



## **Postcolonial English**

*English in Post colonial Singapore*

### **NARRATOR**

In Singapore English is the dominant language having been adopted as one of the official languages after independence to bring together the country's different ethnic groups.

### **MALE 6**

The importance of English it's mainly communication for me. Because of the fact that it's the language that I'm most comfortable speaking with. So and in my daily life when I, when I interact with other people English is the main form of communication.

### **MALE 7**

For me English language is very important as it is international and I believe we have to have a skill to interact with each other which is a basic need. And I think the English language is a very good media for us, people from different countries to talk in a common language to understand each other.

### **FEMALE 5**

I think that for Singapore's policy in English was just that, it's to be used as the main language in school. I think it's a really good policy because it helps me connect to my classmates who are from different racial backgrounds. Because they all speak a different mother tongue. So English is the one common language that we share.

### **FEMALE 6**

For English I would have to say that it's incredibly important for the Internet because the Internet is so all encompassing and because the majority of the information online is in English. So we don't really have any alternative to that.

### **FEMALE 7**

Now I would, I would consider English to be my first language because although I would speak Chinese at home but I do not really practice it in writing. So the standard doesn't really increase its just that I am able to communicate in simple Chinese, Mandarin with my parents and my relatives.

### **NARRATOR**

Young people can choose which language to use with family and friends.

**MALE 8**

Normally when we speak to our teacher we use English but among our friends we normally, this is for my school for my, in my class we speak Chinese.

**FEMALE 8**

I speak Mandarin to my family members cause often older generations they don't know English. And English to mostly everyone else. And Singlish to people who like to speak a lot of Singlish because you want them to feel like you like talking to them.

**NARRATOR**

Although Singlish is widely spoken the use of this local vernacular has been discouraged by the government on the grounds that it might undermine the population's fluency in English.

**LIONEL WEE HOCK ANN**

I think for many people you have to have good English, standard English. And then you have, if you, well if you can find some use for Singlish because it helps you to get by in more informal context. But in the end I think for many Singaporeans the attitude towards English is that it is really an economic resource. And most people would I think agree that the standard English has much greater market value than Singlish.

**MALE 9**

When my friends and I discuss about the use of Singlish we realise that it may be it's a Singaporean identity. And therefore you know it's, I guess we have to know when is the right time to use what kind of English. So amongst ourselves there'll probably be, we probably break into something colloquial, there's Singlish in there but you know, when its time to make speeches for instance, you know, we have to switch back to standard English. And moving from standard English to colloquial English or to Singlish. That's something that we've gotten pretty much got used to over the years, growing up.

**NARRATOR**

In Singapore as in China, American English is gaining influence.

**FEMALE 8**

I think our main influence is from the British, yeah. And but these days people tend to sway towards the American English. Because of media influences.

**MALE 6**

A lot of our English, especially the way we spell and especially the way we spell it's influenced by how the British, influenced by the British spelling. In terms of slangs perhaps we are influenced by American slangs because the fact that we are regularly exposed to Hollywood films and Hollywood media. But in terms of what we use on a daily basis, in terms of what we consider standard I would say it's, it leans towards the British, British English rather than American English.

**LIONEL WEE HOCK ANN**

I think the important thing is to recognise that you've got different standards. So you got standard British English, standard American English and of course even the government itself has on occasions spoken about the need to have standard Singaporean English. So they certainly don't want to be seen as adopting a standard that originally is from elsewhere. The only problems that I think their idea of a standard Singaporean English is that it consists mainly of British or American grammar with Singaporean lexical items. And that's not really going to be very useful or very versatile for communicative situations. Because you're really always looking at standard British or American grammar as providing the kind of structure or if I wanted to be more facetious straight jacket. Within which you slip in local words that refer to local festivals, food items or whatever.