

Singapore's Bilingual Journey

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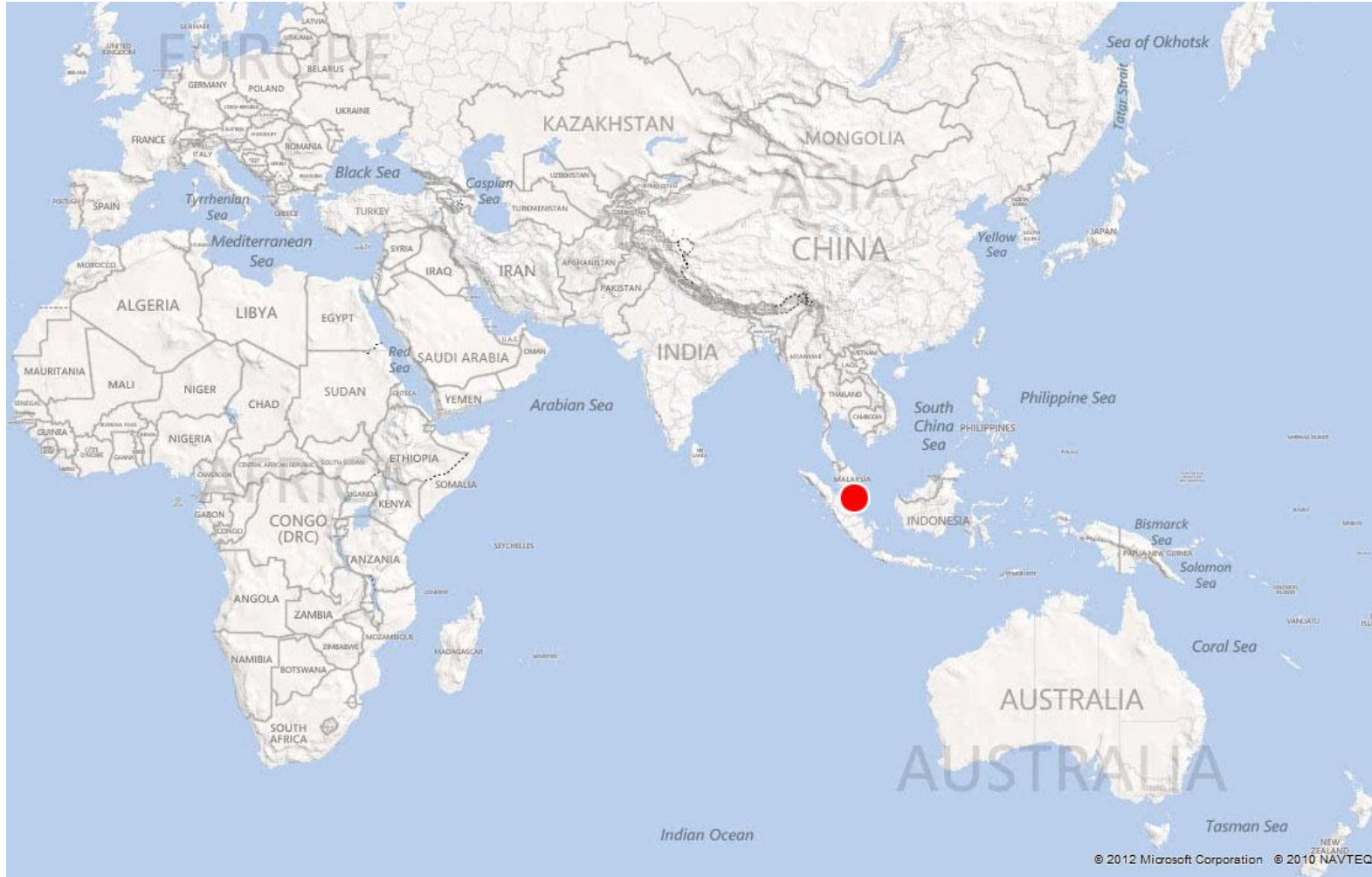


Outline of Talk

1. Background information on Singapore
2. Singapore's bilingual journey
3. Promotion and spread of English language in Singapore
4. Benefits of bilingualism
5. Challenges for English in Singapore
6. Conclusion

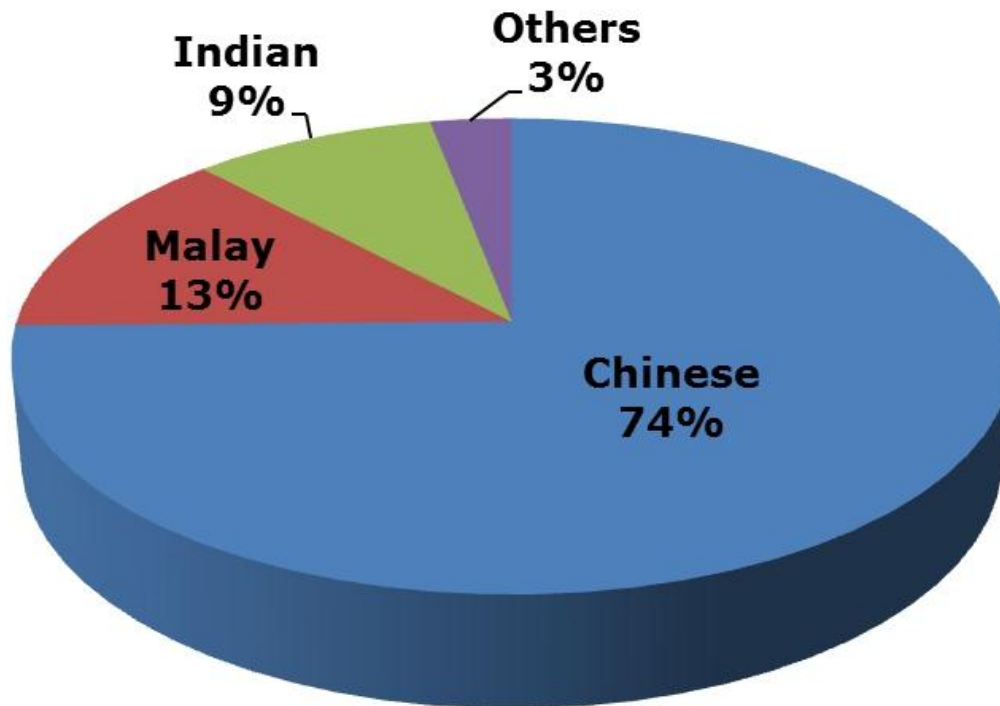
Background information

Singapore



Ethnic Profile

Singapore Ethnic Profile (2012 Census)



Official Languages

DANGER-KEEP OUT !

危險，請避开！

BAHAYA-JANGAN DEKAT !

அபாயம்-அருகில் வராதீர்கள் !

English

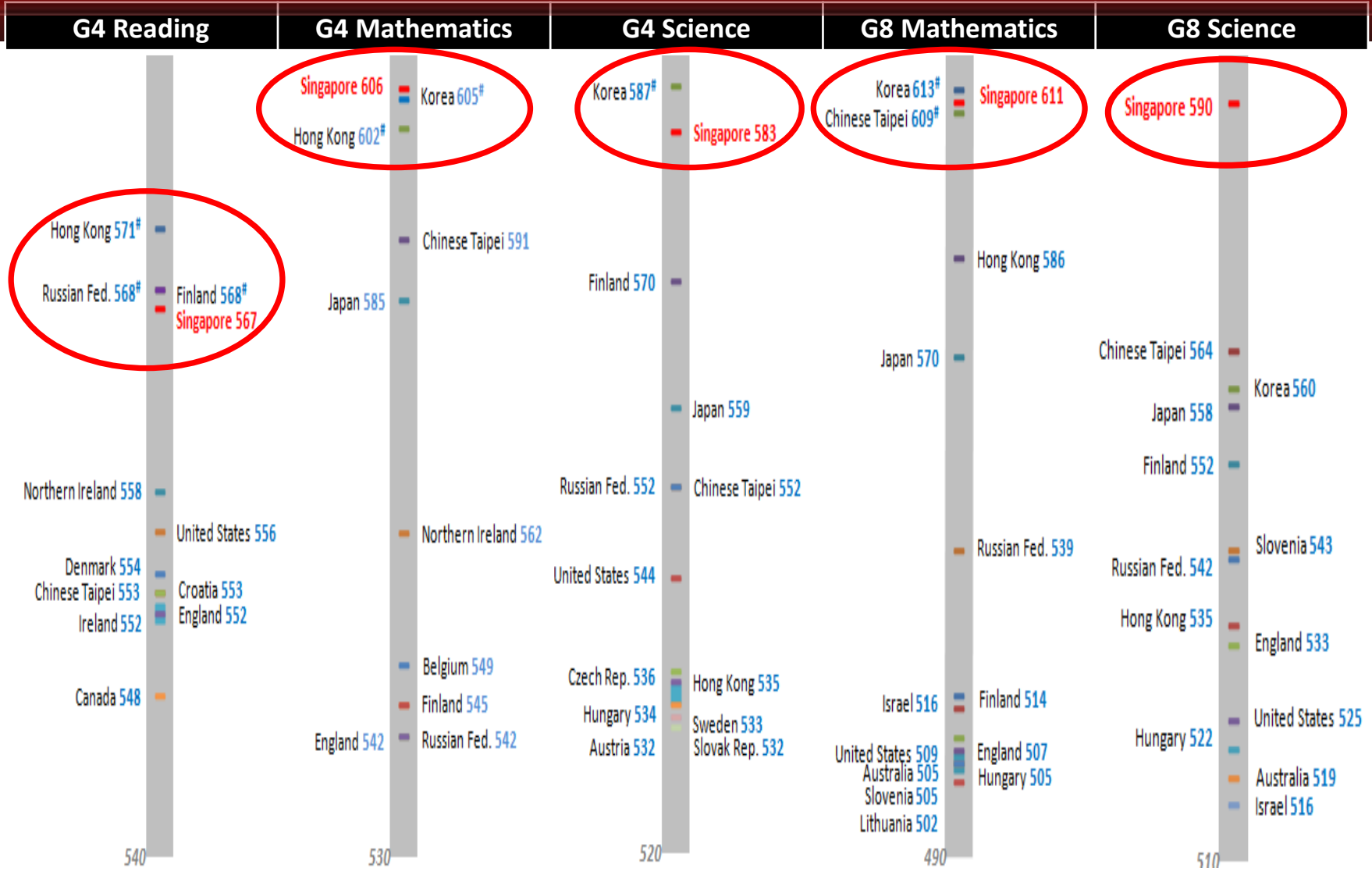
Chinese

Malay

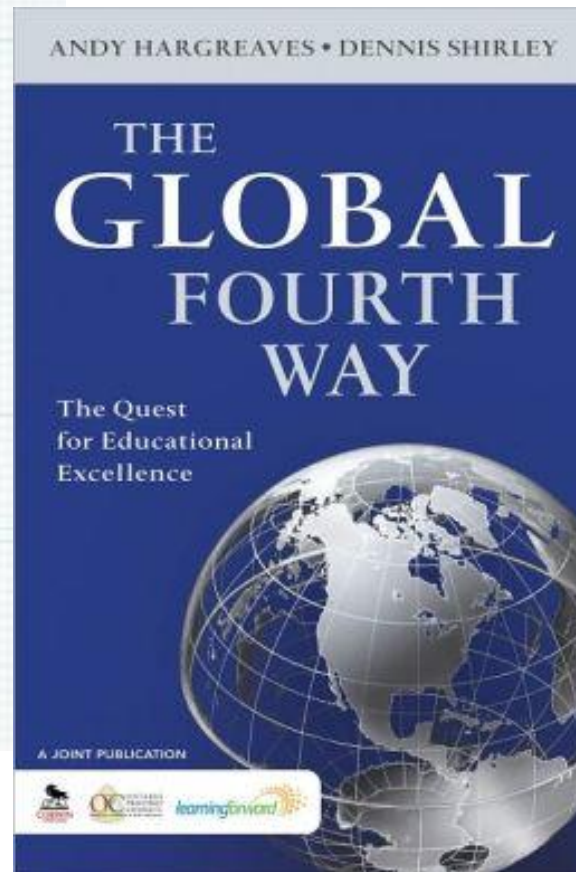
Tamil

High Averages

Mean Scale Score on TIMSS/PIRLS 2011



Achievements in Education



Size of External Trade



- GDP 2012
 - S\$345,561 mil
- Total Trade in 2012
 - S\$984.4 bil
- Top 5 Trading Partners for Exports in 2012
 - USA
 - Australia
 - UK
 - Japan
 - China

Interest in Latin America



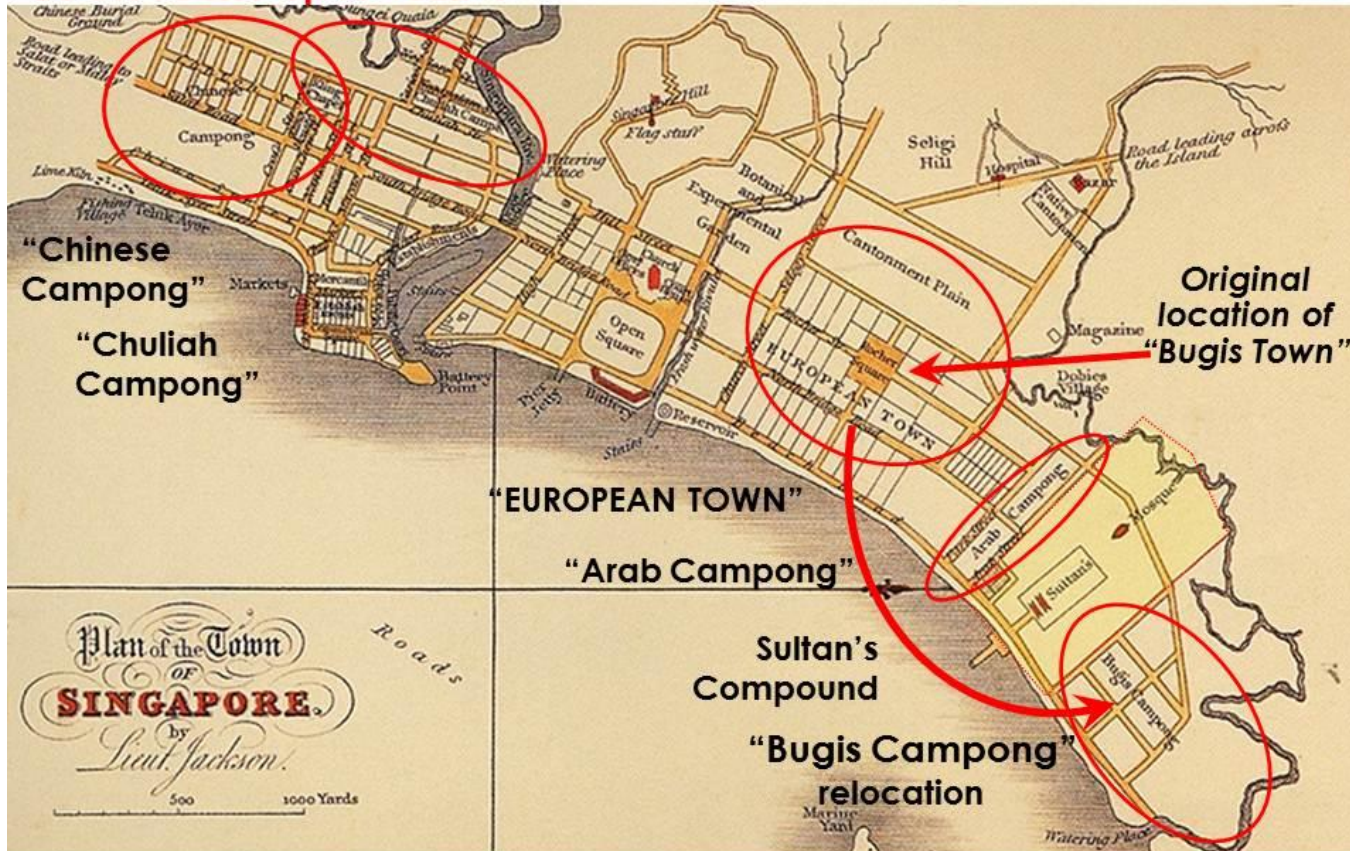
English for Prosperity



Singapore's Bilingual Journey

Raffles Town Plan

'BUGIS TOWN' up to 1822 → 'BUGIS CAMPONG' at KG ROCHOR 1840s



CAMPONG MORPHOLOGY IN SINGAPORE'S COLONIAL TOWN PLAN
Plan of the Town of Singapore, Lt Jackson, 1822

Pre-Independence (1959-1965)

- Vernacular schools
- Chinese, Malay, Tamil, English
- Challenge of integration – formation of integrated schools



Post-Independence (1965-present)

- Sudden thrust to independence
- Adoption of English as lingua franca
- Bilingualism as cornerstone of education system



Rationale for English as Lingua Franca

- To unite a fragmented nation
- To leapfrog the region economically

“For political and economic reasons, English had to be our working language. This would give all races in Singapore a common language to communicate and work in.” ~Lee Kuan Yew

Bilingualism as Cornerstone

- Students must be proficient in English and their mother tongue language

“Children must learn English so that they will have a window to the knowledge, technology and expertise of the modern world. They must know their mother tongues to enable them to know what makes us what we are”. ~Dr Tony Tan

A Difficult Journey

- Opposition to language policy especially from Chinese schools
- Government tried to be even handed with the formation of language review committees to ensure continued emphasis of Mother Tongue Languages (MTL)
- Economic realities turned the tide- in 1987 English became the medium of instruction in all Singapore schools

Promotion and Spread of English

Other Policies to Promote Integration

- Besides education, there were other policies to promote integration
- Housing policy and race quota ensured social mixing
- English became the common language for different races to communicate with each other

Whole of Government Effort

- Adoption of English for the civil service as the language of business
- Efforts made to incentivise and raise English proficiency for workers
- Facility in the language became important for socio-economic mobility

Role of The Media

- Broadcast and telecast in the 4 official languages
- Ascent of English with the spread and popularity of western (mainly American) culture
- Entrenched role of English with the internet

Benefits of Bilingualism

Social Cohesion

- All races can communicate with each other!



Photo: ST

Economic Benefits

- Mass employment became possible with the attraction of MNCs
- Singapore has progressed economically- now a banking and financial hub
- World's 14th largest trading nation, merchandise trade being three times the size of our GDP

Economic Benefits (continued)

- Workers are in demand because of facility in English
- Bilingualism has also allowed us to tap the emerging giants of China and India – Mandarin and Tamil being MTL

Challenges Facing English

Challenge of Mastery

- Complex linguistic environment
- Difficulty for students in mastering 2 languages
- Revisions to syllabuses in both English and Mother Tongue to help students learn better
- Changes in teaching methods to improve outcomes, eg STELLAR

Challenge of Singapore Colloquial English

- Singapore Colloquial English (SCE) or Singlish
- Eg. Instead of `Where are you going?', in Singlish it is `You go where ah?'
- Speak Good English Movement (SGEM) introduced in 1999
- Aim of the movement is to promote good English that can be understood outside of Singapore

Role of ELIS

- Preservation of a high standard of English among educators

“The launch of ELIS is timely. You, the educators, must be the standard-bearers of the language. You need to encourage, stimulate and challenge your students to be excellent communicators in English, able to hold their own at home and abroad.”

~Lee Kuan Yew

Improving English Language Pedagogy

- Building the professional identity of English Language (EL) teachers
- Provide in-service professional development for EL teachers
- Pilot a model of professional development that involves post-course support

Effective communication across the curriculum

- Promotion of a Whole School Approach to Effective Communication (WSA-EC)
- Importance of every subject teacher role-modelling good English



The screenshot shows a Windows Internet Explorer browser window displaying the ELIS (English Language Institute of Singapore) website. The page is titled "Whole School Approach to Effective Communication" under the "Professional Learning > WSA-EC" section. The main content area includes a navigation menu on the left with options like "Home", "About Us", "Professional Learning", "Courses", "Research", "Resources", "News & Events", and "Contact Us". Below the navigation menu, there are social media links for Facebook and Twitter, and a "Join Friend of ELIS" button. The main text on the page describes the WSA-EC program, stating that it aims to help schools achieve the desired outcome of effective communication in English for every student. It mentions that the program involves consultants and English language specialists from ELIS who help schools plan customized programs for teachers, administrative staff, and students. The page also notes that schools can promote school practices or events that help the school community become more aware of the importance of good English and its role in effective communication. At the bottom of the page, there is a section titled "An overview of effective communication in the classroom" with a sub-heading "What is effective communication?".

An Unfolding Story

- Commitment to developing 21st C skills in our students
- Effective communication is a critical skill
- Efforts will continue to be directed towards improving language outcomes in our students

Contact Us

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Like Us on:

<http://www.facebook.com/elis.singapore.page>

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Thank You

- Come and visit us!

