ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF LANGUAGE PLANNING IN MALAYSIA
Looking Ahead to the Future
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INTRODUCTION
This paper was originally intended to focus on the success of language corpus planning in Malaysia. However, recent developments in Malaysian politics brought forth many issues vis-à-vis language status planning, i.e. the return to English as a medium of instruction in education. Therefore, this paper will attempt to address these current issues and their implications on the future status and functions of Malay as the national and official language of Malaysia.

LANGUAGE PLANNING FOR A NEW NATION
Malaysia has been involved in deliberate language planning activities for the last fifty years. Such activities brought together not only linguistics and sociology, but also other disciplines such as education, psychology, communication, geography, history and politics, not to mention finance and management. Of the many Southeast Asian countries, Malaysia faces some difficult problems. This is because her population is not only multilingual but also multiethnic, multi-religious and multicultural. To make it more complex, the number of immigrant population is almost as big as the so-called majority indigenous ones.

Language planning scholars have to choose a language over one or a few others to be promoted as National Language. Then they have to plan, persuade and convince not only state executives and leaders, but also those involved at all levels of language use, of certain types of language forms or rules to be cultivated, and eventually balance benefits of such activities against cost (Thorburn, 1971; Eastman, 1983). Such endeavors are not new. It has been done for hundreds of years. Recently, Norwegian, Hebrew, Turkish and many other languages have been subjected to some form of deliberate changes for refinement, efficiency, and even revival. These were done within the broad definition of nation-building. All had one objective in common, giving an identity to a nation.

LANGUAGES OF MALAYSIA
To understand language planning issues of a country, we would normally begin discussion with a topic on the sociolinguistic profile of the country. The sociolinguistic profile of Malaysia may be redundant to many of us. A brief statement is sufficient. However, a detailed sociolinguistic account of Malaysia can be found in Language and Society in Malaysia (Asmah Hj. Omar, 1982), and Language Planning in Southeast Asia (Abdullah Hassan, 1994).
One generalization often made about Malaysia is that there are three languages spoken in the country. This assumes that Malays speak Malay, Chinese speak Chinese, and Indians speak Indian. Whilst it is true that the Malays speak one language, i.e. Malay, Chinese and Indians can hardly be said to speak one language each. The Chinese community speaks several mutually unintelligible ‘dialects’ that linguists consider different languages. These are Hokkien, Cantonese, Hakka, Hainanese, Kwongsai, Hokchiu, Henghua, and a few others.

Similarly, the Indians, though smaller in number, speak at least nine different languages, i.e. Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi, Oriya, Punjabi, and Sinhalese (Sri Lanka).

Besides, there are also several other indigenous languages, such as Temiar, Jah Hut, Mah Meri, Senoi, Jakun, Temuan, Biduanda, Kintak, Kensiu, and Ce Wong. The merger with Sabah and Sarawak in 1963 brought in several other indigenous languages; Kadazan, Bajau, Murut, Iban, Melanau, Penan, etc. Superimposed on all these indigenous and immigrant languages is English, inherited from the British. Within this diverse sociolinguistic setting, language issues always produce sensitive reactions toward governmental efforts to introduce one common National Language with the objective of bringing about modernization and social integration.

**SEARCH FOR A COMMON SYMBOL OF IDENTITY**

The end of World War II brought rapid political changes to Malaya (Malaysia). For the first time, the different ethnic communities worked together to gain independence from the British colonial masters. They achieved self-government in 1955 and full independence in 1957. In 1963, Sabah, Sarawak and Singapore merged with Malaya to form Malaysia, but two years later, Singapore became a Republic and a separate nation. After achieving independence, the coalition government of the United Malay National Organization, Malaysian Chinese Association and the Malaysian Indian Congress faced an urgent task. There was an immediate need to integrate the three major ethnic groups into one nation.

Whilst under the British rule, the three major ethnic groups were kept apart. The British policy of divide and rule was implemented through an education system designed to create a divided population. The Malays were only given six years of elementary education. Three objectives were defined for the Malay education (1) to familiarize Malay boys with the simple arithmetic to handle small business transactions, (2) to develop better sense of hygiene, and (3) to train the sons of the Malay aristocracy in English to serve their colonial masters.

Similarly, the Indians were also given six years of elementary education, and were expected to provide labor for the rubber plantations and railways. This was a deliberate policy to deny them both economic and geographical mobility.

The Chinese, on the other hand, were allowed to establish their own schools and use curricula, teachers and textbooks from China, as the British colonial government did not consider it their obligation to provide education to the transient population (Annual Report of the Resident-General of the Federated Malay States, 1901).

The British colonial government, however, established English schools to supply sufficient manpower for the British administrative machinery. Thus, the population became divided, and remained so for a hundred years. In fact the Malays too, were divided into various states. They have learned to accept unity only quite recently but the integration of all the ethnic communities was yet to come. And the search for an instrument for national integration began in earnest.
Perhaps, one of the easiest consensuses arrived at, though evidently as discovered later but not the simplest to implement, was the choice for a National Language. The people had indicated their desire to be united under one symbol. Tunku Abdul Rahman, the first Prime Minister gave the philosophy of having an 'authentic' indigenous language as the National Language. In his speech at the University of Singapore on 9th December 1964, he said,

'It is only right that as a developing nation, we 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 - as I would put it, a nation without a soul and without a life.' Wong and Ee also reported that 'national considerations demanded the replacement of the colonial and foreign language by an indigenous one - Malay (1971:78).

This was a positive sign as the choice of a National Language 'is most often tied to elements of nationalism' involving struggles between groups (Eastman, 1983:5).

The acceptance of Malay as the National Language in fact came earlier in the form of the People's Constitutional Proposals presented by AMCJA-PUTERA (All Malaya Council of Joint Action - representing the non-Malays, and Pusat Tenaga Rakyat - representing the Malays) in July 1947.

One of the important proposals was that Malay Language should be the sole official language of the country. However, the usage of other languages would be permitted. This common desire of the people to have a common language as a common symbol for the new nation was translated into reality when the status of Malay as National Language was enshrined in the constitution of the country. (Constitution of Malaysia, 1981, Article 152). This constitution was the result of an understanding between all the ethnic groups of the population. It is a social contract among all the ethnic groups to be upheld for the sake of integration.

NEED FOR COMMON CULTURAL VALUES

Coming from different cultures, religions and languages, the people of Malaysia needed more than just a National Language as an instrument of integration. Political and ethnic leaders had to design a strategy to develop a common national outlook among the younger generation. They considered the schools as the most suitable channel to cultivate these common values. However, as schools were closely identified with the different ethnic groups and their languages, attempts to introduce changes in these vernacular schools provoked immediate repercussions. Nonetheless, the school system remained the most plausible channel, and language the most useful instrument for future integration. Hence, much of the steps toward these objectives took place in the school system.

However, this newly chosen National Language was found to be inadequate in many respects. Though it had been widely used as a language of administration, culture, trade, diplomacy and philosophy, it lacked terminology for science and technology. As such the National Language needed to be rigorously developed and cultivated to enhance its status and efficiency as a tool for imparting knowledge, values and information.

CODIFICATION OF THE NATIONAL LANGUAGE

Language planning concerns careful selection, development and cultivation of certain language norms toward targeted objectives. This was the case with Malay. If it remained inadequate to express science and technology, then it would fail to perform its function as a language to impart education. This would then jeopardize its role as a language...
of educational instruction. Its role as an instrument of integration for the new nation would also be unfulfilled. Deliberate steps must be taken to develop the language to perform the above functions. In short, Malay had to be developed to enable it to perform as a language of administration and education.

Within the newly independent nation, language planning grew out of real socio-political needs. It was carefully envisaged to go hand in hand with the other programs in the development of a new nation. Malaysia's language planning was managed by the Language and Literacy Agency (Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka); an institution established in 1957, aimed at developing the language to perform its new functions and roles.

In this paper, I will trace the language planning strategies as carried out by both the Ministry of Education and the Language and Literacy Agency in the selection of norms for Malay; its codification, modernization (Ferguson, 1968), dissemination and evaluation. Noss's definition (1984) of language planning included form as well as role planning through certain disseminating agencies, especially schools, colleges and universities. This approach will be used here. These norms involving phonological, morphological, syntactic as well as semantic forms have to be prescribed roles in the language; so that the language can, in turn, function to meet the needs of a developing modern society.

The phase and volume of the output of the activities seemed to be quite modest during the first ten years of the Agency's existence. But after 1970, the strategies adopted were more aggressive, and more determined to enhance the Malay language as the National Language. Initial skepticisms from all ethnic groups, including the Malays, about the weaknesses of the language had to be neutralized by enhancing the language's capabilities in performing its different roles. This was achieved through systematic and rigorous codification and implementation of the language norms, especially in spelling, pronunciation, and lexical expansion.

STANDARDIZED SPELLING SYSTEM

Malay had a sophisticated spelling system based on Arabic letters. However, for the sake of modernization the Roman script was adopted. The first Romanized Malay spelling system was introduced in 1905. It had several weaknesses and needed revision to make it more efficient to meet the new needs. A revision of the spelling system was carried out and a new spelling system was introduced in 1972. New letters O, V, and X were included in the new spelling system to cater for the need to write scientific terms that contain these letters. The convention of using vowel harmonies was further improved for economy and efficiency. Certain writing and punctuation conventions were adopted for clarity. The uses of number 2 to indicate duplication, and a hyphen (-) to mark affixes were discontinued. These changes took into account the latest development in phonology, and other social and pedagogic considerations, which made the system linguistically respectable and one of the most systematic and efficient among modern languages today. It has now become more adequate to handle academic and sophisticated discourse. After three years of trial, the system was further modified and stabilized in 1975. This means that no further changes will be made, at least not in the near future.

STANDARDIZING PRONUNCIATION

Once the spelling system attained stability, pronunciation became the next logical target. Pronunciation was never a big problem in the National Language as it was fairly standardized. However, a few changes were recommended recently to bring it in line with the new spelling system. For example, the pronunciation of the vowel in a word final position had two varieties, [a] and [?] . As [a] is the real sound...
value of the letter a, then it was decided that it should be pronounced as [a]. This change was introduced in schools and government-owned radio and television networks since 1980. This, incidentally, is in consonance with the pronunciation of the Indonesian language which adopted this sound in its standard variety. Secondly, r in word final position will be fully pronounced. The habit of silencing r in word final position was discontinued. The other change made was to encourage speakers to pronounce all words with the Malay sound values. This was done in an effort to eliminate the differing sound values that existed in the source language. For instance, the letter g in English is not consistently pronounced as [g] as in go and gin. This move would standardize pronunciation. Standard pronunciation is essential in order to develop a more efficient language of communication.

COINING TECHNICAL TERMS

One of the most pressing needs of the National Language - vis-à-vis its new role as a language of instruction in schools and universities - was for scientific (?) and technical terms. Teachers and textbook writers needed these terms to express concepts, processes, and names and so on, in their various disciplines. By establishing working committees comprising discipline and language experts, guidelines were formulated. The ISO designed by INFO TERM based in Vienna was used. To date millions of technical terms had been coined for all disciplines. With these scientific and technical terms came the various grammatical and semantic elements, including phonological and morphological forms that affected Malay language. However, with the help of language experts and scholars of various disciplines, the Language and Literary Agency became more sensitive to the idea that these elements have to be regulated and standardized. For instance, bringing half a dozen affixes from English (Greek and Latin origin) with the same semantic and grammatical functions (e.g. a-, -in, -im, -UN, -ab, -an, -ir, dis-, and non-) became more efficiently handled. Though a large number of words were incorporated into a language, a speaker is only involved with a general basic vocabulary and his specialized technical terms. As such a big number of technical terms coined in the language need not bother the general public. Each speaker needs to be concerned with the general vocabulary and technical terms from his own discipline. The total number is small.

The next step in the planning was the compilation of scientific (?) and technical terms into dictionaries. Lists of technical terms were not useful to students or teachers unless accompanied by standard definitions. If standard definitions were not given, differing interpretations may be created by different scholars that could lead to confusion. Translators needed this much more then others as translation efforts can be seriously hampered by the absence of clearly defined terms.

INTEGRATION THROUGH THE NATIONAL SYSTEM OF EDUCATION

These efforts in language codification were carried out to enable the National Language to perform its functions in education and administration. Systematic implementation of the language in these two domains was expected to eventually spread the use of the language to the whole population resulting in an integrated nation with a common outlook (Razak Report, 1956).

As briefly mentioned above, the former Malaysian educational system using different languages (English, Malay, Mandarin and Tamil), with different syllabuses, kept people apart. This policy of aparthood was indeed effective and became in later years a major obstacle in implementing the national education policy. The old system had to be replaced with one that would bring the various ethnic groups together. A common language of instruction and common curriculum content was thought to be the solution. However, implementation of the policy
faced resentments. Fostering the development and cultivation of the National Language was one of the prime objectives of the national education policy. It was an important instrument of national integration, and as such it became an important feature in the national education policy. Therefore, from time to time, from incidents to incidents, the leaders of the country had to bargain, persuade and coax the various ethnic groups to adjust and accept the national education policy. Several issues were more problematic.

THE CHOICE OF BILINGUALISM

Issues relating to medium of instruction swung from the need to implement the National Language as a sole medium of instruction to that of accepting bilingualism to maintain the languages and cultures of other communities. Undoubtedly, some kind of bilingualism would be the legitimate choice. However, there were two varieties possible; (1) parallel bilingualism - when two school systems existed using two different languages, and (2) sequential bilingualism - when two languages were used in the same school system one after the other. To complicate the situation further, a completely monolingual system may also exist within these two systems. Opting for bilingualism would mean perpetuating the divisions among the people. Within a short span of time, the education policy was reviewed and reformulated several times, all due to problems connected with language issues. From 1946 to 1970, the education policies came under heavy scrutiny and several changes had to be made. Until 1995, there were no further reviews. It seemed to suggest that the policy had finally been stabilized and accepted, though much was still to be done to achieve its objectives as a vehicle for political and social integration.

Of course, opinions differ. On one hand there were those who believe that the use of one language would bring unity, others would like to maintain multilingualism as language is only one of the instruments of integration. People speaking differing languages could actually be integrated some other ways. Bilingual education was merely a strategy to improve learning. Debates of this nature was not uncommon. At almost the same time, the United States was also discussing the same issue - fearing that 'bilingual education will somehow destroy the national unity of the United States. … [t]hat … the wave which carried bilingualism into public policy… [would result in] weakening this common American glue and aggravating ethnic tensions and differences…” (Kennedy, 1983:10).

In Malaysia, debates on the effect and impact of bilingualism took place even before independence. In 1946, after the Japanese occupation, a new education policy, the Cheeseman Plan, which advocated free primary (elementary) education in all languages was introduced. Secondary (middle & high school) education would be introduced using the four different languages as media of instruction. The teaching of 'mother tongues' was to be made available in the English schools, and at the same time the teaching of English was to be made compulsory in all vernacular schools. This would have been a parallel bilingualism. The new education policy paid no attention toward the need to integrate the people. This policy was abandoned in 1949 with the demise of the Malayan Union. Asmah Omar (1979) provided more information on the social, political and ideological motives of the plan.

The success of the Malays in bringing an end to the Malayan Union propelled them to seek further benefits and advantages from their colonial ruler. They pressed for educational reforms. The Barnes' Committee which was later set up to look into the plight of Malay education, was unable to propose improvement in the Malay schools without involving the whole system of education. As such, the Barnes' Report (1950) made a radical recommendation that all existing schools should be transformed into National schools in which children of the various ethnic groups would be taught through the medium of Malay
and English. This would have been sequential bilingualism. As expected, the Chinese and Indians reacted strongly against it because they saw this as a move to eliminate their languages and cultural identities. This resulted in the formation of another committee called the Fenn-Wu Committee.

The Fenn-Wu Committee was formed in 1952 to look into the need of the Chinese schools. It had the impression that most Chinese were prepared to accept Malay and English as media of instruction, and at the same time could continue learning their mother tongue to keep their cultural identity. This would make them trilingual. In fact, they actually welcomed the advantages mastery of those languages would give them.

The Fenn-Wu Report seemed to make the same claim for the Indians. Mother tongues of the Indian communities (Tamil, Telugu and Punjabi) were to be retained in Indian schools. (Further information on the development of education for the Indian community can be found in Ampalavanar’s works, 1981:128-136.) The issue on bilingualism raised its ugly head again after 1995, and will be dealt with later.

**COMMON OUTLOOK THROUGH COMMON CURRICULUM CONTENT**

The Razak Report of 1956, and The Rahman Talib Report of 1960 laid the foundation of the education policy for modern Malaysia. Both reports took into account the various proposals made by earlier reports. In the main, the Razak Report brought forth two recommendations; (1) the existing bilingualism in the primary schools would remain, and (2) all schools, irrespective of language medium should use common curriculum content. The Malay medium schools were called National Schools, and Schools using English, Mandarin and Tamil as medium of instruction were categorized as National-Type schools. The use of common curriculum contents irrespective of medium of instruction was easily achieved. It was hoped that the common syllabus content would inculcate common values and outlook in life, and eventually forge a new integrated nation.

Still its implementation faced much resentment. Early efforts to achieve unity through education were too weak and steps taken were not effective to bring about social integration. It merely endorsed prevailing status quo with some curriculum change. The only positive change was that secondary education for the Malays which was neglected before was made available then. The Report was even weaker compared to the Barnes’ report. If Barnes’ report was implemented by the British, integration through language and education could have been more positive.

The policy to establish Malay medium secondary schools was to ‘to bring together children of all ethnic groups under one national education system, in which, Malay was to be the medium of instruction. That would orientate all schools to (have a common) Malaysian outlook (Razak Report, 1956: para 115). The report further said ‘that progress towards this goal cannot be rushed’ (Razak Report, 1956: para 12). However, apart from the slow progress anticipated, it was also hampered by the reluctance of certain officials in the (Malay - necessary to identify the race?) Ministry of Education’s to implement the policy.

Efforts to implement the national education policy outlined in the Razak Report began in 1956. Three schools were established, namely Sekolah Tuanku Abdul Rahman in Ipoh, Sekolah Dato’ Abdul Razak in Seremban and Sekolah Tun Fatimah in Johor Bharu. The first two were for boys and the last for girls. However, implementation of Malay as medium of instruction did not take place immediately. Selected children from national primary schools were given one year of intensive English, in what was called Remove Class, and they continued their education through the medium of English.
Due to the reluctance of the Ministry of Education to implement Malay as medium of instruction in National Secondary schools, the Association of Malay Teachers (Kesatuan Guru-Guru Melayu Semenanjung), staged an en-bloc resignation from their jobs and memberships in UMNO party as a vote of no-confidence in the government's way of enhancing Malay interests. To pacify them, the Ministry of Education established a separate school that used Malay as the medium of instruction in 1958.

This school, which was called Sekolah Alam Shah, became the forerunner of education conducted in the Malay language. More and more national schools were established. The lack of initial confidence in the national schools slowly disappeared after more affirmative actions were taken by the Ministry of Education. However, as the Malay medium schools flourished in terms of size of enrolment, so were schools using English as medium of instruction. In eleven years after independence, whilst students in national schools doubled, enrolment in the English schools increased seven times more.

After the ethnic riot in 1969, politicians and ethnic leaders realized that common syllabus content alone could not bring the population together. They were willing to experiment with another strategy. Thus a systematic implementation of Malay as medium of instruction in secondary schools was introduced. However, Chinese secondary schools were left alone. The conversion of English into the National schools was to take place gradually over fourteen years. This would be implemented until all schools and universities used Malay as a medium of instruction.

At the beginning of the implementation of this new policy, enrolment into secondary schools in Mandarin dwindled as more students opted for the national schools. However, part of the Chinese community resisted this change. Loh Fook Seng (1975) said that the Chinese 'resisted every effort and plan' to change their identity. Kua Kia Soong (1985) also expressed this in the opening sentence of his book. 'The Chinese schools in Malaysia is an accomplished fact, that ... [they] was fought for with blood and sweat.' Today, in Stedman's study (1985), there were still 1,000 Chinese primary schools involving 600,000 children, and 45 private Chinese schools that enrolled 60,000 students. Another study made confirmed that there are 14,000 Chinese students in Johor Bahru alone. Though this could be considered a serious problem which could thwart the plan for integration, secondary Chinese schools were allowed to continue. The wisdom might not be obvious then, but now it could be seen that those schools did produce citizens stipulated in the Razak Report (1956). In fact, ironically, in 2003, the Ministry of Education discovered that some 60,000 Malays were enrolled in the Chinese medium schools.

**SOME PERSISTING THORNY ISSUES**

The initial attempt to implement the national education policy that used Malay as medium of instruction faced many problems. Some persist until now.

**To Be or Not To Be Bilingual?**

The successful implementation of the national education policy was not without its negative effects. As mentioned before, the Chinese and the Indians eventually became bilingual and trilingual as observed by Fenn-Wu (1952). They mastered the National Language, their respective mother tongues, and English. They understood the advantages well. On the other hand, the Malays, especially those from the rural areas, systematically became monolinguals. They received their education in Malay, but failed to achieve even a rudimentary level of English. Teaching of English in the rural schools with no reinforcement outside the classroom had little success. As a result they became seriously handicapped in securing employment and pursuing higher education in English speaking environments.
Ironically, the Barnes' proposal of 1950 recommended bilingualism, and was endorsed by the Malays, but resented by the non-Malays. Yet twenty years later the Malays who had earlier accepted bilingualism became monolinguals and the non-Malays, bilinguals.

There was no simple solution to this. The Malays must accept the fact that they too must be bilingual. The process of national integration might be in jeopardy again, for a monolingual community will suffer serious disadvantages compared to the bilingual ones. Educational institutions are already showing some firmness in this aspect of 'bilingualism.' In fact all the universities in the country insist that students attain a working knowledge of English before or during the course of their studies, failing which they face failure or deregistration. Such a strict policy is found desirable as university education would seriously be handicapped if students cannot consult texts and reference books in English. Even when basic text books are available in Malay, reference materials still remain in English.

The question of becoming bilingual is accepted by all. It has ceased to be an issue. The big question is how. The new Education Act (1996) made many changes toward this end. It allowed the establishment of private universities and colleges. It also made possible the use of other languages. Thus UTAR and several other private universities, for example, were established. At the same time the public ones were corporatized. The use of English and other languages became more liberal. Institutions wishing to do so need only obtain the approval of the Minister of Education.

The present system of education in Malay is judged to be successful. It has produced graduates and professionals that helped to develop the country. Thus, some Malays do not see the need to change the national education policy. UMNO political leaders are also of the opinion that the Malay language is already stable. Thus, the Ministry of Education can now reintroduce English as a medium of instruction to teach Mathematics and Science in all schools, colleges and universities. This was disclosed in the *Sunday Times* on 9 July 1995.

The disclosure brought opposition from all quarters, but chiefly from the Malays and Chinese. Representations were sent but the Ministry of Education remained evasive and elusive. Finally, in 2003, the plan was announced, and the use of English in teaching mathematics and science would be introduced in the primary schools beginning 2003. The Malay, Chinese and Tamil leaders were adamant. They met and sent representations to the minister and the prime minister but to no avail. In fact the ministry became more aggressive. Another announcement at the end 2002 indicated that the use of English in teaching mathematics and science will be carried out at all levels; from the primary school to the university. However, the Chinese school teachers were more firm. They accepted the use of English on condition that Chinese would remain. What was taught in English would be repeated in Chinese. No such condition was mooted by the Malays. Thus, once again, the Malays would end up with one language.

**The Case against Bilingual Education**

Ellen Bialystok, professor of psychology at University of York, Toronto, Canada, did a study on cognitive development among children subjected to bilingual education (Bialystok, 2001). Her findings were also echoed by Geneese (1994). Early studies did not produce conclusive evidence that learning through two languages was better. In fact, Macnamara (1966) reported that "bilinguals have a weaker grasp of the language than monoglots," which caused "language deficits." This occurred due to four factors. (1) differences in languages confused the children, (2) cultural assimilation was important in learning a language, and this was absent among children, (3) learning imitate good models, and there was no such models in
homes where the parents did not speak the language, and (4) children may have passed the "critical period" to learn a language naturally.

According to Bialystok, children faced difficulties in a bilingual system of education. Only children with a good command of the second language would be successful. This meant that only children from the middle class would be successful. Certain languages have a cultural overlap with the mother tongue. Where such overlaps occur, students will have an advantage over other students that have a mother tongue which is very different from the second language, causing them to lag behind. Such a move, as using English to teach Science and Mathematics, implemented in early 2003, would put children in the rural areas, rubber estates, and city fringes at a disadvantage. These children have no command of English at all. They will receive no help in learning English at home as parents of these lower income groups living in these areas do not speak English.

The Need to Build a Body of Basic Knowledge in Malay

The Language and Literary Agency was efficient in publishing books for use in the primary and secondary levels of education. Acute shortages occurred at the tertiary level. Publishing academic books for tertiary education was difficult and unrewarding financially. Since the readership was small, royalties can be very meager. To both publishers and writers, all this can be very frustrating. Translations would be more rewarding financially, but tougher and bothersome with copyright issues. In 1967, ten years after the establishment of the Language and Literacy Agency, only 545 titles were published. Few were for tertiary education, and fewer still for science and technology. In a survey conducted in 1987, there were approximately 7,000 courses in the universities but only 380 titles were translated for tertiary education. Students had to rely on books written in English.

This situation became more acute after 1995 when the New Education Act made translation efforts redundant. Roosfa Hashim (2003) provided the statistics below to indicate dwindling efforts to publish tertiary books in Malay.

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Figure 1: Publishing Statistics of Council for Academic Books 1990-2003

Malay Language activists saw this as a step backward. The Malay Language was developing well. A stock of basic knowledge in the language would be necessary for intellectual development of its speakers.

Fear of Cultural Domination
While the implementation of Malay as a medium of instruction in schools and universities was successful, fear of loss of cultural identities and domination by the indigenous culture became apparent. Three issues demonstrated this point. On one occasion some Chinese reacted vehemently against the Ministry of Education's move to promote non-Mandarin educated teachers to senior positions in Mandarin primary schools. In 1998, part of the Chinese and Indian communities, demonstrated against the University of Malaya's senate decision to use Malay as medium of instruction in the non-language courses in Chinese and Indian Studies Departments. Interestingly, nobody felt the same way when English was used to teach all such courses in those departments (including Malay Studies). The third incidence occurred when an integrated school system was suggested by the Ministry of Education in early 1990's. Under this system, Malay, Mandarin and Tamil schools will be located in one compound. The move did not suggest that the medium of instruction be changed, but merely a strategy to get the children of the three ethnic groups to mix freely and use the Malay during extra curricular activities. This was also resented. Agreement was only reached when assurance was given that they be allowed to use their respective languages in all the extra curricular activities, including teachers meetings which can be conducted in their respective languages. Undoubtedly, there is unwillingness to give up one's identity.

Collective Memory of a Race

Fear on losing ones' identity with the loss of ones' language is a real one. Within a language is the collective memory of a race. Once the language is lost, so is the collective memory. The memory contains values, ethics, culture, etc. of a race. Once a new generation loses the language of their parents, they lose the whole collective memory. In other words they will no longer be Malays, Chinese or Indians as their forebearers. They will acquire the values, ethics and culture of the new language.

Sensitivities of the Term "Malay"

The Malays also had their fair share of linguistic sensitivities. This is one of the sensitive repercussions indicated by Watson (1984), 'how will the Malays view the non-Malay citizens who have become proficient in their language and use it in every aspect of their lives?' A couple of events demonstrated this clearly. The first appeared in the name of the National Language itself, and second was the use of Malay in churches.

A group of Malay scholars insisted that the constitution of the country stated that Malay is the National Language, not Bahasa Malaysia. Bahasa Malaysia was a name that emerged after the May 13 1969 ethnic clash. A name that came to be used to denote a common element among them. Therefore, the new name Bahasa Malaysia would give it the Malaysian character.

The latter was an issue regarding the use of Malay in the church. As Malays are Muslims, the use of Malay in churches was conceived with mixed feelings. There was a fear that Christian literature in Malay will influence the Malays. After all Christian literature in English did have some influence on the English speaking Malays. However, the use of Malay in Christianity was not new. Ever since Christian missionaries came to Southeast Asia (circa 1500 AD), they had employed Malay to reach the natives. The Malays may have to cope with this. Maybe an analogy can be drawn from the Arabic case to allay the fear of the Malays. In many Middle Eastern countries, Christian Arabs also use Arabic in their daily religious rituals. The Muslim Arabs are not influenced. Will the Muslim Malays, on the other hand, be influenced if Christian religious rituals are carried out in Malay?

Silent Policy on Other Languages
Amidst these developments, one could make a few general observations regarding the status of Mandarin and Tamil in Malaysia. Though the languages were not given official status, they were free to grow and thus ensuring language maintenance. Paradoxically, if these languages were made official, then their use could be subjected to certain restrictions vis-à-vis the National Language, and hence may not enjoy full freedom. This is regarded as an unofficial policy. The process often works in two contradictory ways; (1) by reinforcing weak implementation of National Language policy; (2) by filling communication gaps overlooked by official policy (Noss, 1984: 5).

One may also observe another interesting feature of language issues in Malaysia. Despite criticism that the Chinese and Tamil languages are not given their proper recognition, the Chinese schools are actually undergoing considerable growth. Although establishing new schools are not permitted, there is always a loophole that can be exploited. For example, branches of the existing schools can be set up without many encumbrances. As a result the Chinese schools in major cities keep growing in size (though not in number) and enrolment.

However, the use of Chinese and Tamil in the mass media - especially in newspapers - is widespread. The Government has not shown any interest to control the printing of these newspapers. This is a positive indicator that the government has a healthy policy toward the use and retention of these languages by their respective communities.

Of all the newspapers, the Sin Chew Jit Poh and the Nan Yang Siang Pau has the biggest daily circulation of almost one million. So is the Tamil newspapers and magazines. Even the very small minority group of Sikhs used to have their own newspapers: *Malaya Samachar*.

One other significant phenomenon in language influence is the influx of Cantonese (and Mandarin) films and videos from Hong Kong and Taiwan. Their constant screening in the local theatres and on television networks is another testimony to the relative freedom of Chinese to perpetuate their language and identity. Similar phenomenon is true of Tamil and Hindi films. Currently, with the open-sky policy, the influx of foreign movies is intensified. With ASTRO overwhelming the media and entertainment industry, Malaysians can view close to 20 channels of English programs, seven in Chinese, one in Tamil, and one in Arabic, twenty four hours a day. Only two Channels (RIA and TV1) remained in Malay, interspersed with Chinese, Tamil and English. The Government's only intervention is in the form of minimal regulation - that the films and videos carry subtitles in Malay.

**CONCLUDING REMARKS**

In conclusion, fifty years of language planning had certainly shown that Malaysia has achieved some respectable measure of success. Status (role) planning has certainly transformed Malay into a viable language used in education, administration and regional communication (between four Southeast Asian countries). It has also definitely spread in use; from a language that was once used by Malays, and by non-Malays (in a pidginize version), into a language with a standard variety used by all in formal situations. In corpus (form) planning, the Malay language has achieved more success measurable in concrete terms. It has developed a very systematic and efficient spelling system and pronunciation. It now has more than 2.5 million technical terms to handle the need for academic and sophisticated discourse.

We may look at the American situation for comparison. English speaking Americans with their overwhelming Anglo-European culture almost totally subsumed other immigrants, be it from Asia, Latin America or non-English speaking Europe. There are resilient immigrant communities that objected assimilation, as the French in Louisiana, and pockets of Chinese and Hispanic communities. It was
found necessary to legislate English as an official language in California. In my research I find that there are thirty six other states that are in the various stages of following California's footstep. Indeed, Illinois did this earlier in 1836. They included a clause in their constitution which said 'our official language is the American Language,' which no doubt sounded more anti-British than a real need for instituting English as the official language.

In Malaysia, the effort to introduce Malay as a language of education and administration can be more than just the need to have an integrated nation, but also a desperate fight of the indigenous to avoid being overwhelmed by immigrants. (Fiji is a living example.) The one digit majority in term of population gave the Malays a disadvantage. The world views it as a majority nonetheless, yet a majority that is too small to influence a decisive move as the one that have been taken by Indonesia and Thailand. Yet world opinion is against the so-called majority. Its political power can also be compromised by the economic strength of the so-called minorities. The term majority is as tricky as it is deceptive.

Edwards (1985), in his work on Language and Identity surveyed all the language issues of the world. I cannot fail to note one interesting comment he made on the Malay language issues. He correctly identified the problems, but not the effects. I would not agree with him for saying that the implementation of the National Language has caused hardship to the non-Malays as such a situation was never raised as a problem when they went to the English schools. Surely learning English was also difficult, and it didn't seem to cause any hardship.

Ironically, the successful implementation of the National Language policy produced some adverse repercussions. Rural children tended to be monolingual as English, the second language taught, never attained a respectable level of proficiency due to several difficult factors. Their handicap will be augmented when they are discriminated against in employment, and they will suffer serious setbacks in furthering their education beyond the secondary level. We have to be mindful of the fact that tertiary education will probably remain perpetually dependent on English. Students who are not able to make use of materials in English may risk being trapped in a monolingual situation, unless and until Malaysia develop sufficient stock of knowledge in the Malay language.

Thus, it has been demonstrated that Malay can be said to have attained the objectives set forth earlier in developing new functional forms and roles befitting that of a National Language. It is expected to be able to serve more meaningfully as a language of integration. Of course, there is still one word we have avoided till now. What is integration? What kind of integration do we have in mind? Expression like a cultural melting pot is actually a myth. There can be no blending of a nation to forge a new one of that kind. We can definitely have a multiethnic, multicultural, multi-religious nation; a multilingual nation sharing common values inculcated by a common syllabus. Being homogenous in term of ethnic, religion, culture and language does not automatically spell integration and stability. We have seen enough squabbles and bloody feuds in Northern Ireland, Lebanon and India. Perhaps, we can have more faith in our unity in diversity.

There are some regrets, but also every good reasons to be optimistic about the future for the next generation as an integrated nation. As the 1970 school generation become more skillful in Malay and English they may be more willing to come together to break the ethnic barriers. Perhaps, we can expect more positive results. It will not be without problems. These problems must and can be resolved. We have demonstrated that we can be objective in our thinking and approach to bring about positive changes. It is hoped that these problems can be overcome.
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People in Malaysia are called Malaysians. Malays are a predominately Muslim ethnic group that make up a large portion of the populations in Malaysia, Indonesia and were the descendants for many people in the Philippines. About a hundred different languages are spoken on Vanuatu alone. Malay, Formosan, and most of the languages of Indonesia, the Philippines and Polynesia are Austronesia languages. When Malaysia was a British colony and in the first years of independence, English was the primarily language of upper learning and a prerequisite for getting job and achieving success. Now Malay is the primary language of interaction in Malaysian schools and universities and students no longer need to pass an English exam to graduate. LANGUAGE PLANNING FOR A NEW NATION Malaysia has been involved in deliberate language planning activities for the last fifty years. Such activities brought together not only linguistics and sociology, but also other disciplines such as education, psychology, communication, geography, history and politics, not to mention finance and management. It has been done for hundreds of years. Recently, Norwegian, Hebrew, Turkish and many other languages have been subjected to some form of deliberate changes for refinement, efficiency, and even revival. These were done within the broad definition of nation-building. All had one objective in common, giving an identity to a nation.