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## ABSTRACT

This master's thesis considers the linguistic situation of Malaysia and the need for language planning to establish one language as a common link across many diverse ethnic and linguistic groups. The development of the present-day multilingual situation in Malaysia is described. The country is characterized by language islands created by a lack of geographical mobility and insulated through socioeconomic and religious activities. The author discusses the formulation of a satisfactory language policy and advocates that Malay be the language which serves as a symbol of ethnic and cultural identification at the national level, as a means for horizontal mass communication, and as a means of access to science and technology. The implementation of such a language policy through the educational system is discussed. (VM)

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THE MALAY LANGUAGE IN MALAYSIA: AN APPLIED  
SOCIOLINGUISTIC STUDY

by

GOH-NGONG SICK, B.A.

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THESIS

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May, 1971

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THE MALAY LANGUAGE IN MALAYSIA: AN APPLIED  
SOCIOLINGUISTIC STUDY

APPROVED:

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This study is motivated by two years of teaching experience during which time the author found that many language teachers were at a loss of seeking out an objective in learning a foreign language due to everchanging and vaguely defined language policy. The need for stable and clearly defined objectives dates back many years to when the author experienced two times of drastic change in the medium of instruction, which denied many of their right to education, and gave all concerned some very unpleasant learning experiences. The need to specify objectives calls for a long term language policy in a multilingual society. Truly there is no short way to language learning, but many frustrations, disappointments, and the consequent waste of money, effort, and time can be avoided with clearly defined objectives.

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The University of Texas at Austin  
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## INTRODUCTION

A language policy desirable and feasible in other countries may not be as adequate in Malaysia, because many different variables are involved, including numerous political factors.<sup>1</sup> Depending on circumstances, one variable may be more important and decisive than another.

In Malaysia the problem of a national language is interlocked with nationalism.<sup>2</sup> As the Tengku expressed it:

It is only right that as a developing nation we should want to have a language of our own . . . If the national language is not introduced, our country will be devoid of a unified character and personality --- a nation without a soul and without a life.<sup>3</sup>

However, when a language is imposed on or adopted by another linguistic group (no matter whether the two languages are genetically related to each other),

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<sup>1</sup> UNESCO, The Use of Vernacular Languages in Education (Paris, 1953), p. 26; Heinz Kloss, "Types of Multilingual Communities: A Discussion of Ten Variables" in IJAL, 33:4, Part 2 (October 1967), pp. 7-17; Heinz Kloss, "Bilingualism and Nationalism" in Journal of Social Issues, 23:2 (April 1967), pp. 39-47.

<sup>2</sup> M. H. Boehm, "Nationalism: Theoretical Aspect" in Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, XI (New York: Macmillan Company, 1967), p. 235; T. H. Silcock and Ungku Abdu' Aziz, "Nationalism in Malaya" in W. L. Holland, editor, Asian Nationalism and the West (New York: Macmillan Company, 1953), pp. 285-6.

<sup>3</sup> The Tengku spoke at the University of Singapore on 9 December 1964. Quoted from Howard Hayden, Higher Education and Development in Southeast Asia Vol. 1, Director's Report (UNESCO & IAU, 1967), p. 228.



social, cultural, and psychological situations are created. From a purely linguistic aspect, there is likely to be phonological, grammatical, and lexical interference (or 'enrichment'<sup>4</sup>, a term as loaded as 'interference'). These people, 'the locus of contact',<sup>5</sup> are, indeed, the original source for the linguist, psychologist, sociolinguist, and language teacher. Regardless of the methods of change-over from one language to the other, the process is frequently beset with linguistic problems of language planning when the language has yet to be standardized and developed, and also with educational problems when it is made a medium of instruction. Usually, the social aspect of the process works in two opposite directions --- as a separator and as an unifier.<sup>6</sup>

It is true, to some extent, that a common language will facilitate inter-group co-operation and communication. Even so, a common language is not the only means to national unity in multilingual Malaysia. According to T. H. Silcock, Whether or not the people of the country ultimately favour a Malay language education, as things are a Malay language education could not per se unify the people.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Einar Haugen, "Linguistics and Dialinguistics" in Monograph Series on Languages and Linguistics, 21st Annual Round Table, (Washington: Georgetown University, 1970), p. 6.

<sup>5</sup> Uriel Weinreich, Languages in Contact (The Hague: Mouton and Company, 1963), p. 1.

<sup>6</sup> Joyce O. Hertzler, A Sociology of Language (New York: Random House, 1967), Chapter X.

<sup>7</sup> T. H. Silcock, Towards a Malayan Union (Singapore: Donald Moore for Eastern Universities Press, 1961), p. 41.



Moreover, much evidence nullifies the assumption that language alone brings unity to diverse ethnic groups. Many nations with linguistic heterogeneity have fought for a common cause; there are also nations without a language problem divided into north and south or east and west.

A common language is not equivalent to a common national identity.

The New Zealanders know the difference between speaking English and being New Zealanders; so, too, the Americans know the difference between speaking English and being Americans. To say that a language community and a societal system are identical is basically misleading.<sup>8</sup>

The present day language policy in Malaysia is based on an assumption which can be represented as follows:



(Common Language refers to the national language, Malay)

In Malaysia a satisfactory language policy in terms of national framework and education is difficult, though not impossible. Educationists, linguists, and political scientists have to consider the complexity of 'historical, geographical, sociological, political, religious, cultural, and linguistic factors' in the context of the given society together with education theory and principle.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Hertzler, A Sociology of Language, p. 62.

<sup>9</sup> UNESCO, The Use of Vernacular Languages in Education, p. 76.

The author begins this thesis with some of these factors which are relevant to formulating a possible language policy. The first chapter deals with the present language situation and some social and ecological mechanism in perpetuating the linguistic diversity. As understood, the national language is invoked mainly to achieve national unity and identity. The degree of unification by the national language of the people in Malaysia within their ethnic groups and on a national framework is discussed in chapter two. Having recognized the two functions, symbolic and utilitarian, that a national language must perform, the author considers multilingualism a possible solution. The third chapter attempts to give an account of the implementation of the existing language policy in education. Some linguistic and education problems are raised and recommendations suggested.

## CHAPTER I

### MALAY IN THE MULTILINGUAL SOCIETY

#### 1.1 Language Situation<sup>1</sup>

Malaysia is cellular society in which 'different cultural, linguistic, ethnic, and economic communities live their separate ways in different parts of the peninsula'.<sup>2</sup> There are perhaps more languages, religions, and cultures than there are ethnic groups. Arbitrarily speaking, the languages can be grouped into four main categories, based on either historical facts or legal status of the languages or both.

- (1) The aborigine languages: Malay (including dialects), Dayak, Dusun, Melanun, Bisaya, Bajau, Murut (Sarawak and North Borneo dialects), Ubian, Illanun, etc.<sup>3</sup>
- (2) The immigrant languages: Chinese (including dialects), Indian languages, and Indonesian languages.

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<sup>1</sup> Charles A. Ferguson, "National Sociolinguistic Profile Formulas" in William Bright, editor, Sociolinguistics (The Hague: Mouton and Company, 1966), p. 309.

<sup>2</sup> E.H.G. Dobby, South East Asia (London: University of London Press, 1950), p. 136.

<sup>3</sup> See A. A. Cense, and E. M. Uhlenbeck, Critical Survey of Studies on the languages of Borneo ('S-Gravenhage, Martinus Nijhoff, 1958), pp. 7-46.



(3) The colonial languages: Portuguese, Dutch, and English.

(4) The language of special status:<sup>4</sup> Arabic.

The absolute number of speakers for these languages ranges from a few million to a few thousand. The relative size of Malay speakers is about 42% of the total population, the Chinese less than 40%, and Indian speakers about 10%. While Malay, Chinese, and Tamil are important or major languages of the country, English is learned and understood by most of the population as a second or foreign language.<sup>5</sup> The ultimate aim of language policy is to replace all the languages with Malay as a referent, as a means of inter-group communication, and as a tool to science, technology, and modernity.

### 1.1.1 The Indigenous Languages

In Malaya<sup>6</sup> the aborigines number about 50,000.<sup>7</sup> The most primitive race extant in South East Asia and the Malay Archipelago is called the Negritos who

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<sup>4</sup> Charles A. Ferguson, 1966, pp. 310-1. Arabic is the only language used in Islamic religious services. Islam has been an integral part of Malay society (see 2.2.2.1). Therefore, the traditional role played by Arabic is not likely to change.

<sup>5</sup> A. H. Marckwardt, "English as a Second Language and English as a Foreign Language" in H. B. Allen, editor, Teaching English as a Second Language (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1965), pp. 3-8.

<sup>6</sup> Hereafter Malaya is referred to the Federation of Malaya or West Malaysia which is composed of eleven states that make up the Malay Peninsula. East Malaysia will be referred to North Borneo (now called Sabah) and Sarawak.

<sup>7</sup> Malaysia Year Book 1970 (Kuala Lumpur: The Straits Times Press (Malaysia) Bhd., 1970), p. 15. Today most of the aborigines have either been assimilated to the Malay community or have retreated to jungle areas. These account for their insignificant role in the linguistic situation of Malaysia.

are found in Kedah, Perak, and Kelantan. The speakers of Mon-Anam Senoi are found in the Central mountains of Malaya. The Jakuns are scattered in South Malaya and Riau-Lingga archipelago. They speak a kind of Malay which is said to be free from foreign loan words.<sup>8</sup>

The aborigine languages in East Malaysia occupy a much more important position than the contemporary aborigine languages in West Malaysia because of their greater relative numerical size and political potentiality. According to the division based on linguistic diversity, there are at least forty distinct languages in the territory. A reliable picture, Cense claims, of the present linguistic situation based on available data is not possible. The reason is that,

slight differences, mostly of a lexical nature and, occasionally in some parts of the phonemic system, have led the observers who usually lack linguistic training, to postulate the presence of separate languages on occasions when there hardly seems to exist a reason to speak of separate dialects.<sup>9</sup>

Moreover, one complication comes from the names given to the aboriginal groups by their neighbours. A name may be applied to one group at one time and to another group at another time.

Thus far the aborigine languages have neither contended nor striven for legal status or rigorous expansion as have English, Chinese, Tamil, and Malay. The autonomy of education and language policy granted constitutionally to East Malaysia has cushioned the conflict.

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<sup>8</sup> Richard Winstedt, Malaya and Its History (London: Hutchinson's University Library, 1948), p. 14.

<sup>9</sup> Cense and Uhlenbeck, p. 6.

### 1.1.2 The Malay Language

The Malays who are believed to be descendants of the Deutero-Malays moved from Yunnan to the Malay Peninsula around 2,000 B.C. Many Malays came from the Indonesian islands after the establishment of the Malacca Sultanate. The strengthening of Malays on both sides of the Straits of Malacca is said to be one of the important factors in making Malay a lingua franca of Indonesia.<sup>10</sup> The Indonesians immigrated to Malaysia at a constant rate on their own and, more recently, by the deliberate effort of the Malaysian government. These immigrants formed about 13% and 9% of the total Malay population in 1947 and 1957 respectively.<sup>11</sup> They speak different languages of the Malayo-Polynesian language family but mainly Malay and Javanese. Though they differed in time of arrival, these Indonesians identified themselves with the local Malays due to common language, religion and ethnicity. To what extent and degree the linguistic relationship will affect the social, political, and cultural relations between Indonesia and Malaysia it is too early to predict. Nevertheless, the linguistic factor will certainly affect Malaysian nationality and vice versa. The inter relationship

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<sup>10</sup> UNESCO, 1953, p. 9.

<sup>11</sup> M. V. Del Tufo, Malaya, A Report on the 1947 Census of Population (London Agents for the Colonies, 1949), pp. 310 & 316; H. Fell, 1957 Population Census of the Federation of Malaya (Kuala Lumpur: Department of Statistics, 1957), report 14, p. 12.



between the two has been voiced by both Indonesian and Malaysian leaders.<sup>12</sup> One result of political impact is the agitation for the formation of a Malay Confederation, called Maphilindo, a term coined from Ma of Malaya, Phil of the Philippines, and Indo of Indonesia.<sup>13</sup> The influence on the linguistic aspect is seen in the proposed Malindo spelling system, a uniform spelling system for Bahasa Indonesia and Bahasa Kebangsaan,<sup>14</sup> a step towards greater linguistic homogeneity and cultural exchange between the two nations.

### 1.1.3 Chinese Dialects

There were frequent trade and diplomatic contacts between the Malacca Sultanate and the Chinese as far back as the Ming Dynasty or earlier. Chinese traders, mostly from Southern China, numbered about 300-400 in Malacca when the Dutch took it over in 1641. Relatively speaking, the number was between

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<sup>12</sup> See K. J. Ratnam, Communalism and Political Process in Malaya (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1965), p. 133; Soedjatmoko, "A Case Study in Cultural Contacts: The Malay Language" in Philips Talbot, editor, South East Asia in the World Today (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1950), p. 49.

<sup>13</sup> There is, however, a stronger tie between Malaysia and Indonesia than any of them with the Philippines. Geographically speaking, Indonesia and Malaysia are closer to each other. The strong immigration ties provided a bridge for the Malays to look to Indonesians for political and cultural leadership especially before 1957. Moreover, Bahasa Melayu and Bahasa Indonesia are more closely related to each other than either Tagalog or Visayan or Jlonkano to any of them. Finally there is also the common religion as mentioned.

<sup>14</sup> The Malay word "bahasa" means "language." Bahasa Kebangsaan means the national language. It refers to Bahasa Melayu or the Malay language.

1/5 and 1/7 of the total population.<sup>15</sup> Following the foundation of Penang in 1786 and Singapore in 1819, the Chinese, mostly traders, streamed into the new trading settlements in waves. During the following few decades the Chinese tin miners and other professional men increased tremendously in number and thus contributed to the heterogenous linguistic situation. After the 1930's, the numerical force of the Chinese speakers came more from natural increase than from new immigration which was now under control. The social, political, and economic unrest in Mainland China forced these people to flee overseas, and the continued unrest transformed the transient Chinese to permanent settlers. This fundamental change does not imply that there was a corresponding change in their cultural identity for adaptation to the new environment. Language, as an ingredient of culture, is the best manifestation of this cultural identity. About ten different dialects of Southern China are spoken, with Hokkien and Cantonese in the leading positions. Though mutually unintelligible<sup>16</sup> orally, the dialects share a common writing system which facilitates communication among the Chinese linguistic communities. Since 1920, Mandarin, a variety of Northern Chinese based on the Peking dialect, has become the medium of instruction in the Chinese schools in place of various dialects (vernaculars as most authors call them). The changeover

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<sup>15</sup> See Victor Purcell, The Chinese in South East Asia (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. 223-43.

<sup>16</sup> Hockchia and Hockchiu are mutually intelligible. The degree of intelligibility among these dialects has yet to be determined.

was in response to the China Nationalistic movement<sup>17</sup> and the influence culminated in a Malayan Chinese education crisis in the late 1940's and the early 1950's.

#### 1.1.4 Indian Languages

The Indians have influenced both the material and spiritual life of the Malays since the beginning of the Christian era. The influence waned with the spread of Islam.

Since the 19th Century, with the new arrival from Southern India of Indian labourers to work on the rubber estates and the railways, Tamil has become an important language in West Malaysia. The next most important language is Punjabi. Its speakers, called Sikhs, came from North India working as professional and military men. Though numerically weak, the Punjabi speakers are still able to sustain their language because of their economic strength and social status. Today, about 85% of the Indians speak Tamil. The remaining sections speak Malayalam, Telegu, of the Dravidian language family, and Punjabi, Hindi, Bengali, Gujarathi, Marathi, and Oriya of the Indo-Iranian language family. None of these languages is intelligible to the other.

#### 1.1.5 Colonial Languages with Special Reference to English as an Official Language

It was reported by R. B. LePage that there is concentrated in Malacca a community of Portuguese speakers whose creole Portuguese is similar to that spoken

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<sup>17</sup> The relation between language and nationalism is discussed very thoroughly in John DeFrancis, Nationalism and Language Reform in China (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1950).

in Macao.<sup>18</sup> How many still retain it as a mother tongue needs further study. Nevertheless, this community is very insignificant in size and probably will not create many language problems since they have married freely with other races.

The Dutch occupied Malacca for nearly two centuries, but today there is no Dutch community in Malaysia. The explanation for this phenomenon is that the Dutch never intended to occupy Malacca on a permanent basis.

The influence of Dutch and Portuguese in the Malay language has been through the means of many loan words. These languages will have no importance either in the future development of the Malay language or in the national language policy of Malaysia.

The role of English will be a very different one, not only in its domains of function, but also in its potential influence on Malay language development. Many newly developing nations such as those in Africa have retained or adopted a foreign language (also a colonial language) as an overt or covert goal of nation-oriented language policy to linguistic and educational problems. Malaysia is more an example of an intermediate developing than a newly developing nation. The retention of English in contemporary Malaysia solves some problems of horizontal and vertical communication on the one hand; and on the other hand provides a smooth transition period for the national language to develop and promulgate for popular acceptance and usage.

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<sup>18</sup> R. B. LePage, National Language Question (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 67. R. B. LePage, "Multilingualism in Malaya" in Symposium of Multilingualism Brazzaville, 1962, p. 137.



#### 1.1.5.1 Legal Status of English

The importance of English is immediately apparent from its legal status, not to mention the actual use of English in administration, a traditional practice. The 1957 constitution proclaimed English as an official language for ten years until parliament otherwise provided. Article 152 clause (2) states that English may continue to be used in both houses of parliament, in the legislative assembly of all states, and for all other official purposes. Clause (3) stipulates that authoritative texts of all bills to be introduced or amendments to be moved in either house of parliament, and of all acts of parliament and all subsidiary legislation issued by the government shall be in the English language. Clauses (4) and (5) stipulate that all proceedings in the Federal court or a high court or subordinate courts shall be in the English language.

When Malaysia was formed in 1963 with the inclusion of Sabah, Sarawak, and Singapore,<sup>19</sup> similar legal arrangement regarding the use of English is specified in article 161 (1), (2), and (3). Clause (2) provides that representatives from East Malaysia can use English in either house of parliament; English may be used for all proceedings in subordinate courts, high courts or appeal from them, in the legislative assembly, and for all other official uses (including the official purposes of the federal government). English has been accorded the status of an official language for ten years from Malaysia day. However, 1973 is not an

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<sup>19</sup> Two years later Singapore seceded to become the Republic of Singapore and is not included in this thesis unless specified.

absolute deadline because any act affecting the status and the use of English has to be approved by an enactment of the legislature of the state concerned (161 (3)).

That East Malaysia delegates will continue using English is certain, making the parliament bilingual assembly. The extension in the use of English will slow down the likelihood that Malay will be the sole official language both in West and East Malaysia, especially in the latter case because it has been given autonomy in its educational and language policy.

#### 1.1.5.2 Social-Psychological Factors for Preference of English

During the process of selecting, accepting, learning, using, and identifying with a non-mother tongue national language, the attitude of the people concerned regarding their own languages and their attitude towards the chosen language and its speakers in question must be assessed. As Robert G. Armstrong expressed it, 'The language question is intimately bound up with the problem of the respect we bear other people and of our self-respect.'<sup>20</sup> The choice of a foreign language as an official language in most African countries is to avoid possible linguistic conflicts among the numerous indigenous languages. Where an indigenous language is chosen, the view is reported by John Spencer that development of the indigenous language should not reach a stage that it will become a rival to the

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<sup>20</sup> Robert G. Armstrong, "Vernacular Languages and Cultures" in John Spencer, editor, Language in Africa. Papers of Levehelme Conference on Universities and the Language Problems of Tropical Africa, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1963), p. 69.



foreign language.<sup>21</sup> With respect to the attitude of the indigenous people towards the Malay speakers, the fear of Malay dominance may turn them away from learning the language. The record of Brunei (Malay) rule in Borneo in past centuries is far from encouraging. Delegates testifying prior to the formation of Malaysia expressed the fear that the relative backwardness and inexperience of the indigenes might be used to their disadvantage by the more advanced and sophisticated Malays.<sup>22</sup>

When Malay is placed side by side with English, the people immediately realize that the former cannot be accepted on the same par with the latter, which provides better opportunities in academic pursuit and professions. Therefore, a Dayak child would by-pass the national language and go straight to English. The trend is explicit in Sabah where indigenous parents demanded their children be instructed in English rather than in Malay. In recent years the indigenous people in East Malaysia have gradually taken pride in their languages and cultures leading to the establishment of native voluntary schools and self-help schools in Sabah and Sarawak respectively. A Kadazan newspaper, the first in the language, for instance, began circulation in 1966. This development may eventually evolve as a similar linguistic, cultural, or even political situation to that of Ireland and England.

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<sup>21</sup> John Spencer, "Languages and Independence" in Spencer, editor, Language in Africa, p. 37.

<sup>22</sup> T. G. McGee, "Population: A Preliminary Analysis" in Wang Gung-wu, editor, Malaysia: A Survey, (London: Pall Mall Press, 1965), p. 76.

Therefore, a solution to avoid such a situation is urgently needed. Malay must be developed to become an indispensable means of communication rather than merely a source of pride, a case development that has made English an accepted official language in the U. S. A.<sup>23</sup>

### 1.2 Some Perpetuating Mechanism in Linguistic Diversity

It is not languages which come into contact but the speakers of those languages.<sup>24</sup> What makes the contacts possible, then, is the settlement pattern of the speech communities, their social and economic activities, geographical communication, and language exposure through mass media, not to exhaust the list. These should be primary factors underlying the choice of a national language.<sup>25</sup> Depending on circumstances, these social and ecological variables will either impede or hasten the linguistic homogeneity which is one of the results of language contact in a multilingual society. Another result is that the individual becomes bi- or multilingual, which is a permanent rather than a transitional phenomenon, as in Montreal, Canada and Paraguay.<sup>26</sup> Finally, there may evolve a pidgin

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<sup>23</sup> J. A. Fishman, et al., Language Loyalty in the United States, (The Hague: Mouton and Company, 1966), p. 30.

<sup>24</sup> Weinreich, p. 1.

<sup>25</sup> Spencer, editor, pp. 130-3.

<sup>26</sup> Stanley Lieberman, "Bilingualism in Montreal: A Demographic Analysis" in the American Journal of Sociology, LXXI (July 1965), pp. 10-25. Joan Rubin, "Language and Education in Paraguay" in J. A. Fishman, C. A. Ferguson, and J. Das Gupta, editors, Language Problems of Developing Nations (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1968), pp. 477-88.

language which may be learned as a mother tongue (creole language).<sup>27</sup> It is hoped that what has been (and will be) discussed and analysed will shed light on likely results of language contact and thus give some preliminary consideration to a feasible and practical language policy in Chapter II.

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<sup>27</sup> William J. Samarin, "Lingua Francas: With Special Reference to Africa" in Frank A. Rice, editor, Study of the Role of Second Languages in Asia, Africa, and Latin America (Washington D.C.: Centre for Applied Linguistics, 1962), pp. 54-64.



1.2.1 Numerical Strength of Native Speakers (NO. in Thousands) <sup>28</sup>

Speech Communities	Malaya	Sabah	Sarawak
Malays	2,802.9	.....	129.3
Chinese:			
Hokkien	740.8	11.9	28.3
Hakka	508.8	57.3	70.2
Cantonese	505.2	15.3	17.4
Tieuchieu	283.1	6.0	22.0
Hainanese	123.0	5.3	8.0
Kwongsai	69.1	.....	.....
Hockchiu	46.1	.....	70.1
Hengkwa	11.9	.....	5.0
Hockchia	9.8	.....	.....
Speakers of other dialects	34.4	8.8	1.0
Indians:			
Tamil	581.1	.....	} 2.4
Malayalam	51.2	.....	
Telugu	27.1	.....	
Pakistanis <sup>29</sup>	10.9	.....	
Sinhalese	3.3	.....	
Speakers of other Dravidian & Indo-Iranian languages	61.5	.....	
Sea Dayak	.....	.....	237.7
Land Dayak	.....	.....	57.6
Melanau	.....	.....	44.7
Kadazan (Dusun)	.....	145.2	.....
Murut	.....	22.1	.....

<sup>28</sup> Figures for Malaya are taken from Fell, report 14, pp. 12-14. Figures for Sabah are based on L. W. Jones, North Borneo: A Report on the Census of Population 1960 (Kuching: Government Printer, 1962a); Figures for Sarawak are based on L. W. Jones, Sarawak: A Report on the Census of Population 1960 (Kuching: Government Printer, 1962 b).

<sup>29</sup> Pakistanis make up several language groups.

Speech Communities	Malaya	Sabah	Sarawak
Bajau	.....	59.7	.....
Indonesians	281.1	24.8	3.2
Europeans	28.0	1.9	1.6
Thai	21.8	.....	.....
Other indigenous	41.4	79.4	37.9
Other non-indigenous	35.7	16.7	0.9

The above figures give only a rough indication of the native speakers of each language community. Of these communities six language families are present. Though more people are literate in Chinese and in their respective mother tongue, the number of people learning English has been increasing throughout Malaysia.<sup>30</sup> Since 1956, English primary school population in West Malaysia has been first in rate of increase. During this same period primary school population in Chinese, Malay, and Tamil streams show little difference in the rate of increase. The breakdown of the English primary school population indicates that Chinese made up half of the number; Indians, with their small number in the total population, constitute about 25%; and Malays make up the remainder. The facts indicate two things: (a) each of the linguistic communities will continue to prize their cultural values and identity; (b) each of these groups shows a more favourable attitude

<sup>30</sup> Fell, report 14, pp. 21-23; Jones (a), pp. 79-96; Jones (b), pp. 75-94.

for English than any other second language. Under the present social circumstances and educational system, English has been a prime contender with the national language as a lingua franca for inter-group communication.

Malay has more native speakers than any other single linguistic group, but it is not dominant.<sup>31</sup> None of the languages is understood by all people. An overgeneralization that Malay and English are the lingua francas must be interpreted very narrowly, as Silcock<sup>32</sup> noted, in view of the pattern of population settlement and occupations of the different linguistic communities. Malay is confined to a communication network of small scale trade among different ethnic groups. English is socially based in that it is used by English educated elites.

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<sup>31</sup> C. A. Ferguson, "The Language Factor in National Development" in Rice, editor, Study of the Role of Second Languages in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, pp. 11-2. Ferguson gave three indications of dominance. A language is dominant if it is spoken by half the population. The second indication is that a language is learned by other native speakers in the country. According to this, English rather than Malay, is dominant as discussed. The third indication is the publication of official texts of laws, etc. Based on this criterion, English is evidently dominant. Other non-official publication, such as newspaper and imported books may show a reverse picture of dominance. What is "officially" dominant may not be social dominance.

<sup>32</sup> T. H. Silcock, "The Effects of Industrialization on Race Relations in Malaya" in Guy Hunter, editor, Industrialization and Race Relations, (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 180.



### 1.2.2 Distribution: Areal Population Concentration, Rural vs Urban

The inter-communal settlements are such that one speech community is predominant in terms of state (Figure 1.1), areal concentration, and rural and urban divisions<sup>33</sup> (Figure 1.2).

Figure 1.2 The Percentage of Rural and Urban Linguistic Group Distribution in Malaya<sup>34</sup>

Year	Malay		Chinese		Indian		Others	
	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
1931	-----	19.2	-----	59.6	-----	17.8	-----	3.4
1947	59.6	21.1	29.8	62.3	9.5	13.8	0.8	2.8
1957	74.2	22.6	14.9	63.9	9.75	10.7	1.15	2.8

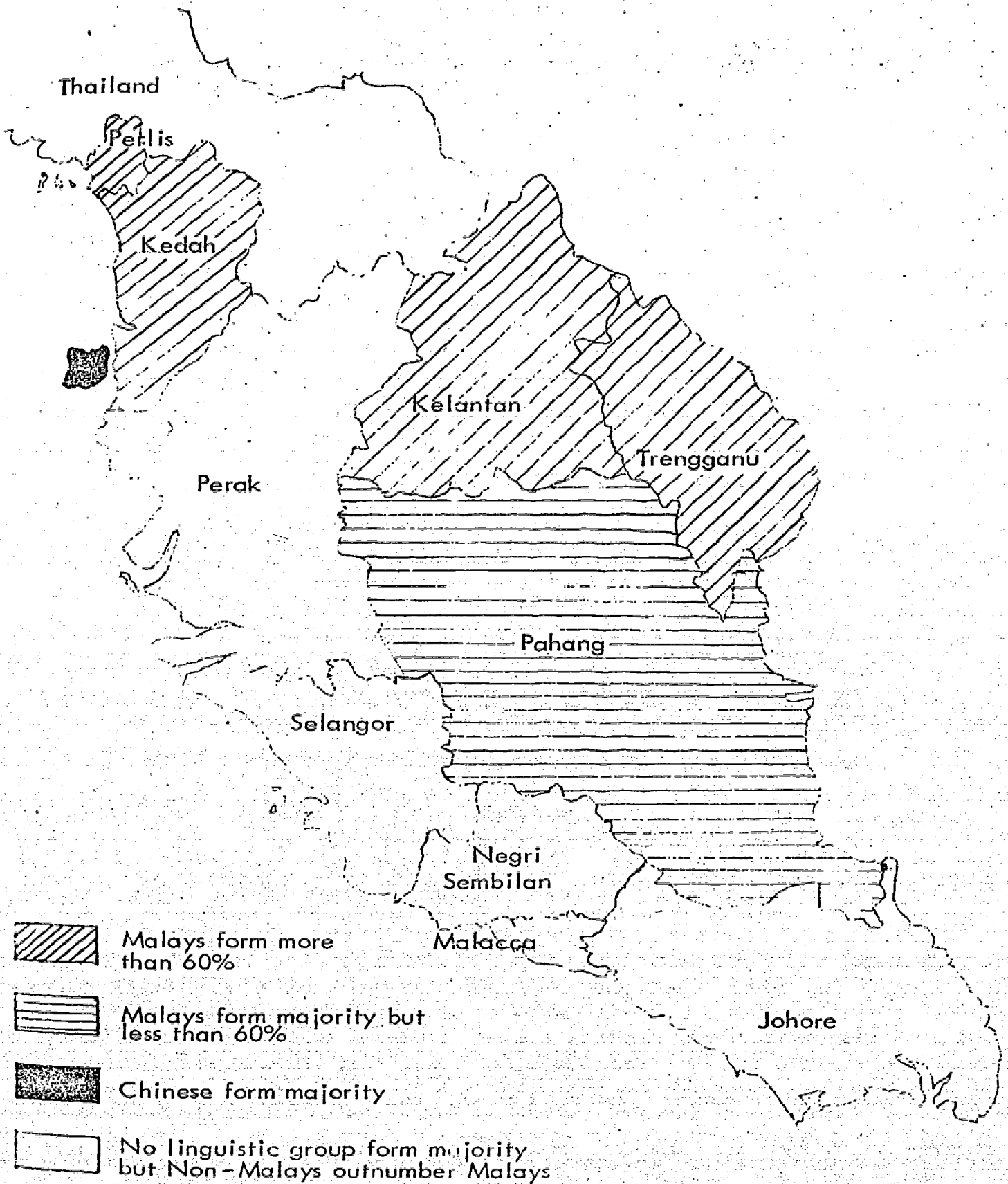
Generally speaking the Chinese and Indians are concentrated on the West coast and in urban areas, while the Malays are on the East coast and in rural areas. There may be some truth that the mutual distrust and hostility between Malays and non-Malays is the result of linguistic congruence with rural and urban divisions.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Rural population means an area having not more than 1,000 people. Samples for areal concentration are taken from Fell: Trengganu in the north-east where Malays were predominant, Vol. 1, p. 67; Penang in the northwest where Chinese were predominant, Vol. 3, p. 7; Johore in the south where neither was predominant, Vol. 6, p. 36.

<sup>34</sup> Urban population percentage for 1931 and 1947 is taken from Del Tufo, p. 46. 1957 figures are from Fell, report 14, p. 9. The rural percentage for 1947 and 1957 is calculated from Del Tufo and Fell respectively.

<sup>35</sup> Weinreich, pp. 96-7.

Figure 1.1 Major Linguistic Groups Distribution in Malaya



Many examples in the past show that a language or dialect of a capital city replaces other languages or dialects to become dominant language. Malay lacks this geographical advantage, because the majority Malay speakers is in rural areas. Therefore, a linguistic homogeneity using Malay seems a long way off.

On intra-group linguistic community distribution the Chinese show a heavy concentration of one rather homogenous group in one area. For instance, the Hockchiu who made up about 2% of the total Chinese population in 1957 are concentrated in Dindings in Perak. Though relatively insignificant in size in West Malaysia, the Hockchiu are the most important dialect group in Sibu in the third division (Province) of Sarawak. Of the two major dialect groups in Malaya, the Cantonese are concentrated in Ipoh and Kuala Lumpur, the state capitols of Perak and Selangor respectively. The Hokkien are mainly in Penang and Klang.

The intra-group areal concentration holds true for other speech communities. The speakers of Punjabi, for instance, are concentrated in Selangor. Some Javanese speakers are concentrated in Seroom, Johore. Although various languages or dialects may not be important in the national framework, they are still the most important, sometimes the only means of communication for these speech communities. These languages function as lingua franca in their respective localities.

The geographical separation of West Malaysia from East Malaysia by the South China Sea is no less important than areal concentration of linguistic communities in perpetuating linguistic diversity. The indigenous peoples who still

live in long-houses and remote jungle areas have little contact with the world. The size of the territory, with its thin population and extremely poor communication, retards geographical mobility, which deprives these people their educational opportunities and facilities. Moreover, with a rather small number of native Malay speakers there is a limited range and frequency of language contact. As a result of these social and geographical insulations there are no natural means of learning a new language: Therefore, there is every reason to believe that it will take the indigenes generations to learn the national language as a means of communication, and adopt it as a first language through formal learning.

The occupational division is another social mechanism in perpetuating linguistic diversity. In general, the Malays are fishermen, rice farmers, and to some extent government officials (including military men); the natives are hunters, fishermen and rice farmers; the Chinese are merchants; the Indians are estate workers and professional men. Furthermore, a specific group may have a dominant occupation or economic activity. The Hokkien, Cantonese, and Tieuchieu are business men; the Hainanese are the restaurant and coffee shop keepers.

From the preceding discussions it may be concluded that a large section of the Chinese population and, to a successively lesser extent, the Indians and the Malays are 'mobilized population'.<sup>36</sup> Their active economic activities mobilize them for relatively intensive communication with the outside world and other

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<sup>36</sup> Karl Deutsch, Nationalism and Social Communication, (Massachusetts: M.I.T. Press, 1966), p. 126.



linguistic communities. It is, therefore, predictable that there would be more bilinguals or multilinguals among them. They will remain so because their languages function in a complementary manner. If competency in a language other than one's mother tongue is a 'good thing' for Americans, such an ability is a necessity for Malaysians. 'The linguistic division of labour',<sup>37</sup> such as that in Montreal, Canada, renders bilingualism or multilingualism a necessity.

### 1.2.3 The Mass Media

The mass media --- press, radio, television, and film --- reflect the language diversity on the one hand and public attitude on the other. There are 51 newspapers published in 6 languages, 8 of which are in the national language, 25 in Chinese, 12 in English, 4 in Tamil, 1 in Punjabi, and 1 in Kadazan. The combined circulation for the papers for each language is 300,000 for Chinese, 200,000 for English, 70,000 for the national language, and 27,000 for Tamil.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Everett C. Hughes, "The Linguistic Division of Labour in Industrial and Urban Societies," Monograph Series on Languages and Linguistics, 21st Annual Round Table, Georgetown University, 1970, pp. 103-119.

<sup>38</sup> Malaysia Official Year Book 1968, (Government Printer, Kuala Lumpur, 1969), p. 242.

The following is a list of newspaper and other publications in Malaysia:

### WEST MALAYSIA

	Language
Utusan Melayu (Jawi); Utusan Zaman (Jawi)	National Language
Mingguan Malaysia (Rumi) .. .. .	" "
Berita Harian (Rumi); Berita Minggu (Rumi)	" "
Warta Negara (Jawi); Warta Minggu (Jawi)	" "
Straits Times; Sunday Times .. .. .	English
Malay Mail; Sunday Mail .. .. .	"
Straits Echo and Times of Malaya .. .. .	"
Pinang Gazette; Sunday Gazette .. .. .	English
Chung Kuo Pao (China Press) .. .. .	Chinese
Nanyang Sian Pau .. .. .	"
Kin Kwok Daily News .. .. .	"
Kwong Wah Yit Poh .. .. .	"
Sing Pin Jih Pao .. .. .	"
Malayan Thung Pau (four issues per week) ..	"
Tamil Nesan .. .. .	Tamil
Sakthi; Sevika .. .. .	"
Sangamani (two issues per week) .. .. .	"
Malaya Samachar .. .. .	Punjabi

### SARAWAK

Utusan Sarawak (three issues per week) ..	National Language
Sarawak Tribune; Sunday Tribune .. .. .	English
The Vanguard .. .. .	"
Kadazan Times .. .. .	Kadazan
Chinese Daily News .. .. .	Chinese
Sarawak Vanguard; Sunday Vanguard .. .. .	"
Sarawak Express .. .. .	"
See Hua Daily News; See Hua Weekly .. .. .	"
The Miri Daily; The Miri Sunday edition ..	"
Hwa Lian Daily News; Hwa Lian Weekly ..	"
Sarawak Siang Pao .. .. .	"
Sa-Chiew Daily News .. .. .	"

### SABAH

Sabah Times .. .. .	English
Daily Express .. .. .	"
Kinabalu Times .. .. .	"

Sabah Times	..	..	..	..	..	Chinese
Overseas Chinese Daily News						"
Api Siang Pau	..	..	..	..	..	"
Sandakan Jih Pao	..	..	..	..	..	"
Borneo Times	..	..	..	..	..	"
Tawau Jih Pao	..	..	..	..	..	"
Eastern Malaysia Evening Post	..	..	..	..	..	"

\* Since 1968 they have merged to become Kinabalu Sabah Times.

In radio broadcasting there is a complete programme in major languages to cater the need of those speech communities. In Malaya the total broadcasting time each week in Malay is 126 hours, Chinese 100  $\frac{1}{3}$  hours, English 97 hours, Tamil 92  $\frac{1}{2}$  hours. In Sarawak the total time is 194 hours with the breakdown 63 in Malay, 39  $\frac{1}{2}$  in Chinese, 38 in English, 28  $\frac{1}{2}$  in Iban, and 25 in Bidayuh. The total hours for Sabah is 119  $\frac{3}{4}$  hours with Malay 28  $\frac{1}{4}$ , Chinese 18, English 26  $\frac{3}{4}$ , Indonesian 23, Kadazan 16  $\frac{1}{4}$ , Murut 5  $\frac{1}{4}$ , and Bajau 1  $\frac{3}{4}$  hours.

Only Malay, English, Chinese, and Tamil are used in the television, which is not yet available to East Malaysia.

Movies are shown mostly in Chinese, English, and Tamil, but very few are shown in Malay.

There is no denying that the mass media is one of the most pervasive and important dimensions in communication. Malay has a long way to go to replace all the languages in this dimension. While different linguistic groups are still exposed to their respective languages, linguistic diversity will continue to persist.

### 1.3 A Change Directed to Linguistic Homogeneity

Within the present social and cultural perspective the importance of mother tongues and maintenance of them are self evident. The linguistic diversity is socially perpetuated on inter and intra-group levels. In view of the language islands created by the lack of geographical mobility and insulated through socio-economic and religious activities, both language assimilation and prohibition effort must be applied to bring a change to the present language situation. As Gumperz<sup>40</sup> pointed out, the persistence of linguistic diversity will not change unless there is a change in the social and ecological boundaries through modernization and other social changes. It is hoped that the changes would create a congenial climate in which Malay, and not other languages, would ultimately function as a common channel of communication, tool, and referent. Whether the changes will follow this direction has yet to be seen. In the course of change, both deliberate effort and unpredictable forces may work for or against it.

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<sup>40</sup> J. Das Gupta and J. J. Gumperz, "Language, Communication and Control in North India," in Fishman, J. A. (ed.). Language Problems of Developing Nations, pp. 151-166.



## CHAPTER II

### FORMULATION OF A SATISFACTORY LANGUAGE POLICY

#### 2.1 Why a National Language

As a newly independent nation, Malaysia is in the process of cultivating a national identity, a process which has plagued the Maghrib.<sup>1</sup> A national language along with other national symbols is invoked as a unifying agent in a multi-lingual, multiracial, and multireligious society. Malay as a national language against this setting has to fulfil the symbolic function --- a symbol of ethnic cultural identification at a national level rather than at a communal level --- and the utilitarian function providing a means for horizontal mass communication and an access to modernity, science, and technology. Making Malay a truly national symbol is our concern here. Lacking such a process, India has resulted in the octopus-like 'linguistic states'. The process is not easy in Malaysia, because there is no single tradition with a long continuity behind it common to all Malaysians. More precisely, each of the three major linguistic groups has its own separate tradition,

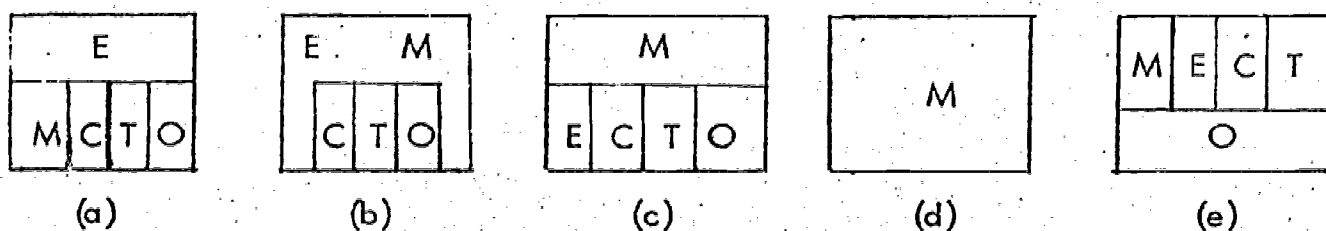
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<sup>1</sup> Charles F. Gallagher, "North African Problems and Prospects: Language and Identity," in J. A. Fishman, C. A. Ferguson, and J. Das Gupta, editors, Language Problems of Developing Nations, pp. 129-50.

the existence of which is 'militant against the development of a single socio-cultural authenticity at the national level'.<sup>2</sup> Briefly, to have 'a language of our own' overshadows many related problems raised by this issue.

## 2.2 A Panorama of Solutions

Some past and present solutions will be discussed so that a feasible solution in terms of national interest will be self evident. For simple treatment, a panorama of solutions may be represented by the following diagrams:



M - Malay E - English C - Chinese T - Tamil O - Other languages

According to the language nation typology suggested by Kloss,<sup>3</sup>

- (a) - exoglossic genuine nation state
- (b) - part-exoglossic section-based nation state
- (c) - endoglossic section-based nation state
- (d) - endoglossic genuine nation state
- (e) - endoglossic multilingual state.

<sup>2</sup> J. A. Fishman, "Language Problems and Types of Political and Social Cultural Integration" in Fishman, Ferguson, and Das Gupta, editors, Language Problems of Developing Nations, p. 496.

<sup>3</sup> Heinz Kloss, "Notes Concerning a Language-Nation Typology" in Fishman, Ferguson, Das Gupta, editors, Language Problems of Developing Nations, pp. 69-85.

### 2.2.1 Past Solutions

The language policy during the colonial period is indicated in (a) in which a non-indigenous language, English, was adopted as the official language. No official recognition of other languages was permitted, but Malay, Chinese, and Tamil were allowed to function and survive on their own. A common foreign language has not drawn as much emotional attachment and strong language loyalty as one's mother tongue. However appropriate it is as a tool, it is not understood by the masses. It does not serve horizontal communication, but only the vertical with the educated bilinguals elites who served as the bridge of communication between the ruler and the ruled. Moreover, it is against national aspiration to adopt a foreign language as the national symbol. When nationalism finds its expression through linguistic reform, even foreign elements in the indigenous language are purged, not to mention the even more remote possibility of adopting the foreign language. National pride works against this solution.

After independence one of the indigenous languages of the country, Malay, was raised to the privileged position that English previously enjoyed (see b, p. 30). Needless to say the change in the status quo created linguistic conflicts between Malay and other languages which were hitherto on an equal footing with Malay. On the other hand, when Malay was made the national language, Malay and English ceased to function in complementary ways and domains. Malay is making headway, practically and constitutionally, to replace English as its ultimate aim. The trend is understandable and predictable. In the face of a growing nationalistic movement, English is very likely to give way to Malay. If the development

of the national language cannot keep pace with nationalistic demand, that is, the national language is insufficiently developed to replace the foreign language, there will be a breakdown of communication with the outside world.

Suffice to say that solution (a) is incompatible with the will of the people and that (b) cannot be a long term solution. There remain (c), (d), and (e) with the latter two being the two extremes of the range.

### 2.2.2 Present Trend Solutions

So much is related to cultural and social reform that a discussion of the present trend in the language policy of Malaysia without such perspectives is a deliberate misinterpretation of facts. Any solution so proposed would not be placed in its true perspective. Writing on language reform in Turkey, Heyd claimed,

The reform of modern Turkish is not only an interesting attempt to change the Turkish language deliberately and methodically; it is also an integral part of an important manifestation of the social and cultural transformation which has taken place in Turkey. The linguistic change can only be understood in correlation with the simultaneous development of Turkish society.<sup>4</sup>

As an observation this is as valid in Malaysia as in Turkey.

#### 2.2.2.1 Religion-Language-Ethnicity

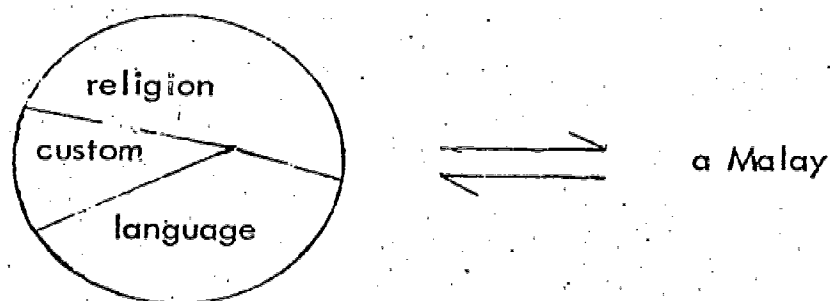
According to article 160 (2) of the Federal Constitution of Malaysia, a Malay is 'a person who professes the Muslim religion; habitually speaks the Malay

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<sup>4</sup> Uriel Heyd, Preface to Language Reform in Turkey (Jerusalem: Israel Oriental Society, 1954).



language and conforms to the Malay customs<sup>1</sup>. The definition may be written as an equation: Islamic religion + Malay language + Malay customs  $\rightleftharpoons$  a Malay; or in the form of a diagram:



These criteria for ethnicity separate Malays from non-Malays.

Religious forces in the maintenance of ethnicity and language maintenance must not be minimized; the three are closely linked. Fishman found that most of the religious institutions in the United States have undergone de-ethnicization which has paralysed the language maintenance effort of the immigrants.<sup>5</sup> The collapse of the ethnic religious barrier has helped to assimilate immigrants into American core culture. Yet in Malaysia, the Islamic religion has been a vital force in consolidating ethnicity, and thus language maintenance, where the Malay language is considered an essential part of the ethnicity. The religion gathered its momentum when it was made the state religion of West Malaysia. The fact that all Malays are Muslims and that they all speak a common language makes them aware of their distinction as an ethnic linguistic group different from non-Malays.

<sup>5</sup> Fishman, et al., Language Loyalty in the United States, pp. 92-126.

The forces of religion and custom are 'related parts of a whole together ensuring the proper functioning of society and preventing its disintegration'.<sup>6</sup>

Islam has provided a spiritual refuge and inspiration against the West and seemingly alien dominance. In Silcock's words the Malays gradually recognized 'dangers threatening to convert their race into an "aboriginal stock" and their culture into a "museum piece"'.<sup>7</sup> What happened in the past in terms of language question can be looked upon as a series of events revolving around two sources, social and cultural. The appearance of the Pan-Malayan Islamic Party (PMIP), for instance, is not without historical significance and background. The party's ideology is in realizing an Islamic Malay country --- a Malay speaking society and an Islamic government. Such ideology is a reflection of dissatisfaction against social and cultural dominance by others. Therefore, language loyalty and nationalistic aspirations have a parallel goal. A similar case is seen in Turkey, an Islamic country. Ziya Gokalp, basing his interpretation on the Koran, explains that Islam advocates at establishing a single homogenous nation with people speaking the same language as a necessary condition to political independence.<sup>8</sup> There is no place for an existence of two languages side by side.

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<sup>6</sup> Willaim Roff, Origins of Malay Nationalism (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), p. 69.

<sup>7</sup> T. H. Silcock and Ungku A. Aziz, p. 286.

<sup>8</sup> Uriel Heyd, Foundation of Turkish Nationalism (Luzac & Co. and the Harvill Press, 1950), pp. 99-101 and 115-21.

Language is an important factor in modern nationalism because a national language is believed to be a symbol of national identity. Time and many favourable conditions are needed to bring about this stage of identity. Frequently, in its country of origin a language is an index of ethnic identification as shown below:

Ethnic group	⇔	Language
Dutch	"	Dutch
English	"	English
French	"	French
German	"	German
Japanese	"	Japanese
Norwegian	"	Norwegian
Portuguese	"	Portuguese
Russian	"	Russian
Spanish	"	Spanish
Thai	"	Thai

The Malay language is an expression of Malay nationalism which began as 'a defensive reaction against the virtual extinction of Malay culture and it began where that culture had been most suppressed by alien groups'.<sup>9</sup> That is to say, 'language loyalty breeds in contact situations'<sup>10</sup> --- the contact of Malay with English,

<sup>9</sup> Silcock and Aziz, p. 285. Cf. Weinreich, p. 100. 'Even if not restricted to immediate situations of contact, loyalty sentiments probably bear some proportion to an actual or imagined threat to the language'.

<sup>10</sup> Weinreich, p. 100.

Chinese, and Tamil. The first Malay vernacular newspaper in Singapore, *Jawi Peranakan*, began publication in 1876 with one of its main objectives being 'to give uniformity to the various dialects of Malay'.<sup>11</sup> In the words of Weinreich, 'language loyalty ordinarily concentrates on standardization of the language'.<sup>12</sup>

During Pan-Islamic influence, possession of the Malay language was treated side by side with religion as a means of unity for the Malays. In 1934 a truly Pan Malayan cultural organization, *Persaudaraan Sahabat Pena* (Brotherhood of Pen Friend), was founded to cultivate interest in the Malay language, to increase its literature, and to safeguard Malay from extinction. To the Malay, his language was so important because it was his means of communication to make his educational and economic grievances known. The secretary of the *Dewan Bahasa Dan Pustaka*, Wan A. Hamid, said that to most Malays the language meant survival as an ethnic group.<sup>13</sup>

The parallelisms between Malay nationalism and Indonesian nationalism in terms of language can be seen in the following quotations:

In Bahasa Indonesia:

Berbangsa satu, bangsa Indonesia  
(We are one nation, the Indonesian nation)

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<sup>11</sup> William Roff, p. 181.

<sup>12</sup> Weinreich, p. 102.

<sup>13</sup> Wan. A. Hamid, "Religion and Culture of Modern Malay" in Wang Gung-Wu, editor, *Malaysia: A Survey*, p. 180.



Berbahasa satu, Bahasa Indonesia  
(We have one language, the Indonesian language)<sup>14</sup>

In Malay:

Hidup-lah bahasa, hidup-lah bangsa  
(Long live the language, long live the nation)

Bahasa jiwa bangsa  
(Language is the soul of the nation)

Satu bangsa, satu bahasa  
(One language for one nation)

Bahasa Indonesia was a by-product of Indonesian nationalism<sup>15</sup> as Malay was the product of Malay nationalism. Expressed in similar terms the maturity of Bahasa Indonesia as the lingua franca came before her independence. The Japanese occupation of the country helped to unite the Indonesians with Bahasa Indonesia, which was then undergoing the vigorous development that consolidated its supremacy over Dutch. The impetus received under the occupation enabled the language to move towards its role as the national language of Indonesia.<sup>16</sup> No such favourable climate for linguistic homogeneity had ever prevailed in Malaysia before independence. This difference in phasing alone, as Spencer<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Amisah Bekti, A Comparison of English and Indonesian Phonemes. Unpublished thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 1958, p. 4.

<sup>15</sup> S. Takdir Alisjahbana, "The Indonesian Language --- By-Product of Nationalism" in Pacific Affairs, XII, 1949, pp. 388-92.

<sup>16</sup> S. Takdir Alisjahbana, Indonesian Language and Literature: Two Essays (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), pp. 3-4.

<sup>17</sup> Spencer, "Language and Independence," op. cit.

relates in his experience in India, Pakistan, and Nigeria, accounts for a tremendous difference in the linguistic situation of the two countries.

Another difference between the development of the two languages is that the unification of the Indonesians under Bahasa Indonesia was against a foreign master who ultimately left the country, while the unification of the Malays was against national groups who eventually made their permanent settlement in the country. The overt opposition of the Malays to the Malayan Union scheme is the best illustration of this point. The proposal suggested multilingualism along with other arrangements which the British thought would create an equal society. An immediate impact of those constitutional reforms resulted in the formation of a Malay party, the United Malay National Organization (UMNO). Within the following year, 1949, two other major parties based on ethnic linguistic ground were formed, the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA) and the Malayan Indian Congress (MIC). Each of these parties caters to the interests of its respective linguistic group. A very unhealthy phenomenon in newly developing nations is that language problems are manipulated by politicians. The presence of these major parties explains why, under this circumstance, a clearly stated language policy is an unwise move in the political arena. Moreover, a vaguely defined policy moves to and fro like a pendulum when pressure from these groups prevails,<sup>18</sup> irrespective of psychological obstacles and pedagogical considerations.

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<sup>18</sup> See Margaret Roff, "The Politics of Language in Malaya" in Asian Survey, 7:5 (May 1967), pp. 316-28.

Ideally speaking, the Malay language must achieve the status Guarani has achieved in Paraguay.<sup>19</sup> The Malay language fails in its unifying function on a national level, but succeeds on a group level. Other language groups also consolidate themselves on an ethnic linguistic basis. Therefore, Malay as a national language must transcend the ethnic level with its ultimate goal towards social and cultural uniformation.<sup>20</sup> If this happens Malaysia will be an endoglossic genuine nation state. Unpractical as it sounds to other linguistic groups, the solution has had a favourable response from Trengganu and Kelantan where over 90% of the population is Malay.

### 2.2.3 Multilingual State Proposal

In contrast to the view of a monolingual Malay state is the view that a satisfactory language solution is expressed by the People's Progressive Party (PPP) which advocates complete equality of all ethnic groups with the recognition of

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<sup>19</sup> Jose Pedro Rona, "The Social and Cultural Status of Guarani in Paraguay" in Bright, editor, Sociolinguistics, p. 286. 'All Paraguayans realize that the Guarani language is the most genuine manifestation of their being an independent nation... They do not consider anyone as Paraguayan who fails to master the tongue. There is an attitude of complete identification between the language and nation itself... Thus, without having reached the stage of a standard language in other aspects, Guarani fulfils the three symbolic functions of a standard language as enumerated by Garvin and Mathiot (see P. L. Garvin and M. Mathiot, "the Urbanization of the Guarani Language: A Problem in Language and Culture" in Fishman, editor, Readings in the Sociology of Language, pp. 365-74): the unifying function, the separatist function, and the prestige function.'

<sup>20</sup> Joyce O. Hertzler, "Social Uniformation and Language" in IJAL, 33:4, Part 2 (October 1967), pp. 170-84.

English, Chinese, and Tamil as official languages and Malay as the national language. The difference in the belief in social reforms after independence is reflected in the approach to the basic cultural concern with language problems. To the PMIP the problems are those of language maintenance, reinforcement, and enrichment of the national language, while questions affecting other languages are treated as if they did not exist. In accepting Malay as the national language, the PPP has also been concerned about the status of other languages in the country. The discrepancy in their approach to language problems is, in fact, the discrepancy in the phases of ideological development.<sup>21</sup> The fear of making Malay the sole official language is similar to the fear experienced by the non-Hindi speakers in India.<sup>22</sup>

In a diverse linguistic community like Malaysia, language conflicts are not an unusual phenomenon since it is only in an ideal language situation that no language conflicts are likely to occur.<sup>23</sup> However, there are a few things which intensify language conflicts, making Malaysia a worse case than India. Yet conflict in Malaysia is of a different nature. Primarily it is the conflict between indigenous and non-indigenous languages for equal legal status. The conflict is essentially derived from the belief and attitude of the superiority of one linguistic

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<sup>21</sup> J. A. Fishman, "Nationality-Nationalism and Nation-Nationism" in Fishman, Ferguson, and Das Gupta, editors, Language Problems of Developing Nations, pp. 41-44.

<sup>22</sup> Gerald Kelly, "The Status of Hindi as a Lingua Franca" in Bright, editor, Sociolinguistic, p. 301.

<sup>23</sup> C. A. Ferguson, "Background to Language Problems" in Rice, editor, Study of the Role of Second Languages, p. 4.



group over the other. Such irrationality can be easily transferred from the speakers of the language to the language itself as being 'civilized' or 'primitive'. Ferguson called them 'myths'.<sup>24</sup> Culturally and historically speaking, the languages of the Indians and the Chinese are the heritage of old civilizations. Promoters of their languages as possible official languages have often emphasized this point. These myths have hampered the unanimous choice of Malay as the national language.

Moreover, these myths have strong implications in and out of classroom situations. These social-psychological factors are a great obstacles in the motivation towards language acquisition and social integration.<sup>25</sup> Ideally speaking, therefore, teachers of Malay as a second language must combine pedagogy and methodology with cultural sensitivity orientation to make language teaching and learning a success.<sup>26</sup>

The language conflict in terms of social structure is between the politically and economically dominant groups, and the rural and urban populations. The congruence of linguistic diversity and social structure has been a great impediment to social-cultural uniformation through the national language. This fact has a direct bearing on the desirable language solution (see (c) on page 30). One observation is true that the immigrants in South East Asia, predominantly the Indians and Chinese

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<sup>24</sup> C. A. Ferguson, "Myths about Arabic" in J. A. Fishman, editor, Readings in the Sociology of Language (The Hague: Mouton and Co., 1968), p. 375.

<sup>25</sup> Wallace E. Lambert, "A Social Psychology of Bilingualism" in Journal of Social Issues, 23:2 (April 1967), p. 102.

<sup>26</sup> John G. Bordie, "Cultural Sensitivity Training for the Teacher of Spanish-Speaking Children" in TESOL Quarterly, 4:4 (December 1970), 337-42.

are more concerned with the economic race than with local politics. Therefore, two distinct classes have been created, relatively speaking, with the indigenous population having political dominance and the immigrants having economic dominance. A language conflict arises when the Indians and Chinese have to learn Malay so their social mobility and economic success will not be jeopardized. The reverse is also true. Linguistic homogeneity is a more likely result if the Malays possess both economic and political dominance. Since this situation will continue, present prospects for a rational and reasonable approach to a language solution look bleak.

The change in the direction and pressure of learning is further complicated by the presence of English, which has assumed the role of a working language in administration and education. The language has assured many people of their economic success, providing for international and vertical communication, and allowed progress in private and public institutions. The presence of English is a great barrier to the change to a new language. As the October incident at the University of Malaya shows, the resistance to change is obvious, both on the part of Malay speakers and speakers of other languages.<sup>27</sup> For the former the change is from Malay to English; for the latter the change is vice versa. To replace English at the present moment is aiming at something impossible and disastrous.

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<sup>27</sup> Mahasiswa Negara, October 1970. The University of Malaya Students Union and the Persatuan Bahasa Melayu Universiti Malaya had a showdown regarding the implementation of the national language in the university. The university administration remained silent as university education and the implementation of the national language need further planning. The incident was started by some Malay students who were unable to cope with lectures delivered in English.

The adoption of Malay as the sole official language is seen as an insult to racial pride and socio-economic independence by other major linguistic groups.

What has happened in Malaysia is well summarized in the following:

Language conflicts exist as to the relative position of several local languages in education and government. These conflicts have serious political implications and hamper the successful adoption of a single local language as a national language.<sup>28</sup>

#### 2.2.4 Endoglossic Section-Based Nation State: A Practical Solution

In the light of the preceding discussions, the author considers an endoglossic section-based nation state (see (c) on page 30) to be a practical, desirable, and long term solution. Malay is the national language, but other languages which are indispensable in the proper functioning of the society will continue to survive and flourish. This solution is similar to (a) except the position of English and Malay is reversed.

One source of language conflict is the presence of several major languages striving for legal recognition. In order to eliminate such conflict Malay has to be recognized as the sole official language. The linguistic states of India, which started with linguistic self-determination for speakers of Telugu, provide us with a classical example of the dangers of giving legal status to rival languages. Therefore, the constitution of Malaysia is making a correct move when article 152 states that 'the Malay language shall be the national language'.

<sup>28</sup> Second Language Learning as a Factor in National Development in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, Summary Statements and Recommendations of an International Meeting of Specialists held in London, December 1960 (Washington, D.C.: Centre for Applied Linguistics, 1961), p. 4.

However, the recognition of English as an official language to be used concurrently with Malay has given legitimate reason for speakers of other languages to make a similar legal claim for their languages. The question has often been asked: If English should be recognized as an official language, why should Tamil and Chinese, both of which have a substantial number of native speakers, not be recognized? Secondly, the legal arrangement given to the English language has put the national language in a disadvantaged position for the simple reason that English provides socio-economic motivation for learning. The strong motivation for learning some English, even imperfectly, will allow no room for the expansion of Malay. English may still be allowed to function as it did in the past because Malay has not been well developed to replace English. However, the denial of English as an official language will provide a gradual and smooth change-over to Malay without further dispute in the future. As long as English is given legal status, there will be pressure from conflicting groups; one wanting to remove it as soon as possible; the other wanting to retain it as long as possible.

The recognition of Malay as the national language is compatible with the nationalistic aspiration of making an indigenous language a national symbol. The choice will satisfy the emotional attachment, pride, and loyalty the Malay speakers have to their language. For other linguistic groups to foster a tie and identity with the national language takes time because each group has its loyalty and pride for its mother tongue. When the national language is taken as a national symbol, time is important in developing the sense of identity.



As examined in 2.2.3 above, non-Malay speakers have been dissatisfied with the position of their languages in the national framework. Apart from the emotional ties, their languages are indispensable in their social activities and interactions. Therefore, the existence of their languages for utilitarian purposes must be recognized. The Constitution of Malaysia, article 152, clauses (a) and (b) provided that

No person shall be prohibited or prevented from using (otherwise than for official purposes), or from teaching or learning, any other languages; and nothing in this clause shall prejudice the right of the Federal Government to preserve and sustain the use and study of the language of any community in the Federation.

This section of the constitution provides insight into the basic needs of other linguistic groups, and the recognition of the fundamental structure of the current cellular society. The Tengku said, "In the language issue, we must not be fanatic or narrow minded."<sup>29</sup> While Malay is recognized as the national language, there is still room for other languages. Russian language policy provides an interesting example. In promoting or encouraging the growth of several languages it is, in fact, controlling and directing linguistic and social changes. In Fishman's words 'planned language change and planned social change are highly inter-related activities.'<sup>30</sup>

However imperative in creating a national identity from the national language, the basic structure of the society must be recognized. The necessity to

<sup>29</sup> A quote from Mahasiswa Negara, October 1970, p. 6.

<sup>30</sup> J. A. Fishman, Sociolinguistics: A Brief Introduction (Massachusetts: Newbury House Publishers, 1970), p. 108.

learn the national language is not as great as the need to learn English in America. It is quite impossible to make Malaysia a unilingual country. Nonetheless it is essential that different language communities have a common link language for communication across linguistic boundaries. The only two languages that are appropriate are English and Malay. The former, the link language in the past, is already entrenched as the de facto official language in administration, higher education, regional and international communication, science, and technology. The English language is, therefore, a link language between the past and the present. In accordance with the symbolic function of the national language every citizen is required to know and use the national language. Given sufficient time, the national language may come into more popular use and function as a lingua franca for all Malaysians alike. Only when the national language functions as the only means of internal communication is the time to replace English as a link language in its mature stage. The national language is, therefore, a link language between the present and the future.

### 2.3 Conclusion

While the constitution has provided a compromise between extreme proposals, many controversies still arise from the actual practice of implementation, particularly in education. The language policy is more a political decision than social and educational needs. Therefore, it is under very much pressure from communal parties which have only added oil to the already burning language issues.

Many authors are aware of the delicate ethnic group relationship in Malaysia. Viewed from this perspective the choice of Malay as the national language has some political, social, and cultural implications. Any decision made has been viewed as an answer to such questions: What kind of society should Malaysia be? And what is Malaysian culture?

The author is convinced that solution (c) is practical and desirable. The country will be a monolingual state, but the individual will be bi- or multilingual. The need for individual multilingualism is a necessity in terms of the cellular society. When the developmental status of the national language as a link language is considered, English is to keep functioning as a link language. Only with sufficient time will the national language become the only link language.

There is no denial of other linguistic groups cultivating an identity with the national language. In the meantime serious problems face the national language: the development of the language, especially its vocabulary, to keep pace with the knowledge frontiers; the promotion of Standard Peninsula Malay over Bazaar Malay in a diglossia<sup>31</sup> situation; the standardization of the spelling system or the pending problems of 'MALINDO' spelling system; the choice and propagation of a script. All these problems call for language planning and standardization.

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<sup>31</sup> Charles A. Ferguson, "Diglossia" in Dell Hymes, editor, Languages in Culture and Society (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), pp. 429-39.

## CHAPTER III

### THE IMPLEMENTATION OF LANGUAGE POLICY THROUGH EDUCATION SYSTEM

#### 3.1 Language and Education

The Tengku is quoted as saying

The question of language and education are two different matters. We cannot combine the two because recognition of Bahasa Malaysia as the national language is a political question, while the acquisition of education is an academic question.<sup>1</sup>

When we come to the implementation of a language policy through the educational system, the two become highly interrelated. Richard Noss who studied language policy in South East Asian Universities pointed out,

National language policy has a direct bearing on university matters, whether the national language or a language of wider communication is used as the medium of instruction.<sup>2</sup>

It is understood that languages in universities can be media of instruction, academic subjects, and research tools. In the lower levels of education the question of literacy is involved. Should the people be literate in their mother tongue or a foreign language or both? A UNESCO report gave an answer.

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<sup>1</sup> Mahasiswa Negara, (October 1970), p. 6

<sup>2</sup> Richard Noss, Higher Education and Development in South East Asia, Vol. 3, Part 2, (UNESCO & IAU, 1967), p. 25.



Even though they must ultimately learn to think and speak in the second language, this goal is, we believe, psychologically the pedagogically as a rule best achieved by two short jumps (that is, from illiteracy to literacy in the mother tongue, and from literacy in the mother tongue to literacy in a second language) than by one long jump (that is, from illiteracy in the mother tongue to literacy in a second language).<sup>3</sup>

The Education in Malaysia will be in a flux until answers to three questions are provided. First, since it must cultivate a common Malaysian outlook for the various ethnic linguistic groups, is a common outlook to be cultivated through a common curriculum and content or through the national language or the mother tongue of the students? Secondly, what relative emphasis should be given to different languages in the development of a common curriculum while attempting to make Malay the national language of the country, and at the same time, preserving and sustaining the cultures and languages of other linguistic groups? That is, the interpretation of the appropriate section in the constitution depends on actual implementation through education. Finally, full education in the national language is not yet available and possible. Therefore, will the change from a world language to the national language as the medium of instruction affect the educational standard and slow down the pace of modernization? These inter-locked questions are, primarily, centered around the media of instruction.

### 3.2 Divisions of Schools According to Media of Instruction

There are four types or streams of schools based on four different media of instruction, Malay, Tamil, Chinese, and English. Each stream has its own curriculum

<sup>3</sup> UNESCO, (1953), p. 56.

and educational aims; each differs in its educational standards and levels of education available.

### 3.2.1 The Malay Schools

The origin of the Malay education was the Koranic school, which was totally religious in nature and content. The religious teacher would teach the religion he had acquired. He tried to impart the correct pronunciation, intonation, and phraseology of Arabic. Religious teaching was very traditional and conservative in the sense that it did not encourage the intellect to criticize the social and religious foundations of the society. Under the paternal care of the British, the secular government Malay schools were not a success in the beginning. Free education for the Malays was met with hostility and distrust and, at best, with indifference. The Malays were distrustful of the new secular education which many thought might seduce the Malays from Islam to the alien faith associated with the British. Moreover, the preference of the Malays for their rural life resisted any radical change. The resistance was so strong that they would send their children for free education only when threatened with punishment.

British education for the Malays did not aim at over-education which might create an educated class of malcontents who might challenge British authority. The 'practical' education did not destroy the traditional rural life. The curricula, which included the three R's, horticulture, gardening, and basket-making, would make the Malays a better rice farmer, fisherman than their fathers had been. The teaching materials were from a story book, Hikayat Abdullah (the Adventures of

Munshi Abdullah), Sejarah Melayu (The Malay Annals), and the Malay newspaper, Utusan Melayu. The teachers, who were poorly paid, were recruited from the senior students of the same school. They read few books other than those used in their work and devotional purpose. The standard reached varied from one state to another. Nevertheless, the highest level of education did not go beyond the end of primary schools. Secondary education was continued in English schools. Only a selected few could attend two years of 'special Malay class' which would equip them with competency in English. Once they crossed this language barrier, they were likely to become administrative clerks.

### 3.2.2 The Tamil Schools

The Tamil schools, mostly on rubber estates, were not financed by the government. Under the International Labour Ordinance, the Indians' education was provided by the owners of the estates in which they worked. The education did not go beyond the primary level. Those who lived near the fringes of the towns were able to benefit from the English education. They were willing to receive an English education for socio-economic reasons.

### 3.2.3 The Chinese Schools

Unlike the Indians, the Chinese were more independent. Education was given high prestige. A contemporary Malaysian educationist wrote,

The Chinese with their high regard for learning set up their own schools as a necessary concomitant of settlement in a new country. Their enterprise in education might well have been the expression of a culturally induced acceptance of Confucian social-prestige rating (scholar, farmer, labourer,

and merchant in that order). The order of prestige may, in today's materialistic society, have undergone a change, but the premium on scholarship remains.<sup>4</sup>

Chinese philanthropist provided the funds for these schools. The teachers were recruited from China and the content of the curriculum was oriented to China. In 1920, the Registration of School Ordinance brought these schools under government supervision and inspection. In 1935, grants in aid were introduced on the condition that the schools had to conform to the requirement of the Education Department.

Though under financial difficulty, these schools managed to survive and develop. Secondary education was available but higher education within the country has been possible only since 1956 with the establishment of Nanyang University in Singapore. Since the 1920's Kuo Yu has replaced other variants of Southern Chinese to become the medium of instruction.

#### 3.2.4 The English Schools

The English schools were the only type of schools that cut across ethnic and linguistic barriers. Operated and supervised by the government and missionaries, these schools were better financed and staffed. As they were located in urban areas, the majority of students was Chinese and Indians. The English

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<sup>4</sup> R. H. K. Wong, "Education and Problems of Nationhood" in Wang Gung-wu, editor, Malaysia: A Survey (London & Dunmow: Pall Mall Press, 1965), pp. 199-200.



education was complete with the higher education provided by Raffles College and King Edward VII College,<sup>5</sup> both in Singapore.

### 3.3 Validation of Educational Objectives

Under the British, different streams developed in different directions. They differed in educational standards, curricula, and administration. The people had had no social interactions as a result of religious, linguistic, cultural, occupational, and demographic boundaries. The English education seemed to promise a good prospect for a non-communal development which would provide a foundation for the unification of a multilingual society. However, these schools were replicas of schools in England. A common outlook might be cultivated, but not 'Malaysian' in nature.

Culturally speaking, the students in these schools were deprived of their traditions. With education through a foreign tongue, the Maori in New Zealand is in the same plight.<sup>6</sup> A German scholar on Chinese studies deplored what had happened in Malaysia.

Their English education remained superficial, only outstanding students being able to penetrate the roots of western culture and to acquire a western humanistic education to replace the lost one... Many are satisfied with their superficial English education which offers them good chances and a good income and they enjoy the comfort of life... with no fixed cultural and moral standards.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> The two colleges merged to form the University of Malaya in Singapore in 1949.

<sup>6</sup> UNESCO, (1953), p. 39. Quoted from UNESCO, Compulsory Education in New Zealand (Paris, 1952), pp. 64-6.

<sup>7</sup> Franke Wolfgang, "Chinese into Malaysians" in Far East Economic Review, 47:10 (March 12, 1965), p. 461.

the people see education not as a means of developing an integrated personality, but as a weapon in the socio-economic race.

Such an education had profound social impact. One result, for instance, was the separation of language groups.<sup>8</sup> The group which did not receive its education through English was socially and economically deprived. Those whose education was through English fostered a pronounced distaste for other languages, even their own tongue, and other linguistic communities. The result can be attributed to two co-related factors: over-emphasis on the English language on the one hand, and neglect of other languages in the society on the other. After finishing his school years, a student became a monolingual either in his mother tongue or a foreign language. Little effort was made to cultivate the cultural sensitivity which is so important in a multilingual society in order to appreciate the cultures of other linguistic groups. Walls of ethnocentricism erected on all sides of the linguistic communities must be torn down.

Education under the British met neither individual nor group needs. These became apparent after the Japanese occupation which changed the social and political life in Malaya. On the one hand, the Malays witnessed how the secular English education had made other ethnic groups materially successful in life. Their apathetic, suspicious, and indifferent attitudes were gone; they realized that their education from the Malay schools was not practical. Therefore, they demanded

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<sup>8</sup> Lillie O. Rogers, Bilingualism in Singapore: Past Reports and Present Policy (Unpublished M.A. thesis), The University of Texas at Austin, 1969, pp. 3-4.

more educational facilities and improvement in Malay education so that they might be able to march abreast with the immigrants.

### 3,4 In Search of New Answers to Old Problems: Abortive Attempts and Controversies

In response to the socio-political changes in Malaya, the British proposed some constitutional reforms in the Malayan Union scheme. The proposal included six years of free primary education for all children, who would be taught through one of these languages, Malay, Tamil, Chinese, English, with English as a subject when it was not a medium of instruction. Secondary education would continue to be conducted in their mother tongue with English as a subject and vice versa. The proposal would turn out bilinguals in one's mother tongue and the foreign language, English, would serve as a link language for different linguistic groups. With the abandonment of the Malayan Union scheme, these proposals were shelved.

However, the first two questions posed in the beginning of this chapter, dealing with cultivation of a common Malayan outlook and the relative emphasis of languages in the curriculum, continued to be the main concern in education. In 1949, a Central Advisory Committee on Education was set up to nullify communal divisions and to integrate all ethnic linguistic groups into a Malayan community. The committee made a report similar to the one discussed above. Owing to the many objections raised, the proposal was shelved.

The committee, however, agreed that the most urgent need was to improve Malay education. Accordingly, in 1950, a committee composed of Malays and

Europeans was appointed under the chairmanship of L. J. Barnes to inquire into 'the inadequacy or otherwise of the education facilities available for Malays'.<sup>9</sup> Unable to propose any improvements in the Malay schools without affecting the entire educational system, the committee went beyond its term of reference to propose a system of bi-lingual national primary schools. Only Malay and English would be used for instruction. That is, there would be two streams of schools, one with Malay as the medium of instruction and English as a subject, and the other vice versa. Aiming at the cultivation of a common outlook, the proposal would affect the existing media of instruction.

We believe that primary schooling should be purposely used to build up a common Malayan nationality, and we urge that it should be recognized on a new inter-racial basis . . . our proposed inter-racial school we call the National school. Its main features are that (a) it would provide a six-year course for pupils between the ages six plus and twelve plus; (b) it would not charge fees; (c) it would produce pupils who are bilinguals (that is, effectively literate in Malay and English) by the end of the course, and the best of whom would then be fitted to proceed direct to an English-medium post-primary school . . . In principle, we recommend the end of separate vernacular schools and their replacement by a single type of primary school common to all. We recognize, of course, that since this end can come only gradually, vernacular schools will continue for some years concurrently with the development of the National school.<sup>10</sup>

The existence of the Chinese and Tamil media schools was looked upon as a handicap to the development of a common nationality. As the UNESCO report pointed

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<sup>9</sup> The quotes from this section are taken from two secondary sources: V. Purcell, Malaya: Communist or Free (London: Vistor Gollancz, 1954), chapter XIII; B. Simandjuntak, Malayan Federalism 1945-1963 (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), chapter VIII.

<sup>10</sup> Purcell, (1954), p. 155.

out, the objection to using a vernacular language based on that reason was misleading.

It cannot be denied that the business of government is easier in a monolingual than in a multilingual nation. However, it does not follow that legislation or school policy requiring the use of the official language at all times will give the same results as actual monolingualism. On the contrary, it is fairly likely that absolute insistence on the use of the national language by people of another mother tongue may have a negative effect, leading the local groups to withdraw from the national life. In any event, it seems clear that the national interests are best served by optimum advancement of education, and this in turn can be promoted by the use of the local language as a medium of instruction, at least at the beginning of the school programme.<sup>11</sup>

The proposal of education through a foreign language drew strong opposition from Indians and Chinese who regarded the move as an attempt to eliminate their languages and cultures. As a result of their complaints, two experts on Chinese education, Dr. William P. Fenn and Dr. Wu Teh-Yao, were invited

to make a preliminary survey of the whole field of Chinese education ... with particular reference to (i) bridging the gap between the present communal basis, with English and Malay as the medium of instruction and other languages as optional subjects, and (ii) the preparation of textbooks for present use with a Malayan as distinct from a Chinese background and content,<sup>12</sup>

and to make what evaluations and recommendations they deemed necessary. (In the opinion of the government, there were no problems peculiar to the Indians' education that would warrant a separate inquiry.)

The Fenn-Wu mission sought the opinion of all communities. The report advocated multilingualism for the Chinese schools in which both English and

<sup>11</sup> UNESCO, (1953), p. 50.

<sup>12</sup> Purcell, (1954), p. 156.



Malay would be taught as subjects so that the medium of instruction would remain unchanged.

To cultivate a Malayan outlook, the textbooks used should have a content directed to this end. The content of education is more important than the means of communication in fostering a common nationality. The restrictive imposition of one mother tongue upon the others is harmful to communal understanding and national unity, which depends not upon 'the singleness of tongue or simplicity of cultures', but upon 'the hearts of its citizen'.<sup>13</sup>

The report recognized that the Chinese schools should occupy a proper place in the Malayan education system. "They cannot be eliminated until the Chinese themselves decide that they are not needed."<sup>14</sup> Moreover, the language itself is 'one of the great languages of the world, key to one of world's great cultures'.<sup>15</sup> Fishman in Language Loyalty in the United States deplored the fact that invaluable cultural assets of American immigrants have gradually been wiped out, and therefore what remains, he says, need to be preserved.

There can be no justification for turning Malaya into a cockpit of aggressive cultures. The people of Malaya will have to learn to understand and appreciate their cultural difference. They should be proud of their mutual tolerance ... A new culture can come only from natural mingling of diverse cultural elements for generations.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Simandjuntak, p. 197.

<sup>14</sup> Purcell, (1954), p. 157.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 157.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., pp. 156-7.

Mother tongue education was maintained to assure that the pupils would not be victim to a non-mother tongue linguistic barrier; the official languages were taught so that they would be link languages for inter-group communication. More importantly, the teaching and learning of these languages would include their cultures and society, and understanding of which is necessary for co-operation between peoples.

The Barnes and Fenn-Wu reports held a contrary view with regard to Tamil and Chinese in education. These reports went to the Central Committee on Education which ultimately considered that

the language of instruction should be the official language of the Federation and that facilities should also be provided for teaching of Kuo Yü (Chinese) and Tamil to those children who so desire when there are at least fifteen pupils in any standard who wish to take advantage of the facilities.<sup>17</sup>

The decision was reached, but the bilingual National school in English and Malay was abortive because there were no funds available to implement the policy.

### 3.5 Rationalization, Implementation, Problems

The problems stated in the beginning of this chapter have long been in existence and recognized. A few attempts at an educational policy with special reference to languages in the curriculum have created many controversies, and have never been implemented. Basically, difficulties are involved with rationalization and implementation, both of which must be compatible with educational theory, and consistent with the terms and spirit of the section of constitution dealt with in the second chapter.

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<sup>17</sup> ibid., p. 159.

### 3.5.1 The Razak Report: Education Through One's Mother Tongue

With the approach of independence, the first elected government appointed a committee under Dato Abdul Razak, now the Prime Minister of Malaysia,

to examine the present education policy of the Federation of Malay and to recommend any alterations and adaptations that are necessary with a view to establishing a national system of education acceptable to the people of the Federation as a whole which will satisfy their needs and promote their cultural, social, and political development as a nation, having regard to the intention to make Malay the national language of the country whilst preserving and sustaining the growth of the language and culture of other communities living in the country.<sup>18</sup>

Education acceptable to the people means two things:

It must satisfy the legitimate aspirations of each of the major cultural groups who have made their home in Malaya and it must offer the prospect of a place in a school for every child born in the country.<sup>19</sup>

Briefly stated, every child has a right to education; education is through the mother tongue. The Razak report gave satisfactory answers to many questions.

A common Malayan outlook is to be achieved by introducing a common content in the syllabus of all schools.<sup>20</sup> Education has an important role to play; it should be a unifying force working towards a national unity.

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<sup>18</sup> Federation of Malaya, Report on the Education Committee 1956 (better known as the Razak Report), (Kuala Lumpur, 1956), para. 1 (a).

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., para. 186.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., para. 15.

Once all schools are working to a common content syllabus, irrespective of the language medium of instruction, we consider the country will have taken the most important step towards establishing a national system of education which will satisfy the needs of the people and promote their cultural, social, economic and political development as a nation.<sup>21</sup>

A far-sighted contribution of the report is this constructive measure to remedy the diverse communal development without affecting the existence and growth of all languages in the country.

The distinction between education and language is made clear. The report sees no reason why different languages used as the medium of instruction should not continue to be used as long as the content is the same. There was no contradiction in making Malay the national language while preserving and sustaining the growth of other languages and cultures. All the schools would be divided into two types, standard schools and standard-type schools. The standard schools would use Malay as the medium of instruction and English as a compulsory subject. In the respective standard-type schools, English, Tamil, and Chinese would be used as the medium of instruction. These schools would be called standard-type English school, standard-type Tamil school, and standard-type Chinese school. An arrangement was made to have Tamil and Chinese taught in the standard-type English schools. For the standard-type Chinese and Tamil schools, both Malay and English would be taught as compulsory subjects. Malay would be taught because it was to be made the national language of the country. Every citizen was encouraged to learn it. English should also be taught because

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., para. 119.

no secondary school pupils should be at a disadvantage in the matter of employment, or of higher education in Malaya or overseas as long as it is necessary.<sup>22</sup>

Incidentally, the Razak report was similar to the Fenn-Wu report. A student is assured of mother tongue education as far as it is available. He would learn Malay and English which would be link languages and a window to the outside world. The proposal would, therefore, be consistent with the author's proposal in the second chapter (pp. 43-46).

### 3.5.2 The Talib Report: Change of the Medium of Instruction in Secondary School

The Razak report was not the final word on the medium of instruction. In 1960 and Educational Review Committee was appointed

to review ... the Razak report and in particular its implementation for the future; to consider the national and financial implication of this policy including the introduction of free primary education; and to make recommendations.<sup>23</sup>

The report acknowledged satisfaction over the progress made in the evolution of a 'national system of education' and in preserving and sustaining four main languages and cultures of Malaya. However, in the opinion of the report,

It would be incompatible with educational policy designed to create national consciousness and having the intention of making Malay the national language of the country to extend and to perpetuate a language and racial difference throughout the publicly-financed education system.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>22</sup> ibid., para. 71.

<sup>23</sup> Federation of Malay, Report of the Education Review Committee 1960 (Better Known as the Talib report), (Kuala Lumpur, 1960), para. 1.

<sup>24</sup> ibid., para. 18.



Therefore, the report recommended a drastic change regarding the medium of instruction in the Chinese secondary schools.

We recommend that education at secondary level . . . shall be conducted mainly in the medium of one of the official languages with the intention of ultimately using the national language as the main medium of instruction, except that other languages and literatures may be taught and learnt in their own media.<sup>25</sup>

Later, under the heading 'national type secondary school', the report recommended the establishment of one type of national secondary school open to all races by competitive selection and with a common syllabus, a flexible curriculum permitting the study of all Malayan languages and cultures and room for diversity in the media of instruction.<sup>26</sup>

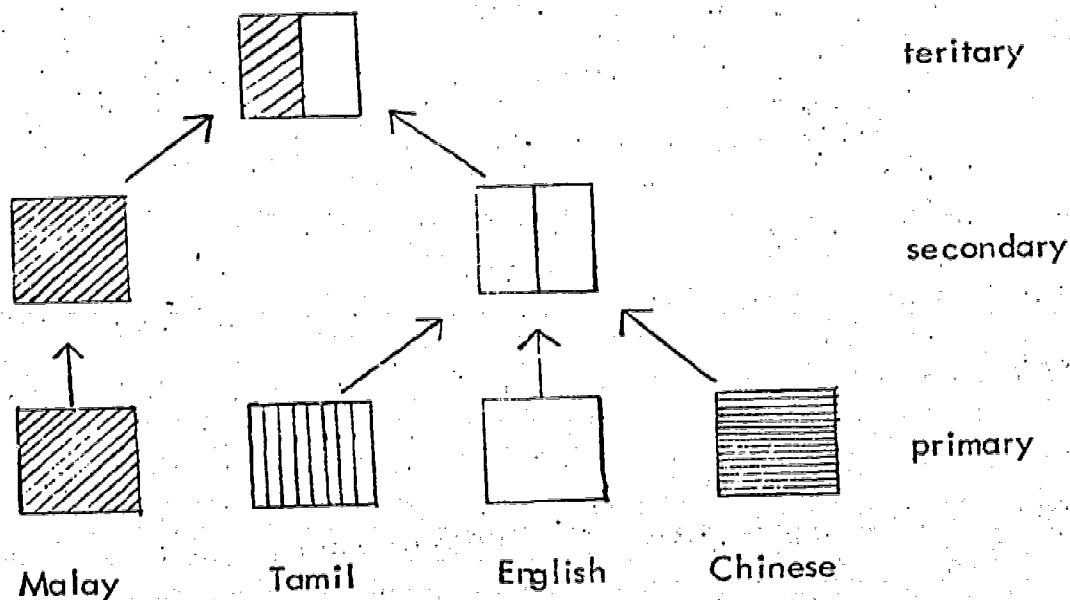
The above recommendation was phrased in vague and general terms. The report did not give an example of the 'flexible curriculum . . . and room for diversity in the media of instruction'.

Ultimately, two types of secondary schools evolved: national secondary schools and national-type secondary schools. In the former, the medium of instruction is Malay with English as a compulsory subject. In the latter, the arrangement is vice versa. The national-type secondary schools are further divided into the national-type Chinese and English secondary schools. The former drew its students from the Chinese primary schools, the latter from the English primary schools. Officially, Chinese ceased as a medium of instruction, and it is taught only as a subject in the national-type Chinese secondary schools. A year of 'remove class' is provided for a smooth transition from one medium (Chinese or Tamil) to another (English).

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.* para. 19.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 40.

The existence of two streams of schools gave a great boost to the English stream which became a threat to the development of the national secondary schools.<sup>27</sup> Many Malay parents continued to seek English education for their children, so that the number of Malay children in the English schools increased while the total enrollment in the Malay schools dropped slightly.<sup>28</sup>



(Streams of Education Since the Talib Report)

Directly related to the medium of instruction was the question of the languages used in common public examinations. If the Razak report's recommendation about the common syllabus was to be interpreted consistently, the pupils would be tested in their respective language of instruction. At that time, there existed the

<sup>27</sup> The student population in the English medium is several times the student population in the Malay medium. See Malaysia Year Book, 1965, p. 552; 1966, p. 351; 1968, pp. 161-2; 1970, pp. 318-9.

<sup>28</sup> Berita Harian (Rumi), January 18, 1967.

Junior Middle Three Examination and Chinese Secondary Schools Leaving Certificate for the Chinese secondary schools. The Lower Certificate of Education (L.C.E.) and the Cambridge Overseas School Certificate (O.S.C.) were for the English secondary schools. This arrangement implies that all students, no matter through what medium they receive their education, have reached a common standard of achievement since there was a common content and a syllabus covered in all schools.

Referring to the common public examinations, the Talib report specified that only English and Malay were to be used.<sup>29</sup> Accordingly, the public examinations for the Chinese schools were discontinued,<sup>30</sup> one in 1961 and the other in 1963. With the establishment of the Malay medium secondary schools, a Malay version of L.C.E. and a Malay version of the Federation of Malay Certificate of Education (F.M.C.E.) which is equivalent to O.S.C. were created for those students. The report said,

it has been strongly represented to us from many quarters that public examinations should be conducted in the language medium of the secondary school. We agree with the principle underlying these representations. It is not reasonable to teach a child in one language and examine him in another.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> The Talib Report, op. cit., para. 72 and 173-4.

<sup>30</sup> Similar examinations were discontinued in Sarawak in 1969.

<sup>31</sup> The Talib Report, op. cit., para. 176.

There are very few known cases in which a non-native speaker can reach a native-like command of a language concerned. Since both English and Malay are compulsory, a student has to jump two hurdles. As required in the examinations, only a good grade in both language courses and a good over-all achievement in general subjects can assure him a first grade certificate to enter upper secondary schools. Not often can a student perform equally well in both quantitative and verbal tests. The weakness in the language concerned can affect performance in general subjects. When educational opportunities depend solely on these examinations, there should be a more satisfactory evaluation instrument. The far-fetched effects of linguistic barriers may render these examinations invalid and unreliable. A. Bruce Gaarder<sup>32</sup> of the U. S. Office of Education revealed how a standardized test can yield very misleading results and interpretation when the subjects do not have the required language ability. These conditions allow a waste of human resources which is a loss to the individual and the society as a whole.

Not only have linguistic barriers affected the lower levels of education, they also reach the university level. Noss observed that

efforts to propagate the national language within the country have peculiar side effects at the higher-education level. Foremost among these effects is the admission of students whose general background and preparation (aside from language proficiency) may be insufficient, either as a result of having been partly educated in the 'wrong' medium (speakers of vernaculars) or as a result of having been given preferential treatment because of their earlier education in the 'right' medium (speakers of the national language). A common complaint about

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<sup>32</sup> See Discussion on "Bilingualism and Thought" by John Macnamara in Monograph Series on Languages and Linguistics, 21st Annual Round Table (Washington: Georgetown University, 1970), p. 44.

latter category of students is that 'they can't express themselves', or even 'they don't know how to think'. Sometimes, these observations are covertly conceived as criticism of the 'poverty' of the national language, but almost invariably it is the poverty of the educational system itself which is to blame.<sup>33</sup>

Both non-native speakers and native speakers can be affected. A thorough and constant evaluation must be arranged. Under the present system of education structure, the Ministry of Education and the universities can shoulder this task, with results useful to present and future implementation of the language policy. When linguistic factors are identified and removed, we will be a step closer to the universal ideal that every child should have an equal right to be educated to his full potential. In short, the distinction between education and language must be made clear.

### 3.5.3 An Evaluation of Implementation

The proposals in regard to the medium of instruction are just one aspect, though the most important and controversial, of the implementation of Malay as the national language. For reinforcement, measures of reward and punishment were recommended:

- (i) it is required for admission to secondary schools
- (ii) it should be a compulsory subject in L.C.E. and F.M.C.E.
- (iii) it can be made a qualification for application of a scholarship from public fund
- (iv) it can be made a requirement for entry into government civil service
- (v) bonuses can be provided to reward the government civil servants for the acquisition of the language

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<sup>33</sup> Noss, op. cit., p. 33.



- (vi) grants in aid to schools could be made to depend in part on the successful learning of Malay as and when sufficient facilities were available
- (vii) it can be a compulsory part of teacher training courses and examinations.<sup>34</sup>

A few significant achievements have taken place:

- (i) the national language is a compulsory subject at all levels primary and secondary schools
- (ii) secondary classes in the medium of the national language was set up for the first time in 1958
- (iii) a pass in the national language in the L.C.E. has become a compulsory requirement since 1962; it has been a compulsory requirement for the F.M.C.E. since its first administration in 1962.
- (iv) Si jil Rendah Pelajaran (an equivalent of L.C.E.) is in Malay
- (v) it has been a compulsory subject in all teacher training courses
- (vi) the F.M.C.E. and Higher School Certificate in Malay versions have been administered.
- (vii) a National University has been established (1970) with Malay as the medium of instruction.

However, the phase of implementation alone does not indicate success in the language policy. Effective learning and the constant use of the national language on the part of the non-native speakers for interaction must be considered.

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<sup>34</sup> The Razak Report, op. cit., para. 22-3.

#### 3.5.4 A Projection

In 1969,<sup>35</sup> the Minister of Education made many decisions about the medium of instruction and languages used in the public examinations. Some of these are being implemented. Since 1970, the medium of instruction in the English primary schools has been replaced by the national language, beginning at the Standard 1 level, and adding a grade each year. Ultimately, these schools will automatically become Malay schools. By 1978, these students will have to use Malay as the only language allowed in the L.C.E. By 1980, the F.M.C.E. in the Malay language will replace the O.S.C. (last year, O.S.C. was discontinued; that is, students can continue to use English in the examination until 1980, but a passing grade in English is not compulsory). Since 1970, Malay has become the medium of instruction for history, geography, art and crafts, and music subjects in the fourth grade of the English schools (Malay is to be the medium of instruction for these subjects in 1972 in the lower secondary schools).

When the examinations are to be held only in the national language, the national type Chinese secondary schools will have to change their medium of instruction. That means there will be only one stream of secondary schools.

#### 3.5.5 The National Language in Higher Education

According to the above projections, the national language will replace English as the medium of instruction in the higher institutes of learning in 1983.

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<sup>35</sup> The information is gathered from Sin Chew Jit Poh, (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia), July 13, 14, 20, 22, August 11, 25, October 15, 17, 1969.

The Tengku speaking at the first convocation of the University of Malaya ever held in the national language (1964) said, 'This (the language Policy) should not interfere with the education of the university or the language used to provide such education.'<sup>36</sup>

However, the relative position of Malay and English in higher education cannot be predicted as stable. The Talib report recommended that the University of Malaya be a bilingual university.<sup>37</sup> The word bilingual has yet to be defined. For instance, bilingual schools in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Singapore are different from one another. According to a very recent article,<sup>38</sup> in the faculty of Arts attended by most of the Malay students, 89 out of 339 courses are taught in Malay (these include courses in the Departments of Malay Studies and Islamic Studies).

Whether Malay can replace English as the medium of instruction depends on future developments. Linguistically, all languages are capable of becoming the media of instruction. This possibility hinges on the development of the Malay language. A very closely related language to Malay, Bahasa Indonesia, has not been able to function as adequately as the international languages. This will give us a hint of how long it will take Malay to become a tool of 'information', to use Kloss'<sup>39</sup> expression, as opposed to a tool of 'imagination'.

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<sup>36</sup> Noss, op. cit., p. 136.

<sup>37</sup> The Talib Report, op. cit., para. 23.

<sup>38</sup> Mahasiswa Negara, November 1970, p. 10.

<sup>39</sup> Kloss, 1968, p. 77.

Much also depends on the supply of local university teachers who will be competent and willing to deliver lectures in the national language. According to Noss, 'few of the non-Malay speaking staff are seriously considering the idea of becoming proficient enough in the national language to deliver lectures in it'.<sup>40</sup> The faculty staff in the university are predominantly non-Malay speakers. A change in the medium might force them to leave their positions which will then be difficult to fill.

Finally, there must be textbooks, library, and journals in the national language for classroom use, research, publication and general reading. The materials in the national language are described as 'scarce' and 'inadequate for the non-native speakers'.<sup>41</sup> Referring to this problem, Noss said,

Nor is the problem of translating text materials simply a matter of 'developing' the national language (increasing its vocabulary). It is possible, of course, that by a dint of expenditure of great financial and human resources, a crash programme could produce a sufficient amount of basic textbooks to supply even a university, so that students would follow courses entirely in the national language. But a casual tour of any existing university library will show that the vast majority of the volumes are not basic textbooks at all. In the natural sciences, the journals are possibly even more important than the basic textbooks (however recently they may be published). Research in the humanities, likewise, requires a constant referral not only to journals, but to books which may never even be reprinted in the original language, to say nothing of being translated into another.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Noss, op. cit., p. 136.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 52.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 29.

If these tools are not available, Silcock<sup>43</sup> points out, a student will have to take notes in the national language and do his reference reading in English. Even then, a reading comprehension of books for university standards needs a high proficiency in English. He must have the command of the tool to do research which is essentially one of the roles of a university.

Only when the above conditions are met will a change in the medium of instruction in the secondary schools not pose a dilemma for the students. That is, they would be adequately prepared linguistically and academically to do their study, instead of changing from the national language to English or vice versa. At present, it seems unlikely that Malay will be able to replace English in the next few decades. Moreover, with all the quantitative demand for more colleges and universities,<sup>44</sup> finances will be a great problem in the maintenance of a national language library. If so, can the students who learn English as an academic subject in the lower levels of education meet the language proficiency required in the university for a successful academic pursuit? In the opinion of Noss, no matter how many hours of world-language study are scheduled, they arrive at the university insufficiently prepared to take advantage of world-language resources, and it is now too late to teach them.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Thomas H. Silcock, Southeast Asian University (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1964), pp. 137-57.

<sup>44</sup> Hayden, op. cit., p. 160.

<sup>45</sup> Noss, op. cit., p. 38.



The required language proficiency will fall on the teachers of English as a foreign language in the primary and secondary levels. Only time will tell whether this is something that can be achieved.

### 3.5.6 The Official Organ of Language Development

As pointed out in the conclusion of the second chapter, the national language faces the problems of development. In view of this, the Language and Literature Agency (Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka) was established in 1957 (reconstituted as an independent body since 1959) to fulfil the following objectives:

- (i) to develop and enrich the national language
- (ii) to print and publish or assist in the printing and publication of books, magazines, pamphlets, and other form of literature in the national language and in other languages
- (iii) to develop literary talent, particularly in the national language
- (iv) to standardize spelling and pronunciation and devise appropriate technical terms in the national language
- (v) to prepare and publish a national language dictionary.

For administrative convenience, the Agency is divided into ten sections: research, editorial, lexicography, terminology, translation, educational and radio courses, production, library, finance, and administration.

The Agency has been given the task of producing a national atlas, a science encyclopaedia, and a junior encyclopaedia which are all basic tools in learning process.

The section that is of greatest importance in language development is the terminology section which acts as a secretariat arranging meeting for experts from various fields and professions.

The resulting new terminology (usually 60-100 items) is published tentatively at the beginning of each month in an official organ<sup>46</sup> of the agency, for potential criticism and review by other technical and language experts. Final results are to be published topically in the form of booklets --- some which have already come out cover the subjects of government administration, engineering, and official correspondence (the last is a style manual).<sup>47</sup>

A national dictionary is under compilation and when completed will have about 30,000 root words. Whether the newly created terminology will ever be accepted in learning institutes is another question. Moreover, these items may never reach the masses.

The third objective which should practically be separated from this organization has over-burdened the Agency. Textbooks in Malay are in such a great demand that their production has preempted other objectives. The Agency's translation is engaged in translation of world classics into Malay, which is not entirely for pedagogical purposes. The editorial section also takes part in converting Indonesian texts to Malay orthography and stylistics. The research section helps in transliterating and editing ancient Malay texts for publication in literature textbooks. Only the national language materials are largely produced within the country. English texts come from all over the world. Some Chinese books are produced locally and some from primary texts are published in Kuala Lumpur.

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<sup>46</sup> The Agency publishes three official monthly magazines, Dewan Bahasa, Dewan Masyarakat, and Dewan Pelajaran. The first is a semi-academic journal which deals with Malay linguistics and literature in the widest sense of the word. For a comprehensive review of linguistic papers in the journal before 1961, see A Teeuw, A Critical Survey of Studies on Malay and Bahasa Indonesia ('s-Gravenhage-Martinus Nijhoff, 1961), pp. 74-6.

<sup>47</sup> Noss, op. cit., p. 138.

regardless of the place from which these books are imported, they aim at the common public examinations. The adoption or change of a text must be approved by the Ministry of Education.

### 1.5.7 The Purposes of Languages in Curriculum

On the one hand, the study of a language is an end in itself. On the other, a language is basically a means to an end. Whatever these objectives are, they will determine and modify the methodology. The purposes of language learning and teaching before 1969 can be summarized as follows:

Language	Spoken	Written
Malay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To native speakers for standardization purposes</li> <li>To non-native speakers as a prerequisite for (a)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To native speakers as a medium of written instruction</li> <li>(a) To all learners as an academic subject, or to satisfy a requirement</li> </ul>
English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To virtually all learners as a prerequisite for (b) and (c)</li> <li>To some learners as a new medium of oral instruction</li> <li>To a few native speakers for standardization purposes</li> <li>To previous learners for remedial purposes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(b) To all learners as an academic subject, or to satisfy a requirement</li> <li>(c) To some learners as a new medium of written instruction</li> <li>To previous learners for remedial purposes</li> <li>To some learners as a research tool</li> </ul>



Language	Spoken	Written
Chinese	To virtually all learners as a prerequisite for (d) and (e)	(d) To most learners as a medium of written instruction and to satisfy a requirement
	To most learners as a new medium of oral instruction	(e) To many learners as an academic subject or research tool
	To previous learners for remedial purposes	To previous learners for remedial purposes
Tamil	To native speakers for standardization purposes.	(f) To most learners as a new medium of written instruction and to satisfy a requirement
	To a few non-native speakers as a prerequisite for (f) and (g)	(g) To some learners as an academic subject or research tool
Arabic Japanese German French Russian Thai Dutch	To a few learners as prerequisite for (h) and (i)	(h) To some learners as research tool
	To a few learners for communication purposes	(i) To a few learners as academic or required subjects, or for cultural or religious reasons

### 3.5.8 Where to Go --- The Chinese and Tamil Primary Schools

When the English primary schools were converted to the use of the national language, there remained the Chinese and Tamil primary schools using their respective languages for instruction. Suspicion and doubt are expressed about the future of these schools. Only by the authority concerned exercising a rational and judicious approach to this educational problem can the question of the medium of instruction be solved. Legal or constitutional approach alone to the issue may

complicate the matter. Much depends on how one interprets the terms of reference. For instance, referring to the 'ultimate objective of making the national language the main medium of instruction', Chang Min Kee, Assistant Advisor (teachers) to the Ministry of Education, explained that the national language is to be made the main medium but not the sole medium.<sup>48</sup>

The Talib report paragraph 14 agreed that the existence of the Tamil and Chinese medium primary schools was to uphold the faith and spirit of the constitution. There is every necessity to promote the existing primary schools in Chinese and Tamil media because mother tongue education is compatible with national aspiration and educational theory. As the UNESCO report puts it,

it is axiomatic that the best medium for teaching a child is his mother tongue. Psychologically, it is the system of meaningful signs that in his mind works automatically for expression and understanding. Sociologically, it is a means of identification among the members of the community to which he belongs. Educationally, he learns more quickly through it than through an unfamiliar linguistic medium.<sup>49</sup>

Therefore, we have reason to believe that a child will benefit most through a language of which he has mastered all basic structures. The first aid to literacy is the mother tongue. Literacy in the mother tongue is an invaluable asset in the adult's life.

Education in the mother tongue may produce students with a good general knowledge of a great many subjects. However, when the change of medium

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<sup>48</sup> Min-Kee Chang, "The Educational System of Malaysia: Its Policy and Structure" in UMBC Economic Review, 3:1 (1967), p. 32.

<sup>49</sup> UNESCO, 1953, p. 11.



takes place, some students might be victims of low language learning aptitude combined with lack of opportunity. Second language teachers and linguistic study of the languages involved should help to overcome this problem.

### 3.5.9 Teacher Supply and Training

The main range and frequency of contact of a non-native speaker of Malay with Malay is primarily in formal classroom situations (see Appendix). Therefore, there should be enough second language teachers to teach the language. The Razak report realized this and recommended the establishment of a language institute to train teachers of the Malay language and to carry on research into and teaching of the languages in Malaya.

The Language Institute has a maximum annual output of 150 Malay language teachers. However, the demand far exceeded the supply when Malay secondary schools were successfully set up. The Institute now trains teachers for Malay schools only. It has fallen a victim to the incessant demand, despite its original aspirations. According to the projection made by the Talib report, there will be a shortage of Malay teachers in Malay and non-Malay schools even by 1980. The projection was made at the time when automatic promotion from the primary to the secondary level and the change of the medium in the English primary schools (and subsequently the secondary schools) were not foreseen. These changes require both Malay language teachers for general subjects and the language course.

Ever since the beginning of the education system in Malaysia, both the quantity and quality of teachers have plagued the system. When comprehensive

education<sup>50</sup> was introduced in 1965, an unprecedented demand for teachers ensued. Speaking objectively, an educational venture without teachers will usually end in failure, or at best, in mediocrity. In order to fill the vacuum, regional training centres were established. High school graduates, sometimes with poor academic achievement, were recruited for part-time training (week-ends) while carrying on the actual teaching on the week days. Two years after they begin teaching, they would have to pass an achievement test which would certify them as qualified teachers. The results were so disappointing that these centres were discontinued in 1967.

These teachers have to face the challenge ahead of them. Students from the primary schools have different socio-linguistic backgrounds and reach different levels of language proficiency and achievement in other subjects. What level of language proficiency have they reached in the primary schools to meet the requirement in the secondary education? A case from native-speakers will make it clear.

A standard five assessment examination revealed that in Malay primary schools, 50 to 70 per cent were below standard. There was a 40 per cent failure in Malay language tests by students attending Malay schools.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> It is designed to provide pupils with general and pre-vocational education with a view to keeping them to find their own aptitude and interest and to select the type of further education (academic, technical or vocational) that will best suit these aptitudes and interests. The schools for these students are called lower Secondary School having the same medium of instruction as in national type secondary schools.

<sup>51</sup> Sanford Jameson, editor, Admission and Placement of Students From the Pacific-Asia Area (National Association for Foreign Student Affairs, American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admission Officers, and the Institute for Technical Interchange, East-West Centre), no date (January 1970?).

On the one hand, the students are below standard; on the other, the teachers themselves have inadequate professional training and language proficiency. Most of them have a relatively better command of English than Malay which was only taught as an academic subject. Before 1969, they were required to teach in English. Now they are required to teach in another medium.

In a recent evaluation of the use of Malay by these trained teachers, the Ministry of Education listed the following shortcomings of the teachers:

- (i) their proficiency in the Standard Malay is so poor that they have to resort to using Bazaar Malay or English
- (ii) they have no self-confidence
- (iii) their methodology and pedagogy are not effective
- (iv) they teach too fast so that most students cannot follow
- (v) sometimes, they use difficult and unfamiliar words which they have learned formally from books rather than frequently used vocabulary
- (vi) they teach only the content of the books.<sup>52</sup>

These problems stem from a few factors: (a) the teachers do not have the language proficiency to make them feel confident; (b) those who use Malay as the medium for general subjects have no insight into the language difficulties or limitation of their students. Therefore, confusion arises as to whether a poor overall performance is the result of weakness in the language or the general problem of understanding the content of the subjects; (c) they have not been adequately or specially trained to teach Malay as a second language. In short, the problems involve both students and teachers.

<sup>52</sup> Sin Chew Jit Poh, May 8, 1970.



As is generally acknowledged, the teacher is the master of a classroom. Effective learning is the result of effective teaching. There is no objection to non-native Malay speakers being recruited as teachers of Malay as a second language. They have the advantage of speaking or knowing the learners' language(s). This source of teacher supply must be appropriately utilized. What is required of the teachers of general subjects is a minimum language proficiency in the target language. Many teachers, particularly the old ones who did not even learn Malay as a subject, may not meet this very basic requirement because they have now lost the plasticity of acquiring a second language. More is required of language teachers, however.

Language-teachers need specialist training. It is not sufficient merely that they have a knowledge of the language they are going to teach; they must, in addition to their general training as teachers, receive special training in how to teach languages.<sup>53</sup>

On the one hand, more Malay language teachers need to be trained. On the other, what is imperative at present is to retrain the teachers involved in the national language implementation. Methodology, comparative linguistics, descriptive linguistics, and second language learning theory must be emphasized in the training programme. Since the beginning of this year, many teachers have taken part in the re-training programme which includes methodology training and learning of Jawi script. The period of training lasts for two to four weeks (during term

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<sup>53</sup> S. P. Corder, "Advanced Study and the Experienced Teacher" in G. E. Perren, editor, Teachers of English as a Second Language: Their Training and Preparation (Great Britain: Cambridge University Press, 1968), p. 67

vacation) or for three months (during school term). In the long run, 'advanced study', to use Corder's term, must be introduced to keep the language teachers informed of new findings in language learning and teaching. In-service training which includes seminars and lectures can be held during each term vacation with the view of exchanging experience and solving difficulties. There is plenty of room for improvement.

Another area that needs special attention is an accurate and thorough analysis of the target language and the languages of the pupils. Classroom application can benefit from the linguistic research into these languages. With the help of linguistics and other relevant disciplines, language learning which also involves extra-linguistic factors can be a rewarding experience.

Only effective language teaching can settle controversies over the medium of instruction. Linguistic performance should not deprive a person of his right to education. When these conditions are met, implementation of the language policy will be on its way to success.



## CONCLUSION

The rise of nationalism has given force to the aspiration for cultural distinctions. One aspect of these distinctions is the preference for one indigenous language over a colonial language as the national language of the country. The process of ultimately making Malay the national official language of Malaysia is one of social and cultural reform. In the process, Malay has to compete with English, and the two other major languages in the country, Chinese and Tamil.

As the national language, Malay has to make practical headway into general use on the national, community, and school levels. The current cellular society of Malaysia rules out the possibility of a monolingual country. The necessity of communication outside one's own linguistic group is a strong motivation for acquiring the language of the community concerned. Each of the major linguistic communities in Malaysia is quite independent, socially, culturally and economically. The range and frequency of necessity for inter-group communication is not great. This social phenomenon will change as society constantly changes. Gradually, all linguistic groups will have to communicate with one another in various ways. Therefore, there is need for a common link language in such social interaction. In the past, English served as a common link language for some educated elites, while Bazaar Malay has served as a link language for the masses. Since

Malay is to replace English in the administration, Malay will be a link language, vertically and horizontally, in the future.

Although not mentioned in the constitution, room must be allowed for other languages to function complementarily with the national language ... 'No good can come of ignoring national cultures or valuable components of a particular national culture'.<sup>1</sup> In a multilingual society, cultural differences must be appreciated and accepted.

The learning of the national language is usually limited to formal classroom education. For half of the school population, Malay is not a mother tongue. Therefore, when the medium of instruction is to be in Malay, not only language but also social, psychological, and educational problems are involved. It is unfair to deprive a child of his chance to and right of education because of weakness in a foreign language.

Mother tongue education has been misconceived as a threat to national unity. This is misleading. Education through the national language does not necessarily cultivate a common Malaysian outlook. The content of education has a role to play. The mother tongue education in Malaysia has been in existence for centuries. From the existing foundation, a system of education which will educate an individual to his fullest potential can be realized.

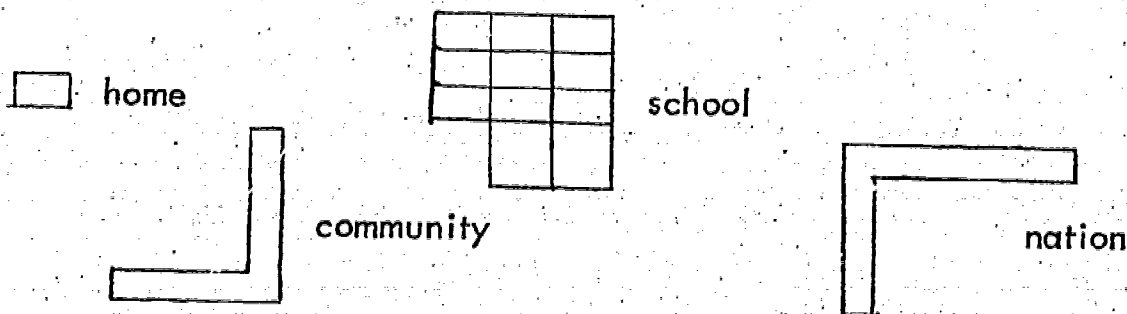
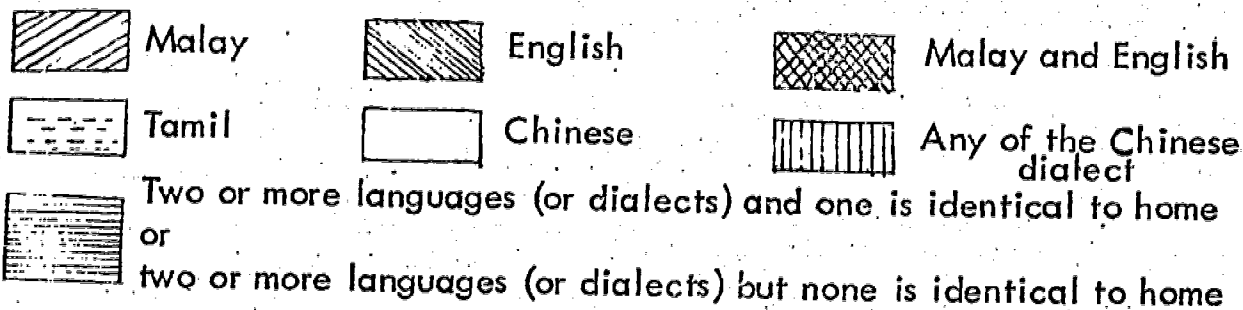
<sup>1</sup> UNESCO, *Bilingualism in Education, Report on an International Seminar, Aberystwyth, Wales, August 20 - September 2, 1960*, (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1965), p. 82.

The national language has been made a compulsory subject in all schools. More qualified language teachers are still needed to make language learning a pleasant experience. However, the emphasis in the public examinations has been on the writing ability of the students. The students study the language; they do not learn the language. Therefore, they are unable to communicate with their fellow countrymen. It is necessary to emphasize the speaking ability of the pupils for inter-group communication. Therefore, a more modern approach must replace the traditional grammar approach. This objective of a language programme is compatible with language learning theory. It also aims at the national interest.

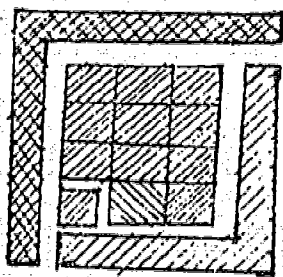
The issue in the formulation of a satisfactory language policy is still alive, while the implementation of the present policy in the educational system will bring about more problems. The decisions of political scientists have created many problems for linguists and educationists to solve. The latter two should have a greater voice in decision making. Taking into consideration the relevant factors, linguistic aspirations and theories of education, the author considers bi- or multilingualism a necessity for the interest of the nation and individual.



## APPENDIX \*

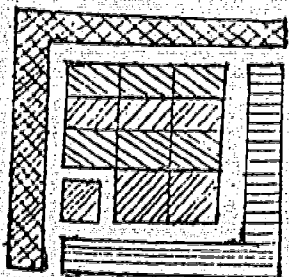


The home language of the Malay child as it relates to the languages of school, community, and nation



Malay school:

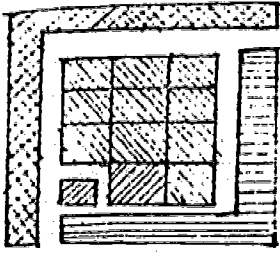
- Malay as the medium of instruction
- English as an academic subject
- Malay speaking community
- Mixed Malay-English use in the nation



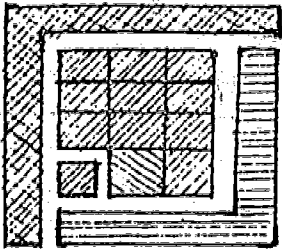
English school:

- Malay as the medium of instruction for some subjects
- English as the medium of instruction for some subjects
- multilingual community
- Mixed Malay-English use in the nation

\* cf. W. F. Mackey, "A typology of Bilingual Education" in Foreign Language Annals, 3:4 (May 1970), pp. 596-608.

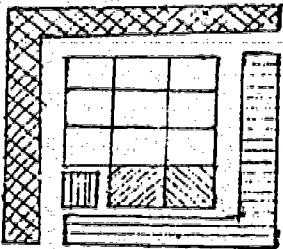


English School:  
 English as the medium of instruction  
 Malay as an academic subject

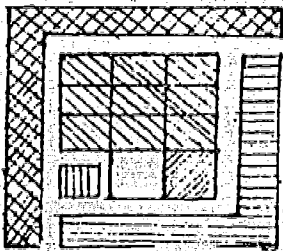


English School:  
 Malay as the medium of instruction  
 English as an academic subject

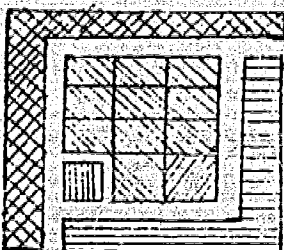
The home language of the Chinese child as it relates to the languages of school, community, and nation.



Chinese school:  
 Chinese as the medium of instruction  
 Malay as an academic subject  
 English as an academic subject

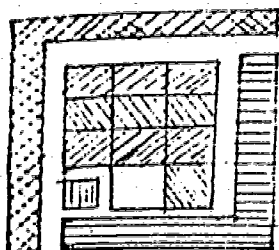


English school:  
 English as the medium of instruction  
 Malay as an academic subject  
 Chinese as an academic subject



English school:  
 English as the medium of instruction  
 Malay as an academic subject



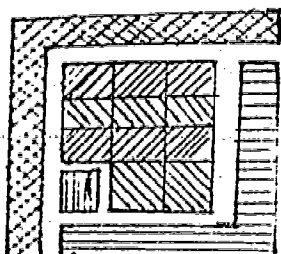


English school:

Malay as the medium of instruction  
for some subjects

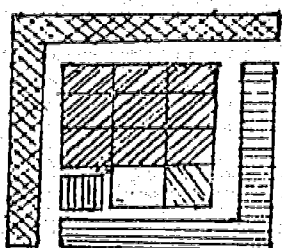
English as the medium of instruction  
for some subjects

Chinese as an academic subject



English school:

same as the above except Chinese  
is not learnt

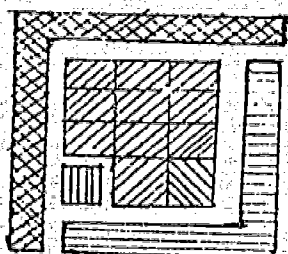


English school:

Malay as the medium of instruction

English as an academic subject

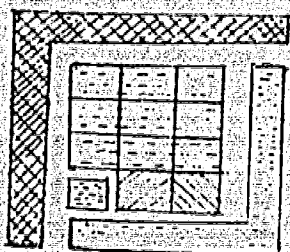
Chinese as an academic subject



English school:

same as the above except Chinese  
is not learnt

The home language of the Tamil child as it relates to the languages of school,  
community, and nation.



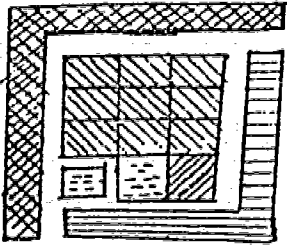
Tamil school:

Tamil as the medium of instruction

Malay as an academic subject

English as an academic subject

Tamil speaking community

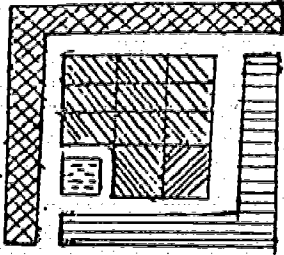


English school:

English as the medium of instruction

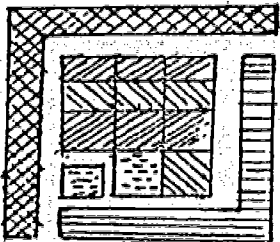
Malay as an academic subject

Tamil as an academic subject



English school:

same as the above except Tamil  
is not learnt.

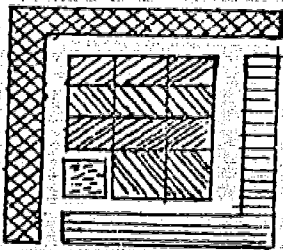


English school:

Malay as the medium of instruction  
for some subjects

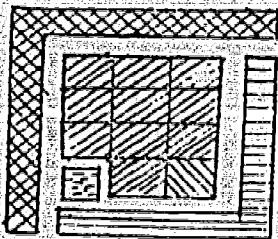
English as the medium of instruction  
for some subjects

Tamil as an academic subject



English school:

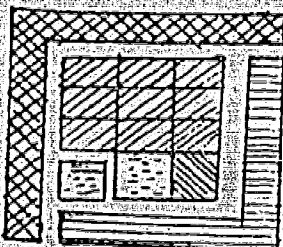
same as the above except Tamil  
is not learnt



English school:

Malay as the medium of instruction

English as an academic subject



English school:

same as the above except Tamil is

maintained as an academic subject



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