

# NATIONAL DAY MESSAGES IN SINGAPORE

Applying Computational and Humanities Scholarship to Produce New Knowledge

## OUR THESIS

Based on our research using digital tools, we conclude that there has been a rise of Bankspeak in World Bank annual reports since 1980.

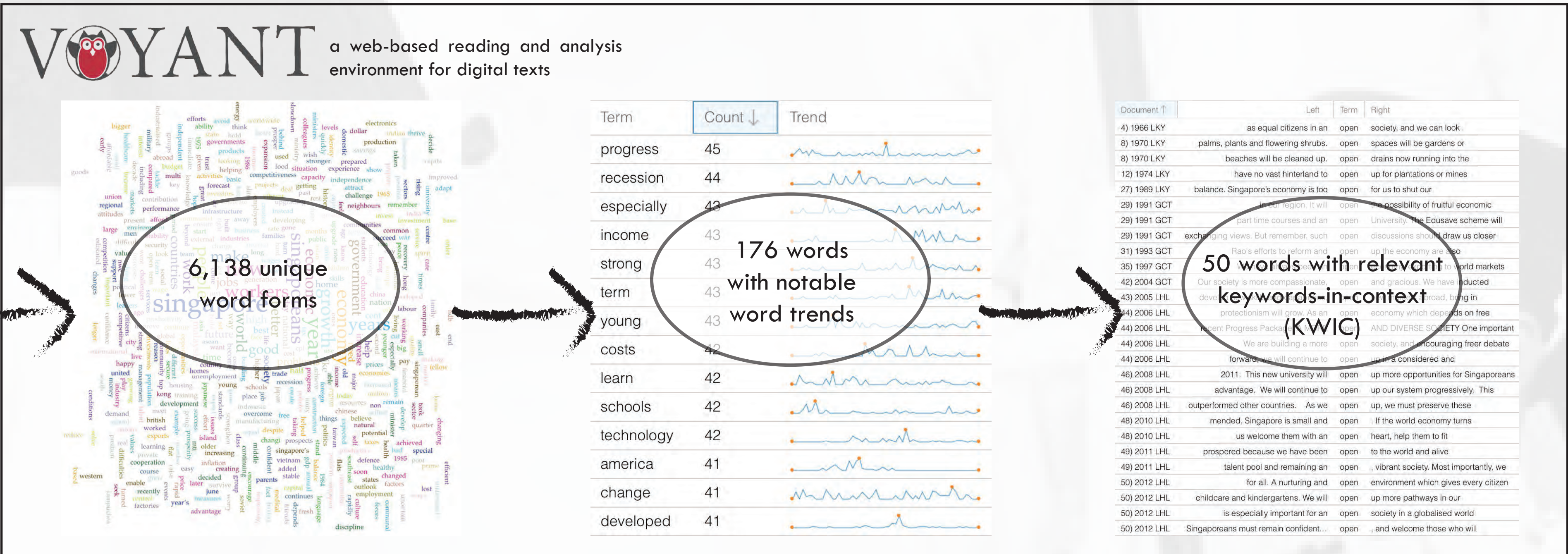
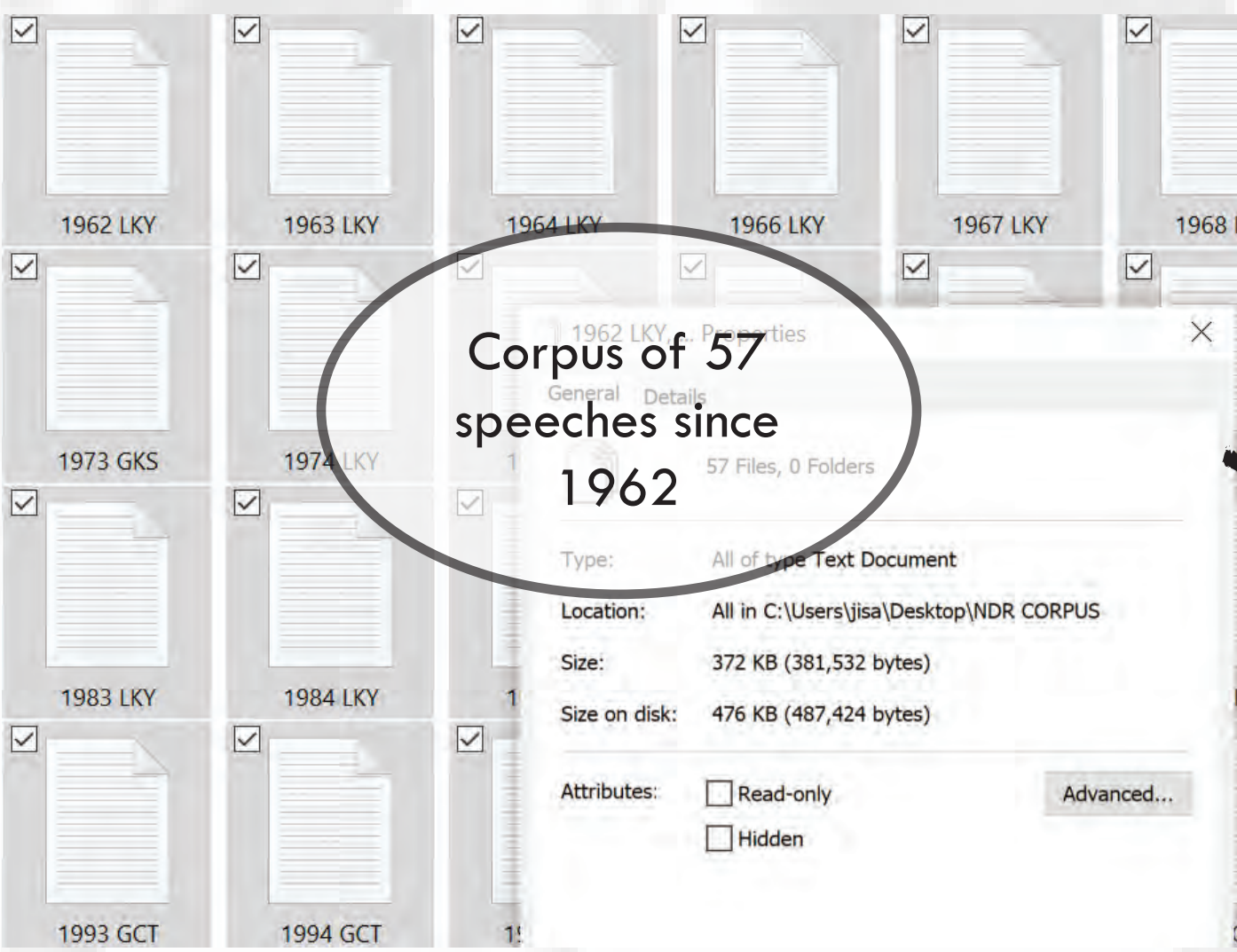
The National Day Rally speech is a way for the Singapore government to strategically balance the ‘moral sensibilities’ of heartlanders (who hold the majority of votes) and the ‘material benefits’ of cosmopolitans (who benefit the economy the most) in order to manage the pace and extent of political liberalisation in today’s Singapore.

Tan’s thesis can be strengthened by drawing from Moretti and Pestre and using digital tools to analyse the trajectory of political liberalisation in Singapore’s National Day Messages.

Kenneth Paul Tan (2007)

Jisa & Han Keong (2019)

## RESEARCH PROCESS



## OUR FINDINGS

### LEE KUAN YEW’S AUTHORITARIAN STYLE OF LEADERSHIP

#### Use of Assertive Language

“... We shall...”

“... We decided to...”

#### Ideological Framework of Leadership

“...enlightened and efficient management...”

“...hardworking people...”

“...good worker-management relations...”

#### Use of Statistics & Statistical Figures

“...rate of economic growth...”

“...high interest rates...”

“...336.2 million...”

“...150 million...”

Lee Kuan Yew’s use of assertive language, ideological framework of leadership, and use of statistics and statistical figures show how he possessed a very authoritarian style of leadership.

### CHANGING STANDPOINT OF THE GOVERNMENT

#### Ever Changing Circumstances

“...adapt to changing circumstances...”

“... Our society is changing...”

#### A New Generation

“...rising expectations of the younger generation...”

“...a new generation wants more alternative voices...”

“...a bigger part in co-creating solutions...”

#### A Forward Looking Community

“...younger Singaporeans must come forward...”

“...broad consensus on the way forward...”

“...we are feeling our way forward carefully...”

These examples demonstrate how the government developed an increasing awareness and sensitivity to the needs of a new generation of Singaporeans, and so adopted a more patient and understanding way to address the public.

### RISING USE OF LIBERAL RHETORIC

#### A More Open and Diverse Society

“...the media are airing more diverse issues and perspectives...”

“...we will continue to open up our system more progressively...”

#### A Vibrant Cosmopolitan Singapore

“...reimagine Singapore, remake our heartlands, and rejuvenate our communities...”

“...we will keep Singapore dynamic, cosmopolitan, and successful...”

#### A Government That Cares

“... My fellow Singaporeans...”

“...these are valid concerns which we must address...”

“...we must stay cohesive and united...”

“...we must tap their collective experience and wisdom...”

We can see here how much the government has changed its approach by turning towards the public for opinions on policy-making, and being more proactive in understanding the people’s needs and taking steps to address them.

## CONCLUSION

Based on our findings using Voyant Tools, we conclude that Tan’s thesis is supported by the data we collected about NDR speeches.

What did you learn about conducting such a project? What could you have done better?

Perhaps we could have sieved relevant words first, check their KWIC, and then observe their word trends. Anyway, we have now seen for ourselves how digital tools, when used properly, can lead to new and meaningful insights in the humanities!

Prof. Alastair Gornall