

## SOME ASPECTS OF LANGUAGE PLANNING IN MALAYSIA

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Language planning and language treatment may be divided into two aspects:

- (a) the choice of language or languages,
- (b) planned change within the chosen language or languages.

Malaysia is of great interest as it provides the opportunity for the observation of both (a) and (b) aspects.

I shall first briefly consider the background to present policies and their implementation and then consider in particular the decision to make Bahasa Malaysia (at that time known as Bahasa Melayu and later referred to as Bahasa Kebangsaan) the national language. I will also discuss the three main types of agencies involved in language planning and language policy implementation and show their involvement in both aspects (a) and (b). I shall concentrate on West Malaysia (Peninsular Malaysia) as there are certain differences in educational policies in regard to Sarawak and Sabah.

### 1. Pre-Independence Malaysia

Language planning may be considered as the more systematic end of a continuum of language treatment. The kind of idiosyncratic changes in spelling brought about by an

advertiser or the peculiar pronunciation of a television personality, aped by his fans, could hardly be considered as language planning. One might not like to term the deliberate suppression of a minority language as language planning either, although it could be very carefully planned. Obviously there is no sharp boundary between language planning and other types of language treatment but rather a gradation. Obviously, too, language treatment includes action and inaction (Platt & Platt 1975). Doing nothing to provide education in a particular language could be a type of language treatment - even part of a carefully devised plan.

In pre-Independence Malaysia, various Christian denominations and eventually the colonial government provided English language medium education. Fees were charged and education was not compulsory. Basic education in the vernacular was provided free for Malay children but continuation in English was necessary for those who were to obtain higher paid employment or entry to tertiary institutions in Singapore. Similar education in Tamil was provided for the children of indentured Tamil labourers from Southern India but higher education meant education at English-medium schools. In reality, only the somewhat better-off Indians or Malays could send children to English-medium schools, although the sacrifices made by some parents to send at least one child through primary and secondary school and even beyond were - and are - remarkable.

Chinese language-medium schools were established by the Chinese communities and some Chinese students did continue education in China. However, English-medium education was virtually essential for employment and advancement in all but the most humble positions in European businesses and in government service.

The language situation in Malaya in the days before independence would probably have seemed extremely confusing to an investigator not familiar with the communication networks in operation. However, there was some system in it - completely unplanned though it was.

Most Chinese spoke their own 'dialect' (except for the Babas, descendants of early settlers, who spoke a creolized variety of Malay), Malays spoke their own regional variety of Malay, Indians spoke their own languages - with Tamil the predominant one among the Southern Indian workers on rubber plantations, on the wharves, on tea estates.

However, it was not simply a matter of no inter-ethnic (or inter-Chinese 'dialect') communication. Among the English-medium educated, English became the lingua franca -- as well as being the language which linked them to the outside world.

Among the Chinese, there was almost always a dominant 'dialect' and those who were not native speakers of it acquired it in varying degrees. If they came as immigrants, or if they moved from an area where another 'dialect' was dominant, they acquired at least enough for basic communication. If a child grew up in an area with a dominant 'dialect' different from the dialect of his parents, he usually acquired fluency in it at an early age. To some extent, too, Mandarin became not only a lingua franca but a prestige variety fulfilling H functions (Ferguson 1959, Platt & Platt 1975) among the Chinese educated.

For inter-ethnic communication when at least one of the interlocutors was not English-medium educated, the lingua franca was the pidginized form of Malay -- Bazaar Malay (or Bahasa Pasar). Thus, without any form of government planning, Malay, although in a simplified and pidginized form and although fulfilling only L functions (Platt & Platt 1975) became the speech variety spoken in varying degrees by virtually all inhabitants of Malaya for inter-group communication.

## 2. The National Language

Fishman (1968:6) has stated of new nations that "in the absence of a common, nationwide, ethnic and cultural identity [they] proceed to plan and create such an identity through national symbols that can lead to common mobilization and involvement above, beyond, and at the expense of pre-existing ethnic-cultural particularities. It is at this point that a national language is frequently invoked . . . . as a unifying symbol."

Even before complete independence in 1957 the Malayan government had set about the establishment of Malay as national language. However,

the immediate operational needs of the country may well necessitate the short-term recognition of another or of multiple languages . . . . . Thus some nations have hit upon the expediency of recognizing several local languages as permissible for early education (i.e. grade one to three or even six), whereas the preferred national language is retained for intermediate education and a non-indigenous language of international significance is retained (at least temporarily) for government activity and higher education (Fishman 1968:7).

Article 152 of the Federal Constitution states:

The National Language is Malay, and Parliament has the right to decide the script in which it may be written. (Romanized script is the official script, but Jawi may be used). Until 1967 English will continue to be the alternate official language; and until then it must be used in all Parliament Bills and Acts. Similarly, both Malay and English may be spoken in Parliament and the State Assemblies, but English remains the language of the Supreme Court until Parliament decides otherwise (Wong & Ee 1975:107).

The National Language Acts of 1963 and 1967 and a consolidating Act of 1971 modify this somewhat. Thus, all proceedings in the courts are to be in the national language or English or partly in one and partly in the other. Also, the texts of all Bills, Acts of Parliament, Enactments and subsidiary legislation issued by any State Government and "of all Ordinances promulgated by the Yang di-Pertuan Agong, shall be in the national language and in the English language, the former being authoritative unless the Yang di-Pertuan Agong otherwise prescribes."

Thus we can see that English was retained for some time for the courts and parliament. As mentioned under 3 below, what Fishman states in regard to languages of education has also been generally true in Malaysia, although in this case I would not consider the policy of allowing primary education in Mandarin or Tamil with Bahasa Malaysia as second language to be merely 'expediency'.

Of course, although a language may be made officially the national language, this does not of itself make it de facto the national language. It is the task of various official, or official sanctioned, bodies to bring about changes in language use patterns so that the language does indeed become the national language.

### 3. The National Language and Education

At the time when Malaya was obtaining independence, the government set up a committee (the Razak Committee after its leader Dato Abdul Razak, later Prime Minister)

to examine the present education policy of the Federation of Malaya and to recommend any alterations or 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, economic and political development as a nation, having regard to the intention of making 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; and for this purpose, to examine the educational structure of the country including such provisions of the Education Ordinance, 1952 as may require alterations or adaptations and the measures for its implementation contained in Council Paper on Education Policy, No. 67 of 1954 (Report of the Education Committee, 1956, p.1, quoted by Wong & Ee 1975: 58).

The Report of the Education Committee 1956 (the Razak Report) stated that

there shall be a variety of primary schools falling into the broad types: Standard Primary Schools in which the medium of instruction shall be the Malayan National Language; and the Standard-Type Primary Schools in which the main medium of instruction may be Kuo-Yu (Mandarin) or Tamil or English.

Malay was to be a compulsory subject in all schools since it was the National Language. To ensure that it was taught, knowledge of Malay would be required for admission to all secondary schools supported wholly or in part from public funds, and for entry into government service. English would be compulsory because of its utilitarian value. Chinese and Tamil would be taught in primary schools where the parents of fifteen children requested it. . . . . In secondary schools the medium of instruction might be English or Chinese, and the Government would establish schools where it was Malay (Wong & Ee 1975:58).

From 1966, it would seem that secondary education at government and government assisted schools has been available only in English with Malay as second language or in Malay with English as second language.

As from 1970, the English-medium schools have been in a gradual process of conversion to Malay-medium. According to the Education Act, 1961, however, facilities for the teaching of Chinese (Mandarin) or Tamil will continue to be made available in the national schools where parents of fifteen or more children in a school so request. The planned target date for conversion of all English-medium primary and secondary education to Malay-medium is 1982 when all sixth form classes (except 'other language' classes) should be in Bahasa Malaysia.

At the tertiary level, too, the medium of instruction is being gradually changed from English to Bahasa Malaysia. Thus the system will be such that:

At Primary Level pupils have instruction in Bahasa Malaysia with English as second language OR instruction in Mandarin or Tamil with Bahasa Malaysia and English as second languages.

At Secondary Level Bahasa Malaysia will be the sole medium of instruction with English as second language and Tamil or Mandarin available as extra languages.

At Tertiary Level Bahasa Malaysia will gradually replace English. Here, the problems are considerable because of the number of expatriate staff. Instruction in Bahasa Malaysia is provided for such staff and at Universiti Sains Malaysia, for example, some expatriate staff were already teaching in Bahasa Malaysia in 1975, but others obviously found that the task of presenting lectures in that language was still beyond them.

#### 4. The Media

We may now consider the part of the media in the implementation of the national language policy:

(a) The Press

It may appear at first that the press plays no direct part in language planning as newspapers have continued to be published in English, Malay, Chinese and Tamil as they were before independence. There are also locally produced magazines in the four languages, particularly in English and Bahasa Malaysia.

However, the newspapers published in Bahasa Malaysia are a powerful tool in the introduction and repeated use of new vocabulary and syntactic constructions, particularly in their editorials and articles of a more serious nature. The press, in general, also keeps its readers informed on government language policies and their implementation, e.g. ministerial statements on the place of Bahasa Malaysia, the importance of English as a second language, and so on. A collection made by me of newspaper articles on language policies over a period of three months in 1975 is in the process of being analyzed in detail.

An interesting trend in language requirements can be seen from the employment advertisements which show that proficiency in Bahasa Malaysia is required, not only for government positions, but also for positions with certain private firms.

(b) Radio

On radio, Bahasa Malaysia is the predominant language. Music programmes are announced in Bahasa Malaysia, no matter what the music (except in the case of certain 'sponsored programmes'). The news is broadcast in Bahasa Malaysia, English, Chinese (Mandarin and several 'dialects') and Tamil. Important announcements are given in these languages and advertisements may also be in one of the languages appropriate to the particular 'network', e.g. Chinese on the Green Network.

However, for most of the time it is Bahasa Malaysia that is spoken and there are, for example, more news broadcasts in Bahasa Malaysia than in any other single language. Many non-Malay younger people stated that they listened to the news in

Bahasa Malaysia or English (or Mandarin in the case of some with Chinese-medium primary education), according to what happened to be available at the time. Radio is obviously an important medium for spreading comprehension of Bahasa Malaysia.

(c) Television

There are two networks: the National Channel and Channel Two. On the National Channel all programmes are in Bahasa Malaysia except for 'canned' programmes, e.g. American series, which have Bahasa Malaysia sub-titles. On Channel Two, there are Chinese feature films (in Cantonese or Mandarin) produced in Hong Kong or Taiwan, Tamil and Hindi films and English language films. With a few exceptions, most of these have Bahasa Malaysia sub-titles and the non-English language films often have English sub-titles as well. The news is broadcast in English, Bahasa Malaysia, Mandarin and Tamil. Over all, the proportion of English language programmes on this channel would be higher than Chinese and Chinese higher than Tamil.

Television broadcasts can be seen as an important agent in promoting Bahasa Malaysia and English. To what extent Bahasa Malaysia sub-titles are read by non-Malays is difficult to say although comments by various Malaysian Chinese regarding difficulties in understanding non-Malaysia/Singapore English - especially American English - in films would suggest that some would look at the Bahasa Malaysia sub-titles for help. There are various programmes such as talent quests, variety shows and live sports shows which are in Bahasa Malaysia and which are popular with viewers of various ethnic backgrounds and so it would seem that most television viewers - and they form quite a large number - would be exposed to a considerable amount of spoken and written Bahasa Malaysia.

School television programmes are broadcast in Bahasa Malaysia for teaching mathematics, science and so on and also for teaching Bahasa Malaysia and English. Programmes which I watched were well produced and there is no doubt that school



television will be an increasingly important medium for the implementation of the policy of Bahasa Malaysia as the national language and English as universal second language.

#### 5. Language Planning Bodies

The most widely known language planning body in Malaysia would be Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka. This was established in 1956 to encourage the "development of the Malay language, the production of Malay textbooks and the study of Malay literature" (Wong & Ee 1975:108).

Besides the production of a wide range of textbooks, both original and translated, and the publication of Malay literature (novels, short stories, poetry and literary criticism), the Dewan publishes 'Istilah' (lexicons for various fields such as economics and linguistics), books on linguistics and even a book on how to produce istilah! It has certainly been a vital force in the development of Bahasa Malaysia and the encouragement of modern Malay literature.

Istilah are also produced in other institutions such as at the University of Malaya and the Unit Bahasa at Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang.

A good account of problems in the standardization of Malay, including the coining of new terms, is given by Asmah Haji Omar (1975), a Malay linguist who has herself been an important force in the development of Malay as a modern national language and in the standardization of spelling with Indonesia. She has discussed, among other problems, the non-conformity of lexical innovations to the structure of the Malay language and "conservatism or sociolinguistic purism which looked back to the dialects for words to convey concepts which are non-existent in the dialects themselves."

The problem of word-coinage -- to what extent words should be coined from morphemes in the language and to what extent taken from English (and indirectly Latin and Greek) -- is a problem for any nation developing a language to include

lexicon needed for a modern society. Malaysian practice is, of course, strongly influenced by what has happened and is happening in Indonesia where there seems to have been no disinclination to the incorporation of 'foreign' lexicon.

An examination of Istilah for word-coinage from Malay morphemes versus introduction of foreign words is beyond the scope of this paper but it is noticeable that this depends on the particular lexical field. Thus an Istilah Ekonomi has mostly Malay-based lexicon, except for terms like ekonomi, faktor, insuran. In one page chosen at random, there are 2 non-Malay words (both insuran) out of 101 (less than 2%) whereas in a page chosen at random from an Istilah Kimia, there are 19 out of 56 (34%), e.g. ion manganus (manganous ion), spektrograf jisim (mass spectrograph), valensi maksimum (maximum valency).

In a discussion of language modernization and planning and the terms development, modernization and Westernization, Fishman (1974:90) suggests that

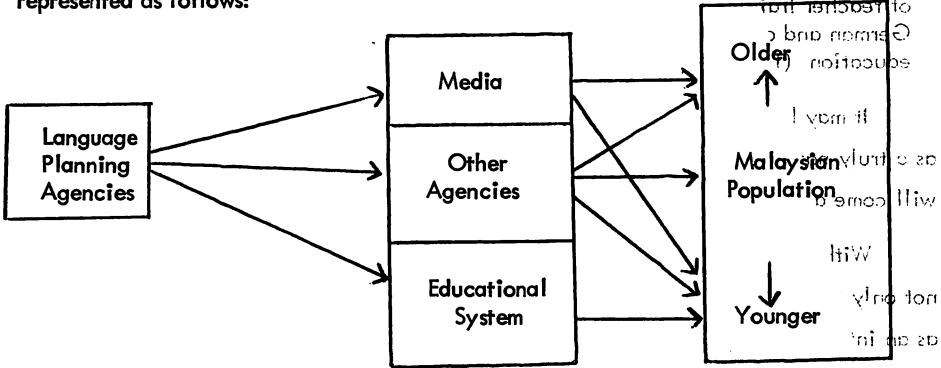
'development' might refer rather more to lexical elaboration, particularly when conducted on the basis of indigenous roots, whereas 'Westernization' might refer to more fargoing changes, e.g. those touching upon the writing system, the pronouns and honorifics in verb forms, etc.

Modernization would be intermediate in these respects. He continues:

"Indonesian . . . . might be said to have proceeded from relative modernization to relative Westernization." Bahasa Malaysia would be similar in this respect. Lexical elaboration is conducted on the basis both of indigenous roots and foreign lexicon, a Western writing system has been adopted for the national language, and the introduction of anda as a neutral second person pronoun has been widely accepted in advertising and broadcasting, official letters and even private letters to non-Malays.

## 6. Conclusions

I have considered in particular three types of agencies of language policy implementation in Malaysia: the education system, the media, and the language planning bodies. Their relationship to one another and to the public may be represented as follows:



The media affect both the older and younger sections of the population. The language planning bodies affect the Malay media and through them at least part of the public - those who read Malay newspapers and magazines in particular. They also have an effect via other agencies, e.g. use of reformed spelling or new lexicon in public signs, notices, etc. In addition they have an influence on the younger part of the population through the educational system, e.g. lexicon for particular fields of study, punctuation, spelling and grammar taught in schools.

The population itself must, of course, be considered as a dynamic entity, with the degree of comprehension and use of Bahasa Malaysia moving up the age parameter year by year.

The main direct agency for the implementation of the national language policy of Bahasa Malaysia as the national language is quite clearly the education system. It has been claimed that

it is the school-language that really lends itself to planning and regulation. Planners may hope to control effectively the kinds of textbooks and the kinds of teacher training . . . . . I am convinced that standard English, French, German and other standard languages are mainly the products of compulsory education (Takdir Alisjahbana 1971:180).

It may be predicted that the standardization of Bahasa Malaysia and its adoption as a truly national language, a language of Malaysians and not simply of Malays, will come about in this way.

With regard to English, it is quite plainly the aim of the Malaysian authorities not only to retain but even to spread the teaching of it because of its vital importance as an international language and language of higher learning and research.

It may be predicted that Mandarin will become one of the languages of culture (in its broad sense) and a 'general language' among the Chinese. By 'general language' I mean something more than a basic lingua franca. It is quite possible that the use of the Chinese 'dialects' will diminish and that Mandarin will become the main Chinese variety of the Malaysian Chinese.

It seems likely that the use of Tamil will gradually diminish and the use of other Indian languages decrease more rapidly as they are not languages of education in Malaysia. Thus the language situation in Malaysia may well come to be:

	MALAYS	CHINESE	INDIANS
H <sub>1</sub>	BAHASA MALAYSIA		
H <sub>2</sub>	ENGLISH		
H <sub>3</sub>	Regional varieties of colloquial Malay	For those with Chinese-medium primary education: Mandarin.	For some: H forms of various Indian languages.
L		Some colloquial forms of Chinese 'dialects' A 'Chinese' colloquial Malay?	Some colloquial forms of Indian language. An 'Indian' colloquial Malay?
	A PAN-MALAYSIAN COLLOQUIAL MALAY?		

It seems quite possible that Chinese - and Indian - influenced Colloquial Malay varieties may develop, akin to what has happened with English in Malaysia and especially Singapore. Although 'native language' characteristics are still to be found in the Colloquial Singapore English of younger Singaporeans, there has been a definite trend towards a pan-ethnic Singapore English.

If this were to happen with Bahasa Malaysia in Malaysia then not only would it be the national H, language but L forms of it would supplant Bazaar Malay and, to a great extent, the L varieties of the Chinese 'dialects' and the Indian languages for intra- and inter-ethnic communication, thus becoming a national language in every sense.

## NOTE

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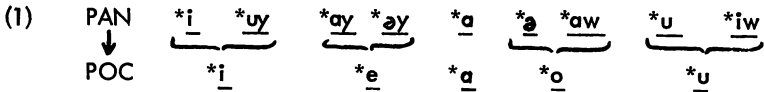
# A NOTE ON THE PROTO-OCEANIC VOWELS<sup>1</sup>

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## O. INTRODUCTION

Followers of the Dempwolff tradition have generally assumed that Proto-Oceanic (POC) has to be reconstructed as having a 'classical' five-vowel system, which is derived from the four vowels and the several diphthongs of Proto-Austronesian (PAN) in the following way:<sup>2</sup>



Of particular interest in this paper are the POC vowels  $*e$  and  $*o$ . Their development from PAN can be seen in the following examples, where their subsequent development in one Oceanic language, Fijian (FIJ), is also shown.<sup>3</sup>

	<u>PAN</u>	>	<u>POC</u>	>	<u>FIJ</u>	
(2)	{ *sakay	>	*nsake	>	ɗake	'ascend, upwards'
	*matəy	>	*mate	>	mate	'die'

(3)	{ *takən	>	*tokon	>	i ti/toko	'staff, pole'
	*laŋaw	>	*laŋo	>	laŋo	'a fly'