

The Identity Dilemma of Chinese Immigrants in Singapore from the Perspective of Intercultural Communication and Identity Negotiation: A Case Study of the Chinese Language Movement of Singapore Chamber of Commerce

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Abstract: This paper is based on the background of many Chinese immigrants to Singapore in recent years. Singapore is a multicultural country. The Chinese identity in Singapore is also influenced by multiple factors such as history and culture. This paper studies the causes and status quo of the identity dilemma of the Chinese in Singapore, which provides a reference for China's research in this field and promotes the development of China-Singapore relations. This study is based on the intercultural communication theory and the consultative identity theory, using case analysis to draw the conclusion that the current Singaporean Chinese are faced with a dilemma in the identity process, and put forward suggestions on this phenomenon: Singaporean Chinese should actively negotiate to carry out innovative development on the basis of protecting the fundamental development of identity culture. Understanding and helping Singaporean Chinese to form an identity and value system is conducive to promoting the positive development of China-Singapore relations under the background of globalization.

Keywords: Singapore, overseas Chinese, intercultural communication, identity

1. Introduction

Singapore has been a multi-ethnic country since ancient times and is also a typical immigrant country. In the first half of the period, immigrants from China, India, the Malay Peninsula and the Indonesian archipelago entered Singapore, forming the foundation of cultural diversity. During the British colonial rule of Singapore, Singapore society was under the influence of British culture and education.

It has formed a multicultural social environment in Singapore. Singapore is a Chinese, Malay, and Indian group that gives first place. According to the official data of the Singapore Bureau of Statistics, by 2022, Singapore Chinese accounted for 74.1%, Malays accounted for 13.6%, Indians accounted for 8.9% and the rest accounted for 3.2% (see Figure 1). The Republic of Singapore is the second country in the world with Chinese as the main nation as shown in Figure 1. In 1977, Singapore launched the Foreign Talent Residence Program. On October 3, 1990, after the establishment of diplomatic ties between China and Singapore, the Chinese people flocked to Singapore on a large

scale. In recent years, the booming connection between China and New Zealand has brought more new opportunities, but also led to the attention of the local society to the new immigrants, including Chinese people.

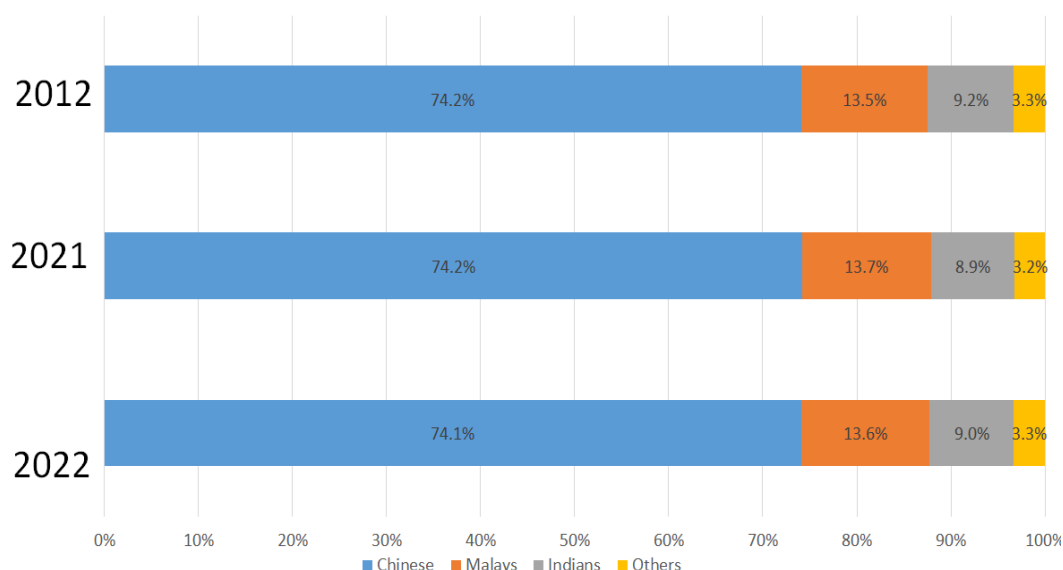


Figure 1: Ethnic Composition of Resident People [1].

According to Singapore government statistics and secondary literature, Chinese can work in Singapore, but mainly in service industry with moderate income level; Singaporean Chinese are mainly concentrated in large areas, and live together; in education, Singaporean Chinese receive bilingual education. This paper will take the diversified society of Singapore as the background, take the implementation of the Chinese language movement as an example, combine the theory of intercultural communication with the theory of negotiation communication, analyze the causes of the current Chinese identity dilemma in Singapore, and put forward suggestions on feasibility. Understanding the identity issues of The Chinese in Singapore and helping the Singaporean Chinese to shape their identity in multi-ethnic countries are conducive to promoting the friendly and harmonious development of China-Singapore relations in the process of globalization.

2. Literature Review

Previous studies on ethnic issues in Singapore can be roughly divided into the following three categories: First, for the original Singapore, researches on Chinese cultural identity [2]; second, Singapore's national governance policy and enlightenment to China [3]; third, the history of ethnic conflict and integration in Singapore [4]. Scholars have summarized Singapore's ethnic integration policy and made innovations, laying a foundation for future generations' research [5]. However, previous studies still have some shortcomings, including the identity confusion and the influence of Chinese culture are not deep enough, and most of them focus on policy and is not comprehensive enough. This study will focus on cultural and identity aspects and improve the research on this issue.

3. Theory

Intercultural communication theory originated in the 1950s, when scholars began to explore the effects of cultural differences on communication. The theory was further developed in the 1960s and 1970s, when researchers began to focus on the ways in which cultural differences can affect

communication. The theory is a field of study that examines how people from different cultures interact and communicate with each other [6]. It looks at how cultural differences can affect communication, and how people can bridge cultural gaps to better understand each other. Research in this area has focused on topics such as language nonverbal communication, cultural values, and intercultural communication. It has also explored the impact of technology on cross-cultural communication, as well as the role of media in creating and maintaining cross-cultural understanding. The development of cross-cultural communication theory has been driven by the need to better understand how people from different cultures interact and communicate with each other and to develop strategies for effective cross-cultural communication [7].

Identity negotiation theory originated in the field of sociology in the middle of the 19th century. In 1959, the sociologist Goffman proposed that social communication should be based on "reaching a consensus of consultation", and for the first time proposed the concept that "recognition should be achieved through consultation". Subsequently, this view was introduced into the field of psychology and by Secord, Backman and Schlenker developed extensions. In the 1880s, Stella Ting-Toomey, an interpersonal communication scholar, developed the theory of identity negotiation to cross-cultural communication. In intercultural communication, identity is a dynamic and continuous process of negotiation, which will be influenced by the social environment and the in-depth change of communication. Identity is an evolving process, and people always repeatedly position their roles in new groups to gain identity. Because individuals have a kind of "multiple self-identity", it is necessary to analyze the construction of identity by combining multiple factors, involving self-identity and social identity, cultural identity, ethnic identity, ethnic identity, etc. [8]. This theory analyzes the factors influencing the evolution of identity, and points out that active identity negotiation is the premise and basis for realizing intercultural communication [9].

Identity is one of the core issues of intercultural communication theory, and the identity negotiation theory closely related to Identity is one of the main theories of intercultural communication, and also the premise of the realization of intercultural communication. This paper will take the theory of intercultural communication as the main theory basis, use the Identity negotiation theory in the case analysis, and analyze the significance of the Chinese language movement in Singapore [10].

4. Case Analysis

4.1. The Chinese Promotion Movement in Singapore

The Chinese language promotion movement in Singapore began in the late 19th century, when the Chinese immigrants who had settled in Singapore began to promote the use of the Chinese language in the local community. This movement was further strengthened in the early 20th century, when the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce and the Singapore Chinese Girls' School were established. The movement gained momentum in the 1950s, when the Singapore Chinese Teachers' Association was formed to promote the use of Chinese in education. The Singapore Chinese Language Council was established in the 1970s to promote the use of Chinese in the public sector. The Chinese language promotion movement in Singapore has had a significant impact on the local Chinese community. It has helped to preserve the Chinese language and culture, and has enabled the Chinese community to maintain its identity in a multi-cultural society. The movement has also helped to promote the use of Chinese in the public sector, and has encouraged the use of Chinese in education. However, the Chinese-speaking movement does not seem to reach its original intention. Many Chinese families in Singapore send their children to English schools because of the superiority of English in social life, severely challenging the survival of Chinese schools. The promotion of Chinese language in Singapore is not effective, and the government support is quite weak. English's dominance in

Singapore is still unshakable. Only emphasis on language skills, not the cultural spirit; only basic communication without deep mastery, this has been criticized for Chinese language education in Singapore. Many people learn Chinese just to cope with exams and daily work, not to learn the essence of Chinese. Therefore, the effect of Chinese promotion in Singapore is not significant. The younger generation of Chinese are used to using English in life and work, which leads to the communication gap between the first generation of Chinese-speaking immigrants and their grandchildren, and it is difficult for the deep feelings and cultural identity of their ancestors to be transmitted to today's Chinese younger generation.

4.2. Analysis of the Chinese Language Promotion Movement in Singapore

4.2.1. Identity Is a Dynamic and Constantly Changing Process

Identity is a complex process that is influenced by multiple factors, such as the social environment and personal experiences, and that changes constantly over time [11]. For the first generation of Singaporean Chinese, they were born and raised in China. Their ancestors were Chinese, they spoke dialects from all parts of China, and they were deeply influenced and influenced by Chinese culture. When they moved to the newly established Singapore, they still thought they were Chinese and had deep feelings for China. However, for the new generation of Singaporean Chinese, Singapore's national concept has been deeply rooted in the people's hearts. At the same time, they also receive the education and guidance of western culture. Therefore, the mechanical promotion of Chinese can not make them have a sense of identity with Chinese culture.

4.2.2. The Role of Language in Intercultural Communication

Culture is mainly a national psychology or thinking habit. Language is a part of this culture. In essence, language is the meaning system and value system of a nation, and it is the world view of a nation. [12]. The ups and downs of the Chinese language promotion movement in Singapore partly reflect the loss of identity among the Chinese people in Singapore. On the one hand, they continued cultural integration with other ethnic groups in Singapore in intercultural communication, gradually forming the identity of Singaporeans. On the other hand, Singaporean Chinese also realized the importance of seeking the fundamental nation and were unwilling to completely westernize it. Therefore, the Singaporean Chinese are easy to lose themselves in intercultural communication. Yu Qiuyu once said, "The function and role of language in inheriting human civilization are irreplaceable. However, we should be soberly aware that when different civilizations enter the mind of the same person, and of course, there will be some collisions and contradictions. However, we should not exaggerate the seriousness of such collisions and contradictions. Because we will make choices based on our own needs, make comparisons, and then produce a kind of coordination, if we do not choose those civilizations, we can also appreciate it as an abnormal civilization, really can not appreciate it, can also let it exist, we have no need to completely eliminate it."

5. Conclusion

From above the discussion, it can be seen that there is still confusion in the identity of Chinese in Singapore, especially the new generation of Singaporean Chinese will be caught in a dilemma in the process of identity. Combined with the theory of the intercultural communication, this paper on the feasibility of the current Singapore Chinese identity confusion the following Suggestions: first, from their own, Singapore Chinese can actively identity consultation, while retaining the traditional culture receiving learning new culture, in order to improve their adaptability to the changing social environment. Secondly, from the perspective of the government, the Singapore government can pay

more attention to the identity of Singaporean Chinese, focus on the living situation of Singaporean Chinese, hold a more developed and inclusive attitude towards the culture and education of Singaporean Chinese, and improve the enthusiasm of Singaporean Chinese in identification negotiation.

Currently there is a lack of studies in this research field that use relevant data to verify relevant relationships. Scholars could consider exploring this issue with more specific numerical evidence in the future.

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