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**ORIGINAL LITERARY WORK DECLARATION**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this research is to study the shift from Malayalam to English among the Malayalees in Malaysia and to assess the linguistic vitality of the Malayalam language in Malaysia. The first phase of the study focused on the language choice and language shift of the Malayalee speakers. The data gathering in the first phase used a series of interviews, questionnaire and cross-sectional survey. The second phase of the research which involved assessing the linguistic vitality of Malayalam language in Malaysia was carried out using a language vitality test, and benchmarking some of the factors that indicate the vitality of Malayalam based on “Language Vitality and Endangerment” by the UNESCO Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages (2003). The results of the study showed that there is an increasing shift from Malayalam towards English among Malayalees in Malaysia due to several factors. This include the fact that Malayalam is not offered in schools as an elective language, it is not well represented by the media, it is not used outside the domains of family and society, and the general perception is that it is more important to learn English than Malayalam. The linguistic vitality of Malayalam too was found to be in the unsafe category which means that little effort is being made to maintain the Malayalam language and it shows that there is a gradual decline in its use among Malayalees in Malaysia.

## **ABSTRAK**

Tujuan kaji selidik ini adalah untuk memerhati perpindahan bahasa dari Bahasa Malayalam ke Bahasa Inggeris di kalangan penutur Malayalee di Malaysia untuk menilai ‘linguistic vitality’ bahasa tersebut di Malaysia. Fasa pertama kajian ini melibatkan pengumpulan maklumat tentang pilihan bahasa dan pemindahan bahasa dengan menggunakan temubual, soal-selidik dan “cross-sectional survey”. Fasa kedua yang melibatkan menilai “linguistic vitality” Bahasa Malayalam di Malaysia dijalankan menggunakan “language vitality test” dan perbandingan dengan faktor-faktor yang menunjukkan “vitality” bahasa tersebut berdasarkan dokumen “Language Vitality and Endangerment” oleh UNESCO Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages (2003). Oleh demikian, kami dapat melihat bagaimana dan mengapa pemindahan bahasa berlaku di kalangan komuniti Malayalee di Malaysia, dan menilai tahap kemerosotan penggunaan Bahasa Malayalam di Malaysia. Dapatan penyelidikan ini menunjukkan bahawa terdapat pemindahan yang meningkat dari penggunaan Bahasa Malayalam ke Bahasa Inggeris disebabkan oleh beberapa faktor. Antaranya adalah kerana Bahasa Malayalam tidak di ajar sebagai bahasa elektif di sekolah, bahasa tersebut juga tidak diwakili secara luas oleh media, bahasa tersebut tidak digunakan di luar domain keluarga dan masyarakat, serta persepsi secara luas bahawa pembelajaran Bahasa Inggeris adalah lebih penting dari pembelajaran bahasa Malayalam. “Linguistic Vitality” bahasa Malayalam juga didapati berada pada tahap yang ‘tidak selamat’ yang bermakna usaha untuk mengekalkan penggunaan Bahasa Malayalam adalah sangat kurang dan terdapat kemerosotan dalam Bahasa tersebut di kalangan kaum Malayalee di Malaysia.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background of the Research

In an increasingly global world people are embracing languages and cultures for various reasons such as economics, finance, political and social stature. Societies are fast transforming into melting pots of languages and cultures which cause the minority languages to become endangered and eventually lost. A language is said to be endangered when it is no longer passed down from generation to generation (Brenzinger, 1992). If this happens, entire speech communities may eventually disappear due to lack of intergenerational transmission. Brenzinger (1992) observed that there may be thousands of elderly speakers in numerically large speech communities but the children of the community no longer speak the language since there is a failure to pass down the language. The reasons for language endangerment can be external or internal or an inter linking of both. External causes include military, economic, religious cultural or educational subjugation. Internal forces include negative attitudes of community members towards their own language (they may connect it with inferiority), or general decline of a group identity. These factors can lead to eventual cessation of the transmission of language and culture. According to Brenzinger (1992) some abandon the language in the hope of overcoming their situations economically and enhance social mobility for the family.

Endangerment does not necessarily apply to a small number of speakers rather the vitality of a language depends on the general attitude of the speakers towards the language and whether the language is passed down to the children (Brenzinger, 1992).

Brenzinger (1992, p.4) further observes that “language endangerment may arise when communities with different linguistic traditions live side by side. Such contacts involve an exchange of products as well as an exchange of cultural elements”. The problem especially escalates when the status given to different languages is not the same. The dominance or inferiority of a language is influenced by a number of factors; such as number of speakers, economics, socio-historical or political strengths of each community. “A language is endangered when its speakers cease to use it, use it in fewer and fewer domains, and use fewer of its registers and speaking styles, and/or stop passing it on to the next generation (UNESCO Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages, 2003)

In Malaysia, the dominant language is Bahasa Melayu, due to socio-historical, political and numerical factors. Saran Kaur Gill noted that:

In the heyday of post-colonial language planning, Malaysia was one of the countries that enthusiastically accepted the arguments of planners and set about to build up its national language. Once independent of British colonial rule, it chose to reduce the role and status of English and select one autochthonous language, Bahasa Melayu, as the official medium of government and education. (2005, 4: 241\_260)

She quotes Asmah (1987: 65), as saying that:

To the Malays and the bumiputera people, that the choice fell on Malay was the most natural thing. It is the language of the soil. Of all the bumiputeras or indigenous languages, Malay is the most advanced in terms of its function as language of administration, high culture, literary knowledge and religion. (1987: 65)

Chinese language comes second due to economics, socio-historical factors and number of speakers. Among the Indian languages, Tamil is in the lead due to the number of

speakers and educational policies that encourage language maintenance. However, in terms of usage, power, and influence, in Malaysia, English Language is regarded as the second language after Bahasa Melayu. The status of English, as a language that is synonymous with progress, development, political and economic advancement, has made it equally important to learning Bahasa Melayu as the national language.

Malaysia is a multiracial and multicultural society that came about as a result of migration in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, as a result of colonization. Colonization brought English into the country in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and English was used in administrative matters, education, and mass media for many years. The fact that English is the popular language economically and politically, has ensured English a firm hold in Malaysia as the second language.

Apart from the indigenous people in Malaysia, there are also the Malays, Chinese, Indians, Sri Lankan and others such as the people of Portuguese descent living in Malaysia. The Chinese language can be grouped into different dialects. There are different languages from the subcontinent of India. Examples are the Malayalam and Telugu languages of South India. In Malaysia the most prominent language spoken is the Tamil language which has a firm hold in education, society and politics. The Tamil language is used and taught in vernacular schools. It has now been introduced as an additional elective language in national schools. The local political party, the Malaysian Indian Congress or MIC uses Tamil in its internal communication and correspondence. The language is also gaining speakers among the Indian community, and a couple of radio channels almost exclusively use the Tamil language in its broadcast. While this strengthens the position of the Tamil language in Malaysia, the opposite seems to be true for the other Indian languages that are gradually losing foothold and they are fast

becoming decadent. Among the Southern Indian languages, Tamil was afforded a higher status when the “divide and rule” policy was introduced by the British who started the Tamil and Chinese vernacular schools.

With Tamil being given a place in the education system, it obtained instant alleviation in status thus sidelining all other minority Southern Indian languages such as Malayalam and Telugu. Taking into consideration that Malayalees from Kerala were of higher educational and social backgrounds, it is not clear why Tamil was the preferred choice, but it would seem that Tamil won by the majority number of speakers.

Thus as one of the minority Southern Indian languages, Malayalam, in my opinion and observation, seems to be heading towards endangerment and speakers of Malayalam are shifting towards English usage and thus, the reason for this study. The Malayalam language originates from the state of Kerala in South India. Malayalam can be traced back to old Tamil which was heavily influenced by Sanskrit and English. English is second to Sanskrit in terms of influence on the language. The Malayalam language varies in intonation patterns, vocabulary and distribution of grammatical and phonological elements and these are in turn variable along parameters of region, community, occupation, social stratum, style and register (Ramachandran, 1994). There are more than thirty five million Malayalam language speakers in India; and in Malaysia, there are about one hundred and thirty five thousand speakers of Malayalam. The Malayalees came to Malaysia in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century largely to have a better life. Being literate and well-educated with a good command of English, they were given coveted positions in plantations and governmental organisations. They held positions as managers, conductors, clerks and hospital assistants as well as other professional positions.

Currently, in Malaysia, a large number of Malayalees hold professional posts in various fields such as education, law, medicine, scientific research, engineering and politics. However, Malayalam is not recognised in Malaysia as one of the languages to be taught in public schools. In pursuit of educational and economic success, the younger generation is slowly losing the language and their traditions. In general, they seem to be embracing English as a dominant language. The question is whether this trend of English being the dominant language, is resulting in a decline in the use of Malayalam among Malayalees in Malaysia, and, whether, in turn, this is also resulting in a slow loss of culture and traditions. This paper proposes that the Malayalam language is heading towards endangerment among the Malayalees in Malaysia and this is largely due to an inexorable shift towards English.

## **1.2 Statement of Problem**

There may be various factors underlying the phenomenon of the seemingly inexorable shift from Malayalam to English among the Malayalee community in Malaysia, and this research seeks to uncover these factors. Local language policies do not support Malayalam language and any motivation to use, or be in contact with it seems to be intrinsic rather than extrinsic. Unlike the Tamil language, Malayalam is not taught in schools or used extensively in the media such as newspapers, magazines, television and radio. The existing programmes in Malayalam are only offered via cable TV and even then it is 2 movies per week and one half hour drama 5 days per week which is aired during peak hours (afternoons) and not during prime time. There seems to be a gradual decline in the use of the language in all domains and it seems to be for all intents and purposes a dying language.

Several studies on the use of Malayalam language have been carried out in Malaysia, mostly by Nambiar (2008). Most of these studies focus on the effect of language policies on language shift among Malayalees in Malaysia. Such studies examined the language choice and language shift but relatively little or no studies were done to assess the linguistic vitality of the Malayalam language in Malaysia. Nambiar (2008) studied the shift of the Malayalam language in five domains such as family/home, friendship, religion, transaction, and entertainment. It is evident that there is a growing trend of shift from Malayalam to English and other languages among Malaysian Malayalees and there is a marked decline in proficiency due to reduced intergenerational transmission of the language. It is also found that the Malayalam language is not the dominant language for interaction within the community of speakers.

Malayalees in Malaysia unlike the Tamils were well educated when they came from Kerala in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. As such, they procured places in administration and managerial posts in the rubber plantations. They were automatically placed on a higher social stratum in comparison to the Tamils because of their level of literacy. It is worth to note that in terms of literacy, Kerala has a literacy rate of 99%. This however is not the case now in Malaysia where various factors have resulted in the literacy rate among the Malayalee community seeing a decline. This cannot be addressed in this research but would require an in-depth study on a different level. Taking into consideration the role of Malayalees in the history and development of Malaysia, one would wonder why Malayalam was side-lined and Tamil given prominence when vernacular schools were introduced into the education system. Indeed with higher education and status, many Malayalees abandoned speaking Malayalam altogether and switched to English.



This current study is conducted in Malaysia among Malayalees born in Malaysia or born in Kerala and migrated to Malaysia using the theoretical framework on Ethnolinguistic Vitality (Bourhis, 1979). Giles, Bourhis and Taylor (1977, p.308) note that, “ethnolinguistic vitality is what makes a group likely to behave as a distinctive and active collective entity in intergroup situation”. Malayalam is one of the minority languages in Malaysia. There seems to be general decline of the use of the language among Malaysian Malayalees which is due to various factors.

The shift from Malayalam to English has become an interesting issue to explore. At a glance, most Malayalees in Malaysia seem to be shifting towards speaking in English rather than Malayalam. Consequently, this study aims to examine the language shift shifted from Malayalam to English and at the same time assess the vitality of the Malayalam language in the Malayalam community. More specifically, this study focuses on a positive change in terms of intergenerational transmission of Malayalam and increased efforts in preserving and maintaining the language and culture.

### **1.3 Objectives of the Research**

The objectives of the study are:

- i. To examine the shift from Malayalam to English in intergenerational Malayalee families in Malaysia.
- ii. To assess the linguistic vitality of Malayalam among the Malayalee speakers in Malaysia.

## **1.4 Research Questions**

This study will seek to answer the following questions:

1. What are the reasons for the shift from Malayalam to English among Malayalees in Malaysia?
2. What is the linguistic vitality of Malayalam language in Malaysia based on UNESCO's "Linguistic Vitality and Language Endangerment document?"

## **1.5 Significance of the Research**

This study seeks to create an awareness of the phenomena and consequential effects of language shift on a minority language (Malayalam Language); and specifically, how the shift is largely towards English. Further, this shift from Malayalam to English seems to be causing a loss of Malayalam language among its speakers within the community and it is hoped that results from this study will spearhead efforts to revive and preserve Malayalam language in Malaysia.

## **1.6 Scope and Limitations of Research**

The study focuses on the shift from Malayalam to English and also the linguistic vitality of Malayalam in Malaysia. The shift from Malayalam to other languages has been addressed in other studies (Nambiar, 2008) but not English specifically but rather looked at the bifurcated language shift from Malayalam to other languages according to the religion of the Malayalees in Malaysia. Linguistic Vitality of Malayalam Language in Malaysia is addressed in this study as it has not been studied or assessed before.

There are limitations to this study in that only a fraction of the community is chosen for this study as it is a short term study. A larger sample population would yield clearer and

more conclusive evidence of the alleged shift as well as a more accurate picture of the linguistic vitality of the Malayalam Language.

### **1.7 Conclusion**

Language shift leads towards language endangerment and possibly eventual death of speech community. Speakers of Malayalam in Malaysia are shifting towards English and this is causing a reduction in the number of speakers of Malayalam within the Malayalee community in Malaysia. This study seeks to observe this phenomenon and study the causes for this shift, and how it affects the linguistic vitality of the Malayalee community in Malaysia. Various methods are used to collect data in this study with the aim of looking at how and why the shift from Malayalam to English is occurring; as well as to assess the linguistic vitality of Malayalam language in Malaysia. In the next chapter language shift, maintenance, endangerment, shift and death will be reviewed. The status of English and Malaysia will also be explained. The theory of ethnolinguistic vitality which is the framework for this study will also be explained.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the literature review of the study. Specifically, this chapter discusses the literature on language endangerment, maintenance and shift. The issues of status, prestige of a language, language policies, language death and language and culture are also addressed. The issues on the status of English and how they affect the vitality of other languages in terms of language choice including the UNESCO's document on endangered languages are also reviewed.

#### **2.2 Status of English and Malayalam Languages in Malaysia**

English is a global language that has been accepted and embraced as the language of the times; in economy, politics, finance, and in society. Walker (2001, p.10) says "English is currently regarded as the world's principal international language. As a result there are now more exchanges between non-native speakers of English than between non-native speakers and native speakers." In fact, in Malaysia, many non-native speakers speak to each other in English.

English was first brought to Malaysia by the British colonialists in the nineteenth century. This facilitated the increased use of English in administration, commerce and trading, and, eventually in the increase of use in educational facilities. English was the medium used in schools until the early 1970s. By then, English had a firm foothold in Malaysia in all areas. Currently, English is learnt as a second and compulsory subject in schools and also commands an important role in politics, media, and in society. English

movies and many English programmes offered by both local television stations, as well as cable television networks, augment the exposure to English, and encourage the learning of the language.

On the other hand, few South Indian languages were brought into Malaysia when the British imported workforce from India. One of those Indian languages is the Malayalam language. Hailing from Kerala, a small state in the Southern tip of India, Malayalees were highly educated in comparison with the other South Indians and were thus afforded posts in administrative areas especially as Managers and Assistant Managers in the estates. They ranked higher on the social strata among the Indians in Malaysia. However, today, Malayalam language is one of the minority South Indian groups that seem to be under threat due to the shift of language from Malayalam to other languages, especially English.

### **2.3 Language Endangerment**

Language endangerment has been a much discussed topic among linguists such as Crystal (2000), Dixon (1991), Grenoble and Whaley (1998), Brenzinger (1998) and Nettle and Romaine (2000) who have studied language endangerment. They are concerned with how fast linguistic diversity and cultural heritage of whole speech communities is being irrevocably lost. Colonisation is one of the factors that are tagged as being the reason for language endangerment.

According to Lewis, M. Paul, Gary F. Simons, and Charles D. Fening (eds.), there are “two dimensions to the characterization of endangerment: the number of users who identify with a particular language and the number and the nature of the functions for which the language is used” (2013, p.1).

In Malaysia which has been colonised, Malay is maintained largely due to its big number of speakers, politics and language policies on the language which include making it a compulsory subject in mainstream education. Among the Chinese community there is a good level of maintenance due to their strong and vehement desire to maintain identity and solidarity which is also augmented by language policies which provide Mandarin in Chinese vernacular schools and new policies which have caused Mandarin to be taught in national schools. Media too plays a part as there are whole channels that provide news and entertainment in Chinese. This is not the case with other minority languages in Malaysia which are side-lined due to both lack of policies that protect them as well as lack of effort by the communities to preserve and maintain the language and culture of their heritage language. Unlike the Indian languages, the Chinese characters can be understood by any ethnic group as they are basically pictorial. This helps unify the community and helps in the maintenance and preservation of the language.

Tamil language too is taught in vernacular schools, and now included as an elective subject in mainstream education; as well as well represented by media. There are two national newspapers in Tamil and various magazines, tabloids as well as many television programmes available to cater to the community of speakers.

Malayalam on the other hand is not offered in anywhere in the education system and very little in media. This causes a gradual lessening of the need to maintain Malayalam language and the shift towards other languages with English being the popular choice.

Mufwene (2003, p.2) quotes Ladefoged (1992) as asking whether “linguists are justified in condemning the fact that some people have found it more advantageous for them to shift from ancestral languages to another which they found more useful.” The question

which arises then is, why shift at all? Why not maintain the heritage language while learning a new language as some communities do? Besides the Chinese, the Japanese too have fiercely protected and maintained their language and culture. Both have proven their worth economically in the world market.

#### **2.4 Language Maintenance and Language Shift**

The question posed by Landweer (1991, p.5) was, “Is there sufficient use of the target language throughout community life?”, and observing that “the more domains the vernacular is used in the better” (Landweer, 1991, p.5). When the language is used in most or all domains there is language maintenance. When the language is not sufficiently used in some or all the domains, there is then a high possibility of language shift occurring. Without language maintenance, there can be language death or bilingualism. Eventually, young speakers embrace the new language and the language dies. Some speech communities make concentrated attempts to maintain the language while others do not.

Pillai (2009) noted in her study of language shift among Singaporean Malayalee families that the first generation maintained the language and were fluent in spoken and written Malayalam. The second generation was less fluent in written Malayalam but still able to speak in Malayalam. The third generation, however, were almost not able to speak or write in Malayalam at all, preferring to speak English and Tamil instead. Pillai (2009) attributes this to:

lack of institutional support for Malayalam, socialization patterns of Malayalees, acquisition of only Singaporean Malayalam by younger learners, low status of pragmatic attitude of speakers and low proficiency of third generation members. (2009, p. 20)

Offiong (2012, p.2493) notes that “language shift is a common phenomenon when it comes to the developing countries of the world”. Offiong (2012, p.2493) also lists major factors that lead to language shift to English. He carried out a study of the gradual shift from Efik language in Nigeria to English. According to him, major reasons for the shift are

economic strength and function that is attached to the English Language and use of English as the medium of instruction in major institutional domains such as schools, television, radio, newspaper organisations, government administration, courts, and civil service among others. (2012, p. 2493)

Another factor he observed was one of demographics, where

speed of language shift is more noticeable in urban areas than rural areas”. He also noted that “lack of education amongst speakers of a particular language encourages shift and eventual extinction of that language. (2012, p. 2493)

This he says may stem from a belief that other languages such as English is “more superior” and of more value than their own.

David (2008) carried out a research on the language of choice of urban Sino-Indians in Malaysia. She noted that:

It appears English has taken priority as a first language amongst Sino-Indians in Kuala Lumpur. English is a pragmatic code as it grants the Sino-Indians social mobility, education and networking. (2008, p. 230)

This supports Offiong’s observations. The status of English, and its importance is a major factor for a shift from mother tongues to English.



In Malaysia, this is happening among Malayalees. Malaysian Malayalees are bilingual or multilingual speaking English, Tamil and Malay in addition to Malayalam. There is a constant shift towards other languages and it is bifurcated (Nambiar, 2011). Generally speaking, the shift seems to involve Malayalee Muslims shifting towards Bahasa Melayu, Malayalee Christians towards English; educated Malayalees towards English and less educated Malayalees towards Tamil. In this study, the focus is on how there is a shift from the use of Malayalam to English among speakers of Malayalam in Malaysia.

## **2.5 Prestige and Status**

Besides contact with other languages prestige and status also seems to be a contributing factor of language endangerment. Mufwene (2003) has noted that much has been written on literacy of the prevailing language and “lack of pride” of the affected language as one of the most important reasons for language endangerment. He noted that some moribund languages focus on developing writing systems and literacy in attempts to preserve them but this did not in actual fact prevent the death of the language. Mufwene (2003) cites Sanskrit and Latin as examples of writing systems and literacy not preventing their deaths. Mufwene (2003) further notes that economics and politics also play a part in the endangerment of languages.

To quote Mufwene (2003)

In the United States Dutch, French, German, Italian, and a host of others were given up as vernaculars even before some Native American languages were. English speakers were not necessarily more literate; as a matter of fact a large proportion of them before the Revolution were not. The increasing usage of English in the colonial economic system, aided by political factors, disfavored the other languages. It promised opportunities the others did not. It appears that the development of writing systems for and literacy in, some endangered languages guarantees not their revitalization but their (lifeless) preservation like preserves in a jar. (2003, p. 4-5)

In Malaysia, English has been awarded a high status second to Bahasa Melayu. *“The government has, since a long time ago, declared English as the second most important language in Malaysia after Malay language.”* (Mohd. Faisal Hanapiah, n.d.). Thus, English has been embraced as a second language and is being used more and more as a first language in coming generations who realize the importance of learning it. However, in doing so, there is a tendency to move away from their mother tongues and shift sometimes completely to English.

## **2.6 Language Policies**

Another factor that is believed to affect language endangerment is language policies. “Fewer than 4 per cent of the world’s languages have any kind of official status in the countries where they are spoken” (Romaine, 2002, p.1). But she also notes that having official status does not necessarily lead to language maintenance but rather it is the way families are brought up and the language that they choose to speak in the home. Perhaps peer groups and the choice of language is closely linked especially in multilingual, multicultural settings.

## **2.7 Language Death**

Languages die when they are not maintained or when the speech community diminishes. It is worthy to note that having orthographic materials of the said language does not constitute to keeping the language alive if the speech community does not exist. According to Crystal (2000, p.1), “a language is said to be dead when no one speaks it anymore”. He says that it is not considered a “living language” unless it has fluent speakers (Crystal, 2000). In his paper on language death, Crystal (2000) mentions the Kasabe language that existed on the 4<sup>th</sup> of November 1995 that ceased to exist the very next day by virtue of the death of one of only two speakers of the Kasabe language. The

existing sole speaker could not speak the language with anyone else and thus that language is essentially dead. This is especially true if the younger generation shows little or no interest in learning an endangered language. Crystal (2000) says that there is a popular belief that the reduction of the number of languages in the world is of benefit to humankind and that an ideal world view is that if there was only one language in the world it “would guarantee mutual understanding, enlightenment, and peace”. He says that this is a misconception and that there are many instances where communities are in dispute in spite of sharing one language within the community. Crystal (2000) says that this misconception comes from largely multilingual nations that assume that when one language is chosen, it will be their language.

Concerning language death, Crystal (2000) says:

We have two choices. We can sit back and do nothing, and let things just wind down. ... The alternative is to act, using as many means as possible to confront the situation and influence the outcome. We know that intervention can be successful. Revitalization schemes can work. But time is running out. It is already too late for many languages, but we hold the future of many others in our hands. The linguists in the front line, who are actually doing the fieldwork, therefore need as much support as we can mobilize.” (2000, pp1-2, 11, 27-28, 163, 166)

Horak (2005) quotes Sasse’s theory which suggested different methods of revitalization of an endangered language. He mentions motivation to keep a language and concentrated efforts on inter-generational transmission of the language.

## 2.8 Language and Culture

Language is also believed to have a close relationship with culture. In learning a new language, one is inexorably drawn to its various cultures. Language differs in many ways from culture to culture; from one environment to another. Some words in languages are culture bound. For example, the different Malay dialects in Malaysia also depict variations in the culture of their speakers. Preservation of the language in some societies is seen as vital to the survival of culture. This can be seen with the Japanese. The Japanese have a phrase “Hear one, understand ten” (*ichi ieba ju wo shiru*) (Kopp.R, 2012). The Japanese are able to communicate with each other using very few chosen words just on the basis that they share the same culture. It differs from the speaking style of some other languages and thus in order to be able to communicate effectively in Japanese, one would first need to know and understand the culture. The Japanese see their language as one with their culture. They have strongly held on to their language, even refusing to embrace English, and still performing well economically worldwide proving that one does not necessarily sacrifice his or her language or culture for economic reasons. Ayumi (2009) noted that Japanese is an “isolated language” and that it has refused to mix up with other languages.

In Malaysia, the Chinese too see their language as an important part of their identity and culture and it is still widely used among their community. The Tamils too make attempts to preserve their language by coining new words for every new vocabulary instead of borrowing. The Malayalam language however originated from old Tamil, with a lot of borrowing from Sanskrit and English.

## **2.9 Linguistic Vitality and the Theory of Ethnolinguistic Vitality**

Linguistic vitality is closely connected to the theory of Ethnolinguistic Vitality. Ethnolinguistic Vitality proposes that a group will consciously and collectively behave in a certain way in order to preserve their culture and traditions. What “makes a group likely to behave as a distinctive and collective entity in intergroup situations” (Giles et.al.1977 p.308). Giles et al (1977) drew out three socio-structural variables that are pertinent to the Ethnolinguistic Framework. They are status factor, demography and institutional support. Status factors include economic, social, prestige and socio-historical aspects. Demography includes the absolute number of speakers, birth rate and geographical concentration. In present times the number of inter-racial marriages is another factor to be considered. Institutional support includes recognition of the groups of speakers, language in media, education and government. Giles et al (1977) further noted that the more linguistic vitality is embedded within an ethnolinguistic group, the more indications for short or long term language maintenance strategies. He further proposed that ethnolinguistic groups can be roughly classified as having low, medium or high vitality.

Landweer (1991, p.1) further presented indicators of ethnolinguistic vitality as a collection of factors, touting them as “useful in indicating the probable direction a speech community will go relative to the maintenance of, or shift from, its traditional language”. Landweer (1991) further explains that in attempts to ascertain linguistic vitality, no one factor is more important than the other. Landweer (1991) proposed eight indicators of ethnolinguistic vitality such as relative position on the global continuum; domains in which the language is used; frequency and type of code switching; population and group dynamics; distribution of speakers within their own social networks; social outlook

regarding and within the speech community; language prestige; and access to a stable and acceptable economic base.

These indicators according to Landweer (1991) do not prove language shift or death but merely points to the direction in which the language is heading. The first indicator looks at where the speech community is positioned along an urban-rural continuum. The closer to urban areas, the more likely language shift will take place. “Language (or dialect) choice can function as a mark of group identification and solidarity” (Landweer, 1991, p.1). In Malaysia, this is evident among the Chinese who cling to their language in spite of everything as a mark of group identification and solidarity. This is augmented by the fact that there are vernacular schools for the Chinese and a new language policy that has introduced the language into mainstream education in national schools. How much the target language is used in various domains and sub-domains in life suggest the language of choice of the said community.

These domains are described by Landweer (1991) as domain of home which includes instruction, correction or scolding, information, comfort, humour, and religious observance within communication dyads of spouses, adults with in-laws, adults with other adults who are not related, adults with children, and children with children. Cultural events which refer to some events such as marriages, funerals, births, naming ceremonies, harvest, competitive feasts, public discussions or arguments, and singsongs. Social events include political campaigns, work parties, sport and adjudication. Formal education refers to language of instruction, language(s) of study, language(s) allowed in recreation, and the language that the faculty uses to communicate to local parents about school matters. The domain of business is the last, which focuses on employment, private business, and marketing. (Landweer, 1991)

## **2.10 Language Endangerment and the UNESCO Document**

The question is how do we ascertain whether a particular language is endangered? In 2003, the UNESCO Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages submitted a document to the International Expert Meeting on UNESCO Programme Safeguarding of Endangered Languages. This document addressed language vitality and endangerment.

The document opens with this note:

A language is endangered when it is on a path toward extinction. Without adequate documentation, a language that is extinct can never be revived. A language is in danger when its speakers cease to use it, use it in an increasingly reduced number of communicative domains, and cease to pass it on from one generation to the next. That is, there are no new speakers, adults or children. About 97% of the world's people speak about 4% of the world's languages; and conversely, about 96% of the world's languages are spoken by about 3% of the world's people (Bernard 1996: 142). Most of the world's language heterogeneity, then, is under the stewardship of a very small number of people. Even languages with many thousands of speakers are no longer being acquired by children; at least 50% of the world's more than six thousand languages are losing speakers. We estimate that, in most world regions, about 90% of the languages may be replaced by dominant languages by the end of the 21st century. (Language Vitality and Endangerment, 2003, p. 2)

The following quote illustrates why it may be important to prevent the extinction of languages:

The extinction of each language results in the irrecoverable loss of unique cultural, historical, and ecological knowledge. Each language is a unique expression of the human experience of the world. Thus, the knowledge of any single language may be the key to answering fundamental questions of the future. Every time a language dies, we have less evidence for understanding patterns in the structure and function of human language, human prehistory, and the maintenance of the world's diverse ecosystems. Above all, speakers of these

languages may experience the loss of their language as a loss of their original ethnic and cultural identity (Bernard 1992, Hale 1998, in “Language Vitality and Endangerment, 2003, p. 2)

Thus, we are able to see that language shift, endangerment and death are issues that need to be seriously addressed in order to prevent speech communities from being totally lost. This is especially vital since language is very closely linked to culture, and, loss of a language may mean a loss of culture.

## **2.11 Conclusion**

There are around six thousand languages in the world and half will die in the next century (Crystal, 2002). This comes to about three thousand languages in 1200 months or a language dying every two weeks (Crystal, 2002). Thus studying the direction that languages are heading towards is an important issue that needs more attention to prevent whole speech communities and cultures from disappearing. It is hard to tell where or when language endangerment starts but it is an issue that needs to be seriously addressed.



## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This research involves using both quantitative and qualitative methods, and both are explained in this chapter. This chapter also presents the various methods used to gather information and data as well as details about the sample population. It also explains how all the information and data is to be analysed and presented.

#### **3.2 Research Design**

The objectives of a qualitative research are to understand reasons and contributing factors for a particular phenomenon, to explore the background of a problem, to build hypotheses and discover opinions. The sample is usually small and respondents chosen only to fill a particular quota. The data is usually collected via structured or semi-structured techniques and data is analysed in a non-statistical manner. It seeks to explore and investigate and findings are not conclusive. The results are usually inconclusive and cannot be used to make generalisations. However, they provide a basic picture and grounds for decision making in the future.

In quantitative research, data is quantified and results generalised. The aim of quantitative research is to study the incidence of various views and opinions in a chosen sample. This research is sometimes followed by some qualitative data in order to explore deeper into a phenomenon. The sample is usually a large representation of the target is usually a random selection. Structured techniques are used to collect data such as questionnaires, telephone interviews, etc. Statistical data is tabulated and findings

conclusive and descriptive in nature. The result is used to recommend a final course of action. (<http://www.snapsurveys.com/qualitative-quantitative-research/>)

This study uses both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Interviews, questionnaires, and a cross-sectional survey over social media as well as a mark-up against factors that determine the linguistic vitality of a language were used in this study.

Case study interviews were also employed in this study to look at the backgrounds of Malayalees who were born in Malaysia and Malayalees who were born in Kerala but moved to Malaysia; and to obtain background information about the languages they used at home, growing up and later with their spouse and their children if any. According to Bromley (1990), a case study is a “systematic inquiry into an event or a set of related events which aims to describe and explain the phenomenon of interest”. (p.302) According to Zucker (2009) (Yin 1994), data can be obtained from “documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant observation and physical artefacts.”

### **3.3 Sampling**

Probability sampling or representative samples are used in this study because they are representative of the target population, and results obtained are valid because they mirror characteristics of the target population. An example would be pupils from a primary school. Probability sampling can be further categorised into two types. They are random and stratified sampling. In random sampling,

each individual in the population of interest has an equal chance of selection. The key to random selection is that there is no bias involved in the selection of the sample. Any variation between the sample characteristics and the population characteristics is only a matter of chance. (<http://psychology.ucdavis.edu>)

In stratified sampling, the sample is first divided into characteristics that are relevant and important to the research such as gender, social class etc. The sample is then chosen within each category or stratum. Although, touted to be as good as or better than random sampling, stratified samples require detailed advanced knowledge of the population and is more difficult to construct. Stratified sampling is used in the selection of samples for the case study interviews. The samples were first categorised based on their parentage. In order to preserve and obtain true results, the samples (ten) had to have parents who were Malayalees. Further, they were divided into two categories or strata; born in Malaysia (5) and born in Kerala but moved to Malaysia (5). The reason for this was to provide a comparison of the differences if any, of the alleged shift from Malayalam to English among Malayalees in Malaysia as well as the rate of intergenerational transmission of Malayalam.

Non probability samples or non-representative samples are not truly representative and thus are not as popular as random or stratified sample. It is however, useful when it is difficult or expensive to get random or stratified samples. This research uses non probability sampling as the population of Malaysian Malayalees is not evenly distributed with some areas having more samples than others.

There are different types of non-probability sampling. A quota sample is when proportions of levels or strata within a sample are fixed by the researcher. This is done to guarantee the inclusion of particular segments of the target population. In this research, the samples of the language vitality test were limited to those of pure Malayalee parentage (100%). Only samples who had Malayalees as parents were chosen. This was to ensure that the test results were not deviated by other factors.

“A purposive sample is a non-representative subset of some larger population, and is constructed to serve a very specific need or purpose” (<http://psychology>.

Ucdavis.edu/somerb/sommerdemo/sampling/types.htm). The researcher focuses on whoever is available to be interviewed within the target population. The possible candidates for the sample population were asked two questions; one, whether their parents were Malayalees, and two, whether their parents were born in Malaysia, or born in Kerala but migrated to Malaysia.

Snowball sampling is a subset of purposive sampling. Each respondent is asked to recommend another person who might be willing to participate in the research. This method of sampling is useful in situations where it may be difficult to locate samples. Convenience sampling is where the researcher takes whatever he can get but not at random. Everyone in the population has an equal chance of being selected. Non-probability samples do not truly represent a population and thus generalizations may be limited and validity can be questionable. Snowball sampling was used in this study, specifically in selecting participants for the questionnaire and the language vitality test. It was a faster and more convenient way of locating suitable candidates as the target population is scattered and difficult to locate.

In this research, snowball sampling is used as the Malayalee population is a minority. Respondents recommended friends or family who were then shortlisted as suitable candidates for the sample. This allows the researcher to reach the target population. It is a relatively cheap, simple and cost-efficient method of sampling. It also needs very little planning and fewer people involved in executing it. There are disadvantages to this method. The researcher has little or no control over the sampling (Castillo, J.J., 2009). The respondents obtained, depend mainly on the respondents already tested or observed. There is no guarantee of the representativeness of the sample and the true distribution of the population and sample is not known (Castillo, J.J., 2009). Another bone of contention in this method of sampling is that respondents may chose people they know well. One of

the implications of this is that the respondents may share same traits and characteristics (Castillo, J.J, 2009) and thus causing the sample to be only a small subgroup of the entire population. This may be the case in this research as snowball sampling was employed in looking for suitable respondents for both the language vitality test and the interview.

### **3.4 Sample Size**

Larger samples are generally preferred to smaller samples as they are more similar to the target population from which they are chosen. Large samples require more time for data collection and analysis and are generally more expensive. Small samples are not suitable for surveys as they cannot cover losses incurred by refusals, and spoilage rates by incomplete responses, illegible replies and nonsensical replies. Appropriate sizes of samples depend on the size of a population, availability of resources such as time and money, the strength of the effect being measured, refusal and spoilage rates and the number of analyses to be performed.

The sample size for this study varied based on the different instruments employed in the collection of data. Ten participants were selected for the case study interviews. Five were born in Malaysia; and five born in Kerala, but migrated to Malaysia. The questionnaire involved 60 people in total; 20 each from generations one, generation two and generation three. 24 participants were selected for the language vitality test; eight from generations one, two and three.

### **3.5 Participants**

The participants for this study were Malayalees of three generations. They were chosen at random based on their willingness to participate in the study and also by snowball, stratified and referential sampling. The respondents for the language vitality test and the interview were divided into three generations based on their ages. Generation 1 (G1) is

from the age of 50 years and above, generation 2 (G2) is from the ages of 30 to 49 years and, generation 3 (G3), from the ages of 18 to 29. For the language vitality test, all the respondents were with parents who were both of Malayalee descent, in order to preserve the purity and to achieve true scores in the test; and from educated backgrounds, but not necessarily employed to better facilitate the running of the test. They were taken mainly from urban areas and may additionally speak other languages such as English, Malay or Tamil. The respondents for the interview were also chosen by snowball sampling or selected from the participants who were involved in the language vitality test. However, there was no restriction as to education level, etc. In order to provide comparison, five respondents were born in Kerala and migrated to Malaysia and five respondents were born in Malaysia, making up ten respondents for the interview.

### **3.6 Interview**

A series of interviews (Appendix 1) were conducted in this study to further elicit valuable information. A total of ten samples were chosen; five who were born in Kerala, India and migrated to Malaysia, and five who were born in Malaysia. They were assigned codes as follows:

(R) – respondent, numbers one to ten;

(MM) – male Malaysia, (FM) for female Malaysia;

(MK) – male Kerala, (FK) for female Kerala;

(G1) – generation one;

(G2) – generation two; and

(G3) – generation three.

An example is R1MMG2 which means respondent number one, male, born in Malaysia and from generation two. The interview included questions about their childhood,

education background parental/ancestral information, their use of the language during childhood and currently, their perceptions of the language, attitudes towards preserving the language and culture. These interviews were carried out on an informal, semi structured basis with a basic line of questioning and additional questions being generated depending on different attitudes and responses by the samples themselves. Anecdotal evidence were presented in the results and discussed. The objective of the interview was to determine the number of Malaysians who shifted to English, as well as the reasons for the said shift. Specifically the interview was aimed at looking at salient factors that contributed towards the shift from Malayalam to English.

### **3.7 Questionnaire**

A questionnaire (Appendix 2) was used in this research to gauge the responses of Malayalees with regards to the languages they speak, and if they speak English, the reasons for their choice. 60 participants were involved in the questionnaire; 20 from each generation (1, 2 and 3) and they were required to answer four open ended questions about whether they speak English at home, the reason for doing so, whether they felt that it was more important to learn English rather than Malayalam in Malaysia and the reason for their response.

### **3.8 Cross-sectional Survey**

Cross-sectional surveys “utilise different groups of people who differ in the variable of interest, but share other characteristics such as socioeconomic status, educational background, and ethnicity” (Cherry, n.d). The researcher just makes observations and there is not causal or relational in nature (Cherry, n.d). Information that is presented in the population is recorded but the variables are not manipulated (Cherry, n.d). This kind

of survey is used to observe the prevalence of something in a given population (Cherry, n.d).

A cross-sectional survey was conducted over a social network community (Facebook) called Malaysian Malayalees. The group consists of members from the Malayalee community that live in Malaysia. The sample size was only by virtue of members who responded to the questions posted on their group wall. The objective of this survey was to obtain a general idea of whether Malaysian Malayalees speak more of Malayalam or English in the domains of home and society.

### **3.9 Language Vitality Test**

A language vitality test (Appendix 3) was conducted on the above subjects to ascertain linguistic vitality. The test was carried out over a period of two months in Seremban, a small town in the state of Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia. The tests were administered on a one to one basis, and personally by the researcher, to ensure true data. The tests consisted of lexical recognition based on photos, verbal translation of spoken sentences, and discourse (Adopted and adapted from a study by Florey, 2009).

The aim of the lexical recognition test was “to learn how receptive linguistic ability varied according to generation” (Florey, 2009). It was also used to determine whether there was a breakdown in the intergenerational transmission of the Malayalam language and in which generation this breakdown was occurring. Further, it was to be a key in “demarcating speaker and non-speaker populations” (Florey, 2009). The aim of the sentence translation task was to learn how productive skills vary and, to identify linguistic similarities and differences between speakers (Florey, 2009). Data was collected by recording the results of the language vitality test. Data was subsequently



analysed and presented in the form of tables and graphs. A pilot study was previously conducted using only the language vitality test and with a smaller sample. The results showed that intergenerational transmission was reasonably good from generation one to two but declined from generation two to three. This study included the collection of other forms of data to validate the findings of the pilot study by use of the same language vitality test but with additional personal interviews with ten respondents, five born in Malaysia and five born in Kerala, India.

### **3.10 Evaluation of Level of Endangerment**

Finally, the language was benchmarked against some of the factors that indicate the vitality of a language in accordance with the document “Language Vitality and Endangerment” by the UNESCO Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages (2003) (Appendix 4). The language was compared with the requirements of each indicative factor and presented in a mixture of scores that indicated the degree of endangerment. A detailed discussion in narrative form was then presented.

### **3.11 Instruments**

The instrument for the language vitality test was a three part test that included a lexical recognition test based on photos, verbal translation test of spoken sentences, and discourse. The instrument for the interview was a series of questions that included demographics, language use during childhood and currently, maintenance and preservation of the language as well as personal perceptions. A questionnaire of four questions was also distributed to the sample population. The instrument for ascertaining the level of endangerment was the indicative factors of linguistic vitality as detailed by “Language Vitality and Endangerment”, a document by the UNESCO Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages (2003).

### **3.12 Data Analysis**

Data from the questionnaire was in the form of percentages. Data from the cross-sectional Facebook survey was in the form of percentages. Data from the language vitality test was presented in the form of scores obtained from counting the number of correct answers. Data for the interview was based on the responses to the interview questions. Data ascertaining the level of endangerment was in the form of detailing the degree of endangerment based on the “Language Vitality and Endangerment”, a document by the UNESCO Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages (2003).

### **3.13 Presentation of Data**

Data for the interview was presented in graph and percentages. The results of the interview were presented in the form of a narrative and some parts in the form of graphs and percentages. The results of the questionnaire, and the cross-sectional Facebook survey were presented in percentages and in narrative form. The results of the language vitality test was presented in percentages numbers and percentages and explained. The level of endangerment was presented in both numbers and percentages indicating the degree of endangerment and narratives.

### **3.14 Conclusion**

This research uses both quantitative and qualitative methods. The sample was from three different generations and chosen by snowball sampling. A questionnaire was administrated to the sample and a cross-sectional Facebook survey conducted online. The sample was given a language vitality test was given to some participants and ten of them were interviewed. Factors that indicate linguistic vitality of a language from “Language Vitality and Endangerment”, a document by the UNESCO Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages (2003) was used to ascertain the level of endangerment

of the Malayalam Language in Malaysia. All the various methods helped the researcher draw interesting conclusions. In the next chapter, data that has been collected will be presented and discussed in detail.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the results of the various data that has been collected throughout the duration of the research. All the figures are presented in this chapter and they are explained in detail. The results of the interview are presented in narrative form with tables and salient factors delineated. The results of the questionnaire are presented in table form and explained in detail. The language vitality test is presented in percentages, tables and graphs.

#### **4.2 Responses from Interview**

A series of interviews were conducted to elicit valuable information. The interviews were carried out on a one to one basis over a period of two months in a small district in Malaysia that has a fairly large community of Malayalam speakers. A total of ten samples were chosen; five who were born in Kerala, India and migrated to Malaysia, and five who were born in Malaysia. The interview included questions (Appendix 1) about their childhood, education background parental/ancestral information, and their use of the language during childhood and currently, their perceptions of the language, attitudes towards preserving the language and culture. These interviews were carried out on an informal, semi structured basis with a basic line of questioning and additional questions being generated depending on different attitudes and responses by the samples themselves.

### **4.3 Background of Respondents' Language Choice and Usage**

The following are detailed descriptions of the results of the interview with excerpts of the views of the participants.

#### **Case 1: R1MMG2**

R1MMG2 is a Malaysian born Malayalee male who is married. He works as an Occupational Safety and Health officer with a multinational company in Malaysia. His highest level of education is S.P.M which is equal to A levels. He speaks Malayalam, Malay, English and Tamil; all with reasonably good proficiency. His father was a Malaysian born Malayalee and was a teacher. His father spoke Malayalam, Tamil, English and Malay. His mother was a housewife. She spoke Malayalam predominantly and a little Malay. Languages spoken during childhood were Malayalam, English and Tamil with Malayalam being the dominant language. His wife is a Malaysian born Malayalee. She is a kindergarten teacher with Form Six or 'O' levels as the highest level of education. She speaks Tamil, Malay and English fairly well but speaks little Malayalam. Languages spoken at home currently are Malayalam, English and Tamil with English and Tamil being more dominant. He communicates with his wife in English or Tamil, with friends in English, Malay or Tamil, in English, Malay or Tamil at work and English or Tamil socially. He is unable to read and write in Malayalam. He observes most Malayalee traditions but is not involved in the local Malayalee association.

He feels it is very important to preserve the Malayalam language. His parents made an attempt to preserve the language by speaking exclusively in Malayalam with the children. They also observed Malayalee traditions such as celebrating Onam. His wife who is a Malayalee does not speak Malayalam. She

grew up in an area where there were almost exclusively Tamil speaking people. The respondent has been trying to get her to learn Malayalam and is slowly succeeding. He promotes the importance of using and preserving the language to other Malayalees. He feels that it is vital that the language is preserved here in Malaysia and agrees that losing the language means losing the culture.

His personal view on Malayalam language in Malaysia is that the language is being lost and along with it the culture. He says that Malayalees are being influenced by the Tamil language and culture largely due to language policies that sideline Malayalam language. He further says that mixed marriages are also a contributing factor of the decline of the Malayalam language here in Malaysia, and that, parents are not making concentrated efforts to preserve the language.

(E1) *...I speak in English at home with my wife because she speaks English and Tamil more than Malayalam. Malayalees in Malaysia are not teaching their children Malayalam these days. Many speak more English at home...* (R1)

#### Case 2: R2MMG1

R2MMG1 is a married male Malayalee born in Malaysia. He is aged 53 and is a businessman dealing in pharmaceutical products. He is highly educated with a bachelor degree. He speaks English, Malay, Tamil and very little Malayalam. His father worked in a printing press and his mother is a housewife. The father speaks English, Malay, Tamil as does his mother. Language spoken during childhood was predominantly Tamil. His wife is a Malayalee.

E refers to Excerpts from quotations by respondents, thus E1 is excerpt one and so forth  
R1 refers to respondent one and so forth

She is also highly educated with a bachelor degree and is a journalist. She speaks Malayalam very well. They have two girls aged eight and twelve. Language spoken with his wife and children is English. Language spoken with children at home currently is English.

Languages used with friends, at work and socially are English, Malay and Tamil. He is unable to read and write in Malayalam. He observes some Malayalee traditions but is not involved in the local Malayalee association.

He feels that it is important to preserve the Malayalam language here in Malaysia. His parents did not make attempts to use the language or preserve it and neither does he. They lived in an area where the community consisted of Tamil speaking Indians. He feels it is important to preserve the language here in Malaysia and that losing the language means losing the culture. He realizes that there is a dire need to preserve the language but that it is an uphill task as there is not much encouragement or motivation to do so.

(E2) *...I know that not being able to speak my mother tongue, Malayalam, is bad. I feel it is important to keep using the language and preserve it but I don't know how. Anyway, English easier to speak and more useful nowadays...* (R2)

### Case 3: R3MMG3

R3MMG3 is a 22 year old single male born in Malaysia. He is studying at a local college in Malaysia. He speaks English and Malay. He understands a little spoken Malayalam. His Malaysian born father (deceased) was an executive at a bank. His

father spoke English, Malay, Malayalam and Tamil. His mother is a teacher and she speaks English, Malay, Malayalam and Tamil. Language spoken at home during childhood was English. Language spoken currently is English. Language spoken with mother is English. His paternal grandfather came from Kerala. Language spoken with grandparents is English with the paternal grandmother and Malay with the paternal grandfather. English was spoken with the maternal grandparents. Languages spoken at college, with friends and college are English and Malay. He is unable to read and write in Malayalam. His parents spoke to him almost exclusively in English. His paternal grandmother spoke to him in English to learn English from him and he spoke to his paternal grandfather in Malay as the grandfather was unable to speak English. This was in spite of spending at least thirteen years with his paternal grandparents. Is this an indication of language being more of a personal choice rather than environment? Is this an indication that the choice of a language is based on which language is important and needed in the immediate environment? When asked why he never spoke in Malayalam even with his grandparents, he could not pinpoint any reason. He feels it is not important to preserve Malayalam language and that his parents did not make any efforts to preserve the language. He does not make any efforts to promote or preserve the language. He feels there is no importance in preserving the language here in Malaysia and that losing a language does not mean losing the culture. He had no views about Malayalam language as he says it is not something that he thinks about. He is not active in the local Malayalee Association and observes the Onam festival as a participant if observed by his grandparents at their home.



(E3) *...It is not important to learn and use Malayalam. I prefer English. I speak English well and all my friends speak English. Besides, my parents never made an effort to make sure I used the language at home. I have never really thought about Malayalam language or worried about not knowing it...* (R3)

#### Case 4: R4MFG1

R4MFG1 is a Malaysian born Malayalee, aged 52 who is married. She speaks English, Malay, Malayalam and Tamil. She was a national sportswoman with S.P.M (equivalent to 'O' levels) as her highest level of education. Her husband is a Malaysian born Malayalee who speaks the same languages as she does. He is a national football coach and his highest level of education is also S.P.M. They have three children aged 29, 27 and 18. The two older children speak English, Malay and Malayalam but the youngest only speaks English and Malay. Her father (deceased) was born in Kerala and migrated to Malaysia. He was working first as a policeman in Kerala and with the railways here in Malaysia. He spoke English, Malay, Tamil and Malayalam. Her mother was born in Kerala and migrated with her father to Malaysia. She finished high school in Kerala. She speaks Malayalam Tamil and a little English and Malay. Languages spoken during childhood were English and Malayalam with Malayalam being the dominant language. Language spoken at home currently is English. Language spoken with mother is Malayalam. Language spoken with husband is English. Language spoken with children is English. Languages spoken with friends and socially are English, Malay, Malayalam and Tamil. She is unable to read and write in Malayalam. She feels that it is important to preserve the Malayalam language. Her parents preserved the language by speaking in Malayalam at home

with her siblings and her. She makes an attempt to preserve the language by speaking to her children in Malayalam whenever possible and maintaining the use of the language among Malayalee friends. She feels that it is important to preserve the language here in Malaysia and that losing the language means losing the culture. She is an active member of the local Malayalee Association and also celebrates Onam but her children are not involved in the Malayalee Association and do not celebrate Onam unless it is with her. This could be due to the fact that their spouses are not of Malayalee descent which brings into play mixed marriages as a factor contributing to the decline of the use of Malayalam and the reduction of intergenerational transmission of the language. She has made several trips to her country of origin Kerala, India. She feels that the Malayalam language is a beautiful language and that it should be preserved and maintained through concentrated efforts by all members of the community. She feels that the local Malayalee Associations should play a more active role in promoting and preserving the language here in Malaysia.

(E4) *...For me it is important to keep the Malayalam language alive but younger generation don't want to. Only my two older children speak Malayalam. My youngest child does not speak Malayalam. He speaks English. My children and I speak to each other in English and the children speak to each other in English and not Malayalam. My two girls are married to non-Malayalees and perhaps it is easier to speak in English. I feel mixed-marriage is one reason why people don't use Malayalam anymore...* (R4)

## Case 5: R5MFG2

R5MFG2 is a married female aged 34, born in Malaysia. Her highest level of education is a bachelor degree and she works as a Critical Situation Manager at Microsoft Malaysia. She speaks only English and Malay. She understands a little Malayalam and Tamil. Her husband is a Malaysian born Tamil. His highest level of education is a bachelor degree and he is a sales executive at a prominent broadcasting facility. He speaks English, Malay and Tamil. They have two children aged 5. Both children speak only English and a little Malay. Her father was Malaysian born and was a teacher and her mother who was also born in Malaysia was a housewife. Her mother finished high school. Her parents spoke English, Malay, Malayalam and Tamil. Languages spoken during childhood were English and Malayalam with English being the dominant language. Language currently spoken at home is English. Language spoken with parents was English. Language spoken with spouse is English. Language spoken with children is English. Languages spoken at work, with friends and socially are English and Malay. She is unable to read and write in Malayalam. She feels that it is important to preserve the language. Her parents made no attempts to preserve the language resulting in her lacking in proficiency in the language. She intends to promote and preserve the language and believes that it is important to preserve the language here in Malaysia. She also believes that losing the language is equal to losing the culture. She feels that Malayalam is a beautiful, soft and rhythmic language and that it should be preserved at all cost. She is not a member of the local Malayalee Association and does not celebrate Onam. The fact that she is married to a non Malayalee is not relevant to the reasons for the choice of languages used. Rather it seems to be due to a complete lack of intergenerational transfer.

(E5) ... *don't speak Malayalam not because my husband is not a Malayalee but because my parents never really insisted on me learning it. Some of my older siblings learnt to speak Malayalam from my late grandfather. My parents would speak to me in Malayalam at times but I would reply in English. I speak to my siblings in English. My children speak English...* (R5)

#### Case 6: R6KFG2

R6KFG2 is a Malayalee born in Kerala and is a married female aged 46. Her highest level of education is secondary school in Kerala. Her husband is a Malaysian born Malayalee. His highest level of education is at college level and he is a security guard by profession. He speaks Malayalam. They have three children aged 25, 19 and 18. All three children speak Malayalam, English, Malay and Tamil. Her father was born in Kerala. (still lives in Kerala). His highest level of education is high school in Kerala. He speaks English and Malayalam. Her mother is a housewife (still lives in Kerala) and she speaks only Malayalam. Language spoken during childhood was Malayalam. Language currently spoken at home is Malayalam. Language used with parents, husband and children is Malayalam. Languages spoken with friends and socially are Malayalam and Tamil. She is able to read and write in Malayalam. She feels it is important to preserve the Malayalam language. Her parents preserved the language by using it exclusively in the home environment and she has done the same ensuring that all her three children speak fluent Malayalam. In her zeal to preserve the language, she refused to learn Bahasa Melayu for quite a number of years only relenting when there was a pressing need to learn the language as her children were

growing up. She feels that it is important to preserving the language here in Malaysia or else it will be eventually lost among the community here. She strongly feels that losing the language means losing the culture as if people do not speak the language they will not practice the culture and traditions. She is not a member of the local Malayalee Association but observes the celebration of Onam and other important days such as the Malayalee New Year. She feels that more attempts should be made to promote and preserve the language. Parents, she says, must speak exclusively in Malayalam at home and children should be a part of the local Malayalee Association in order to maintain the language and culture.

(E6) ...*Malayalam nammallende baashe aane. Athe thane samsarikkinum veettil. Matte baashegal pinne padikkiyam. Ende kuttiyolle ellavarum Malayalam nannaiittu samsarikkum.*” (*Malayalam is our language. We must only speak Malayalam at home. My children all speak Malayalam well*) ... (R6)

#### Case 7: R7KMG1

R7KMG1 is a Malayalee born in Kerala who came to Malaysia during his adolescence. He was a business owner (restaurant) and was educated in Kerala only till primary school. He speaks Malayalam and Tamil well but speaks Malay only when necessary. His wife is a Malaysian born Malayalee and her level of education is lower primary school. She speaks Malayalam and Tamil well, and a little Malay and English. They have five children aged between 44 and 53 years old. . All of them speak Malayalam, Tamil, English and Malay. They have ten grandchildren aged between 5 and 24 years old. Four of them speak Malayalam well and also speak English, Malay and Tamil. Four of them speak English and

Malay, and, little or no Tamil and Malayalam. Two of them speak only English one of whom is in Malaysia and one in Canada. Language spoken at home was Malayalam. Language spoken currently at home is Malayalam. Language spoken with spouse and children is Malayalam. Languages spoken with spouses of the children are Malayalam and Tamil. Languages spoken with grandchildren vary between Malayalam, Tamil and Malay. Languages spoken with friends and socially are Malayalam and Tamil. He speaks and writes in Malayalam and so does his wife. None of his children read or write in Malayalam. He feels it is important to preserve the Malayalam language and is sad that some of his grandchildren do not speak the language. His parents preserved the language by using it exclusively at home. He in turn used the language exclusively with his wife and children. However, with his grandchildren he speaks a code switches from Malayalam or Malay with the grandchildren who do not speak Malayalam. He feels that it is important to preserve the language here in Malaysia or else the language will eventually be lost. He also feels that losing the language equals to losing the culture. He is a life member of the local Malayalee Association and is actively involved in it. He also observes all Malayalee traditions and celebrations. His personal view is that Malayalam is a beautiful language from a beautiful culture and should not be lost.

(E7) ...”*Kuttiyolne Achanum, Ammayum Malayalam parinyikudekkenella ee kalaathill. Ende pere kuttiyolle oruvade English thane samsarikkinnu. Pinne engeneya? Malayalam baashe angeneye poghum.*” (Parents are not teaching their children Malayalam nowadays. My grandchildren speak a lot in English. Then how? Malayalam language will slowly disappear”... (R7)

Case 8: R8KFG1

R8KFG1 is a female aged 67 years old, born in Kerala. Her highest level of education is college and she is a retired nurse. She speaks Malayalam, Tamil, English and Malay. Her husband is a Malaysian born Tamil. His highest level of education is Form Six and he was a senior technician with a telecommunications company. He speaks Tamil, English, Malay and a little Malayalam. They have three children aged 47, 43 and 40. All her children speak Malayalam, Tamil, English and Malay. Her parents are both from Kerala (father deceased). Her father's highest level of education was high school and he worked as a policeman in Kerala and with the railways in Malaysia. He spoke Malayalam, Tamil, English and Malay. Her mother is a housewife who finished high school in Kerala. She speaks Malayalam and Tamil and English and Malay only when required. This respondent is the older sister of respondent R3MFG1. They were chosen because the older sister was born in Kerala and the younger sister in Malaysia. This provides valuable information, especially with regards to the emerging pattern or patterns of intergenerational transmission. Language spoken during childhood was Malayalam and English with Malayalam being the dominant language. Language spoken at home currently is English. Language spoken with parents is Malayalam. Languages spoken with husband are English and Tamil. Languages spoken with children are Malayalam and English. Languages spoken with friends and socially are English, Malay, Malayalam and Tamil. She can read and write in Malayalam. She feels it is important to preserve the Malayalam language and has been doing so by speaking to her mother, siblings and children in Malayalam. Her sister R3MFG1 used to speak to the children in Malayalam but now uses English. Her third child does not speak any

Malayalam. This differs from the children of this respondent, all of whose children speak Malayalam. This respondent believes everything possible should be made to promote and preserve the language by speaking the language and being actively involved in the local Malayalee Associations. She feels that it is important to preserve the language here in Malaysia and that losing the language means losing the culture. She is actively involved in the local Malayalee Association and observes all the traditions and culture of the community. She feels that the language should be maintained and more efforts be made to preserve the language here in Malaysia.

(E8) *...I speak Malayalam ....even my children do....even though my husband is not Malayalee; I made it a point that my children learnt it. But then most of the time outside home, we speak English with friends and some family members. I was born in Kerala ... so maybe because of that...my other siblings who were born in Malaysia speak more English...*

(R8)

#### Case 9: R9KFG1

R9KFG1 is a female aged 75 years born in Kerala. She is a housewife and speaks Malayalam, Tamil, English and Malay. Her husband is a Malaysian born Malayalee. He had a basic education and was a planter. He speaks Malayalam, Tamil, English and Malay. They have seven children. All the children speak Malayalam and other languages such as Malay, English and Tamil. Her parents were from Kerala. They spoke Malayalam. Language spoken during childhood was Malayalam. Language currently spoken is Malayalam. Language spoken with parents was Malayalam spoken with husband and children is Malayalam.



Languages spoken with friends and socially are Malayalam and English. She can both read and write in Malayalam. She feels that it is important to preserve the language and that her parents preserved the language by speaking exclusively in Malayalam at home. She feels that it is also important to preserve the language here in Malaysia and that losing the language means losing the culture. Thus all efforts should be made to preserve it.

(E9) *...Children nowadays won't speak Malayalam if parents don't make them speak....they like to speak more in English...watch English movies...listen to English songs....Malayalam nammalade baashe aane...marrakkam padulla...*” (Malayalam is our language...we shouldn't forget)... (R9)

#### Case 10: R10KFG1

R10KFG1 is a 54 year old female born in Kerala. Her highest level of education is a university degree. She is a housewife. She speaks Malayalam, Hindi, Tamil, English and Malay. Her husband is a Malayalee who was born in Maharashtra. He is a planter here in Malaysia. He speaks Malayalam, Hindi, Tamil, English and Malay. They have two adult children who speak English and Malay but very little Malayalam. Her father who was born in Kerala was an accountant and her mother who was also born in Kerala was a housewife. They both speak Malayalam and English. Languages spoken at home during childhood were Malayalam and Hindi. Languages spoken currently at home are Malayalam and English. Language spoken with parents is Malayalam. Language spoken with husband and children is English. Language spoken with friends and socially is English. She is able to read and write in Malayalam. She feels it is not important

to preserve the language; that is of little or no use in her current life. Her parents made an effort to preserve the language by speaking exclusively in Malayalam at home. She does not make any attempts to promote or preserve the language as she feels that the language is not needed. She does not think that losing the language amounts to losing the culture. She is not active in the local Malayalee Association but observes Onam. She feels that it may be important to some to learn the language but it is not given due recognition and is of little importance at present.

(E10) *...What is the point? We hardly use Malayalam here in Malaysia other than with family.... Even in India, we can only speak Malayalam in Kerala...English we can speak anywhere! ...* (R10)

#### **4.3.1 The Pattern of Language Shift to English among Malayalees in Malaysia based on the Interviews**

The first five respondents were born in Malaysia. Two respondents were from generation one, two from generation two and one from generation 3. All of them showed a shift towards using English instead of Malayalam; in short, a shift from Malayalam to English. This is displayed in Table: 4.1. The next five respondents were born in Kerala and moved to Malaysia at some point of their lives. Four out of the five respondents were from generation one, one from generation two and none from generation three. Out of these five only one respondent (R10KFG1), showed a shift from Malayalam to English. Three out of the respondents; R6KFG2, R7KFG1 and R9KFG1 who were born in Kerala, did not speak English and only spoke Malayalam. R8KFG1 and R10KFG1 both spoke

Malayalam and English but R10KFG1 felt English was more important than Malayalam did not insist on her children learning the language while R8KFG1 did (Table 4.1). Interestingly, R8KFG1 who was born in Kerala, and R4MFG2 who was born in Malaysia are sisters but R4MFG2 did not insist on her children learning Malayalam. Thus, her two older children speak both Malayalam and English but her youngest child speaks only English. The language that she uses with all her children however, is almost exclusively English. This shows a gradual shift from Malayalam to English that is already occurring.

All the children of R8KFG1 speak both Malayalam and English but out of his ten grandchildren four speak Malayalam and English while the other six do not speak Malayalam at all and use English at home and socially. This shows that there is a decline of the use of Malayalam and an increase of the use of English by the third generation.

R5MFG2 is married to a non-Malayalee. She does speak in English with her spouse and her children. She feels it is easier to use English for communication because it is easier and more practical than using either parent's mother tongue. R10KFG1 feels that Malayalam is not important in Malaysia as it is not a medium of instruction in schools or used widely in media.

Table 4.1 Results from Interview

| Respondents | Place of Birth | Shift to English | Spouse Malayalee | Language Spoken the Most Daily |
|-------------|----------------|------------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| R1MMG2      | Malaysia       | √                | √                | English                        |
| R2MMG1      | Malaysia       | √                | √                | English                        |
| R3MMG3      | Malaysia       | √                | √                | English                        |
| R4MFG1      | Malaysia       | √                | √                | English                        |
| R5MFG2      | Malaysia       | √                | X                | English                        |
| R6KFG2      | Kerala         | X                | √                | Malayalam                      |
| R7KMG1      | Kerala         | X                | √                | Malayalam                      |
| R8KFG1      | Kerala         | √                | X                | English                        |
| R9KFG1      | Kerala         | X                | √                | Malayalam                      |
| R10KFG1     | Kerala         | √                | √                | English                        |

#### 4.4 Reasons for Language Shift Based on Interview

There are several reasons for the shift from Malayalam to English based on this interview.

##### 4.4.1 The Influence of Immediate Surroundings

Two of the respondents quoted the influence of immediate surroundings while growing up as a factor that led them to use English instead of Malayalam. The first respondent grew up in an environment where either English or Tamil was spoken.

(E11) *...My neighbours only spoke Tamil and English. My parents too spoke only Tamil and English although they knew Malayalam...* (R1)

The other respondent's spouse grew up speaking English and Tamil at home. His determination to speak Malayalam and not Tamil has led to using English as a neutral means of communication.

(E12) *...My wife can't speak Malayalam and I don't like using Tamil so we speak to each other more in English...* (R2)

#### **4.4.2 Important to Learn English more than Malayalam**

A few respondents felt that it was not important to learn and speak in Malayalam and that it was more important to learn English. A few respondents were of the opinion that that it was more important to learn English as it was a global language. They felt that Malayalam was not a widespread language and could be used only in certain locations around the world. They feel that it is better and of more value to learn to speak English.

(E13) *...Why should I learn Malayalam? I can't speak in Malayalam with my friends and colleagues. They all speak English. Even my parents' siblings and their children speak in English...* (R3)

#### **4.4.3 English is the Popular Choice in Mixed Marriages**

The respondents who were in a mixed-marriage and said that selecting a language that is common to both was practical with English being the popular choice. A couple of the respondents shared the view that mixed marriages were a huge factor in English being the choice of language in the home domain as it was sometimes difficult to find common ground when trying to decide which language was suitable to be taught to the children.

(E14) *...My husband is Tamil and I am Malayalee....so ...we picked English as a neutral language to speak to avoid confusing them. Both my children speak fluent English although they are only six years old. English is definitely more important to me...*

(R4)

#### **4.4.4 Other Reasons for the Shift to English**

Other observations from the interview were as follow. Parents of respondents from all three generations speak Malayalam. Those who were born in Kerala all speak Malayalam while only two out of five of those born in Malaysia speak it. The siblings of those born in Kerala all speak Malayalam. Only one respondent out of those born in Malaysia had siblings who all spoke Malayalam, another had three out of eight siblings who spoke Malayalam while the other three cited their siblings as not being able to speak the language. The children of all the respondents who were born in Kerala speak Malayalam except for one respondent who thought it was not relevant or important for them to know Malayalam in their present daily life. Only some of the children of those who were born in Malaysia were able to speak Malayalam while others were not able to speak. There seems to be a decline in the usage of Malayalam as it comes down to generation three.

Several factors emerged while conducting the interviews. R1MMG2 does not speak in Malayalam with his wife who is a Malayalee. His wife's parents spoke Malayalam but none of the children (her siblings) spoke Malayalam. The reason is the same as the next respondent

that is the people around them (neighbours) were primarily Tamil speaking. R2MMG1 does not speak Malayalam as his parents never used the language at home. He says they grew up in an area where the neighbours were primarily of Tamil speaking background and thus his parents assimilated into the surrounding language and culture. General exploration of this revealed that in many families, in spite of the fact that parents speak fluent Malayalam, they do not speak in Malayalam with their children but use English instead because that is the language that is used frequently and also the popular language that is used in society and in media.

R3MMG3 did not learn how to speak the language in spite of spending around thirteen to fourteen years in close contact with his grandparents who spoke fluent Malayalam. He says he felt no necessity to learn the language and is not interested in learning the language. He speaks only in English with his parents, siblings and extended family members.

R4MFG1 was born in Malaysia and her sister R8KFG1 was born in Kerala. Only two out of three children of R4MFG1 speak Malayalam while all the children of R8KFG1 speak Malayalam in spite of being married to a non Malayalee. This is may be because the sister who was born in Kerala is still very much culturally bound to her roots having being born in Kerala. However, this may be true for many people who are born in Kerala but may differ with others. The third child of R4MFG1 speaks only in English with his parents and siblings.

R10KFG1 was born in Kerala but saw no importance in using the language with her children or teaching them the language, in spite of being able to speak fluent Malayalam herself. It comes back to the idea that language is a matter of choice defined by external factors rather than only on the merit of it being the mother tongue. The dominant choice of language in this case is English. This also reflects the reasons for not learning Malayalam by respondent R3MMG3.

R7KMG1 was born in Kerala India. Being eighty seven years old, he had children and grandchildren and an observation could be made on all three generations just from one respondent. His children all speak Malayalam but out of his 10 grandchildren, only four speak Malayalam while the others do not. This case shows the decline very clearly. By the time it comes to the third generation, the usage of the language has declined. Thus, by the time it comes to the fourth generation, in all probability, unless the parents make an effort to teach the children the language, it is going to be lost in that lineage. Again, the dominant language of choice by the grandchildren who do not speak Malayalam is English.

Thus, we see a gradual decline of the use of Malayalam and the shift towards English. Based on these interviews, the use of Malayalam seems to be declining especially by the third generation and the use of English, increasing. Malayalam is seen as unimportant as there is little or no use for it outside the home and socially unless it is used within the community itself.



#### 4.5 Responses from Questionnaire

A questionnaire was conducted to determine the choice of languages spoken at home, and if their choice was English, why it was their choice. The questionnaire was given out to the respondents and they were given a week to respond to the questions. The respondents were also asked if they thought that in Malaysia, it was more important to learn English than Malayalam, and the reasons for their answer.

Sixty people were involved in the questionnaire. Twenty were from generation one, twenty from generation two and twenty from generation three. They were required to answer four questions.

The table below shows the response to question 1 by generation.

Table 4.2: Responses to Question 1

| <b>GENERATION</b> | <b>NO OF YES RESPONSES</b> | <b>PERCENTAGE</b> |
|-------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|
| <b>G 1</b>        | <b>11</b>                  | <b>55%</b>        |
| <b>G 2</b>        | <b>16</b>                  | <b>80%</b>        |
| <b>G 3</b>        | <b>19</b>                  | <b>95%</b>        |

The responses showed that the percentage of respondents who speak English at home increased from generation 1 to generation 3. In generation 1, only eleven out of twenty (55%) respondents said that they speak English at home. In generation 2, sixteen out of twenty (80%) respondents said they speak English at home and in generation 3, nineteen out of twenty (95%) respondents said that they speak English at home. The figures show that there is an increase of the use of English at home from generation one to three. 55% of the respondents from generation one speak English at home and, it increases to 80%

in generation two, and, 95% in generation three. There is a marked increase from generation to generation and this in turn shows how there is an increasing shift towards English among speakers of Malayalam in Malaysia.

The next question asked the reasons for their choice of English. Several responses were given. Among the popular answers from generation two and three was that their parents spoke English and insisted on English being spoken at home. Parents who spoke both in Malayalam and English, led to children speaking more of English and less of Malayalam. Those from generation one and a few from generation two who spoke English also said that they studied under the English medium of instruction in school and this induced them to speak more English than Malayalam at home. Another reason was that it was a question of necessity to learn and use English as it was needed in order to pursue an education in institutions of higher learning such as universities and colleges. Peer pressure was also listed as a reason to shift to English. Having peers who spoke English well was a motivation to also speak English in order to keep up socially. A couple of respondents said that they lived in an area where most of the neighbours were of English speaking background (non-native speakers of English) and thus began to speak more in English themselves. Finally, the influence of media and the internet that widely uses English was touted as one of the reasons to use English more than Malayalam. Newspapers, magazines, movies, pop culture and songs were seen to also encourage the learning and use of English.

Question three asked if the respondents felt that it was more important to learn English than Malayalam. Although all the respondents from the three generations agreed that it was important to learn and use English, those from generation one and some respondents from generation two felt it was always important to learn and use Malayalam to preserve

it. Only one or two respondents from generation three agreed that it was useful or important to preserve Malayalam. The respondents gave reasons why they thought that learning English was important. English is used internationally in trade, commerce, politics, and international relations. Most reference books at institutions of higher learning are in English, and translating them would be an immense time consuming task. English is also taught as a second language in mainstream education in all national schools. It is one of the compulsory subjects for major examinations and efforts are already underway to make it compulsory to pass the English paper in major examinations. English is also the popular choice in all domains especially business, employment, education, politics, law, medicine and media. Malayalam they say is only useful in social context within the community or in their home state of Kerala in India and nowhere else.

#### **4.6 Responses from Cross-sectional Survey**

A cross-sectional survey was conducted over social network via an online community called “Malaysian Malayalees” on Facebook. The community consists of Malayalees from Malaysia. The aim of the survey was to discover the popular language of choice in the domains of home and society. Two questions were posed; “Do you speak Malayalam at home and socially?” and “If the answer is ‘no’, and you speak English at home and socially, why English?” The questions were left on the community wall for about two months.

Fifty one people of Malayalee descent responded. Out of the fifty one, twenty nine people said that they speak either both English and Malayalam or only English. The remaining twenty two said they speak only Malayalam at home. The people involved in the survey were of different ages and backgrounds. The results of the survey show that

there is a shift towards English with more people using English as a medium of communication at home. Most of the responses did not include reasons for their choice although that was one of the questions posed. Reasons for English as a choice included the fact that parents insisted on the language being used at home. One respondent who came from a background of mixed parentage said that his father who was a Malayalee, and was from an English medium school, insisted that the children only spoke English and no other Indian languages. Another respondent quoted being married to a non Malayalee as a reason to pick English as a common and neutral language to use within the family home. Most of the respondents agreed that parents or grandparents insisted on the use of English at home besides the fact that they were from English medium schools. One of the respondents said that after the grandparents passed away, the family stopped speaking Malayalam and shifted towards English. This is an indication that intergenerational transmission plays an important role in what languages are used by the future generation. In this case a reduction of the use of Malayalam and an elevated importance given to English. In many cases, the responses indicated that speaking in English at home was insisted upon by parents or English was picked up as a habit due to the fact that the father had only spoken to the children in English.

#### **4.7 Responses based on Language Vitality Test**

The language vitality test was conducted to gain insight into the linguistic vitality of Malayalam language in Malaysia. The test was carried out over a period of three months and administered on a one to one basis. The sample population for the language vitality test was Malayalees of 3 different generations. They were chosen at random based on their willingness to participate in the study and also by snowball and referential sampling. The respondents themselves introduced other respondents. The respondents from the sample were divided into three generations based on their ages. Generation 1

(G1) was from the age of 50 years and above, generation 2 (G2) was from the ages of 30 to 50 years and, generation 3 (G3), from the ages of 18 to 29. All the respondents had parents who are both of Malayalee descent in order to preserve the purity and to achieve true scores in the test. All the subjects were from educated backgrounds but not necessarily employed. They were mainly from urban areas and additionally speak other languages such as English, Malay or Tamil.

The language vitality test was conducted on the above subjects to ascertain linguistic vitality. The tests consisted of lexical recognition based on photos, verbal translation of spoken sentences, and discourse (Adopted and adapted from a study by Florey, 2009).

The aim of the lexical recognition test was “to learn how receptive linguistic ability varied according to generation” (Florey, 2009). It was also used to determine if and in which generation there was a failure of transmission of the language. The aim of the sentence translation task was to learn how productive skills vary and, to identify linguistic similarities and differences between speakers (Florey, 2009). Data was collected by recording the results of the language vitality test.

Here are the results of the test presented in tables and graphs based on each category.

#### **4.7.1 Lexical Recognition**

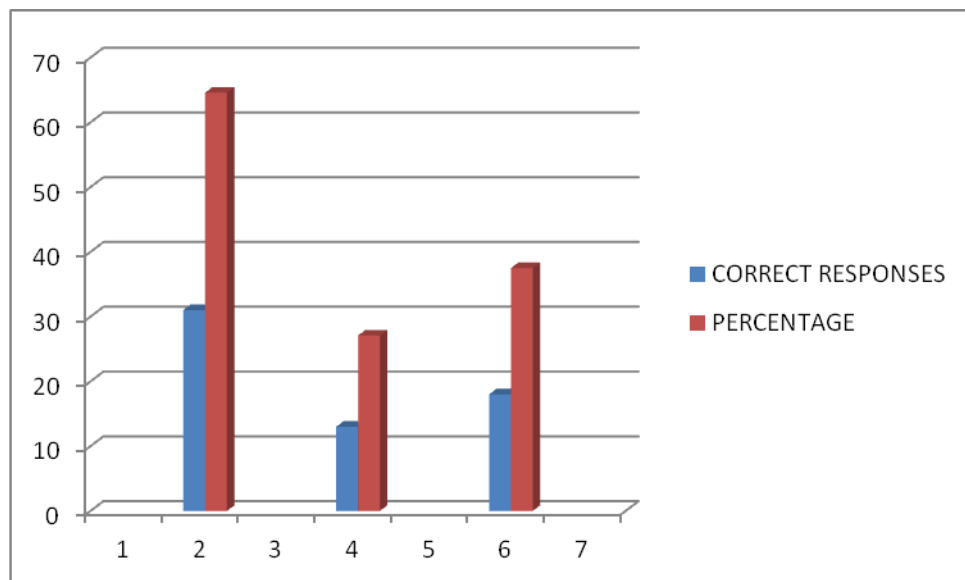
The results of the lexical recognition task are shown in the table and graph below.

It shows the number and percentages of correct responses from the respondents.

Table 4.3 Lexical Recognition

| GENERATION | CORRECT RESPONSES | PERCENTAGE |
|------------|-------------------|------------|
| G 1        | 31                | 64.6       |
| G 2        | 13                | 27.1       |
| G 3        | 18                | 37.5       |

Figure 4.1 Lexical Recognition



The results of the lexical recognition test show that generation 1 scored 64.6% correct, generation 2 scored 27.1% correct and generation 3 scored 37.5% correct. The reason for the relatively low score was because one of the respondents could not respond correctly to the lexical items presented. The relatively higher score in generation 3 was due to one respondent who responded correctly to all the lexical items that were presented. Generation 3 shows better scores than generation 2 because one of the respondents in generation 3 performed well in the test.

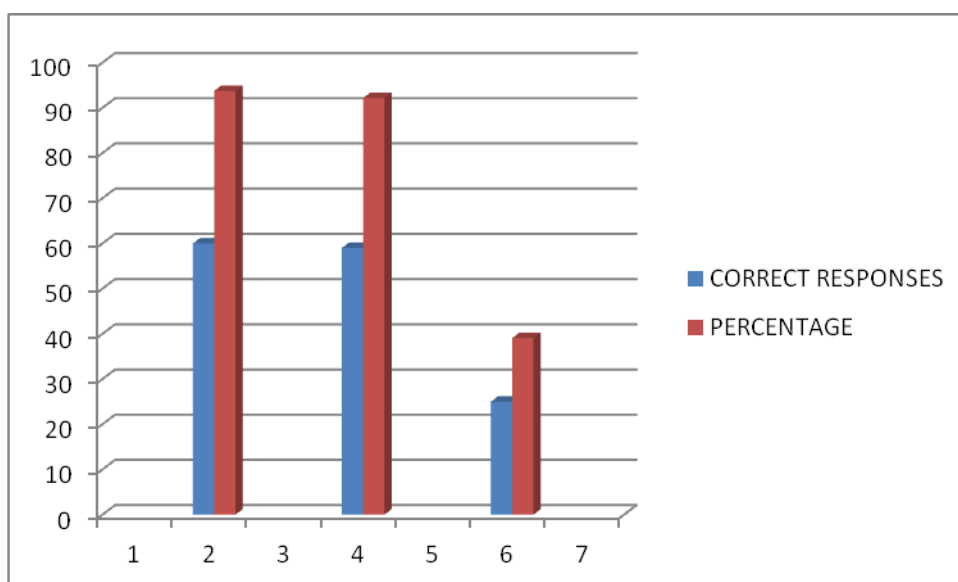
#### 4.7.2 Sentence Translation Task

The table and graph below show the correct responses of the sentence translation task.

Table 4.4 Sentence Translation

| GENERATION | CORRECT RESPONSES | PERCENTAGE |
|------------|-------------------|------------|
| G 1        | 60                | 93.8       |
| G 2        | 59                | 92.2       |
| G 3        | 25                | 39.1       |

Figure 4.2 Sentence Translation



Generation 1 (93.8) and 2 (92.2) performed well in the sentence translation test but generation 3 performed less well at 66.7%.

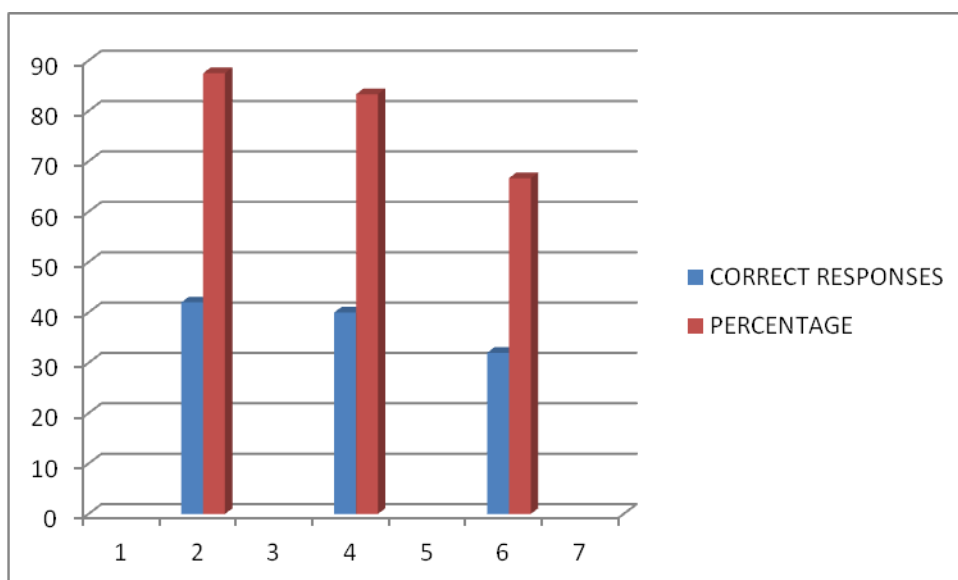
### 4.7.3 Discourse

The following table and graph show the results of the discourse task.

Table 4.5 Discourse

| GENERATION | CORRECT RESPONSES | PERCENTAGE |
|------------|-------------------|------------|
| G 1        | 42                | 87.5       |
| G 2        | 40                | 83.3       |
| G 3        | 32                | 66.7       |

Figure 4.3 Discourse



As with the sentence translation test, generation 1 (87.5) and generation 2 (83.3) performed well in the test while generation 3 performed less well at 66.7%.

The results show that generation 1 performed only fairly well in the lexical recognition category (64.6) while generation 2 and 3 performed below average in the same category. This shows that all the generations have problems with lexical



recognition especially those in generation 2 and 3. This shows a gradual decline from a lexical point of view and the transmission of correct lexicon seems to be reduced from generation 1 to generation 2 and 3.

In the sentence translation task, generation 1 and 2 scored very well while generation 3 performed below average. This shows that generation 1 and 2 still have a relatively good command of the language and is able to translate sentences while generation 3 has poor command of the language. Thus, transmission of the language from generation 1 to 2 seems to have been strong but has weakened in transmission from generation 2 to 3.

Generation 1 and 2 performed well in the discourse test while generation 3 achieved average scores. The subjects were asked to respond verbally in phrases or sentences to pictures shown with no verbal cues given. The pictures were of common daily actions. The average scores of generation 3 was largely due to the good scores of one or two respondents.

#### **4.8 The Shift from Malayalam to English**

The findings from the interview, questionnaire and cross-sectional survey via social network show that there is a shift from Malayalam to English. The factors that contribute to this shift can be summarized as the following.

#### 4.8.1 Intergenerational Transmission

Most of the respondents stated that their parents used English at home and insisted on the children using English at home too instead of their mother tongue, Malayalam. Here are some of the comments that were made by the respondents.

(E15) *...I speak English at home due to family has made it spoken language at home, though my Dad could converse fluently in Malayalam but he didn't teach it thus I speak English now catching up with Malayalam language....* (R2)

(E16) *.....I understand Malayalam but speak English at home...since young I was trained to speak English! ...* (R4)

(E17) *.... I speak in English with Dad and Malayalam with Mom. Simply because they are more comfortable that way plus it has become the practice since childhood to do so. ...* (R11)

(E18) *....I think I speak Malayalam very fluently but at home I speak only in English to my Malayalee wife and my children. I guess I picked up this habit because my Dad always spoke to me in English and it became second nature to speak in English at home....*(R12)

(E19) *.....I speak English at home with family as well as with most of my relatives and friends. When I was going to kindergarten my father made it mandatory to speak only in English. Even if my mother spoke to us in Malayalam, we used to answer back only in English...*(R13)

(E20) *.....I speak English at home with the usage of Malayalam words here and there. Why English? My grandfather emphasized on English when he was raising his children. So it was carried down from there....*

(R14)

These comments clearly show that the choice to speak English at home was triggered by parents and grandparents. Thus we can conclude that the choice to use English at home is a conscious choice made by parents and grandparents, and passed down to their children and grandchildren.

#### **4.8.2 People within Immediate Environment**

A couple of respondents said they grew up in an environment where friends and neighbours were not Malayalees and generally communicated with each other in either Tamil or English.

(E21) *....My neighbours were not Malayalees. They spoke Tamil or English. My parents spoke to each other in Tamil. I chose to speak English as I was from an English medium school... (R2)*

(E22) *... In terms of social communication, I'd say 99% of Malayalee friends and relatives I have prefer speaking in English... (R15)*

The excerpts above show that the choice of spoken language, English here, can be influenced by people in a person's immediate surroundings or environment.

### **4.8.3 Medium of Instruction in School**

Respondents from generation one and two said that English was the medium of instruction in school during their school days and this prompted them to pick English as a choice to speak at home.

(E23) ...*Speaking English was an order from my Acha (Malayalam for father), just because he is brought up in English medium school, he never spoke to us in Malayalam...* (R16)

(E24) ...*I was educated in an English medium school and as such, I'm more fluent in English than in Malayalam...* (R17)

English being the medium of instruction in school only affected generation one and two because by generation three the medium of instruction was changed to Bahasa Melayu. English was then taught only as a second language. All subjects other than English were taught in Bahasa Melayu. Using English most of the time in schools caused the shift towards English and this spilled over to English being spoken at home; in some cases also being carried down to the third and fourth generation.

### **4.8.4 English more Important than Malayalam**

English is seen as more important and useful to learn than Malayalam by some respondents.

(E25) ... *Why English? I think it is the most universally spoken and understood language...* (R18)

(E26) ... *I can't use Malayalam with people other than Malayalees. Even when I go to India, I can only use Malayalam in my home state, Kerala. In other places, I can only use either English or in some places Hindi. So, I choose to speak English and Hindi, and, my children speak English...* (R10)

#### **4.8.5 Mixed Marriages**

Mixed marriages were not taken into account during the planning of the research. However, due to snowball sampling, some respondents who were from mixed parentage or in mixed marriages expressed their views.

(E27) ...*I come from mixed parentage family. I speak English at home. No other Indian language besides English...* (R19)

(E28) ...*Only speak English at home coz me married to non Malayalee...* (R20)

(E29) ...*I come from mixed marriage and my parents spoke English at home so I speak English, Bahasa Melayu and some Punjabi....*(R21)

Thus, mixed-marriages have a part to play in language choice and language shift. In most cases, English was the choice as it was a neutral language.

In conclusion, language choice and shift are influenced by several factors of which inter-generational transmission seems to be the strongest reason. Parents and grandparents have made English the language to be spoken at home and

children and grandchildren follow suit. Other reasons seem to be secondary but still influential in causing the shift from Malayalam to English.

#### **4.9 Linguistic Vitality of Malayalam Language in Malaysia**

Several interesting results emerged from the data collected based on the language vitality test. One was that one of the respondents in generation 1 (G1R2) was not able to complete the test due to the fact that he did not speak the Malayalam language. This was in spite of coming from a purely Malayalee background. The reason given was that his parents also did not speak the language but spoke the Tamil language instead. A respondent from generation 3 (G3R4) achieved excellent scores on all components of the test. This was due to the fact that she learnt to read and write in Malayalam from a very young age. It was also compounded by the fact that she had just returned from Kerala where she had spent 6 weeks. Two respondents from generation 1 (G1R3 and G1R4) who were sisters performed differently in the test. G1R3 did not perform well while G1R4 performed well. This they explained, was because G1R4 watched a lot of Malayalam movies and dramas whenever possible.

Generally all 3 generations had problems with the lexical recognition category. The wrong responses were in the Tamil language, a language that is used extensively within the Indian community in Malaysia. The same applied to the translation and discourse categories but in these two categories, generation 1 and 2 performed well while generation 3 did not. In generation 3, the respondents largely spoke English as a first or second language at home and within the community and also displayed better knowledge of Tamil than Malayalam.

The results of the language vitality test showed that there is a decline in the use of Malayalam among the Malayalam community in Malaysia and this is largely due to lack of inter-generational transmission that is exacerbated by the lack of institutional and societal support.

#### 4.10 Evaluation of Level of Endangerment

The language was benchmarked against some of the factors that indicate the vitality of a language in accordance with the document “Language Vitality and Endangerment” by the UNESCO Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages (2003). The language was compared with the requirements of each indicative factor.

The factors that the document touted as the most relevant to linguistic vitality of a language are shown in the diagram below.

Figure 4.4 Factors that Influence Language Vitality



From: “A methodology for assessing language vitality and endangerment”-

<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/endangered-languages/language-vitality/>

The following are factors that the Malayalam language in Malaysia matched up to, and thus an indication of the vitality of the language. They are to be understood with close reference to the full document “Language Vitality and Endangerment”, UNESCO Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages, 2003.

#### **4.10.1 Factor 1: Intergenerational Language Transmission**

Factor 1: Intergenerational Language Transmission: Unsafe (4): Most but not all children or families of a particular community speak their language as their first language, but it may be restricted to specific social domains (such as at home where children interact with their parents and grandparents). Based on the language vitality test and the interview, most of the children of the respondents speak Malayalam but not all.

#### **4.10.2 Factor 2: Absolute Number of Speakers**

Factor 2: Absolute Number of Speakers. No comparison was made against this factor as the scope of the study is not wide enough to ascertain the absolute number of speakers.

#### **4.10.3 Factor 3: Proportion of Speakers within the Total Population**

Factor 3: Proportion of Speakers within the Total Population: (3), definitely endangered A majority speak the language. Seven out of ten respondents from the interview speak Malayalam. The exceptions were one respondent each from generation one, generation 2 and generation three. Most of their children speak Malayalam.



#### **4.10.4 Factor 4: Trends in Existing Language Domains**

Factor 4: Trends in Existing Language Domains: Dwindling domains (3): The non-dominant language loses ground and, at home, parents begin to use the dominant language in their everyday interactions with their children, and children become *semi-speakers* of their own language (*receptive bilinguals*). Parents and older members of the community tend to be productively bilingual in the dominant and indigenous languages: they understand and speak both. Bilingual children may exist in families where the indigenous language is actively used. In this context, all of the respondents are bilingual or multilingual and there is a shift in language use from Malayalam to other dominant languages such as English and Tamil. This is especially true with generation three.

#### **4.10.5 Factor 5: Response to New Domains and Media**

Factor 5: Response to New Domains and Media: (1) minimal, the language is used only in a few new domains. Based on the interview, Malayalam is used mainly in the domain of home and rarely in other domains. It is not the language of choice in society and at work.

#### **4.10.6 Factor 6: Materials for Language Education and Literacy**

Factor 6: Materials for Language Education and Literacy: (0), no orthography available to the community. There is no Malayalam orthography available here in Malaysia. Existing orthography is personal collections acquired from Kerala.

#### **4.10.7 Factor 7: Governmental and Institutional Language Attitudes and Policies, Including Official Status and Use**

Factor 7: Governmental and Institutional Language Attitudes And Policies, Including Official Status and Use: (3), passive assimilation. No explicit policy exists for minority languages; the dominant language prevails in the public domain. Malayalam language has no official status in Malaysia. It is not offered as an elective language or as People's Own Language (POL) in the education sector. Languages that used to be offered as POL are Tamil and Chinese. These languages are now elective languages in mainstream education. Malayalam is neither offered in vernacular schools nor offered as an elective in mainstream education.

#### **4.10.8 Factor 8: Community Members' Attitudes toward Their Own Language**

Factor 8: Community Members' Attitudes toward Their Own Language: (2), *some* members support language maintenance; others are indifferent or may even support language loss. Some of the respondents think that it is important to promote and preserve the language. Others feel it is not necessary as it is not widely used outside of the domain of home.

#### **4.10.9 Factor 9: Amount and Quality of Documentation**

Factor 9: Amount and Quality of Documentation: (3), fair. There may be an adequate grammar or sufficient amount of grammars, dictionaries, and texts, but no everyday media; audio and video recordings may exist in varying quality or degree of annotation.

Table 4.6 : Estimated Degree of Endangerment

| Factors                                                                                          | Language: Malayalam                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Intergenerational Language Transmission                                                          | <b>(4) - unsafe</b><br>Most but not all children or families of a particular community speak their language as their first language, but it may be restricted to specific social domains (such as at home where children interact with their parents and grandparents)                                                                                                                            |
| Absolute Number of Speakers                                                                      | comparison not made                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Proportion of Speakers within Total Population                                                   | <b>(3) – definitely endangered</b><br>A majority speak the language.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Trends in Existing Language Domains                                                              | <b>(3) – dwindling domains</b><br>The language is in home domains and for many functions, but the dominant language begins to penetrate even home domains.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Response to New Domains and Media                                                                | <b>(1) – minimal</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Materials for Language Education and Literacy                                                    | <b>(0)</b><br>A practical orthography is known to the community and some material is being written.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Governmental and Institutional Language Attitudes and Policies including Official Status and Use | <b>(3) – Passive assimilation</b><br>The dominant group is indifferent as to whether or not minority languages are spoken, as long as the dominant group’s language is the language of interaction. Though this is not an explicit language policy, the dominant group’s language is the <i>de facto</i> official language. Most domains of non-dominant language use do not enjoy high prestige. |
| Community Members' Attitudes toward Their Own Language                                           | <b>(2)</b><br><i>Some</i> members support language maintenance; others are indifferent or may even support language loss.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Amount and Quality of Documentation                                                              | <b>(3) – fair</b><br>There may be an adequate grammar or sufficient amount of grammars, dictionaries, and texts, but no everyday media; audio and video recordings may exist in varying quality or degree of annotation.                                                                                                                                                                          |

Adapted from: “Language Vitality and Endangerment” <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/doc/src/00120-EN.pdf>

Based on the data above, Malayalam language among Malayalees in Malaysia seems to be in the “unsafe” category and seems to be heading towards endangerment.

#### **4.11 Conclusion**

The various data that has been collected indicate that there is a strong shift from the use of Malayalam to English from generation one to generation three. There is also an indication of a sharp decline in the use of Malayalam within the Malayalee community in Malaysia that seems to be compounded by this shift to English. As a result of this, the linguistic vitality of Malayalam in Malaysia can be concluded to be in the “unsafe” category. In the next chapter, the results from the research will be discussed and brought to a conclusion.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter summarizes and concludes all the findings and discussions from previous chapters.

#### 5.2 Summary of Findings

From the results, we can conclude that there is a shift from using Malayalam to English within the Malayalee community in Malaysia. Most Malayalees feel that learning and speaking English is more beneficial than learning and speaking Malayalam and, the reason for English as the choice of language spoken at home was in fact traced to the factor of inter-generational transmission. Most of the respondents said that their parents or grandparents spoke in English at home and insisted on their children or grandchildren speaking in English as well. Respondents also feel that Malayalam is not useful in Malaysia apart from in the domains of home and society. Then again, the choice for English above other languages is a result of the status of English as a global language that is also taught as a second language in schools, and well represented in media. Knowing and speaking English carries the status of being knowledgeable and in with the times. A good command of English is also needed when applying for most jobs, and also, in trade and commerce. Shifting to other languages like Malay and Tamil, occur but on a smaller scale and among less educated speakers of Malayalam or those from rural areas. Difference in ethnic group, or, living in a multiracial, multicultural surroundings makes English which is quite widely used the most sensible common language to be used. This is also true with mixed-marriages that are increasing in number. A survey on

the local Malayalee associations showed that the language of written communication and formal association meetings is English and not Malayalam. This in itself encourages the shift from Malayalam to English.

From the point of linguistic vitality, the results also show that there is a gradual decline of the use of Malayalam language in Malaysia. There seems to be little or no effort to preserve the language although the Malayalee culture itself is maintained via societies for Malayalees. The decline is further compounded by the fact that the language has no status in Malaysian society. It is not represented in media, education, or in administrative levels. Generational transmission of the language is generally lacking and in most cases Malayalam that is intergenerationally transmitted is mixed with Tamil lexicon.

The maintenance and use of Malayalam seems to depend largely on self-interest and motivation in learning the language and passing it down to future generations. On the surface level it seems like educated Malayalees have less tendencies to transfer the language to future generations. Perhaps they are of the opinion that the language is of no practical use. This is an area that could be researched further in the future.

Local Malayalee Associations seem to be doing little or nothing to promote and preserve the language although cultural events are held on a regular basis (at least twice a year). As mentioned above, meetings are held in English instead of in Malayalam and all written communication with members are in English. Although for the Malayalee New Year this year a programme was held to explain the culture and traditions behind the celebration of new year, no promotion was done about the language itself. Malayalam movies(three times a week) and dramas are available on cable television but they are

only available to paying customers. Even then the channels that provide movies and dramas in Malayalam are from India and not Malaysia.

Generally, most of the respondents see an urgent need to address this issue but are unable to offer solutions as to what can and should be done. Some of them feel that it is an uphill task and that the Malayalee Associations should play a more important role in proofing and preserving Malayalam as they are in a position of advantage. Whatever the case, no efforts are being made by all the parties involved and everyone seems to be waiting for the other to make a move.

In conclusion, although Malayalam language is being given increasing importance in Kerala in attempts to preserve the language, in Malaysia the opposite is true and for all intents and purposes seems to be in the '*unsafe*' category according to the intergenerational language transmission ranking by UNESCO (2003). '*Unsafe*' here means that '*most but not all children or families of a particular community speak their language as their first language but it may be restricted to specific domains*' (UNESCO,2003).

### **5.3 Implications**

There were some implications due to this research. The respondents were more aware of the decline of the use of Malayalam language within their community in Malaysia and felt a need to address the problem and overcome it. Malayalee associations should spearhead efforts to Malayalee associations should spearhead a proactive movement to revive the spread and use of the Malayalam language in coming generations in order to preserve it. It is hoped that the results of this research will motivate the younger generation to learn the Malayalam language and in turn, teach the language to their coming generations.

This research also reveals various reasons for language shift in Malaysia. This may help in identifying areas that need to be addressed in order to help other communities work out ways to preserve and maintain their languages.

#### **5.4 Recommendations for Further Research**

This research can be expanded using a much larger sample population and employing the use of a more detailed questionnaire in order to achieve a wider perspective. It can also be studied from the point of different religious backgrounds, social and economic status, as well as other demographic factors. Another area that would be interesting to research would be within speakers of the Malayalam language with a background of mixed parentage as mixed marriages are prevalent.

A copy of a summary of this research should be made available to all the local Malayalee Associations in Malaysia so that they will be aware of the status of Malayalam in Malaysia and the urgency of doing something to start preserving the language.

UNESCO recommends five essential areas for sustaining endangered languages:

1. Basic linguistic and pedagogical training: providing language teachers with training in basic linguistics, language teaching methods and techniques, curriculum development, and teaching materials development.
2. Sustainable development in literacy and local documentation skills: Training local language workers to develop orthographies if needed, read, write, and analyse their own languages, and produce pedagogical materials. One of the effective strategies here is the establishment of local research centres, where speakers of endangered languages will be trained to study, document and archive their own language materials. Literacy is useful to the teaching and learning of such languages.
3. Supporting and developing national language policy: National language policies must support diversity, including endangered languages. More social



scientists and humanists, and speakers of endangered languages themselves should be actively involved in the formulation of national language policies.

4. Supporting and developing educational policy: In the educational sector, a number of linguists are engaged in implementing increasingly popular mother tongue education programs. Since 1953 and especially in the past 15 years, UNESCO has been instrumental in this development through its policy statements. So-called mother tongue education, however, often does not refer to education in the ancestral languages of ethnolinguistic minorities (i.e. endangered languages), but rather to the teaching of these languages as school subjects. The most common educational model for teaching ethnolinguistic minority children in schools still uses locally or nationally dominant languages as media of instruction. Teaching exclusively in these languages, support their spread, at the expense of endangered languages. A great deal of research shows that acquiring bilingual capability need in no way diminish competence in the official language.

5. Improving living conditions and respect for the human rights of speaker communities: Language documenters, though not directly involved in economic and social development, can help governments identify overlooked populations. Linguists and educators can be vital mediators by supporting the communities in formulating claims about their linguistic and other human rights.

(2003, p. 5-6)

In light of these recommendations, the local Malayalee Associations should initiate a discussion with the Education Department on considering introducing Malayalam as an elective language in schools. They can also produce tabloids or magazines that teach Malayalam language and Malayalam culture in order to promote the language.

## **5.5 Conclusion**

In conclusion, there does seem to a shifting away from the mother tongue as proposed by previous researchers and the marked decline in the use of the Malayalam language seems to be largely due to lack of inter-generational transmission especially in coming generations and the fact that it is not the dominant language for interaction unlike the

Tamil language. The shift generally seems to be towards English and this can clearly be seen from generation one down to generation three by which the use of English at home in particular seems to be on the rise. Thus, Malayalam in Malaysia seems to be in the “unsafe” category in terms of linguistic vitality. Other dominant languages such as English in particular is replacing the use of Malayalam in the domain of home, work and socially.

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## APPENDIX 1: Questions for Interview

Subject Code:

Name:

Age:

Country of birth:

Marital status:

Mother tongue of spouse:

Country of birth of spouse:

Occupation of spouse:

Level of education of spouse:

Children:

Ages of children:

Occupation:

Early education:

High school:

Father's origin:

Father's education:

Father's occupation:

Languages spoken by father:

Mother's origin:

Mother's education:

Mother's occupation:

Languages spoken by mother:

Languages spoken at home during childhood:

Languages spoken at home currently:

Languages spoken among family members:

- i) Parents:
- ii) Wife:
- iii) Children:

Languages spoken with friends:

Languages spoken at work:

Languages spoken socially:

Do you feel it is important to preserve the Malayalam language?

Did your parents make any attempt to preserve the language?

Do you make any attempt to promote the language and preserve it?

Do you feel it is important to preserve the language here in Malaysia?

Do you think that losing the languages means losing the culture?

Personal views on Malayalam language: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX 2: Questionnaire

### **Question 1**

Do you speak English at home?

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### **Question 2**

If the answer to Question 1 is yes, what are your reasons for speaking in English at home?

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### **Question 3**

Do you think that learning English is more important than learning Malayalam here in Malaysia?

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**Question 4**

Give reasons for your answer for Question 3.

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### APPENDIX 3: Language Vitality Test

#### Pictures for lexical recognition



## Translation Task

### Translation Task

1. He is a doctor.
2. Annie has a fever.
3. He is eating rice.
4. Murali was sleeping.
5. Have you had your breakfast?
6. I will see you in the morning.
7. Where did you go?
8. How are you/Are you well?

Pictures for Discourse Task









**APPENDIX 4: “Language Vitality and Endangerment” Unesco Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages (attached herewith)**