

National Language Policy and Its Impacts on Second Language Reading Culture

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This research concentrates on Malaysian language policy and its impacts on the development of English language (regarded as a second language in Malaysia) specifically on reading culture. The main objectives of this research are to investigate the weaknesses and strengths of the policy and also to come out with recommendations to improve the implementations of the policy. This qualitative research involves 345 experienced English language teachers and 11 experts who were asked to answer open-ended questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The findings show that policy has not yet achieved its goal to build English language reading culture among primary schools students due to several constraints and it needs some betterment in terms of the implementations.

Keywords: national language policy, second language reading culture.

After independence, the national and official language of Malaysia is Malay; however English has an important role to play. English is taught as compulsory subject from Standard One to Form Five, a period of eleven years. English is also used as a language of communication in urban areas as well. Malaysia has accorded English as a second language status as stated in Article 152 and given due attention (Nor Hashimah, 2008).

According to Pandian (1997), while Malaysia's literacy rate has increased, the incidence of habitual readers among the public does not show a corresponding increase. He added that according to researchers in the field of reading, reading reluctance (the term used to describe the phenomenon of students who can read but choose not to read) has already replaced illiteracy as the major threat to developed and developing societies. This reluctance affects all socio-economic and educational levels. Although the rate of literacy in Malaysia is high compared to that of any South East Asian countries that is for the group of citizen who are ten years old above (the reading rate is 85%), however, only 3% read magazines, 3% read books and 1.6% read comics (Mingguan Malaysia, April 19, 2009).

In Malaysia, the Reading Promotion Policy was initiated to implement the objective of the National Library of Malaysia under the National Library (Amendment) Act 1987 (Act A667) Part II Section 4(2) which is 'to promote and facilitate the development of the reading habit'. This policy is in line with the strategy of the National Policy on Library and Information Services article 4.7.5: to instill and develop a reading habit' (Ali, Razali, 2001). This policy is also to support the 1985 National Book Policy in which to ensure that Malaysians have a high interest in reading quality books. It also acts as one of the supportive objectives in achieving the Vision 2020.

The National Library of Malaysia is the Secretariat of the National Reading Promotion while the State Public Libraries act as the Secretariat of the State Reading Promotion. As the Secretariat to the National Reading Promotion Committee, the National Library of Malaysia coordinates the various reading promotion programmes at the national level. And, in 2009, the Ministry of Education plans to implement the 'First Step Reading Module' programme inspired by the Australian education system. The programme begins with 1000 primary schools. The programme is a system of graded reading system which starts from easy

reading before going on to more complex reading material after pupils are able to master the previous lessons. Through this programme, ministry hopes that it would be able to enhance the use of English in Malaysian schools (New Straits Times, November 17th, 2008).

In Malaysia, although starting from kindergarten, students are exposed to various reading strategies, such as whole-word-reading and phonemic reading, the question of whether the students are able to cultivate reading as a culture is still to be ascertained (Razali, 2001). Basically, the effectiveness of reading is difficult to be assessed based on written examinations and at the same time does not really encourage the students to read more or extensively. This is because reading readiness and motivation to reading develops slowly and is impacted by many factors (Fatimah, 2002).

The objective of English literacy in Malaysia covers the use of English in written and spoken forms, to understand various types of texts and to appreciate the aesthetic element of the language (Hazita, 2004). According to her, all major races of Malaysia namely the Malays, Chinese and Indians, have accepted the importance of English literacy and its hugely positive effect on their future career. Students who read a great deal are also benefitted more in that language. Significant research studies in 2003 by Robert E. Slavin of Johns of Hopkins University and Alan Cheung of Success for All Foundation on Effective Reading Programs for English Learners report that students become better and more confident readers, write better, listen and speak more ably and have greater control over the use of a range of words. Moreover, they develop positive attitude toward learning and are motivated to study the new language.

According to Pandian (2005) literacy has been regarded as the most important element in developing a country - economically, academically and socially. Many strategies and practices have been carried out for improving learning outcomes and literacy, however, the hindrance contributing factors of improving this situation need to be overcome as well. Social background is one of the primary external factors that influence reading habits in Malaysia (Nazri, 2003). He believed that parents in the

lower economic strata, see reading as a means to pass examinations and to advance economically. Nazri supposed that parents should encourage pleasurable and morally fulfilling reading and equates this with good reading habits.

The importance is also given to English in the schools in the country again; this should have been translated into high proficiency in the language. So this study explores students' ability in one major skill area-reading. The study also examines the reading culture existing in the state as perceived by students, teachers and scholars. The value of this study is in its ability to capture the English language reading culture in Malaysia and providing the impetus for overcoming and deficiencies if any exist.

During the British era, English was taught and used at English medium schools. Only the urban schools had the opportunity to implement the use of the language due to economic and social factors. Vernacular education such as Chinese and Tamil alongside Malay schools flourished in the rural areas. After independence, this scenario changed. Malay assumed greater prominence in education particularly after 1967. All English schools were converted into Malay-medium institutions. This conversion was done in stages and these schools were subsequently classified as national schools (David and Govindasamy, 2003).

With the implementation of Malay as the sole medium of instruction in national schools, English was taught as merely a subject. Two decades later, when the government realized that there were some general decline in students' competency in English, various measures were taken. This included the introduction of Self-Access-Learning Centres (SAL), Extensive Reading Programmes, Class Reader Programmes, English Hours, Children's Contemporary Literature Programme, and the introduction of literature component in English syllabus, the imposing of Malaysian University English Test (MUET) for pre-universities and matriculation centres, and finally the teaching of Mathematics and Science subjects in English in 2003. However, in July 2009, the Malaysian Cabinet decided that the medium of instruction for Mathematics and Science will revert to Malay language in national schools and mother-tongue languages in national-type schools from

2012 onwards (New Straits Times, July 9, 2009). The reversal of the Teaching of Mathematics and Science in English (ETeMS) policy will be done in stages. The Education Minister added that there will be greater emphasis on learning the English language where English literature will be re-introduced, as will subjects on grammar and composition. The outcome of the reversal and the latest measures to improve the performance of English among school students can only be seen in the years to come.

Therefore, the study is to generally investigate whether Malaysian national language policy has given positive or negative impacts on the development of second language reading policy and at the same time to identify the suggested steps to improve the implementations of the reading interventions.

Literature Review

In accordance with the above discussion, this study on the English language reading culture should be investigated from a multiplicity of interrelated factors, such as home literacy, internal and external motivations, reading strategies, reading interventions and language policy (Sangkaeo, 1999).

A survey done by the National Library of Malaysia highlighted that Malaysians read an average of only two books per year (Utusan Malaysia, July 15th, 1997, p. 6), a statistic that reveals poor extensive reading habit. One contributing factor may be due to the method of teaching reading which is mainly using the textbooks as the main source (Cheah, 1992). Secondly, teachers hardly take into consideration the suitability of the content and the length of the chosen texts (Underwood, 1989; Gardner, 1987) when embarking on reading materials. Distinctly, these two salient crucial factors had been identified as the main reasons why learners read very few books. The two factors stated namely using text books as the main source and the inability to find suitable texts for reading activities indicate that the prevalent perception of reading is very narrow and slow to develop, much of it due to reasons such as focusing more on examination and putting more effort in completing the syllabus (Razali, 2001). Rost (1990), Underwood (1989),

Ur (1987) and Carrel (1988), based on their research from many parts of the world have postulated that reading habit has not been instilled due to the 'examination oriented' approach practiced by a majority of teachers; such an approach places emphasizes on oral drilling and answering past year examination questions. Moreover, the lack of interesting reading activities in classrooms might also affect the students' interest in exploring the boundless benefits of reading (Carrell, 2007).

The 1957 constitution declared Malay as the national language, gave special provision for the official use of English, and promised other languages an 'equal opportunity to grow and develop' (Ghazali, 2003). It was Malay which received the most urgent attention. The Malay Language Academy known as *Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka* mooted in the 60s was set up primarily to solve the lack of Malay teachers, and secondarily to standardise and modernise the language. Education using English also continued to flourish. Following Talib Rahman Report, some Chinese secondary schools chose to convert to English medium. Given the choice of converting to Malay or English or losing government funding, most switched to English. The result was that by 1962, 90% of secondary students were English-medium schools (Pennycook, 1994). To counter this, an Education Act of 1961 proposed that Malay become the sole medium of instruction at secondary level.

But the key legislation was the 1967 National Language Act, which came at the end of a 10-year period in which English was to be retained while methods of promoting Malay were worked out. It declared Malay as the sole official language, with English as the 'second most important' and to be retained as an alternative language for the legislature and courts. In order not to jeopardize educational standard, English was retained as one of the core subjects (Asmah, 1979), while Malay was to be staggered in over 26 years, starting by introducing Malay into English-medium secondary schools until they were fully converted into Malay-medium schools. After this period that is from 1981 onwards, Malay became the sole language of education at all levels of education, completing a cycle begun in

1971. There was a further inducement for acquiring Malay (David and Govindasamy, 2003). Government jobs seeker, and study grants applicants were required to have a high level of Malay proficiency, thus compelling all citizens including the non-Malays to become competent in the language too.

In 2003, owing to globalization pressure and the need for English language proficiency among students, English was reinstated as the medium of instruction for two subjects - Science and Mathematics. This status quo was maintained until 2009. In 2009 the teaching of Mathematics and Science was again rescinded (New Straits Times, July 14th. 2009). The outcome of this reversal of the policy may yet determine the status of English and English education in Malaysia.

In discussing reading habit, Atan Long's 1982 classic study on the reading habits and interests of Malaysians, revealed that Malaysians had poor reading habits and generally did not like reading. He warned that the apathy towards reading, if allowed to carry on, would create wide rifts in the socioeconomic and intellectual development of segments of the population, especially among rural dwellers. He stressed that the level of socioeconomic status of families affects interest in reading and the level of 'reading for pleasure' shows a significant difference between town and rural dwellers as well.

Atan Long (1984) gave a similar analysis on the reading habits and interests of Malaysians. His study found that ethnicity and the language used influence the patterns of newspaper, magazine and book readership. The effect of education is clearly seen whereby, in general, readership of newspapers and magazines were much lower for people who received only primary education. The attitude of the people towards reading was quite positive. About one-fifth of the subjects ranked reading as their first choice activity, second only to the more popular activity of TV watching. Newspapers were most read (97%), followed by magazines (67%) and books (42%). The data also indicated that those who read most frequently (heavy readers) were from the high socioeconomic status, middle-aged and had an English educational background. Other local studies include those

carried out by Rita Vias (1988) and Lim (1974) to the working adults. They also indicated the same findings, that is, the more educated the learners, and the more reading activities would take place.

Another most significant study on reading habits or behaviour was conducted by Pandian (2004). He carried out two studies to investigate reading behaviour of university students and secondary school students. He employed similar data collection method on both groups of students that is by using questionnaires. The school and home literacy practices and their relationships with the emergent knowledge among students were investigated. The data were gathered from 674 Science University of Malaysia students and 975 Form Four government secondary school students from 15 schools. In the university students category, his conclusions are that 80.1% are reluctant readers of English language materials, 76.9% are reluctant readers in Malay language materials; students from urban areas tend to have more English materials at home; female students possess much stronger positive home reading influence than male students and exposure to language emerges as the most significant determinant of various reading habits. As for secondary school students, it was found that 76.2% of the students under study were reluctant readers of English-language materials while 61.4% were reluctant readers of Malay language materials; acquisition of English materials is strongly correlated with attitude towards reading in the language; peer influence in reading behaviour in the various languages is generally stronger than teacher influence. Thus, he recommended that to promote reading environment, teachers and parents should find ways to capitalize 'peer influence' among students, in which children try to find and form a reading group among themselves.

All in all, the syllabus produced by the Ministry of Education is well-designed not only in promoting English as a medium of communication but also catering students' need towards developing human capital mission (Ghazali, 2003).

Methodology

Altogether, 345 experienced English teachers who were directly related to the second language reading gave comments about their students and also gave responses using a questionnaire. There were professionals such as officers from the Education Ministry, state and district, and reading activists involved in making sure the components and tests of second language reading used correctly – this group gave their responses through the using semi-structured interviews. The researcher also conducted document study on official documents and reports. An internationally recognized reading test was also used to measure the sample's present reading performance. The questions in the schedule were given earlier to the experts to ensure that they were well-prepared and the information given would be substantive. At times, the researchers also posted some probing impromptu questions based on the responses. The responses from the experts are presented in the findings, conclusions and recommendations. The background of the experts, however, is not directly mentioned due to ethical concern adopted by the researcher in this study.

The main questions used in the interview were related to the most suitable reading strategies and reading interventions, the impact of national language policy on second language, the important role of the Ministry of Education, state government, schools and teachers to improve or develop the English reading culture, contributing factors to the existing English reading culture, relationships between second language reading culture and reading strategies, reading interventions and language policy and also the relevant theories pertaining to the topic.

Findings

In the questionnaire, teachers were given open-ended questions about reading and their responses were culled and the following qualitative presentation of the finding is given in this section.

Firstly, teachers were asked on how to encourage students to read English materials. Some teachers highlighted more than one way of encouraging the students, so the researcher had to enumerate and summarize the findings. Table 1 shows the findings.

Table 1: Encouraging students to read English materials

Items	Encouraging students to read	Number of respondents
1	Make English lessons fun	109
2	Teachers should use English as well (be good role models)	98
3	Provide 'user-friendly' kind of reading materials (such as computer)	95
4	Provide a specific timetable to reading activities	89
5	Provide English stimulated environment	88
6	Have competitions / always give rewards	67
7	Always give reading tasks	51
8	Always motivate them to read	56
9	Expose them to the world of story books (any interesting story)	25
10	Always carry out English reading campaigns	15

To the statement on how to encourage students to read English materials, a very high number (n=109) of teachers felt that teachers should make English lesson as a much fun time as possible. For example, carrying out student-centered activities such as games, group

presentations, singing, role playing and many more.

Then, teachers (n=98) believed that they should only use English when teaching and become good role models of applying the language. Next, nearly the same number of teachers (n=95) felt that they should provide

'user-friendly' types of reading materials through the use of computer or information and communication technology (ICT).

Later, providing a specific timetable for reading activities and English stimulated environment shared almost same distributions (n=89 and n=88). The sixth suggestion was to handle competitions and giving awards (n=67), followed by giving reading tasks (n= 51), motivating students to read (n=56), exposing students to the world of interesting stories (n=25) and lastly organising English reading campaigns.

This above suggestions show that teachers should be very close to students in making sure reading culture is developed. The findings also

show that a lot of teachers agreed that students read English materials when they are forced to read, that is, students were reluctant to read English materials, and teachers had to creatively assign tasks to students. At the same time, the tasks should be planned based on students' level and interests. Lack of interesting reading activities might affect the students' interest in gaining benefit through reading (Carrell, 2007).

Secondly, teachers were asked about the time their students read English materials. This question allowed teachers more freedom to express their views based on their own perceptions of their students. Table 2 shows the findings.

Table 2: Conditions which cause students read English materials

Items	Suitable time for Reading English Materials	Number of Respondents
1	When they are forced to read	111
2	When they found any interesting books	76
3	During English lesson only	65
4	Only for their favourite reading materials	55
5	If their hobby is reading	23
6	When they want to be noticed/praised by teachers	12
7	When are browsing the internet	2

Table 2 indicates that the highest number of respondents (n=111) agreed that students read English materials when they are forced to read. In other words, although reading habits should come naturally, due to the obstacles such as a limited understanding of vocabulary and time, students needed to be forced to read.

Then, 76 teachers believed that their student would read English materials when they find any interesting books. Another view is that students would read English materials. During English lesson only (n=65), only for their favourite

reading materials (n=55). The other statements such as hobby is reading (n=23), when the students want to be noticed or praised by teachers (n=12) and lastly, students read English materials when they are browsing the internet (n=2) did not receive strong support from the teachers.

Teachers were asked about the most effective reading intervention in order to improve English reading culture among the students. Table 3 shows the findings.

Table 3: Effective reading intervention

Items	Effective Reading Interventions / Remedies	Number of Respondents
1	Oral drilling / reading aloud/ extensive and intensive reading / spelling and dictating words	186
2	Using pictures / songs / games (interesting approaches)	90
3	Recognising English words as early as possible age by doing stimulation from parents and surrounding	87
4	Provide staged-reading-materials, shared and guided reading	79
5	Use multimedia / ICT (interactive learning)	65
6	Make dictionary a compulsory reference book	48
7	Learn-a-word-a-day approach (word cards)	35
8	Teachers (not only ELT) should be role models of inculcating reading habits in schools	21
9	Provide various types of books especially story books	14
10	Stress on sound / phonetic method	3

Table 3 indicates that 186 respondents agreed that the most effective reading intervention is oral drilling, reading aloud, extensive and intensive readings, spelling and dictation. This is followed by using pictures, songs, games (n=90), recognizing English words as early as possible, by doing stimulations and encouragements from parents and others (n=87), providing staged-reading materials, shared and guided reading (n=79), using multimedia or interactive learning (n=65), making dictionaries as a compulsory reference book (n=48), applying learn-a-word-a-day approach (n=35), being role models in inculcating reading habits in schools (n=21), providing various types of

books especially story books (n=14) and stressing on sound or phonetic methods (n=3).

All in all, the most preferable and effective reading intervention and remedial programmes to build up or improve an English reading culture include oral drilling, reading aloud, extensive and intensive readings, spelling and dictation and using pictures, songs, games or any other interesting approaches, and also recognising English words as early as possible.

Later, teachers were asked about their opinion on the national English language policy. The question is to know whether or not the policy is effective to improve English language reading culture among students. Table 4 and 5 explain about the findings.

Table 4: Malaysian English language policy

Items	Do you think that our English language policy is effective?	Number of Respondents
1	DID NOT ANSWER / NO RESPONSE	145
2	Yes, our English language policy is effective	108
3	No, our English language policy is not effective	93

Table 5: Ways to improve English reading culture among students

Items	Improving English Reading Culture among Students	Number of Respondents
1	Students should be given more freedom to read for pleasure	89
2	Teachers should be more creative	87
3	A lot of non-optionist ELTs affect English performance	64
4	Make English a compulsory-pass-paper in public examination	42
5	Politicians / Celebrities / Successful people should inspire students by using English language	34
6	Education should be 'less' exam-oriented	27

Table 4 shows that 108 respondents (31.2%) felt that our English language policy is effective; however, 93 respondents (26.9%) believed that the policy is not so. Shockingly, 145 respondents (41.9%) did not give any response to the question. The researcher believes that those who did not answer were because either they did not know the answer or confused with the question or wanted to remain neutral.

Table 5 shows that to improve the policy pertaining to issue of English reading culture, 89 of them felt that students should be given more freedom to read for pleasure instead of reading to complete specific learning tasks.

Next, 87 respondents felt that teachers should be more creative in order to improve an English reading culture among students. This is because teachers' creativity would help the students to become more interested in reading and be able to avoid boredom in ESL classes. A large number (64 respondents) also believed that a lot of non-optionist English Language Teachers (ELT) not only affected the English performance but also fail to instill reading culture in students.

42 respondents said that English should be made as a compulsory-pass-paper in public examination as it is for the Malay language; this approach would make the students, parents and teachers pay more attention to the subject and in the long run, reading would be encouraged.

Next, 34 respondents believed that celebrities including artists, politicians and successful corporate leaders should inspire students by using English and they should be role models to the them as well.

Lastly, 27 respondents shared the view that education should be less exam-oriented. They felt that too many examinations exert pressure and have affected the main objective of learning. Therefore, the findings show that the teachers themselves were not so happy with the 'examination-minded' and consequent ineffective approaches practiced by the teachers. Next, 76 respondents felt that teachers should provide reading corners in the classroom. This is to make sure that reading materials would be easily available for the students. The approach of having 'moving library' or Self Access Learning (SAL) is good examples.

67 respondents suggested that teachers should organize visits to language centres or libraries. By applying this approach, both teachers and students would access to knowledge of learning languages.

Later, 56 respondents agreed that teachers should use 'graded reading materials' to cater to the various levels of students. This is to ensure that all students would enjoy learning and at the same time the learning objectives could be achieved.

Lastly, 43 respondents believed that teachers should organize a lot of language competitions regarding the usage of English language. This is to make learning language as fun as possible and the same number of respondents felt that teachers should make full use of library because if the library is fully utilized, the reading culture would be easily created.

From other point views, the interviews with the experts were very fruitful and gave valuable impacts on the findings of the research. Experts were asked to comment on the national language policy and its role in encouraging students to read more English materials. For 52 years since independence, Malaysia has undergone tremendous development in education. The passing of several Acts of Parliament in 1996, amongst them the Education Act 1996, the University and University College Act 1996 (Amended) and the Institution of Higher Education Act 1996 are directly related to the development of English. In general, these Acts allow the use of English in both public and private universities and other institutions of higher learning in the country, and the introduction of English as the medium of instruction for Mathematics and Science in schools. However, these acts by the government were differently received by different people (Nik Safiah, 2008).

Pertaining to the issue, the experts agreed that students' feedback or responses should be consulted or asked to give on their reading needs or on the nature of the reading culture. This is because they are the 'clients' that need to be aided.

The experts also stressed that the national language policy should clearly explain the roles

of specific bodies in encouraging students to read more English materials.

The experts were also asked to comment on other countries which have well-defined language policy that Malaysia could emulate. Out of eleven experts only four of them named several countries such as Singapore, India, and the Philippines to be good models which have a good second language policy.

The experts viewed Malaysian own ELiTE policy as long overdue. The introduction of ELiTE (Early Literacy Through English) in 2007 at several selected school is a good start; however, further research should be done to improve student's performance because ELiTE was introduced at the same time the Year One students were struggling to learn reading vide Malay language. ELiTE is a pioneer project involving sixty selected primary schools in Malaysia. The Year One students of those schools had to use a special module in learning English in which the stress was on phonetics. English, Mathematics and Science teachers were involved in this project.

Taking the example of ELiTE, all eleven experts unanimously commented upon and lamented the lack early childhood or preschool programmes and in the early years schooling system.

From the responses, it is can be that research and planning should involve all parts or bodies pertaining to reading or literacy. The experts highlighted that the present strategies did not allow the main players (teachers) to plan and build the strategies based on the actual scenario in schools or pre-schools.

All the experts elaborated upon a wide range of constraints that were quite commonplace in the Malaysian English lesson classroom, which they themselves had frequently faced. Some limitations that were repeatedly voiced were: limited time in preparing suitable reading materials; class hours constraint; large class size; mixed ability classes; lack of student motivation; lack of infrastructure especially graded reading materials, the weaknesses of ICT facilities, poorly stocked library; lack of well-trained teachers; lack of activities related to listening and speaking; and frequent tests or examinations. Many experts opined that these prevailing constraints could be held responsible

to a great extent for undermining the success of the remedial classes.

The experts were also asked about the specific contributing factors for the low English reading culture among students pertaining to the present scenario of Malaysian education development. Although the experts repeatedly mentioned that all bodies should work together to create the reading culture, some of them preferred to concentrate more on reading habits. According to them, reading habits normally start at home and then the healthy habits would be brought to schools. A reading culture would be created when all relevant bodies work together in improving the reading environment (Ratnawati, 2003),

Both reading habits and reading culture deeply involve parents and teachers (Siti Hamim Stapa, 2007). Thus, parents may need to be taught how to participate constructively in the education of their children and teachers should invite parents and families to participate in the literacy process, not only to promote literacy in their children but also to enhance their own literacy (Pandian, 2002). The experts unanimously agreed that reading habits and reading culture are overlapped and connected to each other.

Obviously, the experts prefer that schools be given more freedom in carrying out reading activities. The needs of improving the students' motivation, better school management (enough teachers and facilities) and the involvement of parents appear to be important elements that should be taken into serious consideration. Claire (2002) stressed that reading resources used in schools should reflect consistently the reading materials read by students. So, she urged that better reading facilities should be provided by school administrators.

Finally, the researcher asked the above question because the information gathered from the interviews with the experts would help the researcher get a clearer picture of the present curriculum pertaining to reading and other skills as well. The interviews with the experts also sought to identify the mismatches between the students' English language needs and the present strategies and also generated many suggestions that could help in reconciling the students' needs.

Besides that, they also stress that the language policy should have a clear vision in helping students keep track of the importance of reading, making them realize that there is an educational aim in doing so, motivating them to take proactive action to get jump-started into cultivating a reading habit and making them aware of national policy roles in English language instruction. Moreover, most of the experts believe that reading assessments should be carried out in more motivating ways, for example, in staged approaches (based on students' abilities) or in bottom-up approaches, that is, evaluating students based on what they have learnt (read) and eventually increasing the level or type of difficulty (Gersten, 2003).

Conclusions and Recommendations

As mentioned above, language policy in Malaysia evolves and develops from time to time based on current needs, globalization (modernization) and language development (Pandian, 1999).

Basically, the language policy in Malaysia greatly emphasizes on the national language; however, recent developments in education have ushered in acceptance of English among people including students. Therefore, the current policies have made a gradual impact on the reading culture of primary school students not only in Terengganu but also in Malaysia. The experts shared similar views in discussing the reading strategies and reading interventions especially related to students' surrounding, the effective and friendly approach and the importance of early childhood education. These are extremely important in developing any language learning. The controversial implementation of the use of English in the teaching of Mathematics and Science has also been an impetus pushing the students and teachers to master and devote more time to reading. All in all, the current language policy and planning of the national language has also given more space for the development of English.

Lastly, the experts hope that a long term project to develop 'a reading society' should be planned and carried out in ensuring Malaysia achieve its goal of a truly educated society.

In a nutshell, Malaysian language policy has gradually developed in many aspects; however, it has not impacted reading culture of primary school students (in this case in Terengganu) due to many contributing factors that have been mentioned by the experts. Therefore, Malaysian current policies pertaining to English language needs some restructuring.

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