



Taiwan
grounds
military...

Mar 23,
2021



Hong Kong
tells foreign
governmen...

Mar 25, 2021



Standard
Chartered
Debt...

Standard Ct

Recommended by

Forum: Many Singaporeans struggle with language proficiency

PUBLISHED MAR 23, 2021, 4:00 AM SGT

Many of my foreign friends hail from Hong Kong, Taiwan and China. On many occasions, they were very amazed and perplexed by the manner in which Chinese Singaporeans speak.

From their observations, they said many locals here are very predisposed to articulating their thoughts in several languages when constructing a sentence in daily conversation.

At first instance, this appears to be a demonstration of linguistic ability and thus sounds "impressive" to these foreigners.

The sad reality is that many Singaporeans are simply not proficient in any spoken language. For instance, one may start speaking in English but halfway through the conversation, is unable to adequately articulate an idea.

In order to complete one's sentence, one has to borrow words from Mandarin or even Chinese dialects. Personally, I am also guilty of such a weakness.

Similarly, in discussions conducted in Mandarin that involve technical jargon, it is common for speakers to use English for the technical terms because they do not know what the Chinese equivalent is.

I would imagine not many Chinese Singaporeans would be able to adroitly express the law of diminishing returns in economics or gravitational force in physics or the various chemical elements in Mandarin.

I distinctly remember during my tour of Taiwan in January 2019, I was inundated with a plethora of technical terms in Mandarin which I found rather challenging. It made communication with the Taiwanese pretty tough.

It is shameful to have to frequently resort to speaking a multitude of languages within one sentence to get a point across.

There is a misguided notion that Singapore is a bilingual society.

The fact is, many Singaporeans are jacks of all trades in terms of language, while failing to master any single one sufficiently.

The majority are comfortable with and adept in one language, mostly English since it is the working language here.

We are, at best, monolingual. Only language professionals, including linguists, translators and transcribers, could qualify as effectively bilingual.

It is imperative that Singaporeans make a concerted effort to overcome this language deficiency.

One needs to invest an inordinate amount of time to build a solid foundation in a language.

Reading widely is certainly one useful way to do this.

Get unlimited access to all stories at \$0.99/month

- Latest headlines and exclusive stories.
- In-depth analyses and award-winning multimedia content
- Get access to all with our no-contract promotional package at only \$0.99/month* for the first 3 months

Subscribe Now

* Terms and conditions apply

Join ST's Telegram channel here and get the latest breaking news delivered to you.

RECOMMENDED

Proposal staycation: She wanted to surprise him, but was... surprised instead

Mar 22, 2021

Man stuck in drain, with water up to his chest, at hiking trail along BK... rescued by SCDF officers

Mar 22, 2021

Ad



00:15

Push your monthly data limit

M1

Ad

8 top places to get the world's best view of the Milky Way in Australia.

[Learn More](#)

Australia.com

Ad



00:15

Get the

Struggling with

The making of

5 Things Your

protection you
really need
with smarter
insurance by...
DBS

DBS

overflowing
filing cabinets
and unwieldy
spreadsheets...
This cloud-

Branded Content

a modern
clinician-
scientist:
Merging data...
science with

Branded Content

Property Agent
Won't Tell You

Syfe



sponsored by **Samsung**

Epic Galaxy S21 Series 5G deal!

What's more epic than 8K Video Snap
and 64MP camera? Free* Galaxy Buds
Pro.

[Shop Now](#)

Free* Galaxy Buds Live for a good epic
pair with your new phone's 64MP
camera.

[Shop Now](#)

Free* Galaxy Watch Active2
Bluetooth® (40mm) to keep up w
your epic style.


[Shop Now](#)



Subscribe today

Get unlimited access to exclusive stories and analyses by the ST newsroom

Choose your plan

 E-paper

 Facebook

 Instagram

 Twitter

 Podcasts

 RSS Feed

 Telegram

 Youtube

• SINGAPORE

• ASIA

• WORLD

• OPINION

• LIFE

• BUSINESS

• TECH

• SPORT

• VIDEOS

• PODCASTS

• MULTIMEDIA

[Terms & Conditions](#)

[Data Protection Policy](#)

[Need help? Reach us here.](#)

[Advertise with us](#)

✉ Sign up for our daily newsletter

Sign up

More [newsletters](#)

By registering, you agree to our T&C and Privacy Policy.