

**SPEECH BY MR LEE HSIEN LOONG, PRIME MINISTER, AT LAUNCH OF THE
26TH SPEAK MANDARIN CAMPAIGN, 15 NOVEMBER 2005, 11.00 AM AT THE
NATIONAL LIBRARY EVENTS PLAZA**

推广华语运动理事会主席黄昭虎教授，

各位来宾，

1 我们在 26 年前开始推广华语以来，已经取得良好的成绩。20 多年前，这个运动的目标是鼓励华社放弃方言，改用华语。经过多年的努力，这个目标已经达到了。现在，一般华族家庭面对的选择，不再是使用华语或方言，而是使用华语或英语。所以，推广华语运动近年来改变了方向。目前的目标是鼓励华族新加坡人在家里和公共场合使用华语。

2. 随着中国的影响力越来越显著，我们对华族语言和文化的未来更有信心了。当我们在 1979 年开展讲华语运动时，中国刚开始实行对外开放和现代化的政策。今天，中国发展神速，已经是一个举足轻重的大国。它的经济和政治影响力越来越大。它的软实力也开始发挥作用。中国的艺术和文化在世界各地越来越受欢迎。

3. 中国的崛起将使世界的经济重心转移到亚洲。我相信，在未来的日子里，随着许多公司在中国建立业务，到中国短期或长期公干的新加坡人将会越来越多。幸运的是，我们书写华文和讲华语的能力，对我们争取生意和开拓商机特别有利。最近，数十位本地商人组成商业代表团，随我到中国访问。他们之中，好一些在中国早有业务。他们告诉我，他们用华语直接跟当地官员和商业伙伴沟通、打交道，对建立友情、搞好关系十分有用。我亲眼看到他们很自在的用华语同当地人交谈、说笑。毫无疑问的，掌握华语是新加坡人很大的竞争优势。

4. 有鉴于此，我认为通晓华语的家长应该充分利用自己的长处，为孩子制造学习双语的良好环境，鼓励他们掌握最高水平的华语和英语。我们的生活习惯是从小在家里养成的。因此，家长扮演的角色很重要。他们应该鼓励孩子养成良好的阅读和会话习惯，为孩子打下掌握双语的基础，使他们一生受用不尽。

5. 我们的学校和教师也扮演重要的角色。我很高兴的知道我们的学校在这方面做了很大的努力。很多学校开办各种语文深化活动，包括跟中国的学校结成姐妹学校，让学生对华族文化有更深和更全面的认识。与此同时，我们的学生对学习华文显得越来越有兴趣和热忱。在中学和初级学院，选修高级华文的学生正逐年增加。

6. 我们应该再接再厉，进一步提高我们掌握华语的能力。目前的情况是，大多数新加坡人的华语水平，只达到日常生活用语的水平。如果要讨论较深刻和复杂的课题，就不得不改用英语，这是很难避免的现象，因为英语是新加坡的行政和商业用语。但是，我们应该鼓励那些华语基础不错、同时又有能力和兴趣的人，继续努力，以掌握更高水平的华语和加深对华族文化的认识。这些人士应该开始用华语讨论政治，商业，经济和社会课题，也就是说，在更高的层次使用华语，以提高新加坡社会的华语水平。

7. 讲华语运动在未来所扮演的角色一样重要。我们应该继续鼓励华族新加坡人使用华语，帮助他们提高华文的水平。这个运动多年来取得了显著的成绩。我相信，只要我们再接再厉，华文和华语在新加坡将是富有生命力的，前景一片美好的。

English Translation of Chinese Speech

1. The Speak Mandarin Campaign has come a long way over the last 26 years. Initially, the campaign aimed at getting the Chinese community to speak Mandarin instead of dialects. This objective has been achieved. Today, the choice for Chinese Singaporeans is no longer between Mandarin and dialects, but Mandarin and English. Hence, in recent years, the campaign has shifted to encouraging the Chinese community to continue speaking Mandarin at home and in public places.

2. Our confidence in the future of Chinese language and culture in Singapore has been strengthened by the growing importance of China. When we launched the Speak Mandarin Campaign in 1979, China had just decided to open up and modernise itself. Today, China is rapidly emerging as a major global player. Its economic and political influence is on the rise. Its **soft power** is also growing. Chinese arts and culture are gaining in popularity around the world.

3. China's rise will shift the centre of gravity of the world economy towards Asia. More and more Singaporeans will find that their work will require them to travel and operate in China. Our ability to speak and write Chinese will give us a considerable advantage in these business dealings. In my recent visit to China, I had a business delegation travelling with me. Many of the businessmen had projects in China. They told me that their knowledge of Mandarin made it easier for them to establish rapport and cultivate better relationships with their business partners, and with the government officials. I could see how comfortable they were interacting in Chinese, exchanging views and socialising. It was an enormous advantage.

4. This is why it is important for Chinese-speaking couples to make full use of their natural advantage and bring up their children to achieve the highest levels of fluency in both English and Mandarin. The home is where habits are cultivated at an early age. Parents thus play an important part in encouraging good habits of speaking and reading in their children, and giving them a foundation in both languages that will last for life.

5. Our schools and teachers also play an important role. I am glad that we are making progress on this front. Many of our schools have launched enrichment programmes, including tie-ups with schools in China to deepen our pupils' appreciation of the various facets of Chinese culture. Among our students, there is growing enthusiasm and passion for the language. More and more are taking up Higher Chinese, both at the secondary and junior college levels.

6. At the same time, we should work towards raising our abilities in Mandarin to a higher level. At present, the majority of Chinese Singaporeans speak Mandarin at a conversational level, and switch to English when they discuss serious subjects. This is unavoidable since English is the language of business and administration in Singapore. But for those who are already comfortable with some basic level of Mandarin, and have the aptitude and interest, we should encourage them to go deeper into the language and culture. They ought to start by using Mandarin at a higher level, to

discuss political, business, economic and social issues. In this way, we can over time achieve a higher standard of Mandarin in our society.

7. The Speak Mandarin Campaign will continue to play an important role in promoting the use of Mandarin among Chinese Singaporeans, and improving their proficiency in the language. We have made significant progress over the years. With our continued efforts, I am confident that we can ensure the long-term vitality of the Chinese language and culture in Singapore.
