

**SPEECH BY MR LUI TUCK YEW,
MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT & SECOND MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
AT THE LAUNCH OF THE SPEAK MANDARIN CAMPAIGN 2011
MONDAY 4 JULY 2011, 11.20AM, AT THE ASIAN CIVILISATIONS MUSEUM**

(English Version)

Mr Seow Choke Meng, Chairman, Promote Mandarin Council

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

1 A very good morning to all of you. I am pleased to be here today and be a part of the launch of this year's Speak Mandarin Campaign.

Mandarin – A Mother Tongue Not to be Neglected

2 Increasingly, more and more Singaporeans have come to understand the importance of Chinese language. They are more willing to pick up the language and even pass on to the next generation. Indeed, there are both cultural and economic reasons for Chinese and even non-Chinese Singaporeans to learn and speak Mandarin.

3 With China's growing economy, being able to speak Mandarin gives us an advantage over those who do not or find it difficult to communicate in the language. And by understanding the Chinese language, it also helps in connecting us to our cultural roots and learn from our forefathers who have passed down many invaluable teachings through the language.

4 Like what Confucius has said: 学而不厌，诲人不倦。我们应该在生活中积极制造学习的机会，保持对学习不轻易感到满足的态度。而教导他人时，我们要特别耐心、不言疲倦。

[Translation of the saying: “Never be contented with your study; never be impatient with your teaching”¹]

5 Indeed, the best way to learn is to live by it. And the best way to learn a language is to keep it alive. Which is what this year’s Speak Mandarin Campaign is all about – Mandarin. It gets better with use.

Mandarin. It gets better with use

6 This year, the Speak Mandarin Campaign is introducing fun and enjoyable activities to encourage Singaporeans to keep our Mandarin alive. As mentioned by Choke Meng earlier, the Promote Mandarin Council is organizing a Theme Song Contest and Short Film Competition to demonstrate that Mandarin is fun and accessible. This allows our young people to tap into the legacy of a language and culture with deep roots and tradition in today’s world of IT innovation and pop culture.

7 More importantly, to keep a language alive, we need to live by it. Most of us come from or cultivate a single language environment at home. We speak either only English or Mandarin at home. In order to speak Mandarin well, we have to use it in our daily lives and use it well.

¹ This Confucius quote reflects the concept of education whereby as a good teacher, one must be studious first. Then he could keep a positive attitude to his teaching to his students.

Therefore, it is important that those of you, who speak Mandarin, use Mandarin as the language of communication at home.

8 For parents, make an effort to speak well as you are teaching by example and your children will learn from you. When your attitude to Chinese language, culture and history is one of fun, discovery and adventure, your children will also see the Chinese language and culture in the same light. For those who want to learn or encourage our children to use Mandarin comfortably in their daily lives, watching Chinese movies and television programmes and listening to Chinese radio are ways of learning by osmosis. Reading Chinese books, newspapers and even comics is another way. Going one step further, one can also start by writing short poem and lyrics of songs to keep Mandarin alive.

9 In closing, I strongly urge you to join me in keeping Mandarin alive in our daily lives. Let us find time and opportunities to delve deeper into the Chinese language, discover and rediscover its many fascinating aspects. Encourage our young people to learn and embrace Mandarin in their lives, they will grow up to be a bilingual and bicultural generation. With this, I would like to thank the Promote Mandarin Council for their efforts in promoting the use of Chinese and wish the Council success in its Speak Mandarin Campaign this year.