LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE AND SHIFT AMONGST SYRIAN ARAB MUSLIM IMMIGRANTS IN KUALA LUMPUR DURING THE COVID 19 PANDEMIC

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2023

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THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS (LINGUISTICS)

FACULTY OF LANGUAGES AND LINGUISTICS
UNIVERSITI MALAYA
KUALA LUMPUR

2023

UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA

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Registration/Matric No: 17014544/1

Name of Degree: Master of Arts (Linguistics)

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ABSTRACT

This research falls within the scope of language maintenance and shift during COVID-19 among the Syrian Arab Muslim community in Malaysia which is a multilingual and multicultural country. This community migrated to Malaysia circa 2011, for many different reasons among those is after the war started in their home country which is Syria. This study focuses on four domains which are employment, education, friends, and home as proposed by Fishman (1972). The main objectives of this study are to explore Language Choice amongst Syrian Muslim families in Malaysia; the reasons for maintaining and/or shifting their Arabic languages; and the strategies followed by parents to maintain the participants' language/s. There are close to no studies conducted during the COVID-19 and the effect hereof on language maintenance and shift among the Syrian immigrants in Malaysia. Qualitative study and semi structured interviews were employed. Online interviews were conducted with 10 families via Zoom application due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings show parents' educational background have not affected children's language acquiring. However, the type of school they go to has affected their language development. This study validates the findings of previous scholars' study on language maintenance and shift where the more the number of domains a minority language is widely used the more likely the language can be maintained. The dissolution of Malaysia being a multiracial country can be a sign of social change in which maintaining the Syrian heritage language has become a challenge, whereas speaking English or Malay is a necessity of life in Malaysia.

Keywords: Language Maintenance, Language Shift, Language Choice, COVID-19, Fishman's Domains

PENGEKALAN DAN PERALIHAN BAHASA DI KALANGAN IMIGRAN MUSLIM ARAB SYRIA DI KUALA LUMPUR SEMASA PANDEMIK COVID-19

ABSTRAK

Penyelidikan ini adalah mengenai pengekalan dan peralihan bahasa semasa pandemik COVID-19 bagi komuniti Muslim Arab Syria di Malaysia, di mana Malaysia adalah sebuah negara majmuk dari segi bahasa dan budaya. Komuniti ini berhijrah ke Malaysia pada sekitar tahun 2011, dan terdapat pelbagai sebab untuk penghijrahan ini, satu daripadanya adalah peperangan yang tercetus di Syria. Penyelidikan ini memfokuskan kepada empat domain iaitu pekerjaan, pendidikan, rakan dan kediaman seperti yang dicadangkan oleh Fishman (1972). Objektif utama penyelidikan ini adalah untuk mengkaji pilihan bahasa bagi keluarga komuniti Muslim Syria di Malaysia; sebab-sebab mengekalkan bahasa atau peralihan kepada bahasa yang lain, dan strategi yang dipraktikkan oleh ibu bapa komuniti ini untuk mengekalkan bahasa mereka. Sehingga hari ini, tiada kajian seperti ini telah dibuat mengenai pengekalan dan/atau peralihan bahasa bagi komuniti ini semasa pandemik COVID-19 dan kesan-kesan kepadanya disebabkan pandemik ini. Kajian kualitatif dan temu ramah separa struktur digunakan. Disebabkan pandemik COVID-19, temu ramah bersama 10 keluarga diadakan secara atas talian. Hasil kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa latar belakang pendidikan ibubapa tiada kesan kepada penguasaan bahasa kanak-kanak komuniti ini. Walaubagaimanapun, jenis sekolah yang dihadiri oleh kanak-kanak ini mempunyai kesan terhadap pembentukan bahasa mereka. Kajian ini mengesahkan hasil kajian yang telah dibuat oleh para ilmuwan yang lepas bahawa jika bahasa minoriti digunakan di dalam lebih banyak domain, kebarangkalian bahasa ini boleh dikekalkan adalah tinggi. Pembubaran Malaysia sebagai negara majmuk boleh menjadi petanda perubahan sosial di mana mengekalkan bahasa asli komuniti Syria di Malaysia boleh menjadi perkara yang sukar, sedangkan penguasaan Bahasa Melayu dan Bahasa Inggeris adalah keperluan bagi kehidupan di Malaysia.

Kata Kunci: Pengekalan Bahasa, Peralihan Bahasa, Pilihan Bahasa, COVID-19, Domain Fishman

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Explanation
CA	Classical Arabic (the language of the Holy book of Muslims
DA	Dialectal Arabic
FLP	Family Language Policy
HL	Heritage Language
KL	Kuala Lumpur
LC	Language Choice
LF	Lingua Franca
LM	Language Maintenance
LMLS	Language Maintenance and Language Shift
LS	Language Shift
MCO	Movement Control Order
MPC	Malacca Portuguese Creole
MSA	Modern Standard Arabic
SA	Standard Arabic
SOP	Standard Operating Procedures
TA	Thematic Analysis
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

In multilingual societies, plenty of social factors contribute to using a preferred variety or language. Moreover, there are varied restrictions related to language choice (LC) confronted by diverse communities (Holmes & Wilson, 2018). In case of language shift, it is most probably that the shift goes towards the dominant and the most powerful group's language (ibid).

Migration could be a reason for language shift, however, other factors can also contribute to this, such as economic, political, and social alternations that might take place in that given society. Additionally, language shift could be slower in rural areas as these communities might attribute great value to their minority language (Holmes & Wilson, 2018).

This research aims to look at the language choice in different domains amongst Syrian Muslim families, who came to Malaysia after the war started in their country from March 2011, within the Malaysian community. This study will help in getting a better understanding on how the Syrian Heritage language, Modern Standard Arabic, the Classical Arabic language, and other languages that might be spoken by these families are maintained and/or shifted since these families came to this country and during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This chapter will introduce the background and context, followed by the statement of the problem, objective of the study, research questions, and significance of the study, scope, and limitation of the study. It will also provide an outline structure to this dissertation. Finally, it will elaborate on the theoretical framework designed for this study.

1.2 Background of the Study

1.2.1 Language and Multilingual Societies

Language is an essential contributor for human interaction and communication as it helps speakers in conveying their ideas and messages in a clear and understandable manner (Yusmawati, Lestari & Hidayah, 2018). The field of sociolinguistics was first formalised in 1964 (Fishman, 1965), and it initially focused on the correlation between society and language (Holmes & Wilson, 2018). Now it has branched into language choice (LC) in multilingual communities, and language maintenance and shift (LMLS) in minority communities.

People used to communicate in the same language (Romaine, 2000). However, this has changed later due to several factors one of which is the mobility of people which happens for various reasons (Pauwel, 2016). It could happen individually, in small groups or even whole communities. Continuous mobility is also the same reason also that made different communities who might speak different languages adjacent (ibid). Adjacent languages or language contact is when languages have effect on each other. For example, some languages might be deemed to shift. Language shift is when a language is desolated on the account of another language (ibid). While language shift refers to language change in the daily use, language maintenance refers to language stability in daily use, as well. Language choice (LC) often refers to "the unconscious choices of individuals exhibited in their daily speech" (Appel & Muysken, 2005).

In multilingual societies, LC is very important as it may lead to achieving or not achieving speakers' needed desires due to the emotional and psychological effects on the addressee (Yusmawati, Lestari & Hidayah, 2018). Hatoss (2013, p. 18) used the term "speech community as opposed to language community as it refers to a group of people who interact through a language or a range of languages rather than a group defined on the basis of their first common language". In immigrant societies where immigrants try

to adapt to the new community by learning the host language, their mother language might witness a shift. Language Shift (LS), another aspect that will be focused on in this research, can be defined as substituting a language by another as a main tool of integration and communication within a certain society (Potowski, 2013). As proposed by Fishman (1964, 1991), languages can be preserved through several domains including home, close friends, community, etc. Moreover, Kaplan and Baldauf (1997) proposed that Language Maintenance (LM) can be divided into community language maintenance and dominant language maintenance. Apart from the need to maintain a community language which might be facing extinction, there is also a need to maintain dominant language to prevent significant language from drifting away from the standard model (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997). However, the way the minority or the immigrants' communities view their HL, value or devalue it, and/or prioritise or deprioritize its use in the family milieu are factors that contribute to LMLS.

1.2.2 Language and Religion in Malaysia

Malaysia is a country located in Southeast Asia. It is a multi-ethnic country with three main ethnic groups, i.e., Malays, Chinese and Indians. This non-homogeneity resulted in a multilingual country with an estimation of 41 languages as each ethnicity has its own language/s and dialect/s (John, 2015). However, the two languages that are widely understood and used in Peninsular Malaysia are Malay language and English. Malay language is the national language in this country (Darmi & Albion, 2013). It is also the medium of teaching in the governmental schools (Asmah Haji Omar, 2003). English language, on the other hand, is also widely spoken in the country but mainly in Kuala Lumpur (KL), i.e., the capital of Malaysia, and it is considered the business language (Murugesan, 2003) as well as a compulsory subject in schools (Darmi & Albion, 2013). However, it must be noted that language proficiency in English is not the same for all Malaysians (John, 2015).

The official religion in Malaysia is Islam, as the majority of the Malaysian society are the Malays, and Malays are Muslims. Despite that, different ethnic groups practise their different religions freely in this country. According to Nazri, Talib and Sulaiman (2019), practicing religion freely is one of the reasons that Muslim immigrants take Malaysia as a destination.

1.2.3 Arabic Language and Culture

The Arab league consists of 22 Arab countries located in Eastern Africa, Western Africa, Northern Africa, and Western Asia. For some of these countries, Arabic language is considered one of the official languages, but for others, it is considered the sole official language. The Arabic language is of a Semitic origin. According to Alhussein Almbark and Hellmuth (2015), this language is divided into three parts i.e., the Classical Arabic (CA), the Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), and the Dialectal Arabic (DA). CA is the language of the Quran, i.e., Muslim's holy book, while MSA is the formal language used in books, news, formal speech, etc. Different Arabic dialects are used in different Arab countries, and they might differ within the borders of the same Arab country, as well.

Syria is one of the Arab League countries located in the Western part of Asia. It consists of fourteen governorates. Its capital is Damascus which is also known colloquially as *Ash-sham* (الشَّام) and is located in the southwestern part of Syria. Majority of the Syrian community are Arabs with Islam being the dominant religion in this country with around 70% Muslims. The official name of Syria is Syrian Arab Republic and Syria has two principal languages, i.e., the Standard Arabic (SA) and Spoken Arabic, dialectal Arabic or Heritage language. Hereinafter it will be referred to as the Heritage Language (HL) (*Syria*, n.d.). While the Standard Arabic is used in formal speeches, TV news, and in education, the HL is used in daily communication and interaction. Each governorate

uses a different HL, and different heritage languages are also used within the same governorate.

The country used to consist of over 21 million people before the civil war started in 2011 and the number has since dropped tremendously. 2011 is an unforgettable year for Syrians as it has forced millions of people to relocate internally and/or externally for security reasons. While most Syrians chose to go to neighbouring countries such as Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan or sailing to Europe (Faleh & Ahmad, 2018), a limited number decided to travel to Malaysia. According to UNHCR Malaysia Website 2022, apart from the immigrants and the expatriates, there are 2800 Syrian refugees in Malaysia as of 2022. For those who are not refugees, most are settled in Malaysia under a work permit, study permit, etc. In fact, there are also Syrians who had arrived in Malaysia before 2011.

In this study, the focus will be on the Syrian Muslim families who came to Malaysia after the war started in their country. For Syrians, moving to a country like Malaysia is considered a great change in many different aspects. One of these aspects is the linguistic landscape. In Syria, Arabic is the dominant language with Standard Arabic being the language of the curriculum in schools and universities, and the Heritage Language being the communication language people use in their daily interactions. Hence, Syria is considered a monolingual country (Saour, 1992) a contrary to Malaysia, a multilingual country.

1.2.4 The COVID-19 Pandemic in Malaysia

First reported in 2019, the COVID-19 illness was quickly declared a pandemic, causing panic and chaos throughout the world. Malaysia, amongst many other countries took necessary Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) that would help reducing the transmission of this fatal virus. Part of that SOPs include wearing masks and lockdown. On the 18th of March 2020, Movement Control Order (MCO) 1.0 started. This lockdown

resulted in starting online learning at schools for majority of students. Reopening of schools happened in stages (Harun & Arumugam, 2020). A full reopening was on the 22nd of July 2020. However, due to the constant threat of another wave of COVID-19 variant, another lockdown, the MCO2.0 was reintroduced on the 9th of November 2020 (Menon, 2020). During this time, schools were once again closed and only reopened on the 1st of March 2020 in stages (Perimbanayagam & Yunus, 2021). Final closure of schools, due the third lockdown (MCO3.0) started on the 6th of May 2021 (Loheswar, 2021) and lasted until 14th September 2021. Therefore, since the first MCO started, students were forced to carry out online learning for an inconsistent 13 months and had spent only 6 inconsistent months at school in face-to-face setting.

After 50 years of great prosperity achieved internationally at the educational level, the COVID-19 forced educational institutions to change their ways and quickly interact at different levels, i.e., system, students' needs, reassurance for parents and students, using clear and simple approaches, etc. (Daniel, 2020). Studying remotely means that children would spend more time at home with their parents. Hence, home is the dominant setting in which the language is used. As studies show, the family linguistic milieu has a great role in influencing Language Maintenance and Language Shift (LMLS) (Kang, 2015). One of the study objectives is to look at the progressive influence of the MCO on these families' LMLS.

1.2.5 Syrian Community in Kuala Lumpur

The participants in this study are limited to Syrian Arab Muslim families, parents and their children, who are residing mainly in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The focus is on the families who left Syria after the war started in their homeland, Syria, i.e., 2011 onward. The study looks at the language maintenance and language shift in two

generations, the parents, and their children. The parents were chosen from different educational backgrounds to look at the effect of education on LMLS, if any.

1.2   Statement of the Problem

The study of language choice, language maintenance and identity focuses on investigating the learning process of a specific language from different aspects, including the social and the cultural aspects (Morgan, 2007; Norton & Toohey, 2011). In this sense, language use is seen as a social identity and a dynamic production related to the social and cultural contexts based on everyone's lived experience/s (Hall, 2013). To some extent, learning the dominant language is vital to reshape the lives of immigrants and rebuild their identity in the host country. Moreover, there are various factors determining whether immigrant families become bilingual and/or multilingual; and these factors include school, workplace, as well as the community support for, and the use of, the minority language(s) alongside other languages, etc. (Pauwels, 2005). Research has found that the most cogent motivation for immigrant families to maintain their mother tongue is maintaining the sense of belonging (Bilbatua & Ellis, 2011). Upon the replacement of each generation of the new generation, the inheritance of the language is also experiencing more ordeal. Moreover, the replacement of the environment, the Syrian heritage language might face great challenges. The mother tongue might be influenced by the education and the different experiences received by the Syrian families as a minority community in Kuala Lumpur.

The researcher in this study will investigate the way the native Syrian families respond to the changes such as the change of the linguistic milieu in different domains, and the changes happening due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In fact, there is a lack of research regarding language maintenance and language shift amongst Syrian immigrants residing in Malaysia especially for those who came after the war that had started in Syria.

Apart from that, there are close to no study conducted during the COVID-19 and the effect on LMLS in general among the Syrian immigrant in Malaysia.

Moreover, most of the studies about Syrian society in Malaysia focused on socio and humanitarian related issues regarding Syrians who decided to take Malaysia as their destination after the war. However, none of the studies looked at how the Syrian community in Malaysia are managing their language use in their daily communication and integration, nor were there any studies that looked at how such community is maintaining the language. This is regardless of whether it is the maintenance of the language of the Quran through which they can get a better understanding of their religion or the Syrian dialect which is the heritage language (HL) through which they communicate daily.

It is hoped that this study, which is conducted on the Syrian community, would provide a general impact on LMLS amongst other Arab communities in Malaysia, mainly those who took this country as their destination after the war started in their countries such as the Yemeni, Iraqi, etc. Hence, this study could be marked as a reference for other researchers who might be interested in similar phenomenon. It could also provide an insight on LMLS on Arabic language in multilingual communities that could be compared to similar studies conducted or yet to be conducted on Arabic language in multilingual countries.

1.4   Objectives of the Study

The research aims to look at the language choice of the families in different domains to get a better understanding on how the Syrian Heritage Language (HL), MSA, CA, and other languages that these families might know are maintained and/or shifted after they left their homeland until the time of conducting this study which happened during the COVID-19 pandemic while the families are trying to adapt to the new norms, and the family language use in the Malaysian society.

Hence, this study has three main objectives:

1. To explore the language choice of the families in different domains among Syrian families residing in Malaysia, and to understand the way children acquire the heritage language during the pandemic.
2. To investigate the LMLS among this community in Malaysia and during the pandemic.
3. To investigate the strategies adopted by Syrian families residing in Malaysia to maintain the children's language/s during the pandemic.

1.5   Research Questions

The research questions for this study are:

1. What is the language choice amongst Syrian families in different domains?
2. What are the factors contributing to such language choice in the Syrian families residing in Malaysia?
3. What are the strategies adopted by the Syrian families in Malaysia for maintaining children's language/s?

1.6   Significance of the Study

Living in a country where HL is not a majority could be a great challenge to be maintained overtime by its speakers, mainly for children (Kaveh, 2020) who are considered the second generation in this study. It usually takes awareness and conscious efforts from parents to help their children's HL from being shifted (Kaveh, 2020). Since language is one of the most important tools for communication and integration in any host country (Selmer & Lauring, 2015) with the host society, parents along with their children might be learning the language of that host country. Different challenges might fall between trying to maintain the HL and integrate with a new society (ibid). As per the knowledge of the researcher, no studies have yet looked at LMLS in Malaysia among Arab in general and Syrian immigrants in specific. Hence, it is important to look at how the Syrian parents are managing theirs and their children's language/s along with the language of the host country.

In the light of the great change happening because of the pandemic, researchers all over the world started to conduct studies in different areas with relation to COVID-19. In fact, there have been recent studies conducted with regards to LMLS, but to the researcher's knowledge, none looked at this phenomenon in the light of the pandemic. Due to the lack of studies that have been conducted with regards to language maintenance

and language shift (LMLS) during the lockdown and the repeated MCO, the researcher wants to investigate language maintenance and shift (LMLS) amongst the Syrian community in Malaysia during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well.

Looking at language maintenance and shift (LMLS) within the Syrian community in Malaysia may provide noteworthy insights into other Arab migrants' communities within the Malaysian society in specific and into the Arab immigrants' communities in other multilingual societies worldwide, in general.

Choosing Malaysia as my second home and with good command in English and some background about the Malay language made it easy for me to easily interact with the locals. In fact, I did try to blend in and do charity work when I first arrived in Malaysia, in 2016, I volunteered to teach English for the Arab refugee communities and was truly surprised with the efforts parents are exerting to learn the English language along with their children. The main motivation to conduct this study starts from the language class which I taught many years ago. I would like to learn more about the language choice among this community.

With that being said, it is hoped that this study will contribute to the body of knowledge on language maintenance and shift among Syrian Arab immigrants residing in Malaysia.

1.7 Scope and Limitation of the Study

The scope of this study is narrowed down to language maintenance and shift amongst the Syrian community in Malaysia, particularly in Kuala Lumpur. It is true that this will help us understand LMLS among the Syrian community residing in KL, but not the Syrian community throughout Malaysia. Narrowing the scope of the study only to Kuala Lumpur was due to the limited number of participants that best fits the nature of this qualitative study.

The study on the other hand is also looking at language maintenance and shift in the light of the pandemic in Malaysia. Although the COVID-19 virus has spread worldwide, different countries had different procedures in dealing with it. The Standard Operation Procedures (SOP) in some countries were stricter than others. Some countries, Malaysia being one of them, had long and several Movement Control Order (MCO) starting March 2020 until October 2021, and this frequently forces student to go back and forth between online and face-to-face lessons (see Section 1.2.4: COVID-19 Pandemic in Malaysia).

There is another limitation in this study that is related to the manner of conducting the interviews, the researcher, the subjects of the study and others. This shortage and others will be further elaborated on in their corresponding Chapter (see Chapter Three: Methodology Section).

1.8   Theoretical Framework

Two theoretical frameworks are adopted in this study are the accommodation theory, and the domain theory. The domain theory is a theoretical framework that looks at communicative interactions based on different domains (Breitborde, 1983). The Domains are meant to describe the speakers' linguistic behaviour (Suktiningsih, 2017). In immigrant communities, the home and school are two important domains (Fishman, 1972) that affect children's language continuity and/or shift. These are the two settings in which children communicate and interact the most. While the medium language at immigrant children's school might be the host country's language, their parents would use the heritage language with them at home if parents do not know the language of the host country or if they are interested in maintaining their kids' HL.

Hence, the family linguistic setting is considered crucial in confronting language shifts resulting from the educational and/or social linguistic settings (Fishman, 1991; & Schwartz & Verschik, 2013).

Language maintenance is considered an extra challenge within the families that try to maintain the religious and ethnic languages as one's maintenance or shift is dependent on the other (Fishman, 1991). Holmes and Wilson (2017) stated that migrants can give a vivid example of language shift. According to them, even though the shift is based on several factors, the majority language would replace the minority language over time. Language maintenance usually happens when the community or family realises that learning their original language is worth reviving for their identity inheritance (Asmah Haji Omar, 2014).

Elhami (2020) demonstrated that communicative accommodation happens either consciously or unconsciously, and it can be verbal and non-verbal. It could happen between different range of people such as, teacher and students, physician and patient, different generations in the same family, etc. It is a result of many different reasons. Recently, the immigration reflux has made this phenomenon more apparent. Immigrants face many challenges in the host country, one of which is the language. Having no or very little input about the host country verbal and gesture language make it very clear for the host people to notice this. For example, in Spain, the host people use simplified language or more body language when they talk to immigrants to facilitate their communication (ibid.).

According to Fishman (1964), languages can be preserved through several domains including home, close friends, etc. Within the home domain, this study focuses on the Accommodation Theory to analyse the reciprocal and non-reciprocal communications between parents and their children. Accommodation Theory, which is the second theory in this research framework, proposes that "speech accommodation" is

important in studies that look at LMLS across generations as it shows which generation is trying to adapt to which generation's language (Holmes & Wilson, 2017).

The ethnic language in the Sindhi community in Malaysia has witnessed a shift. In her study, David (1999) found out that the first generation of Sindhi in Malaysia are accommodating their language to that of the younger generation for easier communication by using English instead of their ethnic language, i.e., the Sindhi. However, in intergenerational study conducted on families from Chinese ethnicity in Singapore. The grandparents were steering the language towards English. For them, English is more important for the future of their grandchildren.

1.9   Structure Outline of the Dissertation

In Chapter One, the context of the study has been introduced, the research questions have been identified, the value of such research argued, and the limitations discussed.

Chapter Two will discuss the existing literature that was reviewed to identify key language shift and language maintenance approaches and strategies within the context of immigrant and minority communities.

Chapter Three will briefly discuss the research instrument, research context, data collection procedure, and data analysis. The adoption of a qualitative, deductive research approach will be justified, and the broader research design and the limitation will also be discussed.

Chapter Four is where the findings and discussion will be set, and here the research questions will be answered and discussed.

In Chapter Five, I will wrap up the dissertation, provide a summary of the results and state future directions of this research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1　Overview

This Chapter will define key terminologies used in this study as highlighted by scholars in the field of sociolinguistics, followed by introducing main past studies done in the field of language maintenance and shift. The literature review chapter will also include studies conducted on minority languages within the Malaysian context. Finally, it will highlight some important studies that were conducted on the Arabic language as a minority language.

Research conducted on the correlation between language, society and the human being is appealing to diverse disciplines (Pauwels, 2016, p. 29) and the field of LM and LS is no exception. It is hard to track down this field's exact origin or determine the pioneers, as it is interwoven with other areas of study such as "language contact" (Pauwels, 2016, p. 9). However, there is ample agreement that LM and LS came up in the mid-twentieth century. In 1964, Joshua Fishman had further elaborated on the definition of the concepts and provided suggestions in the field.

In this section, different definitions as provided by scholars will be illustrated. Besides, other key definitions will be elaborated on such as Lingua Franca and Family Language Policy with relation to LMLS.

2.2　Language Maintenance

Language maintenance is defined in the Longman dictionary (Richards & Schmidt, 2013, p. 319) as: "The degree to which an individual or group continues to use their language, particularly in a bilingual or multilingual area or among immigrant groups." Pauwels (2016, p. 1) argues that the concept of "language maintenance" indicates some sort of steadiness and firmness. However, it contradicts the dynamic nature of the communities of the world today and the constant change of languages, especially in

communities where multilingualism is the norm, such as some Asian communities. The term is mainly associated with the minority communities, such as immigrants and indigenous minority groups. In the light of the constant competition with other major language/s, the heritage or the community languages might be in question of maintenance. In fact, Sridhar (1997, p. 275) argued that there is no such thing as absolute language maintenance, based on observations in multilingual communities such as India.

Pauwels (2016, p. 20) defined LM as retaining the first language or its ongoing use. Kaplan, Robert and Richard (1997) proposed that language maintenance can be divided into community language maintenance and dominant language maintenance. Apart from maintaining a community language that is facing extinction, there is also a need to sustain dominant language to prevent significant language from drifting away from the standard model. Fishman (1964, 1991) proposed that languages can be preserved through several domains, including home, close friends, community, etc.

Based on various studies, Abdelhadi (2017) has reported several factors contributing to language maintenance.

1. The more a minority language is used in multiple domains; the more it is deemed to be maintained. The factor that has been opposed by Holmes (2003) who found that the lack of language used in private domains such as the family or the home domain is an inevitable factor that will lead to language shift.

2. Concentration of the populations speaking the minority language and the duration of stay.

3. Cultural-related factors such as the role of the family and the ethnic identity.

4. Linguistic-related factors: In the case of the Arabic language, it is considered a high-status language as the language's speakers related it directly to the holy-Quran (Dweik, Nofal & Qawasmeh, 2014). This positive attitude towards the language was a leading factor in maintaining it.

In general, language maintenance is not considered the norm around the globe, and this is due to the constant mobility of communities. Exposure to other languages is regarded as a major factor leading to language shift. However, a short period of contact with other languages might not lead to a significant linguistic shift (Pauwels, 2016, p.17).

2.3   Language Shift

LS is defined as neglecting a language on the account of another. This does not mean the loss of the language, but rather its absence from a given speech in the community. Pauwels (2016, p. 18) also stated that it could also mean the progressive substitution of the major language.

Asmah Haji Omar (2014) states that language shift is a process from the shift of X to Y reverts to X. The phenomenon usually happens when the community, or family realises that the learning of their original language is worth reviving for their identity inheritance. Kaplan and Baldauf (1997) also defined the language shift to be the change of the trends of language use where the original language begins to be used more prominently.

Additionally, there are different factors or reasons leading to language shift of a minority language in a multilingual community. Below is a list of few reasons amongst many others:

1. The ethnic language is not the national language nor the educational language. It is merely useful in the home domain. Furthermore, not knowing the ethnic language does not affect their ethnic identity. An example to that is the Malaysian Iyer community (Mukherjee & David, 2011, p.33). Heritage language or ethnic language is defined in Longman dictionary (Richards & Schmidt, 2013, p. 260) as: "the language a person regards as their native, home, or ancestral language.

This may be an indigenous language (e.g., Welsh in Wales) or immigrant languages (e.g., Spanish in the US)."

2. The community has priorities in choosing the language. They would, for example, use the language that would lead to "economic survival", to status and wealth (Mukherjee & David, 2011, p.34)

3. Emotional attachment to the ethnic language which might be more appreciated and maintained by the elder generation and shifted by the younger generations who might not find a logical reason for learning the HL (Mukherjee & David, 2011, p.34)

4. Exogamous marriages might also lead to language shift. For example, the exogamous marriage in the Sindhi community in Kuching, Malaysia (Mukherjee & David, 2011, p.69)

5. Laws or policies in some countries do not support using the minority languages as a part of the educational system (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000, p. 291) which might lead to language shift, and more than that to language loss or death. An example of that is the punishment of five school-students for using their mother Finnish tongue in the school-breaks in Sweden (ibid. p. 295).

In the field of anthropology and sociolinguistics, language revitalization is considered a part of language shift and it is considered a feasible goal in language planning (King, 2001, p. 199). One example is the Saraguro community. It is considered one of the most indigenous groups in Ecuador. Recently, their native language, i.e., Quichua, has witnessed a huge decline and shift towards the monolingual Spanish (King, 2001, p.14). This has led the Saraguro to have more power and control over their communities and schools. This resulted in the increasing use of the Quichua on both the individual and collective levels in order to revitalise the language. In his book, King (2001, p. 197) suggests that the language loss in the home domain happens at the end.

However, the revitalization process does not necessarily start from there but rather from the formal or the public domain.

Ojibwe language is also one of the indigenous languages that is predicted to die within a century. In their research study, Hermes, Bang and Marin (2012) have tried to explore the practical and theoretical means that might contribute to bringing language learning back to indigenous families and homes, rather than being inclusive to schools. The study suggested three ways to revitalise Ojibwe language, such as, 1] immersion programmes at schools; 2] ceremonial experiences; and 3] Ojibwe film-making events such as camps.

Language revitalization planning is considered an attainable aim. However, not all language revitalization planning is successful. Some attempts might fail as the language planning requires the presence of national and regional level as well as official attention. Without sufficient support, language revitalization planning might flop (King, 2001, p. 204).

2.4   Lingua Franca

A lingua franca (LF), according to the Longman Dictionary (Richards & Schmidt, 2013, p. 340) is defined as "a language that is used for communication between different groups of people, each speaking a different language. The lingua franca could be an internationally used language of communication (e.g., English), it could be the native language of one of the groups, or it could be a language which is not spoken natively by any of the groups but has a simplified sentence structure and vocabulary and is often a mixture of two or more languages. The term lingua franca (Italian for "Frankish tongue") originated in the Mediterranean region in the Middle Ages among crusaders and traders of different language backgrounds. The term auxiliary language is sometimes used as a synonym for lingua franca."

Samarin (1987, p. 371) defined LF as a means of communication among people who do not share the same mother tongue. It is used in situations where the linguistic verbal communication becomes difficult to understand or in situations where dialects of the same language is very different. While some LFs are settled in "informal situations" such as the case of acquiring a second language, others are settled in more "formal settings" such as schools. An example of the latter case is SA and CA in the Muslim countries. The spread of a given LF might be based on certain factors such as migration, colonisation, trade, religion, etc.

The English language as an LF is the most widely spread language, with speakers on all the continents of the earth (Clyne & Sharifian, 2008). In countries such as those within Asia or Southeast Asia, policymakers are facing problems where they must balance between the use of national languages and English language (Kirkpatrick, 2012). National languages are important in promoting the unity of the nation and the unity of the races speaking different languages. The challenge is by trying to make the relationship between international and national languages complementary rather than competitive (ibid.). Adding on to that problem is that English is encouraged to be used as a medium of instruction at a growing number of private and public schools in Asia. An exception to that is the Mandarin language, of which there is a constantly rising demand of it, both in Asia and worldwide (ibid).

Mandarin, amongst other languages such as French and Spanish is also considered a lingua franca and is having a similar international impact as that of English (Plumb, 2016). Many researchers stated that Mandarin Chinese is rapidly growing internationally due to China's powerful economic and political position (Hua & Wei, 2014; & Kirkpatrick, 2011). However, with over 50 minority groups in China (Gao & Smyth, 2011), this made unifying it an impossible mission. Throughout history, attempts have been made by policy makers to unify it by the means of singular language (Bianco, 2007).

In fact, some researchers state that Mandarin Chinese will be the LF amongst the different Chinese ethnic entities both inside and outside China, while others state that it will be LF throughout East Asia (Ding & Saunders, 2006). Not only that Mandarin is also predicted to grow internationally, putting it on the same global position as that of English language (Zhao & Huang, 2010).

Another example is Malaysia, where, as a multi-ethnic and multicultural country, has three main races: 1] Malaysian Malays; 2] Malaysian Chinese; and 3] Malaysian Indians. In Malaysia, English falls not only as a second language but also as a globalisation language that serves the business language in the country (Yaacob et al., 2011). On the other hand, the Malay language is considered the unifying language amongst different ethnic groups as it is the national language of the country (ibid).

Within the Malaysian setting, English is widely used as a second language, and it gradually established its leading position in politics, economy, culture, education, and other domains over time (Sidek, 2017). Now, not only people in Malaysia, but most of the global community are using English as a lingua franca. This establishes the irreplaceable position and the absolute power of the English language. It has been made a primary communication tool for people from different backgrounds in Malaysia (ibid) and worldwide (Ke, 2015).

On the other side of the world, the United Arab Emirate (UAE) has also rapidly transformed itself into a multicultural country, partly due to the discovery of petroleum, which helped in changing a desert into an attractive urban city. This has attracted a workforce that comes from different parts of the world with a number that exceeded the Emiratis themselves (Hopkyns, 2014). The newcomers use the English language as a lingua franca. In her study, Hopkyns (2014) used an open answer questionnaire to investigate the opinions of 47 Emirati female respondents regarding the English language and Emirati's identity and culture. The participants reported that the English language is

essential in communicating with others within the country and abroad, finding a good job opportunity or keeping a job, helping their children with their English, and enjoying music and English-language movies. Most of the female participants had a positive attitude towards international English. However, most participants found that the English language had transformed the culture into becoming more open to others, in terms of appearance, and lifestyle. It also caused a decline in the use of Arabic, which is considered the mother language of the Emiratis, due to a deep desire to perfect the accent of international English. The participants of this study were divided into two. The first thought that the increased use of the LF did not affect their identity, an opinion that was opposed by the other half of the participants.

In Japan, however, empirical research conducted by Saito (2012) on middle school students found that the students cherish the native English language and visualise using the English language in a native milieu. Hence, the English language is envisioned to be used in an English community setting. This is opposing the current trend, which promotes English as a global language.

Over time, the continuous use of LF might lead to changing language patterns and structures and it might even substitute the indigenous languages (Samarin, 1987 p. 373). Some researchers (House, 2003) have refuted the current argument against LFs such as the English language forming a threatening remark on multilingualism and on the national languages. Hatoss (2003) calls for embracing this language as a whole for all the goodness that comes with it as an LF.

2.5   Family Language Policy

Family language policy (FLP) in an important field of study in sociolinguistic. Curdt-Christiansen, (2016) raised the question of why some children who were fostered in multilingual or bilingual milieu are able to attain similar levels of expertise in both minority and majority languages.

Recent evidence showed that the family environment is important to LMLS as it contributes to kids' linguistic trajectory (Schwartz & Verschik, 2013). Fishman (1991) viewed the minority family linguistic milieu, between kids and parents, and kids with each other, as a powerful force in the face of external influences such as social and educational settings.

Schwartz and Verschik (2013), view family milieu as a key requirement for language preservation and maintenance. Family Language Policy (FLP) focuses on exploring the way and the reason families maintain, shift and/or develop multiple languages (Chevalier, 2013). While trying to maintain children's language/s, parents face challenges (Schwartz & Verschik, 2013). Not all families manage to find the effective strategies or the right tools that enable them to overcome or deal with the obstacles that might hinder them from learning the language of the host country whilst also maintaining the mother language. In the past few years, researchers began to shift the study of language policy to focus on a bilingual/multilingual family environment. Researchers have broadened the study range of FLP to include respondents from a variety of socio and economic backgrounds, for example, middle-class families (Hill & Hill, 1986), families with adopted children (Andrew, 2014), binational families (Ogierman, 2013), and families with a minority language background (Patrick, Budach & Muckpaloo, 2013). In general, FLP scholars are concerned with and trying to explore the use of parental discourse strategies, as well as linguistic environment in keeping a balance between

bilingualism or among multilingualism (Chevalier, 2013; and Schwartz & Verschik, 2013). Based on these queries, FLP researchers focus on parents' efforts to preserve HL by modifying their children's language development (Spolsky, 2012).

Under the current circumstances accompanied by the COVID-19 Pandemic which forced schoolchildren to stay at home for their safety and attend their classes online, new challenges, new fears might appear which might require parents to adopt novel strategies.

2.6   Language Maintenance and Shift in the Context of Malaysia

Selecting a certain language to be used in certain situations or circumstances is based on cultural and social contact and the occurrence of that given language/s (Yusmawati, Lestari & Hidayah, 2018). Language choice of a growing group can lead to maintaining or shifting the first language or using a mix of languages (ibid).

Usually in multilingual and multi-ethnic communities, everyone has more than one language in their linguistic repertoire (Yusmawati, Lestari, & Hidayah, 2018). Fasold (1990) believes that for multilingual users, they might need a multilingual environment when dealing with different affairs. For example, there would be one specific language for them to use at home or with friends, another one could be used for business-related matters, and even a third language for governmental processes. Similarly, Gal (1987) also mentioned that someone's language choice is structured, which is inseparable from social status, places, or situations. David (2008) suggests that there are many factors that could influence the language choice such as social relationship, age, ethnicity, occupation, place, media, etc.

Speakers might switch a language according to the social situation they are involved in based on their linguistic repertoire (Suktiningsih, 2017). Suktiningsih (2017) conducted a study on Sasak teenager as a minority language in Malaysia in four domains as suggested by Fishman (1968). Using the sociolinguistic approach in this quantitative

study, the findings show that teenagers use Sasak language at home. In school, they use the Malay language with their teachers and they rarely use the Sasak even with their Sasak peers. According to the researcher, this might be because the children might be influenced by the instruction languages used at school. Most teenage participants do not use Sasak in religious situations. Within their neighbourhood, the teenagers' choice of language depends on the addressee and the topic at hand.

In Malaysia, around 100 languages have been detected so far, with the majority having its base on the Malay language and the dialects (Gordon, 2005). Other languages commonly found in Malaysia include Chinese such as the Mandarin and Hakka, and the Indian such as Tamil and Sindhi. Besides these majority languages, there are also other indigenous languages such as the Iban. This makes Malaysia a "widespread linguistic mosaic" as described by Karchner-Ober, Mukherjee and David (2011). In Kuala Lumpur (KL), English is used more than in any other states because KL is considered a business centre in Malaysia.

Opposite to the subtractive impact of the law and the coloniser's monoglossic ideology shown in some recent studies (see for example: Hiebert & Rojas, 2021; Kaveh, 2020; Harwati, 2020; Bouchard, 2019; Bihan-Gallic, 2021; and Dubiel & Guilfoyle, 2021), the studies on minority languages in Malaysia did not show such subtractive influence. See for example the two LMLS studies conducted on two minority languages in Malaysia, i.e., Kristang and Sindhi, by David and Noor (1999); and David (1999) respectively. Both studies were conducted quantitatively across generations. Both studies show that the language shift occurs across all generations with the minority language being dominantly used by the older generations. David (1999) found that LMLS differs across generations and within the same generation. Both studies show that the English language is more dominant amongst the younger generation. However, the Sindhi culture was maintained despite having a shift in the Sindhi language.

More recent exploratory research (Kaur & David, 2019) was conducted on the second largest immigrant Indian community in Malaysia with regards to language, culture and religion maintenance and shift on Punjabi, Sikh. Using thematic analysis to look at the data, it was found that cultural values are deemed more essential than the Punjabi language itself. Moreover, most of the participants find no connection between understanding the teachings of the religion and understanding Punjabi because, for them, the English language is considered sufficient to convey the meaning. Hence, the relationship between religion maintenance and language maintenance is not considered interchangeable.

This study is related to the subject of this research, which involves language maintenance and/or shift in Arabic – the language in which the Quran was written. However, unlike Kaur and David (2019) who focused on a community that immigrated from India to Malaysia in the second half of the nineteenth century, the subjects of this study – the Syrian community – are considered relatively new immigrants. Therefore, unlike the three generation of Indians in Malaysia, the Syrians in Malaysia have only been since the 2011 war. Hence, my study looks at two generations instead of three - the parents and their children - and focuses on the parents' ideology towards language and religion.

In their study, Pillai, Soh and Kajita (2014) looked at an endangered language represented by the Malacca Portuguese Creole (MPC). Using the language policy model adopted by Spolsky (2004), their study aimed to investigate the role played by the FLP regarding MPC. The findings are similar results to more recent research conducted within Malaysia as well as those conducted by Kaur and David (2019). Both studies found that the transmission of the culture (Pillai, Soh & Kajita, 2014) and religion (Kaur & David, 2019) was not related to the transmission of the language within the family. In both studies, HL is maintained mainly by the elderlies as the younger generation shifted more towards English.

2.7   Recent Studies on Language Maintenance and Language Shift

The field of LMLS could be connected to the study of contact language because languages proximity is not only considered a norm (Pauwels, 2016, p. 17), but it is also caused by the constant mobility of both people and the community. Recently, there have been studies focusing on intergenerational language maintenance and shift, such as the study conducted by Wenhan, Chin and Cavallaro (2022). The research, based in multicultural Singapore, used an ethnographic approach, and data were collected from three families through interviews, and complemented by audio recordings. The research highlighted that very little attention has been given to intergenerational families where both parents are working. In this scenario, the grandparents are the main caregivers as they spend more time with the children compared to the parents themselves. Hence, by focusing on the role of the grandparents as caregivers in steering language shifts and/or maintenance, results show that grandparents are steering the shift towards English. Furthermore, despite the clash of ideologies between the parents and the grandparents, it was clear that the grandparents' ideologies were more dominant.

In another recent study conducted in Nova Scotia and Scotland, Gaelic language revitalization through immersion education was analysed to see if this strategy might play a role in the revitalization of this language (Dunmore, 2021). This study was deemed important due to the notable shift happening in the Gaelic language. The findings show that in Scotland, a decrease in the Gaelic community led to a pessimistic future aspiration. This is contrary to Nova Scotia, which showed optimistic future aspirations. Even though the same strategy was followed, the context was different. According to the researcher, this contrast is attributed to complicated socio-historical factors and other culture-related factors.

Another example of research by Hiebert and Rojas (2021) examined the dynamic shift in expressive Spanish language proficiency. This research focused on language loss and growth amongst 34 Hispanic bilingual Spanish-English children who were studying in an English immersion school in Dallas. These children, aged between 3-4 years old, showed loss of Spanish lexical and grammatical output from pre-school up to kindergarten. The researchers used archived data from bigger longitudinal research, and they used "narrative language sample analysis" to look at the data.

Kheirkhah and Cekaite (2015), on the other hand, investigated the FLP of a Persian-Kurdish family that resides in Sweden. In their case study, they explored the way FLP is practised in parent-child interactions and the kind of efforts made to maintain HL. Findings showed that parents used various methods when dealing with their child's language mixing, i.e., translating the inapprehensible words to their child into the heritage language; intentionally controlling their child's language choice to create a monolingual environment in the family. Besides that, parents also correct the child's problematic words and request the child to respond in HL.

In the past two years, while there have been studies conducted on LMLS on minority groups, very little was done on minority immigrant groups. One example was research by Veettil, Binu, and Karthikeyan (2021) that explored LMLS amongst Malayalees immigrant minorities in Oman. Looking at different age groups, the study analysed the main influences on LMLS by addressing different domains that facilitate LMLS. It shows that while code-switching is used as a friendliness gesture with other cultures, multilingualism is inevitable in the current wave of globalisation. The data were collected using observations and qualitative semi-structured interviews involving fifteen participants.

Some studies conducted on minority groups show the powerful role played by monoglossic ideology in steering the situation both in school and at home before eventually leading to minority language shift. A good example is observed from two recent studies by Kaveh (2020) and Harwati (2020) which were conducted in view of the law in Massachusetts, USA and Yogyakarta, Indonesia. According to the laws, the medium of education at schools in these two countries are English and Indonesian, respectively. In this study, Kaveh (2020) found out that both the staff at children's schools and the parents value bilingualism but still, both parties give preference to English over HL since it is the future language and a power language. This means that both parties' views are additive. At the same time, this also implies a certain subtractive view, since prioritising the English language unintentionally leads to minority language shift, thus causing HL death. Harwati (2020) also states that the Javanese language in Yogyakarta has already witnessed a great shift occurring among the younger generation and this is still ongoing. She found that without serious efforts from the government and the local government to revive the language and add a new supporting script to the law, there is no hope of revitalising the Javanese language. As stated earlier, monoglossic ideology plays an important role in steering the situation in school and at home. This would then lead to minority language shift.

Another example from the Indonesian context shows how education itself could promote the use of certain languages over a person's ethnic language. In Indonesia, for example, there is a linguistic richness and diversity with over 500 languages spoken with the Indonesian language being the national language. In a qualitative descriptive study by Yusmawati, Lestari and Hidayah (2018), the language choice amongst 15 families from a Chinese origin in a city in Aceh in North Sumatera was observed. The findings show that most of the participants prefer to use Indonesian language with other ethnic groups

instead of using Aceh. The reason is because parents were concerned about their children's ability to follow the education that is conducted primarily in Indonesian.

Other recent studies looked at how the coloniser's ideology instilled in the colonised could lead to language shift in the majority language/s in a relatively short time. (See, for example, (Bouchard, 2019); and (Bihan-Gallic, 2021) in their studies on Forro and Kanak languages, respectively).

In minority families where HL is given a conscious priority over the language of the host country, HL is secured (Kheirkhah & Cekaite, 2015). In communities where the majority language is devalued by its speakers on the account of the coloniser's language, such a language will be shortly shifted, as well, as parents would encourage their children to use the language that they think would furnish a better future for them (see for example, Bihan-Gallic, 2021; and Yusmawati, Lestari & Hidayah, 2018).

Dubiel and Guilfoyle (2021) used a psycholinguistic method known as "accuracy and response time score" to investigate children's HL possible shift, maintenance, and strength while it is still in relative domination period. By comparison 38 English-Polish children and 24 monolingual Polish children, results showed that even though there is a relative dominance, there has also been shifts in the HL strength which has been demonstrated in faster processing in monolinguals. According to the researchers, their study, which compared HL in monolingual and bilingual speakers, provides more substantiality unlike previous studies which compared the dominance of HL with L2.

In a study conducted in New Zealand, Seals and Olsen-Reeder (2020) looked at the role of sustainable translanguaging in maintaining *te reo Māori* language and in revitalising Samoan language. The researchers attempted to show what previous studies tried to prove in that this method does not oppose the immersion education method as both methods seek the same goals - to protect the vulnerable languages and their speakers'

identities. The findings show that sustainable translanguaging has allowed more learners to be engaged in the classroom. This is a method which is proving to be practical and workable in the learning space.

As noted, the recent studies looked at the concept of language maintenance and language shift from different perspectives. Different methodologies were also followed by different researchers to analyse and study LM and LS. i.e., case studies, qualitative, longitudinal analysis, etc. While some studies showed the powerful role of a family milieu in steering the shift or the maintenance, other studies showed that language maintenance and shift was out of the control of the family's will and instead under the control of the law. This can intentionally or unintentionally lead to language shift. Recent studies also did not neglect the important role of the caregivers within the families where children's linguistic value is guided and influenced by other caregivers apart from the parents. Recent studies also looked at strategies to maintain a language at the level of educational institutions and the level of the states.

One of the objectives of this study is to look at LMLS in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent lockdowns. Hence, data collection method was limited. For example, in most sociolinguistic studies especially the ones that look at LMLS, onsite observation is essential. In anthropological studies, the researcher might observe precious moments that are not said in the interviews. Sometimes, these observations show contradictory data to which is spelled by the participants during the interviews. Because of the lockdown and for the safety of the participants and my own safety, the researcher had to conduct the meetings online and there had been very little to observe. To note, none of the studies discussed earlier analysed LMLS in the light of the pandemic. Meeting my participants after the lockdowns where children received their education online was noteworthy to see how this had affected their languages.

2.8   Language Maintenance and Shift Studies on Arabic Language

During the past 30 years, numerous studies explored the efficacy of religion for maintaining the language. As the Quran is written in Arabic, the community that is following Islam supports the Arabic language. Fishman (1991) introduced the religion domain and indicated that a book like the Quran is an efficient method for transmitting the Arabic language from generation to generation. This view is supported by Clyne and Kipp (1999), who found that as long as there are Muslims in the world, Arabic will not disappear since the Quran is written in Arabic, and it can even be passed on from generation to generation. In fact, Gogonas (2012) highlighted the major role played by religion in maintaining the language among Arab Muslim Egyptian teenagers in Athens. On the contrary, Coptic Egyptian Arab teenagers could not maintain their language and their Arabic language witnessed a shift.

There have been studies conducted on the Arab minorities that looked at Arabic language maintenance in different parts of the world. In this section, I will state four studies conducted in four different countries on Arabic language maintenance and shift, i.e., (Othman, 2011) in Manchester, Britain, (Abdelhadi, 2016) in Adelaide, Australia, (Dweik & Qawar, 2015) in Quebec, Canada, and (Gogonas, 2012) in Athens, Greece. While the first two studies were conducted on Muslim participants, the latter two were conducted on participants from different religious background.

The European Union is known for being diverse in languages and these languages are referred to as "the national languages of Europe". Arabic is one of these non-European languages (Extra, 2007). Othman (2011) looked at Arabic language maintenance in Manchester, Britain in two generations of Muslim families. The participants' intention is to stay permanently in Britain, and Arabs there constitute the biggest number in that area compared to Arabs residing in other parts of Britain. In this study, the researcher looked

at language maintenance in terms of: 1] daily language functionality, 2] separation or categorization of the function between the mother language and the majority language, 3] the ability of the participants to use their native language in realistic conversations, 4] the positive attitudes the participants have towards their mother language, 5] language channelling intergenerationally, and 6] the institutional support in Manchester. The findings of this study show that the first generation maintained their Arabic language in intragroup communications while they use English in their intergroup communications. The children, on the other hand, used Arabic with the first-generation Arabs and with their non-English-speaking peers. With their Arab English-speaking peers, they use English. With siblings, they use more English than Arabic. The researcher concludes that despite the differences between the first and the second generation, they are similar in that they still maintain the functionality of the language. It must be noted that parents in the home domain used strategies to encourage their children to use Arabic such as the "nonresponse" and the minimal grasp strategies amongst others.

Abdelhadi (2016) explored the efforts made by the Arabic-speaking community in Australia on language maintenance as well as their experience when facing challenges. The finding shows that the first Arabic generation are maintaining their HLs successfully. It was also found that the second generation can communicate in Arabic, but there was a trend to language shift when they talk with friends, since the only language used in school is English. From another perspective, Abdelhadi (2016) mentions that many Arabic speakers believed that Arabic will never disappear as it is a religious language. He also suggested that it is a good way for the next generation to learn Arabic as well as the Quran in the mosque, which is a great place to practice and maintain the Arabic language (ibid).

Dweik and Qawar (2015), on the other hand, investigated language choice in different domains amongst adult Arabs in Quebec, Canada. Participants came from different religious backgrounds. The languages they focused on were Arabic, French and

English. Results revealed that participants freely use Arabic when they are at home, mosque and while listening to the radio. However, when they have to deal with the government or in educational institutions, they used English and/or French. Researchers also found that when participants are in the neighbourhood, with friends, and in their own media, they would use a mix of Arabic, English and French. Participants showed positive attitudes towards their languages, i.e., Arabic language being the heritage language, the French language being Quebec most prevalent language and English being the national and most widely used language in Canada.

Using the core-value theory, Gogonas (2012) conducted interesting quantitative research on language maintenance and shift amongst second-generation Arab teenagers who attended Greek schools in Athens. The participants came from different religious backgrounds. The findings of this study show that religion was the main reason for maintaining or shifting the Arabic language amongst the teenagers in this study. While the Arabic language was shifted amongst those who embraced the Coptic religion, it was maintained amongst Arab speakers who embrace Islam as a religion.

In general, we can see that these studies highlight the religion essential role in maintaining or shifting a language. This was very clearly emphasized in Gogonas's (2012) study who compared language maintenance and shift between Muslim and Christian teenagers in Athens.

2.9   Conclusion

This chapter has generally introduced the main aspects that are related to or correlated with the field of language maintenance and shift. It moved from the general to the specific and investigated LMLS in the context of Malaysia. It finally looked at studies conducted on Arabic language in the field of languages and linguistics. The past literature shows that there is a shortage in LMLS studies that are conducted on the Arabic language

as a minority language in in the context of Malaysia. There is also close to no studies conducted on the Syrian community with regards to language maintenance and shift in Malaysia and worldwide. Moreover, having the study conducted during the Covid-19 Pandemic can make the data unique where students have to learn online instead of schools.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1   Overview

Arab Syrian Muslim families shared their experience of integration and communication in Malaysia through the narratives they unfold to the researcher via online semi-structured interviews. The families shared their language/s related stories that started from their hometown in Syria, after moving to Malaysia up until the moment of the interviews which were conducted during the MCO.

After having introduced the methodology in the first Chapter, this Chapter will delve deeper into the methodologies that was used by the researcher to extract the information needed to achieve the purpose of this study. It will start by elaborating the main research instruments, followed by the research context, data collection procedure, and finally data analysis.

3.1.1   Methods

Qualitative methods were adopted in this exploratory study. This kind of methods best fit the nature of this research where "people are the focus of this study". This method helps to explore "descriptive data" (Walliman, 2018, p. 80) "in form of words, descriptions, accounts, opinions, feelings, etc.", (Walliman, 2018, p. 148). Data were analysed manually using deductive thematic analysis to identify the patterns of themes.

3.2   Instruments

Three crucial instruments were used to obtain the data needed to answer the research objectives which involves language use, language maintenance and language shift within the Syrian community in Malaysia. The three "typical" instruments used in "qualitative data" (Walliman, 2018, p. 80) in this research are interview transcript (Seidman, 2006) which was obtained via semi-structured interviews, participants

observation (Musante & Dewalt, 2010), and text-field notes (Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2018). Observation works as a complementary method that helps enriching the data compiled via other methods (Simpson & Tuson, 2003). Although the researcher could not be on the field as the data were collected during the MCO, these instruments still allow the collection of rich data that were critical in answering the research questions and achieving the objectives of the study. While these instruments are usually used in a face-to-face setting, they were deemed suitable for the purpose of this research and allowed the researcher to collect sufficient data during online sessions.

3.2.1   Interview

For the purpose of this study, the researcher designed 66 questions for the semi-structured interviews with the families (see Appendix 1: Semi-structured Interview Questions, Pages 1 & 2). This kind of interview usually includes "structured and unstructured sections with standardised and open-type questions" (Walliman, 2018, p. 114). "Guiding the participant within open-ended questions takes some anticipation of possible routes he or she may travel in responding, and you must ascertain what further inquiry is appropriate and often necessary. It also takes some spontaneity and guesswork, as you come upon junctures in the interview that potentially offer a deeper understanding of the participant's narrative" (Galletta, 2013, p. 76). The nature of these questions helps the researcher to obtain information that could help her in answering the research questions and meeting the study objectives. For my easy reference, I grouped the questions into sections. Each section, for example, could address certain participant in certain domain.

According to Breitborde (1983), domain is a theoretical concept which looks at communicative interactions based upon similar experiences. This study focused on interactions in four domains, i.e., 1] family domain; 2] friendship domain; 3] education domain; and 4] employment domain.

As mentioned earlier, online platform was used to collect data for semi-structured interviews. Although face-to-face interviews would have been preferable, online video interviews were a practical substitute that still allows the researcher to be immersed in the community. During MCO, it is proven that video interview is the best way to conduct this study as it provided a "rich experience" (Walliman, 2018, p. 116).

Online meeting "saves travelling" costs (ibid.), and time. Moreover, online interviews allow both the researcher and the participants to attend the meeting in comfort and be more flexible with the time of the meeting. However, the researcher must expect some "technical issues" during these online interviews (Walliman, 2018, p. 116).

Additionally, online interviews can also be recorded – both audio and visual, which could be helpful for the researcher in many ways. First, there will be no need to depend on "the memory" but rather allows the researcher to fully focus on the answers and keeps track of the flow of the interviews, especially on key questions that were designed to give open answers. Second, what is said in the interviews can be "checked repeatedly". Finally, other researchers can use the same recordings for "different analysis" (ibid).

Anthropological interviews are seen as "friendly conversation" (Spradley, 1979 in Seidman, 2006, p. 15). The goal of open-ended questions is "to have the participants reconstruct his or her experience within the topic under study" (Seidman, 2006, p. 15). In this study, the researcher followed the three themes suggested by Seidman (2006) while composing the questions of the interviews. According to Seidman (2006), researchers

conduct "three interview series" with each participating individual or family. This is to build a rapport and put data in context because "without a context, there is little possibility of exploring the meaning of an experience". However, in this study, the researcher conducted one interview with each participating family, yet the questions of the interview were divided into three parts or 'themes' as proposed by Seidman (2006). First, "focused-life history" which is similar to "life-story method" suggested by Okita (2002 in Schwartz & Verschik, 2013, p. 6). Here, the participants narrate their language/s history when they were living in Syria. Participants relate language experience to the surrounding environment, such as family, friends, work, etc. Second, "the details of experience", in which the focus will be on the present moment of the interviews, i.e., since the participant left Syria until the moment of the interview. Participants were asked to share their language use experience within the community, at work, at school, with friends and neighbours, and at home. This process of talking about a day at work or at school, etc. allowed the researcher to elicit more details. Finally, "reflection on the meaning", or reflection on the participants' feelings, attitudes, hopes, aspirations, and others with regards to the subject shared in relation to their language/s maintenance, shift, and use. Following this structure allows the researcher to get comprehensive and in-depth qualitative data.

The questions of the interviews were presented in a pilot study on a small number of people as suggested by Walliman (2018). This allowed the researcher to be more systematic in conducting the main study.

Online interviews require good communication skills as highlighted by de la Croix, Barrett, and Stenfors (2018). According to them, the way the researcher makes the participants feel during the interview contributes tremendously to the research quality. Thus, the researcher's role is to build with a good "rapport" with the participants which "requires optimal communication skills from the researcher". However, the researcher

made it a point to respect the fact that not all participants would be willing to share similar life stories.

For the purpose of this study, the researcher prepared a well-organised question paper for easy reference. However, this paper was not shared with the participants. The purpose of the question paper was to make sure that all questions were fully covered.

Closed Questions were also designed for the "opening questions" to ensure the participants are familiar with the study and to assure "about the anonymity" as suggested by (Walliman, 2018, p. 116). The questions were designed in a way that allows a smooth transition from closed question to open questions. The meeting ended with words of appreciation and gratitude for the participants' time and willingness to share their thoughts and experiences in this study.

3.2.2   Observation

Apart from the semi-structured interviews, observations were used as a secondary method in this study. Unlike a physical meeting which allows the researcher to "fully" observe people during an interview (Musante & Dewalt, 2010, p. 1), online interview is limited to what the participants allow the researcher to see through small screens. However, not all participants might be willing to share their videos, which means the researcher was not able to capture non-verbal actions that could have been useful for the study subject. For these reasons, observations served only to supplement the data obtained through detailed and comprehensive semi-structured interviews.

3.2.3   Text-field Notes

Despite being highly recommended to have text-field notes to document any necessary observations that contribute to the subject study, there is no set guide to using the same (Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2018). Online recorded interviews allowed the researcher to focus on the flow of the conversation and the quality of questions rather than having to continuously write notes. Therefore, this process was instead carried out during the transcribing process.

According to Walliman (2018, p.51), "further distortion can be introduced by your own particular assumption". Hence, it is important to note that there are shortcomings in referring only to transcribed data without taking field notes. This is because part of the "meaning" might be lost, for example, the contradictions, non-verbal remarks and even "humours" related to the subject of the study.

3.3   Research Context

3.3.1   Research Participants

Ten participating families voluntarily approved to take part in this study. This number fits the nature of the qualitative study conducted. It also allowed the researcher to look closely into the participants individually, in different settings, to get a "subjective understanding" on the hows and the whys that this study is trying to answer (Baker & Edwards, 2012, p. 8).

The total number of the participants is 43 after excluding two children because of their ages. The excluded children are: the first child, a female in the third family and the third child, a baby boy, in the sixth family. These two children were excluded as one of them is a teenager and the second one is still 4 months old, respectively.

The population in this study were divided into two generations, i.e., parents who are middle aged, and their children between 12 and 3.5 years old. The participants are 10 mothers, 10 fathers, and 23 children, 6 males and 17 females. Fathers' ages range between 33 and 65 years old. Mothers' ages range between 24 and 55 years old (see Table 3.1: Family Members' Ages).

Table 3. 1 Family Members' Ages

Table 3.1: Family Members' Ages					
Family	**Father**	**Mother**	**Kid 1**	**Kid 2**	**Kid 3**
Family 1	37	30	11	9	6
Family 2	43	37	9	4	---
Family 3	48	39	~~16~~	12	9
Family 4	33	30	9	---	---
Family 5	37	32	9	7	3.5
Family 6	41	31	11	8	~~4 months~~
Family 7	65	55	11	7	---
Family 8	37	34	11	7	5
Family 9	33	24	6	4	3
Family 10	34	24	9	4	---

All participants are Arabs, Muslims, and Syrians but came from different governorates in Syria (see Appendix 2: Participants' Governorates in Syria). They are from different educational backgrounds.

Even though not all people of KL attain the same level in English language, yet it was more spread in this state than the rest of Malaysia. Hence, participants in this study, are mainly residing in KL. This has helped the researcher to obtain more consistent findings with regards to study subjects.

3.3.1.1 Gaining Access to the Setting

The researcher approached the participants through two Syrian mothers who used to be the researcher's students in an English language class in Malaysia in 2016 (see Section 3.4.1: Pilot Study).

In fact, approaching participants in this way had truly eased the data collection process. When people are not familiar with the researcher and the study, "complexity" might be "added to the search for and access to participants" (MacDougall & Fudge,

2001, p. 3). In this way, the participants might not know the researcher, but they had known the two mothers who had already been subjects in the pilot study. The two mothers reported three things that had encouraged the other mothers and their families to participate in this study. 1] Credibility: as the two mothers had known the researcher personally.   2] Trust: as the participants knew that the researcher is also a Syrian. 3] Knowing the background of the study: having already participated in this study, the two mothers narrated their experience to the other mothers. All previously mentioned reasons have contributed to gaining access to participants. All participating families were residing in Kuala Lumpur and most of them were in Ampang (see Figure 3.1: Participants' Location on the Map, (Go2 Travel Malaysia, n.d. & Visit Selangor, n.d.).
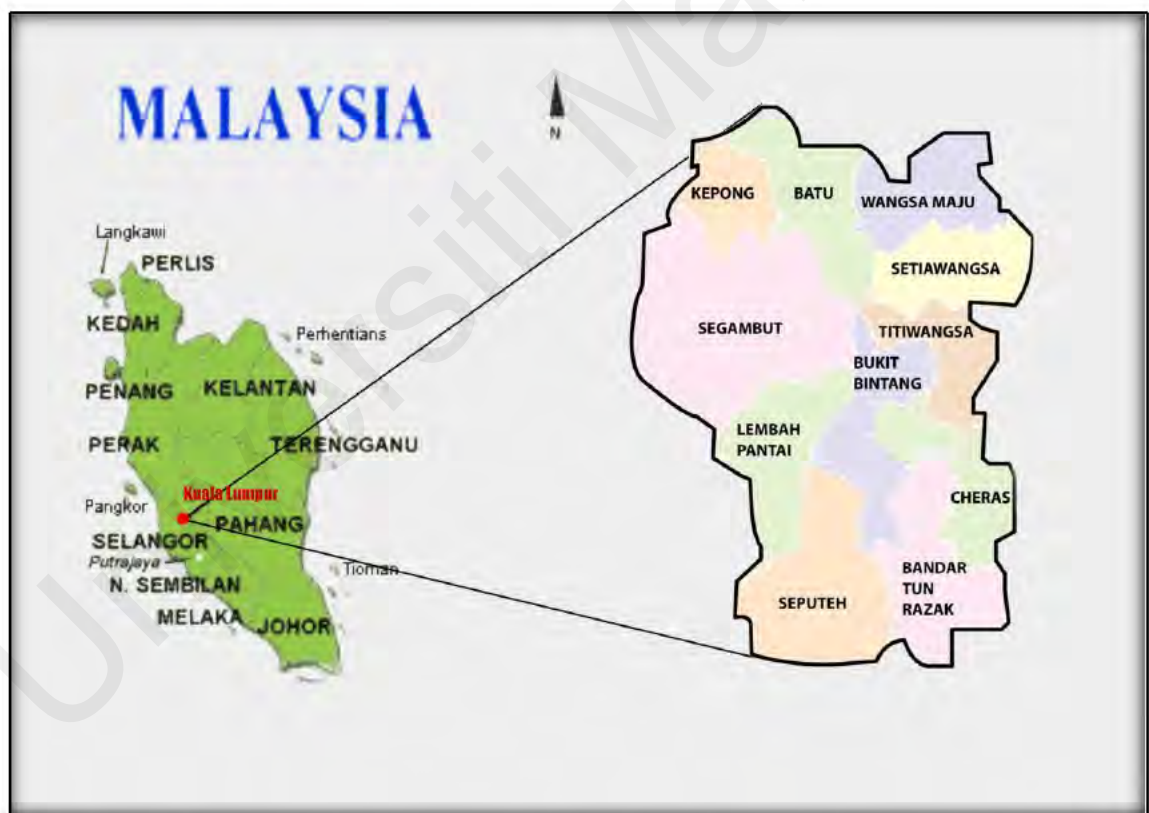
Figure 3. 1 Participants' Location on the Map (Go2 Travel Malaysia, n.d. & Visit Selangor, n.d.)

3.3.2   Duration of the Study

The journey started in an academic course the researcher attended in *Universiti Malaya* (UM) at the end of 2020 whereby students were required to conduct a pilot study in the field of sociolinguistics. After getting an approval from the course's lecturer on 25th November 2020 to conduct the pilot study, the researcher started listing the questions of the interviews. Two interviews were conducted with two families on the 22nd of December 2020. The duration of both meetings was 105 minutes. In August 2021, the University Panel approved the research proposal. The researcher found the participants and conducted meetings online from 17th of July until 7th of August 2021. Data were transcribed and then translated from 8th of August until 5th of October. The writing process started on August 31st (see Appendix 3: Duration of the Study). The two meetings with the participating families in the pilot study were included in the main study. The researcher then passed the Candidature Defence on the 30th of March 2022, and finally submitted the dissertation for examination in August 2022. Being done with the minor corrections, the researcher managed to submit the final version of the dissertation in March 2023.

3.4   Data Collection Procedure

3.4.1   Pilot Study

The researcher conducted mini research on LMLS in a sociolinguistic course which was a part of the researcher's master programme at the UM. The lecturers of the course estimated this study to be good and encouraged the researcher to expand it as a dissertation.

The participants of the mini research were two Syrian Arab Muslim families. The researcher obtained the participants' formal consent via email. At that time, the country

had been under MCO, and the UM advised all the students to abide by the SOP for their safety. Hence, meetings had to be conducted online via Zoom teleconferencing software on the 22nd of December 2020.

The researcher and the participants first met in an English language course the researcher was conducting for refugees. This had been the starting point that helped the researcher later to find the rest of the participating families for the main study (see Section 3.4.2.1: Finding Participants).

For the researcher, the pilot study had been a trial for the main study from which the researcher has learnt several things. For example, some redundant questions were removed. Since the study includes children, a one-hour limit was set for each interview. Connection problems were also an issue identified during the interviews which might distract the participants' attention, making them lose focus and interest. For this, the researcher needed to have a notebook nearby to jot down the most important points whenever technical issues occur.

Following the pilot study, the data were transcribed manually word for word. Each 15 minutes took approximately one hour of transcription. Transcriptions were then reviewed as suggested by Power (2005, p. 26) before translated into English. Translation was not done literally in order not to lose meaning. Transcription and translation texts were placed "side by side" as suggested by Power (2005, p. 58), (see Figure 3.2: Side by Side Texts).

Family 2
Meeting Date: 22 December 2020
Transcription Date: December 2020
Translation Date: December 2020
Coding Date: December 2020
00:00 → 00:05

الباحثة: ط١ع٢وين أجت؟

Fa1: K1F2FE was born in Syria; K2F2FE was born in Malaysia   K2F2FE Malaysian product .. الأب(٢): ط١ع٢إجت بسوريا..

الباحثة: أديش كان عمرا ط١ع٢لما أجت لهون؟

Mo2: When the family came to Malaysia K1F2FE was almost 2 years   الأم(٢): كانت لسا مو مطبقة الستين

Two years :(٢)الأب

Figure 3. 2 Side by Side Texts

3.4.2 Main Study

3.4.2.1 Finding Participants

As clarified in Section 3.4.1, the pilot study has resembled a trial for the main study and thus has helped the researcher in doing the dissertation in a more effective manner. Having passed the proposal defence in June 2021, the researcher sought the assistance of the two participating families in the pilot study (see Section 3.4.1: The Pilot Study) to find the rest of the participants which were 8 families (see Appendix 5: The Eight Participating Families in the Main Study).

The researcher contacted the informants via WhatsApp voice call feature. In this call, the informants were introduced to the researcher and to the study. The families were informed that participants must fall within certain criteria to fit the purpose of the study: 1] parents must be Syrians; 2] participants arrived in Malaysia after the war started in their country; 3] children's ages range between 3-12 years old; and 4] meetings will be either audio or video recorded. After that, the participants' questions with regards to this study were answered to their satisfaction. Finally, their formal approval to participate in this study was later obtained via email (see more details in Section 3.5.1: Ethical Consideration).

3.4.2.2 Interview Details

Eight more interviews were conducted within a period of twenty-two days (see Table 3.2: Date and Duration of the Interviews via Zoom). The duration of the interview was dependant on the amount of the information each family has in their pockets to share and also on each family's willingness to share.

The maximum time taken for the interviews was sixty minutes and the least time taken was thirty minutes (see Table 3.2: Date and Duration of the Interviews via Zoom). The total duration of the recordings of all interviews was seven hours and thirty minutes.

Table 3. 2 Date and Duration of the Interviews via Zoom

Family	Date of the Interview	Duration
F1	Tuesday, 22 Dec 2021	45 min
F2	Tuesday, 22 Dec 2021	60 min
F3	Saturday, 17 July 2021	43 min
F4	Saturday, 17 July 2021	28 min
F5	Saturday, 17 July 2021	60 min
F6	Sunday, 18 July 2021	38 min
F7	Monday, 19 July 2021	30 min
F8	Tuesday, 20 July 2021	60 min
F9	Tuesday, 20 July 2021	43 min
F10	Saturday, 7 Aug 2021	43 min

3.4.2.3 Video and Audio Conferencing

Zoom online platform was used for all meetings since all participants were familiar with it. Collecting data online had its cons. For example, the internet connection was not stable in all interviews. This made the data collection inconsistent for some interviews, especially with regards to open questions where a participant might be eagerly sharing some stories or ideas related to the study subject. When the line is back, the participants' eagerness to share might fade, hence the researcher had to restart the conversation to get the participants on the right sharing track. Moreover, three families were not comfortable sharing their videos; a fact respected by the researcher (see Appendix 5: The Eight Participating Families in the Main Study). However, this limited the researcher's ability to capture any non-verbal moments. Furthermore, for some

families, the mother will address all the questions on behalf of her family members which might affect the credibility of the data.

Regardless, there were benefits of collecting data online. For example, it eased the process since both the researcher and the participants are meeting from home. It also saved travel time and costs for the researcher. In addition to that, meetings were flexible in terms of time, allowing the researcher to follow the participants' preferred time. Additionally, the participants did not have the burden of receiving the researcher in their houses too early in the morning or too late at night.

The zoom meetings were saved to the researcher's device to be transcribed and translated at a later stage.

3.4.2.4 Language Used During the Interviews

Interviews were carried out in the researcher's native language, i.e., the Damascene Syrian Dialect. However, the families were given the choice to speak the language or the dialect they prefer and both parties can understand.

3.4.2.5 Transcription and Translation

The researcher followed the same procedures followed in the pilot study (see Section 3.4.1: Pilot Study). Data were transcribed on a word file, reviewed, and then translated to English. Transcriptions and translations were placed side by side (see Figure 3.2: Side by Side Texts). Refer to Sections 3.3.3 & 3.4.2.2: Duration of the Study & Interview Details, respectively for more details about data collection dates, transcription and translation.

3.4.2.6 Participants' Coded Names

To ensure anonymity, participants' names in this study were replaced by codes as illustrated below. "F" in this study stands for "Family", "Fa" for "Father", "Mo" for "Mother", "K" for "Kid", "M" for "Male", and "Fe" for "Female" (see Table 3.3: Meanings of Codes). The families were given numbers from 1 to 10 and that arrangement was given according to the interviews' dates and times. For example, "F1" is the first family interviewed and "F10" is the tenth and the last family interviewed. The first family interviewed was given the number one (F1), etc. Since all families have no more than 3 children, children were also given numbers (1, 2 or 3). 1 goes for the eldest kid in the family, 2 the second kid and 3 for the youngest kid (see Appendix 6: Family Members' Coded Names).

Table 3. 3 Meanings of Codes

Codes	Meanings	Explanation with Examples	
F	Family	K1F1M	1st Child in the 1st Family is a Male
Fa	Father	K2F10Fe	2nd Child in the 10th Family is a Female
Mo	Mother	Fa9	Father in the 9th Family
K	Kid/Child	Mo7	Mother in the 7th Family
M	Male		
Fe	Female		

3.5   Data Analysis

Having the data collected, a "flexible approach" has been used which is thematic analysis (TA). This approach which has proved to be "a unique and valuable method on its own" was used to methodologically identify, organise, and provide patterns of themes in the interview data which are deemed to be crucial to the study subject and the research questions in this deductive and explorative study (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p. 57). Data, in the form of qualitative interviews, were then transcribed and organised in a word file on a 5-minute basis and translated into English. Initially, the researcher wanted to code the data using NVivo software, but the data was manageable to be coded manually. The data were then reviewed and edited many times by the researcher. Each name of the

participating family member was replaced by their corresponding codes. Names were also coded in the Arabic and English transcripts (see Appendix 13: Full Interviews with the Participating Families).

The field notes acted as a reliable method to guide the researcher while transcribing the observation and interview data. Despite the limited observation in this study, the field notes acted as a supporting instrument to the interviews because they are based on impulsive data. Hence, they helped in obtaining authentic data and enhanced the understanding of the researcher.

For the thematic analysis data were reiterated deductively which means that the researcher already had an expectation of the themes that might be found in examining the raw data (Nowell, Norris, White & Moules, 2017). Themes were divided into three. Each theme served in answering one research question. I colour-coded the themes (see Table 3.4: Deductive Thematic Analysis; see also Appendix 13: Full Interviews with the Participating Families). The first theme was meant to answer the first research question related to the families' language choice in the host country, Malaysia. The second theme was related to the Syrian families' language maintenance and language shift as a minority community in Malaysia. The objective of the third theme was to highlight the strategies the parents followed to maintain or reverse the shift in their languages.

Colouring the themes helped the researcher to look for the sub-themes or the sub-topic in each theme. Some themes were also divided into sub-sub-themes. These sub-sub-themes allowed the researcher to put the ideas in an organized and clear manner on the paper. Having done that, the writing process started, and the findings were supported with quotes from the participants and corresponding data of previous similar studies in the field.

Table 3. 4 Deductive Thematic Analysis

	Theme One	Theme Two	Theme Three
Main themes	**Language choice in the host country**	**Language maintenance and language Shift**	**Strategies to Maintain languages**
Sub-themes	1. Malaysia as a second Home. 2. Attitude towards Malay. 3. Attitude towards English. 4. Language choice in the employment domain.	1. the role of language in different domains. 2. the effect of COVID-19 on the participants' languages.	1. Attitude towards Arabic languages 2. Parents' role in Maintaining or reversing the shift in their children's languages.
Sub-sub-themes	1.1 Reasons to choose Malaysia 1.2. Future plans in terms of settlement	1.1 education domain 1.2 home domain 1.3 friendship domain 2.1 effect of COVID-19 on Arabic languages 2.2 effect of COVID-19 on English language	1.1 Attitude towards HL 1.2 Attitude towards SA and CA

Having analysed the data, the researcher was able to compare the input regarding the subject matter within the Syrian community in Kuala Lumpur and see the differences and similarities. Dividing the transcribed data in the word file in a table on a 5-minute basis eased referring to videos and audios when needed (see Appendix 13: Full Interviews with the Participating Families).

3.5.1 Ethical Consideration

In compliance with the UM research ethical consideration, a consent form, which was originally written in English (see Appendix 8: Original Consent Form in English) was obtained prior to data collection. This consent form was translated into Arabic language (see Appendix 9: Consent Form Translated into Arabic) and emailed to the participants. The email contained a message in English and Arabic. The participants' reply to the email using any approval words is considered as a formal approval to participate in this research (see Appendix 7: Emailed Message to Participants). The corresponding emails of the participants were hidden not to disclose any personal information about the participants. An electronic carbonated copy (CC) was also emailed to the researcher's supervisor.

Despite having obtained the formal consent from participating families, the researcher has verbally reassured the participants about the confidentiality and the anonymity of the data shared. Few things were emphasized:

1. Real names will not be revealed, and they will be replaced by codes.

2. The participants have the right not to answer any question.

3. The participants have the right to terminate the interview at any time.

4. Participants can at any time interrupt the researcher and ask any question.

5. No videos or photos will be shared or disclosed without the participants' prior consent.

None of the families terminated the meeting or refused to answer questions. However, some families were more open to elaborate on the open questions than others. Some participants asked the researcher some personal question, which served as an icebreaker to the interviews.

3.5.1.1 Researcher's Role

The researcher's served as both an insider and outsider in this study. "Language and Culture are linked symbolically [...] they stand for each other in the minds of insiders and outsiders too" (Fishman, 1991, p. 22). Despite having pros and cons for each, yet with the researcher's prudence in employing each for the good of the study, this has resulted in and contributed to the ease of the data collection and helped obtaining rich findings.

According to Fishman (1991, p. 392) while an insider experiences things, an outsider only views things "telescopically or microscopically". Being an insider who is a Syrian Arab Muslim who grew up in Syria and received education in Syrian schools, has eased the researcher familiarity with the study context. An insider also meant that the participants will not look at the researcher as an intruder. On the contrary, the researcher

in this study is someone who shares similar aspirations, struggles, challenges, and concerns as that of the participants' themselves, especially that the researcher had left Syria seeking security after the war started in Syria, as well.

Despite all that, the researcher cannot be considered as a complete insider but rather an as an outsider, as well. This is very important to avoid prejudice and/or oversimplifying the subject matter. As an outsider, this was important as it had helped "judgements" not to be "bound up" by the researcher's own experience (Spolsky & Hult, 2010, p. 487).

Having specialized in English language, unlike the participants, the researcher did not encounter communication problem upon arriving in Malaysia. Although a daughter to Syrian parents who was brought up in monolingual home, the researcher was multilingual and familiar with Indonesian Language, which falls under the same family language as the Malay language (Soderberg & Olson, 2008). However, not having children, the researcher has not experienced the same struggles the parents in this study might have faced or are facing with regards to their children's LMLS. Finally, while the participants live in Kuala Lumpur, the researcher lives in another state.

Being an insider who is familiar with the context and an outsider who knew only a part of the story arose the curiosity of the researcher to see the whole image through the eyes of these families and their shared stories.

3.6   Conclusion

This chapter has served in setting the study rationale along with the methodological details by elaborating and justifying the research methodologies and analysis. Hopefully, this allows the reader to better weigh the study reliability and validity.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The overall aspiration of the study is to describe the current vitality and future viability of the Syrian immigrant community's language choice in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. To date, there have been limited comprehensive studies concerning the Syrian immigrants in Malaysia, especially on the language choice among minority community.

The previous chapter explains the methodology used for collecting and analysing the data and justifying the use of the instruments. Findings from the interviews, audio and video recordings, and notes will be explained in this chapter.

The data compiled were rich and comprehensive, therefore, the findings were divided into different themes, which are: 1] Syrian Immigrants' Language Choice in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (see Section 4.1); 2] Language Maintenance and Shift among the Syrian Immigrants in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (Section 4.2); and 3] The Strategies in Reversing Syrian Children's Languages in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (Section 4.3).

4.1 Syrian Immigrants' Language Choice in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

This section, which focuses on the language choice of Syrian immigrants, is further divided into four subsections. The first subsection will discuss the reasons for choosing Malaysia as the Syrian immigrants' second home and how that shaped their language choice in the host country. The following subsection then focuses on the attitude towards the host country's official language (Malay), before discussing the immigrants' attitude towards the second language (English) as a lingua franca in the subsequent subsection. Final subsection looks at how that plays a role in the Syrian immigrants' language choice in the employment domain.

4.1.1 Malaysia as the Syrian Immigrants' Second Home

The Syrian immigrant families left Syria to seek security after the war started in their country, i.e., March 2011 onward. Malaysia was one of their choices. These families came from different governorates in Syria, i.e., Damascus, Homs, Hama, Daraa, and Aleppo (see Appendix 2: Participants' Governorates in Syria). Each of their journeys to Malaysia was different. While some came directly from Syria to Malaysia, others went to other countries before arriving in Malaysia. Some of them had been to other Arabic-speaking countries such as Egypt and Lebanon, while others had initially moved to other non-Arab speaking countries (see Appendix 10: Syrian Families' Journeys Since Leaving Syria). However, among the reasons attributed to choosing Malaysia, includes:

1. Finding job opportunity

2. Religion-related reasons

3. Lack of choice

4. Attractive country

5. Coincidence

The reasons were supported by their personal statement with extracts as follows:

No	Reasons	Extract in Arabic	Translation into English
1	Finding job opportunities	الأب(١): "ان في شخص موجود هون كنا عأساس في حدا يساعدني أول ما أجي عالبلد ما أجي على بلد غريبة ما بعرف فيها حدا وكنا متفقين أنا وياه على شغل. هو كان تقريبا مأمنلي شغل".	Fa1: "there had been someone here in Malaysia who offered helping me in this country in which I am stranger in it knowing no one; we agreed on making business together. He had already found me a job".
2	Religion-related reasons	الأب(١) بلد إسلامي مناخد حريتنا فيها بالنسبة للشعائر" : الدينية تبعنا وما في مين يحاسبنا. بس إني أطلع على أوروبا كان مفتوح المجال على أوروبا بس ما حبيت أطلع قلت لاء مشان حافظ على حالي وعلى عيلتي".	Fa1: "it is an Islamic country where we can practise our religious rituals freely without being accountable. At that time, even though it has been easy to emigrate to Europe, Malaysia for us was a better choice. In Malaysia, I can protect myself and my family from being drifted from Islam".

No	Reasons	Extract in Arabic	Translation into English
3	Lack of choice	الأب(٨): "الفكرة أنو وقت طلعنا من سوريا للبنان كان اني قدم على شي اسمو فيزة البحث عن عمل بألمانيا وبلشت بالاجراءات تبعها وواحد من المتطلبات كان أنو نفتح حساب بنك بألمانيا اسمو closed account فكانو موقفين هي القصة بالنسبة للسورين يوقتا فتعصلج موضوع استخراج فيزا لألمانيا والبلدان التنية اللي فينا نسافرلا بدون فيزا كان عندي خيارين هنن ماليزيا والسودان فاخترت ماليزيا ههههه".	Fa8: "when we left Syria to Lebanon, we had the intention to travel to Germany under employment visa, one of the conditions was to open certain bank account but this was not a choice for Syrians. Hence, the visa had been hampered and we had only two choices left either Sudan or Malaysia, hence we chose Malaysia haha".
		الأم(٤): "ما في حدا يستقبلنا إلا ماليزيا أو السودان. فأكيد ماليزيا مو السودان".	Mo4: "no country would receive us but Malaysia or Sudan, and of course Malaysia is a better choice".
4	Attractive country	الأم(٣): "لما عملنا استخارة قالولنا ماليزيا حلوة".	Mo3: "we were told that Malaysia is a beautiful country".
5	Coincidence	الأب(٣): "صدفة.. عنجد صدفة. نحنا كنا ناويين نروح على أمريكا بس بسبب رفض الفيزا كان البلان بي Plan B تبعنا الهند وبعدين حكيت هون مع صديق بماليزيا وقلي تعال جرب ماليزيا، فقعدنا 3 شهور وعأساس حنروح الهند ف Luckily, we found Job and we stayed here".	Fa2: "it happened by a mere coincidence; we had planned to travel to America but our visa there was rejected. Hence, we had to follow our plan B which is travelling to India. I had contacted a friend residing in Malaysia who advised me to try Malaysia. We thought to stay temporary until we travel to India but luckily, we found a job and we stayed here".

Several respondents have also included more than one reason for choosing Malaysia as their new host country. The following is one of the extracts:

No	Reasons	Extract in Arabic	Translation into English
1	Finding job; opportunities; Attractive country; & Muslim country.	الأم(٣): "لما عملنا استخارة قالولنا ماليزيا حلوة، بامكانكن تشتغلو فيها. أخدنا صورة معكوسة تقريبا (تضحك بسخرية)، وكمان في عامل أنها مو بحاجة لفيزا، وأهم شي أنها مسلمة هي النقطة الأولى".	Mo3: "We put the intention to come to Malaysia, we were told that Malaysia is a beautiful country, you can find good job opportunities, another factor is that coming to Malaysia does not require a visa upon entry and most importantly and on top of all is that it is a Muslim country".

Syrian families settle in Malaysia under different visas, i.e., refugees under the UNHCR, work permit, student visa, and under Malaysian and Humanitarian Aid and Relief Programme (MAHAR). For all the Syrian Participants in this study, Malaysia is considered as a transitional phase in which they are not planning to settle in permanently. This contradicts their wish to stay permanently because the Permanent Residence and the citizenship in this country are not easily attained. For them, Malaysia is considered a transit phase until they get the opportunity to travel to a country that guarantees a more settled future, especially for their children. These families do not even have short-term plan to go back to their homeland. According to the participants, staying in Malaysia even for a short period is considered an advantage because in this country, they are able to

practice religion freely (Nazri, Talib & Sulaiman, 2019). However, it is deemed more important for the families to seek a more settled future for their children and Malaysia is that bridge that will connect them to their future, especially in terms of settlement. Below are statements by participants expressing their desire to settle in Malaysia and the subsequent impediments:

Participants Wish to Stay in Malaysia and the Impediments Hereof	
Extract in Arabic	**Translation into English**
الأب (٢): "بشكل عام لما بقارن ماليزيا بكتير دول شفتا في كتير إيجابيات" لوجودنا بماليزيا كتير إيجابيات مقارنة مع كتير دول أوروبية وأجنبية وحتى عربية ولكن للأسف القوانين شوي معقدة هون. يعني هنن لو عندن قوانين تساعد الواحد يندمج أو يستقر بتخيل يمكن كنا اخترنا نعد هون بس بالأساس وجودنا PR هون هو وجود مؤقت لكل الناس مافي شي بخليكي أنو. ما في جنسية ما في to plan for long ما في شي يخليكي".	**Fa2:** "Generally, when I compare Malaysia to many other countries that I have been to, I find it distinguished and unique with lots and lots of positivities in comparison with many other European and non-European countries. But unfortunately, the laws are a bit complicated for us. If there had been laws that would help us integrate into the society, I fathom that we would have chosen to stay here. We cannot get PR nor citizenship; thus, we cannot plan for long. Hence, we know that we are staying here temporarily".
الأب(٨): ايه طبعا. نحنا وقت منقول تطلعلنا فرصة نطلع منطلع مو لأنو ما منحب البلد بس مشان موضوع تأمين الجنسية هون مشان الولاد يستفيدو منها بالمستقبل فإذا كانت هي الفرصة متاحة بماليزيا فهو بلد جيد أنو الواحد يعيش فيا بيضل بلد اسلامي مو بعيدة عمليا من ناحية الدين ومن ناحية الأخلاق عموما فيك friendly الماليزيين وحتى باقي الأعراق الموجودة هون يعني ناس تتأقلم معاهم فيك تعيش معاهم والبلد حلوة جدا. المشكلة الوحيدة عندن أنو أد ما سكنتي هون عشر ستين عشرين سنة تلاتين سنة ما بيعطوكي جنسية. فإذا الواحد بدو يتغرب كل هالمدى يتغرب ببلد ياخد جنسية يقدر يستفيد منها أو ولادو يستفيدو منها بالمستقبل هي الفكرة".	**Fa8:** "If we had the chance to leave Malaysia, we would do that not because we do not like living here but because we need to get the citizenship especially to guarantee a more settled future especially for our children. If such a thing is provided in Malaysia, I would never think of leaving it. It is a Muslim country and all races here not just Muslims, are friendly. In general, it is easy to adapt in this country. The only issue is that no matter how many years one might live in this country, it is not easy to obtain the citizenship. We are expatriates anyway, so it is better to be expatriates in a country where we can get a better future for our children".

4.1.2 The Attitude Towards the Host Country Official Language

This section explains the Syrian immigrants' attitude towards the host country's official language, which is Malay. The findings reveal that they would not emphasise on Malay language as they have a mind-set that they are leaving Malaysia at some point.

The participants used connotations during the interviews to describe the Malay language as "limited" to the region, can only be "locally used", "rarely used", or "expired" the moment these families leave Malaysia, as well as "useless" for the future of their children. In other words, for them, the language doesn't carry much weight, especially among the younger generations.

Despite having these opinions, there were participants who are aware of the value of the Malay language if they could settle in Malaysia. According to some participants, Malay language can be a medium of communication, especially "to fully integrate" or "to be closer to the host people". Other participants indicated that learning the Malay language is a "sign of appreciation to the host country", besides the Malay "importance for communication". The families' attitudes towards Malay language are summarised in Figure 4.1.
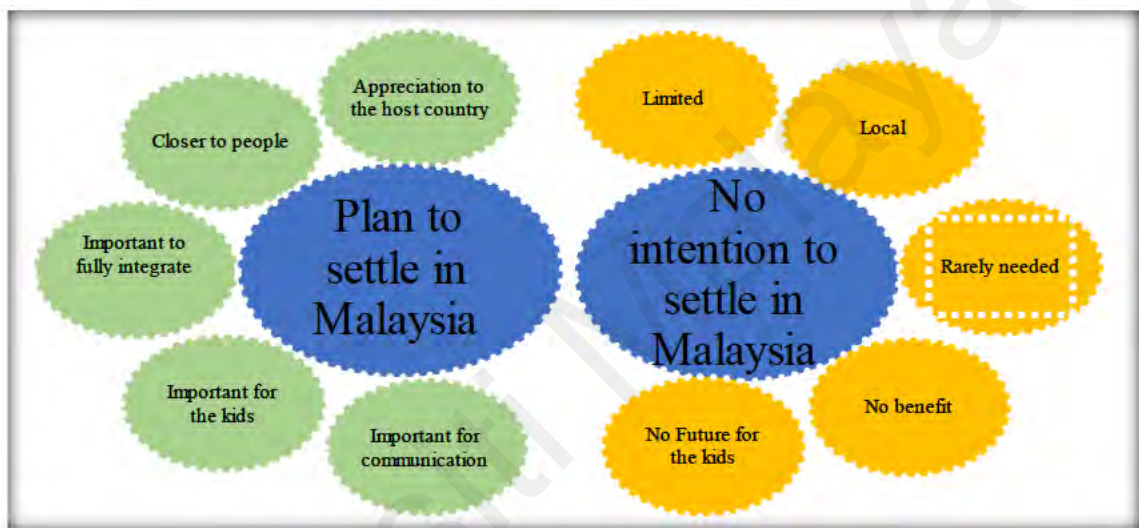
Figure 4. 1 Attitude Towards Malay Language

Another reason to value the Malay language is the easiness it could bring to their transactions and interactions. The Malay language is useful in certain circumstances. As per what the parents reported, it is not comfortable feeling to always need someone to translate for them, as this would cause them embarrassment.

Importance of Malay in Malaysia	
Extract in Arabic	**Translation into English**
الأب(٦): "اللغة الانكليزية بشكل عام يعني بتقضي حاجة بكوالالمبور، ولكن أحيانا الانسان بيضطر أو حتى بالعمل وقت يكون في مالاوية بتكون أيسر المعيشة هون يعني في كتير محلات ما بيحكو انكليزي منضطر أنو عالإشارات.. الماليزي أيسر حتى مثلا أنا بدي اتصل مع موظف من موظفين الدولة. بتلاقي الموظف انكليزيتو ضعيفة فمنضطر نجيب صديقي ماليزي. نحكي معن ماليزي ويترجملنا للانكليزي فبيضل الماليزي لماليزيا أفضل".	**Fa6:** "In general English is ok in KL, but sometimes one had to use Malay even at work, when the customer is Malay, Malay makes living easier in many aspects. There are many shops where they do not use the English, here we use signs and gestures. Another example is when we need to call a governmental employee, you will find the employee's English weak, hence we need to seek the assistance of our Malaysian friends. Malay is better for living in Malaysia".
الأب(٥): "أنا عم اتعلمها لأن في شغلة أكيدة أي شعب بتتعلمي لغتو وبتتواصلي معو بصير ودي يعني بينفتح معك أكتر بالعلاقة".	**Fa5:** "I am learning it (Malay), as it is a sure thing that when you learn the others' language and communicate with them, they will be friendly and more open to you in the relation".

4.1.3   The Attitude Towards the Host Country Second Language

Coming from a war-zone area, safety and settlement are among the aspirations and priorities for the Syrian participants. Since most of these families neither planned to settle in Malaysia for a long term nor travel back to Syria in the short term, participants are more inclined to put more efforts to improve the English language over the Malay language. Therefore, English language for the participating families becomes the main lingua franca in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

The parents in this study look at the English language as "life-changing". It was described as the language of the "science", "communication", "future" and "work industry" not only in Malaysia, but throughout the world. It was also viewed as "international", "widely spread and spoken" and as a "common" language that is "invading the world". Moreover, some participants predicted that this language will be "the mother language" for "most of the population in the future, if not all". On that account, not learning English is considered "a sign of illiteracy". Accordingly, English becomes "a necessity", "a priority", and "an obligation". One participant compared its importance with the "identity card or passport" that accompanies a citizen everywhere. Contrary to the Malay language which is only used in the "region", the English language is viewed as "reusable" even in non-anglophone countries. In fact, for most mothers in this study, learning English is considered critical in "limiting the generation gap" between

them and their growing children. Speaking a language that their children understand very well guarantees a better communication and a mutual understanding in the future (see Figure 4.2: Attitude Towards English Language).

Figure 4. 2 Attitude Towards English Language

The findings in this section are in keeping with the findings of another study (Hopkyns, 2014) which provided a great example about the power of the English language as an international language in the United Arab Emirates. While Malay can represent a powerful social tool in Malaysia, English language is deemed powerful on an international level. Additionally, more work opportunities could be available to speakers of the English language. Consequently, this might improve the financial situation and lead to better integration into the potential country these families might plan to travel to. Below is a selection of what the families stated in Arabic about their attitudes towards the English language. These are translated into English.

No	Attitude	Extract in Arabic	Translation into English
1	Indispensable	الأم في العائلة الثالثة: "كيف ما تنقلت بأي بلد من العالم هي حتكون معي متل الهوية بدها تكون معي إجباري".	**Mo3:** "the English language will accompany me just like my identity card, wherever I travel in the world".
2	Better integration	الأب في العائلة الثامنة: "بالأساس ركز على الانكليزية هون بالبداية مشان أنو نحنا هلأ عايشين هون مشان يقدرو يندمجو بالمجتمع وكمان مشان تعليمن. هلأ مشيو بهاي القصة وصارت لغتن مكتنت أنو يصير عندن علاقات ينجحو بمدرستن، إلخ".	**Fa8:** "English is the most important at the beginning, so the children can integrate in the society and also for their education. They are doing well so far and their English language enabled them to have good rapport at their schools. And as a result, they succeeded at their school".
3	Science language	الأب في اللغة الخامسة: "حاليا اللغة الانكليزية هي لغة العلم".	**Fa5:** "currently the English language is the language of the science".

In the following excerpt, one father narrated an incident in which he had been fooled by a mobile seller. At that point, he had regretted not putting extra effort to learn English.

Extract in Arabic	Translation into English
الأب (١): "صار معنا مشكلة بسيطة من فترة إني رحت لأشتري موبايل. اشتريناه من واحد صيني ومن شركة صينية. وأنا بحب الشغلة السريعة ما بحب إني وقف وأعد وشوف المميزات. إيه هات يلا وخلصنا وبسرعة اشتغل بالجهاز. تمام؟ تمام! دفعنا ومشينا. وصلنا عالبيت قال هاد ما فيه جوجل . إيه شو ما في جوجل.. فهون حسيت حالي إني يا ريتني كل عمري دارس لغة إنكليزي ولا صار معي هالفصل هاد. هي المواقف أوقاتا بتصير مع الواحد بيندم. ليش أنا والله الشغلة بدها لغة. أو بيحاكيني زبون ما كتير بفهم عليه بيرد بعيد وبرد أنا بعيد ومنضل نعيد. بعدين بقول لحالي والله الواحد لازم يتعلم لغة".	**Fa1:** "We faced a problem a while ago while we were getting a new mobile because of not understanding the English language. We got a mobile that does not have a google search in it. Here, I felt the need to master English language and regretted not putting more efforts since we first landed in Malaysia. Sometimes a customer calls me, and we keep repeating over and over. At these moments when I feel that I really need to learn the language".

Most parents in this study made a progress in their English language (see Appendices 11 & 12: Parents' English Language Level before Leaving Syria; and Parents' English Language Level Now, respectively). Only few participants maintained a very basic level in this language. However, the majority have improved significantly. The tables of the Appendices 11 and 12 are color-coded to easily compare the participants' language level while they had been in Syria and how it improved by the time of this study.

4.1.4 Language Choice of the Syrian Parents in the Employment Domain

Fishman (1972) talked about language choice in four domains: 1] education domain; 2] the employment domain; 3] the friendship domain; and 4] the home domain. In this section, the researcher will discuss the Syrian parents' language choice in the

employment domain. Looking at language choice in the employment domain helps in getting a closer understanding to parents' language perception in the workplace, and this might affect language choice for parents in the remaining domains.

The Syrian parents in this study came from different educational backgrounds. The parents who found job easily were the ones with higher education background and those who had relatives and acquaintances. Syrian parents in this study had different professions. Some are academics, such as lecturers and teachers. Others are working in the private sector as employees in international companies. The remaining are leading vocational occupations such as making and vending foods (see Table 4.1: *Syrian Arab Muslim Families' Work and Career in Malaysia*).

Table 4. 1 Syrian Arab Muslim Families' Work and Career in Malaysia

Family	Father (Fa)	Mother (Mo)
F1	Confectionery man and a Chef	Housewife
F2	Lecturer at a private university	Housewife
F3	Selling food from home	Selling food from home Quran teacher for native speakers
F4	Selling food from home	Selling food from home
F5	Trader	Arabic teacher for native speakers
F6	Business owner	Housewife
F7	Engineer (jobless)	Housewife
F8	Employee at an international company	Housewife
F9	Selling food from home	Selling food from home
F10	Selling food from home	Housewife

Parents in this study viewed the English language as critical, especially for their children, who represent the future generation. However, when it came to their careers and work in Malaysia, they had different attitudes. The findings show that the nature of work each parent is doing defined their priority in language choice. In other words, in the employment domain, parents use the language that best serve their careers whether it is English, Malay and/or Arabic. For example, if Malay might serve a parent in improving the work income, that parent would try their best to learn at least the terms that serve that given business. Below are parents' statements that show the language the parents choose and the reason for that choice.

Extract in Arabic	Translation into English
الأب(٥): "اللغة الماليزية أنا كرمال شغلي متعلما بس بالنسبة لولادي ما الها مستقبل معنا الماليزية".	Fa5: "I have learnt the Malay language to serve me at work, but it has no future for the kids".
الأم(٩): "من جديد والله مفكرة يعني كتير من جديد من وقت ما بلشت بزنس فقلت خلص يعني بما أنو محيطي صار كلو ماليزيين فأنو هيك يعني عم بحاول أني أعد وأتعلم".	Mo9: "I am newly starting to think of learning the Malay language because of my business. Most of my clients are Malay".

The father in the first family is a confectionery man. He had arrived in Malaysia in 2014 and his wife and children followed him in 2015. Before landing in Malaysia, the father had been a monolingual. He learns English and Malay through interactions with the locals, his customers, and his Malaysian co-workers. At his work, he deals with Arabs, Malaysians, and foreigners. Fa1 (the aforementioned father), tries to accommodate to the language of the customer. Below is extract in Arabic of what the father said about his interactions with customers and co-workers.

Extract in Arabic	Translation into English
الأب(١): "٦٠٪ ماليزيين بتعامل معن باللغة الملاوية بالدرجة الأولى وبس يصعب علي الوضع بدبر حالي بالانكليزي. بس حسن عم يحكو مالاوي بسرعة بطلب منهن يبطؤو بقلهن بفهم عليكن بس شوي شوي.. اللي ما بعرف جاوبو بالمالاوي بجاوبو بالانكليزي والعكس".	Fa1: "60% of the customers are Malays. First, I use Malay with them and when it becomes hard, I use English and vice versa. When they speak Malay fast, I ask them to slow down".
الأب (١): "اللي بيشتغلو معي بالمعمل عرب سوريين من الشام ومنحكي مع بعض بالشامي وفي ٣ عمال ماليزيين بستخدم معن اللغة الملاوية".	Fa1: "some of my workmates are from Damascus and I use Damascene with them; others are Malay and I use Malay with them".

The father in the second family (F2), on the other hand, is fluent in English even before coming to Malaysia, due to his Indian higher education degree. The father arrived in Malaysia in 2014, as well. In Malaysia, F2 is working as a lecturer at a private university in Kuala Lumpur. In his work, he uses the English language with his students and colleagues regardless of nationalities. However, with the non-Syrian Arabs, he uses the Standard Arabic. Even though there are colleagues and students at the university who are Malaysians, the father is not interested in learning the Malay language. He believes the English language is far more necessary for his work rather than the Malay language. In fact, during the interview, 22% of the father's conversation was done in English. His knowledge in Malay despite residing in Malaysia for many years, is still limited to only a few words.

Extract in Arabic	Translation into English
الأب(٢): "(الطلاب) ماليزيين كلهن.. في أحيانا International students.. But it is the medium of instruction, It is compulsory, you have to teach in English, يعني by the ministry".	Fa2: "All of them (students) are Malaysians. There are few international students. But it is the medium of instruction, you have to teach in English; it is compulsory by the ministry".
الأب(٢): أنا عندي طلاب يعني أنا supervise them ففي واحد عندي مصري بقلب شوي عمصري. I sometimes use Bahasa just for fun,"	Fa2: "I supervise Arab students, one of them is Egyptian. I twist my tongue to Egyptian dialect. I sometimes use BM just for fun".
الأب(٢): "دايما أنا بستخدم الانكليزي ولكن اللي حولي مو بالضرورة يستخدمو انكليزي لأن الماليزيين تحديداً هنن more comfortable to speak their own language يعني هنن بالنسبة إلهن الكلام بالإنكليزي بيبذلو جهد لحتى يحكو انكليزي غالبا، فأنا أحيانا حتى باجتماعاتي الرسمية ممكن الكل يحكي ماليزي وأنا الوحيد اللي بيناتن أجنبي".	Fa2: "Even at break time, I use English. However Malaysian feel more comfortable to use their own language. English for them needs an effort. Even in our formal meeting sometimes they might all speak BM, and I will respond in English as the only foreigner".

Parents in the third family came to Malaysia in 2019. Before arriving in Malaysia, the parents' knowledge in English was limited to basic conversation. These parents could not improve much in English because their arrival in Malaysia coincided with the pandemic. As a result, within a few months for arriving, they had to go into lockdown, thus preventing much contact with other people. The parents sell food from home with most of their customers being Arabs. Very few customers are Malaysians who place their orders in English via WhatsApp.

Extract in Arabic	Translation into English
الأم(٣): "أحيانا بيجيني غير العرب بستخدم معن اللغة الانكليزية مع أنو بيكونو ماليزيين. أصلا هنن وقت بيبعتولي بيبعتولي بالإنكليزي".	Mo3: "I use English with the non-Arabs even though they might be Malaysian. They would text me in English anyway, so I text back in English".

The fourth family that was interviewed arrived in Malaysia in 2016. While still in Syria, their English had been limited to some words and simple phrases. The mother finished her high school while the father studied only up to the sixth grade. The father works in restaurant equipment and the mother sells food from home. Their knowledge in English has improved with their current level of vocabulary deemed efficient enough to accomplish the work tasks. Neither parent have acquired any knowledge in Malay.

Extract in Arabic	Translation into English
الأم(٤): "أخي وزوجي شوي شي يمشي أمورن بمجال شغلن. يعني مفردات [بالانجليزي] بمجال شغلن".	Mo4: "My brother and husband know only a little bit of vocabularies in English that help them do their work".

The fifth family arrived in Malaysia in 2016. Besides their mother language, the parents had acquired an intermediate level of English when they were still in Syria. As soon as they arrived in Malaysia, the parents tried to put efforts to learn Malay and improve English through courses. According to the parents, most of the language they acquired was from their interaction with people. The mother had acquired a university degree in Arabic literature from Syria. In Malaysia, she teaches Arabic for native speakers in a school. Since she teaches Arabic for Arab students, she does not use any other language. However, she does know Malay. Despite that, her conversation with her Malay colleagues were mainly in English. According to her, English is easier to communicate with and as a foreigner, her colleagues unintentionally use English with her. The father, on the other hand, studied translation up to the third year in Syria. In Malaysia, he works in public relations. His job in public relations makes him interested in using Malay. To this end, he is exerting efforts to master this language along with the English language. According to him, both languages are important because they serve the public interest of the company for which he is working. Problems with the local customers could be solved easily when using their native tongue, the father reported.

Extract in Arabic	Translation into English
الأب(٥): "أيه بفهم عليهن بالأرقام وبالمعاملات التجارية أما غمق باللغة لاء".	Fa5: "I understand the numbers and commercial transactions but cannot go deeper into conversations".
الأب(٥): "يعني أي ماليزي بحاكيه بلغتو بتلاقيه فورا ارتحلك وبلش يفتح قلبو وهيك".	Fa5: "Any Malay, when you use their language, they will be more comfortable dealing with you and will be more open to you".
الأم(٥): "أنا رفقاتي الماليزيين اللي معي بالمدرسة بسمعهن. في قسم ماليزي لأنو بالمدرسة صرت يعني من الكلام ألقط كلام منهن بس ما اضطريت أني أحكي معهن. لأن وقت يحكو معي بيستخدمو الانكليش. ماني مضطرة كتير كتير أنا كوضعي إني كتير قوي الماليزي".	Mo5: "I listen to my Malay colleagues when they speak, I started to catch some speech parts from them. But I did not have to use the Malay language with them because when they speak to me, they use the English language. In my situation, I do not really need to learn BM".
الأب(٥): "هلأ أنا بشتغل بشركة طيبة للمواد الغذائية كمدير أفرع. فأحيانا بيضطروني الموظفين أنو مثلا تعا شوف هالزبون عندو مشكلة تعال حاكيه. فالزبون الماليزي بحاكيه بلغتو بحيث أنو إذا عندو مشكلة أو زعلان من شي بحاكيه بلغتو فورا بيرضى بعتذر منو بلغتو مع هدية صغيرة بتلاقيه بيرضى فورا".	Fa5: "I work as a manager and sometimes the employees encounter a problem with a client, they would soon call me to talk to that client. The moment I speak their language, the problem is considered solved, and the client will be satisfied".

Parents in the sixth family arrived in Malaysia twice: the first time was from 2011 to 2014, and the second time was in 2018. In between, the family lived for three years in an English-speaking country in South America. The father has just completed his PhD study. It is an Islamic-related study. The father has strong foundation in Arabic language and his dissertation was written in Arabic. He works as an operation manager and the customers he deals with are Arabs. Therefore, the language he uses is exclusively Arabic. The mother obtained an Islamic-related degree from an Arab country in Arabic language. She does not work in Malaysia. Both parents' knowledge in English are limited to basic conversation before coming to Malaysia but have since improved to an advanced level. While the father studied the language on his own, the mother attended courses and learnt the language through interaction. Neither parent have acquired any knowledge in Malay.

Extract in Arabic	Translation into English
الأب(٦): "ما بضطر اتعامل بالانكليزي. نحنا مجرد استيراد مواد عربية. يعني نحنا عنا شركة عائلية هون [..] من سوريا من الامارات فكلها مواد عربية اللي منستوردا".	Fa6: "I do not need to use English, we merely import Arabic materials, and we are a family company here [...] We import from Emirate, from Syria".
الأب(٦): "مع العرب لغة عربية وأحيانا مع الجزائري بحكي لغة فصحى مشان يفهمو علي أكتر. عندي صديقي تونسي بحاكيه بلغة فصحى مشان يفهم علي.. أحيانا اللغة السامية صعبة عليهن".	Fa6: "With the Arabs I use SA especially with Algerian and Tunisia, our HL would be difficult for them, so I use the SA".

Parents in the seventh family are jobless. They are the eldest parents in this study. The mother's knowledge in English before leaving Syria was limited to a few words while the father had mastered English even while he was in Syria. Besides his career as an engineer, the father had worked as a translator, as well. The family left Syria in 2015 and travelled to Cambodia and Thailand before finally landing in Malaysia in 2018. Both parents are still maintaining the same level in English. Neither parent have acquired any knowledge of Malay.

The eighth family arrived in Malaysia in 2018. The father (Fa8) had obtained a PhD degree while the mother had obtained a master's degree in a medical-related study. Both parents had no prior knowledge of the Malay language, and that has not change. In Syria, the father used to have a good command in English while the mother's knowledge

was limited to terminologies in her field of study. The father in Malaysia is the sustainer in the family and he is working in a company where the language of communication is English, resulting in significant improvements. Even if he used some Arabic with his Arab colleagues, they would soon switch into English because they want to practice their English more. Another reason is that most of the time they would be talking about work and use terminologies that they only acquired in English.

Extract in Arabic	Translation into English
الأب(٨): "اذا كان حديث مالو علاقة بالعمل منحكي عربي بس اذا كنا عم نتناقش بالعمل وبس نحنا عرب لعرب ههه أول شي منحاول نبلش عربي بس بعدين منقلب الحديث لانكليزي لأن خلص تعودنا أنو لتشرحي هاد الموضوع أو لتواصلي بهاد الموضوع أساسا أنتي عم تتواصلي مع كل الأشخاص التانيين بالانكليزي فبتصير اسهل لإلنا أنو نتواصل بالانكليزي حتى لو كنا عرب بين بعضنا يعني. حتى نحنا منقول خلينا نعمل social بالانكليزي خلينا نصير أسرع بالمحادثة".	**Fa8:** "if what we are talking about is not related to work, we use the Arabic language, but if it is work-related issue, first we start in Arabic, then we switch into English. Because we got used that to explain certain thing, we usually use the English language. It would be easier for us even if we are only Arab. We also prefer to socialize in English to improve our conversational skills".

The mother in the eight family (Mo8), on the other hand, is not working. Despite that, she places a great value on Malay in case they decide to settle in Malaysia for work-related reasons. The following extract explains the mother's attitude towards the Malay language.

Extract in Arabic	Translation into English
الأم(٨): "ايه طبعا لأنو ساعتا حأقدر أشتغل بدي أتواصل مع ناس، فبيجوز طبقة الناس اللي أقدر أتواصل معاهم ما يكونو ملمين بالانكليزي أكيد هي شغلة فبدي لغة تواصل معاهم. حأضطر اتعلم اللغة المالاوية".	**Mo8:** "of course I will learn BM. I will need it to be able to communicate with patients. I might have patients who do not know much English. In this case learning the BM is a must".

Fa9 and Mo9 (the ninth family), were the first to arrive in Malaysia in 2011 and 2012 respectively. The father finished school up until the sixth grade in Syria and the mother up until the twelfth grade. They met and married in Malaysia. Both are selling food from home, with most of the customers being Malaysians. While they had no knowledge of English or Malay before coming to Malaysia, both were able to learn English and Malay through interactions with people in the host country and with their customers. Mastery of either language is still poor, but sufficient for them to be able to conduct their business.

Extract in Arabic	Translation into English
الأم(٩): "ايه بلطش اجباري. لأن هنن في مننن ما بيحكو انكليزي ابدا. مثلا اللالا موف من جديد. اجباري أغلب اللالا موف ما بيحكي انكليزي. أساسا على التلفون بتلاقي صعوبة كتير بالانكليزي".	**Mo9:** "I have to use the BM even if not perfectly. Some of the Malaysians do not speak English. For example, most of the LaLa Move drivers only speak BM. Anyway, to speak via a phone call, it is so difficult to explain in English".
الأب(٩): "ما كنت بعرف انكليزي ابدا بس هلأ بعرف شوي ماليزي.. وانكليزي بحكي أما كتابة لاء [..] يعني بخلص حالي".	**Fa9:** "I knew no English, now I know a little bit. In a way that helps me survive here. Only speaking but not writing".

The parents in the tenth family arrived in Malaysia in 2018. They both completed their primary school in Syria and had no knowledge of either English or Malay before arriving in Malaysia. The father is a chef and a breadwinner and have acquired some basic English and Malay. His knowledge of these languages is enough, and it complements one another, allowing him to work. The mother, however, still has not acquired any extra knowledge in either English or Malay.

Extract in Arabic	Translation into English
الأب(١٠): "بحكي انكليزي ماليزي بس أنا أغلبية زباييني عرب".	**Fa10:** "I use English and Malay but most of the customers are Arabs".
الأب(١٠): "الهدف بطور من نفسي يعني بجتهد على نفسي صير صاحب مطعم بعمل بزنس وشغل بالبلد".	**Fa10:** "I aspire to improve my language as this will help me become a restaurant owner, I would make a business in this country".

Based on the interviews, the length of time these families spent in Malaysia has little effect on the level of improvement in the languages of the host country. It is not also related to the parents' previous knowledge in either language. What motivated or not motivated the parents' improvements in any language is mainly attributed to the use of that language in the workplace. One of the questions addressed to participants in this study was: "If you had the opportunity to learn a language other than English or Malay, what would that language be?" Most replied "Chinese Mandarin", which stresses their belief in the relevancy and growth of China in the work industry in the coming years. As stated by one of the fathers in the following extract, those who know Mandarin will have better opportunities in the industry.

No	Reason to learn language	Extract in Arabic	Translation into English
1	"future economic survival"	الأب(٥): "اذا بدي تابع أخبار اقتصادية. بقلك احتمال كتير كبير تصير الصين هي المسيطرة على الاقتصاد العالمي. فالمستقبل للصين. معظم الاقوال ومعظم الاتجاهات او الاسهم التجارية بتحكي هيك. فأحيانا في مجموعة فيها بعض العائلات السورية وغير السورية بلشت تعلم ولادها لغة المندرين اللي هي اللغة الصينية فهي بتعطيكي فرصة. هي مو كرمالي أنا. كرمال ولادي لأن بدي حاول حطن بكورسات لغة صيني فأنا بحب وجه أولادي حسب المصلحة المتوقعة".	Fa5: "When I watch the economic situation news, I predict that China has a great potential to be overcontrolling the international economy in the future [..] currently, there are some Syrian and non-Syrian families who have started to get their children learn the Mandarin, as this would provide them with opportunities in the future. I would do that not for me but for my children. I will get them enrolled in Chinese language course. I act according to the predicted interest".

In multilingual communities, people communicate daily in more than one language in the workplace because of the linguistic diversity dominating the workplace (Kamisah Ariffin, 2007). Moreover, the minority communities have their priorities in choosing the language in the workplace in multilingual communities such as Malaysia. They would, for example, use the language that would lead to "economic survival", to status, and wealth (Mukherjee & David, 2011, p.34). The findings go in line with a recent study conducted by Ghadi et. al. (2019) on Syrian adult participants in Canada where the participants' skill in the English language was their only barrier to attain a good job, secure it, or maintain it in order to provide for the family. Same goes with a study conducted by Dweik, Nofal, and Qawasmeh (2014) who found out that for the Syrian participants, English language is considered a good tool that could lead to attaining their financial and educational aspirations, which also goes in line with the findings of this study.

4.2   Language Maintenance and Shift among the Syrian Immigrants in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

In the first theme, the Syrian families revealed their preference in using the English language in the host country instead of the Malay language. However, when it came to the employment domain, parents used the language that best serves their careers whether that language was English, Malay and/or Arabic.

This second theme is focused on the second research question which is related to LMLS among the Syrian community in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The first subsection will explain children's Arabic language maintenance and shift in three domains, i.e., the education domain, the home domain, and the friendship domain. The second subsection will talk about the effect of COVID-19 lockdown on the participating families' languages.

4.2.1   The Role of Language in Different Domains among the Syrian Immigrants in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

To understand the phenomenon of LMLS among the Syrian community in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, the researcher looked at the children's language use in three domains. The first is the education domain, where the researcher focused on children's language use with their Arab classmates in and outside of class. Second is the home domain, where the researcher focused on the language use in four subdomains, i.e., parents together, fathers with children, mothers with children, and siblings together. Finally, the friendship domain, where the researcher looked at children's language use with their Arab friends.

The researcher chose families from different educational background to see the effect of education on LMLS (see Table 4.2: Syrian Arab Muslim Families' Education Background). The findings show that education could have an indirect effect on LMLS. In other words, parents with higher education background managed to find jobs easily

upon arrival in Malaysia. As a result, they became financially stable faster than the other families with lower education background. Therefore, while education is not the direct factor defining LMLS in these families, their education does affect their level of financial security, which then affects the type of schools their children were sent to. Hence, the direct reason that led to either maintenance or shift in these children's Arabic languages was the type of school.

Table 4. 2 Syrian Arab Muslim Families' Education Background

Education background Colour Coded		
1	6th grade	
2	Baccalaureate	
3	Higher institute/University degree	
4	Higher education	
Families	**Fathers**	**Mothers**
F1	6th grade	Baccalaureate
F2	PhD	Higher institute
F3	Higher Institute	Higher Institute
F4	6th grade	Baccalaureate
F5	Higher Institute	Bachelor's degree
F6	PhD	Bachelor's degree
F7	Bachelor's degree	Baccalaureate
F8	PhD	Masters' degree
F9	6th grade	Baccalaureate
F10	6th grade	6th grade

The financial situation of the families and the type of school will be discussed further to illustrate how the type of the school has affected Syrian children's languages in three different domains.

For parents who are financially stable (F2, F5 & F8), it was important for them to enrol their children in a school that will facilitate their children's acquirement of native-like English accent. At the same time, their choice of school also depends on the children being able to connect with their religion via the teaching of Standard Arabic (SA) and Classical Arabic (CA). Hence, the Islamic International schools were the parents' best choice. However, even though there is SA and CA-related subjects at these schools, the children's heritage language (HL) showed somewhat of a shift as the English language is used extensively in schools. This is because the curriculum and the language of

instruction is in English. Only few subjects related to Islamic teaching are conducted in Arabic. However, these subjects will be eventually explained in English as many students are non-native speakers of this language. Students at these schools use English to communicate in and outside class. Hence, even if Arab students are conversing with each other, English dominates. This becomes the norm in such schools because students came from different nationalities.

Additionally, none of these families have relatives in Malaysia. They all chose to live in areas in KL that are mostly resided by locals. Despite that, they are not isolated from the Syrian community and their social circle consists mainly of Syrians. Children in these families also mainly use the English language with their Arab friends.

As for the home domain, all parents in these three families use HL when they converse together. Children use English and Arabic with the father. Even though mothers in these families (F2, F5 & F8) can speak English, they followed strict roles. They tried to use HL with children most of the time even when a child uses the English language. Siblings, on the other hand, mainly converse in English.

Even though HL is considered the parents' mother language, apparently it was not the same for their children. English language is considered their first language, and they feel more comfortable expressing themselves when using it. Statements in the extracts below show children's language use in three domains for these three families (F2, F5 & F8).

International Islamic Schools and Language Shift			
Family	**Domain**	**Extract in Arabic**	**Translation into English**
F2 They do not have relatives in Malaysia	**Education** **Asterisk (*)** mark is used for the field notes jotted down by the researcher during the interviews	ط١ع٢: "لاء.. بس نحنا منحكي إنكليزي لأنو في من *جملات ما منعرفها عربي منحكي إنكليزي". الأم(٢): "ألمى وقت عملت الProject بدكن تعمله بال English أو بدكن بتعمله بالعربي، فهي اختارت أنو تعمل اللغة بال English". ط١ع٢: "[عملت المشروع بالانكليزي] لأنو أنا ماني كتير منيحة بالعربي". ط١ع٢: "[بالباحة مع رفقاتي العرب] منحكي انكليزي وعربي [بس] الأكثر انكليزي".	**K1F2:** "We use English because there are sentences, we do not know their meaning in English". ***Using wrong plural in Arabic language** **Mo2:** "When she did the project, she has the choice to either do it in English or Arabic and she chose English". **K1F2:** "I did the project in English because I am so good in Arabic". **K1F2:** "in the recreation, I use English and Arabic with my Arab classmates, but we use English more".
	Home **Asterisk (*)** mark is used for the field notes jotted down by the researcher during the interviews	ط١ع٢: *(تنظر لوالدها منتظرة منه تفسير السؤال) ط١ع٢: *(تحاول إيجاد المفردة في اللغة العربية) ط١ع٢: *(ما فهمت السؤال) ط١ع٢: "هديك المرة عملنا فيديو *بيابا موبايلو". الأم(٢): "وقت بيكون serious بين الأب(٢) وبنتو الكبيرة بينقلب إنكليزي". الأب(٢): "أنا إذا بدي بهدل ألمى بتطلع لحالا بالانكليزي.. بحس تأثيرا على ألمى أكبر.. بحس لما بستخدم الانكليزي معا خصوصا لما بكون أنا معصب بتفهم علي تماما أنا شو بدي.. إذا عصبت بالعربي she might miss something, she might not understand the context". الأم(٢): "لما نزلنا على سوريا من شي سنة ونص لما كانت وقت تنزعج من حدا من الولاد.. من ولاد أخواتي ففورا تقلب إنكليزي.. طبعا هني ما يفهمو عليها.. أنو يقولولي ترجميلنا.. [..] صارت تجاهد نفسا لتقدر تفهمن". ط١ع٢: "بحكي (مع أبي) إنكليزي لما ما بعرف شلون قول الجملة بالعربي". ط١ع٢: "الانكليزي هي اللغة الأقرب لقلبي".	*looking at father asking for explanation. *unable to find an appropriate vocab in Arabic. *she did not understand the question. *Arabic words in English structure. **Mo(2):** "when the father is serious with his daughter, he would swipe to English". **Fa(2):** "if I am angry at my daughter, unintentionally words would go out in English. She would understand exactly what I want. If I said things in Arabic, she might miss something, she might not understand the context". **Mo(2):** "when we went to Syria, she would use English with other children when she gets annoyed. They would not understand her they would ask me to translate. She would put a great effort to explain for them". **K1F1:** "I use English with my father when I do not know how to say things in Arabic". **K1F1:** "English is closer to my heart".
	Friendship	الأم(٢): "يعني أصلا أصلا وقت بتجتمع هي ورفقاتا العرب بتحكي انكليزي".	**Mo2:** "Anyways, she already uses English when she meets with her Arab friends".

Parents in F7 are jobless, with Mo7 age 55 years old, and Fa7 being 65 years old. They suffer illnesses that hinder them from work. They are settling under UNHCR and depends largely on aids they receive under this organization. However, their children's HL has shifted towards English as they are currently attending an international fee-free school for refugees. The curriculum is mainly in English, and they have only one Quran recitation class per week. Children use English language with their classmates in and outside of class.

F7 live in an area mostly resided by Arabs and have no family in Malaysia. The parents spend most of the time at home and have very few friends. While the children use Arabic with their Arab friends, the language can shift to English when they become stuck.

For the children in this family, English is the dominant language that they use throughout their social interactions, be it in school, with their father at home, with each other, and even with their friends. The mother, on the other hand, converse mainly in Arabic and knows basic English. Therefore, lack of understanding between herself and her children sometimes occur, but are generally resolved by the father, who act as interpreter and translator. Below are statements of the mother (Mo7) and K1F7 on language use.

International School for Refugee and Language Shift			
Family	**Domain**	**Extract in Arabic**	**Translation into English**
F7 They do not have relatives in Malaysia	**Education**	١ (7): "عندي الولاد لما بيعد والولاد كلها مع بعضا بتعرفي في الصومالي في الليبي في اليمني بقاكل ياتن بيحكو انكليزي".	**Mo7:** "my children use English with all other Arab children of different nationalities".
	Home	١ (7): "أنا بحكي معاهم عربي.. أبوهن بحاكيهن انكليش".	**Mo7:** "I use Arabic with them while their father uses only English".
		١ (7): "وقت أنا بكون قاعدة وهو عم يعمل حساباتو للعبة بيحاكي حالو بالانكليش".	**Mo7:** "When my son does his calculations and he is on his own, he would use the English language".
		١ (7): "وقت بيكونوا عم يلعبو مع بعض انكليش ويسبو بعضن بالانكليش".	**Mo7:** "When the siblings play together, they would use English".
		١ (7): "محمد بلش يكربج يعني بيسأل ماما هي الكلمة شو معناها.. أوقاتا ما بفهم عليه فبيحاكي أبوه ليفهمو".	**Mo7:** "My son started to forget Arabic; he always asks me about the meaning of what I say. Sometimes, we do not understand each other, so he would ask his father for an explanation".
		ط ١ع٧: "بحب اكتب باللغة الانكليزية.. بس بكره اني اكتب عربي".	**K1F7:** "I like to write in English, but I hate to write in Arabic".
	Friendship Asterisk (*) mark is used for the field notes jotted down by the researcher during the interviews	١ (7): "حتى بالكوندو عندي هون *كلو منستخدم الانكليش".	**Mo7:** "in this condo, *all children use English".
		ط ١ع٧: "*مع الولاد العرب بستخدم عربي وانكليزي والكلمات اللي ما منفهما منحكيهن بالانكليزي".	**K1F7:** "*with Arab friends, I use Arabic and the words we do not know, we use in English".
			* **Contradiction between what the mother said and her child. Different answers for the same question.**

International School for Refugee and Language Shift			
Family	**Domain**	**Extract in Arabic**	**Translation into English**
F5 They do not have relatives in Malaysia	**Education Home Friendship**	الأم(٥): "هلأ لغتهن بالمدرسة الدولية عانيت من اختلاف اللهجات واللغات فوصلت لمرحلة أنو مثلا بنتي بتحكي نص الجملة مصري ونص الجملة يمني ونص الجملة عربي ونص الجملة انكليزي.. يعني أنا عانيت كتير [بالمدرسة الاسلامية العالمية] ماكانت في جملة تمام. كانت الجملة كل اللهجات مع اللغات".	Mo5: "In the International school, I suffered the variety of dialects and languages. they reached a point in which they would use Egyptian, Yemeni, SA and English in the same sentences. They would not say any one sentence in one language. It would be a mix of dialects and languages".
F8 They do not have relatives in Malaysia	**Home**	الأم(٨): "الصغيرة عندي يعني لكنتا كتير قريبة من الـnative لأن كتير بتتابع برامج أطفال.. بتتابع من التلفزيون [..] بيقدرو يتواصلو وياخدو ويعطو حتى أنا أوقات مصطلحات ما بكون بعرفا بتفاجأ انو هنن بيحكولي ياها وحتى أنو ما بيعرفو معناها بالعربي.. يعني وصلو لي لهي المرحلة.. فهمتي علي يعني أنو مصطلحات ما بعرف معناها بقلهن شو معناها بيقلولي ما منعرف وحتى هلأ مثلا وقت اللي بيلعبو مع بعضن لغتن انكليزي أكتر ما تكون عربي هاد اللي صار عنا". الأم(٨): "بالنسبة للانكليزي [..] بتحسيها لغتن صارت يعني متشربة عندن ياها يعني أكتر من العربي". الأم(٨): "لاء أوقاتا بيتواصل الأب معاهم (الأطفال) بالانكليزي أكتر مني". الأم(٨): "هلأ هالحديث ابني أكيد مانو فهمانو يعني. يعني كمان بيقلي ماما شو معناة. فلذلك حايص.. ما عم يفهم شو عم نحكي". الأم(٨): "حتى يعني وصلنا لمرحلة اذا بحب حطلن برنامج تلفزيون باللغة العربية بيملو أنو متل عقوبة بيعتبروها. ههههه أنو يا الله ليش هلأ هيك.. مع أنو يما بتكون فكرتو كتير بسيطة.. أما بالانكليزي بيشوفو شغلات أكبر بكتير من عمرن وبتجذبن. يعني بيجوز بحكم أنو بيفهمو بيقدرو يستوعبو أما بالعربي أبدا.. ماما شو عم يحكي شو عم يقول.. يعني هنن مثلا بيفهمو العامية مثلا أكتر من الفصحى.. الفصحى لسا أبدا كتير.. مشكلة كبيرة عندن". الأب(٨): "في أوقات يعني بصير ستن وجدن ما بيفهمو عليهن.. لان هنن حيدخلو كلمات انكليزي بالحديث تبعهن".	Mo8: "the little girl's English language accent is very close to the native's because she watches a lot of cartoons [..], they can communicate very well. They would even mention terminologies that I never heard of. They have reached this point that they would know things in English but not in Arabic. They keep asking me about the meanings of the words in Arabic. When they play together, they would use English more than Arabic". Mo8: "you feel that English is their first language, they have absorbed it more than Arabic". Mo8: "their father uses English with them more than me". Mo8: "I am sure my son does not understand any word of what we are saying now. He keeps asking me about the meanings. He cannot sit still because he does not understand". Mo8: "even if I tried to put a very simple Arabic cartoon, they would soon feel bored. They consider it as punishment haha asking me why I am doing that to them. Contrary to the English cartoon where the language would be advanced and they understand everything, but not for the Arabic. They understand HL more than SA. SA is a big problem for them". Fa8: "sometimes their grannies would not understand them as they would be using a mix of English and Arabic when they speak".
	Friendship	ط٢ع٨: "مع رفقاتي بحكي English".	K2F8: "I use English with my friends".

Children in F6 have mainly maintained their Arabic language; and they also speak fluent English; and studies in an International Islamic school in Malaysia. Mo6 and Fa6 have obtained a university degree and PhD degree, respectively. The parents narrated that they had been into an English-speaking country prior coming to Malaysia, which shifted their children's language to mainly English. Not wishing the same pattern to be

repeated in Malaysia, they followed strict strategies (see Section 4.3: The Strategies in Reversing Syrian Children's languages in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia) that led to reversing the shift in their children's Arabic language.

F6 has a big family in Malaysia, and they are living in an area mostly resided by Arabs. Most of their friends are Arabs, mainly, Syrians. The children in this family accommodate the language and dialect of the addressee. Moreover, they can easily communicate with their family in Syria. At home, they use only Arabic HL with each other and with their parents.

International Islamic School but Language Maintenance			
Family	**Domain**	**Extract in Arabic**	**Translation into English**
F6 They have big family in Malaysia	**Education In Malaysia**	**الأب(٦):** "الأطفال خليط بس حتى العرب بين بعض بيحكو انكليزي لأنو هنن صاير كل واحد بلهجة فصار يلاقو أسهل طريقة للتواصل مشان يحكو مع بعضن هي الانكليزي".	**Fa6:** "Children are mix but even Arab children would use English. Everyone uses different dialect, so they use English as lingua franca to ease their communication".
	Home In Malaysia	**الأم(٦):** "هو السوري على طول موجود بحكم أنو أهلي هون وأختي هون وعنا قرايين منيح فالسوري ما اتأسر.. اللغة الأساسية هي السوري.. فهنن حسب اللي بيعدو معو اذا قعدو مع سوريين بتضل لهجتن سورية". **الأب(٦):** "الفكرة أنو عليا تعلمت هون وحمزة ولد هون فاللهجة السورية ١٠٠٪ يعني إذا حكينا مع أهلنا بسوريا ما منفرق أبدا عن باقي الأولاد".	**Mo6:** "HL is always there because we have big family here hence, Syrian HL was not affected. My children would accommodate to the addressee's language. If they met Syrians, they would use their HL". **Fa6:** "my daughter started her school education in Malaysia and my son was born here. Their HL is maintained 100%. When we contact our family in Syria, they would speak exactly the same as the children who were born and study in Syria".
	Friendship In Malaysia	**الأب(٦):** "بس إذا عليا لعبت مع ليبيين أو مع يمنيين يتحكي متلن هي وحمزة".	**Fa6:** "When my children play with non-Syrian Arabs, they speak like them".
	Prior coming to Malaysia	**الأم(٦):** "الصراحة مرت فترة لما كنا عايشين بجايانا فكتير اتأسرت لغتن لدرجة أنو صرنا نحكي بالفصحى حتى بين بعض".	**Mo6:** "honestly, prior to coming to Malaysia, we were living in an English-speaking country. The children's Arabic language was badly shifted to the degree that we started to use SA among each other".

Families with lower education background (F1, F3, F4, F9 & F10) have not quickly settled financially. Children of these families are studying in different schools.

Children of F1, F3 and F4 are in schools mainly for Syrian students. The curriculum is English, and the language used for teaching is English, as well. Only few books are in Arabic, and they are on Islamic-related subjects. These subjects are fully

taught in Arabic without using any other medium language because all students are native speakers of Arabic.

However, even though all these children are studying in Syrian schools, the children's language (F1 and F4) have slightly shifted, i.e., at the level of words only. However, this was not the case for F3 whose children largely maintained their grasp of Arabic. As mentioned earlier, they arrived in Malaysia only a few months prior to the pandemic. Classes were conducted online, and the children spent most of the time at home. Hence, the language they interact with the most is the HL. English, for these families, is considered a foreign language that they are still learning. For these children, Arabic is considered their mother language, and they feel most comfortable using it.

Children of F1 and F4, meanwhile, use English in class and Arabic outside of class. At home, they mainly use Arabic with each other and with their parents and can comfortably use HL with the family in Syria and with their Arab friends in Malaysia. Generally, the difference between children of these families and children whose language have tremendously shifted (F2, F5 & F8) is the classmates' nationalities. These children have Syrian classmates where they speak a mutual language, i.e., the Syrian HL. Below are extracts with statements about the language use of these families (F1, F3 and F4) in different domains.

Language Maintenance for Children Attending Schools Mainly for Syrians			
Family	**Domain**	**Extract in Arabic**	**Translation into English**
F1 They have big family in Malaysia	**Education**	ط١&٢(ع١): "بالمدرسة مع رفقاتنا منستخدم العربي".	**K1&2(F1):** "with our classmates we use Arabic".
	Home	الأم(١): "في كلمات بيعرفوها بالانكليزي ما بيعرفو معناها بالعربي".	**Mo1:** "there are words, they know in English but not in Arabic".
		ط١ع١: "بشاهد أفلام الكرتون العربي مشان افهم لأن في انكليزي أحيانا ما بفهمو".	**K1F1:** "I watch Arabic cartoon because I do not always understand the English cartoon I do not understand".
	Friendship	ط١ع١: "إذا عرب بحكي عربي [..] بشكل عام اللي ما يحكو عربي منستخدم إنكليزي".	**K1F1:** "if Arabs, I use Arabic […] in general, I use English with those who do not speak Arabic".
		ط١ع١: "مع السوري بحكي سوري ومع اليمني بحكي سوري كمان".	**K1F1:** "I use Syrian HL with all Arabs, Syrian and non-Syrian".

Language Maintenance for Children Attending Schools Mainly for Syrians			
Family	Domain	Extract in Arabic	Translation into English
F3 They arrived few months before the Pandemic. No relatives in Malaysia	**Home**	الأم(٣): "المشكلة أنو نحنا تقريبا بعد ما أجينا بفترة ٤ أشهر بلشت قصة الكورونا، فللأسف الشديد أنا ما عندي قصة هالاختلاط الكبير بالأشخاص بس بنفس الوقت يعني بالكوندو عندي في نسبة عرب كبيرة.. بتعرفي أنتي بالأمبانج نسبة العرب كبيرة". ١ (3): "لبين ما تفتح المدرسة تقريبا كان بحدود الشهرين شهرين ونص كنا عم نحاول كل يوم نعلمن ١٠ أو ١٥ كلمة إنكليزي لحتى يفوتو ولو أنو خمسة بالمية يكون عندن شوي استعداد للمدرسة".	**Mo3:** "the problem is that after around 3 months of our arrival in Malaysia, the pandemic started, so, we did not have the chance to mix a lot with people here. In our condo, we have lots of Arabs. In general, in this area in KL, there are lots of Arabs". **Mo3:** "We were teaching them around 10-15 English words a day preparing them for the schools even if only a little".
F4 No relatives in Malaysia	**Education**	ط ١ع(٤): "بالباحة مع رفقاتي بحكي عربي".	**K1F4:** "I use Arabic with my classmates at the recreation period".
	Home	الأم(٤): "قبل ما يقعدونا بالبيت كانت تخربط أوقاتا تحكي بالانكليزي".	**Mo4:** "Before the pandemic, she would sometimes use English by mistake at home".

Meanwhile, children of F9 were all born in Malaysia and are still pre-school age. Their Arabic is strongly maintained as they spend most of their time with their parents who only use HL with them. Children in this family are still monolingual and the family does not have relatives in Malaysia.

F10's children are studying in a Libyan school. Most of school students are Arab Libyan. The school follows the Libyan curriculum which is in Standard Arabic. Children's English language is limited to a few words and phrases. They have only one period of English education in a week, which means the children use the Libyan HL in schools with their teachers and classmates. At home, with each other and with their parents, they use the Syrian HL. Below are statements by F9 and F10 about language use in different domains.

Language Maintenance for Children Attending Schools Mainly for Libyans Language Maintenance in the Family in which All Children Are Pre-school Age			
Family	**Domain**	**Extract in Arabic**	**Translation into English**
F9 They do not have relatives in Malaysia	**Home**	الأم(٩): "بالبيت اللغة اللي بتستخدموها العربي بين بعض عربي."	**Mo9:** "At home, the children use Arabic language with each other".
	Friendship	الأم(٩): "يعني حنان وحنين من جديد عم يتعلمو انكليزي لأن مصاحبين كم بنت افريقيات فصارة يحكو انكليزي.. أما حنان وحنين وأحمد بيحكو عربي نظامي".	**Mo9:** "My K1 and K2 started to learn English newly because they have new African friends. But all my three children can speak Arabic perfectly".
F10 They do not have relatives in Malaysia	**Education**	الأم(١٠): "هلأ هي كانت بمدرسة ليبية حطيتا سنتين بس هلأ مافي مدرسة موقفة". ط١ع١٠: "بالمدرسة مع رفقاتي بحكي ليبي".	**Mo10:** "My K1 was studying at a Libyan school but now she stops". **K1F10:** "with my schoolmates, I use Libyan HL".
	Home	ط١ع١٠: "بالبيت بحكي شامي". ط١ع١٠: "بالبيت منحكي بس عربي".	**K1F10:** "At home, I use Syrian HL". **K1F10:** "We only use Arabic at home".

In light of the constant competition with other major language/s, the heritage or the community languages might be in question of maintenance (Pauwels, 2016). The findings show that the less the domains in which children use their HL, the more their HL is liable to shift and vice versa (Abdelhadi, 2017). Children who maintained their language they do use HL in multiple domains – at home and in school. On the contrary, for the children whose HL has tremendously shifted, their HL is limited to the home domain and only because the mothers were strict about using HL at home. Even then, knowing that their fathers are fluent in English, the children preferred to speak English with their fathers.

The lack of language use in private domains such as the family or the home domain is an inevitable factor that will lead to language shift (Holmes, 2003). Holmes (2003) found out that limiting the use of HL in the home domain could lead to a faster shift in the children's language. Fishman (1991) viewed the minority family linguistic milieu, between children and parents, and children with each other, as a powerful force in the face of external influences such as social and educational settings.

4.2.2 The Effect of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Syrian Children's Arabic Language

Learning online means losing the social contact with teachers and schoolmates in and outside of class, and during other school activities. Hence, the domains in which the language used are decreased in number (Abdelhadi, 2017). It was during this period where some parents noted a reverse in the shift in their children's Arabic language. This has shown in the abstracts below as stated by parents.

Reverse in the Shift in HL during the COVID-19 Lockdown			
Family	**Domain**	**Extract in Arabic**	**Translation into English**
F5	**Home domain during the lockdown**	الأم(٥): "هلأ بصراحة بهي المدرسة [للسوريين اللي سجلوا فيها] بفترة الكورونا خليني قول رجعت لشاميتها. أما كإنكليزي ما حسيت أنها بقوة الانكليزي. أما كعربي زبطت لغتها شوي".	**Mo5:** "Honestly, at this school [which is mainly for Syrians and which they moved to during the pandemic] I can say that she is back to her Syrian HL. The English at this school is not as good as the previous school. Anyways, her Arabic is getting better".
		الأب(٥): "كانو يحكو مع بعض باللغة الانكليزية بشكل دائم. هلأ صار نص ع نص".	**Fa5:** "The children used to speak pure English together, however, this has changed during the pandemic, and they now use half English half Arabic".
		الأم(٥): "خلينا نقول كسبتها من ناحية أنو بتعرفي العربي صعب وإذا ما تلقوه حاليا صعب أنو بعدين يتلقوه، فبحس أنو فترة هلأ يقوو عربيتن".	**Mo5:** "this has been advantageous because Arabic language is difficult, and it is a good chance to improve it. Growing older would be difficult to acquire Arabic".
F8	**Home domain during the lockdown**	الأم(٨): "أنا معاناتي بصراحة بالعكس بالعربي يعني مثلا كنا هديك السنة اولادي ما يعرفو أحرف عربي ما يعرفو شي أبدا مطلقا حتى أنو كلمات محدودة مثلا اللي منحكيهن خود تعا هات جيب مي أكل كزا.. بالانكليزي لاء هنن كتير أحسن بسبب التلفزيون أولا وحتى أنو كانت ال kindergarten تبعن ماليزية ولغتا انكليزية.. فاتطورت اللغة الانكليزية عندن أكتر ما تتطور اللغة العربية فأنا استلمتن بالعربي يعني من هديك السنة هلأ لأن حاول يعني مثلا لي أنو أساسيات يقدرو يقرروؤا مثلا فالحمد لله صارو يعرفو الأحرف ابني بلش يعرف يكتب إملاء خلال فترة الكورونا". الأم(٨): "لاء أوقاتا بيتواصل [الأب] معاهم بالانكليزي أكتر مني".	**Mo8:** "my concern is more towards their Arabic language. last year, my children did not even know the Arabic alphabets. Their knowledge in Arabic was limited to simple things such as, take, come, give me water, food, etc. In English, they are much better because of the TV and their previous kindergarten which was in English. As a result, their English has progressed more than Arabic. Since last year I am trying to teach them the basics in Arabic such as reading. Now, my K2 learnt how to write during the pandemic". **Mo8:** "Their father communicates in English with them more than me".

Reverse in the Shift in HL during the COVID-19 Lockdown			
Family	Domain	Extract in Arabic	Translation into English
F1	Reverse in the shift at the vocabulary level	الأم(١): "بفترة الكورونا والقعدة بالبيت عم يستخدمو العربية أكتر.. صارو بعرفو مفردات أكتر باللغة العربية من وقت كان بالمدرسة لأن صار قعدتن بالبيت أكتر وصارت علاقاتنا مع رفقاتن بما أنهن جيراننا ورفقاتنا فصارو يسمعو عربي أكتر.. قبل الكورونا كانو يروحو عالمدرسة ويسمعو كلمات أكتر انكليزي ويحكو مع الأساتزة حتى بالمدرسة لازم يحاولو يحكو مع رفقاتن بالإنكليزي.. حتى الأستاز صار ينبه عليهن أنو ما حدا يحكي عربي.. إيه هادا كللو أثر عليهن.. هداك النهار كان عندن English activity بالمدرسة قالتلي ملك: "ماما، أول شي حسيت حالي أنو أنا ما عم بعرف أتواصل معهن بعدين هيك صرت استرجع معلوماتي وصرت أحكي معن بالانكليزي".. مازن نفس الشي.. هاد دليل أنو هالفترة أسرت على لغتن".	Mo1: "During the pandemic, the children use Arabic more. They now know more vocabs in Arabic because of staying at home and because their communication is limited to our neighbours who are Arabs, they are now more exposed to Arabic. Before the pandemic they would hear English more and use English with their teachers and the school encourage them to use only English with their schoolmates during the recreation period. My K2 told me that when they had done to school after one of the lockdowns, she found difficulty to communicate in English. Then bit by bit, she started to retrieve her English; Same thing for my K1. this proves how the lockdown affected their languages".
F4	Reverse in the shift during the lockdown	الأم(٤): "قبل ما تبلش هي القصص ويقعدونا بالبيت كانت تخربط أوقاتا تحكي بالانكليزي هلأ لاء".	Mo4: "During the lockdown and staying at home, my daughter does not use English anymore; only Arabic".

The pandemic, and the resultant lockdown, did not only affect the children's Arabic languages. For some, the English language even declined, and this concerned the parents. According to Pauwels (2016), the ongoing competition with the major language/s, the heritage language might be liable to shift. However, during the pandemic, the competition was very little that resulted in reversing the shift in their Arabic language. That is to say that they are using their Arabic language most of the time which also goes in line with the findings of Abdelhadi (2017).

Shift in English Language during the COVID-19 Lockdown			
Family	Domain	Extract in Arabic	Translation into English
F6	English Shift during the Lockdown	الأم(٦): "شوي الانكليزي حسينا تراجع".	Mo6: "I felt that the children's level in English language has declined during the lockdown".

In this section, the researcher has looked at the financial situation of the parents and how it affected the type of school the children are attending. The general findings show that the language the children used to socialize in their schools is the main reason for language maintenance or shift - regardless of the language of the curriculum or the medium language of instruction. For children who use the English language to socialize

in school, they have shown a shift in their Syrian HL. Children who attend schools with Libyan students have their language shifted into Arabic Libyan HL. The children who managed to have their HL maintained are the children who are attending schools mainly for Syrian students and the children in the family in which all the children are still preschool age. The same students who have their HL shifted are the children whose use of the HL is also limited even in the home domain. Most of these children use HL mainly with the mother, who were strict on using HL with the children as a strategy to maintain their HL (see next Section 4.3: The Strategies in Reversing Syrian Children's languages in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia).

4.3 The Strategies in Reversing Syrian Children's Languages in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

As presented in the findings of the first theme, Syrian parents do value the Malay language. However, they put more weight on learning the English language. The second theme, on the other hand, showed us the reasons for children's Arabic languages shift – either tremendously or slightly – and maintenance. It also showed how the lockdown helps reverse the shift in children's Arabic languages. In fact, during the lockdown, most children's English language declined due to the decrease in the number of domains in which this language is used (Abdelhadi, 2017).

This last section will address the third research question that focuses on the parents' attitude towards Arabic language. It will also present the challenges the parents are facing regarding their children's languages in this multilingual host country. Finally, it will disclose the strategies these families are adopting in trying to overcome these challenges for the sake of maintaining their children's languages.

4.3.1 The Syrian Parents' Attitude Towards Their Arabic Languages

While HL is considered the language of communication which is usually acquired spontaneously through daily interactions, Standard Arabic (SA) and Classical Arabic (CA) need deliberate effort to be acquired even by the native speakers of the language. However, acquiring SA and CA might be easier in an Arab Muslim country than non-Arab one due to length of exposure to this language (Curdt-Christiansen, 2016). In Syria, for example, the curriculum is in SA, and is usually delivered either in HL or SA. Moreover, there are at least two sessions each day devoted to teaching school students all aspects related to SA, such as grammar, speech rhythms, poetry, poesy, rhetoric, etc.

In a country such as Malaysia, this largely depends on the school the students are enrolled in. As noted in Theme Two, only one family (F10) have enrolled the children in a school in which the curriculum is in SA and is instructed in Arabic language. Even though the Arabic language is considered a high-status language (Dweik, Nofal & Qawasmeh, 2014), but this is mainly because it is the language of the Quran. Hence, dialects might not fall within this category and CA, SA and HL might not fit in the same category. From this point, it would be crucial to look at how parents view each of these languages. Different strategies to maintain the children's languages might be adopted based of the parents' attitudes towards each language, including the English language.

Living in a non-Arab multilingual community and not having plans to go back to the homeland might bring different attitudes and ideologies towards each of the Arabic languages and the LF. These ideologies might be apparent in the parents' language choice which might be reflected in the way they steer their children towards using certain language to navigate in the society or at home (Lanza, 2008). The findings in this theme show that the perspective from which most Syrian parents view the SA and the CA is different from the perspective they view the HL.

Most participating parents do value the SA and CA because of their contribution to understanding the Quran and in keeping their children "attached to their religion and their Creator". In fact, very few participants (Fa5 & Fa10) state that SA and CA are not important. They believe that "not maintaining these languages is not necessarily contradictory with the ability to understanding the Quran". Below are some of the participants' statements that show their attitudes towards the SA and CA and how maintaining them is considered important to maintain the children's religion.

No	Attitude toward CA & SA	Extract in Arabic	Translation into English
1	**Aspirations** Mastering the Arabic grammar at a young age as Arabic language is difficult	الأم(١): "إيه لأنو اللغة العربية كتير صعبة إذا خسرتيها أنك تسترجعيها وخصوصا الولاد نحنا مثلا أتقناها مستحيل ان شالله تنتسى بس الولاد كتير بتهمني أنو يأكدو عاللغة العربية ويحفظوها ويأتقنو قواعدها [..] اللغة العربية إذا فقدوها صعب كتير أنن يتقنوها ".	**Mo1:** "Arabic language is difficult to be reacquired once lost especially for the kids. For us [parents], we already mastered it. I need my kids to focus on Arabic, memorize and master its grammar. Once lost, it is difficult to reacquire".
2	**Aspirations** Mastering the Quran-related skills at a young age as Arabic language is difficult	الأم(١): "أنا وأبوهن بيهمنا كتير بهالعمر أنو الولاد يتقنو القرآن وأحكام التجويد وهي القصص اللي بتخص ديننا. أنو إيمتى ما كبرو شوي تانية ما عد يطلع بإيدن يتعلموها وبدها تصير كتير صعبة عليهن".	**Mo1:** "At their age, we [as parents] are keen on making our children master the Quran, reading Quranic roles, and all religion-related issues. Once they grow a bit older, it would be very difficult for them".
3	**Great fear** for the future generation to lose the Arabic language	الأم(٢): "دايما عندي هاد الهاجس الصراحة أنو أنا بنتي احتمال كتير كبير أنو حتى هي وزوجا يحكو انكليزي. شلون ولادا رح يصيرو؟ يعني بفكر حتى بولادا يمكن. يعني أصلا أصلا وقت بتجتمع هي ورفقاتا العرب [..] منروح مع بعض مجموعة انكليزي فكيف هي رح تتعامل بكرة بالأيام بس تكبر [..] أنو طلعنا برات بلدنا لبلد أجنبي. الولد صار عندو يمكن اللغة الانكليزية أهم من اللغة العربية. صارت بالعكس اللغة العربية اللغة التانية. متل وقت كنا بسوريا اللغة الانكليزي هي اللغة التانية صارت للأسف هلأ وبالعكس [..] بحس أنو هي لغتنا، اللغة الأم ولغة القرآن بالنهاية".	**Mo2:** "I have this obsession that occupies my mind that my daughter would only speak English with her husband when she grows up? What about her children? […] anyways, now she uses English when she meets with her Arab friends. Being in a foreign country, English becomes the native language for them instead of Arabic, opposite to how things were when we were in Syria [..] Eventually, it is our language, the mother language, and the language of the Quran".
4	SA & CA are **correlated**	الأم(٨): "أنا بحب يطورو لغة القرآن لأنها تعتبر لغة فصحى يعني اذا طورو لغتن القرآن وحافظو عليا فتباعا حتتطور عندن اللغة الفصحى".	**Mo8:** "I want them [my children] to improve their Quran language because it is considered the standard Arabic. If they improved the CA, the SA would eventually get improved".

With regards to the HL, participants' attitudes are divided into three groups. The first group believes that the HL has no value because it does not contribute to the understanding of the Quran and considered it a low-status language that is not important to maintain. The second group states that the HL is not important in understanding the Quran, yet they viewed it as important to maintain in order not to lose contact and communication with the family in the homeland. The third group, who constitutes the minority, believes that the HL is equally important to the SA and the CA, and it contributes to understanding the Quran. Below are some of the participants' statements showing their attitudes towards the HL.

No	Attitude toward HL	Extract in Arabic	Translation into English
1	HL is a waste of time	الأب(٢): "أكبر خطأ نحنا ضوعنا حياتنا وعمرنا نحكي باللهجة السورية وولادنا تعلمو اللهجة السورية It is not Arabic بالنهاية، يعني أنا دائما عندي هي وجهة النظر أنو نحنا دمرنا لغتنا من ورا اللهجات اللي تعلمناها يعني we diverted from the language بوجود اللهجات. يعني هلأ بنتي الكبيرة بتحكيكي سوري بس أنا شو بفيدني هاد الكلام أذا هاد الكلام مانو موجود بالكتب.. الكلمات المفردات اللي بتستخدما اللي تعلمتالا مننا هي مانا موجودة بالكتب ولا هي مفردات أو مصطلحات عربية فصيحة أنا بقول دائما it is wasting of time. فهم القرآن مالو ارتباط بالعامية. يعني في بعض الأمور لأن نحنا بلهجتنا السورية مستخدم بعض المفردات العامية اللي هي أساسا أصلا فصحى. هادا بيساعد أحيانا. هي لما بتحفظ قرآن، في بعض الأمور ساعدتما أنو هي أصلا متعلمتا لأنو هي ولدت بهاد البيت السوري. في بعض المفردات قريبة وموجودة ولكن العكس. اذا تعلمت لغة القرآن حتربط كل شي باللغة المحكية، فليش ما نتعلم الفصحى ونحكي شي تاني إذا بدنا [..] الأصل خلينا نتعلم الأصل وبعدين ممكن نحكي اللهجات. لما منتعلم اللهجات المحكية ما عم تساعدنا بتعلم اللغة العربية الفصحى. إضاعة وقت فعلا، ودخلت أنا بكتير نقاشات وأتمنى أنو نحنا نحكي لغة فصحى بالبيت".	**Fa2:** "our biggest mistake is that we wasted our life using HL and we inherited it to our children. At the end of the day, it is not Arabic. In my point of view, we destroyed our language out of using dialects. We diverted from the language by using the dialects. For example, my daughters use HL which not even in books, she learnt it from us. It is a waste of time. Understanding the Quran is not related to HL. HL is limited to few words in the Quran that are used in SA anyways. This might sometimes be helpful because they are brought up in a Syrian house. However, if my daughter learnt the language of the Quran, she would relate everything she speaks with the CA. so why not learning the SA and then learn whatever language we want after that [..] to learn the original language and then move to local dialects. HL does not serve us in learning the SA. I went into debates in this regard, and I am all hopes to start using SA at home".
2	HL is important but SA is more important HL is important as a mother language regardless of the religion	الأم(٢): "اللغة العامية ممكن تعطيكي فهم شوي للقرآن بس لاء القرآن هو الأساس ليعطيكي اللغة العربية. في أهمية يتعلمو العامية بس الأهم أنهن يتعلمو الفصحى مع أنها كتير صعبة يتعلموها لأن أصلا نحنا ما عم نحكيها". الأم(٥): "اهمية العربية كإسلام [..] أنا بتخيل اي حدا لغتو الام شو ما كانت رح يحاول يخلي ولادو يتعلموها . يعني لو كنت اسبانية أكيد رح علم ولادي اسباني".	**Mo2:** "HL could give you a little understanding of the Quran but, in fact, it is the Quran that gives you the roles of the language. Most importantly is to use the SA which is very difficult because we do not use at home". **Mo5:** "Arabic importance derived from being the language of the Islam […] I fathom anyone would teach their children the mother HL. I mean, if my mother tongue is not Arabic, let's say Spanish, I would be keen on teaching it to my kids".
3	It is ok if children lost their HL; but not the SA and CA	الأم(٣): "اذا كبرو ونسيو اللغة العامية مو مشكلة. لغة القرآن هي الأهم". الأم(٤): "المهم الفصحى مشان القرآن. بصراحة أنا مركزتلها عالعربي بس مشان لغة القرآن. مشان إذا حملت القرآن تعرف تقرأ. مركزتلها عالكتابة والقواعد. للمستقبل لبعدين ما بيهمني العامية".	**Mo3:** "If they grow up forgetting their HL it is ok. The CA is the most important". **Mo4:** "The important language to maintain is the SA as it is the language of the Quran. When she [the daughter] grows up and hold the Quran, she needs to have the ability to read. I am focusing on her reading and writing".
4	HL is important as it is the language of communication	الأم(٨): "هي [العامية] لغة تواصل". الأب(٨): "اللغة العامية لأن أنت بدك تتواصل مع العالم خاصة إذا نزلنا على سوريا كزيارة أو بشكل نهائي. حتى وقت الولاد بيتواصلو مع قرايبينا مع ستن مع جدن [..] فبتجي هون اللغة العامية كمان لازم ما ينسوها مشان ما يقدرو يتواصلو".	**Mo8:** "it [HL] is the language of communication". **Fa8:** "HL is important. In case, one day, we went back to our homeland as a visit or permanently, they need to be able to communicate with their grannies […] here comes the importance of the HL, as a communication skill in the homeland".

Some participants believe that all Arabic languages (HL, CA and SA) are equally important because they are the language of the Quran. Hence, knowing these languages are important to understand the teachings of Islam.

Other participants went to the opposite extreme to say that all Arabic languages are not important for their children. For them, losing all Arabic languages is not a problem as HL, SA and CA are not priority languages and they do not, in anyway, contribute to understanding the Quran.

As for the HL, there are two opposing parties. One believes that HL is the language of communication. Thus, maintaining same is important to keep communication with the Syrian community and the family in Syria. The opposing party believes that HL is useless. Below are the participants' statements justifying the participants' contradictory opinions.

No	Attitude toward All Arabic Languages	Extract in Arabic	Translation into English
1	All Arabic languages are equally important even though for different purposes & Extreme fear for children to lose Arabic languages	الأب(٦): "منعتبرن كلن لازم يكونوا موجودين". الأم(٧): "أنا ليش بحاكيهن بالعربي؟ حتى ما يخسروها [..] لغتن الأم أولتا وآخرتا هي العربي لغة القرآن". الأم(٨): "بالمرتبة الأولى أنو هي لغة القرآن يعني أنو هاد اللي بزعلني أنو يخسرو ارتباطن بكتاب الله. يخسرو لا سمح الله ارتباطن بدينهن يعني في كتير شغلات بتخوفني من هاي الناحية. ارتباطن بمجتمعن. يعني اذا صار ورجعنا على البلد أو مثلا اضطر الواحد فهنن حيعتبرو غرب عن بلدن عن مجتمعن يعني هاد اللي بخوفني". الأم(٩): "عندي رعب عندي فوبيا من هالشي [خسارة اللغات العربية]".	**Fa6:** "All [Arabic languages] shall be there". **Mo7:** "I use HL with my children, so they do not lose it". **Mo8:** "on top of the list comes the CA. I would be very sad if my children lost their attachment with the book of God and eventually with their religion. This cause me fear. Also, their attachment with their community, in case one day we went back home. In that case, they would be strangers in their homeland, which is fearful for me". **Mo9:** "I have extreme fear thinking that my children might lose their Arabic languages".
2	All Arabic languages are not related to understanding the Quran, thus losing them is no big deal	الأب(٥): "أنا اللغة العربية كلها ما عندي مشكلة فيها اذا خسرونها. الماليزيين بيقرؤو قرآن وبيفهموه إلى حد ما عشرة عشرين بالمية بس ماشيين. أنا بحس أنو خلص الواحد يواكب. تفكيري عملي. يعني مثلا اذا بحكي بالدين المسلم الصيني ما بيحكي عربي ما رح يدخل الجنة متل المسلم العربي هي سبب مقنع". الأب(١٠): "ما أجانا من العربي الا وجع الراس [..] يعني دولة ماليزيا هي دولة بسيطة. اللغة العربية ما فادتني. فلذلك أنا بتمنى ولادي يتعلمو الانكليزي يتعلمو الألماني يتعلمو الايطالي السويدي ولا بدن ياها اللغة العربية. يعني كمان بترجعي لنفس الشي أنو ما في شمل ستن ما بيعرفوها خالاتن ما بيعرفوهن. ما في ما بيعرفو شي فلذلك ليش بدو يستخدم العربية. أنا كطفلتي ما بدي ياها تحكي معي عربي. بالعكس بدي ياها تحاكيني ألماني ماليزي. تعلمني إلي. لأنو نحنا مو نحنا بلدنا أختي وبالنسبة للقرآن الكريم نحنا ما منتخلى عن ديننا ان شاء الله. يعني ما حدا بيتخلى عن دينو".	**Fa5:** "if my children lost all the Arabic languages, it is not a big deal for me. Muslim Malaysians can read the Quran and they understand 10 to 20% and this is fine. Would a Muslim Chinese, for example, go to hell not speaking the Arabic language? Here I gave you a good reason". **Fa10:** "Arabic languages only caused us headache […] Malaysia is a modest country in which the Arabic language offered me no help. I hope my children learn the German or the Swedish languages and forget about the Arabic. Family reunion becomes an impossible mission. I do not want my daughters to use the Arabic languages with me. Let her learn the Malay language, for example, and teaches it to me. No one would give up on their religion".

The extracts stated above reflect the parents' attitudes, opinions, and feelings towards the Arabic languages. Next section shows how these attitudes are also reflected in the strategies each family follows to maintain the children's languages where parents are playing a major role.

4.3.2 The Parents' Role in Their Children's Languages in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

From the narrations of the Syrian families, it was noted that the Arabic language, especially SA and CA, is an important icon of their religion as Muslim, acting as pillars that connect Muslims with Islam. The HL and the English language are also important for the Syrian families. While the first constitutes the language of the communication with the family in the homeland, the latter constitutes the language of integration in the new homeland. Besides, the English language for these families marks their economical and future prosperity not only in Malaysia but also worldwide.

The Syrian parents are juggling many things at the same to ensure that their children maintain attachment to their homeland, families in Syria, and their religion. Additionally, the English language is considered no less important, and they are trying to get their children to maintain or attain a native-like-English accent for best integration into the host country. To this end, the Syrian parents adopt certain strategies to maintain or reverse the shift of their children's Arabic language. Hence, the parents also follow certain strategies to keep up with, progress or even reverse the shift in their children's English language.

Most children in this study have English-language curriculums at their schools, making them have lesser contact with SA and CA than their Syrian counterparts. In addition, SA and CA are not communication languages. Hence, parents must put

deliberate efforts and invest in their money and time to achieve this objective. The following list is a set of strategies the Syrian parents followed to achieve this:

1. The school choice: In Malaysia, not all schools deliver the Arabic language at the same level of competency. For this, parents make the effort to find the best school that could add to their children's SA and CA.

2. Private tutoring: Parents think that learning SA and CA at school is not sufficient, hence they support it by private classes after school hours.

3. Parents as teachers: Most parents prefer to teach their children the basics of this language by themselves at an early age.

4. Short stories: To have extra exposure to the Standard Arabic (SA), parents get short stories in this language.

5. Animated cartoon: This is a fun method that most parents also like to follow for their children to learn SA in a spontaneous manner.

6. Raising children's awareness: Parents try to instill the value of the SA and the CA in their children's hearts and minds at an early age.

7. Using SA at home: A strategy that failed yet deemed important to add to the list to show what the parents might do to keep their children attached to their religion through the language.

No doubt, the SA and CA bears a great weight for the Syrian parents. Despite coming from different educational background and financial situations, each family used every possible means available to achieve this purpose. Each strategy in the list above is supported by statements below.

No	Strategy	Extract in Arabic	Translation into English
1	School Choice importance in reversing the shift in SA	الأب(٢): "أول شي هي لما كانت بالKindergarten يمكن هاد مهم إنك تعرفيه الـ Kindergarten كانت run by Chinese، وكانت يعني ممتازة جدا. تعلمت هنيك المندرين والانكليزي. يعني تعلمت بسرعة كبيرة لما قررنا نحطها بمدرسة النور كان قرارنا بسبب أنو النور It's run by Arabs وأنو عأساس فيها عربي وطبعا الـ fees كان عامل أساسي [..]، فحطيناها بالنور بس اتفاجأنا أنو المستوى كان سيء [..] تراجعت والعربي ما استفادت فاضطرينا نحطلا دروس عربي to back up [..]. ووقتها تعرفنا على مدرسة السبيكتروم. [..] وكان همنا العربي بصراحة. حسينا يعني أنو English حتتعلم بشكل تلقائي ولكن الاهتمام بالعربي لازم يكون هو الأساس". الأب(٢): "كانت ألمى ترفض لما تسمع بالبيت حدا عم يحكي معها فصحى كانت ترفض وتمانع حتى لما تسمع أنو أحكي معها أنا جملة عربية فصحى بينما هلأ بالعكس بتتقبل. طلع بالتلفزيون شغلة فصحى بتعبدا بتقبل. إذا حكيت أنا معا بالمزح بتقبل". الأم(٨): "لأن المدرسة ممتازة. فيعني أنو حتى مثلا كمان المدرسة بتساعد. يعني أنو ساعدتني بضبط المواضيع بضبط العربي كمان. يعني العربي عندن قوي بالنسبة لبقية المدارس".	Fa2: "At the beginning we enrolled K1 at a kindergarten run by Chinese. It was excellent school in which she learnt English and Mandarin. Despite that, we changed the school because of the fees and the Arabic language. To our surprise, the level of the school was very bad in all subjects even Arabic. Here, we had to hire a tutor to back up. We then changed the school then and our main objective when we were looking for this school was the Arabic language. For us, our daughter will learn English anyway, so the Arabic language was the most important". Fa2: "Before enrolling in this school, my K1 used to refute hearing any SA. Now, being in this school, she would accept it when she listens to Arabic on TV. When I use SA with her, she would also accept". Mo8: "The school is excellent. It helps me a lot in tunning my children's Arabic Language. Level of teaching Arabic at my children's class is very good compared to other schools".
2	Private Quran and SA Classes	الأم(١): "كل يوم جمعة [درس خصوصي] تسميع قرآن". الأم(٣): "قرآن ومواد شرعية عاملينلن ياها متل دوام تاني بعد ما يخلصو المواد الأكاديمية عندن دراسة للمواد الشرعية تقريبا ساعتين بشكل يومي". الأم(٩): "بنتي الكبيرة مسجلتا بسنتر بس مشان العربي. أنها تحفظ اللغة العربية. أنها ابدأ باللغة. هلأ بنتي حنان بتعرف القاعدة النورانية التلاوة التجويد. كللو بتعرفو".	Mo1: "Each Friday, they have Quran memorization private class". Mo3: "Every day, after the school hours, they have extra Quran and Quran-related subjects for two hours". Mo9: "I registered my eldest daughter in a Centre mainly for Arabic language, in which she learns the Arabic language, at this early age my daughter knows all Quran-reading-related roles".
3	Parents, and mostly mothers teaching SA basics at an early age and following up with their children's SA progress at home.	الأم(٢): "أنا من سن صغير بحاول إني دربها عالأحرف العربي". الأم(٤): "أنا أسستا بالعربي قبل ما تفوت عالمدرسة حتى ما تخسر العربي". الأم (٦): "إيه كل دراسة الولاد علي وعالأب". الأم(٨): "أنا استلمتن بالعربي يعني من هديك السنة لهلأ لأن حاول يعني مثلا لي أنو أساسيات يقدرو يقررؤوا مثلا فالحمد لله صارو يعرفو الأحرف ابني بلش يعرف يكتب إملاء [..] لا في طلعة لا شغلا شي يشغلني فموجهى اهتمامي على أطفالي على أني مسروليتي بحسنأنو لازم مثلا اهتملن بالعربي نميلن العربي عندن شوي".	Mo2: "I train my daughter at an early age [3-and-a-half-year-old] on the Arabic alphabets". Mo4: "I taught my daughter the basics in Arabic at preschool age". Mo6: "the father and me are responsible for teaching the children everything". Mo8: "I am teaching my children Arabic since last year. For example, I am teaching them basics such as reading. My son [7years] knows now how to write […]. I am not doing anything. We are not even going out [during the lockdown], so I am paying full attention on my children. I feel that it is my responsibility to work on their Arabic".
4	Books in SA	الأم(١): "كل الكتب عربي".	Mo1: "All the books at home in Arabic language (SA)".

No	Strategy	Extract in Arabic	Translation into English
5	Animated cartoon in SA	الأب(٢): "بحاول عززلن العربي متل حكايات ماشا وكرزة".	**Fa2:** "I try to back up their Arabic through watching Masha and the bear in and Karazah channel".
6	Raising children's awareness at an early age towards the importance of their Arabic Language	الأم(٦): "هلأ حمزة قبل ما يدخل الروضة علمناه أنو هي العربي ولازم تتعلمها وهي لغتنا ولغة القرآن وهيك". الأم(٨): "ايه طبعا بحسسن (بأهمية اللغة العربية) يعني مثلا هنن بيعرفو أنو كل يوم لازم عنا هلأ وقت للعربي [..] بيعرفو أنو اللغة العربية مهمة لانو لغة القرآن".	**Mo6:** "Before K2 started kindergarten, we taught him that Arabic language is our language, it is the language of the Quran, etc.". **Mo8:** "I deliberately make them aware towards the importance of Arabic language […]; they know that Arabic language is important because it is the language of the Quran".
7	Trying to use SA as a communication language at home instead of HL	الأب(٢): "وأتمنى أنو نحنا نحكي لغة فصحى بالبيت، حاولت مع زوجتي أنا، I tried, but it did not work."	**Fa2:** "I wish we use SA at home. I tried, but it did not work".

HL is the parents' mother language which is used spontaneously with children at home. While not all these families live in an Arab dominated area, all families have Arabic, mainly Syrian, circle of friends with whom they make visits frequently. For these families, the main reason to have Syrian friends is not the language but rather the need to be close to a community with whom they share similar culture. However, this is considered a bonus because it gives the children an additional opportunity to get exposed to HL. The following list highlights the strategies that are followed deliberately by the Syrian parents for their children's HL maintenance.

1. Translation: Parents, especially mothers would translate to their children the words they do not know into HL.

2. Using only HL: Some parents, especially mothers, would give their children the freedom to use the language they desire outside the house. However, at home, they need to commit to using only HL.

3. Correction: This strategy has not been said directly by the parents. This is from the observations of the researcher that were jotted down on fieldnote during the interviews. When a child makes a mistake in language, the parents would first highlight that mistake followed by a correction. Then the child would repeat the correct way of saying it.

4. The school choice: Besides the exposure to HL in the home domain, children who attend schools for Syrians could use the language in the education domain as well, especially outside of class.

5. Raising children's awareness: For some families, HL is considered language of communication with the speakers of this language, and with their family in the homeland. Hence, parents consider it highly important to bring that to the awareness of their children at an early age.

Less financial investment is needed to maintain the HL, yet the efforts required are huge. For example, constant supervision and follow up by the parents were required. These five aforementioned strategies are summarized based on the translated extracts below:

No	Strategy	Extract in Arabic	Translation into English
1	Translation	الأم(١): "الكلمات اللي ما بيعرفوها بالعربي مثلا بيسألوني عليها".	**Mo1:** "The children would ask me about the words they do not know their meanings in Arabic".
2	Strictly using (only) HL at home	الأب(٢): "نحنا منعرف We value the importance of Arabic، فنحنا منحاول نحكي معا دائما عربي". الأم(٢): "أنا بالعكس. أنا بحكي معا عربي وحتى إذا بدا تسألني عالساعة مع إنها ما بتعرف منيح بقلا مثلا ستة ونص. بتقلي شو يعني ستة ونص. بقلا إنتي جربي شو يعني ستة ونص. طبعا إذا عجزت بضطر إني قلا ياها بالانكليزي بس بحاول إنو لاء احكي معا عربي. اذا بتقلي: "ايمتى بدنا نروح عالبحر؟" بقلا السبت. بتقلي "شو يعني السبت". لهلأ ما عندا هاد المفهوم السبت. بقلا حاولي تعرفي شو يعني السبت". الأم(٤): " لاء [ما بخاف أنو بنتي تخسر العربي] لأنو بالبيت منحكي عربي [هاد السبب نحنا بس منحكي عربي بالبيت]". الأب(٦): "[بالبيت منستخدم] عربي حصرًا". الأم(٦): "يعني هو هيك النظام صاير أنتو احكو برا انكليزي وهون ارجعو للغتكن". ط١ع٨: "بحكي مع أمي انكليزي مع عربي وهي بتجاوب بالعربي".	**Fa2:** "We value the importance of Arabic, so we always try to speak Arabic with our children". **Mo2:** "I only use Arabic with my daughter even if she wants to ask me about the time. I know she does not know it in Arabic. I would say to her for example '*it is half past six [in Arabic]*'. She would ask me what that means. I would never give her an answer until she gave up. She would for example ask me '*When are we going to the sea? [in Arabic]*' I would say '*Saturday [in Arabic]*'. I would ask her to try and guess. She has no idea what the names of the days in Arabic". **Mo4:** "I am not afraid that my daughter losses her Arabic, because we only use Arabic at home". **Fa6:** "We mainly use Arabic at home". **Mo6:** "This is the system at home. It is a must that they use HL at home and when they go out, they can use the language they want". **K1F8:** "When I use English with my mother, she answers in Arabic".

No	Strategy	Extract in Arabic	Translation into English
3	Correction **Asterisk (*)** mark is used for the field notes jotted down by the researcher during the interviews	طا ع٢: "لاء، بس نحنا منحكي إنكليزي لأنو في من *جملات". الأم(٢): "*[تصحح] جُمَل".	***Mo2** is correcting the wrong plural of the word '*sentence [in Arabic]*' when the K1F2 was attending to one of the researcher's questions.
4	Choice of School (Mainly for Syrians)	الأم(٥): "استفدت [من انتقال الاطفال لمدرسة للسوريين] أنو قوي لغتهن لأنو كان كلامهم كلو خليط يعني ما في جملة أبدا ممكن تكون لغة وحدة".	**Mo5:** "that children moved to a school in which all students are Syrian was beneficial in that the shift in their HL has been reversed. When they were in their previous school, one sentence would be a mix of many dialects and languages".
5	Raising children's awareness towards the importance of HL	الأم(٨): "[..] بيعرفو أهمية اللغة العربية أنو مشان نتواصل نحنا نفهم على بعضنا يصير حكينا حلو مشان نقدر نحكي قرايبنا نتواصل معاهم".	**Mo8:** "[…] they know that the Arabic language is important because it enables us to understand each other and to speak beautifully and be able to communicate with our relatives".

A lot of attention is put upon the use of English language as the main lingua franca for the Syrian families in Malaysia. It is the main competitor of the Heritage Language and together, these languages have an inverse relationship. Most parents in this study want their children to maintain their Arabic language, while also acquire a native-like English accent. English language, for the participating families, is also important for the parents, as well. Finding good job opportunities or improving their work status requires parents to know English in their host community.

Most children in this study are exposed to the English language in more than one domain. They use this language at school, and when communicating with the Malaysian society. Despite that, this language also requires different forms of efforts and investments from parents to maintain, improve, or reverse the shift. Below is a list of strategies that are followed by parents so that their children attain a native-like English accent.

1. Private tutoring: For some parents, to attain a native-like English accent, schools are not enough. Those with good financial situation, would invest in courses or private tutoring after school hours.

2. Animated cartoon: This is a fun method that most parents would also follow. This allows their children to learn the English language in a spontaneous manner.

3. Movies: Family time, where all parents and children gather once or twice a week to watch a movie. This is not only family time but also a strategy that some parents follow to improve the family's English language.

4. Short stories and books: To have extra exposure to the English language, parents get short stories and even books in English language.

5. Integration with the community: During the lockdown, children only minimally used the English language. This has caused a concern due to the noticeable decline in the children's English. Due to the unknown nature of the pandemic, parents prepared meetings for their children with other non-Arab children who lived in the same condo or area.

6. Online activities: This strategy was mainly adopted by parents during the lockdown when children were spending most of their time at home with very little exposure to the English language. Hence, parents have enrolled their children in online sport activities that uses English.

7. Video games: For few families, video games are considered one of the ways children can obtain good conversational skills in English language.

8. Using English at home: Fa7 used only English at home with the children. For the father, the English language is very important for his children. Therefore, he uses English with them all the time even before the pandemic had started.

These eight strategies are reported below respectively, with the original extracts stated by the Syrian participants.

No	Strategy	Extract in Arabic	Translation into English
1	Private Classes/Courses after School Hours in English Language	الأم(١): "يتعلم مازن وأخواتو أنكليزي برات المدرسة". الأم(٨): "هلأ نحنا سجلناها [بال British council] لبنتي الكبيرة تقريبا أول ما أجينا من سوريا لهون شوي لأنو كان صعب عليا وجديد الوضع [..] فاضطرينا نحطا مشان أول شي اللكنة ولهجتا شوي تصير يعني أقرب لل native وتانيا مشان التقوية ألها لتدخل شوي بالحياة ما تحس أنو في حاجز بينا وبين التواصل مع رفقاتا مع الآنسات مع المحيط تبعا".	**Mo1:** "K1 and his siblings learn English after school hours". **Mo8:** "We enrolled our K1 in the British Council since we arrived in Malaysia. English was challenging for her, so we had to do that also to acquire a native-like accent and also to be able to practice her social life normally without feeling any obstacle between her and her surroundings".
2	English-language Cartoon	ط٢ع١: "بيحكو [بأفلام الكرتون] كلمات انكليزي بتسلخ بمخي أكتر وبتعلم منن انكليزي".	**K2F1:** "I watch cartoon because they sometimes use English words that get stuck in my mind and never forget them".
3	English-language Movies	الأم(٥): "بنهاية الأسبوع نحط على فلم أجنبي مشان نقوي لغتهن ونحنا". الأب(١٠): "مع العيلة ايه.. بتابع يعني. بحب بالأسبوع حط فلم انكليزي بحيث أنو مشان اتعلم".	**Mo5:** "Every week-end, we watch a movie to help them keeping up with their English". **Fa10:** "I like to watch a movie each week with the family, so we learn English".
4	Books or Stories	الأم(٥): "أحيانا عم جبلن قصص انكليزي [..] الانكليش ممكن جبلن كتاب".	**Mo5:** "I sometimes get them English stories […]; they are also at a level where they can read books in English, so I get them books in English, as well".
5	Integration with the Community	الأم(٦): "شوي الانكليزي حسينا تراجع بس اتداركنا الموضوع أنو عنا جيراننا الأجانب والماليزيين فصارو يقضو الوقت الأكتر معاهم".	**Mo6:** "I felt that the children's level in English language has declined during the lockdown. However, we rectified this by getting our children spend more time with our non-Arab neighbours".
6	Online Activities in English Language	الأم(٦): "ايه يعني يأول ما قطعت المدرسة كمان سجلنا حمزة بكاراتيه وجنباظ وكان كلو أنكليزي".	**Mo6:** "When the lockdown started, we enrolled our K2 in sport activities in English, so he keeps up with his English".
7	Video Games	الأم(٧): "بيتعلمو المحادثة الانكليش في لعبة ما بعرف شو اسما بيلعبو فيها محادثة ما شالله مشان هيك كل مالها عم تقوى محادثتن بالانكليزي بسبب اللعبة".	**Mo7:** "My children learn the English conversation through video games. These games play a great role in improving their English".
8	Using only English language at Home with the Children	الأم(٧): "أبوهن بحاكيهن انكليش [..] مشان تقوية اللغة تبعن حتى ما ينسو [..] حتى من قبل الكورونا".	**Mo7:** "Their father uses English with them [since before the lockdown] all the time […] so they always keep up with their English and never forget this language".

Standard Arabic or Classical Arabic is not a language that people use to communicate. For Muslims, it is the medium of communication with their Creator. Through the words and verses written in the Holy Book, Muslims understand the teachings of their religion. Hence, for most Muslim, maintaining this language is undisputable and Arabic language is considered a high-status language (Dweik, Nofal & Qawasmeh, 2014).

Heritage Language, on the other hand, is the language that would keep the children attached to their homeland. It is also the medium of communication with the family there. For many participants, HL is not as valuable as the SA. Despite that, many parents still choose to maintain for the reasons mentioned earlier.

As for the English language, its importance is unnegotiable for all these families. It is the main instrument that opens good work opportunities (Ghadi et. al., 2019 & Dweik, Nofal & Qawasmeh, 2014) in Malaysia and worldwide.

Hence, each family follows the strategy that best suit their financial situation. The strategies ranges from investing in courses, private classes, books, to using free tools such as animated cartoons or even video games.

4.4   Field Notes and Observation Analysis

Unlike other studies which have been conducted onsite, online notes and observations were limited in this study. In onsite studies, even though the children might not be directly participating in the study as interlocutors, the researcher could have the chance to observe nonverbal communications, contradictions, etc. which could contribute heavily to enriching the data. However, conducting interviews online made a very little room for observation whereby most of the time the children would be absent from the scene, i.e., the participants' small devices. Despite that, there has been few observations that could also contribute to the study. It must be noted that most of the observations were extracted from the interview with the second family in which the children were involved the most:

1. The dominance of the English language over the Arabic language was shown in using English grammatical structure in Arabic sentences and phrases. For example: K1 in Family 2 used English possessive structure in her speaking.

Arabic Phrase	Meaning	How it is supposed to be
بابا موبايلو	My father's mobile	In Arabic, the possessive structure is the opposite to that of the English, instead it should be said as موبايل بابا

Even though the child knows the meaning of the words (father and mobile) yet to make it a possessive structure, she used the English structure instead of Arabic.

2. The same child in the same family she used wrong plural of the word /*jumla:h/* which means: a sentence.

Arabic Word	Meaning	How it is supposed to be
جملات /jəmla:t)	sentences	جمل /jəmal/

The child used the general role of forming female plural in Arabic, in which the morpheme (ات), i.e., /*a:t*/ is added to the end of the female nouns to form the plural. Children at 9 years old do not usually generalize the grammar. However, this could be due to being less exposed to the mother language that makes this child use the general role of forming the female plural.

3. This point is non-verbal observation. The researcher observed that most of the questions directed to the child in the second family appeared to be vague for this child despite making sure to use very simple language. The child would look at her father seeking help. Soon the father would explain in English. This has happened frequently while interlocutory with this child and the researcher found it worth mentioning.

4. Since the researcher meant to use her heritage language, the child was trying her best to reply in Arabic. However, many times she could not find the appropriate word and waited for her parents' assistance to fill in the blank.

5. In family 8, the second child of 7 years old was staring at the screen while the researcher was interviewing the family. When the researcher wondered about him if he is interested in the interview, the mother replied: "I assure you that he does not understand a word of what we are saying, he is staring because he is trying hard to get involved and understand what we are talking about".

6. In other families such as family 7, the children gave contradictory answers to what their mother have mentioned about language choice with their friends. While the mother mentioned that her children use English with all other children whether Arabs or non-Arabs, the children's reply was different in which they mentioned that they use Arabic with their Arab friends and when they get stuck somewhere they would use the English language.

Observations are very important. As shown above, despite being to the minimum, yet they were meaningful and served the study even if a little. To this, the study could show even more rich information if it is conducted onsite.

4.5 Conclusion

As immigrants away from their homeland and accompanied by little children, young parents are facing many challenges. Language is just one of these many challenges. Most parents believe that their duty is to make their children attached to their religion and their country through maintaining the ethnic and the religion language. They are trying at the same time to provide the best future possible for their children to have a strong sense of belonging within the host community by exceling the language of the host country. English was the chosen language to be used within Malaysia by these families mostly

because they believe it could serve them and their kids in Malaysia and elsewhere. These families are trying their best to make juggle and maintain the use of all languages whether they are the ethnic languages, the language of the Quran or the language of the host country. To this end, parents put their utmost efforts to maintain their children's languages using different strategies that best suit their economic situation.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

5.1 Overview

This Chapter is divided into two sections, the first section of this chapter provides a summary of the findings of the three themes that correspond to the three research questions. The second section, on the other hand, is dedicated to highlighting the main limitations of this study as well as providing some future directions for possible related and similar studies.

Ten Arab Syrian Muslim families residing in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia left their homeland, i.e., Syria after the war started in their country, i.e., March 2011 onward. These families were willing to narrate their linguistic journey since leaving Syria and until the moment of the interviews which occurred during the COVID-19 lockdown. This study gave an overall image on how this monolingual society are turning into a multilingual one after living in a multilingual host country. Along this journey, the families have faced challenges with regards to language maintenance and language shift. They practiced various strategies and plans to acquire a Lingua Franca that would serve them in the host country and overcoming the shift that might face their children's Arabic language. The researcher in this deductive qualitative study used the thematic analysis and divided the findings into three main themes. Each theme was dedicated to answer one research question.

5.2 Summary of the Study

The first theme meant to investigate the Syrian families' language choice or the Lingua Franca in the host country. It elaborated on the reasons these families might have chosen the Malay language which is the national language of the country, and/or the English language which is considered the second language in Malaysia mainly in Kuala Lumpur.

Through the narrations of these families, it turns out that the working parents are willing to learn any language that might lead to their economic prosperity in Malaysia. It was noted how some parents have put serious plans to learn the Malay language to become more approachable to their clients and customers who were mostly Malaysian-Malay. Others were only dealing with Arabs and have found that it was not necessary to learn the Malay language because it was not serving them in any way in their careers. Others were working in international private sectors where English was the medium language of interaction. The later have not exerted any minimum efforts to learn the Malay Language. However, unlike the Malay language, the English language for these working parents was not an option, and most parents were putting tremendous efforts to learn regardless of whether or not it is critical to their careers. Moreover, the English language was a must to learn for the non-working parents, as well.

As for the children, the parents favoured the English language over the Malay language in this host country. The main reason is that these families were not planning to settle permanently in Malaysia. For them, the Malay language can only serve their children in a limited geographical area compared to the English language which can serve them better on an international level. According to the parents, their children can use the English language all over the world even if it might be a second language in the country these families might later migrate to. These families stated that they would learn the Malay language and they even had the aspiration to attain a native-like accent in case they had the opportunity to settle permanently in Malaysia. However, even if this happened and these families managed to stay in Malaysia permanently, the English language would remain a top priority and learning it comes before learning the Malay language.

The second theme investigated the language maintenance and shift of the Arabic languages among the Arab Syrian Muslim children in Malaysia while trying to acquire a lingua franca during their stay in the host country. It looked at the factor/s leading to

children's language maintenance or language shift and the reason/s these families might want to maintain their children's Arabic languages.

The findings of this theme showed that the main reason that led to language shift or language maintenance among the Arab Syrian children's HL is the number of domains in which the children use their HL. The more domains in which the children use their HL, the more probability that these children might have their language maintained and vice versa. Hence, the choice of the school was the main reason for that as children spend a lot of time at school. In this study, in terms of language shift and language maintenance, the researcher divided the children into three categories based on the schools these children attend.

The first category combines the children whose HL witnessed a major shift. For these children, the English language is considered their first language rather than their Parents' HL. These children have struggled to communicate in HL with their family in the homeland. They have also preferred to use the English language even with their Arab classmates in and outside the class. English language was also their preferred language during playtime with their siblings. These children were enrolled in international Islamic schools with students from different nationalities. The curriculum in these school is in English, and the medium language of instruction is also English. In these schools, even though it is obligatory to deliver the Arabic-related subjects in Arabic language, yet these subjects are explained in English as it takes into consideration the non-native speakers of Arabic language.

The second category combines the children whose HL witnessed a minor shift. This shift in these children's HL was only at the level of some vocabularies. The English language for these children is still considered a foreign language and they are still maintaining their HL as their first language. They feel comfortable to communicate in HL

with their family in the homeland, with their siblings and their parents in the home domain and with their Arab friends, as well. These children use the English language in class which is obligatory. However, outside of class, they use HL. Even though these children are attending schools in which the curriculum is in the English language, yet these schools are mainly for Syrian children. Hence, no medium language is needed for the children to communicate outside of class. The Arabic-related subjects that are obligatory to be delivered in Arabic are instructed in Arabic without the need to be explained in English. All students in these schools understand Arabic very well.

The third category combines the children whose HL was fully maintained. These children were the children who attend Arabic schools in which all the teachers and the students are Arabs. Even the curriculum is these schools is in Arabic and instructed in this language. The English language for these children is still very basic and limited to vocabularies and some basic phrases. These children use Arabic language at school, with their parents, siblings, and their friends. The third category also combined the children who maintained their Arabic language regardless of the school they are attending because they were the children who arrived in Malaysia slightly before the pandemic started and did not have the chance to integrate into the host society either fully or partially. Due to the lockdown, they had spent the majority of their time at home. Even though their curriculum might be delivered in English, they did not participate in online classes, and were only listeners. Their speaking skills in the online classes were restricted and used to the minimum, if any.

During the lockdown, the number of domains in which the language is used was reduced into one domain, which is the home domain. Therefore, HL was the dominant language these children used and the language they were exposed to the most. The findings show that there is a reverse in the shift into HL among children who have their HL language shifted, either major or minor shift. On the other hand, the English language

was declining, which concerned the parents because of the progressive lockdown and the fact that the children's exposure to the English language was limited to the online class.

The third theme displayed the parents' attitudes towards the Arabic languages, i.e., the Heritage Language (HL), The Standard Arabic (SA) and The Classical Arabic (CA). It also elaborated on the strategies these parents had adopted to maintain these languages along with the English language during their stay in Malaysia.

The findings showed that for the participants, HL, SA, and CA do not fall in the same crucible. The importance of SA and HL were weighed in relation to their contribution to understanding the CA, which is the language in which the Quran, i.e., the holy book of Islam, is written in. Most participants valued the SA as it contributed to understanding the Quran, to keeping their children attached to their religion and its teachings. Other participants stated that HL is not important to understand the Quran, and they valued it only as a means that would keep their children attached to their homeland and as a language of communication with their family in the homeland. For some participants, the HL does not bear any importance and losing it does not arise their concerns. Very few participants devalued the HL, SA and CA. They viewed them as impediment in their children's way. For these participants, Islam will always be their religious identity, but this is not necessarily related to understanding or speaking any of the Arabic languages.

Even though the parents in these families came from different educational background, and living with their children under various financial conditions, all these families invested their time and/or money to maintain their children's Arabic languages and the English language, as well. Each family used their available resources based on their material capabilities and time availability.

5.3 Suggestions for Future Research

This study is interesting because it is the first study that looks at language choice and language maintenance and shift among the Syrian Arab Muslim community in Malaysia. It mainly looked at the Syrian families who left Syria after the war started in their country. This study has contributed to the body of the research in giving a comprehensive view about the linguistic journey of the Syrian community in Malaysia mainly for those who left their country 2011 onward. However, this study has also shown some limitations. This section highlights some of the study limitations and provide some guidelines for future research in this area.

First, this study is notably limited to the number of participating families to fit the nature of this qualitative research. Therefore, the findings could not be generalised. However, they can be useful as a reference for related and similar future studies in the field of language maintenance and shift. Hence, a quantitative analysis is recommended to look at a larger scale of the Syrian community in Malaysia. Anyways, this does not mean that the quantitative analysis must be carried out to overcome the limitations of the qualitative analysis, but rather should be conducted based on it (Lanza, 2008). In other words, the need for quantitative analysis does not take away the importance of looking deeper into LMLS and LC in this community. This can only happen through case studies and qualitative analysis because the research body on this community in Malaysia is very limited, especially regarding LMLS.

Second, this study looked specifically at the linguistic journey of the Syrians in Malaysia and mainly those who arrived in Malaysia after the war started in their country. Hence, the findings can give an overall view on the Syrian community in specific and other war-affected Arab countries who left their countries after the war had started in their homelands. Therefore, they might not be generalised on all Arab communities in

Malaysia. In this regard, similar studies could be conducted to investigate LMLS in families who left their countries for different reasons other than seeking security.

Third, there is a lack of research on LMLS among the Syrian Arabs and other Arabs in Malaysia as well as other southeast Asian countries. For that, future studies can also look at LMLS among Arabs in other Muslim Southeast Asian countries especially Bahasa-speaking countries such as Indonesia and Brunei to compare the phenomenon of LMLS amongst Arabs in these countries and see where they might meet or diverge.

Lastly, the main source through which the data of this study had been collected is via online interviews. Due to the lockdown, the researcher did not have the opportunity to do face to face interactions (Lanza, 2008) with the participants which proved to be useful in similar sociolinguistic studies done in the field of LMLS. Being present in the field could result in observations that might be either supporting and/or contradicting what the participants might verbally share during the interviews. Despite that, the findings of this study were notably rich. Hence, the researcher promotes doing similar studies online even if there is no lockdown. Distances, for example, shall not be a reason that might limit the researcher from conducting their desired studies that might contribute to the body of the research. However, the researcher shall take into consideration that a big part of research quality depends on the way the researcher or the interviewer leads the interviews. It also depends on the nature of the interview questions which must be as comprehensive and as detailed as possible. It also relies on how open the participants are to the researcher and how willing they are to share about their personal experiences with relation to a given study.

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