

SPEECH BY MS LIM SAU HOONG, CHAIRPERSON OF PROMOTE MANDARIN COUNCIL, AT THE 30th ANNIVERSARY OF THE SPEAK MANDARIN CAMPAIGN ON 17 MARCH 2009, 5.00 P.M. AT NTUC AUDITORIUM.

Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew

Mr Lim Swee Say, Minister, Prime Minister's Office

Rear Admiral (NS) Lui Tuck Yew, Senior Minister of State for Education and Information, Communications & The Arts

H.E Zhang Xiaokang, Ambassador, Embassy of the People's Republic of China

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good Afternoon

Introduction

It is my pleasure to be here with you today to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Speak Mandarin Campaign. This campaign has come a long way since Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew launched it 30 years ago. Over the years, we have succeeded in inspiring more Singaporeans to speak and use Chinese.

And these efforts would not have been realized without our partners, who share our vision of promoting Singapore's proficiency in Chinese. To all our partners, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for your continual support, dedication, and conviction.

Importance of learning Mandarin

There are some who pick up the Chinese language because it proves useful in business. There are some who regard it as a gateway to a rich 5000-year-old culture, or perhaps to connect with their roots. And then there are some, who like me, adopt the language simply because our parents said so.

Whatever your reasons may be, today more than ever, there is no denying the importance of learning Chinese. The language has made its presence felt the world over, given the seismic rise of China as a global economic and cultural power. And to illustrate that point, we were all treated to the 2008 Summer Olympic Games in Beijing.

A significant milestone for Promote Mandarin Council

And so, in addition to stressing the importance of the Chinese language, this year, the Promote Mandarin Council hopes to also nurture Singaporeans' appreciation for Chinese culture. It is our desire that in time, Chinese Singaporeans are distinguished as both effectively bilingual and bi-cultural.

A sneak preview of The Chinese Challenge

In two weeks time, the council will launch a new and engaging Challenge to encourage Chinese Singaporeans to embrace Chinese, the language, and the culture. It is the council's wish that this Challenge will draw participants out of their comfort zones and one day, be heard in Chinese.

讲华语运动迈入第三十年了。坦白说，我从没想过三十年后的今天，接下理事会主席棒子的会是我。朋友们都问我为何要接下这个烫手山芋？因为这肯定是个苦差。

其实在接手之前，我不是没有挣扎的。因为想到当下的语文环境和国人学习华文华语的心态，我也犹豫了。

然而最后我还是答应了下来。那是因为第一，我看到今天全世界各地学习华文华语的人越来越多，这已是一个不争的事实，因为中国已崛起强大了。此时鼓励国人学习华文华语肯定是当务之急。第二，我坚信未来推广华文华语更应着重在质方面的提升，除了讲得更好，更应言之有物，这物，指的是内涵。第三，我深信真正的双语双文化人才是未来的赢家，但更重要的还是如何做到不卑不亢和宠辱不惊。

是的，这些年来，作为新加坡双语政策下的一个受惠者，我是心存感激的。所以，我愿意把这份真诚的反思与大家共勉。

这或许是个“知其不可而为之”的艰巨挑战。然而，试问哪一个任重道远的使命不是这样开始的呢？

学好语文，取决于心态。今年我们理事会为大家呈献的名为“华文？谁怕谁！”的一系列活动，就是旨在鼓励国人重新思考这个课题。通过互动式游戏比赛的方式，展示语文文化本身的魅力，让学习华语华文回归最真实的动机，把学习变得更有兴趣、更实在和更具意义。说真的，请别期待短时间内立竿见影，但若能持之以恒，假以时日，肯定会看到细水长流和潜移默化后的成效。

在这里，我要感谢我的理事会全体伙伴的任劳任怨,更要感谢中华语文学基金和通商中国在这非常时刻慷慨解囊与鼎力相助。

经过多个月的筹备，今天，为我们打头阵的是一系列小而美的电视宣传广告片。由于时间匆促，我们先推出这第一波。这是我们以低成本制作的片子，是多个不同国籍小朋友学习华文华语的真实纪录。

(commercial plays)

其实，在这次拍摄的过程中，牵动着我的除了是这群孩子们轻松快乐、信心满满的愉悦态度外，最让我感到震撼的还是这些孩子们背后用心良苦的父母。我想，这些有远见的父母肯定是了解到未来的下一代，掌握双语只不过是孩子们最普通的技能罢了。

若三十年是个里程碑，三十年后，象这样的外国小朋友将会在未来世界的舞台上和我们的新加坡小孩交锋和较量，当狭路相逢时，我想问的是，我们新加坡的小孩有多少胜算的把握和机会？谢谢。

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