

## **CHAPTER 3 : METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the methodology of the present study. The research framework will be presented followed by the profile of participants, data collection procedures and the instruments used. Finally, the data analysis that will be employed in this study will be presented.

The present study aims to investigate the language choice in selected domains by the participants of this study and their attitude towards their mother tongues. Based on the findings, the study hopes to investigate if there is maintenance or a shift away from either both or one of the parent's mother tongues by the children and possibly the parents as well.

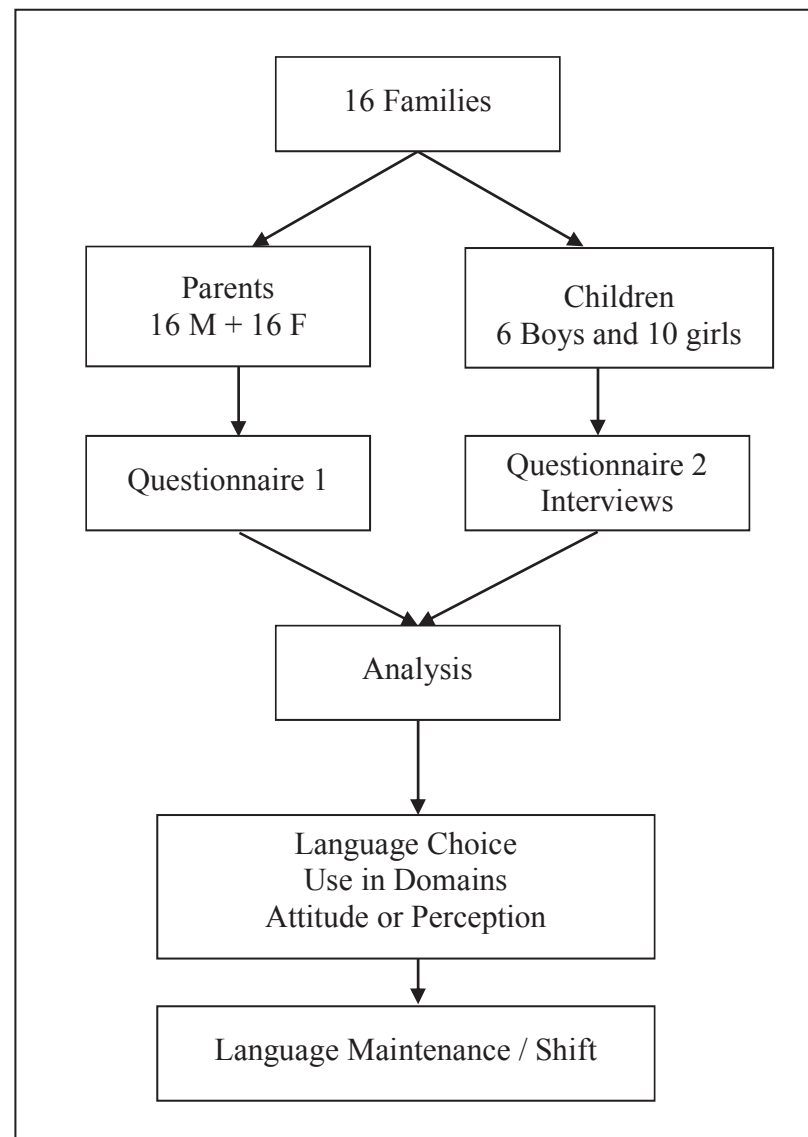
### **3.2 Theoretical Framework**

The framework of this study is based on Fishman's (1972) model of 'domains of language use'. The domains refer to the selected domains such as home, friendship, school, religion and neighborhoods. According to Fishman (1972) such domains are able to give insight into the language choice in two or more different language situations. It is notable that topic, role-relations and setting are important factors contributing to the concept of domain. This present study will explore language choice with the assumption that language use varies according to the relevance of situational variables of topic, interlocutor and setting.

The sample of this study comprise of children of Sino-Malay mixed marriage and both of their parents. The mother tongue of the fathers is Malay and that of the mothers is

one of the Chinese dialects (Hokkien or Cantonese) or Mandarin. The second part of the study is to investigate the attitude of both children and parents towards these mother tongues. It hopes to document any measures taken by the parents in maintaining their mother tongue within the family or any tendency to shift to another language.

The following figure illustrates the steps that will be taken to carry out this study:



**Figure 3.1: Research Framework of Language Choice of Sino-Malay Families**

### 3.3 Profile of Participants

This section presents the profile of the three categories of participants in this study. The three categories consist of 16 children (“C” participants) and both their parents; mothers (“M” participants) and fathers (“F” participants). The sixteen Sino-Malay mixed marriage families in the sample live in Subang Jaya, a metropolitan area in Selangor which is generally considered to be a suburb of the city of Kuala Lumpur. The community or residents are well educated and of middle class income.

For the purpose of clarification to differentiate between the parents and the children, the participants will be coded into three groups. The fathers will be coded as “F” and the mothers will be coded as “M”. On the other hand, the children will be coded as “C”.

#### 3.3.1 Children or (“C”) Participants

The following table 3.1 shows the distribution of “C” participants according to age and gender.

**Table 3.1: Profile of “C” Participants**

<b>Age</b> <b>Gender</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Male</b>	2	2	1	1	<b>6</b>
<b>Female</b>	4	3	2	1	<b>10</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>16</b>

This category of participants comprises 6 males and 10 females. The participants are teens from upper forms, that is, Forms 3, 4 and 5. The participants’ age ranges are from 15 to 18 years. These teens volunteered to participate in the study and permission was sought from the school, teacher and parents. Although it would have been ideal to have

equal number of male and female teens, these teens are all students available in the school with Sino-Malay background.

### 3.3.2 Father or (“F”) Participants

This category of participants comprises 16 “F” participants. The following table 3.2 shows the details of education level and occupation of “F” participants.

**Table 3.2: Profile of “F” Participants**

Father	Father ( Malay )	
	Education	Occupation
F1	University	IT Officer
F2	University	Senior Manager
F3	University	Lecturer
F4	University	Engineer
F5	University	Engineer
F6	College	Businessman
F7	College	Insurance Broker
F8	University	Accountant
F9	College	Businessman
F10	College	Hotel Manager
F11	College	Auditor
F12	College	Businessman
F13	College	General Manager
F14	University	DBKL Officer
F15	College	Businessman
F16	University	IT Officer

All of the “F” participants are Malay. These “F” participants belong in the age range of 45 -56 years, with the mean age of 50.6. From the data obtained, a high proportion of “F” participants have higher level of education. The data show that eight (50%) of the “F” participants attained had qualifications at university level while eight (50%) at college level. The data also shows that most of them are professionals or had ‘white

collar' jobs as engineer, accountant, auditor, and manager while six “F” participants are involved in other disciplines such as in business, insurance and others.

### 3.3.3 Mother or (“M”) Participants

This category of participants comprises 16 “M” participants. The age of “M” participants range from 44 to 54 years. Table 3.3 shows the profile of these participants who are of Chinese descent:

**Table 3.3: Profile of “M” Participants**

Mother	Mother (Chinese)	
	Education	Occupation
M1	university	Teacher
M2	university	Human Resources Officer
M3	College	Bank Officer
M4	university	Petronas Consultant
M5	university	Teacher
M6	College	Secretary
M7	College	Charity Manager
M8	university	Accountant
M9	Secondary school	Housewife
M10	College	Nurse
M11	College	Graphic Designer
M12	College	Boutique
M13	College	IT Officer
M14	university	Consultant
M15	College	Kindergarten Administrator
M16	College	Clerk

Table 3.3 shows that among these sixteen “M” participants, 38 %( n=6) of the “M” participants have university level of education. The other nine “M” participants (56%)

studied in the college. Only one of the participants had secondary level (SPM) of education.

In terms of employment, all but one is working. Out of those working (15), 70% of them are white collar workers (teachers, accountant, bank officer, manager and IT officer).

### **3.4 Instrumentation**

Two instruments are used in this study, namely, questionnaires and interviews. The first instrument is a set of questionnaires in English. The questionnaire is based on items from the Sociolinguistic Survey Report by Saba (1996) and Tokelauan Language Survey by Yuko Otsuka (2007). It should be noted that not all items were adapted from the survey that have been done by these two researchers since this study only looks some selected domains. The items such as language proficiency, family domain, and friendship domain and language activities were used as a guideline to device the questionnaire for this present study.

#### **3.4.1 Questionnaire**

The questionnaire was prepared for both parents and children respectively. The items that are used in the questionnaire are slightly different for both parties. The questionnaire is divided into four sections:

- i) Section A is to collect the biodata of the participants.
- ii) Section B will be answered by the “C” participants.
- iii) Section C will be answered by the ‘F’ participants and
- iv) Section D will be answered by the “M” participants

A set of questionnaire 1 which consist Section A and section B will be answered by the children in the school. Meanwhile, Section C and Section D is a set of questionnaire 2 for parents. The set of questionnaire 2 for parents will be given through the children and required the parents to answer the questionnaires. The parents were briefed by researcher via telephone.

### **3.4.2 Questionnaire 1: Children (C)**

The children will be required to complete Section A and Section B which consist of three parts namely Part I, Part II and Part III. The discussion will be presented in the following sections thus Section A, Section B, Section C and Section D.

#### **3.4.2.1 Section A**

Section A consists of nine questions. These questions required the “C” participants to tick in appropriate boxes and write down the information needed in the spaces provided. The questions consist of demographic profiles such as age, gender, ethnic, mother tongue and first language, educational level and occupation of the participants (only parents). On the other hand, the “C” participants are required to rate their level of proficiency of languages such as English, Malay, Mandarin and Chinese dialects (Cantonese, Hokkein, Hakka). They were asked to rate themselves on the basic skills of comprehension, speaking, reading and writing abilities in the given languages. They are required to circle the appropriate rate by using five-point rating of Likert-scale (1= Not at all, 2=Very Little, 3=Average, 4=Good, 5= Excellent). At this point, it should be noted that the present study aims to obtain a rough estimate of the number of children of mixed parentage who claimed proficiency in the languages that are mentioned above and for them to identify the language they claim as their first language and mother tongue. A copy of the questionnaire can be found in Appendix A.

### 3.4.2.2 Section B

In section B of the questionnaire, “C” participants were asked to indicate their language choice/use of domain analysis in a three-point Likert scale (3= Always 2=Sometimes and 1= Never). The “C” participants also were asked to circle NA (Not Applicable) if the questions were not applicable to them. Section B was divided into three parts and the first part (I) contains 29 items. The items in this part are to elicit the main language(s) used among participants in the home domain (16 items), school domain (7 items), friendship domain (4 items) and neighbours domain (2 items).

Thus, the participants were requested to indicate the language(s) they speak to different interlocutors in the family domain such as parents, grandparents, siblings, cousins and relatives. In neighbourhood domain, they were asked to indicate the language(s) they speak among Malay ethnic group and Chinese ethnic group because they are Sino-Malay children. In school domain it attempts to find the language(s) used by the “C” participants among the school community such as school principle, teachers and school workers and friends.

The second part (II) of section B contains 20 items which refer to the “C” participants' language choice in the following domains: literary (4 items), entertainment (4 items), electronic communication (4 items), social interaction activities (8 items) and finally religious domain (1 item). The present study hopes that, both parts (I) and (II) will provide details with a more nuanced understanding of their language choice in these important domains.



Finally, the third part (III) of section B contains 11 statements to determine the “C” participants' attitude and perception towards their mother tongue(s) and seek information of any positive feeling towards their mother tongue or whether the “C” participants are involved in a process of language shift. The scale used to rate was a five-point Likert with 5= Neutral (N), 4= Strongly Agree (SA), 3= Agree (A), 2= Disagree (DA) and 1= Strongly Disagree (SDA). A copy of the questionnaire can be found in Appendix B.

### **3.4.3 Questionnaire 2: Parents (“F” and “M”)**

A set of questionnaire was prepared for the parents. The demographic profile such as age, ethnic, mother tongue and their first language, educational level and occupation were included in section A to get the background information of the parents. Section C is to be answered by the “F” participants (fathers) and section D is to be answered by the “M” participants (mothers).

#### **3.4.3.1 Section C**

Section C questionnaire is to gather the “F” participants' use of language(s) in their daily repertoire. This questionnaire is divided into three parts. The first part is on “F” participants language use in the family domain (13 items), friendship domain (4 items), and neighbourhood domain (2 items). The second part is on the language choices in literary domain (4 items), entertainment domain (4 items), e-communication domain (4 items), language activities (3 items) and finally the religious domain (1item). The third part of questionnaire contains four statements which will be used to evaluate the “F” participants' perception towards their mother tongue and their spouse’s mother tongue. The five-point Likert scale will be used to rate with 5= Neutral (N), 4= Strongly Agree

(SA), 3= Agree (A), 2= Disagree (DA) and 1= Strongly Disagree (SDA). A copy of the questionnaire can be found in Appendix C.

#### **3.4.3.2 Section D**

Section D is a set of questionnaire is to obtain “M” participants’ perception towards language(s).The questionnaire is divided into three parts. The first part is on language use in the family domain (13 items), friendship domain (4 items) and neighbourhood domain (2 items). The second part is on the language choice in literary domain (4 items), e-communication domain (4 items), religious domain (1 item) and entertainment domain (4 items). Since the mixed parental vary linguistically, so this study is also aimed to seek information about the perception (attitude) of the “M” participants towards their mother tongue and their spouse’s mother tongue. Thus, the third part of the questionnaire contains four statements which will be used to evaluate the “M” participants’ language attitude and perception towards each of these statements. A copy of the questionnaire can be found in Appendix D.

#### **3.4.4 Interviews**

Structured interviews contain a series of open-ended questions. The interview questions are aimed to further probe the responses given in the questionnaire. The method will be described in the following discussion. It should be noted that the parents were not able to participate in the interviews due to time constrain and busy daily schedules. However, they gave their consent to the researcher to interview the children as long as there was no disturbance in their study activities.

The interviews will be conducted in school and the average time for each participant will be about 15 to 20 minutes. It should be noted that in this study, the use of tape

recorder will be deemed impractical because the school surrounding is noisy and not conducive to obtain the data. The data was collected via field notes by the researcher.

The “C” participants were asked questions that will be used to map out their perception of the language(s) that they use in daily communication. A copy of these open-ended questions can be found in Appendices E. For the ease of analyzing the data pertaining to the interview, the participants will be numbered accordingly from **C1** to **C16**.

### **3.5 Selection of Domains**

The framework of this study is based on Fishman's Domain Model (1972). The study aims to investigate the language choice of sixteen (16) Sino-Malay mixed-marriage families, that is, to analyze “who uses what language with whom and for what purposes” (Fishman 1972:19). The selected domains are home, friendship and school, religious, literary, communication and entertainment. The domains will be presented in the following discussion in this study.

#### **3.5.1 Family Domain**

In this study, family domain will focus on both children and parents' frequency of language use with family members such as parents, sibling, grandparents and other relatives. The home is the first place where children have their first interaction with people such as parents, siblings and relatives. With their innate ability, they acquire the language of the home as their first language and they have more affinity for the language spoken in daily use at home as they grow up. It should be noted that the home is a place where special social and family bonding takes place among family members.

### **3.5.2 Friendship Domain**

Children spend their time not only in the family environment but also with their friends. In order to grasp the children's overall linguistic repertoire in the present study, this section has included questions on the choice of language used among their friends according to different ethnic background such as close Chinese friends, close Malay friends, Chinese schoolmates and Malay schoolmates.

### **3.5.3 School Domain**

Children spend most of their time in school and this could influence their choice of language use. In this section "C" participants were also asked about the language use of the school's staff members such as teachers, school clerks and others. Harrison and Piette (1980), who investigated language choices of Welsh bilingual young children, concluded that the school plays an important role in influencing the children's degree of commitment towards their mother tongue, Welsh. Thus, the linguistic environment of children from Sino-Malay parentage will also be investigated in this study to determine whether this domain will result in similar findings as Harrison and Piette (1980).

### **3.5.4 Domain of Mass Media**

Mass media domain refers to the choice of language used in newspapers, magazines, comics, television, radio and other communication networks. In Malaysia, this domain is heavily dominated by the official language Malay and the second language English. This domain will be used by the researcher to survey the language choice and patterns of language use among the participants. In the entertainment domain, the participants will be asked to indicate their language preference for the television programmes, radio programmes and songs. As for the reading domain, the participants will be asked to indicate the language that they prefer in reading materials such as newspaper, magazine,

books, novels, comics and the internet technology which includes blogs, e-mails, chatting and the use of SMS (Short Messaging System).

### **3.5.5 Religious Domain**

The religious domain influences the social construct of a particular society. In Malaysia, a number of religions are embraced by Malaysians, including Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity, and others. Most of the predominant religions of the world are represented and embraced by Malaysians. In the case of Sino-Malay families, the “F” participants are Malays who are Muslims. The “M” participants are Chinese, and those who have converted to Islam, either through marriage or of their own personal choice, they have adopted the Malay culture in addition to their own Chinese culture.

### **3.6 Data Collection**

Since the “C” participants are secondary school students, permission was sought from the Principal of the school in order to carry out the study. This is to ensure full cooperation from all parties involved in the school, which was vital to fulfill the ethical aspect of conducting this study. The participants from Sino-Malay background were identified with the help of their respective class teachers. The purpose and significance of this study was then explained to the “C” participants.

For the purpose of data collection, a consent letter from the researcher was given to the parents of the “C” participants. Each participant was asked to sign the consent letter and retain a copy for their records. The participants were assured that their identity will be protected by either eliminating or changing their names in this study.

### **3.6.1 Administration of Children's Questionnaire (1)**

The questionnaire was administered to "C" participants in classroom by the researcher. The researcher briefed them on the purpose of the study and explained content of the questionnaire. The participants were allocated about 30 to 40 minutes to answer the questionnaire but were allowed to stay on to complete the questionnaire if they wished. The questionnaire was collected immediately by researcher.

### **3.6.2 Administration of Parent's Questionnaire (2)**

Questionnaires for the parents or F and M participants were submitted through the children. The parents were contacted via telephone and invited to participate in the survey. Once completed, their children returned the questionnaires to the researcher. All sets of questionnaire were distributed over a three week period and were personally collected by the researcher. The questionnaires were all completed and collected in October, 2008 for analysis. A total of 32 questionnaires were collected from all participants of parents.

### **3.6.3 Interviews**

The interview was conducted with the "C" participants during their recess time. The "C" participants answered the open-ended questions in a friendly atmosphere since the researcher has good relations with most of the "C" participants. The open-ended questions served to probe as much detailed information as possible for items in questionnaire. The interview was conducted in English as this was requested by the "C" participants. The interviews were completed by the end of January, 2009.

### **3.7 Pilot Study**

A pilot test to administer the questionnaires was carried out with two "C" participants: one male and one female. A similar questionnaire was given to the parents of the two

chosen participants. The feedback on the parents' questionnaire was positive. The questionnaire for the "C" participants confirmed that most of the statements and questions were clearly presented except one minor correction on the self-rating of language proficiency provided in section A. This was rectified for the actual study.

Due to the lack of participants with the Sino-Malay background required for this study, it should be noted that the "C" participants involved in the pilot study were given the revised set of questionnaire and were included in the actual study.

### **3.8 Data Analysis**

Upon the completion of the data collection, data obtained from the questionnaires were analyzed for the findings presented in the form of frequency distribution and percentages. The data were analyzed based on the selected domains. For ease of computation, figure of "always" and "sometimes" will be presented in the tables to show the frequency distribution. On the other hand, to show the overall choice of each language among the participants, the findings shall be presented in the form of bar charts. For each language used, the frequencies will be combined as the language used as "always" or "sometimes" to get the percentages. The "always" option was given three points meanwhile 'sometimes' was given two points. The percentage will be tabulated based on the score that given.

### **3.9 Summary**

In summary, this chapter has presented the background information on the participants, the methodology and the instruments used to gain the information for achieving the research objectives that were stated in Chapter One. The study hopes that the findings

from the questionnaire and the field notes of interviews would reveal information regarding the language choice/use and language maintenance or shift among the members of Sino-Malay families.