiveness of the process of learning mother tongues in Singaporean institutions of education has always attracted the attention of teachers, researchers and officials in the field of education. This is primarily manifested in the constant updating and optimization of curricula in accordance with the socio-economic situation and needs of society. For example, the reform and renewal of the Chinese language curriculum in primary and secondary schools took place in four stages. In 1971, the first program of teaching Chinese in primary school

was developed, and in 1973 - in secondary school. At that time, English-language and Chinese-language schools coexisted in Singapore, so programs were developed separately for each of them. With the introduction of various streams in Singapore's education system in the early 1980s, the second phase of reforming Chinese language curricula came. The third phase of the curricula update took place in the 1990s and was characterized by an emphasis on Shared national values, which were proposed by the Government of Singapore in the White Paper on Shared Values (1991). National Shared Values included the following statements: 1) Nation before, community and society above self; 2) family as the basic unit of society; 3) community respect and support for the individual; 4) consensus not conflict; 5) racial and religious harmony [2]. In the educational process Shared Values ensured the transfer of cultural and traditional values through the teaching of the native language. The next stage in the renewal of native language programs in Singapore's schools took place between 2000 and 2010. The Chinese language curriculum in primary school was updated in 2007 and in secondary school in 2011. The main goals of the developed programs of this period were the need to engage students in using the language in their daily lives, to provide them with the opportunities to apply language skills in authentic tasks in various real-life scenarios. [3].

The goals and tasks of mother tongue programs are divided into basic and additional. The main goals lie in the development of language skills in five areas, namely, speaking (listening and speaking), reading and writing, recognizing and writing characters, and clear and effective use of language. Additional goals include the study of various aspects of national cultures, acquaintance with the literary heritage of a certain ethnic group, moral education and the formation of a civic patriotic position. Texts and other educational materials should be selected from the point of view of their relevance to traditional culture and values so as to facilitate nation-building in addition to developing language skills [4].

At present, native language curricula of 2015 function in Singapore. They preserve a complex approach to the study of native languages, which includes forming and developing five language skills and acquaintance with the cultural and historical heritage of a certain ethnic group. In addition to auditorium classes in the native language, acquaintance with the national culture, values, lifestyle of the ethnic group is significantly facilitated by the active extracurricular activities of students. For example, at Tanjong Katong Girl's School a whole list of extracurriculum activities outside the curriculum is offered: Singapore - Brunei School Twinning Program (hosting and overseas exchange), Overseas and local learning journeys, School based language and cultural workshops, All arts Indian festivals, etc. [5].

However, despite all the state's efforts to ensure the effectiveness of Mother tongue learning, many modern linguists and researchers pay their attention to the shift in language education of young Singaporeans towards English. The English language is a promising language for the younger generation in terms of their future careers. Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong at the 40th Speaking Mandarin Campaign conference noted that the Republic of Singapore may lose its bilingual competitive advantage, as the proportion of Chinese households here speaking English as their main language has risen sharply in the past 20 years. At present, 71% of Chinese families speak English at home, while 20 years ago this percentage was

42%. Accordingly, the percentage of Malay families with English in everyday communication is now 67%, and 20 years ago - 18%; Tamil 70% and 55% respectively [6].

To raise the role of native languages in the life of Singaporeans and improve the quality of their learning during the school period, the Ministry of Education of Singapore is developing new programs for teaching native languages at all stages of education and streams, the implementation of which is planned in 2021. The main tasks of the educational process lie in boosting the national identity, infusing cultural knowledge and providing It-enabled learning.

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