

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

This chapter begins with a brief description of the birth and status of English in Malaysia, along with some enlightenment about the different discernments of English in the country, and its potential impact on the identity constructions of Malaysians.

1.1.1 English in Malaysia

It is interesting that in a country like Malaysia, which only comprises 28,334,134 million people as of Malaysia's 2010 census, about 140 languages are spoken according to Gordon's *Ethnologue: Languages of the World* (15th edition, 2005). Among the rich variety of different languages that are spoken by Malaysians, there is one language which holds a certain superior and important role in Malaysia – the English language. This is because Malaysia had been formerly colonised by the British until 50 years ago when the country received its independence on the 31st of August 1957. Throughout this historical period, numerous missionary schools were established in Malaysia and the knowledge of the English language spread in the urban areas of the country. English was, however, not extensively taught or well accepted by everyone in the country, but was mostly favoured by the majority of the elite and upper-class Malays, not forgetting many Chinese and Indians who were mainly brought into the country from China and India by the British as workers in various fields starting from the second half of the 19th century. At that point in time, the British colonial education system was successful in creating some very proficient users of English among the elite group of Malaysia. In addition, British colonisation has undeniably made a successful pathway for Malaysians to have high levels of English proficiency and that has been recalled as probably the most influential

heritage the British left behind for the nation and the people of Malaysia (Bhatt, 2010:13).

It is indisputable that the English language plays an important role in the lives of many people in our globalized world today, including Malaysia, and it is acknowledged as the second language (ESL) in Malaysia after the first and national language, which is 'Bahasa Malaysia' or the Malay language. English was replaced by Bahasa Malaysia, (the Malay language) as implemented by the government in its 1970's educational policy. This national action plan was established to promote a communal national identity and a spirit of unity among the citizens of Malaysia who live in a multi-racial country as well as to promote Malay which had been a 'secondary' language before (Wong et al. 2012:146).

In spite of being positioned as the second language in Malaysia, English is used extensively for many reasons. English is irrefutably used as an important medium for official purposes, given the status of the "second most important language in Malaysia after the national language, Bahasa Malaysia" (Mohd Faisal Hanapiah, 2004:108). It is also recognised as one of the extensively used media of instruction in most of the academic fields in Malaysia (Mohd Faisal Hanapiah, 2004). Apart from that, English is undoubtedly an essential requirement for a company, institution or employers to look for when it comes to job employment, as quoted by Mohd Faisal Hanapiah (2004:111) that "people with paper qualifications (academics), computer skills or technical skills and have good proficiency in English can expect to get employment easier and faster than those who are merely having qualifications". Moreover, a person is not only expected to be at best bilingual or multilingual, but proficiency in the

English language is undeniably an added advantage as it opens doors to many opportunities. Likewise, English has also conquered some mass media, be it the news on television, radio programmes, newspapers, magazines, tabloids and other forms of reading materials. Last but not the least, one should not forget to include the language that Malaysians use to communicate daily with family members, friends, and colleagues, for Malaysians tend to use English in a rather comfortable manner besides the use of their mother tongue, Bahasa Malaysia or other varieties (Mohd Faisal Hanapiah, 2004). Therefore, even though Bahasa Malaysia is the official national language, it can be affirmed that Malaysia certainly stimulates Malaysians to communicate in English, the neutral and largely dominant language in some domains; such as ‘business’, ‘employment’, ‘education’, ‘media’ and others, due to the rich blend of ethnicities, races, languages, cultural backgrounds present in the country and also because of Malaysians’ competency in English (Mohd Faisal Hanapiah, 2004, Coluzzi, 2012).

1.1.2 Various perceptions of English and its effects on identity

Even though there are positive notions about the importance of English in Malaysia on the one hand, such as being recognised as a way leading to a successful life, as a modern language for communication, a reflection of high levels of education and a symbol of high status and social power (Wong et al. 2012:147), there are also negative perceptions among Malaysians on the learning and use of English. This latter situation generally arises due to a lack of interest in using and learning the second language besides one’s local and ethnic language or mother tongue. In addition, this situation may arise due to the feeling of intimidation faced by certain Malaysians as they lack the proficiency,

show a poor command of the language and fear English as contributing to sociocultural and identity erosion as found in Lee's studies (2003, 2008). The existence of such negative perceptions encourages the development of a phenomenon called 'othering' among young Malaysians in varying degrees, according to the findings in a study by Lee et al. (2010:96). Young Malaysian adults generally feel 'othered' or marginalised in different ways due to the variation in thoughts, behaviours and practices they uphold. For instance, one group may feel that "There are big differences between 'us' and 'the speakers who speak English dominantly'" while another group may feel that "Speakers who speak local languages or their mother tongue at most times are more closed up to themselves" (Lee et al., 2010:96). In addition, Lee's (2001; 2003; 2005; 2006) studies (cited in Lee et al., 2010:98) have related many incidents where some Malaysians, whether Malays or non-Malays, who have a good proficiency in English experienced bitterness; for instance, they were called 'boastful' and 'Westernized' among their peers who are more proficient in the mother tongue or ethnic language.

In this study, the researcher is interested in exploring the influence and effects of English on the construction of various identities among young Malaysian adults. The research focuses its attention on Malaysian youths simply because they have gone through the multiple changes of educational policies in Malaysia in terms of the long-debated issue of the medium of instruction to be used - whether to implement English as the dominant medium of instruction or to maintain the use of the national language. Besides that, this research is also conducted to explore how their experiences have led to their current viewpoints and opinions today on the identities they uphold due to the impact of English.

1.2 Statement of the problem

The issue of identity construction among Malaysian young adults and the effects of English are important to investigate because the use of English has been highly debated in Malaysia for the general betterment of our country in terms of our nation's progress and constructive development to compete in the globalized world. For instance, the former educational policy of integrating English as the medium of instruction for science and mathematics at school has been constantly a highly contested issue and an unsettled topic which has also appeared many times in newspaper headlines in the recent years. In addition, the decision of Malaysian Minister of Education, Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin of eliminating the option to use English to teach mathematics and science despite the dismay and disagreement showed by parents' groups was due to the concern of the possible confusion and chaos it would create in the national education system because of the claim that the country did not possess good English teachers to cater to the needs and hopes of the parents (The Malaysian Insider, 2011). This situation could also be due to the existence of the issue of identity construction among Malaysians with varying degrees of competence in English and their mother tongue, which eventually leads to differences in attitudes and perceptions towards the use and learning of English. This underlying issue definitely needs to be rectified and further investigation is needed before active implementation of policies takes place in our multi ethnic country.

In this study, the issue that the researcher will be investigating is how the use and learning process of English could affect Malaysian young adults' construction of identity, by considering their differences in their mastery of both English and their first languages. There are basically two cases:

- (i) English is the dominant language or adopted as a first language
- (ii) The mother tongue is the dominant language and is widely used compared to other languages.

1.3 Objectives of the study

This study sets out to explore different perceptions and experiences of Malaysian young adults with varying degrees of competence and proficiency in English and its effect on their identity construction. This study also investigates the issue of ‘othering’ or marginalisation they face among peers as to how such representations affect the construction of their own identities in Malaysia. To scrutinize these issues, the researcher has set out to investigate both the positive and negative effects of the use of English among young Malaysian adults with different levels of competence and proficiency in English.

1.4 Research questions

For the objectives of the study, 3 research questions were developed:

1. In what ways does the dominance of English among different young Malaysian adults affect their racial, ethnic or national identity?
2. How do different levels of competence or proficiency in English or the mother tongue affect the construction of identities of ‘self’ and the ‘other’ among young Malaysian adults?
3. How does the phenomenon of ‘othering’ or ‘self-versus-other’ representations help young Malaysian adults achieve greater proficiency in English?

1.5 Significance of the study

This study of different viewpoints and perceptions of young Malaysian adults about the effects and influence of English in this country on the construction of their own identities is important to address several issues associated with the way English is perceived among them. It will also help us to understand and look at the underlying factors contributing to the emergence of the ‘othering’ phenomenon among young Malaysian adults by not only constantly dealing with the speakers’ difficulties in learning and speaking the language in educational contexts, but also considering their different sociocultural backgrounds and ethnic identities leading to this problem. A profound understanding of the effects of the learning and use of English will help us to provide educators with ways to teach learners (ESL speakers) to use the most effective handling techniques to overcome the problem of ‘othering’ among Malaysians. For instance, speakers could realize that having a low competence in English does not necessarily limit their performance in life or place them at the bottom of the ladder of social success and power. On the other hand, proficient English speakers could be taught coping strategies to learn to accommodate according to different situations, backgrounds and cultural settings to overcome issues of being perceived as ‘others’ or marginalised in the community.

1.6 Definitions of the terms used in the study

In this research, a special terminology is used to highlight certain issues that will be discussed further and in much detail. The definitions used for the terms in this study are entirely limited for the use of this research only. This means that the terms used here may have different definitions or explanations in different contexts outside this study. Therefore, it is made clear that the meanings given for the terms are only applicable in the context of this study.

'Identity' is defined as people understanding their "relationship to the outside world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how people understand their possibilities for the future" (Norton, 1997:410). In other aspects, 'identity' is viewed as "a dynamic and shifting nexus of multiple subject positions or identity options, such as mother, accountant, heterosexual, or Latina" (Pavlenko and Blackledge, 2004:35), which is why according to Lee (2003:2), 'identity' is rather complicated to define, as "it is best seen as a plurality and not a unitary construct". In her article, 'identity' is further described as "the individual's concept of the self, as well as the individual's interpretation of the social definition of the self, within his or her inner group and the larger society" (Lee, 2003:2). According to Bauman (2004:17), "identity is the loudest talk in town, the burning issue on everybody's mind and tongue". Studies in the past have also shown that switching of identities does take place whenever speakers, especially in postcolonial communities, such as Malaysia, switch to different languages; Hall (1996), for example claims that historical experience causes a change in human identities which are continuously changing as maintaining one's identity is provisional.

'Cultural identity' is referred to as "the attribution of a set of qualities to a given population" who acts as cultural beings (Friedman 1994:29). Friedman (1994) also states that 'cultural identities' are experienced by individuals and are equivalent to ethnicity. On the other hand, Chen (2006:12) defines the concept of 'cultural identity' as "personal, sexual, national, social and ethnic identities all combined into one". According to Mustafa (2006:38) identities are usually created within the "play of power, representation and difference which can be either constructed negatively as the exclusion and marginalisation or celebrated as a source of diversity, heterogeneity and hybridity" signifying that they are interconnected to other identities.

‘Othering’ is defined as “the ways in which the discourse of a particular group defines other groups in opposition to itself: an ‘us’ and ‘them’ view that constructs an identity for the ‘other’, and implicitly, for the ‘self’” (Woodward, 1997). In addition to that, Riggins (1997) also mentioned that “‘othering’ of another group typically involves maintaining social distance and making value judgments (often negative) based on stereotyped opinions about the group as a whole”. On the other hand, Abdallah-Preteille (2003) denoted ‘othering’ as “objectification of another person or group” or “creating the other”, “which puts aside and ignores the complexity and subjectivity of the individual”, (cited in Dervin, 2011:7). Abu-Lughod (1991:87) also stated that ‘othering’ permits individuals “to construct sameness and difference and to affirm their own identity”. Also, Gillespie (2006) in Dervin, (2011:7) mentioned that ‘othering’ directs a person towards a “widespread tendency to differentiate in-group from out-group and ‘self’ from ‘other’ in such a way as to reinforce and protect the self.”

‘Linguistic hybridity’ according to Anchimbe (2007) refers to bilinguals or multilinguals whose two or more languages and cultures are merged whereby one language and culture is inherited from one’s parents and the other language or languages are learned in school. Anchimbe (2007:15) explains further about linguistic hybridity or ‘linguabridity’ defining it as an unconscious process where children, who are introduced to two or more languages besides their mother tongue, do not fluctuate or align alongside their parents’ rigid identities, but integrate into new communities quicker than adults without placing social, racial or political stigma to the foreign languages acquired and only view the difference in the use of the languages in various contexts and in people who use them.

‘Social and cultural capital’ is adapted from Bourdieu’s (1986) notion and denotes the “language use, skills, competencies and orientations of perceptions or habitus that a

child is gifted with by virtue of socialization in his or her family and community.” Therefore, children who belong to the elite group or strata of society are conferred by their “familial socialization with both more and the right kind of cultural capital for success in school and in society” (Bourdieu 1986, cited in Wong 2012:149). In short, ‘cultural capital’ would be the “knowledge, skills, dispositions of the bodily habits,” and while ‘social capital’ refers to “access to cultural and subcultural institutions, social relations and practices” (Bourdieu 1986, cited in Wong 2012:149).

The next chapter will provide an extensive review of theories and analysis of past studies related to the issue of the study in order to carry out the research according to its objectives.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, a brief overview of how English paved its way into this country and some important information and facts about the current situation of English and how it is perceived and accepted in Malaysia have been presented clearly. In this chapter, further discussion on the frequent changes in educational policies and implementation as far as the use of English is concerned, and the effects on the construction of identity among young Malaysian adults in relation to the lack of use of the native language as well as some fundamental terms will be presented. Having mentioned all these, it is crucial to know and learn further details in this chapter on the history of English in Malaysia, more accounts and studies in the past about the level of acceptance of the second language by people of different educational backgrounds, qualifications and social as well as cultural backgrounds, so that the scope of this study can be comprehended with ease accompanied with a solid background knowledge.

2.2 Historical background of English in Malaysia

The first European languages to set foot in Malaysia were Portuguese and Dutch, and later followed by English with the British colonization. Subsequently, the Chinese and Indian languages were also introduced through the migration of Chinese and Indians to Malaysia, who were brought into the country as labourers by the British Empire. This contributed to Malaysia's growth as a multi-racial and multilingual country (Mostafizar Rahman 2008:3). Malaysia, being a British colony, adopted English as the lingua franca and the language which dominantly occupied several formal and informal domains as it became the official language in the country and was used in courts and for educational purposes to a large extent (Mostafizar Rahman 2008:3). In addition to that, English was a language that promoted high social status and belonged to the upper class society,

spreading ever so swiftly and shaping a leading group of local users among the Malays, Chinese and Indians. Besides, people with knowledge of English had added advantage because English was the language of the 'rulers' and the authorities. Ain Nadzimah and Chan (2003) stated that this in a way contributed to the rapid growth in the number of English speakers which led to an escalation in the number of English medium schools in Malaysia. Undoubtedly, the increasing acceptance of the language encouraged the growth of English medium schools in Malaysia. Ain Nadzimah and Chan (2003) also commented that English became so significant and dominated so many domains and fields that it managed to uphold its position as a co-official language for ten years after Malaysia received its independence in 1957.

However, the racial riots that took place in Kuala Lumpur in May 1969 gave more determination to the phasing out English-medium schools in Malaysia, so that all the schools become Malay-medium schools i.e. 'national schools' by 1982 (Karim, 2013). Due to this, the English language lessened in importance as an administrative language and the language of education since the medium of instruction was officially changed to Bahasa Malaysia (Malay language) in January 1970. English became less important and the official status of English diminished to such a level that it became merely a subject of study in schools. While this affected the education system of Malaysia for a few decades, a sudden and unexpected change transformed the education outlook of the country in 2002. The obvious reasons behind the decisions for changes to take place are related to the change in the medium of instruction from English to Malay which had caused the gradual decline of the standard of English among the younger generations in Malaysia. The issue of the deterioration of the proficiency of English among young Malaysians has been highlighted regularly in the local English newspapers for the past twenty years. English was viewed and looked up on as the language of diplomacy,

international commerce, science and technology as well as entertainment. Malaysia was seen to be less capable and was running the risk of losing out in the competitive world or international arena without a high competence in English (Wong et al. 2012).

In line with this notion, Ridge (2004) reported that the government of Malaysia felt it was essential to give importance to the learning of English, because the language was progressively seen as vital in the development of trade and commerce as well as giving the country a competitive advantage in the globalised world. Ridge (2004) also affirmed in his study that the government of Malaysia was taking a giant leap to encourage and implement policies to start teaching scientific and technical subjects in tertiary education in English. In accordance with these implementations, former Prime Minister Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad drew up bold educational policies in 2002 whereby subjects in school such as mathematics and science would henceforward be taught in English beginning from the first year of primary school. Unsurprisingly, such an unexpected declaration brought about an extreme change in attitude and perception among the people of Malaysia towards the importance of English and the security of their own racial or ethnic languages. What we can comprehend from the above discussion is that the introduction of bilingualism into the education system in Malaysia did not take place instantaneously - it went through numerous stages with huge changes of language planning and policies in Malaysia over the years.

2.3 The role of English in the Malaysian school system and educational policies

According to David and Govindasamy (2003), Azirah Hashim (2003), Ambigapathy Pandian (2003), Solomon (1988) and Watson (1983), there have been four stages in the expansion of the English language and its implementation along with the national language – Bahasa Malaysia - in 56 years (Tan, 2005).

2.3.1 Stage 1: Segregation of standard schools and standard-type schools

Before Malaysia was given its independence in 1957, ethnic groups were segregated in primary schools which had four different media of instruction. Malay medium was used in 'Standard Schools' while the English, Mandarin Chinese and Tamil languages were employed as media in the 'Standard - type Schools' (Tan, 2005). During this period, the ethnic Malay, Chinese and Indians students were tailored according to their respective media of instruction or their own ethnic languages or mother tongues. The communities were clearly set apart from each other geographically in terms of the job scopes of the family as well the schools that the children were going to. It was found that students who attended the English medium schools in the urban areas and towns mainly consisted of the ethnic Chinese, a certain amount of Indians and also Eurasians (Tan, 2005). Although English medium schools were set up and opened to all, regardless of ethnicity, it was mainly preferred by the non-Malays because English education opened doors to greater opportunities to a good job in the government sector, and in the private fields as well as it provided social mobility (Gill 2009, cited in Wong et al. 2012). The reason accounting for the low number of Malays in the English medium schools was that the schools were located in the urban areas, and "the Malays were 'under-represented' in these schools, as not many Malays lived in the towns" (Asmah 1982, 1992). Furthermore, many of the schools were Christian missionary schools, thus the Malays generally felt that such schools were unsuitable for their children's religious, cultural and educational development (Tan, 2005). However, in spite of this, English medium schools in the urban areas had the most multi-racial blend. Besides English medium schools, there were also Malay, Chinese and Tamil vernacular schools. These schools used the students' own mother tongue

as their media of instruction. Since most Malays were working as farmers and fishermen, the British decided to set up the Malay vernacular schools in the villages to keep them satisfied and restricted to the rural areas. In addition to that, the migrant Chinese and Indian communities were not of interest to the British to set up schools for them, therefore they had to make arrangements and finance their own schools and even establish their own curriculum, which was modelled after the syllabuses and systems used in China and India respectively (Tan, 2005). Meanwhile, the Tamil schools were built in rubber estates, which were predominantly managed by Indian migrant workers and catered for students only up to the primary level of education. An important point to note here is that the segregation brought about by the system of education which comprised four noticeably different systems at the primary level was strictly coherent with the British policy, referred to as the 'divide and rule' principle, which was aimed to keep the different races separated (Philip 1975, cited in Gill 2009). Progressing from this period, secondary education was largely available in English, Malay or Chinese medium and the medium of instruction in tertiary education was only in English (Tan, 2005).

2.3.2 Stage 2: The substitution of English with Bahasa Malaysia

This system continued to be practiced even after independence until the occurrence of the racial riots in Kuala Lumpur in May 1969, when the Malay language (Bahasa Malaysia) was then declared the only national language to promote and cultivate national identity and multi-ethnic unity (Tan, 2005). It was former Minister of Education, Dato Haji Abdul Rahman Ya'akub, who declared that English medium schools would be removed in Malaysia beginning from January 1970, and by the year 1985, all previous English medium schools,

which were also known as national type schools, would officially become Malay medium (national) schools (Tan, 2005). This transformation led the students to go through a mixed medium education system, where subjects such as science and mathematics were taught in English, and history and geography were taught in Malay (Bahasa Malaysia) (Tan, 2005). Huge changes in the medium of instruction in tertiary institutions also took place when English was replaced by Malay, while Mandarin-Chinese medium and Tamil-medium primary schools were maintained as they were but with a unified curriculum. To highlight this matter, David and Govindasamy (2003:223) recognized this shift as ‘nationalistic fervour’.

2.3.3 Stage 3: Realisation of the importance of English

According to Asmah Haji Omar (1996:259) with reference to the Razak Report of 1956, English is the “second primary language or second most important language”. With this, Asmah Haji Omar (1996) maintains that English is still accessible in tertiary education through various courses and levels, such as pre-university and twinning programmes in Malaysia. In addition, she also emphasized that “local English-medium education has made a comeback and with great vigour” (Asmah Haji Omar 1996:519), stating that the second language is given much importance and is well accepted by Malaysians realising its benefits to themselves and to the nation. Because of its importance and the advantages it provides, English is still widely taught as a compulsory subject in schools. Nevertheless, it is not regarded as a compulsory subject to pass in the secondary school public examinations at the national level, known as (SPM or Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia). Due to this, many feel that the uncertain notion of

making English ‘a compulsory subject to be taught in school but not to pass’ has deeply affected its importance and value among Malaysians (Wong et al. 2012).

2.3.4 Stage 4: Introduction of a bilingual education system

Lastly, the final stage thus far recalls the events that took place in 2002 regarding the apprehensions about the deteriorating standards of English and lack of competitiveness among Malaysians in general, the high rate of unemployment of the ethnic Malays in the competitive working world due to their monolingualism as well as the constant division of the races in Malaysia due to their language use (Tan, 2005). All this led former Minister of Education, Musa Mohamed, to declare on 22 July 2002 that a Malay-English mixed-medium or bilingual education system would be executed in national schools starting from January 2003, under the advice of former Prime Minister, Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamed, with reference to press reports and comments from the News Straits Times (a widely read English newspaper by Malaysians) and news feeds from the Malaysian news agency ‘Bernama’.

2.4 Declining standards of English in Malaysia

Due to the numerous policy changes and new implementations in the Malaysian education system with regard to the medium of instruction to be used or maintained, the standards of English among Malaysians, especially the younger generations who were affected by the policy changes have worsened over the years. This phenomenon was clearly noticeable in poor public examination results when it came to performance in the English language or literature studies, typically in non-urban areas of Malaysia. The declining standard of English was even more evident when one is unable to perform well during job interviews as they are required to communicate in English.

An exclusive team was formed by the Ministry of Education in Malaysia in the year 2000, to investigate the reasons behind the gradually declining standards of English among students (Tan, 2005). The team exposed many shortcomings in the education system most of which were well known to educators and school administrators in Malaysia (Choy and Troudi, 2006). The decline in the standards of English in Malaysia discussed by the team was highlighted in media reports as there were many Malaysian students who had enrolled in colleges for higher level studies after their completion of Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM), the Malaysian equivalent of the British 'O'-level examinations, that faced difficulties having to deal with English as a medium of instruction, (Chok 2001:8). Abdul Kahrim (1991) claimed that this problematic situation had been apparent from the time when the government decided to switch the medium of instruction in schools from English to Malay in 1983 in their new educational policy. This notion is supported by Saadiyah Darus (2009) as it was mentioned in her study that the changes of the National Language Policy in the Malaysian education system developed gradually from 1970 to 1983. The conversion was done by terminating the Lower Certificate of Education (LCE) examination in 1978, which was a national examination for the Form Three students aged 15. This was then followed by the removal of the Malaysian Certificate of Education (MCE) examination in 1980, which was a national examination for the Form Five students aged 17. The termination of the two national examinations which were conducted in English was one of the major reasons for the standard of English among Malaysians to decline over the years (Saadiyah Darus, 2009). In addition, Choy and Troudi (2006) also commented in their study that, apart from the inadequate exposure to English in schools contributing to the decline in the standards of English in Malaysia, there are numerous other concerns like the rising differences in English proficiency among students and a

lack of competency in English among educators that have also contributed to the deterioration of the language.

2.5 English perceived as a threat to national language in Malaysia

After almost 8 years from the implementation of the policy of reverting the medium of instruction for mathematics and science from Bahasa Malaysia to English, the new policy was withdrawn from the education system in 2011 due to the complaints received from the ultra-nationalists who viewed the teaching of science and mathematics in English as unfavourable to the children who live in rural areas of Malaysia. This was because the children appeared to be struggling with the use of English to learn mathematics and science according to Welfare, Women and Family Development Minister, Datuk Fatimah Abdullah who judged the overall results of the Ujian Pernilaian Sekolah Rendah (UPSR) examination for the state of Sarawak, hence proposing the notion of perpetuating the Malay language (Bahasa Malaysia) while continuing to strengthen English since the objectives of teaching the subjects in English were unmet (The Star, 2011). English was seen as a threat to the national language, which is the Malay language (Bahasa Malaysia), thus encouraging English education signified downgrading the national language, Bahasa Malaysia, as less prestigious. According to a newspaper article by Nadeswaran (2009), some nationalists in Malaysia also share the opinion that maintaining Bahasa Malaysia as the medium of instruction in schools represents loyalty and patriotism towards the country. This notion in a way can be viewed as a strong element of representing one's national identity.

2.6 Language as an identity marker

The concept of language as an identity marker is an important one. This is because, although language as an identity marker is important in homogeneous communities,

there appears to be a stronger need for groups of people to construct boundaries around themselves to outline what makes them different from the rest of the people, particularly in heterogeneous communities. This is usually done through the use of languages as identity markers among the members of varied and rather mixed communities. This notion is supported, among others, by a distinguished sociologist, Tabouret-Keller (1998) where he explicitly described the connection between language and identity as,

“The language spoken by somebody and his or her identity as a speaker of this language are inseparable. This is surely a piece of knowledge as old as human speech itself. Language acts are acts of identity.” (p. 315)

Ironically, language as an identity marker can be used by the members of a community who speak the language of the group to include and recognise themselves as part of the group or it could also serve as a way for others to exclude and disregard them. Despite the many other ways and practices that help create and maintain one’s identity, such as music, crafts, painting, food, clothes, festivals or musical instruments, the importance of knowing and being able to speak and understand the language weighs more importance. This was highlighted by Bloch and Trager (1942:5) as “language is not only an element of culture itself; it is the basis for all cultural activities.” As Dixon (1997: 135) puts it, “a language is the emblem of its speakers”, language represents the primary guide and the symbol of the identity of any speaker. According to Crystal (2003), identity is an important factor in determining the characteristics of the members of a community, or rather in distinguishing the ‘us’ versus ‘them’. Language has become so significant to identify the origin of a person that, in this increasingly heterogeneous world, it is becoming gradually difficult to differentiate the community where people belong just by looking at their faces or appearances.

2.7 Past research on representation, othering and construction of identity among Malaysians

The role and importance of English are constantly debated in the education and policy making arena, despite being only the second language in Malaysia. According to Lee et al. (2010:88), Malaysians tend to view English incongruently because from a positive point of view, English is observed as an important language for communication, a language that serves instrumental purposes, i.e. a language for self-achievement and acknowledgement, such as a tool to obtain high status, economic benefits, basic security as well as to help in matters related to self-orientation (Baker, 1992 cited in Mostafizar Rahman 2008:3); a language that does not take sides when it comes to social integration and supports one in terms of professional development. However, past studies by Lee (2003, 2008) reveal that not all agree with the former perceptions of English as there appears to be fears and negative outlooks as well on the impact of the language on national and cultural identity. Although there appears to be an increasing interest in the effects and influences of English on the construction of identity, this area of research continues to be under-studied by researchers (Graddol, 2006 in Lee et al. 2010:88).

Since Lee et al., (2010:88) claims that the impact of English attainment on the construction of identities of Malaysians remains an under-researched area, the researcher was keen to investigate the surfacing issue on a slightly larger scale involving 100 respondents, so that they could voice their opinion on what their viewpoints are on the effects of English as far as the construction of their identities is concerned. The researcher also selected nine respondents of various ethnicities and proficiency levels in English to add valuable insights to the issue under study. However, it is worth reviewing the studies conducted by researchers in the past on similar problems in order to obtain a general understanding of the issue involved.

In a more localised setting, Asmah Haji Omar (1991) conducted one of the earliest study of language and cultural identity of Malaysians and the findings reveal that the primary language spoken by a group of bilingual non-Malay academics at a local Malaysian university, mostly Chinese and Indians, does not entirely represent their ethnicity. Although the respondents in the study justified their lack of proficiency in their mother tongue with the fact that they received their education in English medium schools, there were responses from the participants which made clear that they wished to reverse the language shift that was taking place and were taking measures to educate their children and develop their knowledge and proficiency in their mother tongue. The study clearly indicates that the respondents consider their ethnic language as a significant marker of their ethnic and cultural identity when they reported that their children were coached privately to learn their mother tongues as a way to revive the diminishing linguistic identity.

There is also a doctoral research conducted by David (1996) on three generations of Sindhi immigrants in Malaysia. The study shows that the Sindhi Malaysians no longer identify their mother tongue, Sindhi, as an identity marker of their community but have moved on to characterizing their cultural representations through other factors, such as authentic Sindhi cuisine, cultural attires, religious and cultural festivities and others. According to the report of the study, the Sindhis claimed that the massive linguistic shift from their ethnic language, Sindhi, to English took place gradually over three generations, mainly when the third generation attended the national system of education where the Malay language (Bahasa Malaysia) was the medium of instruction and Sindhi linguistic usage weakened along the years.

A few years later, Asmah Haji Omar (1998) investigated if there was any connection between linguistic identity and the ethnic heritage of an individual belonging to a group or groups. The study was conducted by interviewing 12 respondents from the three major ethnic groups in Malaysia, namely Malays, Chinese and Indians, and also by conducting a survey with 83 respondents. The study revealed that linguistic identity varies according to the individual's progress, setting and situations where the language is used and is not something that is innate in the individual. Asmah Haji Omar (1998) also highlighted that the Malay language (Bahasa Malaysia) holds a steady position in the life of the Malay community because it is the national language and it is widely used as their language of communication. However, she stated that the other ethnic groups' shift from their languages does not necessarily mean that they are assimilating culturally into the majority group. This is because English is not considered an ethnic language or dialect in Malaysia; rather it is a language that does not have a community that speak it as their first language in the country. Therefore, Asmah Haji Omar (1998) claims that the reason other ethnic groups prefer to move away from their own ethnic languages and to learn and speak English has to do with the fact that it has high prestige in the globalised world.

For her doctoral dissertation, Lee (2001) conducted a study with a group of 14 selected Malaysian postgraduate students who were very proficient users of English in order to explore the impact of English on the construction of their sociocultural identities. This qualitative research revealed that the issue of identity among Malaysians is quite multifaceted due to the country's multi-ethnic structure and post-colonial influences. It was reported that the respondents alternate their identities according to different situations as well as to whom they are interacting with. They claimed that they have to handle the multiple identities they possess sensibly so that they can be accepted or

welcome in the group that they are mixing with. The study also revealed that resentment towards English was prevalent among the Malays in certain localized settings. Speakers who tended to use English in their communication with friends and family were perceived and labelled as ‘show off’, ‘being boastful’, were seen as being elitist, influenced by colonialism and betraying the Malay language and cultural identity. Moreover, this sort of antipathy was also felt by the non-Malay students as studied by Lee (2003a, 2003b, 2005). It was reported in Lee’s research that the non-Malay students, such as the Chinese participants, felt that they were often looked upon as ‘too westernized’ because of their lack of fluency in Mandarin as they were more comfortable in speaking English. Nevertheless, Lee (2001) also revealed that there were others who view the ability to master English as an empowering experience. Other positive outcomes of being proficient in English, according to the findings in Lee’s (2001) study, were the reduction of ethnocentrism, ability to access to alternative views and the capability to possess a quality of directness and neutrality. Furthermore, being able to master English was seen as facilitating a more insightful and critical approach to one’s own culture. In addition, the findings in Lee’s study (2006, 2008) revealed that the ability to know multiple languages makes it easier for the speakers to switch and ‘mask’ their identities depending on different contexts.

To add to the existing literature, Lee et al. (2010) expanded her doctoral research by studying the impact of the English language on the construction of identity of multilingual Malaysian undergraduates selected from private and public universities in Malaysia. The study, using a younger group of Malaysian adults, revealed a more positive outcome towards the role and impact of English on their identity construction and everyday talk. Lee et al.’s (2010) findings show that a majority of the respondents in the study affirmed that English happens to be their dominant language, although most

of them can speak their respective ethnic languages with friends and family members. While many of the respondents acknowledged that English has made them more direct when voicing their opinions, heightened their confidence, made them more broad-minded and allowed them to take a more impersonal stand in their communication, there exists a clear division with the way the respondents view speakers who are proficient in English and speak the language dominantly as opposed to those who are more fluent in their mother tongue and hardly speak any English. The respondents feel the two groups are distinct in the way they think, act or even with the way they portray themselves. The study revealed that the respondents who are multilingual and speak English dominantly or as their first language are the ones being othered by the ethnic group speakers who are less competent in English. Similar findings were obtained in the previous study by Lee (2003) with respondents revealing names and labels that were used with them for speaking English among people of the same ethnic group. Nevertheless, Lee et al. (2010) claims that the umbrage of the impact of English on identity construction reported in Lee (2003) appears to have declined in the study with 20 Malaysian undergraduates as they showed increasing recognition of the role of English as a significant tool in their lives and more than just a second language.

However, there are some deficiencies in the past literature that need to be considered for this study. In Lee et al.'s study (2010), the main requirement for the participants was that they were to be regular users of English besides their local languages so that they were conversant enough to provide their views on the issue. There is a plus point to have this criterion in her study because their familiarity with English helped her to explore its impact on their identities. Nevertheless, there is also a minus point because the findings proved to be rather biased. The reason is that the subjects were mostly fluent speakers of English. This was made clear in the discussion section of the study

where she mentioned that there were a significant number of respondents amongst the 20 interviewees that spoke English as their dominant language. Her findings also showed that they were the ones being ‘othered’ or marginalised mostly by the less competent speakers of English. Therefore, what concerns the researcher for the current study is to find out whether or not similar results are revealed through a wider range of sample, involving an extended group of participants not limited to only those coming from private or public institutions, but to include undergraduates, postgraduates as well as working professionals from various parts of Malaysia.

A more recent addition to the literature of the impact of English on the identity construction of Malaysians is the study conducted by Wong et al. (2012), where the researchers investigated further on the use of English as an identity marker among undergraduate students in Malaysia. Interestingly, the findings in this study seem to provide contradictory results vis-à-vis Lee’s (2001) study, as Wong et al.’s (2012) study reveals a more positive outlook on the acceptance of English as part of the respondents’ linguistic repertoire. The results of the study illustrate that the ‘English’ identity of the English-speaking Malaysians do not affect their ethnic identities adversely, which reflects the findings in Lee et al.’s (2010) study - showing a strong sense of care for one’s own ethnic and cultural identity and at the same time accepting English as their first or second language.

2.8 Linguistic hybridity

Linguistic hybridity is an important concept to be discussed in this study simply because Malaysia is a multi-ethnic and multicultural society; therefore Malaysians naturally tend to be bilingual or even multilingual. Before a further description of what linguistic hybridity means, let us as look at the definition of hybridity in terms of the natural

sciences. 'Hybridity' in the natural sciences refers to a new variety generated from the combination of present varieties (Wong et al., 2012). Therefore, hybridity denotes "the merging or mixing of cultures, languages and identities, especially in a multicultural and multilingual society" (Wong et al. 2012:149).

As opposed to David Crystal's popular belief and arguments in his book 'Language Death' (2003) that English imperialism threatens the existence of native languages and is likely to wipe out minority languages and cultures, Pennycook (1998) tries to argue against the notion of English linguistic imperialism and illustrates his arguments by providing evidence to show that a multiracial and multilingual society adapts languages and cultures to the presence of English as one of the dominant languages in the community, and for this he uses the concept of 'linguistic hybridity'. In addition to that, Anchimbe (2007:15) defines linguistic hybridity or 'linguabridity' as a blend of two or more languages and cultures, where he argues that children do not "fluctuate from one identity to the other or align themselves with a remote identity consciously like adults". He supports this notion by describing that children do not consciously know the limitations of identity construction as opposed to adults, simply because children seem to be more accommodating to the new language learned or the communities they mingle with in order to speak the foreign language, unlike adults who have more tendency to stigmatise a foreign language and its social value on their identity construction. In short, Anchimbe argues that these bilinguals do not necessarily have to hold on to or practice the cultures along with the languages that are learned for communication purposes (Anchimbe 2007:15).

2.9 Optimistic views of English in Malaysia

Knowing and mastering a foreign language is often viewed as providing benefits for the speakers in a world where competition is inevitably high. Archard (1996:119), cited in Crystal (2003:30), expresses the idea that languages are the lubricant of trade; for instance, in a situation where two British companies are trying to sell their products to the Arabic market and one is proficient in Arabic while the other is not, having every other aspect equal, it is undeniable that the British company that is able to use Arabic to communicate the business deal would most likely create a more promising impression on the Arabic traders. This simple example provided by Archard (1996:119) helps to illustrate the importance of knowing more than one language so that one is able to get messages across to someone, to understand a situation in a different setting and to form a reputable impression amongst those who do not share the same language and cultural background.

In a more localised context, Tan (2005) analysed the viewpoints of Malaysians who perceive English as a language that promotes competitiveness, globalization and unity, rather than a medium that stands in the way of 'nation building'. These perceptions, felt by Malaysians, were well illustrated in Tan's study (2005:54) which involved a quantitative lexical analysis of a mini corpus of nearly 26,000 words from local newspapers on the issue of the new bilingual education policy announcements and implementation details in Malaysia. The analysis of the mini corpus revealed that English is constantly associated with some key words or phrases that appeared repetitively in the newspapers, such as 'language of knowledge, information technology, communication, globalisation, competency and competitiveness'. These findings clearly indicate the reason behind the constant debate and arguments that revolve around the notion of English being the core language of knowledge and wider

communication, and catering to the need for information technology and to tap into current knowledge, which Malaysians regard as a tool and necessity to compete in the globalised world today. In addition, Tan (2005) has also discussed in a qualitative manner the issues claimed in the news reports that most Malaysians have boldly voiced out their concerns for re-establishing English-medium education in Malaysia in the following ways:

- a. *“Bring it back. This is the general reaction to Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad’s remarks yesterday that English could be re-introduced as the medium of instruction in schools. Educationists, politicians and a prominent unionist agreed that the move was feasible but would require much work.”*

(Source: ‘Cautious aye to re-introducing English-medium school system’, by P. Sharmini. News Straits Times, 8 May – from Tan, 2005:55)

- b. *“Debate on the NST Online Surfers’ Survey still favours the return of English-medium schools although the proposal has since been ruled out by the government.”*

(Source: ‘Surfers favour English medium’, by Azmi M. Anshar. News Straits Times, 19 May – from Tan, 2005:55)

In addition to that, according to Halliday (1975), the influential role of English is essential to recognise because it emphasizes the ‘pragmatic function’ (language as action), by which English is used as a tool to move on in life without upsetting Malaysian’s inner essence, viewpoint or beliefs, as well as ‘mathetic function’ (language for learning), where English is used to access information and build networks. As a matter of fact, it was reported that Malaysians’ opinion that re-introducing English for teaching science and mathematics will allow Malaysia to be more competitive, able to attract investments and developing a stronger and more efficient workforce, was mentioned in at least 12 texts (Tan, 2005:57).

In addition, Coluzzi (2012) studied the language use and attitudes of 88 university students in Brunei Darulssalam and another 88 students from a Malaysian public university on the prevalence of linguistic and cultural imperialism through the strong presence of English and its available cultural products in both countries. In the Malaysian linguistic context, Coluzzi (2012:122) reported that English holds a higher status than Standard Malay (Bahasa Malaysia) and it is extensively used in numerous domains such as for inter-ethnic communication, economic benefits, modernity, and among foreigners for tourism. Although multilingualism is apparent in a multi-ethnic society in Malaysia, where speakers usually code-mix and code-switch on a regular basis for communication, English places itself in a reputable position among Malaysians. This was highlighted by Coluzzi (2012) in his findings that with more Malaysians pursuing their higher education, they acknowledge and observe the significance of English as part of developing their lives, which echoes the findings of (Asmah Haji Omar 1992, 2003; Ozog 1996 in Coluzzi 2012:121) that English has become the desired language for inter-ethnic communication, especially among the educated. In addition to this, interesting results were also revealed in Coluzzi's (2012) study, that English, of course not exclusively, appears to be a popular language after Standard Malay in various media, such as reading materials, music as well as different means of communication – emails and text messages for inter-ethnic communication.

2.10 English as a global language

The significance of the English language is not only embraced in Malaysia, but it is also recognized as a world lingua franca or a well-accepted global language. To substantiate this notion, McArthur (1998) expressed the idea that it is possible for other global languages to be highly affected as it has been noted that countless new varieties have appeared around the world in relation to English due to its status as a world lingua

franca. It is notable that many countries such as Singapore, Ghana, and Jamaica have adopted their own varieties of English or new Englishes, and English is widely used as a medium of instruction. In this way it is possible for these varieties to emerge as a contemporary way to identify and represent their own ethnic identities and eventually to be upgraded to standard languages in due course.

2.11 The weakening of the mother tongue due to the dominance of English

Bernard (1992) once made a clear comparison between the roles of securing cultures and languages, by highlighting the necessity to transmit languages through the spoken and written medium if people really care about protecting their multiple cultures. It was mentioned that when language transmission stops or breaks down, it will lead to severe loss of hereditary knowledge:

“Any reduction of language diversity diminishes the adaptational strength of our species because it lowers the pool of knowledge from which we can draw”.
(Bernard 1992:82)

In addition to that discussion, Romeo Labillos (1996 in Crystal 2003:34) also stated that when a native language is removed or forgotten, it becomes a non-replaceable natural resource and, like the extinction of any animal species in our world, can be equated to the extinction of any native language due to the dominance of manipulative global lingua francas (Hale, 1992a:8).

According to Crystal (2003:20), the survival of a language can be classified as safe, endangered or extinct. To add to this notion, Krauss (1992:4) adds another term, i.e. ‘moribund’, to identify “languages which are no longer learned as a mother tongue by children”. It was also specified that this refers to a stage where the language lacks intergenerational transmission, the inability for the potential speaker or user of the language to reproduce it.

Kincade (1991:160) on the other hand, has classified the stages of language survival into a five-level system.

- a) “*viable languages*: have population bases that are sufficiently large and thriving to mean that no threat to long-term survival is likely”;
- b) “*small but viable languages*: have more than at least 1000 speakers and are spoken in communities that are isolated or with a strong internal organization, and aware of the way their language is a marker of identity”;
- c) “*endangered languages*: are spoken by enough people to make survival a possibility, but only in favourable circumstances and with a growth in community support”;
- d) “*nearly extinct languages*: are thought to be beyond the possibility of survival, usually because they are spoken by just a few elderly people”;
- e) “*extinct languages*: are those where the last fluent speaker has died, and there is no sign of any revival”.

However, Wurm’s (1998:192) five-level classification of weaker languages seems to be more relevant to the present situation of the mother tongue or ethnic language crisis in Malaysia. Wurm’s classification is organised from a different perspective and also gives the term ‘moribund’ a different emphasis.

- a) “*potentially endangered languages*: are socially and economically disadvantaged, under heavy pressure from a larger language and beginning to lose child speakers”;
- b) “*endangered languages*: have few or no children learning the language, and the youngest good speakers are young adults”;
- c) “*seriously endangered languages*: have the youngest good speakers aged 50 or older”;

- d) “*moribund languages*: have only a handful of good speakers left, mostly very old”;
- e) “*extinct languages*: have no speakers left”.

On the other hand, Bamgbose (1997:22) based the endangerment of languages on the perspective of linguistic criteria, as in the functions for which languages are used, as well as the kind of structural variation they happen to present. Bamgbose (1997) stated that the use of endangered languages is decreasing gradually throughout the community, since some of the roles these languages originally performed are either disappearing or have been replaced by other dominant languages, such as English or other lingua francas. Such cases are common in Africa, where more dominant languages, such as English, Swahili or some other lingua francas, have replaced the indigenous languages in educational, political and other public situations.

Moreover, some languages face discourse attrition as they are merely used in just one domain in their community, for instance as a language for religious or ritual purposes. Van Hoorde (1998:6) illustrated a situation where the Dutch language is in the danger of losing some of its domains even though it is not in a threatened state. He substantiated his point of view by expressing the possible condition of Dutch being used only as a colloquial language, whereby it may only be used at home to speak with family members, a language one may be comfortable with to express emotions and feelings, but not for more serious aspects of life such as work, money, science or technology.

On the other hand, Crystal (2003) commented that there is usually an intense escalation in the way people code-switch incorporating the more dominant and preferred language

into the threatened ethnic languages due to influences of these strong languages in the community. Elements of the dominant languages incorporated into the dominated languages may include grammatical features, with a growth in the use of inflections and function words. This situation is also accompanied by a lack of knowledge of vocabulary in the speakers' own ethnic languages or mother tongues, the younger generation knowing only part of the traditional vocabulary known by the older generation. This makes it harder for older people to keep up as they become unfamiliar with the borrowed vocabulary that is substituting that of their original, ethnic language. This was proven by a study of the Welsh language conducted by Jones (1985) where lexical erosion was examined across three generations, which included three groups of 20 participants of 60 to 80 years old, 40 to 59 years old and 20 to 39 years old respectively. The participants were required to provide the Welsh word or vocabulary for 150 items ranging from weather, animals, agricultural clothing, parts of the body and many other terms. The results revealed a stable decline in the knowledge and awareness of the words in Welsh across the three generations, with the empirical results of 65% of the older group knowing at least 90% of the words in Welsh, in comparison to 40% of the middle-aged people and none of the youngest group of people.

2.12 Perceptions of monolingual dominance

Crystal (2003) raised a question in his book as to why we should care about whether or not a language survives or dies and voiced out his opinion that many people think they don't need to care much about circumstances such as language reduction or loss simply because of the popular belief that any reduction in the number of languages is of advantage for the people in the world and not an issue to be worried about. According to this view, Crystal (2003) perceives that many believe that in an idyllic world, mutual understanding, enlightenment and harmony would only be achieved if there would be

just one language, and any situation which is in support of this tendency is highly encouraged.

In his book 'Language Death' Crystal (2003) noted two big problems with the above notion. The first is the idea of sharing a single language that would bring global solidarity and a world full of understanding and harmony. He deeply disagrees that the notion of sharing a single language like the dominant English language as a global lingua franca would eliminate animosity, conflict and diversity and bring peace and unity in the world. The second problem, he claims, is closely related to the question of choice. He mentions that it is common for people who belong to or come from major monolingual nations to effortlessly make assumptions that it will be easier for everyone to just use a single language to communicate with each other in the world, that language being the language of their own country. Crystal (1997b, 2003) argues that it is highly possible to have a world where everyone speaks at least two languages; one being the people's own ethnic language or mother tongue and the other an international language for facilitating common understanding and global communication. This should be encouraged and upheld.

The next chapter will provide details on the methodology employed to conduct the study to obtain relevant and reliable data and findings. The discussed linguistic terms and features in this chapter will be used for analysing the data of the study in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter a comprehensive discussion on the approach that was used to conduct and analyse the issues of the study will be illustrated in detail. For this study, the researcher selected a mixed-method approach, employing both quantitative as well as qualitative research designs as tools, in order to explore and analyse the impact and influence of English in the construction of identity among young adults in Malaysia. So that this issue could be investigated at different stages, this chapter is divided into several segments: the purpose of conducting a mixed-method research, a description of the participants involved in the sampling method, the techniques and instruments implemented for data collection, the data gathering methods and data analysis methods employed during the research period.

3.2 Reasons for employing a mixed-method approach

While Johnson et al. (2007:123) defined mixed-method research approach as “the type of research in which a researcher or team of researchers combines elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches (e.g., use of qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collection, analysis, inference techniques) for the purposes of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration”, Tashakkori and Creswell (2007:4) described mixed-method study as “a research in which the investigator collects and analyses data, integrates the findings, and draws inferences using both qualitative and quantitative approaches or methods in a single study or a program of inquiry”.

The rationale for utilising a mixed-method approach when conducting a study is that when both quantitative and qualitative data are combined together the data become richer and are able to provide a better understanding of the research problem than what

may be obtained solely from either type of method. In addition, a mixed-method technique is favoured when one type of research, qualitative or quantitative, is insufficient to address the research problem or answer the research questions objectively (Creswell, 2008). Sieber (1973) also substantiated the effectiveness of a mixed-method approach, thus providing numerous reasons for merging quantitative and qualitative research method. This was done by illustrating how the affirmed approach could smoothen up the data collection and data analysis stages of the research procedure. Through observations and studies of the past, Sieber (1973) is able to prove that at the research design stage, quantitative data will be able to contribute to the qualitative component by recognising representative sample interviewees, and discarding non-related or divergent cases. On the other hand, at the proposal stage qualitative data will be very useful in supporting the quantitative section of a study by providing theoretical and instrument development for the research. One of the most crucial parts of a study is the data collection stage, where, in this case, quantitative data can help provide some basic statistics and to prevent research bias which is typically prevalent in a qualitative research, while qualitative data can assist in simplifying the data collection process with detailed responses and examples. It is also an important factor that quantitative data and findings can aid in facilitating the generalizability of the qualitative data. The final reason for employing a mixed-method approach is the role of qualitative data during the data analysis stage, which is to interpret, clarify, describe, and validate quantitative results, concluding with a solid grounding and adjusting of the findings of the study.

In addition, scholars such as Rossman and Wilson (1985) have also acknowledged three reasons for merging quantitative and qualitative research methods in a study. The first reason is the ability of the researcher to confirm and corroborate each method through a triangulation process. Next, the researcher would be able to use the combination of the

two approaches to create enhanced and richer data and analysis. Lastly, mixed-method approaches aid in initiating new concepts and thoughts and in analysing the contradictions developing from the two data sources.

Likewise, Greene, Caracelli, and Graham (1989:259) developed five broad justifications for utilising a mixed method approach in studies by exploring the results of past published research:

- a) “*Triangulation* seeks convergence, corroboration, and correspondence of results from the different methods”.
- b) “*Complementarity* seeks elaboration, enhancement, illustration, and clarification of the results from one method with the results from the other method”.
- c) “*Development* seeks to use the results from one method to help develop or inform the other method, where development is broadly construed to include sampling and implementation, as well as measurement decisions”.
- d) “*Initiation* seeks the discovery of paradox and contradiction, new perspectives of frameworks, the recasting of questions or results from one method with questions or results from the other method”.
- e) “*Expansion* seeks to extend the breadth and range of inquiry by using different methods for different inquiry components”.

3.3 Stages in adopting a mixed-method approach for this study

The flow chart on page 39 is adapted from Abraham S. Fischler, School of Education on ‘Mixed Methods’ to illustrate the seven stages involved in applying a mixed-method research approach to explore the impact of the English language on the identity construction of young Malaysian adults in this study.

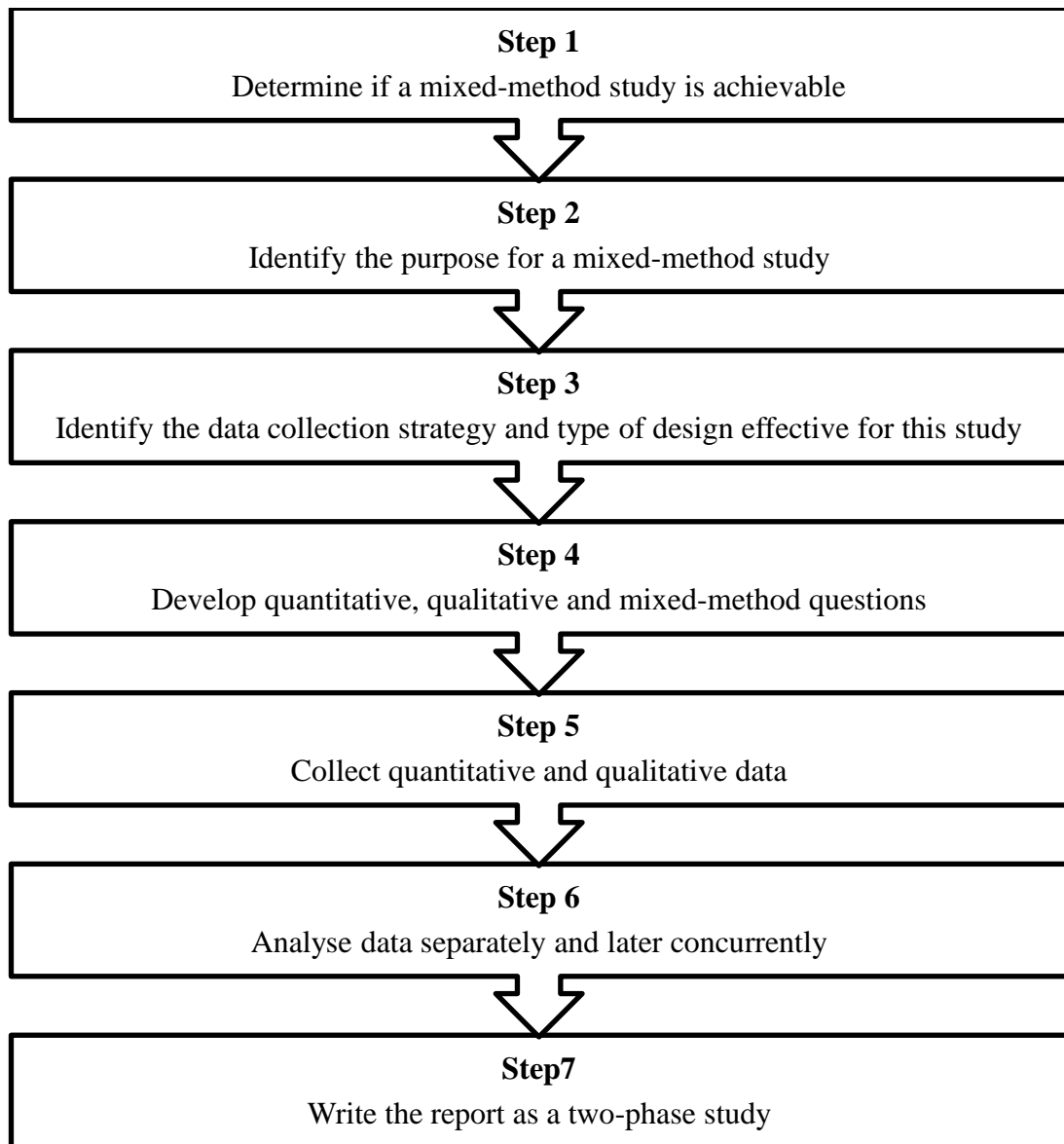


Figure 3.1: Seven stages of conducting a mixed-method study

Adapted from Fischler, 'Mixed-Method'
http://www.schoolofed.nova.edu/arc/research_courses/ppt/mixed_methods.pdf
(See Creswell, 2002)

3.4 Sample population

Since the study employs a mixed-method approach, using a both quantitative and qualitative research design, the researcher began the data collection process by gathering information and feedback from a large number of respondents through a quantitative method at an initial stage. Therefore, a random sample of 100 participants from Malaysia was selected to answer the survey questions prepared by the researcher

in order to examine the issues of the study from a quantifiable perspective in the first stage. The sample was carefully selected to represent the population of young Malaysian adults, by ensuring the participants were well distributed in various parts of Malaysia. Thus the researcher made sure that the participants came from different states of the country and were not chosen merely from a particular place or institution to take part in this study. These 100 Malaysian respondents were purposefully selected to aid in exploring the impact and influence of English in the identity construction of young Malaysian adults, representing the target population at large.

The appropriate age group of the participants to contribute to this study was firmly restricted within the scale of 20 to 28 years old, as the participants could be pursuing their undergraduate or postgraduate studies. Working adults who fell in this age group category were also considered. Since working adults between the ages of 20 to 28 years old were welcome to participate in the survey for this study, participants were also required to fill out the occupation column. This was for the researcher's personal reference and it was not considered as an important criterion for the selection of the participants. This was required of the participants so that the researcher could keep account of the divergent range of occupations the participants represented and to avoid having too many representatives from similar fields or jobs.

In addition to that, the main requirement for the respondents to fulfil in order to be part of the study was to have a fairly good command of the English language and also they had to be able to communicate and provide mature thoughts, opinions and perceptions on how English impacts their identity construction as well as that of other young Malaysian adults. In this study, no specific measures were taken to select participants in terms of their gender, race or religion. However, there were no extreme polarizations in

the amount of male or female respondents, or participants who belonged to a particular race or religion outnumbering one another. It was made a requirement for the participants to fill in the gender column in the distributed questionnaires to serve as a research guide for the researcher so as to avoid uneven gender distribution.

The second stage in the data collection process involved a qualitative approach, where only nine carefully selected Malaysian individuals were chosen to represent the 100 respondents who participated in the task of answering the interview questions in order to provide a more in-depth point of view and to share their personal experiences on the impact and various influences of English towards the identity construction of young Malaysian adults. The selection was also made by ensuring that the nine participants came from various racial and language backgrounds to represent the general population in Malaysia for this study.

The researcher also made sure that the nine participants who agreed to contribute to this study belonged to either a group which speak English as their dominant language compared to the mother tongue, or from a group whose mother tongue is its dominant language and English its second language. This selection criterion was adopted to prevent research bias in the study by avoiding either group to dominate the findings from the data collected due to an uneven number of speakers who are proficient in either language. However, there is a limitation in terms of the participants involved in the study: only one male was able to participate in the focus group interview, which leaves eight others to be female respondents. Nonetheless, the gender aspect was not part of the selection criteria of the sample population and therefore it should not have affected the data interpretation or findings of this study.

3.5 Instruments employed and data collection process

In order to employ a mixed-method approach for this research, the researcher decided to firstly, conduct a survey to gather data quantitatively by distributing questionnaires as the first research instrument. This method was employed to gather results from a common population as an initial approach and subsequently a qualitative approach was used to collect further details and information from the respondents by conducting interviews in focus groups. The results of the survey helped to formulate relevant questions for the interview.

3.5.1 Quantitative approach: Survey

For the data collection process in this study, the first phase was to employ a quantitative method, where a quantitative research approach is defined by Creswell (2008:46) as “a type of educational research in which the researcher decides what to study, asks specific, narrow questions, collects quantifiable data from participants, analyses these numbers using statistics and conducts the inquiry in an unbiased, objective manner.”

To carry out this approach, a survey was conducted by distributing questionnaires to a sample population of 100 respondents, within the age group of 20 to 28 years old. This sample population was purposefully selected to represent young adults in Malaysia in general, to study and analyse the impact and influence of English on the construction of their identities. The questionnaire is divided clearly into two sections, namely: section A and section B. Section A requires the respondents to provide general background information: details about their gender, age, ethnic group, educational qualifications and field of occupation. Responses from section A were not a

contributing factor to the interpretation or analysis of the research, but served as a reference for the researcher. On the other hand, section B called on the respondents to provide other personal details, such as their mother tongue, proficiency in the mother tongue and other languages spoken as well as their views on the effects of the use of the English language in various situations. There are a total number of 15 questions in the questionnaire, and only three of them required the respondents to provide their feedback and opinions in written form. For the rest of the questions, the respondents only needed to tick (✓) next to the answers or responses they could relate to or agreed with.

3.5.2 Qualitative approach: Focus group interview

The second stage of the data collection process proceeded with a qualitative approach, where a qualitative method is defined by Creswell (2008:46) as “a type of educational research in which the researcher relies on the views of participants; asks broad, general questions; collects data consisting largely of words (or text) from participants; describes and analyses these words for themes; and conducts the inquiry in a subjective, biased manner.”

The employment of a qualitative research approach required the researcher to utilize focus group interviews as an instrument for the study. A total of nine respondents out of the 100 who participated in the survey in the first stage were purposefully selected to participate in the interviews to further help answer the research questions of the study. The researcher selected focus group interviews as a method to probe further into the issue under study by preparing some semi-structured open-ended questions. This procedure was planned to allow the possibility of gathering more information and feedback on the interviewees'

experiences and perceptions of the concept under study by involving more participants, i.e. with the idea of having two to three participants to be interviewed at the same time. The rationale for conducting a semi-structured open-ended interview within focus groups was to allow flexibility in the way the participants responded by encouraging discussion of opinions and experiences on the impact of English on their identity construction as multi-ethnic Malaysians. Before getting the respondents to begin answering specific questions related to the issue under study, they were required to answer some basic background information questions in order for the researcher to understand the participants' background. Also, the first section of the questions in the interview was meant to make the participants feel comfortable with the researcher and the interview process as well as to reduce the level of intimidation faced by them when they were required to answer questions on a certain topic right away. Subsequently, the interview proceeded gradually with a more detailed viewpoint-based set of questions which began with phrases such as: *"Do you think..."*, *"In your opinion..."*, and *"What do you think..."*. Lastly, the questions moved on to engage the interviewees in answering a more thorough set of situation-based questions which required the respondents to share and discuss personal feedback, experiences as well as to contribute with their recommendations on the issue under study.

On a positive note, focus group interviews in this study have proven that conversing in groups was particularly comfortable for the respondents to voice out their thoughts and opinions on the issue under study, as they did not have to face the interviewer alone. Altogether, the nine participants were interviewed in four separate groups, comprising of two members in two groups and three

members in the other two groups. Each focus group interview lasted for about 20 to 40 minutes, depending on the level of discussion that took place within each group that was interviewed. Some participants had much more to share and discuss with the group members, while other focus group participants needed to be questioned and guided more by the researcher to develop the flow of the interview. The focus group interviews were audio-taped and then transcribed verbatim for data analysis purposes.

3.6 Interview protocol

An interview protocol was used as a guide for asking the semi-structured questions and for recording the participants' answers. The researcher followed some guidelines in order to conduct the focus group interviews, such as considering the aspects of heading, instructions, preparation of the questions to be asked to the participants, spacing before questions and responses from the respondents as well as thank you statements (Creswell, 2009:183). Since the researcher had planned to conduct a semi-structured open-ended focus group interview with the participants, there were not too many questions prepared beforehand; however, the researcher was well aware that it was important to elicit more answers, responses and explanations by asking the participants for more elaboration on what they were saying about the issue under study. Although the interviews were audio-taped by using an MP3 player, notes were taken to avoid loss of primary data.

3.7 Data analysis procedures

Long before the actual data collection process began, the researcher conducted a small-scaled pilot study by discussing the impact or influence of English on the way young Malaysian adults construct their identities with some potential respondents. The pilot

study was also carried out by taking down notes from conversations on the phone with some potential respondents, clarifying doubts and issues and by asking questions related to the topic under study. The results and findings of the pilot study helped to develop a few initial provisional themes related to the issue under study.

Some themes which emerged from the pilot study are as follows:

- a) Failure to accommodate to appropriate situations with the use of either the mother tongue or English as the dominant language.
- b) Insensitiveness towards the cultures of others by using favoured language dominantly.
- c) The popular belief that competence in English brings success and a brighter future.
- d) Fear of embarrassment due to the lack of proficiency in either mother tongue or English (mostly English).
- e) Differences in thoughts and behaviour between the in-group and out-group in society.

The themes which were developed from the pilot study helped the researcher to develop the aim of the study so that more could be explored and discovered on whether or not this issue was a common problem faced by young Malaysian adults in a subtle and rather hidden manner. Also, guidance on the initial themes which emerged from the pilot study, along with the analysis of the actual data collected through the surveys and focus group interviews, have helped the researcher a great deal to identify the common themes after the coding process. The themes that emerged from the analysis and the findings were interpreted and described to answer the study's proposed research questions, which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the analysis of the data is divided into two major sections; the first one discusses the survey results and the second section elaborates more on the interview results. The data collected during the research interview were identified, coded, classified under various themes, interpreted and analysed with the aim of producing the answers to the research questions of this study.

4.2 Background of the survey

A survey was conducted among 100 respondents to find out ‘the effects of English on the construction of identity among young Malaysian adults’ and the results are outlined further on in this chapter. The responses obtained from this survey were helpful in analyzing the effects of the English language in constructing the respondents’ identities as Malaysians, although it is regarded as a second language in the country. Sincere responses and feedback in answering the questionnaire were required for the study and the participants were assured that the answers provided by them would be used for research purposes only and the personal details of the participants would be confidential.

The questionnaire comprised two sections: Section A and Section B. Section A required the respondents to provide their general background information, while Section B required the respondents to provide personal thoughts and views on the effects of the use of the English language in various situations. The respondents were required to put a tick (✓) in the appropriate column to answer and they were allowed to tick (✓) more than once for certain questions only if necessary.

4.2.1 Analysis of section A of the survey: personal background

There was a percentage of 44% male and 56% female respondents who participated in this survey. Table 1 presents the distribution of respondents according to gender (male and female), with R = respondents and % = percentage. The table shows that the percentage of female respondents is slightly higher than that of the percentage of male in this survey. The questionnaires were distributed rather evenly to both genders to prevent gender biasness in this research.

Table 4.1: Distribution of respondents according to gender

Gender	Total R	%
Male	44	44
Female	56	56
Total	100	100

A total of 38% of the sample were 20 to 24 years old and the other 62% were 25 to 28 years old. Table 2 presents the distribution of respondents according to age group (category 1 = 20 to 24 years old and category 2 = 25 to 28 years old). In this survey, the percentage of the more mature age group representing respondents from 25 to 28 years old outnumbers the younger group of respondents from 20 to 24 years old.

Table 4.2: Distribution of respondents according to age group

Age group	Total R	%
20 to 24 years old	38	38
25 to 28 years old	62	62
Total	100	100

In terms of race, multiethnic Malaysia is made up of three main races, namely the Malays, who represent the biggest population of the country, followed by the Chinese who are second in position and lastly the Indians who make up the third

race of the country in terms of size, followed by other minority ethnicities. In this survey, however, the percentages of the respondents who participated differ from the actual size of the ethnic groups that make up the country. This was due to the respondents' availability to participate in the survey. Table 3 presents the distribution of respondents according to ethnicity and it can be seen that 33% of the participants were Malays, 24% of them were Chinese, 38% were Indian; the survey has also included 5% of others - the Bidayuh, which is one of the many small ethnic groups coming from East Malaysia, from Sabah and Sarawak. Unfortunately, the Sikhs, who are also a small community in Malaysia, did not manage to be part of the survey due to their unavailability when the questionnaires were distributed.

Table 4.3: Distribution of respondents according to ethnicity

Ethnicity	Total R	%
Malay	33	33
Chinese	24	24
Indian	38	38
Others	5	5
Total	100	100

In order to participate in the survey, the respondents had to qualify to provide mature and sensible feedback. This was done by ensuring that they had at least completed their SPM (Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia) – Malaysia's Certificate of Education, or 'O'Level, or a qualification of an equivalent status. From the survey, it was discovered that 13% of them had completed their SPM / 'O'Level / equivalent status, while 24% of them had STPM / 'A'Level / Matriculation / equivalent qualification, 59% of the respondents hold a Bachelor's Degree, representing the highest ratio of the overall sample, and lastly only 4% of them had obtained a Master's Degree. No respondents had obtained their Doctorate

qualification or PhD in this survey. Table 4 presents the distribution of respondents according to educational qualification.

Table 4.4: Distribution of respondents according to academic qualification

Academic qualification	Total R	%
SPM / O'Level / equivalent	13	13
STPM / A'Level / Matriculation / equivalent	24	24
Bachelor's Degree	59	59
Master's Degree	4	4
Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D)	0	0
Total	100	100

According to Lee et al. (2010: 98), the findings of their study supported the feedback obtained in Lee's (2003) previous study, where multilingual postgraduate respondents adjusted their identities whenever they switched to different languages in localized contexts. These postgraduate students stated that knowing English allowed them to be more direct with their speech and have a more critical and insightful outlook towards their own cultures. Although the percentage of postgraduates who participated in this research is rather small, they echo the feedback obtained in the previous studies on identity construction conducted by Lee (2003, 2010). Hence, having analysed studies in the past, the researcher is interested to investigate if similar results and feedback can be obtained if respondents of different educational backgrounds are involved in this study.

In addition, the respondents were also asked to state their current field of occupation in order to provide a clear perspective of the different types of people and the range of working and educational background and experiences they had in order to contribute in this survey with their feedback and responses. Table 5 illustrates the distribution of respondents according to professional background. From the table, it can be seen that a total of 13% of the respondents were from

either the medical, science or biology field of work, whereas 19% of them were educators, teachers, instructors, trainers or lecturers. The finance, business and accounting field was only represented by 1%, the smallest percentage of the overall sample, while another 28% of the participants comprised administrative and management staff, which represented the highest percentage of participants in a particular field. A total of 20% of the respondents represented the information technology or telecommunications field and 19% were represented by undergraduate and postgraduate students. The study carried out by Wong et al. (2012:153) recommended a more wide-ranging study to be conducted comprising Malaysian young adults who are not only from the educational settings but from different settings or fields and from different geographical regions of Malaysia so that the findings will be able to provide a clearer perspective of the impact of English on the identity construction of young Malaysians.

Table 4.5: Distribution of respondents according to professional background

Professional background	Total R	%
Medical / Science / Biology	13	13
Education / Teaching / Training	19	19
Finance / Business / Accounting	1	1
Administration / Management	28	28
Information Technology / Telecommunications	20	20
Undergraduate / Postgraduate	19	19
Total	100	100

4.2.2 Findings of section B: personal details and viewpoints

In section B, the respondents were required to answer 15 questions altogether by selecting and ticking the responses that they agreed upon. Out of the 15 questions, three open-ended questions numbered 12, 13 and 14 were asked to obtain feedback on their personal viewpoints and thoughts on the effects of

English on identity construction of young Malaysian adults as well as the effects of ‘othering’ among Malaysians on the learning and use of English. Their feedback and viewpoints were narrowed down to common themes and were also analyzed carefully to answer the research questions in this study.

In question 1, the respondents were asked to state which one of the given options is their mother tongue. Table 6 presents the mother tongue of the respondents and it shows that 34% of the sample stated that Bahasa Melayu is their mother tongue, another 34% of the respondents spoke Tamil as their mother tongue, a total of 12% spoke Cantonese and 8% spoke Mandarin as their mother tongue, while 9% spoke other languages, such as Bidayuh and lastly only 3% of the respondents in this survey spoke English as their mother tongue.

Table 4.6: Mother tongue of the respondents

Language	Total R	%
Bahasa Melayu	34	34
English	3	3
Mandarin	8	8
Cantonese	12	12
Tamil	34	34
Punjabi	0	0
Others	9	9

In question 2 the respondents were required to state how well they could speak their mother tongue. Table 7 illustrates the respondents’ level of proficiency in their mother tongue. From the survey, a huge percentage of the sample stated that they could speak their mother tongue very well outnumbering the other responses, with a total of 65%. On the other hand, 24% stated that they were able to speak their mother tongue well while 8% felt that they spoke their mother tongue fairly well. Only 3% of the population affirmed that they spoke their mother tongue poorly. None of the respondents could not speak their mother tongue at all or could only understand it a little. The fact that 65% of the

respondents answered that they could speak their mother tongue very well reflected their level of confidence - they could judge their own proficiency in their mother tongue, which they are using and upholding well.

Table 4.7: Respondents' level of proficiency in their mother tongue

Statement	Total R	%
Very well	65	65
Well	24	24
Fairly well	8	8
Poorly	3	3
I don't speak it at all	0	0
I can only understand it a little	0	0

In question 3 the respondents were required to state the language that they normally speak at home. Table 8 presents the languages that the respondents normally speak at home. From the table, it can be seen that a total of 40% of the sample stated that they normally speak Bahasa Melayu, while quite a larger number of the respondents stated that they normally speak English at home, i.e. as many as 35% of the overall sample. 20% of them stated that they speak Tamil at home, while 13% normally speak Cantonese and only 8% of the respondents in this survey normally speak Mandarin at home. Since there were no participants representing the Sikh race, none of the respondents speak Punjabi at home. The percentage of the respondents speaking English at home is second highest after the 40% of the respondents who normally speak Bahasa Malaysia at home, a figure which corresponds roughly to the number of Malay respondents – 33%. The findings support the notion discussed in Anchimbe's (2007) definition of 'linguistic hybridity', whereby bilinguals or multilinguals who speak two or more languages acquire one of them from their parents and learn the other at school.

Table 4.8: Languages that the respondents normally speak at home

Language	Total R	%
Bahasa Melayu	40	40
English	35	35
Mandarin	8	8
Cantonese	13	13
Tamil	20	20
Punjabi	0	0
Others	9	9

In question 4 the respondents were required to state the language that they normally speak with their friends or colleagues. Table 9 below presents the languages that the respondents normally speak with friends or colleagues. It can be seen from the table that a total of 75% of the respondents affirmed that they normally speak English with their friends or colleagues, followed by Bahasa Melayu with a total of 65%. Only 24% of the respondents stated that they normally speak Tamil with their friends or colleagues, whereas 15% stated they used Mandarin and 10% Cantonese. Only 1% affirmed that they speak other languages from the options provided with friends or colleagues. This proves that Bahasa Malaysia and English are the ‘high’ varieties that are widely spoken among friends and colleagues at workplace or universities. This also denotes that young adults are very comfortable in using both languages to promote multilingualism in a multiracial country.

Table 4.9: Languages that the respondents normally speak with friends or colleagues

Language	Total R	%
Bahasa Melayu	65	65
English	75	75
Mandarin	15	15
Cantonese	10	10
Tamil	24	24
Punjabi	0	0
Others	1	1

For question 5 the respondents were required to state how comfortable they feel when they speak English. Table 10 presents how comfortable the respondents are in speaking English and it can be seen from the table that a majority of 60% feel comfortable speaking English, however, less than half of them stated that they are very comfortable speaking in English and even fewer people affirmed that they do not feel very comfortable speaking English. None of them ticked the option that they do not feel comfortable at all speaking in English. Although there were only about a quarter of the total respondents who felt that they are ‘very comfortable’ in speaking English, 60 % of them felt ‘comfortable’ in speaking English. This result denotes the rising level of interest and preference in using English among young Malaysian adults.

Table 4.10: How comfortable the respondents are in speaking English

Statement	Total R	%
Very comfortable	27	27
Comfortable	60	60
Not very comfortable	13	13
I’m not comfortable at all	0	0

In question 6 and 7 the respondents were required to carefully make a choice in responding to the following questions. If the respondents had agreed to the fact that they feel either very comfortable or comfortable in question number 5, they were required to answer question number 6 as well. On the other hand, if they had agreed earlier in their response that they feel either not very comfortable or not comfortable at all, then they had to refer to question number 7 to provide their feedback.

In question 6 the respondents were asked to choose from the options provided as to why they feel comfortable when communicating in English. Table 11 illustrates the reasons to why the respondents feel comfortable communicating

in English. From the table, it can be seen that 44% of the participants felt that they are able to express their thoughts, ideas and feelings better in English. 22% of them felt that they are comfortable speaking in English as they have better proficiency in English and only 7% of them felt that they lack the proficiency in their mother tongue or other languages while 4% have many friends or colleagues who speak English dominantly, which contributes as a factor to why they feel comfortable speaking in English. Nearly 50% of them shared the opinion that they are comfortable enough to use English because they are able to express and deliver their thoughts, ideas and feelings better. This was also not primarily because they are not proficient in their own mother tongue or other languages.

Table 4.11: Reasons to why the respondents feel comfortable communicating in English

Statement	Total R	%
I am able to express my thoughts, ideas and feelings better in English.	44	44
I have better proficiency in English.	22	22
I lack proficiency in my mother tongue or other languages.	7	7
I have many friends or colleagues who speak English dominantly.	4	4

In question 7 the respondents were asked to choose from the options provided as to why they feel not very comfortable or not comfortable at all when communicating in English. Table 12 below presents the reasons to why the respondents feel uncomfortable when communicating in English. It can be seen from the table that 6% of the participants felt that they are unable to express their thoughts, ideas and feelings well in English. 7% of them felt that they are comfortable speaking in their mother tongue because they have better proficiency in it. A total of 9% of them feel that they lack proficiency in English

and that leads to lack of confidence on their part to continue speaking that language. This category obtained the highest percentage of all the options provided for this question. While 3% of them feel that they do not have many friends or colleagues who speak in English dominantly, which contributes to their feeling uncomfortable speaking in English, only 1% chose the option that his or her friends or colleagues usually tease him or her if he or she speaks English. As can be seen, very few respondents stated that they feel uncomfortable in using English to communicate. And for those who did, it is because of their lack of confidence due to their poor proficiency in English or because they have a better command of other languages. As can be seen, only one respondent stated that his or her ‘friends or colleagues usually tease him or her if he or she speaks in English’ – which proves that it is a rare case now as more people are open to the use English in their day-to-day communication.

Table 4.12: Reasons to why the respondents feel uncomfortable when communicating in English

Statement	Total R	%
I am unable to express my thoughts, ideas and feelings well in English.	6	6
I have better proficiency in my mother tongue or other languages.	7	7
I don't feel confident when I speak in English due to lack of proficiency.	9	9
I don't have many friends or colleagues who speak English dominantly.	3	3
My friends or colleagues usually tease me if I speak in English.	1	1

In question 8 the respondents were asked to state how important English is to them and the results are presented in table 13. Out of the four options provided, a total of 67% of the respondents felt that the English language is very important to them. The findings indicate that two thirds of the sample realizes the

importance of English in their lives by stating it is a ‘very important’ language to them. Another 31% affirmed that the English language is important to them, while only 1% of the respondents stated that it is not very important and none selected ‘not important at all’. This means that almost everybody believes that English is important.

Table 4.13: The importance of the English language to the respondents

Statement	Total R	%
Very important	67	67
Important	31	31
Not very important	1	1
Not important at all	0	0

In question 9 the respondents were required to state to what extent proficiency in English benefits them as users of the language. For this question, table 14 presents how does good proficiency in English benefit the respondents as users of the language. It can be seen that 54% of the respondents felt that they could communicate more effectively in English, i.e. the majority of them. The second highest percentage would be for the reason that they will be able to secure a good job if they are able to use English well, which was chosen by 50% of the respondents. This was followed by 45% of the respondents who stated that their performance in college, university or workplace is better with the use of English. A total of 31% of them felt that they could understand the lessons taught in the college or university better with English. While many had chosen the above options, 14% felt that English gave them a sense of pride and high social status, while 13% chose the option that they would be able to secure a place at the university or college if they were proficient in English.

From the survey results for this question, most respondents recognize the benefits that they gain if they have a good proficiency in English, as the three main reasons were chosen more than the other options, i.e. having a good proficiency in English would provide them a better job, better performance at tertiary level, as well as help to make communication effective. Surprisingly, the last answer provided for this question was chosen by only 14% of the respondents as only a few felt that English gave them a sense of pride and high social status. Therefore the answers do not echo the findings of Wong et al. (2012:151), as her study revealed instances of how English is perceived to have given the respondents high social status in the society and respect, with the respondents being looked upon as highly educated. I believe that a more in-depth response could be obtained from the respondents through interviews as there is a tendency for them not to reveal their true thoughts and feelings through a survey.

Table 4.14: How does good proficiency in English benefit the respondents as users of the language

Statement	Total R	%
I will be able to secure a good job.	50	50
My performance in college / university / workplace will be better.	45	45
I will be able to secure a place at the university / college.	13	13
I can understand the lessons taught in the college or university better.	31	31
I can communicate more effectively.	54	54
It gives me a sense of pride and high social status.	14	14

Question 10 required the respondents to state their views on people who speak English dominantly even though their mother tongue is not English. Table 15 below presents the respondents' view of people who speak English dominantly even though their mother tongue is not English and it can be seen that as many

as 44% of the respondents feel people speak English because they want their children to learn English as their first language. Most of them feel that parents want their children to learn English as their first language because it opens doors to opportunities in this globalised world and proficiency in English offers a brighter future. The second most chosen reason is that they feel they are not proficient in their mother tongue or other languages; this option is favoured by 39% of the sample. A total of 27% of the sample stated that the reason why people tend to speak in English dominantly is to reflect their high social status. For this question, more respondents selected the option ‘they want to show high social status’ as a reason in comparison to the 14% who answered question 9. In addition, 21% agreed that people who speak in English most of the time or more than their mother tongue want to show that they can speak better than the others. Only 16% of the overall sample stated that this could be due to being ‘boastful’ or to showing off one’s proficiency in English.

Table 4.15: Respondents’ view of people who speak English dominantly even though their mother tongue is not English

Statement	Total R	%
They are boastful or show off.	16	16
They are not proficient in their mother tongue or other languages.	39	39
They want to show high social status.	27	27
They want their children to learn the language as their first language.	44	44
They want to show that they can speak English better than the others.	21	21

Question 11 gauged the respondents’ view on the importance of ‘language’ in maintaining one’s cultural or ethnic identity compared to other aspects, such as traditional clothes, traditional food, traditional music, dances, festivals and other traditional practices or customs. Table 16 is used to present the respondents’ view on the importance of ‘language’ in upholding one’s own cultural or ethnic

identity. The table illustrates that almost equally, 44% of the respondents stated that ‘language’ is an important factor while another 43% stated that it is very important to maintain one’s own cultural and ethnic identity by upholding the language. 10%, however, felt that language is not a very important criterion and only 3% felt that language is not important at all to maintain one’s ethnic identity in comparison to all the other aspects mentioned above. The survey results for this question, however, do not echo the findings of David’s (1996) study where it was found that the language alone did not determine the identity of the third generation of Sindhis in Malaysia who were more proficient in English than in their mother tongue, as they showed their ethnicity through other aspects, such as their traditional clothes, food and festivities.

Table 4.16: Respondents’ view on the importance of ‘language’ in upholding one’s own cultural or ethnic identity

Statement	Total R	%
Very important	43	43
Important	44	44
Not very important	10	10
Not important at all	3	3

As for question 12, the respondents were asked to state ‘yes’ or ‘no’ and provide a reason for their answer to the question whether or not people would give up their cultural beliefs and practices if they continued speaking English dominantly or most of the time. Figure 1 presents the results of whether or not people will give up their cultural beliefs and practices if they continued speaking in English dominantly. It can be seen from the figure that only 14% mentioned ‘yes’, while a majority of the respondents – 86% of them -- stated ‘no’.

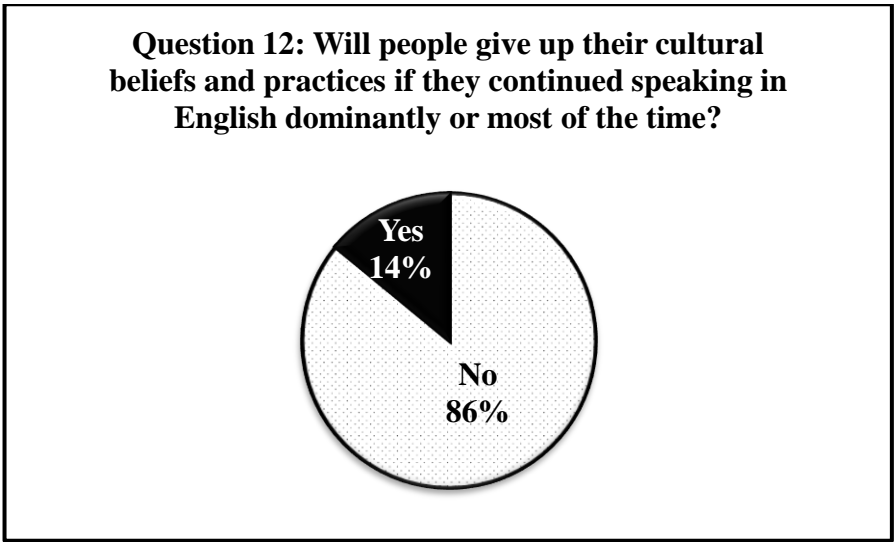


Figure 4.1: Results of whether or not people will give up their cultural beliefs and practices if they continued speaking in English dominantly

Similarly, question 13 required the respondents to state ‘yes’ or ‘no’ and provide reasons for their choices for the question whether or not people would lose their ethnic or racial identity if they continued speaking in English dominantly. Figure 2 is used to present the results of whether or not people will lose their ethnic or racial identity if they continued speaking in English dominantly. The figure illustrates that a large number of respondents – 84% mentioned ‘no’ for this question while as few as 16% stated ‘yes’.

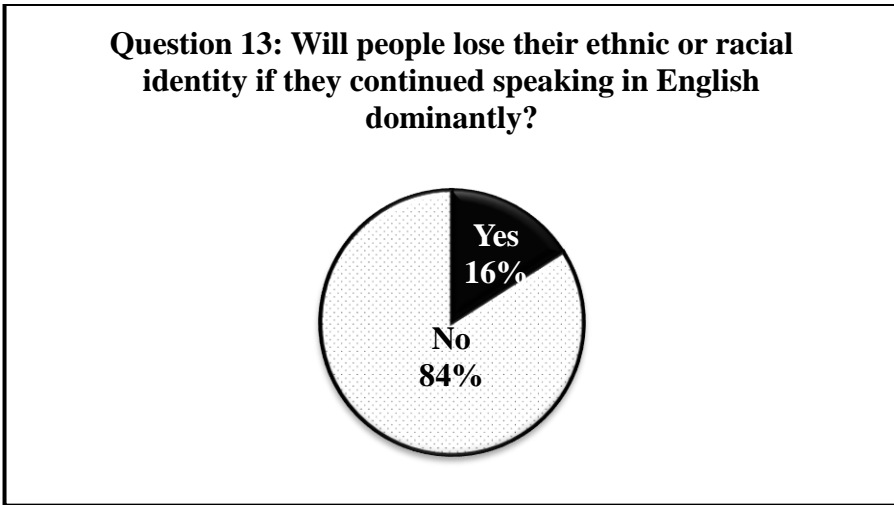


Figure 4.2: Results of whether or not people will lose their ethnic or racial identity if they continued speaking in English dominantly

Question 12 and 13 represent the opinions of a vast majority of young Malaysian adults who do not think that speaking English dominantly will lead them to give up their cultural or ethnic identities, their beliefs and practices as language is seen mostly as a medium of communication with people. Some respondents view that language and cultural beliefs are not related, therefore people will still hold on to their cultural beliefs strongly although they speak a different language dominantly other than their mother tongue. There are others who mentioned that cultural practices and beliefs are something that one is born or educated with since childhood. Therefore people can never change them easily due to the influence of dominant English usage and in most cases some cultural beliefs are given up by some people due to their impracticality.

In addition, respondents who do not believe that English would erode their ethnic or racial identity view English as another means of communication, a tool to express oneself, which in fact is able to promote ethnic or racial identity to others and convey to others information about one's own culture. They also believe that people tend to speak English dominantly due to the requirement of work, needs of daily life, education requirement and to interact in their social circle. It definitely does not mean that one has to lose their ethnic identity if they speak English more often. English is also perceived as to offer better opportunities that await them in the future, and people are generally well aware that being multilingual adds advantages to one's life. In addition, it is also strongly supported and believed that ethnic or racial identity and cultural beliefs will remain even if another language is adopted to communicate. In addition, it is strongly believed by the respondents that people will not lose their ethnic or

racial identity as long as they know and are aware that they are just learning or using the language and not assimilating into the dominant culture or practices.

On the other hand, the smaller percentage of respondents who felt that people who speak in English dominantly though their mother is not English would eventually give up their cultural beliefs and maybe lose their racial or ethnic identity, explained their own reasons for agreeing to questions 12 and 13. Some stated that speaking in English dominantly causes one to lose their culture and be influenced by the more dominant culture, for instance; Western culture and modernity will eventually allow this kind of changes to take place. Besides, they claimed that people belonging to the modern generation are less aware of their basic cultural beliefs and practices due to the dominance of English and that one may even lose the originality of their mother tongue due to the influence of English as code-switching and code-mixing would become a natural feature of their speaking. For some young Malaysians, English is a threat to the Malay language (Bahasa Malaysia), as in most cases Malaysia's official and administrative language is still Bahasa Malaysia and people will no longer see the importance of using the national language anymore.

As for question 13, a smaller percentage of respondents fear that speaking English dominantly will eventually cause people to lose their ethnic or racial identity, however it will be a slow process as it may take a few generations. Despite agreeing to the fact that English is a more dominant language and people find it more convenient to speak it with their family and friends as it is also a global language, this group realizes that the use of the mother tongue is gradually given less importance as it is seen as less useful for various purposes,

and one's ethnic identity could be affected by this. This is because they view the mother tongue as having an important role in the representation of one's racial or ethnic identity, therefore ignoring the mother tongue in favour of English will gradually contribute to the loss of one's ethnic or racial identity in the future. They also stated that when one uses English dominantly and forget one's own mother tongue along the process, the way they speak, behave, appearance, lifestyle, accent, even the kind of food they choose to eat will change in favour of a Western lifestyle.

Question 14 is also a subjective question, which required the respondents to state 'yes' or 'no' whether they agree or not that having high proficiency in English made them more confident persons. They were asked to provide a reason for their answers, too. For this question, figure 3 is used to present the results of whether or not people agree that having a high proficiency in English makes them more confident. It can be seen from the figure that the great majority of respondents - 93% - agreed to the statement that being able to use English well makes them confident persons because knowing English allows them to communicate without boundaries or barriers with people within or outside the country. This notion is developed further by some respondents as they felt that speaking English well gets a person to communicate and express his or her ideas and thoughts well with anyone, whether they are locals or foreigners who can speak English. It sets no boundaries even if people are from different racial beliefs, religions and adopt various practices. Furthermore, the world has accepted English as a global or international language, therefore people who can communicate in that language well are bound to be confident. In addition to that, they also believe that having a high proficiency in English helps to eliminate

‘fear and shyness’ as they will be able to express their thoughts and articulate their speech in a more effective way. Indeed, fluency in English creates and contributes to the image of being professional or outstanding in the eyes of others. It earns respect and admiration thus creating a good impression, too.

Only 7% of the respondents disagreed with the statement, affirming that confidence depends on personality. In addition, they explained that speaking English does not mean speakers have more confidence, as it could be a way of covering or hiding their weakness because speaking English gives a person the edge that impresses others. They also believe that confidence is in-built and it shows regardless of what language a person may speak because knowledge and appearance are the most important causes of confidence in a person.

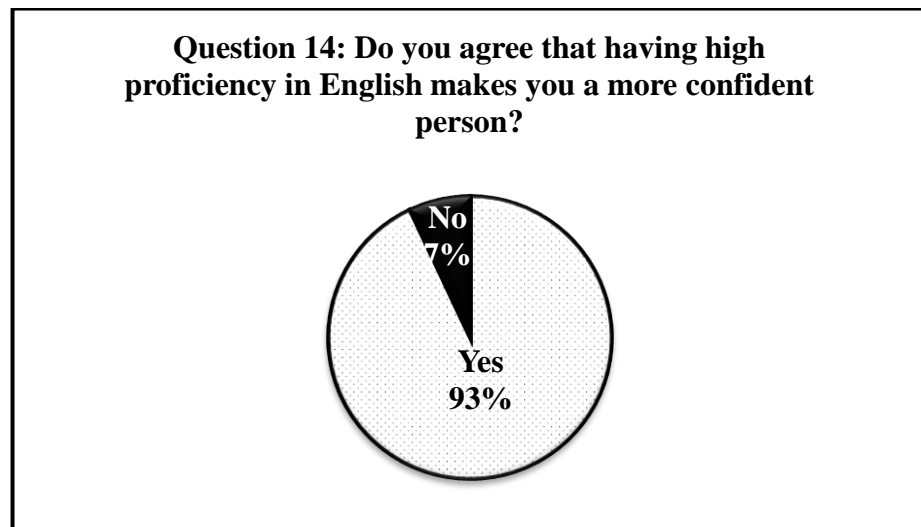


Figure 4.3: Results of whether or not people agree that having a high proficiency in English makes them more confident

See Appendix E (pages 173 to 175) for data reference on the reasons and justifications provided by the respondents for question 12, 13 and 14.

The final question in the questionnaire - question 15 - required the respondents to choose the kind of situations that they had gone through due to the use of English. They were presented with eight positive and negative situations to choose from, and they were allowed to choose more than one situation. Table 17 is used for this question to present the kinds of situations that the respondents have experienced on using English. From the table, it can be seen that the great majority of the respondents – 68% - agreed to the statement that speaking in English well made them feel more confident; however, not many – only 25% of the respondents - selected the option that speaking in English made them feel more intelligent. The survey also revealed that 50% of the respondents felt that they were encouraged positively to speak and improve their English by their friends and colleagues. The results obtained from question 15 illustrate that many young Malaysians are very much encouraged to use English with friends and colleagues. Furthermore, it could be inferred from their selection of options that being able to use English well with their friends and colleagues boosts their confidence level and creates opportunities in their lives.

Only 24% stated that they were teased (badly) for speaking English with their friends and colleagues who are usually of the same race. This issue has been discussed thoroughly during the interview sessions with some of the respondents who participated in the survey to get a clearer account of the reasons why such situations occur with their friends and colleagues of the same race. 20% of the respondents felt that they were welcome and included in the group whenever they spoke English with their friends who do not speak English dominantly, and 25% of the respondents also stated that they were welcome and included in the group whenever they spoke their mother tongue or other languages among their

friends who speak English dominantly. These two situations were discussed further in the interview to obtain additional details from the respondents.

Only a small percentage of 12% admitted that they felt ignored whenever they spoke English with their friends or colleagues who don't speak English dominantly and a small percentage of 13% agreed that they felt ignored, too, whenever they spoke their mother tongue or other languages with their friends and colleagues who are proficient speakers of English. These two situations are the least represented compared to the rest of the situations provided in question 15. The awareness of the importance of English among young Malaysian adults has increased along the years due to the realization of the benefits that English offers in improving their lives in many ways; therefore, only few have experienced such negative remarks and judgments from their friends and colleagues for speaking English.

Table 4.17: The kinds of situations that the respondents have experienced on using English

Statement	Total R	%
Being teased badly for speaking English with my friends / colleagues (usually of the same race).	24	24
Being encouraged positively by my friends / colleagues to speak and to improve my English wherever and whenever possible.	50	50
Felt ignored whenever I spoke English with my friends / colleagues who don't speak English dominantly.	12	12
Felt welcome / included in the group whenever I spoke English among my friends who don't speak English dominantly.	20	20
Speaking English well made me feel more intelligent.	25	25
Speaking English well made me feel more confident.	68	68
Felt ignored whenever I spoke my mother tongue or other languages with my friends / colleagues who are proficient speakers of English.	13	13
Felt welcome / included in the group whenever I spoke my mother tongue or other languages among my friends who speak English dominantly.	25	25

4.3 Analysis of the focus group interviews

The second section of this chapter discusses the analysis of the interview responses of the nine participants who were interviewed in focus groups. They were required to provide their opinions and judgments on the effects of English on the construction of identity among young Malaysian adults. In order to obtain valuable feedback on the issue under study from the nine participants, they were interviewed in focus groups to allow them to provide a more in-depth view and response to the questions concerning the issue. This was done by getting them to discuss the issue and share their experiences with the other participants in the focus group without having to go through a rigid one to one question and answer session with the interviewer alone.

4.4 Themes discovered from the analysis

A total of eight themes were developed from the analysis of the interviews involving nine participants selected from the 100 respondents who answered the questions in the survey. The eight themes were finalized by coding the common responses obtained from the interviews conducted with the nine participants. The eight themes were analyzed and are discussed below with relevant extracts selected from the coded interview transcripts.

4.4.1 Linguistic hybridity

According to Anchimbe (2007), linguistic hybridity refers to bilinguals or multilinguals who are able to speak in two or more languages and whose cultures are integrated whereby one language and culture are inherited from one's parents and the other language or languages are learned in school or the community. Anchimbe (2007:5) suggested that in postcolonial communities, even though children and young adults are usually brought up speaking the national language or an international language without having the ability to

differentiate their identities like adults, they are comfortable in expressing what they believe has become their L1.

The following extract illustrates the responses of two of the nine participants on how they felt when hearing English used in a dominant way by Malaysians whose mother tongue is not English. The question was (Q 9):- “*What is your opinion of people who speak English most of the time, though their mother tongue is not English?*” In extract 4.4.1.1, Speaker 1 mentioned that she had always been impressed by the ability of people who try to speak English and that she enjoyed listening to them converse in English because she personally learned a lot from them. Speaker 2 also shared the same opinion for question 9, stating that she was impressed by some of her friends who were able to speak in English because it reflected their courage and confidence to learn and speak another language. Linguistic hybridity is present widely in the Malaysian community as people certainly learn more than one language to communicate with other people of different ethnicity and also due to the requirements of the national education to incorporate and learn other dominant languages in school. The notion of multilingualism was most welcomed by some respondents as they view it as a norm in Malaysian culture and its multiracial background.

Extract 4.4.1.1

I	: Alright, let's move on to the next set of questions – general viewpoint questions, on the next page. Alright, this is very interesting. <i>What is your opinion about people who speak English most of the time although their mother tongue is not English? (Q 9)</i>
S1	: <i>I love to hear that, because I see, I can see that they are very good and I just love to hear that and I can learn from them.</i>
I	: <i>Hmm, but my question is, their mother tongue is not English, but that is the language they often speak, most of the time. What do you think of that?(Q 9)</i>
S1	: <i>Yeah, I'm aware of that. For example, maybe she's from Kelantan and then she, she use English language with her parents or family, so nothing wrong</i>

with that.

I : So, you're quite impressed with that?

S1 : *Impressed with that...positive.*

S2 : *Usually I am very impressed with those who can speak English although their mother tongue is not English, because they have, at least they have the courage to speak in another language...and most of my friends that I know, they couldn't, they don't even have the courage to speak in another language...and that's the thing that hinders the learning of that language.*

In extract 4.4.1.2, when another respondent was asked the same question (question 9), the response was also affirmative, as the speaker felt that there was a strong need to communicate in other languages or English when meeting people of other races and language backgrounds to understand each other in a multi-racial community.

Extract 4.4.1.2

I : Alright, so let's move on to, basic questions we are done, we will move on to the general viewpoint questions. *What is your opinion of people who speak English most of the time, although their mother tongue is not English? Anyone can answer this. (Q 9)*

S1 : They are moving along with the, you know, technology and you know what we call, er...something like, er...*we are growing up, so maybe we can learn other language, we are, we must use other language as well. We cannot use Tamil all the time, because we are facing a lot of people, maybe Indians, Chinese, Malays and maybe foreigners, then at that time, we cannot use Tamil to foreigners, so maybe we can use English as well. But we must not forget our mother tongue.*

The respondents were also questioned on whether or not the English language caused Malaysians to give up their racial or ethnic identities if the speakers continued speaking in English dominantly or, in some cases, if the speakers no longer spoke their mother tongue and only used English. The question was (Q 10): - *"If the mother tongue is no longer spoken by a person at all, do you think that it will eventually lead them to let go of their racial or ethnic identity? Provide reasons for your answer."* In extract 4.4.1.3, Speaker 1 did not feel that

speaking in English dominantly or not being able to speak one's own mother tongue was a big issue that one needed to be worried about as the future generation could always learn the mother tongue through listening to people of the same language and racial background. Speaker 2 was also of the same opinion as Speaker 1 for question 10, as she believed that ethnic identity was uphold by one's culture and customs and not solely by the language. Speaker 2 also added that Malaysians are bound to code-switch and use various other languages to communicate to people of other races to feel accepted by others.

Extract 4.4.1.3

I : Right, *okay if mother tongue is no longer spoken by a person at all, imagine this situation, do you think it will eventually lead them to let go of their racial or ethnic identity? (Q 10)*

S1 : *No.*

I : *Why? Don't you think mother tongue is very important to uphold one's racial or ethnic identity? (Q 10)*

S1 : *Er...*

I : *If you want to remain a Kelantanese, you want to remain a Malay, what if, you and your, you know in future, your kids no longer speak the language that was taught by your grandparents and your parents? What do you think happens?*

S1 : *Erm...okay for me, erm...okay for me, no, my answer is no. Why, because, they can always learn the language through environment. You just...for extract, Kelantan dialect right, whenever I, for extract, I raise up my children using English language and, but then I can always bring them to the environment and they can always listen to, to, to, you know to the surrounding...but then, when we talk about racial or ethnic identity, I don't think it's er, somehow a big issue there.*

I : *Right, okay, that's your opinion...Speaker 2?*

S2 : *Erm...I'm like speaker 1, I also think that...no...because, erm, I think ethnic identity is uphold by... er, by I mean culture and customs, er...not so much on language, because in Malaysia we have so many races, so we are bound to code-switch and use lots of languages. So, how do you differentiate that...*

S1 : *You cannot define people through languages, it's inside....*

In extract 4.4.1.4, two other respondents were also in support of the notion that it was not only the language that determined the ethnic or cultural identity of a person but there were certainly other factors too, such as cultural beliefs and practices that one upholds to maintain their identities. One of the respondents stated that the fact that she did not speak her mother tongue to everyone except to close family members and friends was not going to change who she was or her ethnic identity.

Extract 4.4.1.4

I	: Pretending to be like a native speaker...okay, <i>if mother tongue is no longer spoken by a person at all, do you think that it will eventually lead them to let go of their racial or ethnic identity? (Q 10)</i>
S1	: Erm...er, <i>I think the culture and all stays there, it's not going to change even though you don't speak your mother tongue, like me I don't speak much mother tongue, except with close family members, friends, but it's not going to change who am I.</i>
I	: <i>So, your racial and ethnic identity remains?</i>
S1	: <i>Yes.</i>
I	: What about you? What do you think?
S2	: <i>Actually, I think that, when you're looking at mother tongue, it's just a language, so it doesn't change what you practice at home. So, practice, I, I still practice whatever I do, but still, my language, more often, more often I use English, so I think it doesn't affect.</i>

The respondents were asked a similar question to question 10 to see if there was any difference in feedback or opinion they could share with the researcher. They were asked (Q 11): - “*Could people still maintain their racial or ethnic identities even if they continue speaking English most of the time? Provide reasons for your answer.*” Both extracts 4.4.1.5 and 4.4.1.6 proved that the respondents strongly felt and agreed that people would still be able to maintain their racial and ethnic identity even if they continued speaking in English dominantly. They supported their stand by stating that the customs, beliefs and

practices that were upheld by the people were more important aspects of maintaining one's racial or ethnic identity than the language alone. According to one of the respondents, if such a case occurs, it is the language that will be affected not the identity of an individual as language and identity are two different aspects.

Extract 4.1.1.5

I	: Right, so that will be relevant for question 11, <i>will people still maintain their racial and ethnic identity even if they continue to speak English most of the time?</i> (Q 11)
S1	: <i>Of course, yes.</i>
I	: Of course, <i>so, it's nothing to do language so much, it's how you uphold your customs...</i>
S1	: <i>Yes...</i>
I	: <i>Beliefs and other things...</i>
S1	: <i>Exactly.</i>

Extract 4.1.1.6

I	: Okay, maybe this would be a repetitive question, but still if you have any other answers, <i>could people still maintain their racial and ethnic identity, even if they continue speaking English most of the time?</i> (Q 11)
S1	: <i>Yeah, they still could...</i>
S1	: So you agree ya?
S1	: <i>It will not affect...agree, agree...</i>
S2	: <i>Yeah, the part which will be affected will be the language itself not the identity, identity and language are totally different.</i>

In addition, the respondents did not view the idea of speaking English dominantly as a threat or something that had a negative impact on their mother tongue or their racial, ethnic and national identity as Malaysians when they were asked the following question (Q 12): - *"In your opinion, could English be viewed as a 'threat' to or having a 'negative effect' on your own racial or ethnic*

or national identity? Provide reasons for your answer.” This is because they believed that language was not the only aspect that proved the racial or ethnic identity of a person. One of the respondents in extract 4.4.1.7 still believed in her own culture and followed the customs and faith of her own ethnic group strongly and did not perceive using English as inflicting any kind of threat to her own ethnic identity. In support of that opinion, another respondent of the same focus group interview also acknowledged the use and learning of English as a way of expanding and mastering other languages and stated that it did not have anything to do with affecting, threatening or causing the loss of one’s own ethnic or racial identity. They believed that people could still hold on to their racial or ethnic identities if they believed in and upheld their cultural customs and traditional practices. For that reason, the respondents were certain that the ability to speak in English dominantly did not represent a form of betrayal to one’s own racial, ethnic or national identity.

Extract 4.1.1.7

I	: <i>Alright, in your opinion, could English be viewed as a threat or having a negative effect on your own racial, ethnic or even national identity? (Q 12)</i>
S2	: <i>Definitely not.</i>
I	: <i>So, it’s not viewed as a threat?</i>
S1	: <i>No...no...</i>
I	: Okay, any reasons to support your statement?
S2	: <i>Erm...just like what I said just now, because I still have the believe in my own culture and my own customs and I’m still yeah, following those and I still have faith in my own ethnic. So, I don’t think language is a kind of threat or negative effect on my own ethnic identity.</i>
S1	: <i>For me, language is just a kind of...can we say a branch of knowledge in which you, ability for you to learn and ability for you to, you know master other languages and it’s not about ethnic or national identity, it’s nothing to do with threatening or negative effect at all and it’s how you uphold yourself and uphold your family and how you...you know, you er...hold to your belief, erm that’s all...</i>

On the other hand, the same question (Q 12) was asked to another respondent in extract 4.1.1.8, and the response received was that he believed that people were bound to lose the culture and ethnic identity if they started adopting Western culture and practices which were completely different from the local cultures and traditional values. The respondent felt that one's identity was only affected as long as a different culture and lifestyle was embraced, but not because of language on the whole.

Extract 4.1.1.8

I	: Could English be viewed as a 'threat' or as a negative effect on your own racial, ethnic or national identity? (Q 12)
S2	: English??
I	: <i>Now that more people are speaking and you said you are comfortable speaking in English, would it be a 'threat'? (Q 12)</i>
S2	: <i>Right, if they are going to speak the language only, it's not going to be threat, but if they start to practice the culture of the native speaker, it might become a threat, you know because, like in England or in the U.S, the way that they expose their culture is totally different apart from here. In, in, in, we are Indians, so the way we expose our culture is totally different, so language doesn't have effects until they hold on the culture.</i>

4.4.2 English perceived as threat to one's mother tongue, racial or ethnic identity

On the other hand, when question 10 was posed to some respondents from another focus group, a different comment was given by one of the respondents stating that she believed that if the mother tongue is no longer spoken by a person at all, be it any language or dialect, one would most likely lose the racial or ethnic identity in due course. She boldly stated that the mother tongue is very important for a person to represent his or her identity. The reason provided by the respondent was that being an Indian herself, who spoke Tamil fluently, she felt that there were countless books and literary texts written in the Tamil

language available out there and if people did not have the ability to read these useful and knowledgeable texts, they would most probably not know how to practice that cultural knowledge in their lives. In addition, when the respondent was questioned on the level of importance of the language in maintaining one's identity as opposed to various other aspects and factors such as music, festivals, food and cultural attire, the respondent maintained her viewpoint that language plays an essential role in creating one's identity as in her opinion, it is professed as the root of life. She also disagreed with two of the other respondents in the group when questioned if English should be the language used to teach Mathematics and Science in schools. The respondent (Speaker 1) in extract 4.4.2.1, prefers the mother tongue to be taught in schools at the elementary level so that the children become familiar with the words in their mother tongue and at the same time this provides them the opportunity to widen their knowledge of vocabulary before they are exposed to other languages such as English and the Malay language, the national language.

Extract 4.4.2.1

- | | |
|----|---|
| I | : Okay, alright, question 10, <i>if mother tongue is no longer spoken by a person at all, be it Tamil or Mandarin or Hakka, do you think that it will eventually lead them to let go of their racial or ethnic identity? (Q 10)</i> |
| S1 | : <i>Yes, I think so because, like er...I personally think that most of the Tamil books, okay, which reflects their culture and their ethnic identity are in Tamil. So, if they are not practicing the language, how can read all these materials, like books or journals, or whatever it is, if they are not reading it, how are they going to practice this in their life? So, I think knowing mother tongue is really very important for a person.</i> |
| I | : Alright, okay, okay, anyone of you? |
| S2 | : It's important also, but nowadays there are many translations, like for Chinese, they don't know Mandarin also they will practice the...what I mean, the er (unclear) |
| I | : <i>But do you think that speaking English dominantly would ever affect one's identity? Like representing them, themselves as Indians, as Chinese, as Malays...if they...</i> |

S1	: <i>I think so...</i>
I	: <i>A lot of them think that language is still a secondary matter. It's not really like you know, something very important, even if people, as years pass, they give up on language. They say, "No, I will still be an Indian, I'm born Indian, I will die an Indian.", "So, what's wrong with me speaking English most of the time? What do you think about that?"</i>
S1	: (Giggling)
I	: Do you agree or disagree? You can disagree with that because...
S1	: <i>I disagree with that because I think someone has to speak in their mother tongue in order to keep their ethnic and racial identity, as I told you, they have to practice the language because language is the root for life; language is the root for everything. So, they have to speak in their mother tongue in order to keep their identity.</i>
I	: So, bringing in policies like teaching Mathematics and Science in English is actually a good idea?
S3, S2	: Yes, yes...
S1	: <i>I don't think so, because I want subjects like Science and Mathematics to be taught in Tamil, because last time, I, I learned everything in my mother tongue, and nowadays kids are learning everything in English. But they are actually, erm...they cannot widen their vocabulary, especially Tamil vocabulary, like they don't know what is 'plus' or 'minus' in Tamil.</i>
I	: Right.
S1	: <i>The very basic things in Tamil, that means we have to make them learn everything in mother tongue first, because that is the fundamental of learning there, so I want them to everything in Tamil.</i>

4.4.3 Awareness of English being a social and cultural capital

The following extracts were taken from three different focus group interviews to highlight the responses of the participants for the following question (Q 13): -
"In your opinion, is English viewed as related and conducive to power and prestige, social success, a means to better jobs, higher education and improved living standards? Provide reasons for your answer." On the whole, all the participants provided optimistic feedback and responses for this question. All

three extracts taken from the interview transcript for question 13 proved that the respondents strongly felt that being able to speak in English brought respect and gave a person a high social status in the society. Not only do people tend to look high upon the speakers of English, provided they have a good command of English, but they are also regarded as highly educated people in the society. In addition, it was also overtly mentioned by one of the respondents in extract 4.4.3.1 that English was a well-accepted international and globalized language; therefore the ability to use the language was perceived to open doors to success, to help to obtain better jobs and to create broader opportunities in life. The participant in extract 4.4.3.1 also stated that English was not only a language widely spoken in the world but it was equally important in Malaysia, as there was a constant debate on the issue of the implementation of English as the medium of instruction in schools and higher institutions. Moreover, they felt that English was not only viewed as a language or as one of the many subjects in school but as something that can deliver more than that, as something that can develop and shape the life and success of a person as mentioned by one of the participants in extract 4.4.3.1.

Extract 4.4.3.1

I	: Okay, in your opinion, <i>is English viewed as err, related and conducive to power and prestige, social success, a means to better jobs, higher education or improved living standards? (Q 13)</i>
S1	: <i>Erm, yes because English is err, lingua what...our lingua franca, so basically if you speak good English, then people will have higher opportunity to get jobs and they really look high upon you. About success, yes, as you are thinking about success, it's an international language, so if you're going to learn English, you're going to gain from it. Okay, better job, higher education, improved living standards, everything is related to success.</i>
I	: Okay, so everything falls in this group – success.
S2	: <i>Yes. So, once you learn English, you go towards success everything will fall in place (unclear).</i>

I	: Hmm, <i>but why English</i> , I don't see many people being judged for not being able to use their mother tongue properly, but English is a reason where people are really...
S2	: <i>Because English is becoming an international language, English is becoming a main language; you know in Malaysia, they are still debating to come up with English for the, for the syllabus and everything, so it's already, it's becoming a hot topic, English.</i>
S1	: <i>Even though, English is a second language in Malaysia, but still the importance is there, like if you speak in English or if you converse something in English, people will really look high on you, where it's like easily message could be conveyed, you know...</i>
S2	: <i>English, we are not viewing English as a language; we are viewing English as education, so something that provides us success. That's what happened now, that's why people start to judge each other.</i>
I	: <i>So, it's no longer just a language anymore...</i>
S2	: Yeah...
I	: It brings many other things along...
S1	: <i>Yes, the moment someone uses English, err, I feel that there will be different first impression on the person...</i>
I	: Right...
S1	: <i>Epecially their English; they have good pronunciation and all compared to the ones who try to speak in English, but err, not with good proficiency.</i>

The respondents in extract 4.4.3.2 agreed with each other that English was very essential since it was one of the requirements to enter university. They clearly understood the necessity for a student to obtain a distinction in English in school or at best a Band 3 (as a marker for a fairly good user of the language) in the Malaysian University English Test (MUET) to gain admission into university. Given the above opinion, the participants strongly agreed that English was an essential requirement everywhere and it was acknowledged as a powerful and prestigious language.

Extract 4.4.3.2

- I : Okay, erm, in your opinion, *is English viewed as related and conducive to power and prestige, social success, your means to better jobs, higher education or improved living standards? Does English lead to all these?* (Q13)
- S1 : *Yes, of course! (giggling) That is the first requirement to enter a university, right, someone has to have a distinction in English in SPM, and they have to have at least Band 3 in MUET, that means English is there and everywhere, so we really look at English as a powerful and prestige language.*
- I : *Prestigious language...*
- S3 : *Yes, I agree...*
- S2 : *Yeah, I agree too. (giggling)*

Furthermore, in extract 4.4.3.3, the respondents also shared the opinions of the other respondents from different focus group interviews that English was a well-accepted language in the world and it was crucial for business communication involving people from different nations. They believed that with the ability to speak in English, one is able to improve his or her living standards and move forward in life. While in agreement with the first respondent in the interview, the second respondent highlighted the importance of having a high proficiency in English in order to secure employment in prominent companies or institutions as employers looked for employees with a good command of English.

Extract 4.4.3.3

- I : Alright, okay, question 13. *In your opinion, is English viewed as related and conducive to power and prestige, social success, means to getting a better job, higher education and improved living standards? Can English lead to all these success?* (Q 13)
- S1 : *Yes.*
- I : *Ahem, why?*
- S1 : *Well, err, as we all know that English language is one of the languages being known worldwide, that we use English language in business, we use*

English language to, to, you know improve our living standards, and if we have other language than our own dialect, we could go more, we could go forward, and especially for English language, we cannot say English language (unclear) ...but how do you bring yourself when you have another branch of knowledge, and we talk about English language, you want to, you will bring yourself into higher level, you know higher education and means that you, your...your...err your, you know your...

I : Chances to get...opportunity...

S1 : *Chances to get higher education, err chances to get better jobs is high, so people will look into you as in a better person, as in a better person compared to you without the language.*

I : *Are you trying to say that, people, people knowing English, or the ability to speak English well raises one's confidence, where ever they go?*

S1 : *Yes, of course yes...one of it as well...*

I : What about you Speaker 2?

S2 : *Actually, I also agree about that because most knowledge err, is in English, so and, most of the time, as far we know, those employers, what they look at now, is on your command of English. So, that's very important to get better jobs and all those things.*

4.4.4 Being 'othered' by others with negative remarks and judgments

According to Dervin (2011:7), 'othering' is an alternative method of social representation, which is closely related to stereotypes. Dervin (2011:7 cited in Abdallah-Preteille 2003) defines 'othering' as "objectification of another person or group" or "creating the other", which isolates and disregards the intricacy and subjectivity of a person.

The following extracts illustrate the responses of the participants to question 14, which concentrated more on their personal experiences when it comes to using English in their lives. The respondents were asked to view the chart which represented the kind of discrimination or reaction they had received or experienced by dividing the groups into two divisions –Group A, representing

speakers who speak the mother tongue more dominantly than English; and Group B, representing speakers who speak English more dominantly than their mother tongue. The respondents were allowed to view the chart to identify the feedback or situations they had encountered due to the use of either language – English or mother tongue dominantly. Subsequently, they were asked a few more in-depth questions to explore why such situations had occurred to them. The following are the questions asked to them: *‘Have you ever personally experienced or gone through these situations due to the use of English or the lack of it?’*, *‘Why do people discriminate and make a person feel insecure with such negative remarks due to the use of English or for not being able to converse in English well?’*, *‘Why do you think English has become a reason for others to make judgments towards you?’*, *‘If you have any other personal experience regarding this issue, do you mind sharing it?’*

In extract 4.4.4.1, both the respondents shared the same opinion that they had personally experienced discrimination at times due to the use of English dominantly with their friends and relatives. One of the respondents stated that she felt she belonged more to Group A because of the kind of situations and experiences she had had. Speaker 1 mentioned that her friends of the same race would usually not welcome the use of English as it was perceived to be a foreign language to them and did not represent who they were, their identity, race or culture. There were instances provided by Speaker 1 to illustrate how she was labeled with ‘food terms’ by her friends of the same race or cultural background to strongly remind her where she had come from; for example, a popular Kelantanese food called ‘Budu’ was used, which they included in their meals all the time. To exemplify another account, Speaker 2 mentioned that she was also labeled with ‘food terms’ by her friends of the same ethnic group to make her

conscious of who she was or who she was trying to become when she spoke in English. Speaker 2 was labeled ‘banana’ by her friends who teased her for being ‘yellow on the outside’, to show that she was Chinese but ‘white on the inside’. They scolded her for trying to be a Westerner by speaking in English dominantly. The respondents also shared their dilemma that they would often lose their confidence whenever they were judged for their proficiency in English or if they made grammatical mistakes when they spoke the language to others.

Extract 4.4.4.1

I	: Alright, okay I think we can now go to the last set of questions...if you see, you have a...I have presented two groups here, you can look at them carefully, and I just want to ask you, <i>have you ever personally experienced or gone through these situations due to the use of English or, sometimes, the lack of it? Which group do you think you belong to, Speaker 1?</i>
S1	: I feel... <i>I am in Group A...</i>
I	: Ahem...
S1	: <i>Well, basically because err...because most of my friends are not using English language, and sometimes when I use English language at one time, they, they you know, mock me and they laugh at me, they tease me because, because that’s not our language, and err...we’re not used to that language, so they said, “Why are you using that language and you’re not English people?”</i>
I	: Right, so the language defines what kind of people you are, so you don’t use the language if you don’t belong to that... <i>do they call you names? Have they called you names for speaking English? Label you with names?</i>
S1	: <i>Err...terms.</i>
I	: Terms? Certain terms...like what, such as?
S1	: You might understand that, but this type of food is, is, is being known in Kelantan, is being known in Kelantan, for Kelantanese, yeah...and can I say the name? <i>The name is Budu, actually. It’s a kind of food that we add into our rice, into meals every day, you know, and then they call me that term because, when we use English, when we talk in English, they call me that term to show that I’m from Kelantan.</i>
I	: Hmm...to remind you that you’re from Kelantan!
S1	: <i>To remind me! To make me aware that, “Hey, you’re from Kelantan, you don’t speak English.”</i>

I	: I think other races also experience the same thing, because I've also heard of it, I've experienced it, too; I clearly understand what you mean, okay...
S1	: Yeah...yes, yes...
I	: Using food terms to remind you to come back to our....
S1	: Yeah, come back (giggling)
S2	: <i>I was labeled 'Banana'...</i>
I	: 'Banana'?! Because of the colour?
S2	: <i>Yes, because of the yellow on the outside and white on the inside.</i>
S1 & I	: (Laughing out loudly)
S2	: <i>Yellow on the inside means I'm a Chinese and white on the inside means...like</i>
S1	: <i>Like Western...</i>
S2	: <i>Yes, like Western, yes...</i>
S1	: (Laughing) Ahaa, okay....
I	: Alright, so any other things you want to add? By looking at the points that I have given you here... <i>have you ever lacked confidence when you tried to speak English? When they always make, you know, judgments, and do you constantly worry about making mistakes?</i>
S2	: <i>Yeah, sure I do...</i>
S1	: <i>Yes, of course...</i>
S2	: <i>I do worry...because, to me as long as people can understand what I am saying, it's okay, but certain people judge how you are speaking English...so it kind of give you a kind of burden.</i>

In extract 4.4.4.2, another speaker (Speaker 1) was asked the same question on whether or not she had received any negative feedback or reaction from her friends or relatives for using English, as she had admitted that she was more proficient in her mother tongue than in English. She mentioned that she had faced discrimination for trying to speak in English while she was studying at the university. She also revealed that she was not very confident in using English

because she had always been using her mother tongue since she was young. The speaker also mentioned that when she had to learn to use English in the university due to the educational requirements, she was badly teased and mocked by the ones who could speak English better than her for making grammatical mistakes or for using words in English inappropriately. Because of that, the speaker lost her confidence in speaking English to her friends and eventually started distrusting her own ability to converse in English and resorted to speaking her mother tongue. Moreover, when the same question was posed to Speaker 2 in the same interview, she shared a similar incident when she had met up with her old school friends and revealed that those whom she used to speak to in her mother tongue in school still did not welcome the culture of speaking in English even after years of leaving school education and called her ‘boastful’ or ‘show off’ for speaking the language to them.

Extract 4.4.4.2

I	: <i>Have you ever been called names by other people, you know, like whenever you spoke, you tried to speak in English, you know they call you like ‘Don’t try to show off’, ‘Don’t try to boast’, have you ever been called that way....</i>
S1	: No...err....
I	: When you tried to speak in English....
S1	: <i>Actually, I have experienced all these in my university time, err, they never call me any other names but they will laugh at me when I speak in English because maybe err, I don’t have much confidence when I try to speak in English, because I’m used to speaking in Tamil since I was kid, okay, then suddenly, when I entered my university life, I have to use English because my studies and subjects all are in English, so I have to practice. That time, when I’m practicing, the other friends, those, those who are very good in English, they will tease my grammar as well. They will say, “What language are you using?”, “What grammar are you using?”, you know, “You’re talking, your, your, your words giving two meanings...” you know, something like that, so these things happen to me and these things make me feel so err....so down and I myself...</i>
I	: <i>You lose your self-confidence?</i>
S1	: <i>Yes, I myself under estimate my, my, my level in English so because of that</i>

I just cut to, I just stopped speaking in English and I just continue with my mother tongue...

I : So the people were the cause of the result of what you actually went through...

S1 : Yes.

I : What about you, Speaker 2?

S2 : Could you repeat the question please?

I : ***Speaker 2, have you ever gone through or experienced these situations due to the use of English or not being able to use it well?***

S2 : ***(giggling) My personal experience would be like being called 'boastful', 'show off' sometimes...***

I : ***With your circle of friends?***

S2 : ***Yeah, recently it happened, and we...we met up after three years, a big gap, and so if I'm talking in English with them, they will say, "Oh, Anita speakinglah now!", like "Anita changed a lot", like school time, I always talk in Tamil, so now "Anita started to talk in Englishlah", so "Cannotlah talk to her now", "She one-type already lah"...okay, okay like that...***

I : Hmm... So, English is being...not accepted...

S2 : ***Yeah, not accepted...among my friendslah.***

Another respondent also expressed his dilemma in extract 4.4.4.3 explaining that he was teased badly, mocked and laughed at for speaking English with his friends. When he was in the university taking up his degree programme, he recalled that he was not acknowledged by his course mates for speaking in English because one of them had just kept quiet the whole time, trying to ignore the respondent's small talk in English. He was only welcomed once he started speaking in his mother tongue to the course mates who were of the same ethnic background. Not only that, the respondent also shared instances when he was left ignored by his friends of the same race whenever he spoke to them in English and they would remind him of the kind of food he usually ate at home and would tell him that it was not sensible for him to speak the language of the

westerners. English language was clearly undesirable among his circle of friends or peers according to the accounts shared by the speaker; however he also mentioned that sometimes his friends would judge him for not speaking to them in English correctly in spite of being an English teacher and mocked him instead. The respondent had actually tried accommodating to the attitudes of his friends by making some mistakes on purpose to fit in the group and be accepted, but was often left confused with their habit of changing opinion on the use of English or the mother tongue.

Extract 4.4.4.3

I : Okay, let's move on to the more specific questions. Okay, if you see, there are two groups here, you can compare, what I want you to see is to answer this question. *Have you ever gone through or experienced these situations due to the use of English, or sometimes the lack of it?*

S2 : *Being teased badly, mocked, and laughed at for speaking English with my friends...yes!!*

I : Which one, Group B?

S2 : *Err, A. Because the first time when I enrolled for my Bachelor's degree, I remembered talking in English and suddenly one of my friends just kept quiet for the entire time and he was telling me as if I was born abroad or somewhere...I consider this moment as lucky for me because you spoke to me in Tamil after that, he told me that...so that's number one.*

I : Ahem.

S2 : *Number two, if I'm mixing with my friends who's coming from usually come from the same race, it depends on the way that they are raised up, like the place, the geographical location is very, very important. Certain friends, they were like, they left me like, ignored when I speak...English, like they'll just say if you want to speak in English, you speak...alone, don't speak it to us. Alright, the favourite quotation that my friends always tell me is that at home you want to eat curry, but outside you act and you eat pizza...*

I : Hmm, so the language is not welcome with friends of that group?

S2 : *Yes, the language is not, is not welcomed, especially the same age...*

I : Peers, with your peers...

S2 : *Yeah same age, yeah, and then sometimes they call me 'boastful', it happened to me a lot, alright, when I start to speak in English when I'm*

attending my phone calls or something, they said, 'Why you're boasting', but at the same time, if I don't speak in English, they'd say 'Are you an English teacher?' so it's two different viewpoint, I don't know which one they are more comfortable with...but...

I : These opinions come from the same group of friends?

S2 : *Yes, same group friends. Sometimes, because, when I'm mixing with them, I always like tend not to use English too much, at the same time, I mix with Tamil, and sometimes I make grammatical errors purposely, but they think that err, are you a teacher, your English is so bad. But if I talk in English, like what I'm talking to you now, they'd say that, why don't you just talk in Tamil. So, two views from one group.*

On the other hand, one of the respondents who were interviewed shared a different experience on social and cultural discrimination altogether as she had problems speaking her mother tongue fluently with her friends. Speaker 2 in extract 4.4.4.4 described instances of her younger days when she was teased whenever she spoke in her mother tongue because of her poor pronunciation of the words, and was discouraged most of the time. It was clear that Speaker 1 and 2 were course mates at the university previously and had shared this experience together, because it was noticeable that Speaker 2 was still playfully mocking Speaker 1 for her incompetence in her mother tongue. Furthermore, Speaker 1 continued saying that she felt rejected when she tried to speak in her mother tongue and the others did not really welcome her in their group. As a result, her self-esteem dropped due to the mockery and discrimination she was experiencing, and she quit speaking in her mother tongue for a long time up until her final years in university when she was encouraged by some of her friends then. She also agreed with Speaker 1's opinion that she was also called names or 'food terms' for speaking English dominantly with the others or with those of the same ethnicity. Speaker 1 also revealed another term that her friends used to call her, which was 'Peter' which describes people who speak in English dominantly or include a lot of English words in their mother tongue. This term

was explicitly used by her friends who wanted to express their disapproval of English being spoken among friends and to remind them to stop using it by mocking them in a direct manner.

Extract 4.4.4.4

I	: <i>Okay, Speaker 1? Which group do you think you fall into?</i>
S1	: <i>Actually a little bit of both.</i>
I	: Okay...
S1	: <i>Erm, okay, so like being teased, like during my younger time, younger time, I was teased when I spoke my mother tongue because of my pronunciation and all, because I always spoke English and so when I started to speak Tamil, my friends discouraged me...</i>
S2	: <i>Until she reached her Bachelor's degree, because I did mock her (giggling)</i>
I	: Aha, so you're one of the friends! (giggling)
S1	: <i>(giggling) Yeah, exactly! Then erm....this one, okay then erm... I, I do feel a little rejected, okay, when I tried to speak my mother tongue, they didn't really welcome me in the group...</i>
S2	: That's because we can't understand what you are speaking (mocking)
S1	: <i>They discouraged me when I talked...always feel confident speaking English, then, this one about, err...about 'labels', because I can't speak my mother tongue so much – yes, many people, friends, even the teachers, there's this saying in Tamil, like what Speaker 2 said, the one that 'curry' and all that stuff...</i>
I	: Ahem, <i>what other...could you give some other extracts, like what did they... what kind of labels did they give you, what other remarks?</i>
S1	: <i>'Peter', like that...</i>
I	: Oh, okay, what does 'Peter' mean?
S1	: I think, some culture, err, I don't know, maybe...
S2	: <i>Alright, 'Peter' is the name for a foreigner, right, someone who is very proficient in...</i>
I	: A westerner?
S2	: <i>A westerner...so...</i>
S1	: <i>A westerner...</i>

S2	: <i>So if you're going to talk English most of the time, then they might say okay you're 'Peter something like that they'll just keep quiet, try to mock you differently, and do something different, they'll do like some sort of gimmick in front you, like they some sort of a native speaker... like when you are, when you are talking to them, they will try to mimic you with the eyes rolling up and then down...</i>
I	: Just to make you realize....
S2	: <i>Yes, that you are talking too much, something like that...</i>
S1	: <i>Okay, but the thing is, what do you call that ah...I don't pretend to speak like the natives or what, so this is my accent, this is how I speak English, you know, but some people maybe, I don't know, maybe they feel that they are pretending to speak like that. Okay, then, err, okay the thing is about speaking mother tongue, when my friends discouraged me, actually that was a turning point and I really stopped to really practice, this was during primary school, until secondary school, I don't really want to talk, use my mother tongue because of my friends. But, later when, during my teenage life, then I started to catch the language again. Because of my friends, my confidence and self-esteem really dropped, like okay, I shouldn't speak in Tamil, people don't want to hear.</i>

4.4.5 Use of negative remarks or judgments to improve oneself to become a better user of the language

The participants of the focus group were then asked question 15 on how they viewed the challenges of using English and what they did to improve their proficiency in English. The questions and sub-questions were as follows: –
“From your point of view, how might the situations and circumstances that you face among your peers help you to achieve greater proficiency in English, despite the challenges?”, *“Could you provide instances when you felt situations like the above have helped or motivated you to improve your English?”*

In extract 4.4.5.1, Speaker 1 mentioned that she did not recede from using and learning English but tried to improve her proficiency by watching and listening to YouTube videos. She explained excitedly that she loved listening to people conversing in English; she expanded her knowledge of English words and pronunciation by memorizing and re-producing them when she spoke the

language to her friends. On the other hand, Speaker 2 stated that she needed to be courageous to speak the language and not be like her friends who had given up the hope to improve their proficiency in English. She explained that she was lucky to still have some friends who encouraged her to speak in English without having to worry about making mistakes.

Extract 4.4.5.1

I	: Right, <i>what are some efforts that you put into improving your proficiency in English?</i>
S1	: <i>Of course, 'YouTube'!</i>
I	: 'You Tube'?? What do you do, you actually listen to...
S1	: <i>I actually listen to 'YouTube', and listen to movies, wear my earphones and that's it...that's why I said, I love to hear people talking in English. So, I just hear, and I just look at how do they pronounce the words and I remind, err I remember and memorize and that's it, that's how I learn English.</i>
I	: Anything else you want to add, Speaker 2?
S2	: <i>I mean to improve my English, I just need to get my courage more, the courage is the first step of all, because at first, I'm like...my friends don't speak English, just because they don't have the courage. So, luckily I have friends, who doesn't mind, my friends, they really encourage me.</i>
I	: <i>So, the first thing is not to worry about making mistakes...</i>
S1	: <i>Yeah...</i>

Extract 4.4.5.2 highlights the way discrimination faced by one of the participants had managed to motivate her to move a step forward and improve her proficiency in English in numerous ways. The speaker expressed her emotional state in the past - how she felt embarrassed when her friends used to laugh at her or mock her when she tried to speak English. Nevertheless, the speaker stated that she used that experience as a stepping stone and it encouraged her to learn English more. Using English more frequently at her workplace and with her boyfriend had proved effective in making her a better user of the language. The

speaker practiced using English as much as she could with other people regardless of her poor proficiency and the mockery she had received in the past. The speaker also believed that if English was spoken to family members or close friends, error correction could be done without having to worry about social rejection as opposed to constantly battling with the fear of being embarrassed or corrected by strangers. Furthermore, she added that watching English movies with subtitles to understand the contents or the story better and reading simple and beginner level English books were some of the habits she had developed to improve her knowledge of and proficiency in English. Lastly, the speaker explained that she made sure that she prepared for her Bible classes on Sundays by reading or making sufficient references in English so that she was well prepared to teach the kids in English and answer their questions, too, in a confident manner.

Extract 4.4.5.2

I : Hmm, okay, let's move on to the final part of the questions, I think you have talked a lot...alright... Hold on ya, right, *would you be able to provide me instances, experiences, when you find situations like these, like you know you said your friends don't encourage you, have all these situations helped you or motivated you to improve your English? What have you done...to improve your English?*

S1 : *Okay, err...truly speaking, err....I feel embarrassed when they laugh at me but I, I take that as an encouragement to push up my, my, myself to learn English more. Okay, most of the time, at my working place, I started to use English, even though I know I'm talking in, you know not proper Englishlah, I'm not using good grammar but I try to speak with my friends and maybe with my boyfriend. I tell him, come we just speak in English, then he tease me, and say that "Oh, so you want to laugh at me ah?" because my boyfriend is not as educated as, as maybe as me, but I just want to improve our English, maybe I want to put a level, you know, one step higher, the confident level in ourselves. We no need to speak to others, no need to speak to others, like you know, err, strangers, maybe we can speak among us, maybe I can speak with my boyfriend, maybe I can speak with my sister, so any mistake, we can correct at the time, okay. And then, I started to watch English movies with the subtitles as well, because I cannot watch an English movie without subtitles because as you know, err, Hollywood actors are using very good English and very fluently and some words I really cannot understand what they are talking so I need subtitles as*

well because I need to match what they are talking and the words appear on the TV. So, I can match them, and then I know oh, this is the meaning of that. And then, I use to read, err, not to say newspaper, err, I don't want to 'tipu' (cheat) you lah, I seldom read the newspaper. I started to read English books, English books but for primary school one lah, I have to learn from the basic, start from the basic okay I have to start from the basic. For your information, I'm a Christian, and I'm taking care of the Sunday school at my church, so whenever I talk to them, I must be well prepared, before I enter the Sunday school to teach them, I have to prepare with my own, you know, modules, English modules, then only I can teach them, so that means, I have to well prepared, I have to train before Sunday, I have 6 days from Monday till Saturday, I can practice more in English, then Sunday I will enter my Sunday school and I will teach them in English, if any questions they raise to me, then, I think I will be able to answer them back because I've already practiced in 6 days before.

In extract 4.4.5.3, another respondent stated that he had always been confident using the language and did not place great emphasis on the mistakes he made when he spoke in English. He also pointed out that he avoided using sophisticated or complicated words but used simple words to his students and colleagues as an alternative to avoid making mistakes. This respondent was never worried about the comments he received from his friends or colleagues and said that he would continue speaking in English under any circumstances.

Extract 4.4.5.3

S2 : *'Lack of confidence', I don't have, so far, 'when I try to speak to other people, I constantly worry' – no. I'm not worried about my mistakes, sometimes I just go on talking, you know, sometimes I use simple words, for example when I'm talking to my students or colleagues, I use simple words, I don't use sophisticated words, so no need to be so afraid of making mistakes, 'Being discouraged from trying to speak in English whenever possible' – never happened.*

I : Never happened?

S2 : *Whatever you say, I still, I still go on with my English.*

4.4.6 Support of the implementation of English as a medium of instruction in the national education system

The participants were questioned on what their recommendations or suggestions were for the future use and learning of English in Malaysia in terms of educational policies and implementations. The participants' responses revealed that they were aware of the importance of English in bringing about great changes for the future generations to come. The following extract 4.4.6.1 illustrates the views of a respondent who felt that the younger generation in Malaysia should use English widely once they are in the secondary school. The speaker explained clearly in the interview that although she supported the notion that one should be taught in the mother tongue at an earlier stage of life or in the primary level of education, the medium of instruction had to be in English when they moved to secondary and tertiary level. This is because, in her opinion, a lot of the reading and informational materials, journals and articles were available in English, therefore one was required to know a wide range of vocabulary and be proficient in English to be able to keep up with the progressing world. Furthermore, the speaker stated that there should be standardization in the language used in the education system. Instead of having divisions of schools whereby some schools are Malay medium, some are English medium and vernacular schools with Chinese or Tamil as the medium of instruction, she suggested that English should be made the medium of instruction in schools as it is perceived as an essential and global language. This notion does not mean that one's own mother tongue should be removed from the education system, but the students should take their own ethnic language as a compulsory language subject to maintain the knowledge of their own mother tongue and at the same time

improve their proficiency in English if it is made the medium of instruction in the education system.

Extract 4.4.6.1

- I : That's actually very good, you know, good encouragement there. Okay and the final question, *what would your recommendations or suggestions be for the future use and learning of English in our country in terms of educational policies and implementations?* What do you think is the best?
- Your opinions can be, can be different...
- S1 : We should use English wisely...
- I : Okay...
- S1 : *And we should use English in everything, especially in education, also I told you, we have to learn Science and Mathematics in our mother tongue, but that should be applied in the primary schools only. So, once they move to secondary school, I want them to learn everything in English, because as we know and as I told you earlier, most of the resources, most of the articles, journals and also the online sources are in English, so it is better for them to learn everything in English, even the political matters, should be, should be like err, everything should be applied, err, how to say ah, they have to apply English in all these matters and because most of us are using English in political matters, of course err, so when they try to explain to others, they cannot use the correct words, because they are using Malay to explain the rules and regulations, even the law and everything, you have to explain that in Malay, because we are exposed to that kind of things, even I learned Mathematics in Malay, so I can't teach Mathematics to my, to my cousin sisters or cousin brothers because they are learning everything in English and some of them are learning Mathematics and Science in Tamil so there is no standardize, standardize...*
- I : *Standardization...*
- S1 : *Standardization, so they have to make everything, because everything is being globalized now...*

The same question was asked to two other participants in another focus group interview to find out their views on the change of educational policy in terms of the implementation of English as the medium of instruction for subjects in schools, such as Mathematics and Science, and reasons for the changes to take place. They were also asked for recommendations and suggestions for future

educational policies to be implemented and the possible outcome that may follow.

In extract 4.4.6.2, one of the respondents recalled the change of the language policy for the subjects of Science and Mathematics from English to the national language, Bahasa Malaysia, and felt that the decision could be a big loss to the future generations. This is because she mentioned that students would learn more vocabulary in English and discover new words that they had never encountered before if English was taught and incorporated in those subjects in schools. In agreement to Speaker 1, Speaker 2 also expressed her opinion that if the students were made to learn those subjects in English, they would no longer need to learn the English language as one of the subjects in school but as a language broadly used for various other subjects and that could get them to use the language fluently with others for communication purposes as well.

Extract 4.4.6.2

- | | |
|----|---|
| S1 | : But their grammar, grammatically wrong and so on. <i>Right, coming back to this, the recommendations, suggestions, so in Malaysia, in Malaysia, they had actually implemented teaching Science and Maths in English, but they are going to stop that, right?</i> |
| I | : Right... |
| S1 | : <i>So, I feel it's a big loss, because in that way of teaching Science and Maths in English, I think the students will learn more vocabs in English, you know the new words which they've never encountered before.</i> |
| S2 | : <i>Yeah, this is the same concept as I told her, the same concept, if you're going to teach Science and Mathematics in English, they are going to learn the language not as a subject, but as a communication, so that they can communicate with the teacher.</i> |

4.4.7 English used as a ‘mask’ to show superiority

The following extract represents the views of two respondents who think that proficiency in English does not reflect the intelligence or the educational qualification of a person, because one could attain proficiency in a language by mere practice. One of the respondents mentioned his uncle in extract 4.4.7.1, stating that his uncle could converse relatively well in English and several other languages through constant communication and practice despite his lack of education. While the other respondent in the same interview used the example of the Chinese citizens in China who are known for their intelligence and reputable business capability but may not necessarily be proficient in English. The speaker also highlighted this situation by comparing the reasons and needs for Malaysians to speak English or the Malay language dominantly and stated that this was due to Malaysia’s multiracial structure.

Extract 4.4.7.1

I	: Okay, let’s make myself clear, <i>are you also trying to say that being able to speak well in English means, it reflects that you are a highly educated person, gives you a social status in society?</i>
S1	: <i>Actually it depends on the people, you know, on the people who are judging us, who judge, the people who speak in English, if you think they are educated, that’s why they can speak in English, I think it’s wrong. We can speak in English, if we practice well. Okay, for example, my uncle, he’s not educated, he has just finished Standard 3, but now he can speak more than 4 languages and he is very good in English because he communicating with the people and he’s practicing a lot. You can learn whenever you make a mistake...</i>
I	: Right...
S1	: Okay the mistakes will make people perfect and you can learn from the mistakes that you had err, done before, then you can correct yourself, <i>but we cannot say that people who are talking in English, they are very good, you cannot say like that, like...</i>
I	: <i>It doesn’t tell people their intelligence, it doesn’t reflect their intelligence...</i>
S2	: <i>Yes...</i>

S2	: <i>Yeah, because the....</i>
S1	: Language wise they are good, but education wise, maybe they are not as good, you know, as the others, those who enter the university or something like that...okay, you got it?
I	: Yeah, I got it...
S2	: <i>As what I said just now, in China there are high standard people too, really very, very high standard than Malaysia actually...</i>
I	: Very smart...
S2	: <i>Very smart in creating many, many things, so English, we are multiracial country, Malaysia, it became a must for us to talk in English or in Malay, so it depends on us, situation and people.</i>

Extract 4.4.7.2 illustrates one respondent's viewpoint that English was misused by some people to cover up for themselves to gain respect and power. She explained this situation with an example of her colleagues who faced great discrimination due to their poor proficiency in English in their workplace. This prevented them from delivering their innovative and creative ideas and work-related suggestions because of the constant struggle with their self-inferiority complex which stops them from speaking in English. The respondent expressed that her colleagues who were not very proficient in English were in fact more intelligent and capable than some of those who were highly proficient in English.

Extract 4.4.7.2

I	: Hmm...err, <i>do you agree with the statement that a person who speaks good English is somebody wise in their thinking, are they smart, can we, can we regard them as smart?</i>
S1	: <i>No, not really...</i>
I	: Not really? Then, talk more about it...
S1	: Actually my colleagues are facing this, okay, they have a lot of ideas in their mind, they have the creativity, they have the innovation, but the thing is they cannot do anything in the office, it's because the proficiency level in English is very low and they have their own self-inferiority complex which will never

let them to speak in English. So, each time they will come to my table and they will ask me to correct their work, and I think they are being discriminated because of their proficiency level in English.

I : But that does not...language, the proficiency in English does not measure their...

S1 : *Yes! They are, actually they are smart, smarter than the person who can speak well in English. I can see that.*

I : *So, people who speak English basically cover themselves up, right?*

S1 : *Yes! (giggling)*

4.4.8 English regarded as a threat to the national language and / or national identity

While some respondents supported the use of English in Malaysia, there were others who put forward a more pessimistic viewpoint of what could be the possibilities or the outcome if English were to be used in schools as a medium of instruction. From the respondents' perspective, there were concerns that English could be viewed as a threat to the national language – Bahasa Malaysia - or to the national identity of Malaysians. The participants were also well aware of the instability of the educational policies which switched from Bahasa Malaysia to English and vice-versa as the medium of instruction in the education system. In this case, extract 4.4.8.1 is chosen here to highlight the response of a participant towards the question of why the medium of instruction was changed from English to Bahasa Malaysia after only a few years of implementation and what was their opinion on this issue. In this extract, the respondent stated that it could be because the government fears the loss of its national identity due to the change from the national language – Bahasa Malaysia to English and she personally felt that there was no reason to worry if the change of language may

affect the identity of the nation because the change was only for the benefit of Malaysians to gain knowledge and to improve their proficiency of the language.

Extract 4.4.8.1

I : Right, why was Bahasa Malaysia brought in again for students to learn Science and Mathematics? Why not English? What happened to that policy and why was there a change?

S2 : *I think the government is quite, quite scared of loss of identity...national identity or ethnic identity...actually there's nothing to be scared of, because learning of, the learning of a knowledge doesn't, erm...how to say...I mean, language doesn't really affect how you absorb knowledge...*

Another example is extract 4.4.8.2, where the respondents agreed that English was viewed as a threat to the national language – Bahasa Malaysia - if its use was implemented in the educational system. One of the respondents felt that this could be a sensitive issue to discuss, however she put forward her reasons to why she felt English was perceived as a threat to the national language and / or identity by explaining that if the language was incorporated in the education system as a medium of instruction, it could lead to the reduction in the use of the national language, Bahasa Malaysia, and that a more dominant language – English might end up dominating and being widely used by the people. On the other hand, the other respondent in the same interview stated that he did not view the issue under discussion as a sensitive one because he believed that it dealt with the civil rights of Malaysians if any new policies and implementations are introduced in the country. The speaker continued supporting his statements by justifying that the use of English as a medium of instruction in Malaysia was not going to be a threat to the national language and / or identity because the older generation, for instance his parents, were the product of these implementations and that did not change who they were today or their identities as Malaysians. In fact, the speaker thinks that his father's proficiency in English was good because the medium of instruction in schools back then was English.

Extract 4.4.8.2

I : I have a final question; *do you think our government would actually see English as a threat to our national language, Bahasa Malaysia, because of this implementation?*

S1 : *I, I feel this question is very sensitive, but if you ask my view, honestly I feel - yes, they do feel that it's a threat to Bahasa Malaysia, our national language...*

I : Okay...

S1 : *Okay, maybe they feel that English would just take over, and then they will just stop using Bahasa Malaysia, our national language or formal language. I feel like...what...*

I : Could that be a reason why the Maths and Science subjects were shifted back to Malay?

S1 : *Probably, but you see, those days during my parents time, in school they used English, there was no problem at all.*

I : Yeah...

S2 : My viewpoint on this, I don't think it is a sensitive matter, why because we are in Malaysia, alright, we have all the rights to compare and contrast whatever implementations they are going to do, because we are going to be affected. *It's not going to be a threat, but government saw that as a threat, previously, once and then they are doing same mistake again. Previously, they changed all the syllabus, my father's education is not so high, but he can speak very good English, why, because those days, the medium of communication is English.*

I : Ahem...

S2 : Nowadays, the medium of communication is not English, it's becoming Malay. So, when we ask them in interview or whatever, can you speak in English, they struggle.

CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

Despite Malaysia's multi-ethnic and multilingual situation, English has become part and parcel of Malaysia's identity; in fact, it has been quite an important feature of the country for decades because it was once colonised by the British. Although English is generally viewed positively by Malaysians for its general use for communication and the constructive platform it provides for education as well as job prospects, the existence of negative perceptions on the learning and use of English among some Malaysians is undeniable too, as it has surfaced as a national issue in recent years. According to studies in the past, the acceptance of English in Malaysia differs distinctively among Malaysians as it is viewed in two different ways. On the one hand, English is seen as the language preferred for general communication, regarded as prestigious and offering wider academic and job opportunities, but on the other hand, it is viewed negatively or as an intimidation to Malaysian's mother tongues, ethnic or national identity. For this purpose, the researcher was motivated to investigate the different notions and experiences of young Malaysian adults with varying proficiency levels in both English and their mother tongue to explore the effects of English on the construction of their identities. It is crucial to investigate the issue of identity construction among young Malaysian adults because of the unremitting debate on whether or not English should be made the medium of instruction in the national education system, for the general advancement of the people to strive in this competitive world, and also on how might such decision affect the ethnic identities of fellow Malaysians and the national identity itself.

5.2 Research findings

In order to explore the effects of English on the construction of identity among young Malaysian adults, the researcher developed three research questions for this study. The first seeks to find out what the level of dominance of English is among young Malaysian adults and its effects on their ethnic identities as well as how they perceive the impact of the language on national identity. The second question explores the construction of identities based on the ‘self’ and the ‘other’ faced by young Malaysian adults who have different levels of competence or proficiency in either language – English or the mother tongue spoken as a dominant language. The third research question enquires the ways ‘othering’ or ‘self-versus-other’ representations help young Malaysian adults to achieve greater proficiency in English.

5.2.1 The dominance of English among young Malaysian adults and its effects on racial, ethnic or national identity

Through conducting a survey among 100 respondents and interviewing nine participants from the age of 20 to 28 years old, with different academic and professional backgrounds, the researcher found out that the dominance of English among young Malaysian adults does not have an emotional impact on their racial, ethnic and national identity on a prominent scale. Similar findings were obtained by Wong et al. (2012) in their recent study on the use of English as an identity marker among Malaysian undergraduates, where the respondents appeared to be more accommodating to the presence of English as part of Malaysia’s multi-ethnic and multilingual character. In both the survey and the interviews, most of the respondents explained boldly that speaking in English dominantly does not appear as a ‘threat’ or as a form of disloyalty at all to their mother tongue because they felt that there are other aspects, too, that construct

the identity of a person, which include customs, beliefs, cultural practices, food, music and traditional clothes they advocate to epitomise their ethnic identities. The results of this study also appear to parallel those in David's (1996) study on the Malaysian Sindhi community's language shift from Sindhi to English across three generations, which made clear that language is certainly not the only marker that determined one's racial or ethnic identity.

In fact, the majority of young Malaysian adults in this study provided positive feedback on the learning and use of English dominantly for communication and they were mostly in favour of bringing about changes to the education system in terms of the medium of instruction for the subjects taught in primary and secondary school as well as in tertiary institutions in Malaysia. In addition, the respondents claimed confidently that Malaysians who are mostly bilinguals and multilinguals are comfortable in learning and using two or more languages with family members, relatives, friends and colleagues. They felt that it was unequivocally acceptable for Malaysians to speak in English dominantly as it is viewed as an impressive language ability. Also, speaking well in English is seen as a courageous attitude and as a way of expanding the speakers' knowledge and proficiency in languages different from their own mother tongue. Therefore, being able to speak fluently in English with others is viewed as an added advantage to the user simply because knowledge and proficiency in more languages are valuable for the speakers' lives. In addition to that, the respondents who represent young adults in Malaysia also realize the importance of English when an adult steps out of his or her comfort zone to face the 'real' competitive world. Malaysians are urged to improve their standards of English in schools, universities as well as in workplaces because of the demand for a

high competence in the second language in order to extend their education to the tertiary level after basic school education, as well as to secure employment in renowned companies or institutions. In short, the great majority of the respondents completely agreed that English opens wider opportunities for one to gain success academically, to secure decent jobs which will eventually lead them to improve their living standards.

On the other hand, the existence of a minority of young Malaysians who perceive the dominance of English as intimidating to their own mother tongue, ethnic or national identity should not be overlooked. In the survey, and particularly in the interviews, this minority expressed their opinions clearly on the dominance of English – that it would eventually lead to the erosion of people's mother tongue across generations, and this does not seem to worry some people in the society as they believe that English alone is sufficient to bring success into their lives. The apprehension of this minority on the present state of their own mother tongue endangered due to the influence of a more dominant language - in this case English - reflects Van Hoorde's (1998:6) viewpoint, that although Dutch may not be in an endangered condition, it stands a serious chance of losing some of its most significant domains such as job, finance, science and technology, consequently leaving Dutch to be merely used colloquially with family members or to express one's emotions. In addition, Crystal's (2003) opinion on the big increase in code-switching involving the more prevailing and favored language, English in the case of Malaysia, which meddles with the ethnic languages, causing the gradual decrease in the knowledge of vocabulary in the speaker's own mother tongue, resonates in the current situation concerning the minority in this study to a great extent.

It is evident that the majority of the respondents disagree with the belief that the dominance of English will one day affect and erode the essence of their ethnic or racial identity because they claimed that, if people still hold on to their cultural and traditional beliefs and practices, the dominance of English will not result in the loss of ones' ethnic or racial identity. However, the minority argues that if the mother tongue is not learned, maintained and spoken well by the people, they are at a loss in many ways, as lack of knowledge of the ethnic language will lead to the inability to read useful and authentic materials, related to their ethnic and racial traditions and values. The minority also believes that by merely wearing the traditional costumes, consuming authentic ethnic dish, listening to others talk in their mother tongue or even reading translated materials from their ethnic languages into English, is not going to secure or sustain their identity in the long run. Even though the voice of the minority may seem rather lenient on the issue of identity construction, it definitely echoes Krauss's work (1992:4), where the term 'moribund' is used for languages which fail to be transmitted across generations, therefore leading to the inability of the speaker of the ethnic language to reproduce it. On a more serious note, the perception of the minority in the study also appears to be in line with the first stage of Wurm's (1998:192) five-level classification of weaker languages, in which the presumably affected ethnic languages in Malaysia, particularly Tamil and other ethnic dialects with low numbers of speakers, may be potentially endangered in the generations to come. This scenario is explained by characterizing the affected languages (due to the dominance of English) as 'socially and economically disadvantaged due to heavy pressure from a larger language and beginning to lose child speakers' (Wurm, 1998:192). In short, although most young Malaysian adults endorse the use and learning of English in a dominant way and hardly view it as a 'threat' or

something that produces negative effects for their own ethnic or cultural identity, there are some who view this condition from a negative perspective if English is used dominantly in replacement of one's own mother tongue or if Westerner culture is adopted dominantly and assimilated into the local culture.

While the dominance of English appears to have influenced and affected the ethnic and cultural identities of young Malaysians both positively and negatively, its impact on the national identity was examined too. In view of this situation, the respondents feel that English is the preferred language to be incorporated into the education system and even for official purposes, but at the same time, they recognize the conflicts that the adjustments made to the national language policy could give rise to in the process. They expressed their viewpoint that the government seems to have been relatively reluctant in its adjustments and amendments in the national language policy to allow changes to be made to the medium of instruction in the education system in the recent years. Some stated that this could be due to the fact that English is seen as a 'threat' to the national language, Bahasa Malaysia, which is also the official language in Malaysia, though English is seen as predominant in many linguistic domains in Malaysia, and also widely spoken by the people. It is claimed that the hesitancy in reverting the language policy from Bahasa Malaysia to English could be the government's resilient approach to retain its pride while securing the role of the national language and its identity to represent the country and the unity of the people, as pointed out by Rosenblatt (1964 in Fishman 1989:323 cited in Coluzzi 2007:74) who wrote that "language is one of the most important factors in delimiting a national or ethnic group". Not only does the national language – Bahasa Malaysia - claim to represent its people and the nation's identity, but as highlighted by Coluzzi (2007:87), one may possibly think that the authorities

could be highly conscious that embracing a different more dominating language (English in the case of Malaysia) would contribute to the loss of Malay language and culture, and subsequently succumbing to the more influential and controlling language and culture. As further explained by Coluzzi (2007:87), the spread of English not only carries its culture and economic benefits along with it, but has the tendency to gradually erode other languages and cultures.

5.2.2 The construction of identities of 'self' and the 'other' among young Malaysian adults

The survey results indicate that the respondents who felt ignored, rejected and disparaged for the dominant use of English or for the dominant use of their mother tongue are of a marginal scale. While there appears to be evidence in the analysis of the interviews of the occurrence of 'othering' in the respondents' lives due to their use of English, not all the respondents who participated in this study experienced it. In most accounts, the respondents explained that they felt rejected, ignored and ridiculed for the dominant use of English and the same applies to the others who were not able to converse in English well, but these instances occurred mostly in the past, when the respondents were in school or at university. Most of the respondents, however, do not apparently face similar undesirable situations in their lives at present. The responses of the participants echo Lee's (2001) findings to only a certain degree, as her study reported strong adverse reactions among postgraduate students who felt that the prevalent use of English contributed to ethnic and cultural erosion. The results of this study also shows the existence of 'othering', which was highlighted in Lee's (2003) later study, involving Malaysian undergraduates who were either proficient users of English, or their mother tongue. Similar instances of mockery and labelling were

reported to have occurred among people of the same ethnicity in this study, for example, terms like ‘Westerner’, ‘Peter’ – an English name - or names of food, like ‘banana’, to refer to the skin colour of the Chinese or ‘Budu’ – a Kelantan dish, which symbolizes the respondents’ ethnic identity and where they come from - were used as a manner to show their resentment towards the dominant use of English. What can be observed from the results is that, even though similar findings as Wong et al.’s (2012) on the occurrence of ‘othering’ experienced by the dominant speakers of English in a more pronounced manner, due to their lack of proficiency in their ethnic language were obtained in this study, too, the present results show that this situation is not present on a large scale among the respondents. It can be safely concluded that, despite the presence of an unwelcome intra-ethnic English speaking attitude among Malaysians who are of the same ethnicity, the dynamics of the issue that emerged in the past studies have turned sides and do not seem to be an overriding concern in this study as there appears to be an increasing degree of acknowledgement of the affirmative roles and advantages of English and its sociocultural and economic significance in the speakers’ lives.

5.2.3 The ways ‘othering’ or ‘self-versus-other’ representations help young Malaysian adults to achieve greater proficiency in English

Since many young adults in Malaysia realise the constructive traits of English in their lives – as evidenced in the survey as well as the interviews - the phenomenon of ‘othering’ or ‘self-versus-other’ discernment does not seem to shatter their optimism and confidence in the improvement of their proficiency in English, although the respondents confessed to have gone through numerous challenges and obstacles in attaining their goals. As a matter of fact, this outlook

of young Malaysian adults is supported by Halliday's (1975) notion that the role of English is important due to its emphasis on the 'pragmatic function', whereby English does not have to be necessarily perceived as something that affects the sociocultural identity of Malaysians, but utilized more as a tool to progress in life. These young Malaysians are also in coherence with the 'mathetic function' of English, where it serves as a convenient language for accessing information and creating networks (Halliday, 1975).

In addition, the respondents in this study have shared interesting ways that they have personally tried in order to overcome the 'othering' factor, and to move on to achieving greater competence in English. The findings reported that the respondents are not prepared to give up when they face complications in learning and using English, but are motivated to build on their courage and confidence to speak the language regardless of the remarks or judgments they may receive from others who marginalise them. The findings also revealed that the respondents resort to other alternatives to accommodate in different situations, involving different people and backgrounds, as a way to overcome social rejection in their community.

5.3 Conclusion

While the significance and benefits of English cannot be denied in this rapidly growing world, one should not ignore the consequences that may follow if English is given utmost importance by disregarding the equal role of ethnic languages along with their cultural features, that create and form a person's identity. From an optimistic point of view, English is unquestionably the language that Malaysians aspire to master; however, from a pessimistic outlook, Malaysians appear to be concerned about the

possibilities of losing their mother tongue, as words in their own ethnic language are effortlessly replaced by English words through code-switching and code-mixing - to some degree, paving the way to the waning of their ethnic languages' originality and prominence. As Crystal (1997b, 2003) puts it, one should be encouraged to nurture and maintain one's own mother tongue, and at the same time, use another international language to develop global communication and enable more mutual understanding.

5.4 Recommendations for future research

Even though the findings are believed to represent the voice of young Malaysian adults to a certain extent, with regards to the sampling method employed in this study, the researcher recommends looking at this developing issue in a broader perspective for future studies, possibly involving more participants from various parts of Malaysia to participate in a mixed-method study so that further findings could be obtained and provide richer data to this subject.

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APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE

I am a postgraduate student currently pursuing my second year of Master of English as a Second Language at the Faculty of Languages and Linguistics, University of Malaya.

I am conducting a survey to find out the '*effects of English on the construction of identity among young Malaysian adults*'. I request for your sincere responses and feedback in answering the questionnaire as the answers provided by the respondents will be strictly used for research purposes only and details of the participants will be confidential. Thank you very much for your cooperation.

Instructions

There are two (2) sections in this questionnaire: **Section A** and **Section B**.

Section A requires the respondents to provide their general background information.

Section B requires the respondents to provide personal details and views on the effects of the use of the English language in various situations.

Please put a tick (✓) in the appropriate column to answer and wherever necessary, you may tick (✓) more than once.

SECTION A: Personal Background

1. **Gender** : Male () Female ()
2. **Age** : 20 - 24 years old () 25 – 28 years old ()
3. **Race** : Malay () Chinese () Indian () Sikh ()
Others () please specify: _____
4. **Educational Qualification** :

SPM / 'O' Levels / Equivalent	
STPM / 'A' Levels / Matriculation / Equivalent	
Bachelor's Degree	
Master's Degree	
Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)	

5. **Field of Occupation** : _____ (please specify)
Example: Medical, Education, Finance, Administration, Engineering etc.

SECTION B: Personal Details and Viewpoint

1. Which one of these is your mother tongue?

Bahasa Melayu	
English	
Mandarin	
Cantonese	
Tamil	
Punjabi	
Others (please specify)	

2. How well can you speak in your mother tongue?

Very well	
Well	
Fairly well	
Poorly	
I don't speak it at all	
I can only understand it a little	

3. What language do you normally speak at home?

Bahasa Melayu	
English	
Mandarin	
Cantonese	
Tamil	
Punjabi	
Others (please specify)	

4. What language do you normally speak with your friends or colleagues?

Bahasa Melayu	
English	
Mandarin	
Cantonese	
Tamil	
Punjabi	
Others (please specify)	

5. How comfortable are you in speaking English?

Very comfortable	
Comfortable	
Not very comfortable	
I'm not comfortable at all	

6. If your response is either (very comfortable / comfortable) for question 5, please answer this question:

Why are you feeling comfortable while communicating in English?

I am able to express my thoughts, ideas and feelings better in English.	
I have better proficiency in English.	
I lack the proficiency in my mother tongue / other languages.	
I have many friends / colleagues who speak English dominantly.	

7. If your response is either (not very comfortable / I'm not comfortable at all) for question 5, please answer this question:

Why are you feeling uncomfortable while communicating in English?

I am unable to express my thoughts, ideas and feelings well in English.	
I have better proficiency in my mother tongue / other languages.	
I don't feel confident when I speak in English due to lack of proficiency.	
I don't have many friends / colleagues who speak English dominantly.	
My friends / colleagues usually tease me if I speak in English.	

8. How important is the English language to you?

Very important	
Important	
Not very important	
Not important at all	

9. How does good proficiency in English benefit you as a user?

I will be able to secure a good job.	
My performance in college / university / workplace will be better.	
I will be able to secure a place in the university / college.	
I can understand the lessons taught in the college or university better.	
I can communicate more effectively.	
It gives me a sense of pride and high social status.	

10. In your opinion, what is your view of people who speak English dominantly (most of the time), though their mother tongue is not English?

They are boastful / show off.	
They are not proficient in their mother tongue / other languages.	
They want to show high social status.	
They want their children to learn the language as their first language.	
They want to show that they can speak English better than the others.	

11. How do you view the importance of “language” in upholding one’s cultural or ethnic identity compared to other aspects, such as; *traditional clothes, traditional food, traditional music, dances, festivals and other traditional practices or customs*?

Very important	
Important	
Not very important	
Not important at all	

12. In your opinion, will people give up their cultural beliefs and practices if they continue speaking English dominantly (most of the time)?

Please provide a reason for your answer.

If yes, why?

If no, why?

13. In your opinion, will people lose their ethnic or racial identity if they continue speaking English dominantly (most of the time)?

Please provide a reason for your answer.

If yes, why?

If no, why?

14. Do you agree that having high proficiency in English makes you a more confident person?

Please provide a reason for your answer.

If yes, why?

If no, why?

15. On the use of English, which situation(s) have you experienced the most in your life so far?

Being teased badly for speaking English with my friends / colleagues (usually of the same race).	
Being encouraged positively by my friends / colleagues to speak and to improve my English wherever and whenever possible.	
Felt ignored whenever I spoke English with my friends / colleagues who don't speak English dominantly.	
Felt welcome / included in the group whenever I spoke English is among my friends who don't speak English dominantly.	
Speaking English well made me feel more intelligent.	
Speaking English well made me feel more confident.	
Felt ignored whenever I spoke my mother tongue or other languages with my friends / colleagues who are proficient speakers of English.	
Felt welcome / included in the group whenever I spoke my mother tongue or other languages among my friends who speak English dominantly.	

Thank you very much for taking the time to answer this questionnaire.

APPENDIX B

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Basic Questions

1. What is your mother tongue or first language?

2. How well can you speak your mother tongue / first language?

3. What language do you normally speak at home with your family?

4. What language do you normally speak with your friends or colleagues?

5. How comfortable are you in speaking your mother tongue?

6. Which one of the languages do you feel most comfortable speaking, mother tongue or English?

7. Why do you feel comfortable / uncomfortable speaking in your mother tongue?

8. Why do you feel comfortable / uncomfortable speaking in English?

General Viewpoint Questions

9. What is your opinion of people who speak English most of the time, though their mother tongue is not English?

10. If mother tongue is no longer spoken by a person at all, do you think that it will eventually lead them to let go of their racial or ethnic identity? Yes / No, Why?

11. Could people still maintain their racial / ethnic identities even if they continue speaking English most of the time? Yes / No, Why?

12. In your opinion, could English be viewed as a *'threat'* to or having a *'negative effect'* on your own racial / ethnic / national identity? Yes / No, Why?

13. In your opinion, is English viewed as related and conducive to power and prestige / social success / means to better jobs / higher education / improved living standards? Yes / No, Why?

Specific Questions

14. Have you ever personally experienced / gone through these situations due to the use of English or the lack of it?

A : Mother tongue is spoken more dominantly than English.

B : English is spoken more dominantly than the mother tongue.

A	B
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being teased badly / mocked / laughed at for speaking English with my friends / colleagues (usually of the same race) • Felt ignored / alienated / rejected whenever I spoke English with my friends / colleagues who do not speak English dominantly. • Being called ‘boastful’, ‘show off’ / judged as rude when I spoke English to my friends or colleagues. • Being discouraged from trying to speak in English whenever possible. • Lacked the confidence when I tried to speak English to other people as I constantly worried about making mistakes and that I would be looked down upon. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being teased badly /mocked / laughed at for speaking MT* with my friends / colleagues who are proficient speakers of MT (usually of the same race) because I used more English words in my MT. • Felt ignored / alienated / rejected / discouraged whenever I tried to speak MT to my friends or colleagues as I am more proficient in English compared to MT. • Being called ‘incompetent’ or labeled names on account of my lack of proficiency in MT as opposed to English. • Lacked confidence when I tried to speak MT to people of the same race as I constantly worried about making mistakes and that I would be laughed at.

*MT = Mother tongue

(Other related questions to get respondents to provide more responses.)

➤ Why do people discriminate and make a person feel insecure with such negative remarks due to the use of English or for not being able to converse in English well?

➤ Why do you think English has become a reason for others to make judgments towards you?

- If you have any other personal experience regarding this issue, do you mind sharing it?

15. From your point of view, how might situations and circumstances that you face among your peers help you to achieve greater proficiency in English, despite the challenges?

- Could you provide instances when you felt situations like the above have helped or motivated you to improve your English?

- What would your recommendations / suggestions be for future use and learning of English in our country in terms of educational policies and implementations?

Thank you very much for participating in this interview and for sharing your thoughts on this subject.

APPENDIX C (I)

Interview Transcript (1)

Focus Group Interview Conducted on 3 November 2012

I : Interviewer **S1** : Speaker 1 **S2** : Speaker 2

I : Okay, let me just start with some basic questions, ya...Speaker 1, what is your mother tongue or first language?

S1 : Tamil. Wait, Tamil is my mother tongue, first language is English.

I : I see...Speaker 2, what about you? What is your mother tongue or first language?

S2 : It happens to be Tamil, as well.

I : Only Tamil?

S2 : Yes.

I : Okay, how well can you speak your mother tongue or first language, Speaker 1?

S1 : Okay, I can speak my mother tongue averagely, but I can speak well in my first language, English.

I : How well can you speak your mother tongue or first language?

S2 : Fairly good, but I couldn't recall certain vocabs in my mother tongue.

I : What language do you normally use at home with your family?

S1 : With family, I usually use English.

I : And you?

S2 : With my family, I use two language; one is my mother tongue, which is Tamil, and also English.

I : Okay, what language do you normally use with your friends or colleagues?

S1 : I speak English most of the time, sometimes err, Malay or Tamil.

I : What about you?

S2 : Actually, it depends on my friends, what type of cultural base they are coming from, like Tamil, if they are Indians, sometimes I speak both languages, like a mixture, so I'll use more code-switching and code-mixing...Tamil and English.

I : Okay, how comfortable are you in speaking your mother tongue?

- S1 : It depends on friends, if they are very close, then I'm okay with it, but if no, I have to think about the words and vocab.
- I : And how comfortable are you in speaking your mother tongue?
- S2 : I'm quite comfortable, just under certain circumstances, like in my working environment; I don't normally feel comfortable, I don't feel comfortable talking...
- I : Why?
- S2 : Because of the different races...so what we speak, others might not understand.
- I : Okay, which one of the languages do you feel most comfortable speaking, mother tongue or English?
- S1 : English, because I've been practicing it since young till now.
- I : Okay, and which one of the languages do you feel most comfortable speaking?
- S2 : English too.
- I : Although, your mother tongue is Tamil and you're quite confident in Tamil?
- S2 : Yes. Like I told you in Tamil, I'm quite unfamiliar with the vocab but in English I do have a lot of vocab.
- I : Why do you feel comfortable, sorry, the question is why do you feel uncomfortable speaking in your mother tongue?
- S1 : Erm... I didn't say uncomfortable...
- I : You didn't say you feel uncomfortable, you just said...but you said earlier that you feel comfortable speaking in English...
- S2 : Yes I mean I prefer English more than Tamil, right? Erm...because maybe of the vocab and my pronunciation...and apart from that, I've been practicing English for a very long time.
- I : And what about you?
- S1 : Can you please repeat the question?
- I : Why do you feel...err either way, comfortable or uncomfortable, which one? Do you feel comfortable or uncomfortable speaking in your mother tongue?
- S2 : Mixture of both. Sometimes I feel comfortable, sometimes I don't. I feel comfortable talking at home, but when talking in working environment, I don't. Like I told you, working environment, we have everyone there, so I want everyone to understand what I'm speaking. But at home, my family members, they all know Tamil.
- I : Okay, so I don't think I need to repeat question number 8, because everything has been answered...so let's get to the general questions. What is your opinion of people who speak English most of the time though their mother tongue is not English?
- S1 : Erm, I feel they are maintaining a good err...relationship with...the speakers?

I : I don't understand, could you explain more - maintaining a good relationship?

S1 : Erm...means they are comfortable to speak the language with the speakers, so therefore they use English...

I : Although their mother tongue is not English?

S1 : Yeah, because they are comfortable, that's more important.

I : What do you think?

S2 : Actually, it depends, if I observe them, they can talk good Tamil, and then they are trying to speak like a native speaker, and my impression will be, "Why are you trying to boast?"

I : So, 'boasting' is, is what you notice?

S1 : Pretending...

S2 : Yeah, if they are pretending to speak like native speakers...

I : Pretending to be like a native speaker...okay, if mother tongue is no longer spoken by a person at all, do you think that it will eventually lead them to let go of their racial or ethnic identity?

S1 : Erm...err, I think the culture and all stays there, it's not going to change even though you don't speak your mother tongue, like me I don't speak much mother tongue, except with close family members, friends, but it's not going to change who am I.

I : So, your racial and ethnic identity remains?

S1 : Yes.

I : What about you? What do you think?

S2 : Actually, I think that, when you're looking at mother tongue, it's just a language, so it doesn't change what you practice at home. So, practice, I, I still practice whatever I do, but still, my language, more often, more often I use English, so I think it doesn't affect.

I : Okay, maybe this would be a repetitive question, but still if you have any other answers, could people still maintain their racial and ethnic identity, even if they continue speaking English most of the time?

S1 : Yeah, they still could...

S1 : So you agree ya?

S1 : It will not affect...agree, agree...

S2 : Yeah, the part which will be affected will be the language itself not the identity, identity and language are totally different.

I : You said language, what do you have to say about the language, what happens to the language?

S2 : Language...it might lead to language loss, language shift or language death even...but it doesn't affect the ethnic, you know the identity.

I : In your opinion, could English be a threat or viewed as a negative effect to your own racial, ethnic or national identity? Anyone...

S1 : Well, 'threat' in the sense that, yeah nowadays, people don't practice their mother tongue much, especially the younger generation, so they will have this language loss.

I : Okay, so, that's like a threat?

S1 : Yeah, a 'threat', because they don't practice the language or they don't expose...

S2 : I don't, I don't see that as a 'threat', because you are practicing the language, doesn't mean that you're going to lose what you have in you...am I right? Am I talking about that, or am I talking about something else?

S1 : No, like the younger generation...

I : Could English be viewed as a 'threat' or as a negative effect on your own racial, ethnic or national identity?

S2 : English??

I : Now that more people are speaking and you said you are comfortable speaking in English, would it be a 'threat'?

S2 : Right, if they are going to speak the language only, it's not going to be threat, but if they start to practice the culture of the native speaker, it might become a threat, you know because, like in England or in the U.S, the way that they expose their culture is totally different apart from here. In, in, in, we are Indians, so the way we expose our culture is totally different, so language doesn't have effects until they hold on the culture.

I : Okay, in your opinion, is English viewed as err, related and conducive to power and prestige, social success, means to better jobs, higher education or improved living standards?

S1 : Erm, yes because English is err, lingua what...our lingua franca, so basically if you speak good English, then people will have higher opportunity to get jobs and they really look high upon you.

I : Okay...what about you?

S2 : Well, for me...if you are talking about power and prestige, if you speak English and it brings power and prestige, I don't think so it's right...

I : So, it's not related?

S2 : It's not related, power and prestige, alright a lot of people, you can see that they are speaking English very well, but they are making a lot of grammatical errors, which we don't find out, so where is the power, where is the prestige?

I : What do you mean that they speak English very well, but they still make grammatical mistakes?

S2 : You see, it's like native speakers; like, like they sound like native speakers...

I : The accent, you mean?

S2 : Yes, the accent is there, but the language they have like grammar impairment, so the prestige is there, but your English, how are we supposed to judge your English, something like that.

About success, yes, as you are thinking about success, it's an international language, so if you're going to learn English, you're going to gain from it. Okay, better job, higher education, improved living standards, everything is related to success.

I : Okay, so everything falls in this group – success.

S2 : Yes. So, once you learn English, you go towards success everything will fall in place (unclear).

I : Okay, let's move on to the more specific questions. Okay, if you see, there are two groups here, you can compare, what I want you to see is to answer this question. Have you ever gone through or experienced these situations due to the use of English, or sometimes the lack of it?

S2 : Being teased badly, mocked, and laughed at for speaking English with my friends...yes!!

I : Which one, Group B?

S2 : Err, A. Because the first time when I enrolled for my Bachelor's degree, I remembered talking in English and suddenly one of my friends just kept quiet for the entire time and he was telling me as if I was born abroad or somewhere ...I consider this moment as lucky for me because you spoke to me in Tamil after that, he told me that...so that's number one.

I : Ahem.

S2 : Number two, if I'm mixing with my friends who's coming from usually come from the same race, it depends on the way that they are raised up, like the place, the geographical location is very, very important. Certain friends, they were like, they left me like, ignored when I speak I English, like they'll just say if you want to speak in English, you speak in alone, don't speak it to us. Alright, the favourite quotation that my friends always tell me is that at home you want to eat curry, but outside you act and you eat pizza...

I : Hmm, so the language is not welcomed with friends of that group?

S2 : Yes, the language is not, is not welcomed, especially the same age...

I : Peers, with your peers...

S2 : Yeah same age, yeah, and then sometimes they call me 'boastful', it happened to me a lot, alright, when I start to speak in English when I'm attending my phone calls or something, they said, 'Why you're boasting', but at the same time, if I don't speak in English, they'd say 'Are you an English teacher?' so it's two different viewpoint, I don't know which one they are more comfortable with...but...

- I : These opinions come from the same group of friends?
- S2 : Yes, same group friends. Sometimes, because, when I'm mixing with them, I always like tend not to use English too much, at the same time, I mix with Tamil, and sometimes I make grammatical errors purposely, but they think that err, are you a teacher, your English is so bad. But if I talk in English, like what I'm talking to you now, they'd say that, why don't you just talk in Tamil. So, two views from one group.
- I : Okay...
- S2 : 'Lack of confidence', I don't have, so far, 'when I try to speak to other people, I constantly worry' – no. I'm not worried about my mistakes, sometimes I just go on talking, you know, sometimes I use simple words, for example when I'm talking to my students or colleagues, I use simple words, I don't use sophisticated words, so no need to be so afraid of making mistakes, 'Being discouraged from trying to speak in English whenever possible' – never happened.
- I : Never happened?
- S2 : Whatever you say, I still, I still go on with my English.
- I : Okay, Speaker 1? Which group do you think you fall into?
- S1 : Actually a little bit of both.
- I : Okay...
- S1 : Erm, okay, so like being teased, like during my younger time, younger time, I was teased when I spoke my mother tongue because of my pronunciation and all, because I always spoke English and so when I started to speak Tamil, my friends discouraged me...
- S2 : Until she reached her Bachelor's degree, because I did mock her... (giggling)
- I : Aha, so you're one of the friends! (giggling)
- S1 : (giggling) Yeah, exactly! Then erm...this one, okay then erm... I, I do feel a little rejected, okay, when I tried to speak my mother tongue, they didn't really welcome me in the group...
- S2 : That's because we can't understand what you are speaking (mocking)
- S1 : They discouraged me when I talked...
- I : Okay, I think it's due to the pronunciation that she was struggling with and friends who spoke better mother tongue could not comprehend...
- S1 : Yeah, because I practice English since young, but mother tongue, err, my mum told me, I don't really use Tamil much at home...
- I : Why is that so, can I ask?
- S1 : It has probably since I was young I was like that, since I was small, okay, so it has been a practice, even now, when my mum speaks to me in Tamil, I'll answer her back in English, err, but sometimes I'll answer back in Tamil.

- I : Hmm...okay.
- S1 : Then, no one really called me 'boastful' before, alright...okay, sometimes I do, about this, that 'I feel rejected whenever I speak English with my friends or colleagues'...
- I : Who do not speak English dominantly...
- S1 : When I speak English to them, but they don't speak English dominantly, I feel, I feel a little, I do, I do err, I do this grammatical correction in my head...
- I : I don't quite understand, you do grammatical...
- S1 : No, no, no, in my head, in my own thinking...
- I : Ahem...
- S1 : Because they don't speak English dominantly, right? So most of them, their profi... proficiency level is low, not to say very low, average, something like that, so the simple words like past tense, all that, they don't use it correctly...
- S2 : I think, we are talking about the same friend over here... (giggling)
- S1 : I think it happens to most English teachers, we do correct what other people say grammatically, right...
- I : It's just so apparent that you keep noticing whenever people make mistakes... (unclear)
- S1 : Yeah, but it's not disturbing, it's not disturbing, but I do take note of it, okay, but it's not disturbing, just want to let you know.
- I : Okay...
- S2 : But it's disturbing for the people that you are going to, you know, going to correct, right?
- I : Yeah, but sometimes you can't help it.
- S1 : Okay no one really discouraged me from speaking English, because my dad and my mum have encouraged me since young...
- S2 : I tried! I tried to discourage her... (giggling)
- S1 : I always confident speaking in English, very confident...
- I : You always feel...
- S1 : Always feel confident speaking English, then, this one about, err...about 'labels', because I can't speak my mother tongue so much – yes, many people, friends, even the teachers, there's this saying in Tamil, like what Speaker 2 said, the one that 'curry' and all that stuff...
- I : Ahem, what other...could you give some other examples, like what did they what kind of labels do they give you, what other remarks?
- S1 : 'Peter', like that...

- I : Oh, okay, what does 'Peter' mean?
- S1 : I think, some culture, err, I don't know, maybe...
- S2 : Alright, 'Peter' is the name for a foreigner, right, someone who is very proficient in...
- I : A westerner?
- S2 : A westerner...so...
- S1 : A westerner...
- S2 : So if you're going to talk English most of the time, then they might say okay you're 'Peter' something like that they'll just keep quiet, try to mock you differently, and do something different, they'll do like some sort of gimmick in front you, like they some sort of a native speaker... like when you are, when you are talking to them, they will try to mimic you with the eyes rolling up and then down...
- I : Just to make you realize....
- S2 : Yes, that you are talking too much, something like that...
- S1 : Okay, but the thing is, what do you call that ah...I don't pretend to speak like the natives or what, so this is my accent, this is how I speak English, you know, but some people maybe, I don't know, maybe they feel that they are pretending to speak like that. Okay, then, err, okay the thing is about speaking mother tongue, when my friends discouraged me, actually that was a turning point and I really stopped to really practice, this was during primary school, until secondary school, I don't really want to talk, use my mother tongue because of my friends. But, later when, during my teenage life, then I started to catch the language again. Because of my friends, my confidence and self-esteem really dropped, like okay, I shouldn't speak in Tamil, people don't want to hear.
- I : But then again, from what I understand, back at home; you didn't really have that opportunity to really to speak or to practice your mother tongue, because at home parents spoke to you in English.
- S1 : No, my mum does speak err, use Tamil, when she talks to me, my mum, but I don't know why, most of the time I prefer to answer her in English, sometimes if I want to tease her, or say something about my brothers, condemn my brothers or anything, then I use mother tongue. Okay, other than that, it was always English. She will speak in Tamil, I'll reply her in English, it has been a practice, habit I would say.
- I : And she never said anything about that?
- S1 : No, nothing, she doesn't scold me, nothing.
- I : Okay...
- S2 : Like, for example, when she was mentioning this, confidence level, her friends teasing...it can be the other way around. This is reverse psychology, which is what we call...when we tease someone, that someone will produce a better utterance, you see. Like example, when you are telling someone that you can't,

you cannot speak well, what will happen is, they try to speak well, so when Speaker 1 said, she lacked the confidence because her friends mocked her, I'm one of them, I tried to do that, tried to use the reverse psychology approach...

I : So in a way, you tried to help your friend here to improve her mother tongue....

S2 : Yes, I was trying...

S1 : During my young...during....

S2 : But I don't know how she took it! (Laughing loudly)

S1 : No, during my younger days, no they basically really said, "Stop Nila, don't kill the language!" They said that!!

S2 : But that is the exact phrase I used! (Laughed)

S1 : You know, with all the reaction, probably like what Speaker 2 says, that oh, trying to encourage, but for me, as the person hearing it, like okay, okay I should not, like it gives a negative feedback to me you know...

S2 : I tried to (unclear)

S1 : I looked at it negatively, because the way they talk, the way of their intonation and all that, they face reaction, it really gave me the impact that, I shouldn't speak...

I : That was your immediate...

S1 : Yeah!!

I : Perception of their mockery...

S1 : So, they said like...after more than 10 years, I really regret, like they really caused such a big change in my life...after all friends, you know...

S2 : Like, like, I use reverse psychology, looks like someone reverse it back to me, seems like it was taken like a mockery, because most of the time, what I do to my students is I'll trigger them, alright, the way that I trigger that, I'll just tell them that, "You are not good in presentation", so what they will do is that, they will come and prove to me that they are good in presentation. This is what I've been using for a long time, so when she was, I know her since her Bachelor's time, alright, so she was talking in Tamil, I mock most of the time, but not to say to...to...

I : Shall we say, like it's a constructive mockery...

S2 : Yeah...

S1 : Okay, actually Speaker 2 and I, we know each other since 2006, but during that time, I was already err, err, getting a hold of the language already, it means after my Form 5, after 17 years old, I was already watching more movies, trying to talk more in Tamil, after more after my secondary life, so when I went for degree, the problem is when I started to catch the language late, so that's where my pronunciation runs here and there...so yeah...so it's not my fault, I tried my best to speak, you know...

S2 : (giggling)

I : Okay, let me look at the following question...

S2 : I only talk about the truth, nothing but the truth...

I : Okay, do you think you should answer this question, because I think we talked a lot about why people discriminate or make a person feel insecure with such negative remarks because of their inability to use English?

S2 : Alright, there are, there are two types of individuals, one, they really make them, they mock them, so that they just stop doing what they are doing, the other one, they mock them so that they will prove themselves and who they are, like constantly like err, certain lecturers they told me that in my school, certain teachers told me that "You're not a good student, "You're going to fail, you're going to flop", so what I did is, I performed, I showed to them that I'm a lecturer now. Alright, this is the mockery that they like, they gave me, but now I am reversing back to them. So, what I thought is that, is trying the same approach, but not to the extended level, but just to the minimal level...

I : But, do you think that's err, that actually happens among friends? Because yeah, a lecturer or a teacher will be more concerned in changing a student's life...

S2 : Yeah, friends, there are two types of friends, one is a friend who is good for nothing, one friend, they are your close friend, they want you to excel in your life. Those friends, who want you to excel in your life, if you consider them your best friends, they won't even tell what kind of good characteristics you're having, they always mock you.

I : Okay, let's move on the next question, why do you think English has become a reason for others to make judgments towards you?

S1 : Okay, I feel that erm, some people are very good in English, they can really, they are very well-versed in English so then...wait ah...

S2 : Like, like, like example here, English has become the reason for others to make judgments right, they are very good in the language usage, so when they look at someone...when they look at someone who are not very good in the language, they tend to compare.. compare...like sometimes we compare books to buy, so we look at two books, okay what, which is the best, so if we happen to know this author, we try to compare this author is not so good as this author, right...same concept you are applying when you are, like for me, when I'm speaking English, when I go to class, I see my students, certain students cannot pronounce certain words well, so I'll be comparing, so it's a judgment already made there, first impression already done, first impression is a judgment.

I : Hmm, but why English, I don't see many people are being judged for not being able to use their mother tongue properly, but English is a reason where people are really...

S2 : Because English is becoming an international language, English is becoming a main language; you know in Malaysia, they are still debating to come up with English for the, for the syllabus and everything, so it's already, it's becoming a hot topic, English.

S1 : Even though, English is a second language in Malaysia, but still the importance is there, like if you speak in English or if you converse something in English, people will really look high on you, where it's like easily message could be conveyed, you know...

S2 : English, we are not viewing English as a language; we are viewing English as education, so something that provides us success. That's what happened now, that's why people start to judge each other.

I : So, it's no longer just a language anymore...

S2 : Yeah...

I : It brings many other things along...

S1 : Yes, the moment someone uses English, err, I feel that there will be different first impression on the person...

I : Right...

S1 : Especially their English; they have good pronunciation and all compared to the ones who try to speak in English, but err, not with good proficiency.

I : Okay, I think we can get to the last part of the question, from your point of view, how err, might situations or circumstances that you face among your peers, which you told me earlier, helped you to achieve greater proficiency in English despite the challenges?

S2 : Like example, when I'm, when I'm talking to my friends, certain friends, I told you right like certain friends they mock me, certain friends they are good in English, for example those friends that I've got in my Master's class or something, they are very good in English, so when I speak to them, I become conscious about my English, you seen I don't want to make some glaring mistakes in front of them, being mocked by them, so these types of challenges make me to become better in this language.

I : Okay...

S2 : Alright, because when we do our presentation in Form 5, just imagine we are going to the presentation in Form 5, we are not going to take care of the presentation or the language, we just use it, whether you use code-switching or code-mixing, whatever language, we just use it, because we are not conscious about it. When I came to the degree level, I started to become conscious because all of them, they are very good in English, but as I come to Master's, it's totally a different ball game.

I : Hmm, so in a way, all these things that you have been going through actually helped you, motivated you to improve your English...

S2 : Okay, first of all, English is my favourite subject, and since I was young, I always watch programs on television which are all English-based, like Barney, Sesame Street, so it actually interested me to learn the language, okay, so since then, my dad and I, he always read story books with me, so this has gone on until school, so coming up to peers, so when we are in school, we have the discussion, we have the activities in school, so all this actually err, helped me to get good proficiency in English.

- S2 : So, since she talked about her dad, let me talk about my dad, my dad always told me that I'm not good in English, so I took it as a challenge now, I became an English teacher.
- I : Since you were young?
- S2 : Yes, because I don't speak English at home...
- I : Okay...
- S2 : So as I kept quiet, he always told me "You're not good in English, You're not good in English". So, finally I can tell him that I'm good in English.
- I : Is that why you took up this profession?
- S2 : No, actually no. No, no (giggling). Actually, it's a personal interest, but, but what challenges me, like err, English, why, why you are telling me that I'm not good in English, something that triggered me, why you're telling me, so I proved to him, it's not like I'm not good in English, now you can see, I am good in English.
- I : Okay, so I think, we've answered both these questions, and the final question would be what would your recommendations or suggestions be for future use and learning of English in our country, Malaysia in terms of educational policies and implementations?
- S2 : Try to, try to look at English as a language, rather than looking at it like for educational purpose only, because err, we are talking about native speakers, we tell that native speakers, they are good, actually they are not good, in terms of usage, they are actually afraid of Asians, this is proven.
- I : Really?
- S2 : Because the way that we use our language, our pitch, our tone, our rate is very fast compared to them, they always stop, you see. So, there are certain circumstances that they told you are a very good language user, so instead of looking at English, like okay you learn English, you learn reading comprehension, you learn how to speak, and then you go for exam, you get a Band 6, they should think that, okay learn English and try to use it with your friends, because this is a language.
- I : So, it's not just a subject for you to pass...
- S2 : Yeah, have you ever heard, like err, like Tamil, okay, Indian, we are doing Tamil, but they have Tamil until standard 6, right? Do we learn Tamil just because you want to pass the paper? We never. Since we are born, until now, I think I learn Tamil, even before I enter the school, but we didn't use Tamil to pass papers but we use Tamil to communicate. This is why, this is how we should view the language, like okay you learn English, you learn grammar and then you go and sit and then we will give some sort of a reading comprehension questions or grammar questions, you should get 100 / 100.
- I : It's not just a subject to , you know for just for university entry, but it's a language that we use.
- S2 : Yes.

I : What do you think about err, bringing in native speakers, native speakers to our country to teach English to our students of Malaysia?

S2 : Like I told you, native speakers, although they are native speakers, how good is their English? They can speak well, why because they look at English like a language, here we don't look at English like a language, and here we look at English as education or subject.

S1 : Actually, bringing native speakers, what's going to be different is, not all native speakers, they speak proper English, quoting back to what he said, maybe they'll have the accent...

I : Ahem...

S1 : But their grammar, grammatically wrong and so on. Right, coming back to this, the recommendations, suggestions, so in Malaysia, in Malaysia, they had actually implemented teaching Science and Maths in English, but they are going to stop that, right?

I : Right...

S1 : So, I feel it's a big loss, because in that way of teaching Science and Maths in English, I think the students will learn more vocabs in English, you know the new words which they've never encountered before.

S2 : Yeah, this is the same concept as I told her, the same concept, if you're going to teach Science and Mathematics in English, they are going to learn the language not as a subject, but as a communication, so that they can communicate with the teacher.

S1 : In, in, indirectly...

S2 : Yeah...

S1 : And if they can practice much communication, I mean err the language, then definitely they could get the hold of English.

I : I have a final question; do you think our government would actually see English as a threat to our national language, Bahasa Melayu, because of this implementation?

S1 : I, I feel this question is very sensitive, but if you ask my view, honestly I feel - yes, they do feel that it's a threat to Bahasa Malaysia, our national language...

I : Okay...

S1 : Okay, maybe they feel that English would just take over, and then they will just stop using Bahasa Malaysia, our national language or formal language. I feel like...what...

I : Could that be a reason, why the Maths and Science subjects were shifted back to Malay?

S1 : Probably, but you see, those days during my parents time, in school they used English, there was no problem at all.

I : Yeah...

S2 : My viewpoint on this, I don't think it is a sensitive matter, why because we are in Malaysia, alright, we have all the rights to compare and contrast whatever implementations they are going to do, because we are going to be affected. It's not going to be a threat, but government saw that as a threat, previously, once and then they are doing same mistake again. Previously, they changed all the syllabus, my father's education is not so high, but he can speak very good English, why, because those days, the medium of communication is English.

: Ahem...

S2 : Nowadays, the medium of communication is not English, it's becoming Malay. So, when we ask them in interview or whatever, can you speak in English, they struggle.

I : Right...

S2 : When we ask them to introduce themselves, they cannot introduce themselves like a human being, they trying to introduce themselves like a robot. So, if you are going to think that this language is going to be threat to Malay language, soon or later, this issue will be a threat for our nation.

I : So, what do you propose for our future generation?

S2 : Buck up your English.

S1 : In what aspect?

I : In what aspect, err, about the language plan...

S2 : Buck up your English...

I : Buck up your English...changing back the subjects to....

S2 : Yeah...that, that we....

S1 : Even, even if that doesn't happen, but still if you read a lot and listen to English programs, watch English programs, definitely you will brush up your English...

S2 : Basically...

S1 : Because it's just a matter of learning language, you see err, English for specific purpose, I have friends who teach this to engineers and doctors, and doctors, why because they need the language in their job, right? So, it is important.

I : Hmm...any other opinion?

S2 : Well, talking about the implementations, it's nothing regarding the people there, alright, it's always regarding the government; the government has the final say to do this. So, if I'm going to say my opinion that this people have to implement language and what so ever, it's not going to happen. What they can do is try and communicate dual language...

S1 : That's why I said it's sensitive...

S2 : We, we have like err, we are born in Malaysia, so we have like multi languages....

- I : But we don't have to view this as a sensitive issue, because we as the society of, the citizens of Malaysia, but I hope at least we have that, you know...
- S1 : Even though we have the rights, yeah but anyone is going to listen and the moment you say something or you back stab which the majority of the country doesn't agree, that's why I said, it's sensitive, because it's not going to happen.
- I : Maybe we just need more voices and dare to speak and maybe you'll be heard...okay so err, thank you very much for participating in this interview and presenting your viewpoints, thank you.

* End of transcript *

APPENDIX C (II)

Interview Transcript (2)

Focus Group Interview Conducted on 24 November 2012

I : Interviewer S1 : Speaker 1 S2 : Speaker 2 S3 : Speaker 3

I : Okay, err I shall address you as Speaker 1, Speaker 2, and Speaker 3, okay so no names will be mentioned. So, Speaker 1, what is your mother tongue or first language?

S1 : My mother tongue is Tamil.

I : What about you?

S2 : Mandarin.

I : And yours?

S3 : My mother tongue is Tamil.

I : Okay, how well can you speak your mother tongue, Speaker 1?

S1 : I can speak in Tamil very fluently.

I : Alright, and you?

S2 : Me too, in Mandarin, fluently.

I : You don't speak Cantonese?

S2 : Yeah, I can speak Cantonese also.

I : Alright, both are fluent?

S2 : Yes.

I : What about you, Speaker 3?

S3 : Tamil, very fluent.

I : Very fluent...okay, what language do you normally speak at home with your family, Speaker 1?

S1 : Of course, I will speak in Tamil because that is my mother tongue and also the mother tongue of everybody at home.

I : At home...okay, and what about you?

S2 : I will speak Mandarin and sometimes Cantonese and maybe Hakka also.

I : Ermm...okay, that's quite a bit there...okay and then what about you?

S3 : Err, normally in Tamil and also in English.

- I : But, which one do you normally speak a lot? Mostly...
- S3 : Err, Tamil, Tamil...
- I : Most of the time ya...okay what about the language that you speak with your colleagues here at your workplace?
- S1 : I have to speak in English, because most of my colleagues are not Indians, so their mother tongue is not Tamil, so English will be the medium of communication, so we speak in English.
- I : Ahem, anyone can answer this, what about you?
- S2, S3 : Yeah, it's English also, English...English...
- I : Most of the time ya? Okay, how comfortable are you in speaking your mother tongue?
- S1 : Very comfortable... (giggling)
- I : Very comfortable?
- S2 : Very comfortable... (giggling)
- S3 : Comfortable...
- I : Okay, erm, I don't think question 6 is relevant anymore because...erm...would you say that you might feel uncomfortable speaking English then?
- S1 : Erm... sometimes yes, because I think that speaking in Tamil is very comfortable for me so it's very very easy for me to convey my feelings, and very easy for me to explain things to my colleagues, if they are Tamils.
- I : Erm, right. What about you?
- S2 : Not so comfortable while speaking English because my English is not that good and sometimes I may not explain the things to...in English lah, I mean...
- I : Well you mean? You could express yourself better, in Mandarin?
- S : Yes.
- S3 : Erm...I also not so comfortable when speaking in English because my English also so poor and I can explain more in Tamil rather than English.
- I : Alright, let's move on to the more general questions on your second page. Okay, this would be interesting. Anyone of you can take turns to answer these questions. What is your opinion of people who speak English most of the time, although their mother tongue is not English?
- S3 : Err, maybe they are well educated and feel very comfortable when speaking in English rather than your own mother tongue.
- S1 : I think they are speaking in English because they want everybody to see them as a well-educated person and it's a kind of 'showing off'.
- I : Okay, so you're trying to say that if people who speak English most of the time, it reflects their level of education?

S1, S3 : Yes.

I : Okay...

S2 : Sometimes, they may not be taught their mother tongue...

I : Since they were young?

S2 : Yes.

I : Erm, why do you think that, that happens in a family?

S2 : I think it's because it is English educated in Malaysia right...has many English schools, so many Chinese also don't know Mandarin.

I : But what about parents at home?

S2 : Err, I don't know, maybe they think that err...English is the most important language.

I : Okay, alright, question 10, if mother tongue is no longer spoken by a person at all, be it Tamil or Mandarin or Hakka, do you think that it will eventually lead them to let go of their racial or ethnic identity?

S1 : Yes, I think so because, like err...I personally think that most of the Tamil books, okay, which reflects their culture and their ethnic identity are in Tamil. So, if they are not practicing the language, how can read all these materials, like books or journals, or whatever it is, if they are not reading it, how are they going to practice this in their life? So, I think knowing mother tongue is really very important for a person.

I : Alright, okay, okay, anyone of you?

S2 : It's important also, but nowadays there are many translations, like for Chinese, they don't know Mandarin also they will practice the...what I mean, the err (unclear)

I : But do you think that speaking English dominantly would ever affect one's identity? Like representing them, themselves as Indians, as Chinese, as Malays...if they...

S1 : I think so...

S2 : But it's after hundred years, yes it will affect...(giggling)

I : So, gradually it will, it takes time, ya?

S2 : Yes.

I : Okay, could people still maintain their racial or ethnic identity if they continue speaking English most of the time? What kind of efforts do you think people should take, if you know, they give up on language, but they want to maintain...they still want to be Indians, they still want to be known as Indians, or Chinese or Malays?

S1 : Erm...they have to mingle (giggling)...if Tamil, they have to mingle with Tamil people, if Chinese, they have to mingle with Chinese...maybe yes...(giggling)

I : A lot of them think that language is still a secondary matter. It's not really like you know, something very important, even if people, as years pass, they give up on language. They say, "No, I will still be an Indian, I'm born Indian, I will die an Indian.", "So, what's wrong with me speaking English most of the time? What do you think about that?"

S1 : (Giggling)

I : Do you agree or disagree? You can disagree with that because...

S1 : I disagree with that because I think someone has to speak in their mother tongue in order to keep their ethnic and racial identity, as I told you, they have to practice the language because language is the root for life; language is the root for everything. So, they have to speak in their mother tongue in order to keep their identity.

I : Hmm... anyone else, do you have any other opinions?

S2, S3 : No.

I : Okay question 12, in your opinion, could English be viewed as a threat to or having a negative effect on your racial or national identity, because now you see the importance of English being instilled in our policies, Malaysian policies... will that be a threat to your own language or identity?

S3 : No... (unclear) I don't think so...

I : So, bringing in policies like teaching Mathematics and Science in English is actually a good idea?

S3, S2 : Yes, yes...

S1 : I don't think so, because I want subjects like Science and Mathematics to be taught in Tamil, because last time, I, I learned everything in my mother tongue, and nowadays kids are learning everything in English. But they are actually, erm... they cannot widen their vocabulary, especially Tamil vocabulary, like they don't know what is 'plus' or 'minus' in Tamil.

I : Right.

S1 : The very basic things in Tamil, that means we have to make them learn everything in mother tongue first, because that is the fundamental of learning there, so I want them to everything in Tamil.

I : It has become so normal that, erm... you know, I myself being an Indian, when I speak a string of sentence, half the words is in English, because that's what I think as a complete sentence in Tamil, but I mix that because of my poor command in Tamil. Okay, erm, in your opinion, is English viewed as related and conducive to power and prestige, social success, your means to better jobs, higher education or improved living standards? Does English lead to all these?

S1 : Yes, of course! (giggling) That is the first requirement to enter a university, right, someone has to have a distinction in English in SPM, and they have to have at least Band 3 in MUET, that means English is there and everywhere, so we really look at English as a powerful and prestige language.

- I : Prestigious language...
- S3 : Yes, I agree...
- S2 : Yeah, I agree too. (giggling)
- I : Okay, alright, we'll move on to the more specific questions of my research, you can look at this table that you have in front of you, there's two partitions here, Group A and Group B. Erm...they are both very different, have you ever personally experienced or gone through these situations due to the use of English or the lack of it? Okay, so you can like take some time and read through, which one you have experienced in your life and you can talk more about it.
- S1 : Actually, I don't experience... I did not experience both...
- S3 : Err, for me, I have been discouraged to speak in English whenever possible because this is what I experience in my working environment when I'm trying to talk English to my own colleagues, but they try to speak in other languages, like Malays, I don't whether my English is so poor or they don't want to reply me in English. They still want to reply me in their own mother tongue, Malay.
- I : Hmm...have they called you names when you speak English, like have they called you "Jangan berlagaklah", "Don't boast", "Just talk in your mother tongue"?
- S3 : No, no...
- I : No? They just don't reply you in English language? Okay...What about you, Speaker 2?
- S2 : I don't really experience this...yeah...
- I : Ahem...What about this... 'Lacked the confidence when I try to speak English to other people'?
- S2 : Yeah!
- I : Worry about making mistakes?
- S2 : Yes... grammatically.
- I : Okay... you still speak, but...in a very minimal level?
- S2 : Yeah, when I need to.
- I : Only when you need to...
- S2 : Yes.
- I : Okay... erm...no other...you don't feel any other situations you...
- S1 : I experienced this, 'Feel ignored, rejected', in my...when I was in secondary school... 'Felt ignored, rejected...'
- I : This is... Group B is describing more on 'Being teased, mocked or laughed at when you speak mother tongue.' Here... this one then.

S1 : Hmm...Group A, then. Yeah, I felt ignored and rejected whenever I spoke English with my friends when I was in secondary school...they used to do this, they used to tease me, they used to laugh at me, because most of them are Malay students and I was from a Tamil school, so the culture was different when I get into the secondary school. It was like culture shock, everybody was speaking in English, and I felt that I was ignored by them and I tried my level best to actually enhance the language, I memorized a lot of things and I tried to restate it in on my own. My mirror was my good friend at that time, so I tried my level best to speak in English. So, yes I experienced this before, when I was in secondary school.

I : Alright...okay this is the last question for this group, why do people discriminate or make a person feel insecure with such negative remarks due to the use in English... or for not even being able to converse in English well?

S2 : Maybe, because of the egoistic of people...

I : Hmm...could you explain more about what you've just said?

S2 : Maybe they feel they are very well educated and look down on people who don't speak well in English. Or maybe, if they...or can other side, they look down on people who cannot speak mother tongue...

I : Hmm...err, do you agree with the statement that a person who speaks good English is somebody wise in their thinking, are they smart, can we, can we regard them as smart?

S1 : No, not really...

I : Not really? Then, talk more about it...

S1 : Actually my colleagues are facing this okay, they have a lot of ideas in their mind, they have the creativity, they have the innovation, but the thing is they cannot do anything in the office, it's because the proficiency level in English is very low and they have their own self-inferiority complex which will never let them to speak in English. So, each time they will come to my table and they will ask me to correct their work, and I think they are being discriminated because of their proficiency level in English.

I : But that does not...language, the proficiency in English does not measure their...

S1 : Yes! They are, actually they are smart, smarter than the person who can speak well in English. I can see that.

I : So, people who speak English basically cover themselves up, right?

S1 : Yes! (giggling)

I : Okay, let's move on to the last set of questions...I think we can skip this question, because we have talked about it...and even the other one...number 15, from your point of view, how might situations and circumstances, that you just mentioned just now, that you face among your peers, help you to achieve greater proficiency in English despite the challenges?

I : I think, Speaker 1, just now you said that you memorized a lot, you listened to them a lot, you fought the challenge and yeah, talk more about it, what are the things you did...

S1 : Sometimes, we have to take challenges in a very positive way, because there are teasing us, they are laughing at us, of course we cannot let them to do that for a longer period...so we have to do something, like err...most of us make a lot of mistakes in using the tenses, of course, so maybe we can give more concern to that kind of grammatical things and also we have to learn and we also have to apply the language. Okay, even when we go to KFC, why don't you order the food in English? Because the person who is taking the order is not going to evaluate us, so we have to utilize the surrounding. I think the chances are there, because 80 percent of the materials online are actually in English, so we learn English, the language...on our own. There is no need to depend on anything, because there a lot of online sources some more and free online guidance some more... so the chances are there, we have to utilize them.

I : Speaker 2, have you ever used the challenges that you have to overcome your problem or make yourself better?

S2 : (Giggled) I don't I'm better now or not...because I speak English frequently compared to last time...

S1 : You're a Chinese studies student, right?

S2 : Yes, I'm a Chinese studies student.

I : And you're from a Chinese school before?

S1 : Chinese school and she has a degree in Chinese studies.

I : I see, so your language in that must be really strong!

S1 : Yeah! She's very good in that language... (giggling)

S2 : (giggling)

I : Okay, alright erm...

S1 : S3, remember you used ask for worksheets and to correct your work...(unclear)

I : Yeah, maybe you can talk about that...

S1 : She always takes the worksheets from me, she will do the exercises...

I : Ahem, to improve yourself?

S3 : Yes...

I : Okay, could you tell us more about, what type of...

S3 : Erm...to improve my English, normally I will erm, I will take notes from Speaker 1 that she uses for the students and read more newspapers to correct my English...

S1 : She has to write minutes of the meeting...

- S3 : Yes.
- I : Right, you actually are an admin staff here in this workplace and your friend is actually a teacher?
- S3 : Yes, she's an instructor.
- I : She's an instructor, okay, err, so you get worksheets from her, that she gives out for her students, to improve yourself?
- S3 : Yes, yes...
- I : That's actually very good, you know, good encouragement there. Okay, and the final question, what would your recommendations or suggestions be for future use and learning of English in our country in terms of educational policies and implementations? What do you think is the best? Your opinions can be, can be different...
- S1 : We should use English wisely...
- I : Okay...
- S1 : And we should use English in everything, especially in education, also I told you, we and Mathematics in our mother tongue, but that should be applied in the primary schools only. So, once they move to secondary school, I want them to learn everything in English, because as we know and as I told you earlier, most of the resources, most of the articles, journals and also the online sources are in English, so it is better for them to learn everything in English, even the political matters, should be, should be like err, everything should be applied, err, how to say ah, they have to apply English in all these matters and because most of us are using English in political matters, of course err, so when they try to explain to others, they cannot use the correct words, because they are using Malay to explain the rules and regulations, even the law and everything, you have to explain that in Malay, because we are exposed to that kind of things, even I learned Mathematics in Malay, so I can't teach Mathematics to my, to my cousin sisters or cousin brothers because they are learning everything in English and some them are learning Mathematics and Science in Tamil so there is no standardize, standardize...
- I : Standardization...
- S1 : Standardization, so they have to make everything, because everything is being globalized now...
- I : Hmm, Speaker 2?
- S2 : I think the government shouldn't change their policy so frequently, few years ago, they should learn in English, and now they want to change to Malay.
- I : So, why do you think that happened?
- S2 : I think it's a political issue...
- S1 : No stabilization in government, maybe, some of them they, the ministers are keep on changing and the rules are also keep on changing (giggling)

I : But statistics prove that a lot of students who answered their PMR and SPM exams chose to answer their exam papers in English, but still the government chose to bring it back to Malay, the Malay language, Bahasa Melayu. Why did that happen?

S3 : Maybe they are scared that they will lose their Bahasa Malaysia...

I : Hmm..that could affect the national identity, right?

S3 : Correct.

I : Because, Bahasa Malaysia is our national language, so maybe English is seen as a threat to the national identity...alright, any other opinions you want to share before we wrap up this interview?

S1, S2, S3: No...

I : Okay, thank you very much for participating...

S1, S2, S3: Thank you...

* End of transcript *

APPENDIX C (III)

Interview Transcript (3)

Focus Group Interview Conducted on 28 November 2012

I : Interviewer S1 : Speaker 1 S2 : Speaker 2

I : Okay, good evening, right now I will not mention your names while conducting this interview. I will refer to you as Speaker 1 and the other person Speaker 2. Alright Speaker 1, what is your mother tongue or first language?

S1 : My mother tongue is Kelantan dialect.

I : Ahem, and what about you Speaker 2?

S2 : My mother tongue is Mandarin.

I : Ahem, how well can you speak your mother tongue or first language, Speaker 1?

S1 : Fluently.

I : Alright. What about you?

S2 : Yeah, me too, quite well.

I : Okay, what language do you normally speak with your family, Speaker 1?

S1 : Of course Kelantan dialect.

I : Ahem, do you mix with other languages as well?

S1 : Sometimes....Malay.

I : Sometimes Malay...

S1 : Bahasa Malaysia...

I : But mostly Kelantan dialect?

S1 : Mostly, Kelantan dialect.

I : And you?

S2 : I speak Mandarin with my family and friends.

I : Most of the time?

S2 : All the time.

I : All the time...okay, what language do you normally speak with your friends or colleagues, Speaker 1?

- S1 : Depends on friends...my friends at...my friends at Kelantan, of course I use Kelantan dialect. My friends...err, my colleagues, sometimes I use...most of the time I use Bahasa Malaysia...and sometimes I use English language.
- I : Ahem... thank you, okay...and what about you?
- S2 : Err, if I were to speak to my friends in my hometown, then I will usually use Mandarin. But I were to speak to my friends here, in KL, then it can be Mandarin or English, both of these.
- I : Okay, how comfortable are in speaking your mother tongue, Speaker 1?
- S1 : Very comfortable, as in I don't have to think of the words.
- I : It just comes...
- S1 : It just comes...
- I : Like into your mind? Right... and you?
- S2 : Yeah, me too, it just comes, so I don't have to think of the words before I speak.
- I : Alright, and...err...have you ever felt uncomfortable speaking in English? Any one of you.
- S1 : Uncomfortable yes...before I come to this stage, maybe.
- I : Ahem...why is that so?
- S1 : Because of lack of practice.
- I : Ahem, what about you?
- S2 : Yeah, me too.
- S1 : Also, lack of exposure I think...
- S2 : Actually, quite a lot of times I felt uncomfortable when speaking English...most of the time before this I have felt uncomfortable. I only started speaking in English before I entered the university; it's like Speaker 1, I lacked practice in speaking this language.
- I : Ahem, but at present, which one of the languages do you feel most comfortable speaking, mother tongue or English? At present...
- S1 : At present...well for me, depends on the situation, when at work, I feel most comfortable to speak in English, while I am with my parents or friends at home, in my hometown, when I go back, then I prefer to switch into Kelantan dialect. Erm...not really Bahasa Malaysia, switch into Kelantan dialect.
- I : Alright...Speaker 2?
- S2 : Most of the time, I will still choose to speak in Mandarin, but if let's say, I have to speak to friends of another ethnic, then I have to use English instead.
- I : Does that define your level of comfort when you switch?

S2 : Erm...for now I am more fluent in speaking English, so it's not really that difficult to me. At least my friends can understand me, what I'm trying to say.

I : Alright, let's move on to the next set of questions – general viewpoint questions, on the next page. Alright, this is very interesting. What is your opinion about people who speak English most of the time although their mother tongue is not English?

S1 : I love to hear that, because I see, I can see that they are very good and I just love to hear that and I can learn from them.

I : Hmm, but my question is, their mother tongue is not English, but that is the language they often speak, most of the time. What do you think of that?

S1 : Yeah, I'm aware of that. For example, maybe she's from Kelantan and then she, she...use English language with her parents or family, so nothing wrong with that.

I : So, you're quite impressed with that?

S1 : Impressed with that...positive.

S2 : Usually I am very impressed with those who can speak English although their mother tongue is not English, because they have, at least they have the courage to speak in another language...and most of my friends that I know, they couldn't, they don't even have the courage to speak in another language...and that's the thing that hinders the learning of that language.

I : Right, okay if mother tongue is no longer spoken by a person at all, imagine this situation, do you think it will eventually lead them to let go of their racial or ethnic identity?

S1 : No.

I : Why? Don't you think mother tongue is very important to uphold one's racial or ethnic identity?

S1 : Err...

I : If you want to remain a Kelantanese, you want to remain a Malay, what if, you and your, you know in future your kids no longer speak the language that was taught by your grandparents and your parents? What do you think happens?

S1 : Erm...okay for me, erm...okay for me, no, my answer is no. Why, because, they can always learn the language through environment. You just...for example, Kelantan dialect right, whenever I, for example, I raise up my children using English language and, but then I can always bring them to the environment and they can always listen to, to, to, you know to the surrounding...but then, when we talk about racial or ethnic identity, I don't think it's err, somehow a big issue there.

I : Right, okay, that's your opinion...Speaker 2?

S2 : Erm...I'm like speaker 1, I also think that...no...because, erm, I think ethnic identity is uphold by... err, by I mean culture and customs, err...not so much on

language, because in Malaysia we have so many races, so we are bound to code-switch and use lots of languages. So, how do you differentiate that...

S1 : You cannot define people through languages, it's inside....

I : Right, so that will be relevant for question 11, will people still maintain their racial and ethnic identity even if they continue to speak English most of the time?

S1 : Of course, yes.

I : Of course, so, it's nothing to do language so much, it's how you uphold your customs...

S1 : Yes...

I : Beliefs and other things...

S1 : Exactly.

I : Alright, in your opinion, could English be viewed as a threat or having a negative effect on your own racial, ethnic or even national identity?

S2 : Definitely not.

I : So, it's not viewed as a threat?

S1 : No...no...

I : Okay, any reasons to support your statement?

S2 : Erm...just like what I said just now, because I still have the believe in my own culture and my own customs and I'm still yeah, following those and I still have faith in my own ethnic. So, I don't think language is a kind of threat or negative effect on my own ethnic identity.

S1 : For me, language is just a kind of...can we say a branch of knowledge in which you, ability for you to learn and ability for you to, you know master other languages and it's not about ethnic or national identity, it's nothing to do with threatening or negative effect at all and it's how you uphold yourself and uphold your family and how you...you know, you err...hold to your belief, erm that's all...

I : Alright, okay, question 13. In your opinion, is English viewed as related and conducive to power and prestige, social success, means to getting a better job, higher education and improved living standards? Can English lead to all these success?

S1 : Yes.

I : Ahem, why?

S1 : Well, err, as we all know that English language is one of the languages being known worldwide, that we use English language in business, we use English language to, to, you know improve our living standards, and if we have other language than our own dialect, we could go more, we could go forward, and especially for English language, we cannot say English language per say ...but

how do you bring yourself when you have another branch of knowledge, and we talk about English language, you want to, you will bring yourself into higher level, you know higher education and means that you, your...your...err your, you know your...

I : Chances to get...opportunity...

S1 : Chances to get higher education, err chances to get better jobs is high, so people will look into you as in a better person, as in a better person compared to you without the language.

I : Are you trying to say that, people, people knowing English, or the ability to speak English well raises one's confidence, where ever they go?

S1 : Yes, of course yes...one of it as well...

I : What about you Speaker 2?

S2 : Actually, I also agree about that because most knowledge err, is in English, so and, most of the time, as far we know, those employers, what they look at now, is on your command of English. So, that's very important to get better jobs and all those things.

I : Alright, okay I think we can now go to the last set of questions...if you see, you have a...I have presented two groups here, you can look at them carefully, and I just want to ask you, have you ever personally experienced or gone through these situations due to the use of English or sometimes, the lack of it? Which group do you think you belong to, Speaker 1?

S1 : I feel...I am in Group A...

I : Ahem...

S1 : Well, basically because err...because most of my friends are not using English language, and sometimes when I use English language at one time, they, they you know, mock me and they laugh at me, they tease me because, because that's not our language, and err...we're not used to that language, so they said, "Why are you using that language and you're not English people?"

I : Right, so the language defines what kind of people you are, so you don't use the language if you don't belong to that...do they call you names? Have they called you names for speaking English? Label you with names?

S1 : Err...terms.

I : Terms? Certain terms...like what, such as?

S1 : You might understand that, but this type of food is, is, is being known in Kelantan, is being known in Kelantan, for Kelantanese, yeah...and can I say the name? The name is Budu, actually. It's a kind of food that we add into our rice, into meals every day, you know, and then they call me that term because, when we use English, when we talk in English, they call me that term to show that I'm from Kelantan.

I : Hmm...to remind you that you're from Kelantan!

S1 : To remind me! To make me aware that, “Hey, you’re from Kelantan, you don’t speak English.”

I : I think another race also experience the same thing, because I’ve also heard of it, I’ve experienced it too; I clearly understand what you mean, okay...

S1 : Yeah...yes, yes...

I : Using food terms to remind you to come back to our....

S1 : Yeah, come back (giggling)

S2 : I was labeled ‘Banana’...

I : ‘Banana’?! Because the colour?

S2 : Yes, because of the yellow on the outside and white on the inside.

S1 & I : (Laughing out loudly)

S2 : Yellow on in the inside means I’m a Chinese and white on the inside means...like

S1 : Like Western...

S2 : Yes, like Western, yes...

S1 : (Laughing) Ahaa, okay....

I : Alright, so any other things you want to add? By looking at the points that I have given you here...have you ever lacked the confidence when you tried to speak English? When they always make, you know, judgments, and do you constantly worry about making mistakes?

S2 : Yeah, sure I do...

S1 : Yes, of course...

S2 : I do worry...because, to me as long as people can understand what I am saying, it’s okay, but certain people to judge how you are speaking English...so it kind of give you a kind of burden.

I : What about people who, you know, speak very good English, does that really measure their intelligence? Does that reflect their intelligence, how smart they are?

S1 : I don’t think so, because so far that I know, some err...CEO’s, err those people at higher, higher positions, you know, they are good in English, in terms of writing and dealing with people, business and what so ever, but when it comes to speaking English, they are not very good in, they don’t have a good command of speaking English, but they are the CEO’ s of big err, err, companies, for example, not to name, but then yeah, big companies that we have in Malaysia, knowing that, I could say, err... not really the level of intelligence, because English is, is, is wide yeah, divided into two, writing and speaking.

I : Okay...

S1 : But err...when we talk about lack of confidence, I could say, it really gives me a kind of stress you know, to talk in English somehow, because for example, my friends are using English, and I'm trying to use English at the first stage, before...the same as Speaker 2, when I went for my degree level, then I tried to speak in English, but then I keep on, on thinking, I keep worrying myself, whether I'm talking, I'm using the right word or not. So, I'm worried all the time.

I : Right, what are some efforts that you put in to improve your proficiency in English?

S1 : Of course, 'You Tube'!

I : 'You Tube'?? What do you do, you actually listen to...

S1 : I actually listen to 'You Tube', and listen to movies, wear my earphones and that's it...that's why I said, I love to hear people talking in English. So, I just hear, and I just look at how do they pronounce the words and I remind, err I remember and memorize and that's it, that's how I learn English.

I : Anything else you want to add, Speaker 2?

S2 : I mean to improve my English, I just need to get my courage more, the courage is the first step of all, because at first, I'm like...my friends don't speak English, just because they don't have the courage. So, luckily I have friends, who doesn't mind, my friends, they really encourage me.

I : So, the first thing is don't worry about making mistakes...

S1 : Yeah...

I : Learn from your mistakes, so that you can become a better speaker. Right, so I think we can move to last bit of the interview, question 15, on the next page, from your point of view, how... oh yeah, I think, we've already answered that question right?

S1 : Yes.

I : Erm, so the last one would be, what would your recommendations or suggestions be for future use and learning of English in our country in terms of educational policies and implementations? Think about the policies, that, you know, that was brought in and cancelled, brought in and cancelled like 'Mathematics and Science in English', what happened there?

S1 : It's err...confusion there...so they should have one point of agreement, in which, what language would they want to use, if they Bahasa Melayu, then straight away use Bahasa Melayu, don't confuse others, and especially children.

And, erm...when we talk about policies and implementations, I would like to, if I can, yeah, I would like to give opinion, in which we should expose the students, yeah, especially lower level students, for example, primary students, kindergarten students, to be exposed to the world, expose the language, like, like, how people in Western countries were been exposed to the world, be creative...

S2 : Not only that, because the students nowadays, they are still very passive...

- S1 : But knowing that, they are modern in technology, they have all those iPad and what so ever things...
- I : Yeah, to use that as a means to...expand their English, right?
- S1 : Yeah... I do agree to the stand that some of them still passive...
- S2 : Yeah, they wouldn't speak English, even if you ask them to, so maybe, err they have to think up something else to make them speak.
- S1 : Yes.
- S2 : That's good practice...
- S1 : So, in my opinion, it goes back to the implementation and exposure. Use things, tasks, use something, be able to...
- S2 : Get them to involve...
- S1 : You know, yes, get them to involve, involve in the activity, then only the aim of the activity is to speak.
- I : Right, why was Bahasa Malaysia brought in again for students to learn Science and Mathematics? Why not English? What happened to that policy and why was there a change?
- S2 : I think the government is quite, quite scared of loss of identity... national identity or ethnic identity... actually there's nothing to be scared of, because learning of, the learning of a knowledge doesn't, erm...how to say...I mean, language doesn't really affect how you absorb knowledge...
- S1 : Doesn't change people, doesn't change the race, isn't it?? If you're Malay, then I'm still Malay even though I'm using English language...
- S2 : Exactly, exactly...
- I : Err, so that is something the government can think of, erm...look back and think of for the betterment of our people, right?
- S1 : Yeah...I think so.
- I : Okay, so any final comments or opinions before we wrap up?
- S2 : (Giggling)
- S1 : Final comments, ya...
- I : If you have, but if you don't, then it's okay...
- S1 : Well, err, okay I think I want to say something, but I think I forgot... (giggling) Okay, English language shouldn't be, shouldn't be viewed as something negative, errr...you know, after all, it's a language, it's a language and it's a branch of knowledge.
- I : Alright...

S2 : And to me, the learning of language, I mean, you can learn different languages, and we've learned all those languages, so you don't have to be afraid whether the learning of just one language will hinder the learning of another language.

I : Hmm...Okay, I think you've said well enough, thank you very much for participating in this interview!

S1, S2 : Welcome!

* End of transcript *

APPENDIX C (IV)

Interview Transcript (4)

Focus Group Interview Conducted on 8 December 2012

I : Interviewer S1 : Speaker 1 S2 : Speaker 2

I : Okay, err, in this interview, I will not address your names; I will address you as Speaker 1 and Speaker 2. So, let's start with the basic questions, what is your mother tongue or first language, Speaker 1?

S1 : Err, Tamil, my mother tongue is Tamil.

I : Tamil, okay, what about you, Speaker 2?

S2 : My mother tongue is Tamil too.

I : Okay, how well can you speak your mother tongue or first language, Speaker 1?

S1 : Err... so fluently.

I : Okay, what about you?

S2 : 50 – 50...

I : So, you are not very confident that you can speak your mother tongue fluently?

S2 : Yeah, most of the time, when I'm talking, English words will be...

I : Inserted?

S2 : Inserted in my Tamil...

I : Okay, what language do you normally speak with your family, Speaker 1?

S1 : Err, Tamil as well.

I : Tamil, ya? Most of the time?

S1 : Yes.

I : And you?

S2 : Yeah, me too, Tamil.

I : Most of the time?

S2 : Yeah...

I : But still you are not very confident that you can speak, you know, many Tamil words?

S2 : Yeah.

- I : Alright, what language do you normally speak with your friends or colleagues?
- S1 : Erm, I'll mix it up, maybe Tamil, English and Malay, sometimes...
- I : That depends on who you're working with?
- S1 : Yeah, yeah.
- I : And, how about you?
- S2 : With family members, obviously Tamil, with friends and colleagues, Tamil and also English.
- I : Tamil and also English... Malay?
- S2 : Malay, I will just insert some words inside...
- I : Okay, you don't have that many Malay friends?
- S2 : No.
- I : Okay, how comfortable are you in speaking your mother tongue, Speaker 1?
- S1 : I'm very comfortable, because it's easy for me, because since I was young, a kid, I used to speak in Tamil, so it's very easy for me.
- I : Right, okay, and how about you, Speaker 2? How comfortable are you in speaking your mother tongue?
- S2 : Very comfortable, because we always use Tamil at home.
- I : Okay, and it's easy to think for the words,
- S2 : Yeah.
- I : You don't have to think much for the words...
- S2 : Ahem...
- I : Okay, now if I give you a choice between your mother tongue and English, which language would you choose as you would feel most comfortable?
- S1 : Tamil.
- I : Speaker 1, and Speaker 2?
- S2 : Tamil.
- I : Tamil too. Okay, why do you feel uncomfortable speaking in English?
- S1 : Because erm... I'm used to speaking in Tamil most of the time and I feel maybe I will use wrong grammar when I speak to other people, so maybe they will tease me, so it's better if I talk in Tamil, which Tamil is more comfortable for me and I just choose Tamil.
- I : Right, and you?
- S2 : Is it asking at home or any other public places?

- I : Anywhere, at any time, which language do you feel most comfortable, English or Tamil?
- S2 : Tamil, if I'm with Indian people. If I'm with Chinese or Malay friends, than I would like to speak in English.
- I : And you feel comfortable enough to speak to them in Malay or English?
- S2 : Yeah.
- I : Alright, so let's move on to, basic questions we are done, we will move on to the general viewpoint questions. What is your opinion of people who speak English most of the time, although their mother tongue is not English? Anyone can answer this.
- S1 : They are moving along with the, you know, technology and you know what we call, err... something like, err... we are growing up, so maybe we can learn other language, we are, we must use other language as well. We cannot use Tamil all the time, because we are facing a lot of people, maybe Indians, Chinese, Malays and maybe foreigners, then at that time, we cannot use Tamil to foreigners, so maybe we can use English as well. But we must not forget our mother tongue.
- I : But that's what I'm getting at, I'm talking about, if you know sometimes we see families, they can be you know of an Indian race or Malay race, but that's not the language that they speak, they don't speak Tamil, Malayalam or any other languages, but they speak English to communicate to their husband and wife, between children. What do you think about that? That's not even considering you know, having friends outside your race, it's within your family.
- S1 : Maybe they feel they are more confident by speaking in English or maybe they want to teach their children to speak in English because they think English is err... international language and it err... what we call...it's a must...err...
- I : It has a lot of importance you think?
- S1 : Yes.
- S2 : And I think they are practicing their English by talking to their family members in English although they are, they are Hindu.
- I : Hmm...alright, do you think the situation of speaking in English most of the time, like just now, could eventually lead people to let go or give up their culture? Imagine one day, you see a family, and in generations to come, children no longer speak any word of Tamil, what is your opinion about that?
- S2 : No, I think it's a mistake, with the family members, with your cousins, I think you should talk in Tamil to practice your Tamil well, because if you're very good in Tamil then, you shouldn't talk, okay I'm very confident in Tamil, so I can. Your Tamil is not good as well, so you have to practice your Tamil first, then the other languages.
- I : Are you trying to say that it's important to learn other languages...
- S2 : Just learn, because it's just a language...

I : Yeah, but not give up...

S1 : Actually, I agree with her, but we must give importance to both language. We cannot speak in English but we forget our mother tongue, because we need our mother tongue, because it's our culture, we cannot lose our culture. And then, English is more to worldwide language, that's the importance of English, that's the importance of English, that we can talk to other people which they are not a Tamilian. Okay, err, that's all.

I : Alright, could people still maintain their racial or ethnic identity, you know, can an Indian always be an Indian even if he or she continues speaking in English most of the time? Do you think language affects culture?

S2 : Not at all because language is language and culture is culture, it doesn't give any link of it. We are just speaking a language and culture is since birth and we are practicing it, it's to do something, what has culture taught us, so nothing to do with culture.

I : But then again you are contradicting with what you said, because you said, then a family can come and say, I don't have to speak Tamil to be an Indian, I celebrate the festival, I wear the clothes and I eat the kind of food that Indians eat but I'm going to speak English.

S1 : That's a wrong way actually, err, actually for me, English won't destroy our culture, okay, we are not losing our culture by talking other language, but we must have the limit, okay English is a language, not racial or ethnic, ethnic is a community, okay it's your community and it's your traditional, okay since you are kids, our parents or grandparents have taught us all the racial things, all the...identity of our own community, so we cannot lose our own traditional ways by using English language, it's a language actually. Okay, once, once we are celebrating Deepavali, okay as you said, we are celebrating Deepavali, err we are not worshipping other English God, we are worshipping our Indian God, at the time when we talk to, when we worship or talk to God, we must use our language, okay because it's our Indian God, okay we cannot talk or praise the God in other language. Okay, maybe we can practice like that, okay we got our, our own err, worship songs in Tamil, so during praying time or any ethnic prayers or events, I think we should use Tamil as well, not English, we cannot confuse both languages with racial.

I : Right, so in your opinion, that means, since you said that English does not affect your culture so you don't view it as something like a negative effect?

S1 : No.

I : Not a negative effect, ya?

S2 : It will not affect, no...

I : Alright, in your opinion, is English viewed as related and conducive to power and prestige, social success, means of getting a better job, higher education or improved living standards? Does English lead to all these success?

S1 : Yes.

I : Why?

S1 : Absolutely, English, err, as I said earlier, English is a language that can bring up people to the higher place, okay where ever you go, okay let's say in Malaysia, our country, most of the big companies are owned by foreigners, Chinese, not Indians, okay I'm just telling that. Okay, at the time, when we go for the interview, the Chinese people will interview us, that time we cannot speak in our mother tongue, it's not suitable on that place, so we must know where to use Tamil or mother tongue, we must know, what time we are using that language and to who we are speaking.

I : Okay, what about you? What do you think?

S2 : Also our Malaysia is a multi-racial country, so must be speaking each language equally, so we would be like feeling more comfortable.

I : Ahem, see our country has adopted English as a second language and it has given due importance as our national language, right, Bahasa Malaysia, but let's talk about countries like China and Japan, who, when you go to China and Japan, you have to learn the words in order to survive there if you travel to that country, because they don't look at English as very important, but they are today, you know have created names in economy and politics, so there are countries err...

S2 : You know, because err...China, if they are creating a company there, a Chinaman will do it, will create a company, so I don't think so English is very important for them.

I : Because they have their own...

S2 : They have their own world there, so they don't have to come to Malaysia to work, we are going to survive because they have their own world there...so, that's it...

I : Hmm...okay, finally the more specific questions, okay here I have prepared two tables here, Group A, if you can see, mother tongue is spoken more dominantly than English, and Group B is English is spoken more dominantly than mother tongue. So, just by looking at it, please decide which group you belong to...and have you ever gone through or experienced these situations due to the use of English or sometimes of the lack of it, not being able to use it... So, you can look at it, you can look at the points and tell me from there your own experience.

S1 : For me, I'm using mother tongue err...more, more than English, because as I said earlier, I have to speak in Tamil with my family members because they are not well educated, okay, and then with my friends and colleagues, I have to use other language, not only Tamil, I have to use English and sometimes Malay because err, it depends on who I'm talking to, okay, but English is , is, is err, what to say, err...not to say it's not important for me, but it is important for me. Actually I have no people to speak to, because my mum, she cannot speak in English, so I have to speak in Tamil with her. And err...surely I cannot speak to my mum in English where she understand the language at all, so maybe there will be some miscommunication with me and my mum. So, I prefer, Tamil is good when I speak to my mum, and English is good, I mean okay when I speak to other people.

- I : Right, could you recall your days when you were in the university, when you were doing your Bachelor's Degree, I'm sure you had like different groups of friends who were doing other courses, right...
- S1 : Yeah...
- I : Have you ever been called names by other people, you know, like whenever you spoke, you tried to speak in English, you know they call you like 'Don't try to show off', 'Don't try to boast', have you ever been called that way....
- S1 : No...err....
- U : When you tried to speak in English....
- S1 : Actually, I have experienced all these in my university time, err, they never call me any other names but they will laugh at me when I speak in English because maybe err, I don't have much confidence when I try to speak in English, because I'm used to speaking in Tamil since I was kid, okay, then suddenly, when I entered my university life, I have to use English because my studies and subjects all are in English, so I have to practice. That time, when I'm practicing, the other friends, those, those who are very good in English, they will tease my grammar as well. They will say, "What language are you using?", "What grammar are you using?", you know, "You're talking, your, your, your words giving two meanings..." you know, something like that, so these things happen to me and these things make me feel so err....so down and I myself...
- I : You lose your self-confidence?
- S1 : Yes, I myself under estimate my, my, my level in English so because of that I just cut to, I just stopped speaking in English and I just continue with my mother tongue...
- I : So the people were the cause of the result of what you actually went through...
- S1 : Yes.
- I : What about you, Speaker 2?
- S2 : Could you repeat the question please?
- I : Speaker 2, have you ever gone through or experienced these situations due to the use of English or not being able to use it well?
- S2 : (giggling) My personal experience would be like being called 'boastful', 'show off' sometimes...
- I : With your circle of friends?
- S2 : Yeah, recently it happened, and we...we met up after three years, a big gap, and so if I'm talking in English with them, they will say, "Oh, Anita speakinglah now!", like "Anita changed a lot", like school time, I always talk in Tamil, so now "Anita started to talk in Englishlah", so "Cannotlah talk to her now", "She one-type already lah"...okay, okay like that...
- I : Hmm... So, English is being...not accepted...
- S2 : Yeah, not accepted...among my friendslah.

I : Hmm...so anything else you want to...how did you respond to that? Did you like lose your confidence or you didn't care about it?

S2 : I didn't care about it. I just gave them some 'looks'! (giggling) I just showed them that they are not good as well, because they have graduated, they are graduates...so...

I : They should be able to speak another language instead of their mother tongue...

S2 : Yeah...

I : Okay, why do you think English has become an issue or a matter here for people to discriminate you, for people to make judgments towards you? What is so great?

S1 : Okay, for me err, when people, they can speak English, they are well educated, they will shine more than the others because they can speak English, err, one of the reason is a mother...err sorry, English is an international language, and then, okay I'm giving an example, okay maybe there are 5 in a group, okay 4 of them are Malays and 1 is Chinese, okay, when they speak Malay among 5 people, it's not called err... 'educated', but when the Chinese can speak in English, then the 4 other Malay people will think that she is so educated. She can speak well in English, why we cannot speak in English, maybe because their lack of using the languagelah as well.

We must practice using English to make ourselves confident when we talk to others. Err...I'm trying to say that...when we talk to other racial people or other country people, we have to talk in English, we cannot talk in Tamil to foreigners, to Australians and Americans, we cannot talk in Tamil because they won't understand our language. Now, as I know, err, For my opinion, the nation is conquered by English, okay, because err, most of the countries are using English as their language and it's easy for others to follow when, let's say you need to travel to other countries, let's say you need to go to....

I : Australia?

S1 : Okay, Australia, you cannot speak in Malay or Tamil to the Australian people, is it? You have to speak in English if you want to buy food, you have to ask "How much is the price?", you cannot ask "Berapa harga ini?" they won't understand your language, because we are, the world is practicing like that, the world is growing up, the technology, the, the, the economic wise and it is growing, so we cannot use our mother tongue nationwide. We can use it among our families and friends, we can use that but when you go outside, you must know how to speak in English, you cannot use Tamil all the way, okay...

I : Okay, let me make myself clear, are you also trying to say that being able to speak well in English means, it reflects that you are a highly educated person, gives you a social status in the society?

S1 : Actually it depends on the people, you know, on the people who are judging us, who judge, the people who speak in English, if you think they are educated, that's why they can speak in English, I think it's wrong. We can speak in English, if we practice well. Okay, for an example, my uncle, he's not educated, he has just finished Standard 3, but now he can speak more than 4 languages and

he is very good in English because he communicating with the people and he's practicing a lot. You can learn whenever you make a mistake...

I : Right...

S1 : Okay the mistakes will make people perfect and you can learn from the mistakes that you had err, done before, then you can correct yourself, but we cannot say that people who are talking in English, they are very good, you cannot say like that, like...

I : It doesn't tell people their intelligence, it doesn't reflect their intelligence...

S2 : Yes...

S2 : Yeah, because the....

S1 : Language wise they are good, but education wise, maybe they are not as good you know, as the others, those who enter the university or something like that...okay, you got it?

I : Yeah, I got it...

S2 : As what I said just now, in China there are high standard people too, really very, very high standard than Malaysia actually...

I : Very smart...

S2 : Very smart in creating many, many things, so English, we are multi-racial country, Malaysia, it became a must for us to talk in English or in Malay, so it depends on us, situation and people.

I : Hmm, okay, let's move on to the final part of the questions, I think you have talked a lot...alright... Hold on ya, right, would you be able to provide me instances, experiences, when you find situations like this, like you know you said your friends don't encourage you, have all these situations helped you or motivated you to improve your English? What have you done...to improve your English?

S1 : Okay, err...truly speaking, err...I feel embarrassed when they laugh at me but I, I take that as an encouragement to push up my, my, myself to learn English more. Okay, most of the time, at my working place, I started to use English, even though I know I'm talking in, you know not proper Englishlah, I'm not using good grammar but I try to speak with my friends and maybe with my boyfriend. I tell him, come we just speak in English, then he tease me, and say that "Oh, so you want to laugh at me ah?" because my boyfriend is not as educated as, as maybe as me, but I just want to improve our English, maybe I want to put a level, you know, one step higher, the confident level in ourselves. We no need to speak to others, no need to speak to others, like you know, err, strangers, maybe we can speak among us, maybe I can speak with my boyfriend, maybe I can speak with my sister, so any mistake, we can correct at the time, okay. And then, I started to watch English movies with the subtitles as well, because I cannot watch an English movie without subtitles because as you know, err, Hollywood actors are using very good English and very fluently and some words I really cannot understand what they are talking so I need subtitles as well because I need to match what they are talking and the words appear on the TV. So, I can match them, and then I know oh, this is the meaning of that.

And then, I use to read, err, not to say newspaper, err, I don't want to 'tipu' (cheat) you lah, I seldom read the newspaper. I started to read English books, English books but for primary school one lah, I have to learn from the basic, start from the basic okay I have to start from the basic. For your information, I'm a Christian, and I'm taking care of the Sunday school at my church, so whenever I talk to them, I must be well prepared, before I enter the Sunday school to teach them, I have to prepare with my own, you know, modules, English modules, then only I can teach them, so that means, I have to well prepared, I have to train before Sunday, I have 6 days from Monday till Saturday, I can practice more in English, then Sunday I will enter my Sunday school and I will teach them in English, if any questions they raise to me, then, I think I will be able to answer them back because I've already practiced in 6 days before.

I : Okay, Speaker 2, what have you done to improve your English, if you think that you wish to improve?

S2 : Yeah, I have been teased too at home actually (giggling), for using past tense, present tense wrongly, (giggling) my sister especially!!! (giggling). She would like correct me, then I will learn it but sometimes I'll forget, sometimes I will do it again...

I : How do you feel when you are being corrected by your family member?

S2 : Family members, not so....

I : Bad?

S2 : Not so bad...but friends...so far, my friends have not done that to me, touchwood...

I : Hmm... you don't feel that bad?

S2 : Family members, I don't feel that bad...

I : You don't feel anything or you don't do anything about it?

S2 : No, no!

I : Or do you actually do something about it?

S2 : Do somethinglah, like maybe watching English movies, read some books, not newspaper at all (giggling)

I : Okay, you don't have the habit of...

S2 : Looking at Facebook, Facebook also having good English, information, so I'll read that.

I : Hmm, okay do you try to speak as much, like Speaker 1 was telling me that she uses, creates opportunities to speak to people who are close to her, her boyfriend and her sister, do you do that, like instead of watching and reading...do you speak?

S2 : No, I don't speak English yet to my family members, yeah sometimes I'll just insert some words, but when I'm working out, I'll be in KL, then I must use English to my, to my...

I : Colleagues?

S2 : Colleagues, so that's when I'll practice and use it.

I : Alright, okay, I think we can get to the last question of our interview, what would your recommendations or suggestions be for future use and learning of English in our country, Malaysia in terms of educational policies and implementations?

S1 : Okay, err, for me, we in Malaysia, we should use English more than our mother tongue, okay we can use mother tongue at home with our family members but outside we must use English as well, because err... we can learn more in English, we got past tense, we got present tense, we got vocabulary, we got grammar, but in our mother tongue, I don't think so our parents you know, taught all the things, right, they are talking to us like normal, "You come here.", you know in Tamil lah, "Ingge vaange, ponge" they speak like that, but they won't teach us or have taught us the correct grammar in Tamil, "You cannot speak like this, this one is past tense", no such things, but in English we must use the correct grammar, correct vocabulary because it will bring two meanings or more meanings in one word...

I : If you make a mistake...

S1 : Yes, so we must learn English in correct ways, you know. And then we must practice our people to speak in English more than mother tongue because, I think it's helpful when we go outside, okay we are Malaysians, we are studying err, Standard 1 until Standard 6, okay we are in Malaysia, still in Malaysia, from Form 1 until Form 6, we are still in Malaysia, but whenever we enter universities, some of our students from Malaysia, they are going abroad for their studies, at that time they cannot bring their mother tongue to college or universities because they are at overseas, they cannot talk in Tamil to the...err...

I : Foreigners...

S1 : Foreigners, they have to use English in terms to make the community or group to understand what they are trying to tell, okay if you tell in Tamil, if you tell in Tamil, of course they won't know what you're talking about, if you're using bad words, bad words also, they don't know, they cannot realize, okay so I think we must use English more often and we must practice with our students, okay now maybe we can implement English in our subjects, like before this we have put our Maths and Science in English, it's very good but I don't why suddenly our Malaysia government, they you know get back to the previous one, using Malay for those subject. I think that is not good because we are going higher and higher, we are not going back, we are moving forward, not backward...

I : Progressing...

S1 : Yes...so we have to use English err...with other community, other people err, at one stage we need to use English but at the same time we cannot forget our mother tongue. That is our identity that we are Indian, we are Malay and we are Chinese. Okay, err... So that's the thing I'm trying to say, I hope you can understand...

I : Yeah, I get it, I get it...what about you Speaker2, your final opinion? Do you think it's a wise decision to make our future generation to...you know speak up English language?

S2 : Yeah, because we are, since Standard 1, since kindergarten, we are using English, we are practicing English by some subjects given, but still our English is quite bad, not so good, if we are university graduates also we are not so good in speaking in English. So, if they stress up by giving more classes or more lessons, I think we would like...speaking good English...

I : Change the school system...

S2 : Yeah...

I : I think we have enough classes, it's just that the system, the way that we practice the language, something is fundamentally wrong...

S2 : Ahem...

I : So that has to be corrected, right? Okay, any final opinions before we wrap up?

S1, S2 : No...

I : No? That's all? Okay, thank you very much for participating in this interview.

S1, S2 : Thank you.

* End of transcript *

APPENDIX D

8 Common Themes that emerged from the interview analysis.

Codes	Colour	Themes
	Peach	<p>Linguistic hybridity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bilinguals and multi-linguals are comfortable learning and using 2 or more languages with family, relatives, friends and colleagues. • View it as an advantage to the user as the knowledge and proficiency in more languages are added benefits. • Do not view it as a threat or a negative effect to their mother tongue / racial / ethnic / national identity, not a form of betrayal.
	Yellow	<p>Awareness of English being a social / cultural capital</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People tend to look high upon you of your good command of English. • Speaking English brings respect, gives a person high social status, regards them highly educated people in the society. • Opens doors to success and wider opportunities in life. • Globalized language, international language.
	Pink	<p>English used as a mask to show superiority</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To reflect one's intelligence through language proficiency, but that's not really the case. • Used as a cover up for oneself to gain respect and power.
	Blue	<p>Being 'othered' by others – negative remarks / judgments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Laughed at, mocked, rejected, called names for not being able to converse well in either English or MT. • Face discrimination, alienation or isolation from peers or colleagues.
	Grey	<p>Used the negative remarks or judgments to improve oneself to become better in using the language</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Used various ways to overcome the rejection. • Accommodate and learned to adapt well to the situations. • Did not give up the positive efforts to improve their proficiency in English / mother tongue.
	Orange	<p>In support of implementing English as a medium of instruction in the national education system</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aware of the importance of English is bringing about great changes for the future generations to come.
	Green	<p>English is regarded as a threat to the national language or national identity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Realize the numerous changes and instability of the educational policies regarding the frequent language change as the medium of instruction in the educational system.
	Purple	<p>English is seen as a threat to the mother tongue / racial / ethnic identity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MT is very important and great influence of English could place language, racial or ethnic identity at stake.

APPENDIX E

Common responses obtained from the questionnaire for the open – ended questions (12, 13 and 14)

Question 12: Will people give up on their cultural beliefs and practices if they continue speaking English dominantly (most of the time)?

YES (14 %)	NO (86 %)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speaking English dominantly causes one to lose their culture and tend to be influenced by the more dominant culture. • Modern times will eventually allow this kind of changes to take place. • People of the modern generation are less aware of their basic cultural beliefs and practices due to the dominance of English. • One may lose the originality of MT due to the influence of English. • English dominance leads to loss of MT as it jeopardizes cultural beliefs and people tend to easily adopt another dominant culture (Western culture). • English is seen as a threat to the Malay language (Bahasa Melayu), as in most cases Malaysia’s official and administrative language is still BM and people will no longer see the importance of using BM anymore. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English is just a language, a medium of instruction; a means of communication, therefore speaking the language will not cause people to give up their own cultural beliefs and practices. • Language and cultural beliefs are not related, so people will still hold on to their cultural beliefs strongly although they speak a different language dominantly other than their MT. • Cultural practices and beliefs are something that one is born or educated with since childhood, therefore people can never change it easily due to the influence of dominant English usage; some cultural beliefs are given up by some people due to their impracticality mostly. • Cultural beliefs refer to the way people think, believe, view and take actions for something, they do not relate to language or even to speaking English dominantly. • Speaking English or other languages beside MT only bring advantages and no harm to one’s own culture. • People will eventually give up such cultural practices and beliefs if proper care or effort is not provided to maintain and pass them down to the future generations.

Question 13: Will people lose their ethnic or racial identity if they continue speaking English dominantly (most of the time)?

YES (16 %)	NO (84 %)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The process for one to lose their ethnic / racial identity will eventually take place, but it will be a slow process (it may take a few generations). • The younger generation tends to place more importance on a more dominant language, thus leading to loss of one's ethnic / racial identity. • MT is believed to have an important part in the representation of one's racial / ethnic identity – ignoring MT in favour of English will gradually contribute to the loss of one's ethnic / racial identity in the time to come. • English is a more dominant language, people find it more comfortable to speak it with family and friends and it is also a global language, therefore the use MT is given less importance as it is seen as less useful for various purposes, so one's ethnic identity could be affected by this factor. • To use English dominantly and forget one's own MT will lead to changes in the way people speak, behave, their style, appearance, lifestyle, accent, even the kind of food they choose to eat in favour of different aspects of Western culture. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People who have a very strong belief in their race and culture will not be easily affected or give it up even though they speak English dominantly. • English language is just another means of communications, a tool to express oneself- in fact it can promote ethnic / racial identity to others, convey to others information about one's own culture. • Ethnic and racial identity are something people are born and brought up with, it is quite impossible for someone to easily shake off their identity by speaking English dominantly. • People tend to speak English dominantly due to the requirement of work, needs of daily life, education, to interact in their social circle, and it does not mean that one has to lose their ethnic identity if they speak English more often. • One will not lose their ethnic or racial identity, but they are often labelled as 'show off' if they speak English more than their MT. • People will not lose their ethnic or racial identity as long as they know / are aware that they are just learning / using the language and not assimilating into the dominant culture or practices. • Language does not describe one's identity; rather there are other important elements and factors involved.

Question 14: Does high proficiency in English makes you more confident?

YES (93 %)	NO (7 %)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speaking English well gets a person to communicate well and express their ideas and thoughts well, with anyone, whether they are local or foreigners who can speak English. It sets no boundaries even if people are from different racial beliefs, religions and adopt various practices. • The world has accepted English as a global / international language; therefore people who can communicate in that language well will definitely be confident. • If a person is able to communicate well and effectively or fluently in English without hesitation or doubts, this helps to raise and enhance their self-esteem / confidence. • It gives an additional advantage for the person to project a better image to other people as it is a dominant language in the world. • English is a global language, so people are able to express their ideas and opinions and can be easily understood by other people, especially in their workplaces where there are many kinds of people who come from different racial and religious background. • High proficiency in English eliminates ‘fear and shyness’ in people as they will be able to express their thoughts and articulate their speech in a more effective way. • Fluency in English creates / contributes to the image of being professional or outstanding in the eyes of others. It earns a person respect and admiration thus creating a good impression, too. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confidence depends on the personality of the person. • Speaking English does not mean they have more confidence, as it could be a way to cover / hide their weakness because speaking English gives a person the edge that impresses others. • Confidence is inbuilt and it shows regardless of what language a person may speak. • Knowledge and appearance are the most important aspects to enhance confidence in a person.