

MEDIA RELEASE

Embargoed for 7.00pm Friday 28 March 2025

“SELAT TO SINGAPORE: SINGAPOREAN MANDARIN DATABASE” PUBLICATION LAUNCH

28 March 2025, Singapore – The Promote Mandarin Council (PMC) is pleased to launch the publication “Selat to Singapore: Singaporean Mandarin Database”. The bilingual publication is a culmination of the research effort for the Singaporean Mandarin Database, featuring approximately 1,000 unique Mandarin terms, that hold cultural and historical significance to Singapore, and represent our rich multiracial and multilingual identity.

The Singaporean Mandarin Database was first launched online in 2019 at the Speak Mandarin Campaign’s (SMC) 40th Anniversary Celebrations. Led by Principal Investigator and PMC member A/P Tan Chee Lay, the research project compiles terms commonly used in Singapore but may be less known or used in other Mandarin speaking regions. The database includes information on the term definitions, etymologies, related information, example sentences and equivalent terms used in other Mandarin-speaking regions.

Senior Minister of State Ms Sim Ann, Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Ministry of National Development, and Guest-of-Honour at the publication launch, notes, “The publication is not just a set of books, but a reflection of our collective memories and a valuable language resource and asset that we can be proud of. I hope the book can help readers, especially those from the younger generation, see the connection between Singapore Mandarin and our nation’s unique history and multicultural characteristics, use Singapore Mandarin confidently, and strengthen the Singaporean Chinese identity. I would like to thank the Promote Mandarin Council and the research team’s years of hard work in accomplishing this significant cultural undertaking.”

The publication also features messages from PMC Chairman Mr Chua Chim Kang and Professor Chew Cheng Hai, and accompanying articles from A/P Tan Chee Lay, A/P Tham Shiao Wei and Mr Vincent Lim.

For an online copy of the publication, please visit www.mandarin.org.sg/en/sgmandarinterms (URL of the publication is live only from 2 April 2025). Copies for reading and borrowing will be available at all public libraries. For other enquiries, please contact: NHB_SpeakMandarin@nhb.gov.sg.

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About the Speak Mandarin Campaign

The Speak Mandarin Campaign (SMC) was launched by then Prime Minister Mr Lee Kuan Yew in 1979, to encourage Singaporean Chinese to speak Mandarin.

Over the decades, the SMC continues to encourage Singaporeans to embrace the use of Mandarin, and enjoy an appreciation for Chinese culture. The SMC aims to promote the capability and confidence of Singaporeans to speak Mandarin in relevant contexts, by creating conducive environment for them to use, practise and live the language.

For more information, please visit www.mandarin.org.sg and www.facebook.com/SpeakMandarinCampaign.

Annex A

PUBLICATION SYNOPSIS

“Selat to Singapore: Singaporean Mandarin Database”

Through the decades, Mandarin has played a crucial role in unifying Singapore’s Chinese community, strengthening kinship, and deepening the understanding of Chinese culture.

In 2019, the Promote Mandarin Council commenced research work for the Singaporean Mandarin Database. Led by Principal Investigator and Promote Mandarin Council member A/P Tan Chee Lay, the research project has since compiled approximately 1,000 Mandarin terms unique to Singapore. These terms are commonly used by Singaporean Chinese and they reflect the nation’s distinct Chinese identity, as they are a result of our multicultural and multiracial heritage.

The publication “Selat to Singapore: Singaporean Mandarin Database” is a testament to the Mandarin spoken in Singapore, capturing unique nuances in vocabulary and turns of phrase. The content includes term definitions, etymologies, related information, example sentences and equivalent terms used in other Mandarin-speaking regions.

For more information, please refer to www.mandarin.org.sg/en/sgmandarinterms and www.mandarin.org.sg/ch/sgmandarinterms.

Annex B

FACT SHEET



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 - Ms Li Jingxin
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 - Dr Hu Xiang Qing (Researcher)
 - Dr Dean Wang (Researcher)
- Expert Advisory Panel
 - Professor Chew Cheng Hai
 - Mdm Heng Boey Hong
 - Associate Professor Lan Luh Luh
 - Dr Liang Wern Fook
 - Mr Lim Jim Koon
- Cover Image:

Art by the late Lim Tze Peng. Collection of National Gallery Singapore.

Volume 1: Chinatown (Tai Chong Kok Pastry Shop), 1983

Volume 2: Singapore River, View of the Victoria Clock Tower. c. late 1970s – early 1980s
- Designed by: Marshall Cavendish, a member of the Times Publishing Group

- Identifiers:
 - ISBN 978-981-94-1829-9 (paperback ; v. 1)
 - ISBN 978-981-94-1831-2 (paperback ; v. 2)
 - ISBN 978-981-94-1830-5 (ebook ; v. 1)
 - ISBN 978-981-94-1832-9 (ebook ; v. 2)
- Number of pages in hard-cover book: 1,631 (852 for Volume 1; 779 for Volume 2)
- Number of terms featured: 1,131 Singaporean Mandarin terms (including 755 main terms and 376 alternative names and related terms).
- Number of years of research completed to-date for the Singaporean Mandarin Database: 6 years (from 2019)
- Number of oral conversations conducted: 4
- Number of Research Collaborators: 25
- Number of categories: 9