

CHAPTER 8: FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

8.0 Introduction

The aim of this study is to investigate the world views of Malaysian Chinese as manifested in their discourse. To achieve this, an investigation was carried out on the patterns of communication and the use of frames among Chinese language dominant Chinese Malaysians and English language dominant Chinese Malaysians. This, it was hoped, would provide an insight into whether differences exist in the world views of Malaysian Chinese with differing dominant language background and educational medium. The chapter is broadly divided into three sections, the first section discusses the summary of the findings of the study, the second discusses about the main findings and its implication on the Malaysian Chinese community. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the socio-cultural and socio-political factors such as the dynamics of minority-majority group relations in the country that have contributed to these differences.

8.1 Summary of Findings

In sum, findings from both the interviews and questionnaire suggest that there are observable differences in the frames and patterns of communication utilized by both groups of subjects which in turn indicate the differences in subjects' thought processes as a result of dominant language use as well as social practices. Thus, Group 1 subjects tended to identify with the Chinese society and Chinese cultural practices with its attendant beliefs and values. In contrast, most Group 2 subjects tended to display their distinctive personality through their focus on the self or individual and personal agency which is consonant with a Western cultural orientation. Findings suggest that subjects in the study subscribe to different cultural frameworks (although the subjects are ethnically similar) which incorporate

cultural values, beliefs and practices which affect the community's conception of its communicative behaviour in relation to what is "normal" and "expected."

Examination of culture as defined by Redder and Rebein (1987) as a "mental apparatus" (cf. Chapter 2, section 2.3.2) suggests how it predisposes subjects in the study to view the world in a certain perspective. Thus, what is viewed to be normal, appropriate and expected is culturally relative. In many instances, they are dependent on the collective's interpretation of shared definitions, which include what constitutes the basis of collective action (Kronenfeld, 2000).

In the instance of the Malaysian Chinese subjects, their responses are indicative of their cultural orientation which predisposes them to their respective views of reality. Thus, linguistic enculturation within their native culture provides the foundation for discourse and behaviour. This is evident in how Group 1 subjects interpreted and responded to the interview task in Interview 1. To recap, in retelling and explaining about the movie seen as well as in acceding to the task directly without complaining or questioning interview 1, Group 1 subjects indicated the characteristic traits and values of their cultural orientation. This is observed in their acceptance of hierarchy and group or "authoritarian" control and goals (discussed earlier in Chapter 5, section 5.5.1.3) as well as the emphasis placed on maintenance of harmony. This value is realized through their demonstration of patience, politeness, cooperation, tolerance and compliance to the interview task and the absence of combative, argumentative talk. The dominant language in which they have been enculturated in a way constrains the language behaviour and thoughts of subjects. They seem to align their behaviour through downplaying their personal preferences and convenience and prioritizing on group or collective goals to accommodate the view that people always exist within settings. For

example, when relating about what they have seen in the movie, Group 1 subjects spoke of responsibility and roles. Quite a number of them focus on the society, family as well as authoritarian figures such as the King, the father or the mandarin which is indicative of their collective awareness. Most Group 2 subjects on the other hand, were verbal, open, direct, occasionally critical and did not hesitate to speak their mind. They also focus on the heroine and discussed about her character traits. In the discussion of centrality of family (cf. Chapter 7, section 7.1.1.3), two opposing ideas were presented with regard to sacrifice. Recall that from the perspective of Group 1 subjects, it was viewed to be an obligation while for Group 2, it was viewed to be something which is excessive and unwarranted. This demonstrates Johnson's (2000) view that ideational concepts, which is viewed to be an aspect of "cultural abstraction," is relative to each culture. It is therefore, a matter of interpretation of the various situations, events or occurrences from the perspective of their varied world views. It appears conceivable that the discourse patterns and linguistic usages preferred by subjects may indicate a specific aspect of their social reality and socio-cultural relationship (Holmes, 2001).

In Interview 2 or Structured Interview, indirectness was observed in some Group 1 subjects' responses. Recall that this pattern occurred in all the four aspects analyzed and was observed in subjects' vague or contradictory answers at the close of their responses. This was done perhaps to avoid providing upsetting or unacceptable comments in the interest of its hearers and for purposes of maintaining harmony (De Mente, 2000). In opposition to this mode of communication, most Group 2 subjects were direct and open in presenting their views. They did not hesitate to criticize or state their strong feelings with regard to the issues presented. For example, with regard to the saying on filial piety, Group

2 subjects were open and verbal about their disagreement. Harmony did not seem to be a top priority with them when presenting their views with regard to this aspect. The above examples are in keeping with Peeters (2000) view that cultural values are highly complex and they influence a community's conceptualization with regard to its communicative behaviour. Thus, Peeters concludes that the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis could be observed in the instance where aspects of language used such as in the utilization of discourse patterns, as a result of linguistic relativity, generates cultural relativity.

Johnson (2000) records an incident where a 19-year-old American named Michael Fay was sentenced to be punished by caning for an alleged spray painting spree in Singapore in 1994. Operating on the principles of Western Jurisprudence, the sentence was viewed by Americans to be outrageous and violent for an offence viewed to be minor. Singapore responded by defending its justice system through displaying its low crime statistics. The international incident demonstrated the drastic difference in notions of justice adhered by the two different countries. The researcher also sees it as a difference in the focus between the two countries. The Americans were operating from the American mainstream culture where the integrity of the individual is highly valued in comparison to Singapore, which was operating on her focus on the collective where low crime rates were viewed to be important. As stated by Johnson (2000), systems of abstractions (ideational concepts which include values, morals, ethics, conception of right or wrong etc) in culture guide behaviour and symbolization in language. Johnson concludes that discourse across cultures may seem illogical as a consequence of contradictory cultural abstractions. The aforementioned is also in line with Peeters' (2000) view of the cultural relativity of cultural values. Thus, the orientations of subjects as a

result of their cultural framework(s) to a certain extent, shape their mental processes and organization of reality.

8.2 Discussion

The discussion of the study will encompass two areas: The main findings of the study as well as its implication on the current language situation among Malaysian Chinese.

8.2.1 The Main Findings of the Study

Four areas are deemed to be significant in the findings and will be discussed: use of pronouns as identity markers, conflicting frames, superimposed frames and change in world view.

8.2.1.1 Use of pronouns as identity markers

Analyses of subjects' world views as expressed in their language use through the communicative patterns and frames appear to possess some degree of consistency. The communicative patterns used by both groups have been discussed in Chapter 6, therefore focus will only be on a particular aspect such as use of pronouns as identity markers to highlight subjects' cultural orientation and world view. Recall that Rajoo (cited in Mohd. Taib Osman 1985) stated that the self is the axis in any study of world view therefore subjects' representation and view of the self is important.

In aspects such as Centrality of family and filial piety, Group 1 subjects indicated their identification with the collective and its thoughts and practices. Group 1 subjects' frame of reference indicate priority given to the family and collective. Therefore, in many instances, "I" was used in relation to the group and was not viewed to be "individualistic" as focus was on the collective and how it views self and others. Thus, it was not personal agency but group agency which was

foregrounded. In contrast, singular pronouns used by Group 2 subjects indicated self identity and the distinctiveness of the self. Focus was first and foremost on the self and how it views others or the collective. Thus, singular pronouns were also used to indicate Group 2 subjects' collective identification and was observed in aspects such as education and face. This suggests that Group 2 subjects identified with aspects such as education and face but less with aspects such as centrality of family and filial piety. Perhaps both these aspects represent part of the core values in Chinese culture for the diasporic Malaysian Chinese. The above findings indicate that how the self is viewed and represented by both groups correlates with subjects' cultural orientation and world view.

8.2.1.2 Conflicting frames

Broad patterns of orientation within each individual exist as a result of the co-presence of different frames which may often be conflicting. Findings indicate that these could be a result of two factors: aligning oneself to societal norms and practices which were perceived to be necessary but possessing some contradictory personal views or subscribing to both Chinese and Western cultural frames (cf. chapter 7, section 7.2.2.1 and 7.2.4.3). The former occurrence suggests the fluidity of consciousness in the individual as seen in the verbalization of MC14 (cf. Chapter 7, section 7.2.2.1). It suggests that the same person may think differently in different situations and may respond differently at different times in ways that they themselves may not be conscious of. This is perhaps a phenomenon of being part and parcel of a multilingual and multicultural setting. However, this last element although interesting, is not a trend that has been investigated thoroughly because of constraints of space and scope.

8.2.1.3 Superimposed frames

The above mentioned phenomenon is seen in the occurrence of the superimposed

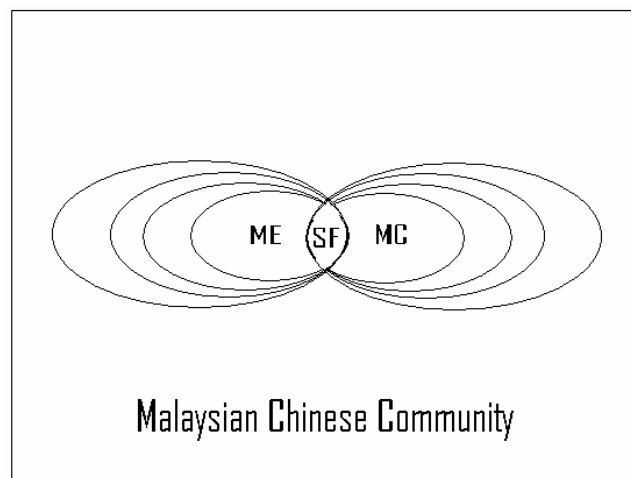
frame utilized by Group 2 subjects which indicates the possible occurrence of cultural adaptation and acculturation as a result of biculturalism. Since both groups of subjects are part of the Malaysian Chinese society and are embedded in a society that is actively practicing its cultural heritage, the degree of exposure and communication of its cultural heritage is high. Hence, the identification to Chinese culture by both groups of respondents.

Consistent with Minsky's and Benarek's (2004) definition of a frame being a mental knowledge structure which involves our knowledge of the world with its basic or typical features of the world, the superimposed frame as defined in this study then is a frame which represents not only the knowledge of the world as learned from a culture but also that learned from another culture. In brief, the person who operates from a superimposed frame possesses features of not one but two or more cultures as a result of exposure to the language through written materials, use of the language, overseas experience as well as further education which opens up other cultural worlds encapsulated in languages (Fantini, 1991).

The superimposed frame then is a consequence of possessing multiple aspects of culture and identity as observed in the verbalization of subjects such as MC3, MC4, MC12, ME9 and ME13. Although there is retention of the primary culture, a "secondary" culture has been integrated. A change in world view occurs when there is maximal integration with the "secondary culture." (see Literature review Chapter 2, section 2.3.3). From the analysis of the above subjects' verbalization, it is surmised that in the instance of MC3 and MC12, findings suggest that there is a high degree of integration with the secondary culture which suggest a possible shift to a predominantly Western world view.

It was also observed that subjects who utilize the superimposed frame possess the ability to move from one cultural context to another. This is a result of overseas or second language experience (Bhawak and Bristlin, 1992) or educational experience which is a result of cultural adaptation and acculturation. Kearsse Brookins (1993) states that when a person is grounded in a specific cultural frame, it allows him/her to learn freely from a new or different cultural system which complements the primary cultural system. Thus, the superimposed frame is in essence a combination frame as it consists of a combination of aspects of the primary culture plus a new or different culture. In this instance, subjects who are operating through superimposed frames will possess the main aspects of their primary culture and some or a few aspects of another culture which has been superimposed on to the main structure of the primary culture as a result of adaptation and acculturation. The superimposed frame is represented in the diagram which follows.

Figure 8.1: The Malaysian Chinese community as represented by Malaysian-Chinese English language dominant and Malaysian-Chinese Chinese language dominant subjects



The Malaysian Chinese community is represented in the above diagram and also in the diagram in Chapter 4, figure 4.1. It comprises of two groups of Chinese,

namely the Malaysian-Chinese whose dominant language is English or ME and Malaysian-Chinese whose dominant language is Chinese or MC. The various concentric circles represent the various cultural frames utilized by subjects from the two different groupings while the intersection at the centre represents the superimposed frame or SF which occurs when there is a cross-over or superimposition of cultural values, practices or thought patterns.

From the social attitude survey, it was found that although most Chinese language dominant or Group 1 subjects were able to read and write efficiently in both Chinese and English, most Group 1 subjects with the exception of MC3, MC4 and MC12, rarely read in English. Analyses of the two interviews in the study indicate that Group 1 subjects with the exception of the three mentioned subjects, subscribe to a Chinese world view. On the other hand, MC3, MC4 and MC12 indicated predominant Western world views as they demonstrated a distinct self identity and personal agency although they perceived themselves to be Chinese language dominant as they identified with their education medium. For instance, MC4 indicated a strong and distinct self identity and personal agency in two aspects analyzed, MC12 in the three aspects while MC3 in all of the aspects analyzed.

In contrast, all Group 2 subjects read in English, watch TV programs in both English and Chinese language, were fluent in English and Chinese but only 2 of them, ME9 and ME13, were able to read and write in Chinese. Interestingly, findings indicate that both these subjects demonstrate a combination of both Chinese and Western orientation and world view. However, ME13 demonstrated a more pronounced Chinese orientation as ME13 indicated identification with the

Chinese in all 4 aspects while ME9 indicated identification with the collective in 2 of the 4 aspects analyzed. Results indicate that the English language dominant or Group 2 subjects such as ME13 demonstrated a more Chinese cultural orientation than the three Chinese language dominant subjects discussed above.

8.2.1.4 Change in world view

As discussed earlier, findings indicate that although there were discrepancies in the verbalization of subjects MC3, MC12 and ME13 as mentioned in Chapter 6, section 6.5.3 and chapter 7, section 7.3.2, correlations were still found to exist between language, culture and world view for these subjects. In an interview with Dr. Kua Kia Song, a Malaysian author and sociologist, on 10th July, 2008, Dr Kua attributes experience as an effective instrument in causing a change in mindset. In the instance of MC3 and MC12, it was found that although both subjects considered themselves to be Chinese language dominant Malaysian Chinese, both subjects were found to be able to operate in both cultures through the use of superimposed frames. This is perhaps due to the fact that both subjects received overseas tertiary education. Hence, there is a difference in their world views from the Chinese language dominant subjects as a result of overseas experience such as exposure to Western education, culture, language practice and use. MC4 on the other hand, was educated in a primary Chinese medium school and proceeded to a national type education medium until the university. However, due to the work demands as an engineer, she uses English in her work and often travels overseas. On the other hand, ME13 received tertiary education in English and Malay but as a result of her experience and exposure to the Chinese language through constant interactions with the Chinese language community, Chinese reading materials and media, ME13 displayed a pro-Chinese world view which is reflected in her emphasis on Chinese proverbs, sayings, values and historical events and practices.

This group of Chinese Malaysian would be termed to be bi-cultural as a result of their ability to function in two distinct cultures and as such they utilized superimposed frames which comprise of both Chinese and English world views.

Further investigation to verify why MC3, MC4 and MC12 displayed a predominantly Western orientation indicated that ability to read both in English and Chinese was not the only criteria. Rather, greater exposure to the English language due to the nature of their work and more specifically, overseas education by MC3 and MC12 in Australia and America respectively caused these Group 1 subjects to acquire the habit of reading extensively in English. ME9 and ME13 on the other hand, received informal Chinese education through self study and tuition classes and acquired the habit of reading Chinese newspapers. Thus, they also demonstrated both Western and Chinese world views but in different combination and degrees.

On the whole, findings indicate that a majority of Group 1 subjects subscribe to a Chinese world view while most Group 2 subjects subscribe to a predominantly Western world view which findings suggest are attributed to their dominant language use which is closely tied to the culture encapsulated in the language. It is necessary to mention about the findings and views of both Fantini (1991) and Nisbett (2000) with regard to the findings of the study. Fantini (1991) in his discussion of changes in world view, attributes significant progress in a second language as a crucial factor for a change in world view.

On the other hand, Nisbett (2003) in his discussion of an experiment conducted to test the relevance of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis discussed earlier in the literature review (cf. Chapter 2 section 2.4.1), reports that Chinese coordinate bilinguals were twice likely to group taxonomically when tested in Chinese and less likely to

do so when tested in English. For compound bilinguals, groupings were found to veer significantly towards Western orientation regardless of the language of testing while Americans are twice likely to group taxonomically. Nisbett (2003:161) concludes that “there is an effect of culture on thought independent of language” with regard to the findings of how coordinate and compound Chinese bilinguals group words. Nisbett also suggests that there is culture difference independent of language as evidenced from the differences between both groups of Chinese bilinguals. Hence, Nisbett (2003) concludes tentatively that as long as different languages are linked to different systems of representation, there is an influence of language on thought.

Findings from the present study indicate that there is a dimension not considered in Nisbett’s experiment as well as Fatini’s (1991:115) arguments about differences in thinking processes and changes in world view respectively. The study strongly suggests that it is not just factors such as the time of acquisition of a language as represented by the comparison made between coordinate and compound bilinguals nor the “significant development in a second language,” although undeniably both factors are important, but rather how much access subjects have towards the world view “encapsulated” in a language which influence world view.

The subjects of the present study, may have some similarities to Nisbett’s subjects in that the Chinese language dominant subjects are more likely to be coordinate bilinguals as they were from Chinese medium schools where exposure to English begins at a later age while English language dominant subjects were from National schools where they were exposed to the English language at home and a much earlier age. Thus, they are similar to the compound bilinguals referred to by

Nisbett. Subjects from both groups indicate that greater exposure and access to the English language tend to veer subjects to the English dominant world view. In sum, findings suggest that it is the greater access to the “text” (videos, TV, books, newspapers, journals, internet etc) which encapsulates world view that brings changes. Thus, it is not just the dimension of time or dimension of language fluency but rather the amount of exposure to the language which “provides the passage to knowing and receiving aspects of its culture” (Asmah 2003: 154) which influences world view.

8.2.2 The Malaysian Chinese community and the question of identity

In the discussion which follows, it is relevant to look at the theory of diaspora, identity, historical and sociopolitical factors as well as the core values held by the Malaysian Chinese which will determine the multilingual-bilingual characteristic of the language situation.

Findings in the study indicate that generally, the Malaysian Chinese community is not homogeneous and this could be attributed to the use of dominant language and medium of instruction. However, it is relevant to note that there are lines of convergence between the two groups as a result of similarity in practices which are valued by the diasporic Malaysian Chinese community.

Large scale arrival of Chinese immigrants to Malaya during the colonial era brought about the establishment of Chinese schools in the region. This was due to the strong belief among diasporic Chinese that Chinese schools are essential for the survival and preservation of Chinese culture in Malaysia (Ho and Hou, 2006). Hence, the Chinese language used as a medium of instruction in Chinese schools is viewed to be crucial to preserving the Chinese in Malaysia as a distinct community. Fear of losing their culture and identity compels diasporic Malaysian

Chinese to hold on strongly to their language and culture. In keeping with the above, most Malaysian Chinese parents desire their children to be mindful of their Chinese origins but they also want them to integrate into the multiracial way of life in Malaysia. This has resulted in the younger generation of Malaysian Chinese today who are proficient in three languages such as Chinese, Malay and English and still retaining their allegiance to Chinese culture (Ho and Hou, 2006).

Consistent with the theory of diaspora as discussed in the literature review, Lim (2006) is of the view that the question of identity such as what it means to be Chinese and having multiple identities are issues which haunt and confront the Malaysian Chinese and many of these issues remain unresolved at this point of time (cf. Chapter 1, section 2.1.3). Ye (2003) attributes several reasons for the above such as distrust, self-defensiveness as well as disgruntlement as aspects of the Malaysian Chinese diasporic community. Ye states that it is not a universal condition but it exists beneath the surface and at times, the causes of which are hard to identify exactly as it resembles the vague unease of a person who has known hard times.

Pan (2000) records of division among Chinese families as a result of the language medium of education which spawns differences in a person's view of the world. Hence, this is seen in the differences observable in the patterns of communications and frames adhered to by the two groups of subjects. The second distinct pattern is adherence to collectivistic norms and practices by Group 1 subjects while Group 2 subjects seem untrammelled by the norms and practices of Chinese society. However, findings also reveal that the English language dominant Malaysian Chinese do adhere to certain Chinese practices and thoughts although they operate primarily from a Western cultural orientation. Being embedded in the

Malaysian Chinese society, they are thus, progressively and recursively shaped through their constant interactions with significant others such as the Chinese dominant language Chinese Malaysians as well as exposure to Chinese culture. Gumperz (1982) states that issues of identity which affect and are affected by social, political and ethnic divisions could be understood through an insight into the communicative processes of interactants. In line with the above, findings with regard to the communicative processes of subjects in the study indicate that it is access to language which influences world view.

Wang (2001) comments that factors such as the considerable **numerical strength** of the Malaysian Chinese community and the occurrence of interactions between all groups of Chinese in the community account for the strong Chinese cultural orientation. Hence, most Malaysian Chinese are able to speak Chinese such as Mandarin and one or more Chinese dialects as discussed in the findings of the survey (cf. Chapter 5, section 5.1.2). Findings also indicate that a number of the English dominant language subjects display their identification and membership in Chinese society with regard to certain aspects such as the aspect of face and education. Perhaps it is hardly surprising that education is given importance by both groups of subjects as it is also linked to the mother tongue in particular Chinese language which is viewed to be crucial for the existence and preservation of a groups' distinctiveness.

The high Chinese language vitality among Malaysian Chinese is evidenced in the repeated success of the Malaysian Chinese in international university Chinese debate competitions as well as literary competitions (Chong 2001:242, cited in Charney, Yeoh and Tong, 2003) which serves to indicate that Malaysian Chinese have achieved a substantial command of the Chinese language (Lee, 2003).

Therefore, language vitality remains high even where English fluency exists which perhaps account for the consistent bi-cultural views adhered to by a few subjects from both groups as manifested in the use of the superimposed frame in this study.

Ye (2003) forwarded several factors which are in line with the theory of core values as propounded by Smoliz (1981) as well as Clyne (1985), (cf. literature review chapter 2, section 2.3.3.2), to account for why the Malaysian Chinese identity is kept strong and separate from mainstream culture. First, he attributed it to “the continued salience of the line between *Bumiputera* and non-*Bumiputera*.” Another factor was the sheer size of the Chinese minority community as well as the fear of diminishing cultural distinctness. The older generation Chinese are fearful of losing their Chinese identity with its attendant markers such as the Chinese language and its customs (Ye, 2003). Another factor which has an influence on the Malaysian Chinese is the current rise of China in the world. As mentioned by Wang (2001), the emergence of China as an economic and political power to a large extent influences the way Malaysian Chinese view themselves as a group. Affiliation with China is seen not so much in terms of political and economic aspects but rather on cultural dimensions as China plays an “important role in shaping the interpretation of Chinese culture (Hou, 2006: 145).

In a recent interview with Dr. Kua, he stated that about 90% of Malaysian Chinese enrolled in Chinese medium schools which concurs with Hou's (2006) estimate of Malaysian Chinese enrollment in Chinese primary schools and Pillai's (2006, cited in David, 2006) comment on the prevailing trend of education among Malaysian Chinese as identification is based on racial and cultural affiliations. Thus, the prevailing trend of Chinese school enrollment among Malaysian-Chinese community is viewed by Ho and Hou (2006) to be probably the only one of its kind

in the world today. Moreover, at this point of time, perceived social inequalities by the Malaysian Chinese community acts as an impetus to push them to further seek for their roots or cultural origin. As such, the move to reconnect with the Chinese culture and practice is all the more strengthened. Therefore, a large number of Chinese Malaysian today are educated in Chinese medium schools where they learn Mandarin and for parents who are not fluent in Mandarin, English is predominantly spoken at home as it was the home language before they started school (Pillai, 2006). This is consistent with the views of Lee (2003) who views the main ferts of Chinese culture to be Chinese schools followed closely by the role played by the family.

In a study conducted by Pillai (2006), it was found that all Malaysian child respondents identified themselves along racial lines as cultural affiliations seemed to be used as a factor of self identity rather than language. Consistent with this trend, findings indicate that the language practice and use among the Malaysian Chinese is an indicator that this group is in the process of negotiating their identity and priorities which is in keeping with diasporic trends and the local socio-political context.

8.3 CONCLUDING REMARKS

Many people assume the Malaysian Chinese to be a homogenous group. The study has shown that this assumption holds little validity. Malaysian Chinese comprise groups with diverse religions, dialects, socio-economic status and even generations. The diversity among Malaysian Chinese is further emphasized through socio-economic, generational differences and dominant language use. Despite the diversity, Malaysian Chinese do share some commonalities in domains such as adherence to strong family ties, emphasis on education, practice of face

and in certain aspects, group orientation. This is a result of both the Chinese language dominant and the English language dominant Malaysian-Chinese being embedded in the Malaysian Chinese society which is both strong and vibrant culturally and numerically (Wang, 2001; Hou 2006).

On the whole, the observable differences in the world view of both groupings suggest that subjects possibly adhere to disparate perspectives, characteristic thought processes and social relations. In keeping with Johnson's views, everyone speaks culturally as language carries and creates the world (s) in which we exist and perceive to exist. Through subjects' discourse, world view is manifested through how we construct, define and perceive "self" and "others" as observed in the focus on self and personal agency or the collective and collective agency within the context of the Malaysian Chinese community. It is therefore surmised that the different dominant languages used by subjects to a certain extent direct as well as constrain subjects' view of the world as languages are culturally relevant and culturally relative (Johnson, 2000). Thus, in this study it could be seen that language (practice and use) both shapes the context of the Malaysian Chinese society as well as is shaped by the context of Malaysian Chinese society. Although findings appear to validate the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis to a limited extent, they are however tentative and only pertain to the study conducted and therefore the conclusions drawn from the basis of the study will inevitably be tentative, and may be revised in the light of future research.

8.4 Limitations of the study

The study utilized various types of stimuli to elicit responses from subjects. However, the stimuli used are intended to depict situations of various

cultural domains and could not take the place of real life situations. Hence, subjects may choose to indicate responses which they feel would be acceptable to the researcher or society but may not necessarily be the responses which they would choose in a real life encounter or experience. Therefore, the researcher triangulated the tools used for the study for greater authenticity of responses. The study is limited to the ten chosen aspects or sub-domains for pragmatic purposes.

Due to the scope of this study, only four selected aspects or frames of the Family Descriptor Scale (FDS) mentioned by subjects were selected for analysis. Refer to chapter 4 for greater details. However, the chosen aspects or sub-domains are deemed sufficient to provide an overview of Chinese culture in the Malaysian context.

The subject of world view is a broad field of investigation, therefore for purposes of this study, world view is viewed from the domain of the family with its ten aspects or sub-domains. Only the domain of family is selected for the study because it has been viewed to be more emphasized among Chinese than other races (Latourette, 1934) and also because of constraints of time and space.

The study focussed only on Chinese and English language dominant Chinese Malaysians and the influence of both these languages on the world views of subjects. Although Malay is the medium of instruction and the influence of Malaysian culture may have a bearing on the study, the focus is on the dominant languages used among the two groups of subjects and hence, the role and influence of these languages in shaping the world views of these two groups of subjects.

The questionnaire and interviews were conducted in English as the researcher, though a Chinese, is not proficient in written Chinese and subjects had no difficulty with English (they all have successfully completed their SPM level English or “O” level equivalent and from the observation of the researcher, who is an English language teacher, they are fluent in the language).

Since this study involves subjects who are bilinguals, usually one language being dominant over the other, responses from subjects would tend to differ from those who are monolinguals. It is also needful to note that the study focussed on subjects of two different dominant language use. Although variables such as age and sex may have bearings on the findings, they are not considered because of the limitations of the study

The researcher recognizes that “Chinese” and “Western” cultures are not monolithic concepts, that these terms mask the presence of a rich and subtly varying complexity of being and thinking. However, based on her readings, the researcher claims that there are some broad orientations that mark these two world civilizations. The choice of the two groups of subjects is based on this literature-inspired belief. The way this thesis has tried to aver to the richness and complexity is in demonstrating that these orientations are ever evolving, that people constantly change in the course of their lives as demonstrated by the fact that in both groups there are “mavericks” (MC3, MC4, MC12 & ME13) who, although they were originally orientated/ enculturated/brought up in one tradition, have changed to get closer to the other orientation. This is because of access to other traditions and their ways of thinking and doing.

8.5 Suggestions for future research

The focus of this study is to establish if there is homogeneity in world views among Malaysian Chinese of different dominant languages as well as its causes. The study has shown that it is not just knowledge of a language or even mastery of a language or languages that affect one's perspective or vision of the world. The evidence suggests that to be able to develop a differing or expanded vision of the world, there is a need for deeper emersion or access into the world view inherent in a particular language. How and to what extent exposure is required could only be verified by further investigation.

As discussed earlier with regard to conflicting frames, analysis of these frames suggests that the process of thought is fluid and subjects may provide different answers at different time according to what is prioritized and perceived to be salient at that particular point of time. Further research into this rich field may throw light upon this interesting phenomenon.

This study did not take into account the role that age and gender may have played in shaping the thoughts and utterances of the subjects. The stereotypical expectations regarding age (e.g. that older people are more traditional and conservative than younger people) and gender (that women play different roles and these shape the way they think) are not clearly borne out in this thesis. (Findings indicate that subjects who seem to have a different orientation from those of their own grouping are from the twenties, thirties and forties age group and comprise of both men and women such as Chinese language dominant subjects as represented by the following: MC3 (male, 40 years), MC4 (female, 29 years), MC12(male, 35 years) or English language dominant : ME13 (female, 45 years). However, these

parameters could be either included or specifically foregrounded in future studies. It is commonly held by scholars that there are distinct differences between diaspora and mainstream. An interesting extension of this work would be to repeat the study with mainstream Chinese.

Another interesting extension would be for the study to be done with the intention of teasing out the specific ways in which Malaysian culture has attenuated the thinking of different ethnic groups living in multiracial Malaysia. The same study could also be done with other immigrant groups e.g. the Malaysian Indians.

Additionally, further research such as comparative studies could be carried out on language use, shift or maintenance among other Chinese communities in countries such as Thailand, Singapore and Philippines would throw further light on the language situation of these Asian Chinese diasporic communities. Taken together these studies could create an interesting database for the study of diaspora.