TABLE OF CONTENTS

| Title Page | i |
| Acknowledgements | ii |
| Abstract (English) | iv |
| Abstract (In Malay) | vi |
| List of Illustrations | xvii |

CHAPTER ONE: OVERVIEW

1.1 INTRODUCTION 1

1.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY 3

1.3 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY 4

1.3.1 The Setting 4

1.3.2 Multi-lingualism in Malaysia 6

1.3.3 Indian Migration to Malaysia 7

1.3.4 Tamil - People and Language 9

1.3.5 The Malaysian Tamils 9

1.3.6 The Tamil Language in Malaysia 10

1.3.6.1 Tamil in Education 11

1.3.6.2 Tamil in the Print Media 12

1.3.6.3 Tamil in Audio Visual Media 14

1.3.6.4 Tamil in Politics 16

1.3.6.5 Tamil in Religious, Cultural and Social Areas 18

1.4 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY 19

1.4.1 Why has the Malaysian Iyer community been selected for the Purposes of the study? 20

1.4.2 Why does this study focus on language shift and language maintenance patterns as its primary objective? 21

1.4.3 Why does this study focus on the reasons for language shift and maintenance? 22
1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY
1.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY
1.7 ORGANISATION OF THE THESIS

1.8 CONCLUSION
ENDNOTES

CHAPTER TWO – THE MALAYSIAN IYERS
2.1 INTRODUCTION
2.1.1 Need For A Description Of The Malaysian Iyers
2.1.2 The Purpose of This Chapter
2.1.3 Organisation of the Chapter

2.2. THE IYERS – A BRIEF DESCRIPTION
2.2.1 Definition
2.2.2 Origins
2.2.3 Caste
2.2.4 Varieties of Tamil
2.3 THE MALAYSIAN IYERS
2.3.1 Origins
2.3.2 Demographic Profile
2.3.3 Socio-Cultural Practices
2.3.3.1 Practices Found In Malaysian Iyer Homes
2.3.3.2 Vegetarianism
2.3.3.3 Taboos and Rules Pertaining to Food
2.3.3.4 Fasting
2.3.3.5 Patriarchy and Extended Families
2.3.3.5 Respect for Elders
2.3.3.6 Rites and Rituals
2.4 ESTABLISHMENT OF NETWORKS
  2.4.1 Formation Of An Association
  2.4.2 Kinship Ties
2.5 CONCLUSION
  ENDNOTES

CHAPTER THREE – REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE
  3.1 INTRODUCTION
  3.2 LANGUAGE SHIFT AND MAINTENANCE – A BRIEF DESCRIPTION
  3.3 FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE LANGUAGE SHIFT
    3.3.1 Bilingualism/Multilingualism
    3.3.2 Economic Power and Language
    3.3.3 Socio-Economic Changes
    3.3.4 The Impact of Education
    3.3.5 Government Regulations
    3.3.6 Migration
    3.3.7 Resistance to Change
  3.4 CONCEPTS RELEVANT TO THE STUDY OF LANGUAGE SHIFT AND MAINTENANCE
    3.4.1 Domain
      3.4.1.1 Domain Analysis
      3.4.1.2 Domains of Language Behaviour
      3.4.1.3 Role Relations within Domains
    3.4.2 Social Networks
      3.4.2.1 Open and Closed Networks
      3.4.2.2 Dense Networks
      3.4.2.3 Social Networks in Malaysia
    3.4.3 Code-Switching
3.4.3.1 Reasons Why People Code-Switch 88
3.4.3.2 Situational and Metaphorical Code-switching 89

3.4.4 The Ethnography of Communication 90
3.4.4.1 Shared Community Norms 91
3.4.4.2 Societal Rules for Interaction and Interpretation 92

3.5 CONCLUSION 94

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY 98

4.1 INTRODUCTION 98

4.2 RESEARCH APPROACH 98

4.3 DATA COLLECTION 101
4.3.1 The Research Sample 102
4.3.1.1 The Sample Used for the Questionnaire 102
4.3.2.2 The Sample used in the Audio Taped Conversations 104
4.3.2.3 The Sample used for the Interviews 106

4.4 RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS 108
4.4.1 Observations 108
4.4.2 Interviews 110
4.4.3 Audio Taping of Intra Community Conversations 112
4.4.4 Questionnaire 113
4.4.4.1 The Home Domain 114
4.4.4.2 The Social Domain 114
4.4.4.3 The Religious Domain 115
4.4.4.4 The Reading/Writing Domain 115
4.4.4.5 The Sections in the Questionnaire 116
A. Personal Details 116
B. Language Use 118
a. General Language Use 119
b. Language Use in the Home 119
c. Language Used for Social Purposes 120
d. Language Used for Religious Purposes 121
5.2.3.1 Increased Role of English in Community Interactions 149
5.2.3.2 Use of Tamil and English in Social Interactions with Tamils 151

5.2.3.3 Increased Use of English at Work 151
5.2.3.4 Use of English in School Interactions 152
5.2.3.5 Summary of Language Use in the Social Domain 153

5.2.4 Use of Tamil in the Religious Domain 154
5.2.4.1 Retention of the Tamil Language to Speak With Priests 154
5.2.4.2 Use of Tamil for Prayers 155
5.2.4.3 Use of Indian Languages for the Singing of Hymns or Bhajans 156

5.2.5 Reduced Involvement in Teaching Children the Tamil Language 157

5.2.6 Lack of Involvement in Activities to Preserve the Tamil Language 158
5.2.7 Understanding Language Shift 159

5.3 CONCLUSION 163

CHAPTER SIX: LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE EFFORTS 165
6.1 INTRODUCTION 165
6.2 ABILITY TO UNDERSTAND TAMIL 170
6.3 EFFORTS TO MAINTAIN THE TAMIL LANGUAGE 170
6.3.1 Efforts Made to Study Tamil Outside of School 171
6.3.2 Involvement in Reading, Listening, Writing and Speaking Tamil 172
6.3.2.1 Reading in Tamil 172
6.3.2.2 Listening in Tamil 174
6.3.2.3 Writing in Tamil 175
6.3.2.4 Speaking in Tamil 176
6.3.3 Functions Performed in the Tamil Language 177
6.3.3.1 To Express Relationships Better 180
6.3.3.2 To Show Respect for Elders 181
6.3.3.3 For Better and More Authentic Expression of Food Items 183
6.3.4 For Words That Have Religious or Cultural Significance 185
6.3.3.5 To Accommodate a Speaker with Limited English Abilities 187
6.3.3.6 For Direct Quotes 189

6.4 ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS ON LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE 190

6.5 CONCLUSION 194

ENDNOTES 198

CHAPTER SEVEN: REASONS FOR LANGUAGE SHIFT AND
LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE 199

7.1 INTRODUCTION 199

7.2 REASONS FOR LANGUAGE SHIFT 200

7.2.1 Importance of Economic Wealth and Status 200

7.2.2 Language and Identity 209

7.2.2.1 Customs and Traditions 211

7.2.2.2 Brahmin Heritage 214

7.2.3 Status of the Tamil Language 223

7.2 REASONS FOR THE MAINTENANCE OF TAMIL 227

7.2.1 Preserving Tamil As Part of Heritage 228

7.2.2 For Accommodation of Elders 232

7.2.3 For A Common Malaysian Indian Identity 234

7.2.4 For Functional Uses 234

7.3 CONCLUSION 235

CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCEPTUALIZING LANGUAGE SHIFT AND
MAINTENANCE AMONG THE MALAYSIAN IYERS 238

8.1 INTRODUCTION 238

8.2 UNDERSTANDING LANGUAGE SHIFT AND MAINTENANCE 238
8.2.1 Macro Level Reasons For Language Shift 240
8.2.2 Stage One of Language Shift 243
8.2.3 Stage Two of Language Shift 244
8.2.4 Stage Three of Language Shift 246
8.2.5 Role of Ethnic Identity in Language Shift 248
  8.2.5.1 Paternity 248
  8.2.5.2 Patrimony 249
  8.4.5.3 Cultural Identity and Language 250
8.3 CONCLUSION 252

CHAPTER NINE: FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS
9.1 INTRODUCTION 253
9.2 OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH 253
9.3 FINDINGS 255
9.4 LANGUAGE SHIFT AND LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE 257
9.5 REASONS FOR LANGUAGE SHIFT AND LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE 262
9.6 IMPLICATIONS ARISING FROM THE STUDY 264
9.7 DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH 266

BIBLIOGRAPHY 268
APPENDIX A -
THE QUESTIONNAIRE 282
APPENDIX B
NAME LIST OF INTERVIEWEES 289
APPENDIX C
LIST OF HOMES VISITED FOR OBSERVATION 291
APPENDIX D
AUDIO TAPE CONVERSATION TRANSCRIPTS 298
NAME LIST OF PARTICIPANTS 535