

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **PATTERNS OF LANGUAGE CHOICE AND DOMINANCE OF ENGLISH IN THE HOME DOMAIN**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter examines the social factors that influence the language choice of Filipino-Malaysian couples in the home domain. Both qualitative and quantitative findings are presented, discussed, and analyzed. This data include the interviews and transcripts of the recording to determine the dominant language choice of the participants. The analyses are narrowed down to the ethnic affiliations of interracial couples such as Filipino-Malay, Filipino-Malaysian Chinese, and Filipino-Malaysian Indian. This chapter specifically discusses the patterns of language choice and the dominant language spoken as the medium of communication in the home domain.

The discussion begins by showing the language choice patterns of Filipino-Malaysian couples and this is followed by a discussion of couples' choice of the first language and its impact on couples' identity and language loyalty. Then the use of Bahasa Malaysia at home is examined. Lastly, the emergence of English as dominant language in the home domain is discussed.

The analysis in this chapter is provided with interview extracts and supported by the data collected through the questionnaire.

## 5.2 Patterns of Language Choice

The pattern of language choice of Filipino-Malaysian couples is based on participants' self-reports in the sociolinguistic interviews conducted. The patterns are presented in three tables (Table 5.1, Table 5.2 and Table 5.3).

**Table 5.1 Patterns of Language Choice of Filipino-Malay Couples**

Filipino-Malay Couples	Bahasa Malaysia (BM)	Filipino (Cebuano, Ilokano, Ilongo, Waray) (F)	English (E)	English (dominant) and Bahasa Malaysia (E/BM)	English (dominant) and Filipino (E/F)
FCMA1	BM			E/BM	
FCMB1		F		E/BM	E/F
FCMA2	BM			E/BM	
FCMB2			E	E/BM	E/F
FCMA3			E	E/BM	E/F
FCMB3			E	E/BM	E/F
FCMA4	BM			E/BM	E/F
FCMB4			E	E/BM	E/F
FCMA5			E	E/BM	
FCMB5	BM		E	E/BM	E/F
FCMA6	BM	F		E/BM	
FCMB6				E/BM	E/F
FCMA7	BM			E/BM	
FCMB7	BM			E/BM	E/F
FCMA8			E	E/BM	E/F
FCMB8			E	E/BM	E/F
FCMA9	BM			E/BM	
FCMB9	BM			E/BM	E/F
FCMA10	BM			E/BM	
FCMB10			E	E/BM	E/F
<b>Total speakers</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>13</b>

FCMA- Malay spouse, FCMB- Filipino spouse

Table 5.1 shows that all Filipino-Malay couples (20) prefer a mixed code of English and Bahasa Malaysia where English serves as the dominant language. Ten (10) spouses (7

Malays and 3 Filipinos) prefer Bahasa Malaysia, 13 spouses (3 Malays and 10 Filipinos) prefer English and Filipino, 9 spouses (3 Malays and 6 Filipinos) prefer English and 2 Filipino spouses prefer Filipino.

The findings shown in Table 5.2 are clear that code switching from English to Bahasa Malaysia is highly preferred by all Filipino-Malay couples. However, switching from English to Filipino is also common to Filipino spouses. In addition, the use of Bahasa Malaysia at home is commonly used by the Malay husbands while English is preferred by the Filipino wives.

Comparing the pattern of language choice between Filipino-Malay and Filipino-Malaysian Chinese couples, a different language choice pattern is found. The data are presented in Table 5.2 which shows the preferred language of Filipino-Malaysian Chinese couples.

**Table 5.2 Patterns of Language Choice of Filipino-Malaysian Chinese Couples**

Filipino-Malaysian Chinese Couples	Chinese (Mandarin, Cantonese, Hakka, Hokkien) (C)	Bahasa Malaysia (BM)	Filipino (Cebuano, Ilokano, Ilongo, Waray) (F)	English (E)	English (dominant) and Chinese (E/C)	English (dominant) and Bahasa Malaysia (E/BM)	English (dominant) and Filipino (E/F)
FCCA1	C			E		E/BM	
FCCB1			F	E		E/BM	E/F
FCCA2	C				E/C		
FCCB2				E	E/C		
FCCA3				E		E/BM	
FCCB3				E		E/BM	
FCCA4	C				E/C		
FCCB4	C				E/C		
FCCA5	C				E/C		
FCCB5			F		E/C		E/F
FCCA6				E			E/F
FCCB6				E		E/BM	
FCCA7				E		E/BM	
FCCB7				E			E/F
FCCA8				E	E/C		E/F
FCCB8				E	E/C		
FCCA9				E		E/BM	
FCCB9				E		E/BM	
FCCA10				E	E/C		
FCCB10				E	E/C		E/F
<b>Total speakers</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>6</b>

FCCA- Malaysian Chinese spouse, FCCB- Filipino spouse

Table 5.2 shows that Filipino-Malaysian Chinese couples (15) spouses (7 Chinese and 8 Filipinos) choose English as the medium of communication at home, 10 spouses (5 Chinese and 5 Filipinos) prefer English and Chinese, 8 spouses (4 Chinese and 4 Filipinos) prefers English and Malay, 6 spouses (2 Chinese and 4 Filipinos) prefer English and Filipino, 5 spouses (4 Chinese and 1 Filipino) prefer Chinese and only 2 Filipino spouses prefer Filipino.

The findings are clear that English is the preferred language by Filipino-Malaysian Chinese couples. However, switching from English to Bahasa Malaysia and English to Filipino is commonly used by the Filipino spouses. Similar findings are obtained with Filipino-Malaysian Indian couples where English is the preferred language as the medium of communication in the home domain. The data are shown in Table 5.3.

**Table 5.3 Patterns of Language Choice of Filipino-Malaysian Indian Couples**

Filipino-Malaysian Indian Couples	Tamil (T)	Bahasa Malaysia (BM)	Filipino (Cebuano, Ilokano, Ilongo, Waray) (F)	English (E)	English (dominant) and Tamil (E/T)	English (dominant) and Bahasa Malaysia (E/BM)	English (dominant) and Filipino (E/F)
FCIA1				E			
FCIB1				E		E/BM	E/F
FCIA2				E			
FCIB2				E		E/BM	E/F
FCIA3				E		E/BM	E/F
FCIB3			F	E			E/F
FCIA4	T			E	E/T		
FCIB4				E		E/BM	E/F
FCIA5				E		E/BM	
FCIB5				E			
FCIA6				E			
FCIB6			F	E		E/BM	
FCIA7				E		E/BM	E/F
FCIB7				E		E/BM	E/F
FCIA8				E			
FCIB8				E			
FCIA9	T			E	E/T		
FCIB9				E			
FCIA10				E			
FCIB10			F	E		E/BM	E/F
<b>Total speakers</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>

FCIA- Malaysian Indian spouse, FCIB- Filipino spouse

Table 5.3 shows that all Filipino-Malaysian Indian couples (20) spouses (10 Indians and 10 Filipinos) prefer English as the medium of communication in the home domain. Two (2) Indian spouses prefer English and Tamil, 8 spouses (2 Indians and 6 Filipinos) prefer English and Bahasa Malaysia, 8 spouses (2 Indians and 6 Filipinos) prefer English and Filipino, 2 spouses prefer Tamil and 3 spouses prefer Filipino.

Data shown in Tables 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3 reveal that Filipino-Malaysian couples regardless of their ethnic affiliation prefer a mixed code between English and Bahasa Malaysia, English, and Chinese, English and Filipino with English as the dominant language. The data also shows that the first language such as Bahasa Malaysia, Chinese and Filipino are still used by couples as embedded language.

### **5.3 Language Vitality of Filipino-Malay Couples' First Language**

This research examined the use of couples' first language at home. In the interviews conducted it is clear that couples' first language be it Bahasa Malaysia or Filipino is sometimes used in the home as embedded languages while English serves as the matrix language. In the interviews conducted with Filipino-Malay couples, the Malaysian husbands said:-

*“FCMB: My first language is Bahasa Malaysia but at home we speak English most of the time. Although, we use also Malay often and Filipino (laugh) Bisaya.”*

*“FCMA: Sometimes I mix with Malay and my wife sometimes uses Tagalog.”*

*FCMB: Filipino spouse; FCMA: Malay spouse (See Appendix A)*

Although English is the dominant language, couples frequently switch to Bahasa Malaysia. However, Filipino is sometimes used at home. Switching from English to Filipino is common because their Malay spouses can understand a bit of the language. The Filipino wives said:-

*“FCMB: I am forced to speak in Filipino (Bisaya).”*

*“FCMB: My husband does not speak Tagalog but he understands some words. When we talk sometimes I use Tagalog and he understands it.”*

*“FCMA: At home we mix English, Malay and Tagalog.”*

*“FCMB: I speak Tagalog to my husband because he understands.”*

*FCMB: Filipino spouse; FCMA: Malay spouse (See Appendix A)*

Apparently, English is one of the languages that both Malays and Filipinos can converse in and understand each other. Filipino-Malay couples who have been married for a number of years have become more proficient in English and Malay languages. Therefore using English or Bahasa Malaysia as the medium of communication at home becomes natural. In fact, using English at home is almost comparable to the use of Bahasa Malaysia (see Table 5.1). Four Filipino spouses said:-

*“FCMB: I am better than my husband in speaking Malay”*

*“FCMB: I can speak Malay fluently now but of course I am more fluent in Cebuano.”*

*“FCMB: I speak Tagalog, Malay, English and Arabic.”*

*“FCMB: I speak Malay with my husband and children”*

*FCMB: Filipino spouse (See Appendix A)*

A questionnaire was disseminated to examine the use of the first language of Filipino-Malay couples at home.

**Table 5.4 Language Choice and First language of Filipino-Malay Couples**

	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
1. I am comfortable using my first language in communicating with my spouse.	12 (60%)	0	0	0	0	3 (15%)	5 (25%)
2. Using my first language makes our conversation as husband and wife easier.	10 (50%)	2 (10%)	1 (5%)	0	0	0	7 (35%)
3. I feel that my first language must be learned by my spouse to have better communication	10 (50%)	0	0	0	0	4 (20%)	6 (30%)
4. Using my first language facilitates better understanding to both of us.	10 (50%)	1 (5%)	0	1 (5%)	0	5 (25%)	3 (15%)
5. Every time I use my first language, a friendly atmosphere is created.	11 (55%)	1 (5%)	0	2 (10%)	0	2 (10%)	4 (20%)
6. Using my first language helps us discuss various topics about friends, family and work.	11 (55%)	0	0	1 (5%)	0	3 (15%)	5 (25%)
7. Using my first language enhances my relationship with my spouse.	8 (40%)	0	2 (10%)	2 (10%)	0	2 (10%)	6 (30%)
8. I feel that my first language is more important than any other languages.	9 (45%)	3 (15%)	1 (5%)	1 (5%)	0	2 (10%)	4 (20%)
9. I encourage my family members to use my first language at home.	8 (40%)	3 (15%)	1 (5%)	1 (5%)	0	2 (10%)	5 (25%)
10. Using my first language makes my family closer.	6 (30%)	3 (15%)	3 (15%)	1 (5%)	0	3 (15%)	4 (20%)
Total respondents							

7- strongly agree, 6- agree, 5-moderately agree, 4-undecided, 3- moderately disagree, 2- disagree, 1- strongly disagree

Table 5.4 shows the reasons for the use of the first language of Filipino-Malay couples in the home domain. Sixty percent (60%) of Filipino-Malay couples strongly agree that they use their first language because it is comfortable to use when communicating with their spouse, 50% strongly agree that using the first language makes the conversation easier, it



must be learned by the spouse for better communication as it facilitates better understanding, 55% strongly agree that using the first language creates a friendly atmosphere and helps in discussing various topics, 45% strongly agree that their first language is more important than any other language and 40% strongly agree that using the first language enhances the couple's relationship and encourages the members of the family to use this language at home.

Filipino-Malay couples have a positive attitude towards their first languages; Bahasa Malaysia for Malay spouses and Filipino for Filipino spouses. However in reality, Bahasa Malaysia is frequently used at home and the Filipino language is rarely used. Although they have a positive attitude towards their respective languages, the reality is that Bahasa Malaysia dominates rather than Tagalog.

However, due to limited social functions of their first language like Filipino and Bahasa Malaysia as compared to English, couples have shifted to English as their medium of communication at home. The use of the first language has become a secondary choice.

#### **5.4 Language Loyalty and Hybrid Identity of Filipino Spouses**

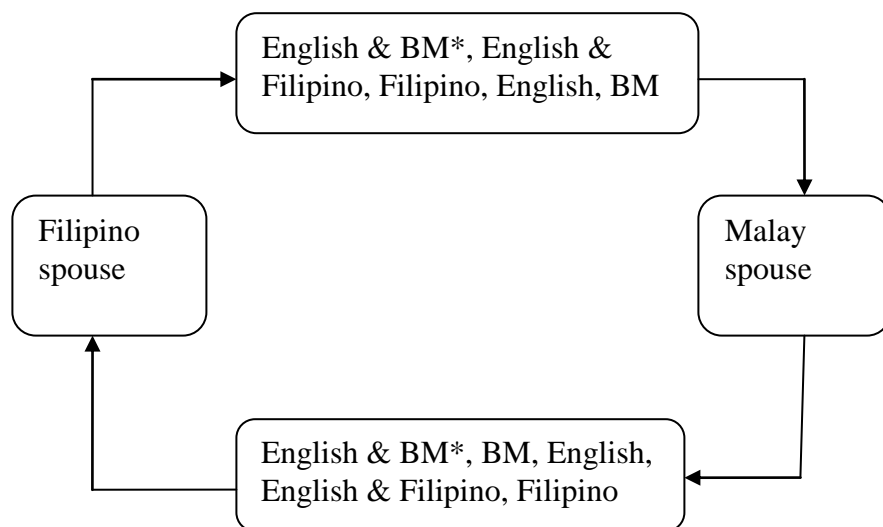
The findings reveal that Filipino-Malay couples maintain the use of their first language in English and Bahasa Malaysia code switching. Despite the dominance of English, Bahasa Malaysia is given importance. The importance given to Bahasa Malaysia is perhaps influenced due to the status of Bahasa Malaysia as the national language and its association with Islam. Non-Muslim Filipinos convert to Islam when they marry Malays and their names change too. Changing the religion and name and practicing other cultural norms related to Malay and Islamic culture contribute in the construction of a new or hybrid

identity of Filipino spouses. Frequent encounters by Filipino spouses with the Malay community have helped in developing their sense of belongingness with the Malay community. This is inevitable because Malay culture emphasizes solidarity and involvement (Zuraidah Mohd. Don, 2008: 24). Consequently, Filipino spouses tend to assimilate and develop loyalty towards Malay culture and Bahasa Malaysia. However, the mixing of two different cultures; Filipino and Malay cultures may result to a hybrid identity which is noted in the language that Filipino spouses speak. Creating a hybrid identity is evident when speakers mix two identities into one i.e mixing the Filipino and Malay identities. The findings are similar to the study of Le Page (1986) as cited in Coulmas 2003:182 that people create their linguistic choice (and we all have more than one) so as to resemble those of the groups with which from time to time they wish to identify. Both the groups, and their linguistic attributes, exist solely in the mind of each individual (Coulmas, 2003:182). We behave in the way that –unconsciously or consciously – we think appropriate to the group with which at the moment we wish to identify. This is evident in the interviews conducted when the Filipino spouses said:-

*“FCMB: When people see me, they think I’m a Malay because I speak Bahasa Malaysia and I look like Malay”*

*“FCMB: Everytime I speak with my husband in Chinese, other people will identify me as a Chinese because I can speak fluently and I think I look like a bit of Chinese (Laugh).”*

*FCMB: Filipino spouse (See Appendix A)*



(\*) Represents a dominant language

**Figure 5.1 Cycle of Language Choice in Filipino-Malay Couples' Interaction**

Figure 5.1 shows the patterns of language choice of Filipino-Malay couples' communication in the home domain. Malay spouses prefer a mixed language between English and Bahasa Malaysia (BM) which is dominant in most interactions. However, Bahasa Malaysia, English and Filipino are also used. On the other hand, for Filipino spouses the use of English and BM is dominant. However, English, Filipino and BM are also used when communicating with their Malay spouses.

### **5.5 The Role of Filipino-Malaysian Chinese Couples' First Language at Home**

Both spouses, Filipino and Malaysian Chinese speak different first languages. Most Chinese spouses speak different Chinese dialects such as Cantonese, Hokkien and Hakka but they all speak Mandarin. On the other hand, Filipino spouses speak Filipino and other Philippine languages like Cebuano, Ilongo and Ilokano. These first languages spoken by the spouses seem to diminish in importance in the home domain. For Filipino-Malaysian

Chinese couples they use their first language but due to social and economic demands, the use of English dominates. However, Chinese language particularly Mandarin is given importance and it becomes the second most important language in the home domain after English. As a result, couples tend to switch from English to Mandarin and in some cases Filipino when it is necessary.

The role of the Chinese language is also essential at home not only between the couples but in interactions with the in-laws who stay with them. Because of this, Filipino spouses are motivated to learn Chinese language and eventually develop certain level of proficiency in Mandarin language.

#### **5.5.1 In-laws' Influence on Language Choice**

Malaysian in-laws such as the parents-in-law, brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law influence the language choice of Filipino-Malay and Filipino-Malaysian Chinese couples at home. The influence of family members in maintaining the use of the Chinese language and culture is evident due to strong family ties. Their values particularly the filial piety in Malay and Chinese cultures give emphasis to natural sensitivity, caring love, sincere concern, and natural respect. These good values can be shown by maintaining language and culture.

The presence of the family members at home has influenced the language choice of Filipino-Malaysian couples. Although the family members do not directly tell the couples to speak Malay or Chinese when they are around but it has become automatic that the Malay or Chinese spouses tend to speak their mother tongue. The use of the first language establishes solidarity in interactions among family members. The presence of a Filipino

spouse, does not affect the language choice in interactions among the Malaysian family members. As a result, Filipino spouses commented that they felt excluded every time the Malay, Chinese and Indian family members interact with each other in their own language. In order to interact with the family members, Filipino spouses are forced to learn the language by talking with their Malaysian spouses respective languages like Malay and Chinese.

In the interviews conducted with Filipino spouses married to Malaysian Chinese, they responded:-

*“FCCB: I speak Chinese because my in-laws do not speak English”*

*“FCCB: Because my mother-in-law does not speak English, so we speak in Chinese”*

*FCCB: Filipino spouse (See Appendix A)*

Filipino spouses try to speak Chinese with their Chinese spouses because they need to develop their language proficiency in Chinese so that they can talk to their in-laws. To some extent, Filipino spouses accommodated their Chinese spouses by learning the language so that they can interact with their in-laws. One spouse said *“I speak Chinese because my in-laws do not speak English.”* which can be interpreted that the language choice of Filipino-Chinese couples can be influenced not only by the spouse but also the family members.

Filipino spouses learned the language of her husband and used it because as they say, *“We have no choice, I think for him he prefers to speak Mandarin”* and *“I need to*

*learn Chinese so I can talk to my in-laws.*” This means that they have accommodated their husbands.

A survey questionnaire was disseminated to examine the reasons for language choice of Filipino-Malaysian Chinese couples at home.

**Table 5.5 Language Choice and First language of Filipino-Malaysian Chinese Couples**

	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
1. I am comfortable using my first language in communicating with my spouse.	0	0	2 (10%)	0	0	6 (30%)	12 (60%)
2. Using my first language makes our conversation as husband and wife easier.	1 (5%)	0	1 (5%)	0	0	6 (30%)	12 (60%)
3. I feel that my first language must be learned by my spouse to have better communication	2 (10%)	1 (5%)	0	0	0	5 (25%)	4 (20%)
4. Using my first language facilitates better understanding to both of us.	2 (10%)	1 (5%)	0	0	0	5 (25%)	12 (60%)
5. Every time I use my first language, a friendly atmosphere is created.	1 (5%)	2 (10%)	0	0	0	6 (30%)	11 (55%)
6. Using my first language helps us discuss various topics about friends, family and work.	1 (5%)	3 (15%)	0	0	0	6 (30%)	10 (50%)
7. Using my first language enhances my relationship with my spouse.	1 (5%)	1 (5%)	0	0	0	4 (20%)	14 (70%)
8. I feel that my first language is more important than any other languages.	1 (5%)	0	0	0	0	1 (5%)	18 (90%)
9. I encourage my family members to use my first language at home.	3 (15%)	11 (55%)	0	0	0	2 (10%)	4 (20%)
10. Using my first language makes my family closer.	5 (25%)	0	0	0	0	3 (15%)	12 (60%)
Total respondents							

7- strongly agree, 6- agree, 5-moderately agree, 4-undecided, 3- moderately disagree, 2- disagree, 1- strongly disagree

Table 5.5 shows the language choice of Filipino-Malaysian Chinese couples. The findings show that the first language of both husband and wife is least preferred as the medium of communication at home. Ninety percent (90%) of Filipino-Malaysian Chinese couples

strongly disagree that their first language is more important than any other languages, 70% strongly disagree that using the first language enhances relationship and 60% strongly disagree that their first language gives comfort in communication, makes the conversation easier, facilitates better understanding and makes the family closer. Fifty five percent (55%) of Filipino-Malaysian Chinese couples strongly disagree and 30% disagree that using the first language creates a friendly atmosphere and 50% strongly disagree and 30% disagree that using the first language helps in discussing various topics.

Using the first language particularly the Filipino language is not highly favored by Filipino-Malaysian couples because of the limited functions in various domains of communication in Malaysia. However, Chinese language is used when Chinese family members are at home. In addition when Chinese and Filipino languages are used in some interactions they are usually seen in code switching from English to Chinese, Bahasa Malaysia and Filipino as shown in Conversation 5.1.

### Conversation 5.1

W- Filipino wife

H-Malaysian Chinese husband

W- Yeah, **kaya nga group nila** (*their group can do it*). **Sila yung smallest group sila pang nag first** (*they are the smallest group yet they rank first*). **Three lang yung team nila** (*they have only three teams*) Yellow, Red, Blue

H- Mei Mei knows the game lah.

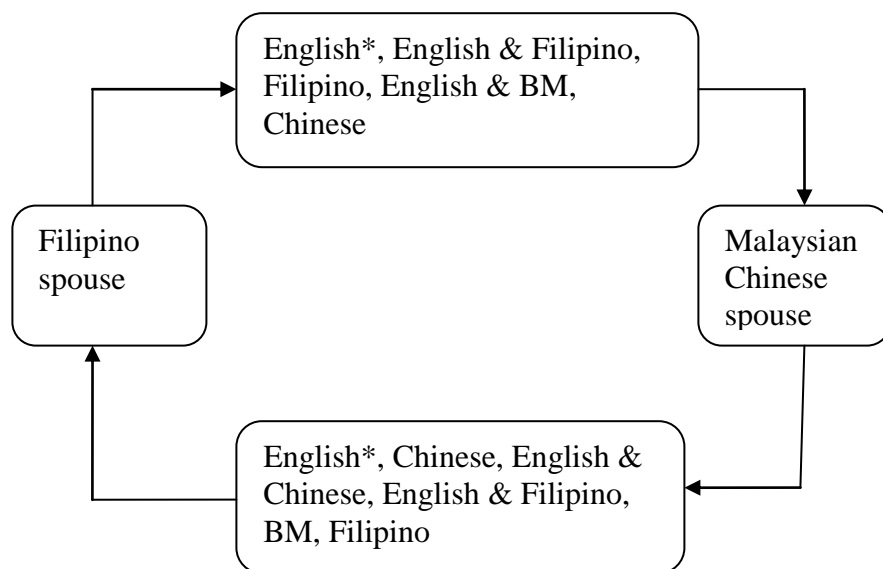
W- Oo, **alam nya yung game. Alam nya** (*she knows the game. She knows*)

H- **[First siya]** (*she is the first*)

W- **Hindi, yung group nila** (*No, their group*).

H- Do you think she can follow?

W- **Oo, syempre** (*yes, of course*) she can follow the game



(\*) Represents a dominant language

**Figure 5.2 Cycle of Language Choice in Filipino-Chinese Couples' Interaction**

Figure 5.2 shows the patterns of language choice of Filipino-Malaysian Chinese couples' communication at home. Malaysian Chinese spouses choose English with some switching in Chinese, sometimes Bahasa Malaysia and Filipino. On the other hand, Filipino spouses choose English and sometimes switch to Filipino, Bahasa Malaysia and Chinese.

#### **5.4 First Language and Language Choice of Filipino-Malaysian Indian Couples**

The interviews conducted with Filipino-Malaysian Indian couples show that 8 Malaysian Indian spouses consider English as their first language and was the language spoken at home when they were young. The Indians can also speak Bahasa Malaysia because it is a required subject and it is also the medium of instruction in the national primary and secondary schools and all Malaysian students regardless of the race must learn Malay as a subject in vernacular school and as a medium of instruction in national secondary schools. Apart from their exposure to Bahasa Malaysia they also learn English in school as a subject. In an interview conducted with Filipino-Malaysian Indian couples they said:-



*“FCIA: We speak English most of the time, we simply talk in English”*

**“FCIB: English lang, pag nag Tagalog ako I translate ko in English”**  
*(English only, if I speak in Tagalog I translate it in English)*

**“FCIB: English kasi from the start English talaga ang first language namin”**  
*(English because from the start English was really our first language)*

*“FCIB: English, as in pure English, we do not mix but sometimes I make some jokes in Filipino”*

*“FCIA: English because at home that’s what we speak often”*

*FCIA: Malaysian Indian spouse; FCIB: Filipino spouse (See Appendix A)*

Based on the couples’ answers, it is clear that English is the language used by Filipino-Malaysian Indian couples at home. Saying *“we speak English most of the time, we simply speak English”* indicates that couples have a strong preference for English. It has become the dominant language in interactions in the home. However, like the others (Chinese and Malays), code switching is common. One participant mentioned *“English only, if I speak in Tagalog I translate in English”* and another participant said *“sometimes I make some jokes in English”* and *“English because that’s what we speak often”*.

The result of the questionnaire is shown in Table 5.6.

**Table 5.6 Language Choice and First language of Filipino-Malaysian Indian Couples**

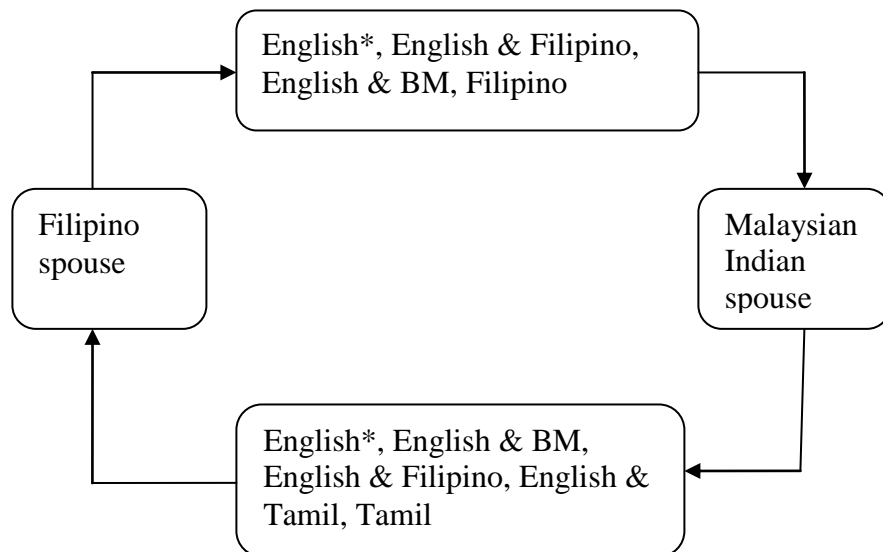
	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
1. I am comfortable using my first language in communicating with my spouse.	5 (25%)	0	1 (5%)	0	0	6 (30%)	8 (40%)
2. Using my first language makes our conversation as husband and wife easier.	2 (10%)	0	0	0	0	7 (35%)	11 (55%)
3. I feel that my first language must be learned by my spouse to have better communication	1 (5%)	1 (5%)	1 (5%)	0	1 (5%)	4 (20%)	12 (60%)
4. Using my first language facilitates better understanding to both of us.	4 (20%)	2 (10%)	0	0	0	6 (30%)	8 (40%)
5. Every time I use my first language, a friendly atmosphere is created.	4 (20%)	2 (10%)	0	0	0	7 (35%)	7 (35%)
6. Using my first language helps us discuss various topics about friends, family and work.	2 (10%)	2 (10%)	0	0	0	5 (25%)	11 (55%)
7. Using my first language enhances my relationship with my spouse.	4 (20%)	0	0	0	0	4 (20%)	12 (60%)
8. I feel that my first language is more important than any other languages.	5 (25%)	0	0	0	0	5 (25%)	10 (50%)
9. I encourage my family members to use my first language at home.	5 (5%)	1 (5%)	0	0	0	7 (35%)	7 (35%)
10. Using my first language makes my family closer.	3 (15%)	1 (5%)	0	0	0	6 (30%)	10 (50%)
Total respondents							

7- strongly agree, 6- agree, 5-moderately agree, 4-undecided, 3- moderately disagree, 2- disagree, 1- strongly disagree

The data reveal that 40% of the participants strongly disagree and 30% disagree that using the first language is more comfortable when talking with their spouse, 55% strongly disagree and 35% disagree that the use of their first language makes the conversation easy, 60% strongly disagree and 20% disagree feel that each spouse must learn each others language, 40% strongly disagree and 30% disagree that using their first language facilitates better understanding and 55% strongly disagree and 25% disagree that their first language helps to discuss various topics.

The findings show that the first language of Filipino-Malaysian Indian couples is not given priority as the medium of communication at home. Consequently, Tamil or Filipino languages are seldom used at home. It can be interpreted that Filipino-Malaysian Indian couples might have not seen the necessity of these two languages in many domains of communication in Malaysia since they have limited social functions unlike English, Bahasa Malaysia and Mandarin which are widely used in various domains of communication.

At present, the choice of the first language or mother tongue in a globalized society has been compromised in favor of English, the world's dominant language. People believe that they can improve themselves economically and academically through their knowledge of English. As a result, the use of English rather than the mother tongue has gained much popularity.



(\*) Represents a dominant language

**Figure 5.3 Cycle of Language Choice in Filipino-Indian Couples' Interaction**

Figure 5.3 shows the patterns of language choice of Filipino-Malaysian Indian couples' communication in the home domain. Malaysian Indian spouses choose English which serves as the dominant language in most interactions. However, switching from English to BM, Filipino and Tamil appears to be common. On the other hand, Filipino spouses choose English and sometimes code switch from English to Filipino and Bahasa Malaysia.

### **5.7 The Role of Bahasa Malaysia in Filipino-Malaysian Families**

It cannot be denied that the national language influences the language choice of the participants. Filipino-Malaysian couples are encouraged and motivated to use Bahasa Malaysia because of its various functions in different domains of communication.

Filipino-Malay couples show positive attitude towards Bahasa Malaysia. The positive attitude is perhaps influenced by the status of Bahasa Malaysia as the national language of Malaysia. Bahasa Malaysia serves as an identity marker for the Malays for it represents their ethnic and cultural identity. It has been inculcated in their minds that all Malays must be able to speak Bahasa Malaysia.

Malay spouses maintain loyalty to Bahasa Malaysia. Using the language at home might be a way of encouraging and motivating the Filipino spouses to speak Malay. The motivation and encouragement for Filipino spouses do not come from the husband alone but also from the in-laws particularly the parents-in-law. Filipino spouses have no choice but to speak Bahasa Malaysia because it is the only way for them to communicate with their non-English speaking elderly, Malay spouses' family members and friends.

In contrast, the Chinese spouses do not encourage and motivate their Filipino spouses to learn Chinese. However, Filipino spouses learn Chinese because of the in-laws who do not speak English. In contrast, Indian spouses do not encourage their Filipino spouses to speak Tamil because they themselves do not speak Tamil.

Filipino spouses would like to use Filipino at home but their Malaysian spouses show no interest in learning Filipino language. As a result, Filipino spouses use English at home and code switch between English and Malay or Chinese depending on the ethnicity of the spouse.

For Filipino-Malay couples, the use of Bahasa Malaysia helps them to build stronger ties with the Malay communities. In the interviews conducted Filipino-Malay couples mentioned:-

*“FCMB: We use only Bahasa Malaysia at home”*

*“FCMB: My husband and I speak only Bahasa Malaysia”*

*“FCMA: We speak in Bahasa Malaysia but if I cannot express myself I speak in English”*

*“FCMB: We speak Bahasa Malaysia because most of our neighbors are Malays”*

*FCMA: Malay spouse; FCMB: Filipino spouse (See Appendix A)*

The use of Bahasa Malaysia is common among Filipino-Malay couples. Although seven out of ten Filipino-Malay couples prefer English as the medium of communication at home, Bahasa Malaysia is also frequently spoken. Only two of the 10 spouses said *“We use only Bahasa Malaysia at home”* and *“My husband and I speak only Bahasa Malaysia.”* These

two had been married for more than 20 years. As a result, the long-term married Filipino spouse has assimilated the Malay culture.

The use of Bahasa Malaysia at home is usually initiated by the Malay spouse in order to encourage the Filipino spouse to use the language. The encouragement made by the Malay spouse is perhaps motivated by his or her language loyalty towards Bahasa Malaysia and with the aim to transmit the language to all family members. In the interviews conducted, the Malay spouses said:-

*“FCMA: I speak Malay with her (Filipino wife) so she will learn”*

*“FCMA: We talk in Malay so that she can improve her Bahasa Malaysia”*

*FCMA: Malay spouse (See Appendix A)*

A survey questionnaire was disseminated to find out the couples' language preference of Bahasa Malaysia.

**Table 5.7 Bahasa Malaysia and Language Choice of Filipino-Malay Couples**

	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
1. I am comfortable using Bahasa Malaysia in communicating with my spouse.	12 (60%)	3 (15%)	0	2 (10%)	0	1 (5%)	2 (10%)
2. Using Bahasa Malaysia makes our conversation as husband and wife easier.	12 (60%)	5 (25%)	0	0	0	2 (10%)	1 (5%)
3. I feel that Bahasa Malaysia must be learned by my spouse to have better communication	12 (60%)	4 (20%)	0	1 (5%)	0	1 (5%)	2 (10%)
4. Using Bahasa Malaysia facilitates better understanding to both of us.	10 (50%)	7 (35%)	0	0	0	3 (15%)	0
5. Every time I use Bahasa Malaysia, a friendly atmosphere is created.	10 (50%)	8 (40%)	0	0	0	1 (5%)	1 (5%)
6. Using Bahasa Malaysia helps us discuss various topics about friends, family and work.	13 (65%)	4 (20%)	0	0	1 (5%)	2 (10%)	0
7. Using Bahasa Malaysia enhances my relationship with my spouse.	12 (60%)	5 (25%)	0	1 (5%)	0	1 (5%)	1 (5%)
8. I feel Bahasa Malaysia is more important than any other languages.	10 (50%)	6 (30%)	1 (5%)	1 (5%)	0	2 (10%)	0
9. I encourage my family members to use Bahasa Malaysia at home.	12 (60%)	4 (20%)	1 (5%)	1 (5%)	1 (5%)	0	1 (5%)
10. Using Bahasa Malaysia makes my family closer.	13 (65%)	3 (15%)	1 (5%)	1 (5%)	0	2 (10%)	0
Total respondents							

1- strongly agree, 2- agree, 3-moderately agree, 4-undecided, 5- moderately disagree, 6- disagree, 7- strongly disagree

Table 5.7 shows the language choice of Filipino-Malay couples of Bahasa Malaysia as the medium of communication at home. It shows that 65% of the Filipino-Malay couples strongly agree that using Bahasa Malaysia at home helps them to discuss various topics and makes their family closer and 60% strongly agree that using Bahasa Malaysia can be more effective when communicating with their spouse, and enhances couples' relationship. Consequently, 60% strongly agree that Bahasa Malaysia must be learned by the Filipino spouse and must be learned by the children. It also shows that 50% of the participants

strongly agree that the use of Bahasa Malaysia facilitates better understanding and creates a friendly atmosphere.

Bahasa Malaysia has been used as the medium of communication at home by Filipino-Malay couples because their proficiency in Malay will eventually help them to find jobs particularly in government offices. Bahasa Malaysia brings economic benefits to couples. On top of that, the choice of Bahasa Malaysia is influenced by the ethnic loyalty of the Malay spouses.

Similarly, Filipino-Malaysian Chinese couples consider Bahasa Malaysia as an important language in Malaysia because it is the national language. Malaysian Chinese believe that Bahasa Malaysia is useful in local contexts specifically in business, education, employment and in other domains of communication. Bahasa Malaysia has a wide range of functions. Due to the role of Bahasa Malaysia as the national language in Malaysia, Filipino-Malaysian Chinese couples' code switched often from English to Bahasa Malaysia at home.

Switching to Bahasa Malaysia in English dominated interactions is prevalent in Filipino-Malaysian Chinese families. As a result both spouses can converse in Bahasa Malaysia to a certain level of proficiency. However, English is the dominant language.

The findings show that Filipino spouses learn Bahasa Malaysia by watching local movies and TV shows. They also learn through their social networks who speak Malay. In the interviews conducted with Filipino-Malaysian Chinese participants, they said:-



*“FCCB: As far as language is concerned English is dominant but we also mix it with Bahasa Malaysia”*

*“FCCA: We use Bahasa Malaysia because it is also useful in dealing with the government and other locals”*

*“FCCB: We speak Hokkien but we also speak Bahasa Malaysia at home”*

*FCCA: Malaysian Chinese spouse; FCCB: Filipino spouse (See Appendix A)*

The interviews reveal that Bahasa Malaysia is sometimes spoken in English dominant utterances by Filipino-Malaysian Chinese couples. They believe that the use of Bahasa Malaysia does help them in dealing with people who are working in government offices and with other local Malay friends. One spouse mentioned *“We use Bahasa Malaysia because it is also useful in dealing with the government and other locals.”* The use of Bahasa Malaysia is not just symbolic but it is useful in some formal and informal domains of communication. For instance when Filipino spouses attend meetings in school or renew their visas.

The importance of Bahasa Malaysia for Filipino-Malaysian Chinese couples cannot be generalized to indicate a form of language loyalty but it shows their positive attitude towards the language.

A survey was conducted to find out more the attitude towards language of Filipino-Malaysian Chinese couples (see Table 5.6).

**Table 5.8 Importance of Bahasa Malaysia in Filipino-Malaysian Chinese Couples' Interaction**

	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
1. I am comfortable using Bahasa Malaysia in communicating with my spouse.	2 (10%)	1 (5%)	0	0	0	7 (35%)	10 (50%)
2. Using Bahasa Malaysia makes our conversation as husband and wife easier.	2 (10%)	0	0	0	0	6 (30%)	12 (60%)
3. I feel that Bahasa Malaysia must be learned by my spouse to have better communication	2 (10%)	2 (10%)	0	0	0	6 (30%)	10 (50%)
4. Using Bahasa Malaysia facilitates better understanding to both of us.	2 (10%)	0	0	0	0	6 (30%)	12 (60%)
5. Every time I use Bahasa Malaysia, a friendly atmosphere is created.	2 (10%)	0	0	0	0	6 (30%)	12 (60%)
6. Using Bahasa Malaysia helps us discuss various topics about friends, family and work.	2 (10%)	0	0	0	0	6 (30%)	12 (60%)
7. Using Bahasa Malaysia enhances my relationship with my spouse.	2 (10%)	0	0	0	0	6 (30%)	12 (60%)
8. I feel that Bahasa Malaysia is more important than any other languages.	0	0	0	0	0	6 (30%)	14 (70%)
9. I encourage my family members to use Bahasa Malaysia at home.	0	0	0	0	0	6 (30%)	14 (70%)
10. Using Bahasa Malaysia makes my family closer.	3 (15%)	0	0	0	0	6 (30%)	11 (55%)
Total respondents							

1- strongly agree, 2- agree, 3-moderately agree, 4-undecided, 5- moderately disagree, 6- disagree, 7- strongly disagree

Despite what was said in the interviews, the data from the questionnaire show that Filipino-Malaysian Chinese couples do not use much Bahasa Malaysia at home. It reveals that 70% of the participants strongly disagree that Bahasa Malaysia is more important than the other languages and 60% strongly disagree that Bahasa Malaysia makes the couples' communication easy, facilitates better understanding, creates friendly atmosphere, helps to discuss various topics, and enhances the couples' relationship. Furthermore 55% of the participants strongly disagree and 30% disagree that the use of Bahasa Malaysia makes the

family closer and 50% strongly disagree that using Bahasa Malaysia makes the conversation comfortable and must be learned by other spouses.

The result shows that couples do not use much of Bahasa Malaysia. Most often Chinese families use Chinese dialects as the language used at home. Chinese speakers in Malaysia prefer their mother tongues such as Hokkien, Cantonese, Hakka, Teochew and Hainnese as the medium of communication in the home domain (see Kuang 2006).

Like the Malay-Filipino couples, the use of Bahasa Malaysia is also common among Filipino-Malaysian Indian couples. Aside from English, Bahasa Malaysia is also widely spoken or mixed with other languages because the couples are proficient in Bahasa Malaysia.

In the interviews conducted, some Filipino-Malaysian Indian couples said:-

**“FCIB: Depende sa sitwasyon pagkailangan mag Malay mag Malay ko”** (*It depends on the situation if I need to speak in Bahasa Malaysia, I speak Bahasa Malaysia*)

**“FCIB: English tapos gagmay nga Bahasa Malaysia”** (*English with a bit of Bahasa Malaysia*)

**“FCIB: I speak Malay, English, and Tagalog, at home”**

**FCIB: Filipino spouse (See Appendix A)**

English is widely spoken by Filipino-Malaysian Indian families however Bahasa Malaysia is also used in English dominant utterances. Although English plays an important role, code switching from English to Bahasa Malaysia and Filipino has become a common feature in

interactions. A survey was conducted with Filipino-Malaysian Indian couples to determine the role of Bahasa Malaysia in interactions in the home domain.

**Table 5.9 Role of Bahasa Malaysia in Filipino-Malaysian Indian Couples' Interactions**

	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
1. I am comfortable using Bahasa Malaysia in communicating with my spouse.	4 (20%)	0	0	0	2 (10%)	8 (40%)	6 (30%)
2. Using Bahasa Malaysia makes our conversation as husband and wife easier.	2 (10%)	0	0	0	3 (15%)	10 (50%)	5 (25%)
3. I feel that Bahasa Malaysia must be learned by my spouse to have better communication	2 (10%)	2 (10%)	0	0	1 (5%)	8 (40%)	7 (35%)
4. Using Bahasa Malaysia facilitates better understanding to both of us.	2 (10%)	1 (15%)	0	1 (15%)	1 (5%)	6 (30%)	9 (45%)
5. Everytime I use Bahasa Malaysia, a friendly atmosphere is created.	0	0	0	0	3 (15%)	8 (40%)	9 (45%)
6. Using Bahasa Malaysia helps us discuss various topics about friends, family and work.	0	0	0	0	3 (15%)	7 (35%)	10 (50%)
7. Using Bahasa Malaysia enhances my relationship with my spouse.	2 (10%)	0	0	0	3 (15%)	5 (25%)	10 (50%)
8. I feel that my national language Bahasa Malaysia is more important than any other languages.	2 (10%)	0	0	0	3 (15%)	6 (30%)	9 (45%)
9. I encourage my family members to use Bahasa Malaysia at home.	3 (15%)	1 (15%)	0	0	2 (10%)	6 (30%)	8 (40%)
10. Using Bahasa Malaysia makes my family closer.	0	0	1 (15%)	0	3 (15%)	7 (35%)	9 (45%)
Total respondents							

1- strongly agree, 2- agree, 3-moderately agree, 4-undecided, 5- moderately disagree, 6-disagree, 7- strongly disagree

Table 5.9 shows the role of Bahasa Malaysia in Filipino-Malaysian Indian couples' interactions at home. It shows that couples prefer English as the medium of communication despite the important role of Bahasa Malaysia as the national language in Malaysia. It reveals that 50% strongly disagree and 25% disagree that the use of Bahasa

Malaysia enhances their role relationship as husband and wife, 50% strongly disagree and 35% disagree that using Bahasa Malaysia helps to discuss various topics, 45% strongly disagree and 40% disagree that the use of Bahasa Malaysia creates a friendly atmosphere, 45% strongly disagree and 35% disagree the use of national language makes the family closer and 45% strongly disagree and 35% disagree that Bahasa Malaysia facilitates better understanding and it is more important than the other languages.

The findings of the study reveal that the use of English in Filipino-Malaysian Indian couples' interaction at home is prevalent although the use of Bahasa Malaysia through code switching also occurs.

### **5.8 The Influence of English in Interracial Couples' Language Choice**

Of all languages spoken by Filipino-Malaysian couples, English is highly preferred as the medium of communication at home because of its social and economic benefits. Apart from being an international language, English has become the language in business, knowledge, and education (see Dumanig, 2007). English has motivated the Filipino-Malaysian couples as the medium of communication at home because it is the language in business and education. However, due to different linguistic backgrounds of couples, their extended family and friends, other languages are also used in English dominant code switching.

In the interviews conducted, all participants regardless of ethnicity believe that the use of Bahasa Malaysia is important in Malay families. However, they also value the importance of English not only in terms of economic and social benefits but they are concerned about their children's English language proficiency. Consequently, couples

communicate in English so that their children will follow and speak English at home. The couples have become the “referee” who speak English with the intention to teach their children. The term “referee” refers to the interlocutors who use a language that is intended to another person who is not actually involved in the conversation (see Yau, 1997).

In the interviews conducted some couples said:-

*“FCMB: We speak in English because it is easy to understand”*

*”FCCB: We communicate in English even when we are angry”*

*“FCIB: Most of the time we speak in English even with my parents’ -in-law”*

*FCMB, FCCB, FCIB: Filipino spouses (See Appendix A)*

A survey was conducted to find out how Filipino-Malaysian couples give importance to English at home.

**Table 5.10 English and Language Choice in Interracial Couples' Interaction**

	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
1. I am comfortable using English in communicating with my spouse.	13 (65%)	2 (10%)	0	0	3 (15%)	0	2 (10%)
2. Using English makes our conversation as husband and wife easier.	12 (60%)	4 (20%)	0	0	1 (5%)	0	3 (15%)
3. I feel that English must be learned by my spouse to have better communication	12 (60%)	4 (20%)	0	1 (5%)	0	1 (5%)	2 (10%)
4. Using English facilitates better understanding to both of us.	12 (60%)	5 (25%)	1 (5%)	0	2 (20%)	0	0
5. Everytime I use English language, a friendly atmosphere is created.	10 (50%)	7 (35%)	1 (5%)	0	0	2 (10%)	0
6. Using English language helps us discuss various topics about friends, family and work.	15 (75%)	3 (15%)	1 (5%)	0	0	1 (5%)	0
7. Using English language enhances my relationship with my spouse.	12 (60%)	5 (25%)	1 (5%)	0	1 (5%)	1 (5%)	0
8. I feel that English language is more important than any other languages.	10 (50%)	5 (25%)	2 (10%)	0	2 (10%)	1 (5%)	0
9. I encourage my family members to use English language at home.	12 (60%)	5 (25%)	1 (5%)	1 (5%)	1 (5%)	0	0
10. Using English language makes my family closer.	15 (75%)	3 (15%)	0	1 (5%)	1 (5%)	0	0
Total respondents							

7- strongly agree, 6- agree, 5-moderately agree, 4-undecided, 3- moderately disagree, 2- disagree, 1- strongly disagree

Table 5.10 shows the choice of English as the medium of communication between Filipino-Malay couples at home. The data show that 75% of Filipino-Malay couples strongly agree that the use of English language at home helps them to discuss various topics and makes the family closer and 65% strongly agree that they feel comfortable when English is used as the medium of communication at home. It also shows that 60% of Filipino-Malaysian couples strongly agree that English makes their conversation easy, provides better communication, facilitates better understanding, enhances couples' relationship and encourages the family members to use the language.

Filipino-Malay couples have favorable attitude towards English. Although most of them value Bahasa Malaysia, they prioritize English because it provides them better economic and social advantage. English in the global world serves as the language for economic, social and political reasons. The prevalent use of English among Filipino-Malaysian Chinese couples has continually existed because all Malaysian Chinese participants were educated in English medium schools and others further their university education in English speaking countries like the United Kingdom (UK), United States of America (USA), Australia, and New Zealand. Consequently, the Malaysian Chinese participants are proficient in English rather than Bahasa Malaysia. Similarly, English is not a problem for Filipino spouses because in the Philippines English is considered as an official language. English is taught in the Philippines at all levels from primary to tertiary education and it is widely used in the media. As a result, Filipino-Malaysian Chinese couples choose English as the medium of communication at home however switching to other languages like Chinese, Bahasa Malaysia, and Filipino is widespread.

In the interviews conducted, Filipino-Malaysian Chinese couples said:-

*“FCCA: We speak most of the time in English but we sometimes mix in Filipino and Chinese”*

*“FCCB: I speak English but sometimes I speak with her in Mandarin or Filipino”*

*“FCCA: Because we can communicate to all, I mean anywhere, so as for me I prefer English. It’s useful and convenient”*

*FCCA: Malaysian Chinese spouse; FCCB: Filipino spouse (See Appendix A)*

The use of English provides the Filipino-Malaysian Chinese couples more access and connections inside and outside the house. This means that through English they are able to



expand their social network. Since English has wider social functions compared to other languages, speakers of English have better opportunities to expand their social network. One spouse mentioned *“Because we can communicate to all, I mean anywhere, so as for me I prefer English. It’s useful and convenient.”* It shows that Filipino-Malaysian Chinese couples value English because it is widely spoken. The emphasis is focused on the usefulness and convenience of using English.

To examine further the extent of use of English by Filipino-Malaysian Chinese couples, a survey was conducted.

**Table 5.11 Role of English in Filipino-Malaysian Chinese Couples’ Interaction**

	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
1. I am comfortable using English in communicating with my spouse.	10 (50%)	5 (25%)	0	5 (25%)	0	0	0
2. Using English makes our conversation as husband and wife easier.	8 (40%)	5 (25%)	2 (10%)	5 (25%)	0	0	0
3. I feel that English must be learned by my spouse to have better communication	5 (25%)	6 (30%)	6 (30%)	3 (15%)	0	0	0
4. Using English facilitates better understanding to both of us.	10 (50%)	4 (20%)	4 (20%)	2 (10%)	0	0	0
5. Everytime I use English, a friendly atmosphere is created.	5 (25%)	10 (50%)	2 (10%)	3 (15%)	0	0	0
6. Using English helps us discuss various topics about friends, family and work.	9 (45%)	5 (25%)	5 (25%)	1 (5%)	0	0	0
7. Using English enhances my relationship with my spouse.	5 (25%)	10 (50%)	2 (10%)	3 (15%)	0	0	0
8. I feel that English is more important than any other languages.	10 (50%)	10 (50%)	0	0	0	0	0
9. I encourage my family members to use English at home.	15 (75%)	5 (25%)	0	0	0	0	0
10. Using English makes my family closer.	5 (25%)	0	0	0	3 (15%)	5 (25%)	7 (35%)
Total respondents							

7- strongly agree, 6- agree, 5-moderately agree, 4-undecided, 3- moderately disagree, 2- disagree, 1- strongly disagree

Table 5.11 reveals that Filipino-Malaysian Chinese couples have strong preference for English. It shows that 75% strongly agree and 25% agree that they encourage the family members to use English, 50% strongly agree and 50% agree that English is more important than any other languages, 50% strongly agree and 25% agree that couples feel comfortable in using English and 50% strongly agree and 20% agree that English facilitates better communication. Furthermore, it shows that 45% strongly agree and 25% agree and 25% moderately agree that using English helps couples to discuss various topics and 40% strongly agree and 25% agree and 10% moderately agree that English makes the conversation easy.

The findings reveal that Filipino-Malaysian Chinese couples consider English as an important language. It helps them to communicate comfortably with each other and it gives them the chance to discuss various topics and issues at home. Communication is essential when couples are not comfortable with the language they use, they might prefer not to talk with each other and this may result in miscommunication and misunderstanding.

The preference for English among Filipino-Malaysian Chinese couples can be considered a threat for ethnic languages spoken by both spouses because it can be expected that next generation might use English and eventually stop using the parents' first languages.

English as the medium of communication at home is also common among Filipino-Malaysian Indian couples. English is the preferred language of Filipino-Malaysian Indian couples because most Malaysian Indians in the sample already speak English at home. Although, Malaysian Indians participants are Tamil speakers, all of them were English

educated. In fact, English is the language that they used when communicating with the Chinese and other ethnic groups in Malaysia. However, Bahasa Malaysia is sometimes used when communicating with the Malays and with people who do not speak English.

Filipino-Malaysian Indians give importance to the English language. Their preference of English is seen in the interviews conducted:-

*“FCIA: We need to speak in English and at work I speak in English”*

*“FCIA: We speak English because it is easy to communicate”*

*“FCIB: I speak English because my husband speaks English all the time”*

*FCIA:Malaysian Indian spouse; FCIB:Filipino spouse (See Appendix A)*

Using English at home perhaps can be considered natural for Filipino-Malaysian Indian couples. David (2006) found in her study of the Indians (Sindhi community) in Malaysia that most young generations have shifted and habitually use English in their discourse with their own generations. Therefore, the use of English among Filipino-Malaysian Indian couples is expected.

A survey was conducted among Filipino-Malaysian Indian couples on the language that they use at home. The data are presented below.

**Table 5.12 Role of English in Filipino-Malaysian Indian Couples' Interaction**

	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
1. I am comfortable using English in communicating with my spouse.	12 (60%)	6 (30%)	0	0	2 (10%)	0	0
2. Using English makes our conversation as husband and wife easier.	13 (65%)	5 (25%)	2 (10%)	0	0	0	0
3. I feel that English must be learned by my spouse to have better communication	14 (70%)	4 (20%)	0	0	1 (5%)	1 (5%)	0
4. Using English facilitates better understanding to both of us.	12 (60%)	5 (25%)	0	0	1 (5%)	2 (10%)	0
5. Everytime I use English, a friendly atmosphere is created.	15 (75%)	2 (10%)	0	0	0	3 (15%)	0
6. Using English helps us discuss various topics about friends, family and work.	12 (60%)	8 (40%)	0	0	0	0	0
7. Using English enhances my relationship with my spouse.	13 (65%)	4 (20%)	0	0	0	3 (15%)	0
8. I feel that English is more important than any other languages.	12 (60%)	8 (40%)	0	0	0	0	0
9. I encourage my family members to use English at home.	13 (65%)	7 (35%)	0	0	0	0	0
10. Using English makes my family closer.	12 (60%)	4 (20%)	0	0	0	4 (20%)	0
Total respondents							

7- strongly agree, 6- agree, 5-moderately agree, 4-undecided, 3- moderately disagree, 2- disagree, 1- strongly disagree

Table 5.12 shows the choice of English among Filipino-Malaysian Indian couples at home. It shows that 75% strongly agree and 10% agree that the use of English creates a friendly atmosphere, 70% strongly agree and 20% agree that English results in better communication and 65% strongly agree that the use of English makes the couples conversation easy, enhances the couples' relationship and encourages the family members to use English at home. Furthermore, 60% of couples believe that using English in their interaction at home gives them comfort, facilitates better understanding, helps the discussion of various topics, makes the family closer and they feel that English is more important than any other language.

In short, there is a high percentage of use of English as the medium of communication at home among Filipino-Malaysian Indian couples. This seems to be related as to what David (2006) says for the Indians that English appears to be dominant because of the association of the language to economic and social mobility.

### 5.9 Language Choice in the Home Domain

Language is sometimes considered as less important than family issues that couples have to deal with at home. Most often couples focus their attention to language only when problems in communication arise.

The interviews, observation, and survey conducted reveal that 10 Filipino-Malaysian couples think about the language that they use as the medium of communication at home while the rest of the participants did not really think of planning any language at all.

The data from the interviews show that Filipino-Malaysian couples consciously choose English as the language for communication at home. Below is a summary of the language choice of Filipino-Malay, Filipino-Malaysian Chinese, and Filipino-Malaysian Indian couples.

**Table 5.13 Language Choice of Filipino-Malaysian Couples**

<b>Filipino-Malay Couples</b>	<b>Filipino-Malaysian Chinese Couples</b>	<b>Filipino-Malaysian Indian Couples</b>
-English *	-English *	-English *
-Bahasa Malaysia	-Chinese (different dialects)	-Bahasa Malaysia
-Filipino	-Bahasa Malaysia	-Filipino
	-Filipino	-Tamil

\* indicates a dominant language

Table 5.13 shows the language choice of Filipino-Malaysian couples. It reveals that Filipino-Malay couples use three languages at home namely English, Bahasa Malaysia, and Filipino. The three languages vary according to the frequency of use but English appears to be dominant than Bahasa Malaysia and Filipino (see Tables 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3). In most interactions, English serves as the matrix language with some switches in Bahasa Malaysia and Filipino.

Similarly, Filipino-Malaysian Chinese couples use English as the medium of communication at home with some switching in local Chinese dialects, Bahasa Malaysia, and Filipino. English is dominant at home while the Chinese dialects, Bahasa Malaysia, and Filipino are used only when necessary. For Filipino-Malaysian Indian couples English is also the preferred language as the medium of communication at home. Although English is frequently spoken at home but switching to Bahasa Malaysia and Filipino is common. However, the ethnic language, Tamil is rarely used.

In interactions between Filipino and Malaysian couples, code switching from English to Bahasa Malaysia, Chinese, Filipino, and Tamil is a common feature. However, Tamil is rarely used because Indians have shifted away from Tamils (see Table 5.3); it is not understood by Filipino spouses. Tamil is used when older Indian in-laws and older family members who do know English are around.

Generally, Filipino-Malaysian couples choose English language at home with some switches in Bahasa Malaysia, Filipino, Chinese, and Tamil languages. Although Filipino and Malaysian spouses are non-native speakers of English they prefer English rather than their own language as the medium of communication at home. The choice of English in

interracial couples' interaction is understandable as the neutral language understood by both parties and it is perhaps influenced by the increasing use of English in Southeast Asian countries particularly in Singapore, The Philippines, Malaysia and Hongkong (see Asmah Haji Omar, 1992). English in Malaysia plays a crucial role in different domains of communication and it has become a necessity. In fact, Bolton (2008) believes that English in Asia has become an identity marker and a means of gaining international competitive education and employment.

### **5.10 Conclusion**

The preference of English over ethnic languages is prevalent among Filipino-Malaysian couples. Although they did not fully abandon their first language, the dominance of English at home has started to displace their ethnic languages. In addition, the occurrence of code switching has also emerged to be the most preferred language variety apart from English.

The couples' preference of English and code switching from English to Bahasa Malaysia, Filipino, or Chinese has reflected the complexity of language choice in Filipino-Malaysian couples' interactions. This complexity of language choice can be explained by examining the couples' reasons for choosing English and code switching from English to other languages which is discussed in the next chapter (Chapter Six).