

**LANGUAGE USE AND ATTITUDES AMONG CHINESE  
ADOLESCENTS IN MIRI, SARAWAK**

**HOON SWEE KIM**

**FACULTY OF LANGUAGES AND LINGUISTICS  
UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA  
KUALA LUMPUR**

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**FACULTY OF LANGUAGES AND LINGUISTICS  
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Matric No: TGC140031

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## ABSTRACT

Language use or choice is an issue in multiethnic and multilingual countries such as Malaysia. Most Malaysians can speak more than one language. They are able to choose a suitable language which is appropriate with the addressee, topic or location. This study aims to explore the languages used by Chinese adolescents in Miri, Sarawak in five selected domains: family, school, transactional, government department and social media. The study also aims to survey the attitudes of Chinese adolescents in Miri, Sarawak towards the usage of Mandarin, English, Malay as well as their own ethnic languages. In addition, this study aims to detect factors that affect the Chinese adolescents' language use in Miri, Sarawak.

Questionnaire, interview and observation methods were used in this study to obtain data. A total of 100 Chinese adolescents in a Chinese conforming school in Miri, Sarawak, were chosen as respondents. Some of these respondents were also interviewed.

The findings showed that Chinese adolescents in Miri gave priority to Mandarin within the family, school, transactional and government department domains, but English in the social media domain. The attitudes towards the usage of Mandarin and English were positive, however, the attitudes towards the usage of Malay was negative. Although the respondents showed positive attitudes towards their own ethnic languages but contradictory to their language use. The respondents perceived and judged the English language as the highest and most positive compared to the other languages. Factors such as low Malay proficiency, lack of interest in learning Malay and lack of motivation lead respondents not to choose Malay as the language of priority in the selected domains. The findings indicated that the Chinese adolescents' language attitudes were closely related to their personal backgrounds, the language use in social environments and their language abilities.

## ABSTRAK

Penggunaan bahasa atau pemilihan bahasa sering menjadi isu di negara yang mempunyai pelbagai etnik dan pelbagai bahasa seperti Malaysia. Kebanyakan rakyat Malaysia boleh bertutur lebih daripada satu bahasa. Mereka berkebolehan untuk memilih bahasa yang sesuai mengikut lawan tutur, topik atau lokasi. Kajian ini bertujuan untuk meneroka penggunaan bahasa oleh remaja Cina di Miri, Sarawak dalam lima domain yang terpilih dalam kajian ini iaitu keluarga, sekolah, transaksi, jabatan kerajaan dan media sosial. Kajian ini juga ingin meninjau sikap remaja Cina di Miri, Sarawak terhadap penggunaan Bahasa Mandarin, Bahasa Inggeris, Bahasa Melayu dan bahasa etnik mereka. Di samping itu, kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengesan faktor-faktor yang menggalakkan remaja Cina dalam penggunaan bahasa tertentu di Miri, Sarawak.

Kaedah soal selidik, temu bual dan pemerhatian telah digunakan untuk memperolehi data dalam kajian ini. Seramai 100 orang pelajar di sebuah sekolah jenis kebangsaan Cina di Miri, Sarawak telah dipilih sebagai peserta kajian. Antaranya belasan orang pelajar telah ditemu bual.

Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa remaja Cina di Miri, Sarawak mengutamakan penggunaan Bahasa Mandarin dalam domain keluarga, sekolah, transaksi dan jabatan kerajaan, manakala Bahasa Inggeris dalam domain media sosial. Sikap terhadap penggunaan bahasa Mandarin dan bahasa Inggeris adalah positif, bagaimanapun, sikap terhadap penggunaan bahasa Melayu adalah negatif. Selain itu, peserta menunjukkan sentimen positif terhadap bahasa etnik mereka. Para peserta melihat dan menilai Bahasa Inggeris sebagai bahasa yang paling berprestij dan paling positif berbanding dengan bahasa lain. Faktor-faktor seperti kurang fasih, kekurangan minat dan motivasi untuk belajar Bahasa Melayu menjadi faktor Bahasa Melayu kurang dipakai dalam domain-domain yang dikaji. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa sikap bahasa remaja Cina

berkait rapat dengan latar belakang individu, persekitaran sosial dan kebolehan berbahasa individu.

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## LIST OF SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS

L1	:	First language or mother tongue
KPM	:	Ministry of Education Malaysia ( <i>Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia</i> )
JPN	:	State Education Department ( <i>Jabatan Pendidikan Negeri</i> )
SPSS	:	Statistical Package for Social Science
DLP	:	Dual Language Programme

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## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Introduction**

Malaysia is a multiethnic and multilingual country. It comprises of Malays, Chinese, Indians and many other smaller ethnic groups. Each ethnic group has its own language. The national language is Malay, however, English is widely spoken among the people in Malaysia. One of the common issues in sociolinguistics in a country like Malaysia is the choice of language (David, 2006). Malaysians often face a problem in choosing a language to use in their daily interactions and social milieu. Therefore, it is inevitable that adolescents are constantly faced with the same issue in their interactions with family members, friends, and neighbours.

This study is based on a multi-fold methodology of a questionnaire, informal interviews and observations focusing on the languages use and attitudes of Chinese adolescents in five selected domains in Miri, Sarawak. It seeks to explore language use by Chinese adolescents from Miri when they interact in the five selected domains and their attitudes towards the usage of these languages. Besides, this study also identifies the factors that encourage these language users to select a particular language for a specific purpose in a particular domain.

The study will present a description and an analysis of the language usage and the attitudes of Chinese adolescents who are currently studying in a Chinese conforming school in Miri in five selected domains, with emphasis on Mandarin, English, Malay and their own ethnic languages. According to Holmes, data from the languages used can provide both social and linguistic information (Holmes, 2013), such an undertaking is deemed viable and useful to linguistic, sociolinguistic and sociological studies of

Malaysian adolescents. This study provides the discourse practices of adolescents in their natural settings in multiethnic and multilingual Malaysia, providing useful information for linguists, sociologists, politicians, educators, trainers, writers, teachers or parents involved with adolescents. It is hoped that this study will provide the impetus for other studies on the linguistic behaviour of Malaysian Chinese adolescents.

## **1.2 The languages of Malaysia**

The national language is Malay. The importance of Malay as an element of national identity of Malaysia was brought about by the rise of nationalism which led to the independence of Malaya from the British Colonial rulers in 1957. Although Malay is accepted and used by all races as the “national and official language” of the country, it is still seen as belonging to the dominant group, the Malays (Asmah, 1993, p. 157).

English is a compulsory language taught in all Malaysian schools (Asmah, 1993). It has been chosen as the principal foreign language due to its use for international communication and a source for the latest development in science and technology. English is considered Malaysia’s second language and is seen as an asset to the country. According to Asmah, as cited in Jariah (2003), the term ‘second language’ refers to “.....second in importance in the hierarchy of the Malaysian languages, seen in terms of the official recognition given to the language, its importance as a language of education instruction, as well as its position as an important language in the professions” (Jariah, 2003, p. 51).

Jariah (2003) adds that the status and prestige of the English language was established during the pre-independence British regime. It came as the language of the rulers and the language itself was considered a language of power and prestige and was much sought



after since then. “The Malaysian linguistic scene in the media and social interaction, shows that English is widespread as a communication tool” (Jariah, 2003, p. 43).

Mandarin is the most common language spoken among the Chinese ethnicity in Malaysia (Ghazali, 2013). Mandarin is the standard Chinese language and is used for all official purposes among Chinese community as well as in the Chinese media. Mandarin is also the medium of instruction in Chinese schools in the country and is fast becoming a popular language amongst the Chinese community especially with the emergence of China as a new superpower and the opening of more diplomatic and trade ties with China.

Tamil is the most common Indian ethnic language, followed by Malayalee, Telugu, Punjabi, Bengali, Pakistani and Sindhi. Each Indian Ethnic group has its own language. Studies have shown that language shift is ongoing in these languages, for example the Sindhi community in Malaysia has moved from their ethnic language to English and Malay (David, 1996). Besides, there are other minority groups such as the Thais, Eurasians, Arabs and people of other descent who speak their own languages as well as English and/or Malay.

According to Asmah (1982), cited in Jariah Mohd Jan (2003), the social environment in Malaysia is conducive to various languages being used in daily communication. The communication among Malaysians, either inter or intra ethnic group seldom implies a straightforward use of one language; it can be a combination of any of the following: Malay, English, Mandarin, Tamil or any of the ethnic languages (Jariah, 2003, p. 42). Malaysia is indeed made up of many ethnic groups and has a rich linguistic heritage.

### **1.3 The languages used by the Chinese community in Malaysia**

Most Chinese are multilingual and they are moderately fluent in Mandarin, English, and Malay language. They also speak their own ethnic language and/or the dominant ethnic language in their area (Languages of Malaysia, 2017). The Chinese in Malaysia is a diverse language group with a variety of dialectal groups. The main dialectal groups are Hokkien, Cantonese, Hakka, Teochew and Hainanese (Baskaran, 2005).

The Chinese adolescents are mostly trilingual or multilingual due to their historical and educational development. Even though Malay and English are the languages they learn in school, they still speak Mandarin and/or have their own ethnic language as their main language.

Therefore, it is inevitable that Chinese adolescents are constantly faced with the option of choosing the right interaction language with different people. Romaine (1989) and Gumperz (1982) pointed out that code-changing often follows a change of addressee. Hence, Chinese adolescents have to choose which language to use to accommodate to their addressee or converge with the linguistic ability of their addressee. David (1992) revealed that language is a salient dimension of group identity and is used to maintain inter-group boundaries in a multilingual setting.

#### **1.3.1 The Chinese Conforming school**

A unified national system of education was initiated in Malaysia in the year 1957 after the country achieved Independence. The Malay language was declared the national language while English became the compulsory language to be taught in all schools. The Chinese-medium and Tamil-medium primary schools are known as national-type schools, whilst the Malay-medium primary schools are known as national schools. Malay is the

medium of instruction in the national schools which are mostly government aided. Mandarin and Tamil are used as the medium of instruction in the national-type schools. These Chinese and Tamil primary schools fulfill the cultural need for vernacular language education in the country. However, Malaysian adolescents at the secondary level have no option but to attend national schools where Malay is the medium of instruction.

The Chinese conforming school was previously known as a Chinese-medium secondary school. In the early 1960s, the promulgation of the 1960 Rahman Talib Report and the 1961 Education Act required that the Chinese-medium secondary schools switch to the national medium in exchange for state funding. This is to comply with the country's monolingual educational language policy. Those that did not wish to comply has to exist as Independent Chinese Secondary Schools deprived of state funding (Santhiram, 2015). These restructured Chinese independent schools are known as national Chinese conforming schools and currently there are still 78 Chinese conforming schools in the country (Soong, 2013).

Although the Chinese conforming schools use Malay as its medium of instruction like the national schools, there are different from the national schools. The students in the Chinese conforming schools are mostly Chinese and are basically from Chinese-medium primary schools. The Chinese conforming schools have at least five periods (200 minutes) a week to learn Mandarin while national school have only three periods (120 minutes). Most Chinese conforming schools have made Mandarin as a compulsory subject for their students to learn and sit for public examination.

The Chinese conforming schools hold their weekly assemblies or extracurricular activities in both Malay and Mandarin as media of instruction. School notices are also issued in both Malay and Mandarin.

### **1.3.2 The Research Site – Miri, Sarawak**

Miri, Sarawak, is located on the north-eastern coastal state of Sarawak, on the island of Borneo. It is known as an oil town that mainly relies on petroleum and natural gas. This has brought large numbers of foreign workers from western countries to work in the booming oil city.

The Royal Dutch Shell company discovered the oil field and drilled the first oil well at Canada Hill, Miri, Sarawak in 1910. This has led to a rapid development of Miri town which became the administrative center of the northern region of Sarawak in 1929.

Nowadays, the development and importance of the oil and gas related industries have deteriorated. Agriculture, timber and tourism have gradually taken their place to become the main economic pillars in the city's vigorous development. The potential of Miri's natural attractions enabled more development in tourism. For example, there are Gunung Mulu National Park, Niah National Park and Lambir Hills National Park, which are the must-see among the many of Sarawak's famous national parks. These are advantages that have enabled Miri to successfully upgrade itself to a tourist city in 2005. It is the first town in Malaysia which is not a state capital to be granted the city status. It was elevated to city status on 20 May 2005 and has become Malaysia's tenth city (Stephen, 2015)

The educational field also contributed to the positive development of Miri city. Curtin University Sarawak, which is the offshore campus of Curtin University, Western Australia, has been the first foreign university to establish its campus in Sarawak since 1999. Furthermore, the Teachers' Training Institute Malaysia Sarawak Campus is also located in Miri. In addition, there are many national and private colleges situated in the city. Other than national primary and secondary schools, there are still a few International primary and secondary schools which are owned by the private sector such as Tenby International school and Pei Min middle school. All these developments from the

educational and tourism fields are sufficient to support Miri city as an international city. International schools at all levels have brought foreign exchange to the city; Curtin University of Sarawak alone has brought in RM480 million in terms of foreign exchange annually from 3,000 foreign students studying at the university (Sibon, 2015). From an oil town to a resort city, Miri has grown with large numbers of foreign workers, tourists and students. These people have managed to transform Miri from a fishing village and sleepy hollow to a peaceful and harmonious city (Yeo, 2014).

### **1.3.3 The Languages Used in Miri, Sarawak**

The Chinese community usually has an ethnic language (dialect) as the lingua franca in a particular area, for instance, the dominant dialect in Kuala Lumpur is Cantonese, and in Kuching it is Hokkien. However, there is no dominant dialect in Miri and the Chinese community use Mandarin as their lingua franca. This is probably due to Miri consisting of a large number of immigrants who reside in Miri because of work and also because it is a pleasant living environment.

In 2015, the fifth Sarawak chief minister Tan Sri Datuk Adenan Satem announced that official government interventions can be in both English and Malay languages during the state civil service gathering. Adenan added that the use of English is necessary and unavoidable and this is a practical and logical step (Tawie, 2015).

Miri is a unique city located in Sarawak, with 19 ethnic groups and more than 20 languages spoken. The Chinese adolescents are multilingual. They are at least moderately fluent in three languages like Mandarin, English and Malay, as well as their ethnic languages. Ironically, they prefer to use English rather than other languages in their daily conversations. Their usage and attitudes towards these languages will influence the

maintenance of their ethnic identity and the development of their native language. With regards to this, Miri was particularly chosen as a research site to investigate the language use and attitudes among the Chinese adolescents.

#### **1.4 Statement of Problem**

Language use and language choice are an important issue in a multiethnic and multilingual society. Linguists agree that elements like loyalty and pride in language attitudes are the factors influencing the use of language. Language loyalty motivates the language user to maintain their language. A sense of pride in one's language causes the language user to continue and expand the usage of his language as his ethnic identity, and this serves to unite the community.

The Malaysian Chinese are usually proud of their ability to speak a few languages like Mandarin, English and Malay other than their ethnic languages such as Hokkien, Hakka, and Cantonese. They will choose to speak different languages for different purposes and domains. Nowadays, the Chinese family in Malaysia is already moving slowly away from the dialects of their origins and heading for Mandarin and English (Ang, 2010). This leads to the younger generations not being able to speak their own ethnic languages. Language is a precious cultural heritage. In addition, language is also the soul, the mind, and the spirit of the people (Fishman, 1994). Thus, we should put in more effort to maintain our language.

The younger generations nowadays are also influenced by the foreign entertainment media. They are exposed to many other languages such as English, Japanese, Korean, Mandarin from China and Taiwan, and also Cantonese from Hong Kong. All sorts of changes and progress in the social media influence the usage of language among the

younger generations in Malaysia. This has become a factor to either maintain or to shift from a language. The language used by Chinese adolescents will determine the progress of Mandarin and other Chinese ethnic languages in future because they are the agents in spreading the usage of Mandarin and Chinese ethnic languages to the next generation.

The respondents in this study are Chinese adolescents aged between 16 and 17 years old and high school students who will graduate soon. They are going to decide on their future, either to further their studies overseas or in local universities or to stop schooling and start work. Thus, their opinions are important because these adolescents are about to enter society and will be the leaders of society in the future (Oswalt, 2016). The respondents' decisions on their future plans will probably be reflected in their language choices and attitudes towards the available languages.

## **1.5 Research Objectives**

The objective of this study are as follow:

1. To explore and identify the languages used in five selected domains, such as family, school, transactional, government department and social media among the Chinese adolescents in Miri, Sarawak.
2. To discover the attitudes of Chinese adolescents towards the usage of Mandarin, English, Malay and their own ethnic languages in Miri, Sarawak.
3. To determine the factors that affect the Chinese adolescents' language use in Miri, Sarawak.

## **1.6 Research Questions**

Specifically, this study aims to answer the following questions:

1. What are the languages used in the family, school, transactional, government department and social media domains among the Chinese adolescents in Miri, Sarawak?
2. What are the attitudes of Chinese adolescents towards the usage of Mandarin, English, Malay and their own ethnic languages in Miri, Sarawak?
3. What are the factors affecting the Chinese adolescents' language use in Miri, Sarawak?

## **1.7 Significance of Research**

This study hopes to draw the interest of scholars regarding language use among the Chinese in the country as research on language use issues in Malaysia is as yet limited. The researcher wishes to give an initial overview about language use among the Chinese adolescents in Miri, as well as their attitudes towards the usage of languages. In addition, the researcher also wishes to discover whether their own ethnic languages have been replaced by other languages. So, at the end of this study, the researcher hope that it will raise awareness among the Chinese in the country who seldom use Mandarin and their own ethnic languages in their daily conversations.

This study is expected to add social understanding about the state of the usage of languages among young Chinese adolescents. In addition, knowledge of language choice and language attitudes among adolescents with a Chinese language education background up to the level of secondary school will be fostered to describe and forecast the future development of Mandarin and other Chinese ethnic languages in Malaysia, because this



group of young Chinese adolescents have great potential in contributing to the spread of Mandarin and Chinese ethnic languages to the future generations. This study can also raise concern about the use of Chinese ethnic languages in the next generation.

Due to the lack of similar studies conducted in Miri, this study wishes to consolidate and strengthen the existing research in the sociolinguistics field, hoping provide a clearer picture about language use and attitudes among Chinese adolescents in Miri, Sarawak.

### **1.8 Limitations**

The scope of this study is limited to language use and attitudes among Chinese adolescents in Miri. The sampling of the respondents was another limitation because they were not random-sampled perfectly but they were selected by the school management. Furthermore, the students involved in this study are Secondary Four students instead of Secondary Five students who are in their last year of schooling. This is due to the rules and regulations of Ministry of Education in Malaysia require that research carried out in schools must not involve examination class students. A total of 100 respondents were involved in this study, which is a small sample size that cannot represent all Chinese adolescents in Miri.

There were also some shortcomings about the questionnaire. Although most of the items in the questionnaire were adopted and adapted from existing research which was conducted in other contexts, this is the first time it was used among Chinese adolescents in Miri.

The limits of this study are the validity and reliability of the instruments used as well as the accuracy of the respondents who have completed the instruments. The results of the study might be less self-conscious than the data collected for administrative purposes

as the respondents were told at the beginning of the survey that the questionnaires were for research purposes. Seliger (1984) argued that much of language attitudes is unconscious (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005) and therefore it is possible that the respondents' responses on language attitudes might become one of the limitations in this study.

The study is only applicable for the current situation with the current political situation in Miri. A longitudinal study of a population survey is recommended for the confirmation of the findings. This study will offer some suggestions and recommendations for further studies on topics related to this. Further studies on factors affecting language use and language attitudes should be conducted so that more consistent findings are available within and across the whole Chinese adolescents' population in a multilingual setting.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This study aims to explore languages use and attitudes among Chinese adolescents in Miri. This chapter presents existing academic literature regarding the issues that are related to languages use and language attitudes as well as other important concepts that relate to this study. Furthermore, comparisons are made with previous studies.

### **2.2 Language Use in Multilingual communities**

Malaysia is a multilingual country and the majority of its people can speak more than one language. Thus, most Malaysians have a wide linguistic repertoire. Whenever speakers of two or some languages come together, a decision has to be made about which of these languages is to be used. They have to choose a suitable language which is appropriate to the addressee, topic or location when communicating. These factors are known as domains of language use.

There are many factors which influence language choice, and may work either with or against each other, producing a complex web of interactions which makes the task of describing any language choice event extremely difficult. In the sociolinguistic context, the concept of language use is usually associated with language choice. According to Romaine (2003), language users switch among languages or varieties, the choices are not organised in the same way all the time. Thus, the choice of languages or varieties in a community shows the speakers' "acts of identity", which means they choose the group they wish to identify with (Romaine, 2003, p. 36).

In Malaysia, Chinese adolescents' linguistic repertoire consists of Mandarin, English and the standard form of Malay they learn in school, as well as their own ethnic languages. They use Mandarin or their own ethnic language with Chinese friends while Malay or English with friends belonging to other ethnicity. According to David (2001), their linguistic and communicative choices are very unique and complex due to the variety of languages and dialects within each ethnic group. In this country, it is usual that speakers of a specific ethnic community know and use another language better than they do their own ethnic language (David, 2001). There are children who don't know how to speak their own ethnic language or have not much knowledge of their ethnic language. There are also children whose first language is English. According to Asmah, English is the first language (L1) of about 1% of the population in Malaysia (Asmah, 2003, p. 100).

Based on the assumption that language use and attitudes of adolescents provide both social and linguistic information, this study wishes to provide a greater understanding of the social and linguistic behaviour of Chinese adolescents in Miri.

### **2.3 Domains of Language Use**

Schmidt Rohr used the concept of domain for the first time in his study about German and it was later expanded by Fishman. Fishman (1964) proposed the concept of domain as one way of looking at language use (Fishman, 1972). Fishman suggested that these domains are a useful theoretical tool for analysing minority speakers' attitudes and behaviour towards languages. They also determined speakers' choice and usage of languages. Domains are interactional situations where the use of a specific language is deemed appropriate. These domains for example can be family, friendship, education and employment.

Fasold (1984) later concluded that domains are environmental systems “in which one language variety is more likely to be appropriate than another.” A domain is a general concept that describes three important social factors in the choice of a language. By using information about the domains of language use in the community, we can probably get a very simple model of the norms of the language community. Factors such as location, topic, and respondents constitute a domain. The analysis of different domains, for instance family, friendship, market, school, neighbourhood, work, government, and religion is related to language environment. A domain involves typical interactions between typical respondents in typical settings (Holmes, 2013).

Fasold (1990) suggested that multilingualism serves as an interactional resource for the multilingual speaker. This means that one particular language may normally be used at home or with close friends, whereas another language may be used for commerce and trade, and even another extra language for dealing with government agencies.

Previous researches used a number of domain to study the usage of language in different communities. The family domain applied consistently in all the studies, while other domains were applied in other studies (David, 1996). Previous studies demonstrated that language used in the family domain is the stronghold for language retention. According to Dorian (1981), as cited in Baker (2011), the home is the last bastion of a subordinate language in competition with a dominant official language of wider currency (Baker, 2011, p. 77). Thus, the most basic domain is the family domain (Fasold, 1984).

Languages or varieties used in a speech community are always determined by certain social factors such as who you are speaking to (the addressee), the social context of the conversation (setting), and the function or what the conversation is about (topic). For example, in a family domain, when a mother speaks to her daughter about what to cook

for dinner at home, they would most probably use a dialect. However, the situation may vary when a daughter is talking to her mother about a boy she admires in school. She might choose to use Mandarin instead. This showed that the topic of the conversation also plays a role in the usage of language.

Domain is clearly a very general concept that determines language choice, which is in turn determined by the addressees (social distance), settings and the topic of the conversation. It is a useful concept for drawing general language patterns in a speech community (Holmes, 2013). Spolsky (1998) argued that the elements of typical domains such as place, role-relationship and topic are used to classify social situations.

According to Romaine (1994), a domain is an abstraction which refers to a sphere of activity representing a combination of specific times, settings and role relationships. Romaine (1995) believed that there are factors such as economy, administration, culture, politic, and religion within each domain which influence the bilingual language users to choose to speak in one language rather than the other.

Language retention and language shift are unbalanced across multiple domains. Therefore, an analysis of the domains of language use helps to organise and explain the awareness of speakers regarding the patterns of language use. Fishman rejected the notion that all communities have a fixed number of domains in the selection of languages. The study of the number of domains and domain types for a particular community is highly dependent on the nature of the groups studied and their relationship with society (David, 1996).

## 2.4 Language attitudes

The literature on language attitudes is extensive. Attitudes can be viewed either from a mentalist point of view, or behaviorist point of view. There are three components in the mentalist view: cognitive, affective and conative. The knowledge and perceptions of an individual is the cognitive; the emotional reactions and feeling is the affective; while the behavioral intentions and actions is the conative. On the other hand, the behaviorist view defines attitudes as the responses people make to social situations (Lambart, 1967).

With respects to language attitudes, Asmah (2003) wrote that “a primary language in an individual’s repertoire means that he has a high preference for that language and he is comfortable using it because he is more skilled in it” (Asmah, 2003, p. 150). An individual’s language attitudes are influenced by their educational background which includes the ability to master their first language (L1) or mother tongue. A person with a high ability in their mother tongue will speak in their mother tongue during their conversations with others, who are in the same background. On the other hand, a person who does not master their mother tongue, will certainly not be confident to use their mother tongue to communicate with others, who are in the same background too.

Betancourt (1976), as cited in Hoh (2011), also stated that language attitudes are related to education as shown in his study “*Language attitudes and Language Education in Arecibo, Puerto Rico*” and his definition of language attitudes is:

“... attitudes towards a language are inclusive not only of attitudes toward language variation but also toward the culture in which the language variation is embedded, and toward the speaker. These attitudes are inculcated in early childhood by social conditions and later reinforced by education, giving attitudes an enduring nature in the people and locale.”

(Betancourt 1976)

However, Fasold (1984) was of the view that “attitudes towards language are often the reflection of attitudes towards members of various ethnic groups” (Fasold, 1984, p. 148). A person’s language attitudes also bring about their feelings or judgements towards their ethnic group, which the ethnic group who speaks the same language. In short, there is a close relationship between language attitudes and attitudes towards an ethnic group. Crystal defined language attitudes as “the feelings people have about their own language or the language of others” (Crystal, 1997, p. 215).

Sadanand (1993) stated that "attitudes towards the use of different languages are motivated by people's perception of the role of each language and the functions it performs in relation to each other" in his study “*Assessing attitudes to English and language use*” (Sadanand, 1993, p. 138).

People classify different languages or varieties as elegant, expressive, vulgar, musical, polite, impolite, pleasing or unpleasing (Holmes, 2008). This categorisation has influenced users' attitudes towards language because it reflects their identity and represents their social status. As a result, people develop either a positive or negative attitude to other languages based on community judgment. A language becomes appealing to the speakers who have positive attitude towards it and prefer it in most interactions.

Based on socio-linguistic aspects, a person with positive judgements towards a language usually demonstrates loyalty towards the language. In addition, this person is more likely to use a particular language in various domains. This situation can be explained as language users make an effort to maintain their mother tongue and to prevent their ethnic identity from being marginalised over time especially in a multilingual country.



Pillai (2006) stated that dominant languages can be used in formal and informal domains of communication and help to gain prestige, better economic access in the community, authority and power (Pillai, 2006).

Ferrer and Sankoff (2004) discovered that the language preference of a speaker is influenced by dominant languages. Thus, bilinguals and multilinguals may choose to use a dominant language as a medium of communication due to its economic benefits, social networks expansion, greater advantages to get a better job or a better salary offer, and better opportunities to get a chance for promotions for them. The functions and the broader acceptance of the language prompt to the use of a dominant language. In summary, the favoured language of communication in a speech community is usually the most prestigious language due to its wider social functions.

## **2.5 Review of Empirical Studies**

Fishman (1972) posited that a speech community is sensitive to the domains in which these conversations take place. A team of sociolinguists conducted research on language use in a Puerto Rican community in New York City, to find out whether Spanish or English were used in different domains. They observed and interviewed the respondents in five domains, which are: family, friendship, employment, religion, and education. They revealed that the mentioned domains are the focal areas that determine the choice of languages used within the community (Romaine, 2003).

Peter Trudgill (1983) performed a study of language use and attitudes towards Arvanitika (Albanian) in Greece. Arvanitika is the language of a minority community of Arvanites. He found the younger informants had negative attitudes towards the Arvanitika language as compared to older informants. Trudgill's study showed that the age of the

language user plays the main role in the choice of a language. Besides, the study also reported that Arvanitika does not form part of the Arvanite identity.

Srinarawat (1988) investigated the language use and attitudes towards Chinese of 319 Teochew peoples (sub-group of Chinese ethnicity) in Bangkok in the study "*Language use of the Chinese in Bangkok*". The findings showed that most of the respondents are able to use Thai and Teochew, but only speak Teochew with their elder parents and relatives. The factor of language use is determined by "who" you speak to. Conversely, most of the respondents use Thai when communicating with their spouses, siblings, colleagues, younger relatives, children and helpers as they are from the same level of social economy status or lower. To summarise, in the family domain, Teochew is the primary language used by the Chinese in Bangkok. They choose to use Thai when they are outside the house. The findings also showed that the Thai born Chinese have positive attitudes towards Thai, they think Thai is an important language and is much more needed in Thailand.

Young (2010) measured the extent of language maintenance of Chinese ethnic dialects and the shift toward the use of Mandarin. In his study on "*Language maintenance and language shift in Taiwan*", a total of 823 Chinese in Taiwan were involved in the survey to describe their language use and attitudes towards Mandarin and Chinese ethnic dialects which are their mother tongue. The results indicated positive attitudes towards Chinese ethnic dialects, and substantial shifts towards the use of Mandarin. There was a significant decrease in the use of one's ethnic language and a significant increase in the use of Mandarin with family members in the succeeding generations. There was considerable shift toward Mandarin at work and with friends because Mandarin is often used as a common language in inter-ethnic (between the sub-groups of Chinese ethnicity) communicative interactions.

Previous studies reported that minority ethnic languages have shifted away to a dominant language due to various factors related to the changes and progress of the entire community (Trudgill, 1983; Srinarawat, 1988; Young, 2010). The areas of their ethnic language use shrank down to the family domain with the elderly in the family only.

The Chinese communities are facing social changes and cultural encounters in a multiethnic, multicultural and multilingual country like Malaysia. Low, Howard and Wales (2010) conducted a study on 100 mothers from middle to upper-middle socio-economic backgrounds in the Penang Chinese community. The purpose of the study was to investigate the language they speak at home with their children. The findings indicated that Mandarin and English are the main interaction languages with their children at home. The findings revealed that the Chinese ethnic languages in Malaysia have also already moved away towards the dominant language.

A study regarding attitudes and language based in Singapore was conducted by Wee (1990) where the respondents were from families using either Mandarin or English. The findings showed that people from Mandarin speaking families had positive attitudes towards Mandarin, they preferred to use Mandarin in order to maintain their ethnic identity. However, those from English speaking family had negative attitudes towards the usage of Mandarin. This study revealed that factors such as education background and first language (L1) or mother tongue affected language attitudes as well as language use.

Kong (1999) conducted a study in Kampung Sungai Durin, Sibul in Sarawak, to investigate the language choice among fifteen Chinese hawkers. Kong revealed a few factors that influenced language choice among the hawkers, such as familiarity and spontaneity, customers' mother tongue, dealer and supplier, language status, personal language background, personal relationships between hawkers and customers as well as physical appearance of customers. However, Kong's findings showed that the role of

Mandarin as lingua franca among the Chinese is the main factor that encourages the Chinese hawkers to choose to speak Mandarin during their conversation with customers. The respondents of the study considered Mandarin an important language among members of the Chinese community in Malaysia as Mandarin constituting the identity of the Chinese people in the country.

Wee (1990) and Kong (1999) reported that an individual first language or mother tongue is the main factor that affects language use. an individual's first language is related to their family language and educational background.

Ang (2009) studied language use among Malaysian Chinese in Kuala Lumpur within their social context. The respondents of his study consisted of 510 Chinese with half of them at the age of 50 and above while the rest of them were below 50 years old. The respondents were required to choose the language used according to the specific addressees. There were three types of addressee in the study: friends, colleagues and strangers, whom these respondents always encounter. The data was collected through a survey questionnaire.

The findings showed the respondents overall used Mandarin the most. The younger generations use Mandarin most frequently among the various types of codes, followed by English. The use of their own ethnic language is much less common compared to Mandarin and English. The elderly used their own ethnic languages with their friends, even though the use of Mandarin increases when they spoke to their Chinese colleagues and strangers of Chinese ethnicity.

Ang also stated that the usage of Chinese ethnic languages is decreasing from one generation to another. Ethnic languages such as Teochew and Hainan which have already lost their position in the communication within the Chinese community. The reasons are

these ethnic languages are at the lowest position among the Malaysian Chinese and their younger generations are unable to speak these languages. In short, Ang (2009) found that social distance is the main factor influencing language use; the younger generation had shifted away from their own ethnic language to a dominant language.

Wang (2007) surveyed the language choice among fourteen families across three generations in Johor with multi-fold methods, such as interviews, observation and questionnaires. The findings showed there are significant differences in language abilities and the usage of language between the three generations in a family. The language ability of Mandarin progressively increases from the older to the younger generations. The first generation, i.e. the grandparents, stated that their most used language was their own ethnic language (dialect), whereas the third generation, i.e. the children, stated that their most used language is Mandarin. However, the second generation, i.e. the fathers and mothers, were at moderate used both Mandarin and their ethnic language equally.

The language used among the three generations in the family domain reflected the same tendency, in which the first generation used their own ethnic language as the dominant language, while the third generation used Mandarin as the dominant language. The second generation used their own ethnic language in addition to Mandarin in the family domain. In the non-family domain, they used their own ethnic language in informal contexts while Mandarin was used in formal contexts.

When interacting among their friends, the first generation used their own ethnic language. There was a difference between the language used by the two genders in the second generation, whereby the fathers used their own ethnic language, while the mothers used Mandarin when communicating with friends. When the third generations were not sure about their sub-group of Chinese, they used Mandarin among friends.

Wang also surveyed the attitudes towards the usage of Mandarin and Chinese ethnic languages of the first and second generation. The third generation was not involved due to the fact they were too young at the time. The findings showed that the first generation had positive attitudes at a lower level towards Mandarin, the mothers of the second generations had positive attitudes towards Mandarin, while the fathers of the second generation showed moderate positive attitudes towards Mandarin.

To conclude, Wang (2007) found that individual language abilities determine language use. The use of language has changed from the older generation to the younger generation due to the changes and progress of the language environment.

In their study “Language choice among younger generation in Kuala Lumpur”, Chong and Wang (2009) used survey questionnaires to measure Secondary Four Chinese students’ language choice in 16 secondary schools around Kuala Lumpur. They applied six domains in the study which are family, school, restaurant, clinic, shopping center and government office.

The findings showed the Chinese students were not confident to speak their own ethnic languages. The researcher believed this was related to the Mandarin educational background of the respondents. The finding is similar to the previous research conducted by Wang (2007) and Young (2010) where the use of ethnic languages among family members is decreasing from their grandparents, parents to their children. However, the use of Mandarin was increasing.

Cantonese is not the biggest sub-ethnic group in Kuala Lumpur, but most of the respondents were able to speak the Cantonese dialect fluently. Thus, Cantonese was also most frequently used by the respondents in various domain, especially in informal domains. The frequency of use of English grows with the domain’s degree of formality.

This complied with the Domain Theory's assumption that the high variety is used in formal domains while the low varieties are used in informal domains.

Chong and Wang's (2009) research revealed that people's educational background had led to the gradual lost of their own ethnic language. The students who participated in this study use Mandarin and Cantonese in their daily conversation as these two languages are the dominant languages in Kuala Lumpur.

Koh (2008) studied the relationship of attitudes towards the usage of Mandarin within the Chinese community in Malaysia. The study was carried out in Kuala Lumpur and Selangor with survey questionnaires distributed to 120 respondents and sixteen of the respondents were also interviewed.

The study was based on the Domain Theory. The six domains used in the study were family, friendship, neighbourhood, religion, employment, government and purchase. The findings showed that Mandarin as the main language was used the most often in all the domains except government. This revealed that the Malaysian Chinese community had positive attitudes towards the use of Mandarin in generally. According to Koh, the use of Mandarin in the government domain is not common because Malay or English serving as official languages as being more suitable for formal discussion. Koh's (2008) study showed that formal and informal domains determine the choice of the languages used in Malaysia.

Coluzzi (2011) conducted a survey among 88 students from the University of Brunei Darussalam and the University of Malaya regarding language use and attitudes among university students. The students were asked to fill in a questionnaire in English including 23 questions on language use and attitudes. The findings showed that English is the main language used among the students, standard Malay hardly ever being used as it has lower

status than English in both countries. Malay and Chinese dialects are used on their own or in code-switching and mixing with English, Mandarin and/or Malay. These languages seem to be used less among the younger generation due to the English dominance of the education sector. More and more younger people are well educated and go on to higher education.

According to Coluzzi (2011), English is the dominant language among the younger educated generations, which is similar to the findings from Pillai's (2006). The dominant language can be used in formal and informal domains of communications.

Previous researches related to language use and attitudes among the Malaysian Chinese showed the Chinese ethnic languages facing deterioration in their position as well as usage due to the rivalry and great influence of other languages, especially Mandarin.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

As for Malaysian youths nowadays, they are free to use any language and variety, for instance, the standard language Malay or English or Mandarin, the informal variety of any of the languages or a mixed variety of all the languages. Students choose to use the language that they feel easy to understand and to express their feelings with. Therefore, Chinese adolescents prefer to use the language they are most familiar with in various domains. This study focuses on five selected domains: family, school, transactional, government department, and social media to explore language use and attitudes towards Mandarin, English, Malay and the ethnic languages.

This study selected five domains to explore the Chinese adolescents' language use in Miri, Sarawak. The five selected domains include formal domains and informal domains.



The only formal domain is the government department. The other informal domains are family, school, transactional and social media. The social media domain is a new domain due to the new technologies. Social media refers to the wide range of Internet-based and mobile services that allow users to participate in online exchanges, contribute user-created content, or join online communities. The kinds of internet services commonly associated with social media include blogs, wikis, social bookmarking, social network sites, status-update services, virtual world content and Media-sharing sites (Dewing, 2012). Social media domain in this study specifically refer to the usage of social network sites such as Facebook, WhatsApp and email which are currently welcome among the users of all ages in Malaysia.

Previous studies stated that the implementation of language policy in a country bring in a tremendous effect on language use and further determines language retention or language shift of a language whether or not in a community. In addition, attitudes and opinions of a person towards the value of a certain language also determine whether a language will be to preserved or die away.

This chapter included both the theoretical and empirical literature related to the study. It consisted of two sections: the former reviewed the theoretical framework of the chosen topic written by pioneer scholars in the field such as Fishman (1972 and 1994), and Fasold (1984); the latter briefly reviewed some related empirical studies that were conducted in Malaysia and in neighbouring countries. This review of literature has helped the researcher in designing the research instruments and understanding the topic from a wider perspective.

## **CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter provides some insights on the methodology used in this study. It gives information about the respondents and the selection of respondents. It also describes the instruments, their validity and reliability, data analysis, and concludes with the procedure used in the study.

This study employed several methods to obtain the prospective data. The main instrument was a questionnaire, followed by informal interviews and observations as complementary instruments. A questionnaire was employed to explore the language use in family, school, transactional, government department, and social media domains among the Chinese adolescents in Miri. This is because the questionnaires could be distributed to a relatively large number of respondents to make the collected data valid and reliable. The informal interview and observation method were used in conjunction with the questionnaire to minimize bias. Descriptive statistics was the main method used to analyse the data.

### **3.2 Respondents**

The respondents in this study were Secondary Four Chinese students, aged between 16 and 17 years old. These students are about to enter society and will be the leaders of society in the future (Oswalt, 2016). According to the rules and regulations of The Ministry of Education in Malaysia, research carried out in schools must not involve examination class students. Hence, the Secondary Five students were not part of this study.

The respondents were from the one and only Chinese conforming school in Miri. The Chinese conforming school is mainly attended by Chinese students, with more than 90% of total over two thousand students in the school being Chinese. The students are mostly from Chinese-medium primary schools and they attend five periods (200 minutes) a week to learn Mandarin, as stated in Chapter 1, Section 1.3.1. Mandarin is a compulsory subject for them to learn and sit for public examination. The school management uses both Malay and Mandarin as media of instruction.

The respondents in this study were arranged by the school management. They were 104 Secondary Four students from four different classes, two science classes and two art classes. All the four classes are the top classes in Secondary Four. Out of the 104 respondents, two were not Chinese, while another two did not complete the questionnaire. Therefore, the data analysis of this study only involved a total number of 100 respondents.

### **3.3 Research Instrument**

A questionnaire on language use and attitudes (see Appendix A) was used to collect the data for this study. The questionnaire comprised two parts: language use and language attitudes. The language use section was adapted from Chong and Wang's (2009) study on *Jilongpo Guozhong Huayi Xuesheng de Yuyan Xuanze* and adapted according to the five domains in this study (**Section 2.2**). The language attitudes section was adapted from Baker (1992), who examined the attitudes of students towards the use of English and Welsh in Wales (**Section 2.3**) (Baker, 1992).

The questionnaire comprised four sections. Section A was about personal details such as gender, previous primary school attended, parents' origin, parents' educational background, languages proficiency levels, and mother tongue or first language (L1). The

respondents were required to read and tick the chosen answer or to write down their answers.

Section B was about language use within the family, school, transactional, government department and social media domains. This section was to seek information on the language used in the five selected domains with different addressees of the domains. It employed a 5-point Likert scale ranging from never, seldom, sometimes, often, and always. Respondents had to write the numbers 1 to 5 in the corresponding boxes according to the difference in frequency of use. For example: Family domain.

		Mandarin	English	Malay	Ethnic language	Others (please specify)	
a.	Grandparents						
b.	Father						
c.	Mother						
d.	Siblings						
e.	Relatives						

To respond to this question, respondents were asked to choose the numbers as stated below:

Never (1)	Seldom (2)	Sometimes (3)	Often (4)	Always (5)
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\* If you use only one language, please indicate the language by writing (5) in the corresponding box.

Section C was about the beliefs and the affective dimension of the respondents' attitudes towards language use. The first item (Item no 13) was the overall opinion about all the languages and it comprised seven statements as shown below:

Please ✓ the description that fits you the most.

	Mandarin	English	Malay	Ethnic language
The language I like the most.				
The most friendly language.				
The language I use to express my thoughts proficiently and confidently.				
The language symbolizes my ethnic identity.				
The most prestigious language.				
The language shows me as high status.				
The most important language in future.				

The second item (Item no 14) consisted of 12 statements; 3 statements for each language. It also employs a 5-point Likert scale ranging from totally disagree, disagree, uncertain, agree and totally agree. For example:

*I love Mandarin.*

Totally Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

Section D consisted of open-ended questions on factors that influence one's language use. The same questions were also used for the interview to confirm the findings.

The questionnaire was presented in English, Mandarin, and Malay (**Appendix A, B and C**) in order to enhance comprehension and also to give the respondents a choice to pick a language to answer the questionnaire.

### 3.4 Research Procedures

In order to adhere to all ethical considerations and guidelines for conducting research with human subjects, the researcher had to submit an official written application along with all the necessary documentation regarding the nature and purposes of this study to the Education Planning and Research Division (*EPRD*), Ministry of Education Malaysia prior to the Sarawak State Service and Development Sector for seeking their approval to conduct this research. This research was approved on 14th July 2016 by *EPRD* with the reference number KPMSP.600-3/2/3Jld23(96) (**Appendix D**) and *JPN* Sarawak with the reference number JPS(W)/SK2P/(Lat)153/08/02/05/Jld.53(66) (**Appendix E**).

The researcher met the school principal personally and handed in the approval letter from the Ministry of Education Malaysia and the consent letter for the respondents' parents. In order to seek permission from parents for allowing the students to participate in this study, the school management sent the consent letter to all respondents' parents on behalf of the researcher. The consent letter also stated that the students' participation was completely voluntary, and their anonymity was protected.

Data was gathered via an adapted questionnaire and an informal group interview to discover the respondents' opinion towards their language use and their attitudes towards the usage of languages. The variables for language used were based on five chosen domains, and information was gathered on their attitudes towards the use of Mandarin, English, Malay and their ethnic languages. The five chosen domains included formal and informal domains; the informal domains are family, school, transactional, and social media, while the only formal domain is the government department. These domains were chosen based on the Chinese adolescents' general daily activities. The adolescents' daily lives are simple, most activities and communication occur in the informal domain, such as family, school, and transactional domains. While in the formal domain - the

government department: these Chinese adolescents do communicate with the clerks in the registration department to apply for an identity card or the ones in the immigration department to apply for an international passport. Another informal domain chosen was the social media domain. They often use social media for entertainment purposes, besides searching information on the internet. Fishman rejected the notion that all communities have a fixed number of domains in the selection of languages. The number of domains and domain types being studied for a particular community is highly dependent on the nature of the groups studied and their relationship with society (David, 1996, p. 130).

#### **3.4.1 Pilot Study**

In order to test the internal reliability of the questionnaire, a pilot study on fifteen (15) Secondary Four students were conducted in the same school on the first week of August in 2016. The data was then processed using SPSS Version 22, to test the internal consistency approach with Cronbach's alpha. Cronbach's alpha is a measure of internal consistency, that is, how closely related a set of items are as a group. Many researchers reported that any value of Cronbach's alpha between 0.6 and 0.9 is acceptable (Cresswell, 2012). The Cronbach's alpha value obtained in this study was 0.889. This suggests that the items have relatively high internal consistency as a reliability coefficient of 0.70 or higher is considered "acceptable" in most social science research situations (Chua, 2006).

Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient normally ranges between 0 and 1. However, there is actually no lower limit to the coefficient. The closer Cronbach's alpha coefficient is to 1.0 the greater the internal consistency of the items in the scale. According to Chua (2006), a Cronbach's alpha value between 0.65 to 0.95 is considered satisfactory as the lower value demonstrates the ability of the instrument to measure that the concept in the study is not too low, while the higher value demonstrates that the items in the

questionnaire are similar or there are overlaps among them, which is not appropriate for statistical reliability of the instrument (Chua, 2006).

George and Mallery (2014) demonstrated the following rules of thumb: “ $\alpha > 0.9$  – Excellent,  $\alpha > 0.8$  – Good,  $\alpha > 0.7$  – Acceptable,  $\alpha > 0.6$  – Questionable,  $\alpha > 0.5$  – Poor, and  $\alpha < 0.5$  – Unacceptable” (p. 231). The increasing number of the alpha value is partially dependent upon the number of items in the scale, but it should be noted that this has diminishing returns. An alpha of 0.8 is probably a reasonable goal. A high value for Cronbach’s alpha indicates good internal consistency of the items in the scale. Cronbach’s alpha is a test reliability technique that requires only a single test administration to provide a unique estimate of the reliability for a given test (George & Mallery, 2014).

### **3.4.2 Data Collection**

The researcher administered the questionnaire on the third and fourth week of August 2016. The questionnaires were distributed to the students in their classrooms. The respondents had an hour to fill in their responses and answer the questionnaire on the spot. The completed questionnaires were collected immediately.

An informal group interview was conducted by the researcher after the respondents had submitted their questionnaires. The interviewees were randomly selected from voluntary students who were willing to provide more information about their language preferences and their reasons for their choice of language as well as their attitudes towards languages.

The group interview was conducted with four to five students in each classroom as not all the respondents who filled up the questionnaire were willing to go through the interview session. The interview session was carried out in an informal setting in the



classroom. The interview began with basic information and then the respondents were directed towards the issues regarding their language use and attitudes towards the usage of languages. All the information was recorded in written form. The respondents were able to provide enough information as all the questions were related to their language use and attitudes towards the languages mentioned. The information supported their personal experiences and examples.

The interviews were not recorded because it was found that the respondents were more comfortable in answering the questions freely than when an audio recorder was used. The interview complemented the questionnaire and the goal of data collection was achieved.

The language used among students in school was observed even before the actual study, that is during the pilot study. Observation was done during the administration of the questionnaire, and also during the interview sessions. The researcher spent two weeks in August 2016 observing students and noting down their verbal exchanges in the school compound during school hours. The verbal conversation among the students at various locations like the school fields, along the corridor, at the school canteen and at the students' activities hall were observed and field notes were taken by the researcher. The notes from the observation were used to cross-validate the findings that emerged from the other sources of information. All the information obtained from the observations was recorded in written form.

The main reason for employing a few methods to collect data was to gather information from different sources in order to validate the findings of the study. It is better to cross-validate findings and conclusions that emerge from the analysis of the raw data by using different sources of information.

### **3.5 Data Analysis**

The researcher collected the raw data from the respondents through a sociolinguistic questionnaire. The data was analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Science (*SPSS*) Version 22 for descriptive statistics.

The data was analysed in terms of frequencies, percentages and average values (means). A frequency counts on the demographic profile of the respondents, and their language attitudes towards the usage of languages were recorded. Average values were applied to obtain the value of each domain in order to calculate language use in the five selected domains.

All the results were presented in either tables or figures. Each table and figure describes a certain topic, with a title and number and were accompanied by comments and a description of the higher and lower rates. The results of the languages used in five selected domains were presented in terms of means, while the results on language attitudes towards the usage of languages were presented in terms of frequencies and percentages.

The four informal group interview transcripts and observation notes were manually categorised, grouped, and coded to consolidate the basic arguments. The researcher interpreted the data obtained and highlighted their consistency with the previous related studies.

## CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study. The respondents' demographic profile was presented before the data analysis. The data analysis is divided into three separate sections according to (i) the language used in different domains, (ii) the adolescents' attitudes towards the usage of languages and (iii) the factors affecting the languages used. Each section will be followed by an analysis of the findings and discussions.

The analysis and discussions for the language used in different domains is based on the mean value of a particular domain on all the responses, and presented in a figure format. The second section about attitudes towards the usage of languages is based on the frequency count or percentage on all the responses, and presented in a figure format. The analysis and discussion of the third section about the factors affecting the language used is based on the combination of the languages used in different domains, and attitudes towards the usage of languages, as well as on the interview and observation notes. The research questions include:

1. What are the languages used in the family, school, transactional, government department and social media domains among the Chinese adolescents in Miri, Sarawak?
2. What are the attitudes of Chinese adolescents towards the usage of Mandarin, English, Malay and their own ethnic languages in Miri, Sarawak?
3. What are the factors affecting the Chinese adolescents' language use in Miri, Sarawak?

## 4.2 Respondents' Demographic Profile

A total of 100 respondents, 41 boys and 59 girls participated in the study. According to Chinese historical study, the Chinese follow a patriarchal society tradition where the children's ethnic background is follow the father. Is therefore, the study discusses the respondents' ethnic background by referring to their father's ethnic background.

**Table 4.1:** The ethnic background of the respondents' parents.

Origin	Father's ancestor origin		Mother's ancestor origin	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Cantonese	6	6.0	6	6.0
Hokkien	10	10.0	9	9.0
Hakka	29	29.0	24	24.0
Teochew	8	8.0	7	7.0
Foochow	34	34.0	40	40.0
Hainan	3	3.0	4	4.0
Not sure	3	3.0	4	4.0
Others	7	7.0	6	6.0
Total	100	100.0	100	100.0

The ethnic background of the respondents (**Table 4.1**) were mostly Foochow (34%), followed by Hakka (29%). Besides, there were other ethnic groups, such as Cantonese, Hokkien, Teochew, and Hainan. From the feedback of the respondents, those was "Not sure" about their parents' ethnicity didn't know mainly because their parents did not tell them about their ethnic origin; they only identified themselves as Chinese. As these families are not using their own ethnic languages at all, the respondents know that they are of Chinese ethnicity without knowing their actual sub-group of ethnicity.

Furthermore, those who emphasised their father or mother's ancestor origin as "Others" are those from the mixed marriages. Their father or mother is from the second generation of a mixed marriages and they have a Chinese surname, but do not speak their own ethnic languages. The Chinese family name is passed from father to children.

Interestingly, there are respondents from mixed marriages, and in most cases the intermarriage cases are between a Chinese and a member of the various indigenous ethnic group of Sarawak, such as Iban, Bidayuh and Dayak. Generally, these respondents use English most frequently in their daily conversations.

**Table 4.2:** The type of primary school attended by the respondents.

Type	Frequency
Chinese-medium	97
National	2
Private	1
Total	100

The majority of the respondents (97%) attended Chinese-medium primary schools (**Table 4.2**). It can be concluded that they had learned Mandarin through formal education in school for 6 years before enter secondary school. At the time the data was collected, 10 years of regular Mandarin learning through formal lesson had been gone through by those who continue to learn Mandarin at secondary school level.

**Table 4.3:** Mother tongue for the respondents.

Mother Tongue	Frequency	%
Mandarin	80	80.0
English	10	10.0
Malay	0	0.0
Own Ethnic Language	10	10.0
Total	100	100.0

A person's first language (L1) is also known as their mother tongue. In this study, 80% of the respondents' mother tongue was Mandarin, this corresponds to Ang Lay Hoon's study on 285 families in Kuala Lumpur in 2010. Ang found that the Chinese families in Kuala Lumpur are already moving away slowly from the dialects of their origin and heading towards Mandarin and English (Ang, 2010). The mother tongue of the respondents is mainly Mandarin (**Table 4.3**). On the other hand, i.e. 10% of the cases the respondents' mother tongue was English and the other 10% of the respondents had their own ethnic languages as mother tongue.

Although only 10% of the respondents have English as their mother tongue, it is possible that these families have shifted away from Mandarin and their own ethnic languages in the past. This means that these families may have already replaced Mandarin and their own ethnic languages with English.

**Table 4.4:** Respondents' perception of language proficiency.

Language Proficiency	Frequency (%)			
	Mandarin	English	Malay	Ethnic Language
Excellent	18.0	10.0	6.0	5.0
Good	57.0	31.0	22.0	18.0
Average	21.0	51.0	57.0	41.0
Poor	4.0	8.0	15.0	36.0
Total	100	100	100	100

Most of the respondents believed that their proficiency of Mandarin was better than other languages, although only 18% of them put their level of Mandarin as excellent (**Table 4.4**). In contrast, they evaluated their ethnic language as the poorest, with 36% of them rating themselves “Poor” at speaking their ethnic language.

According to the respondents, they assess their language proficiency based on their examination results. This revealed that most of the respondents pass with an average mark or grade for English (51%) and Malay (57%) subjects, while get the better grades in Mandarin as 57% of them rated themselves as “Good” in Mandarin.

41% of the respondents rated themselves as “Average” in their own ethnic languages while 36% rated themselves as “Poor”. According to some of the respondents, they knew only a few words or phrases in their own ethnic languages. They could not understand a conversation most of the time when their grandparents or relatives communicating in their ethnic language.

**Table 4.5:** Education level for the Respondents' Parents.

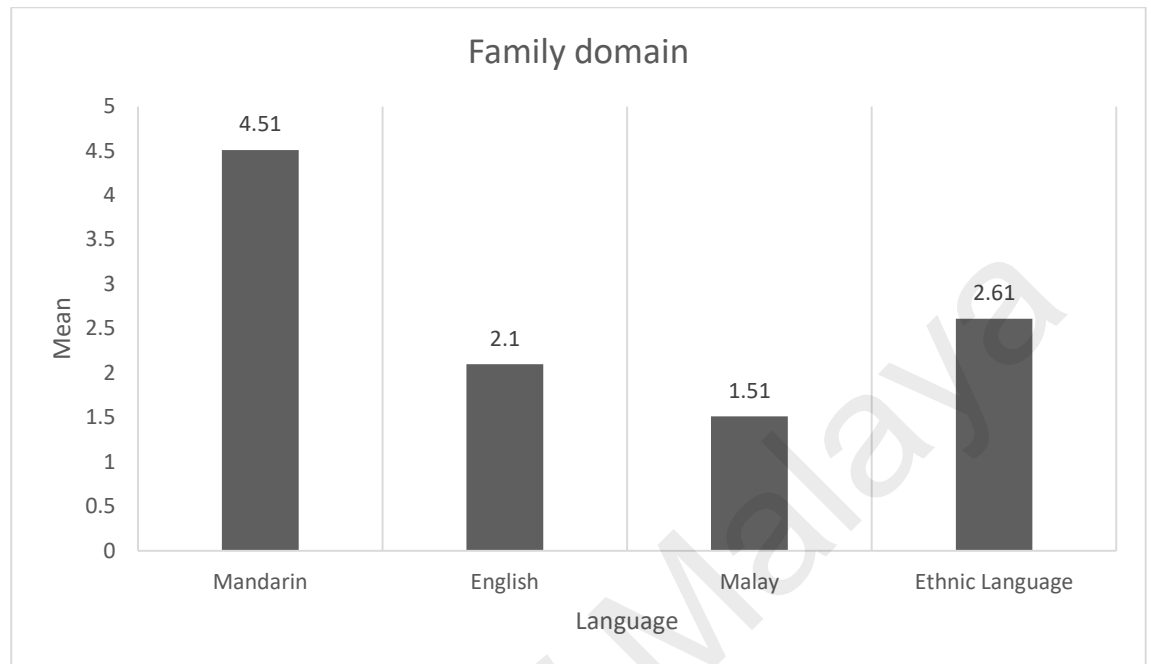
Level	School Type	Father's		Mother's	
		Frequency	Percentage %	Frequency	Percentage %
Primary	Chinese-medium	72	100	68	100
	National	24		29	
	Private	4		3	
Secondary	Chinese Conforming	32	100	26	100
	Chinese Independent	8		6	
	National	52		62	
	Private	8		6	
Higher Education	National	9	29	17	25
	Local Private	6		4	
	Overseas	14		4	
	Not Attend	71	71	75	75

The education level of all the respondents' parents was at least at the secondary school level. The majority of them studied in Chinese-medium primary schools and continued their studies at National secondary schools (Please refer to Section 1.3.1 for more information on National schools). Among the 100 respondents, only 29% of the respondents' fathers and 25% of the respondents' mothers obtained education at higher education level.



### 4.3 Language used in five selected domains

#### 4.3.1 Family Domain



**Figure 4.1:** Languages used in the family domain

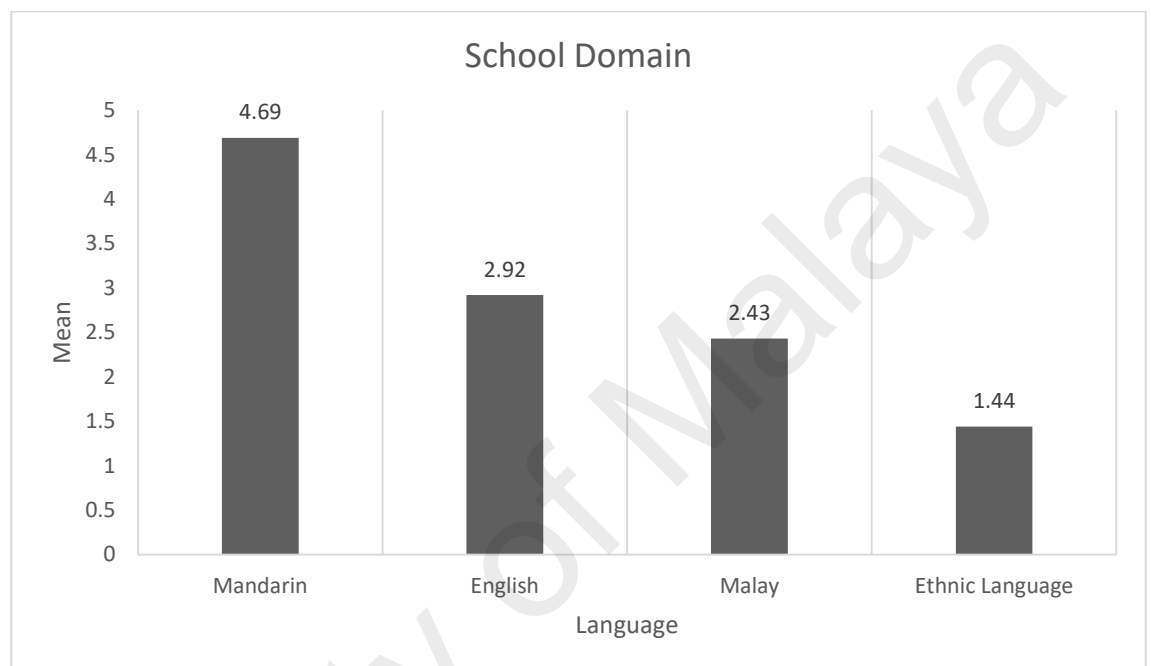
Most of the respondents used Mandarin (mean value = 4.51) with their family members (**Figure 4.1**). The respondents spoke their own ethnic language mostly to their grandparents and elder relatives. Some of the respondents used English with their siblings and parents. A few of the respondents used Malay (mean value = 1.51) with their mother and relatives of mother's origin family, especially those from mixed marriages.

The results showed that the respondents perceived the importance of Mandarin in the family domain as being linked to their first language (L1) or mother tongue as well as their identity which they are Chinese. When communicating with parents, siblings, grandparents and relatives, they mostly preferred Mandarin, followed by their ethnic language.

According to the interviewees, they use Mandarin with family members regardless of location and topic. They always code mix with English or Malay or their own ethnic

languages during their conversations, especially when using some specific terms or phrases.

#### 4.3.2 School Domain



**Figure 4.2:** Languages used in the school domain

It was found that the different levels of relationship did not affect the language used among the Chinese adolescents. The respondents are used Mandarin most frequently (4.69), followed by English (2.92) and Malay (2.43) in the school domain when communicating with close friends, classmates, and teachers.

The respondents used Mandarin most frequently in the school compound due to the ethnic population of the school. The school is populated by more than 90% of Chinese students and 40% of Chinese teaching staff. Most of the teaching staffs are not Chinese, but they are able to understand communicative Mandarin and communicate with students

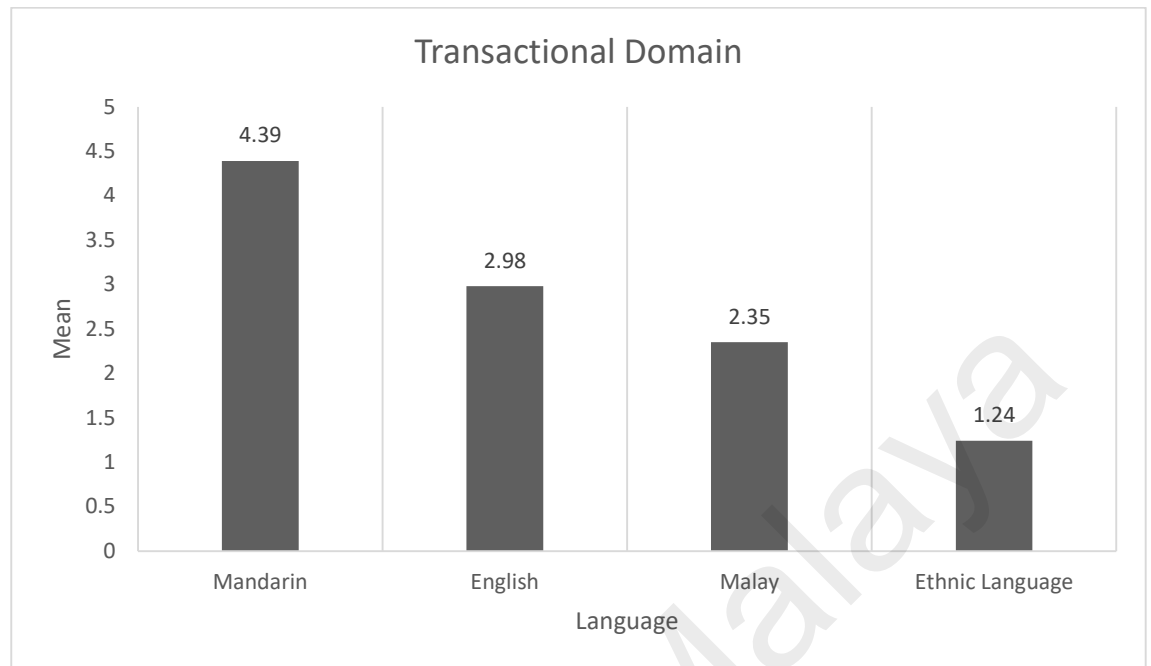
in Mandarin. They code mix with some Malay and English terms or phrase in their conversations.

The school follows the unified education system of Malaysia, with Malay serving as the medium of instruction. In 2016, the Education Ministry have implemented the Dual Language Programme (DLP), giving students the opportunity to use either English or Malay in Science, Mathematics, Information Technology and Communication, and Design and Technology (Azymie, 2016). The school has chosen to use English as language of instruction for Science and Mathematics under the Dual Language Programme.

According to the interviewees, they used Mandarin to either Chinese school mates or teachers. However, if the addressee cannot speak Mandarin, they shift to English, then Malay. Respondents preferred to use English when speaking to people of other ethnicity. Interestingly, it is common that the respondents code mix in their conversations. For example, when they are speaking in Mandarin, they mix it with English or Malay terms or phrases; when they speak English, they will also mix it with Mandarin and Malay terms or phrases. During the informal interview, the respondents added that they used the standard form of Mandarin, English or Malay when they are in the formal classroom or during the oral assessment.

Throughout the observation in this study, the students in the school communicated in Mandarin and English during recess time, in the canteen as well as in the corridor or while playing games.

### 4.3.3 Transactional Domain



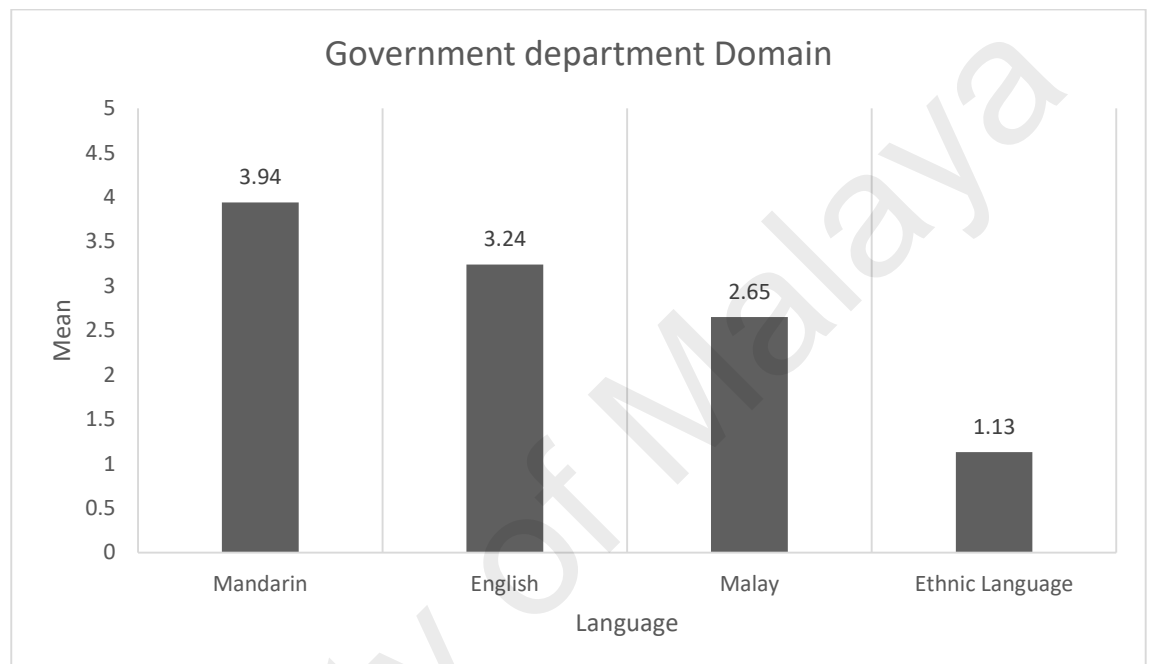
**Figure 4.3:** Languages used in the transactional domain

In the transactional domain, when the respondents speak to hawkers in the wet market, shopkeepers in the sundry shop or supermarket, waiters in the restaurant, bank officers, and librarians, they prefer to speak Mandarin. Instead of using their ethnic languages, the respondents preferred to use Mandarin when they speak with people of Chinese ethnicity (**Figure 4.3**). The mean value in the above figure indicates that there is a great difference in the use of Mandarin (4.39) compared to the use of their own ethnic language (1.24). When they speak to people of other ethnicities, the respondents choose to speak in English (2.98) and Malay (2.35).

The interviewees disclosed that they spoke Mandarin when the addressee looks Chinese. If the addressee “shakes his head”, which means the addressee cannot understand or cannot speak Mandarin, then the respondents shift to speak English, then only Malay. According to them, it was not easy to tell from the face the other person’s ethnicity, as there are indigenous ethnic groups in Sarawak such as Orang Ulu and

Bidayuh who look like Chinese and vice versa. In order to avoid the awkward situations, some interviewees prefer to wait for the other person to start the conversation.

#### 4.3.4 Government department Domain



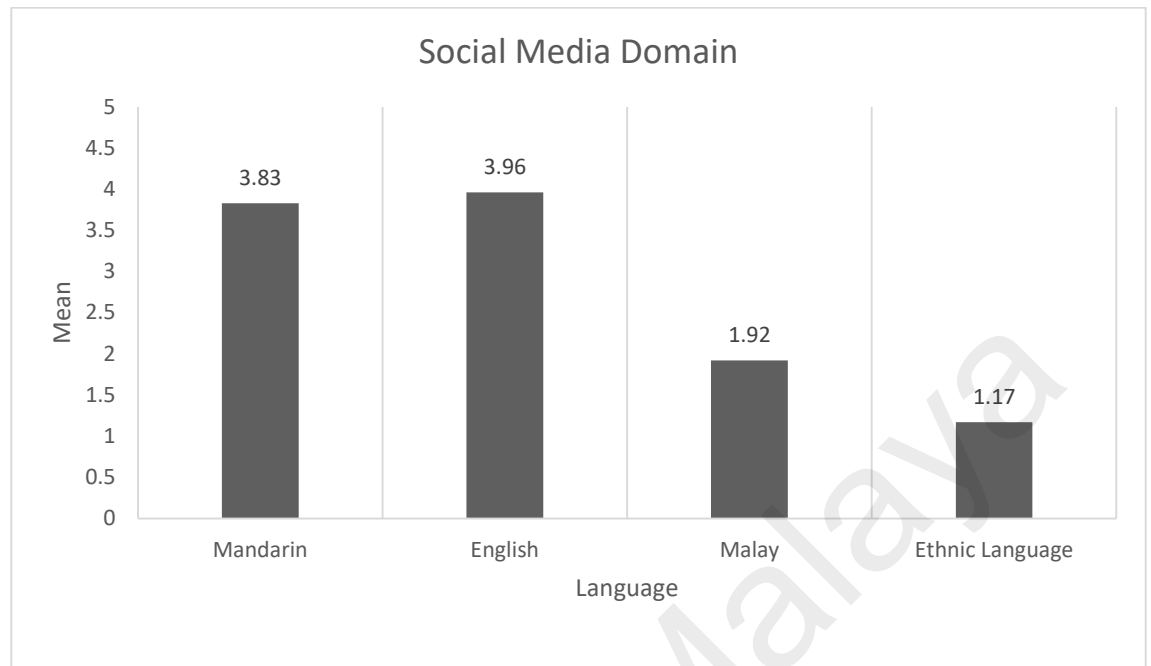
**Figure 4.4:** Languages used in the government department domain

The government department domain is a formal domain. All the respondents assume using Malay during the application for an identity card or a passport in the government offices as Malay is the national language. However, the respondents preferred to use Mandarin, followed by English, then by Malay. According to the interviewees, they spoke Mandarin to anyone that look like Chinese and only shift to use English when Mandarin was not understood in the conversation. They chose to use the most comfortable and confident language regardless of the location and topic. The use of Mandarin (3.94) was slightly higher than English (3.24) (**Figure 4.4**), and the use of Malay achieved 2.65 which was much lower than English. The current political situation in Sarawak may play a role in influencing the language use in government departments.

Sarawak consists of six major ethnic groups including Iban, Chinese, Malay, Bidayuh, Melanau, and Orang Ulu. The composition of population is 24.2% Chinese, 24.4% Malay and 50.5% are the indigenous ethnic groups (State statistics: Malays edge past Chinese in Sarawak, 2014). The Malay people speak Sarawakian Malay rather than standard Malay. Sarawakian Malay is the most common language among Sarawak Malays and other indigenous tribes. Most of the indigenous ethnic groups speak fluently in English as they are Christians. According to the interviewees, most of the officers in the government departments speak English to them during their conversations.

In Sarawak, English has actually been used in many important areas of administration despite Malay being the official language, as English is still used in the courts, state legislative assembly, and certain government agencies in Sarawak (Tawie, 2015). In addition, Chief Minister Tan Sri Adenan Satem announced in year 2015 the state's re-adoption of English as an official language alongside with Malay.

#### 4.3.5 Social Media Domain



**Figure 4.5:** Languages used in the social media domain

Nowadays, social media play an important role in influencing people's lifestyle, and enable them to have e-interaction, e-collaboration and e-discussion. In this era of technology, people like to "text" others rather than to actually "speak" to them. Therefore, it is crucial to investigate the written form of language use in social media.

The respondents preferred to use English (3.96) when chatting online or leaving their comments on their Facebook (**Figure 4.5**). The usage of Mandarin (3.83) is slightly lower than English. Less respondents used Malay (1.92) and their own ethnic languages (1.17) on social network.

According to the respondents, they faced problems typing in Mandarin using communication devices such as computers and smartphones. This is the only reason why they opt to use English in the social media domain. Interestingly, the respondents somehow used "phonetic alphabets" to replace the Mandarin characters during conversations through the communication devices.

#### 4.4 Attitudes towards the usage of languages

**Table 4.6:** Attitudes towards the usage of Mandarin, English, Malay and their own ethnic language on the part of Chinese adolescents in Miri, Sarawak

Statements	Percentage %			
	Mandarin	English	Malay	Ethnic Language
The language I like the most.	65	27	0	8
The most friendly language.	65	15	0	20
The language I use to express my thoughts proficiently and confidently.	84	16	0	0
The language that symbolizes my ethnic identity	75	0	0	25
The most prestigious language.	44	56	0	0
The language that shows me as high status.	40	52	0	8
The most important language in future.	26	73	1	0

The findings indicated that the Chinese adolescents in Miri perceived Mandarin with the strongest positive attitudes as Mandarin is the most favourable language among all the languages, followed by English (**Table 4.6**). Mandarin achieved the highest percentage among four out of seven statements and another three statements for English.

Mandarin is the most favourite language with 65%, followed by English (27%) and the ethnic language (8%). Mandarin (65%) is the friendliest language, followed by their ethnic language (20%) and English (15%). The respondents believed that by using Mandarin they can express their thoughts proficiently and confidently. Most of the Chinese adolescents in the study feel that Mandarin is the language that symbolises their ethnic identity (75%), followed by their own ethnic language (25%).

The respondents considered English as the most prestigious language (56%), followed by Mandarin (44%). English enjoys the highest status (52%), followed by Mandarin (40%). 8% of the respondents choose their ethnic language as the highest status language. The respondents rated English as the most important language in future (73%), followed by Mandarin (26%) and Malay (1%).

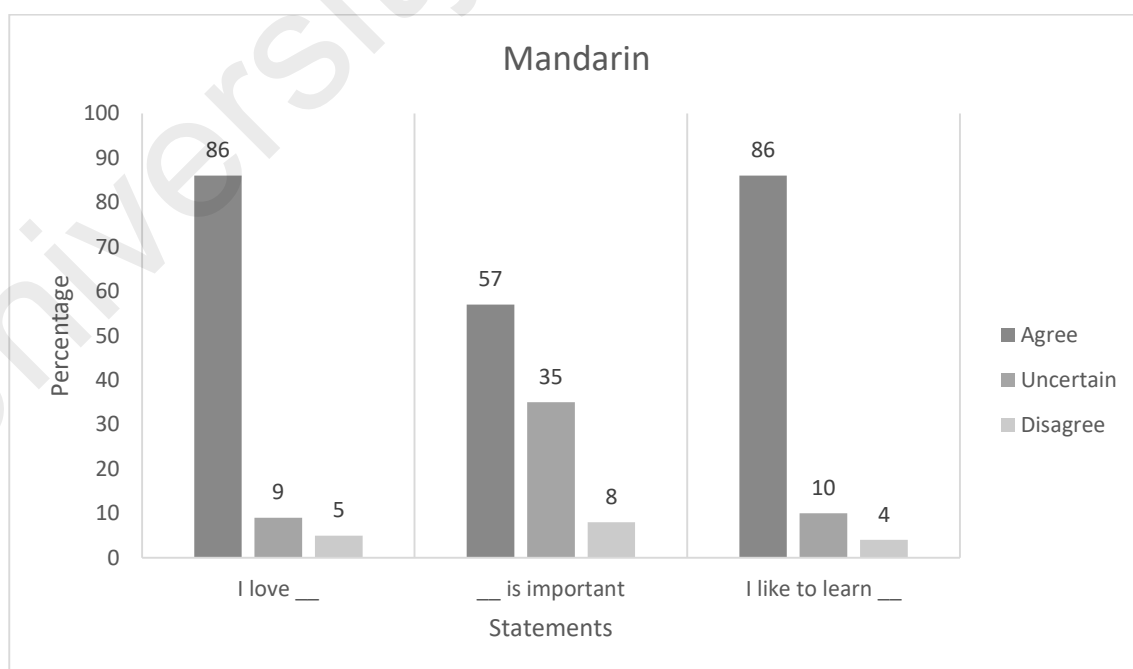


In this study, the respondents have mixed feelings towards their own ethnic language, although some of them (25%) feel that it “symbolises their ethnic identity” and some others (20%) feel that it is the “friendliest language”, but it didn’t reflect in the most liked language, which was not their ethnic language (8%).

In contrast, their attitudes towards the usage of Malay were negative compared with the other languages. None of the respondents chose six out of the seven statements for most, and only one respondent chose Malay as “the most important language in the future”.

In short, attitudes towards language use play a significant role because language attitudes will influence one’s behaviour, and thus determine one’s language choice in a particular period and setting.

#### 4.4.1 Attitudes towards Mandarin

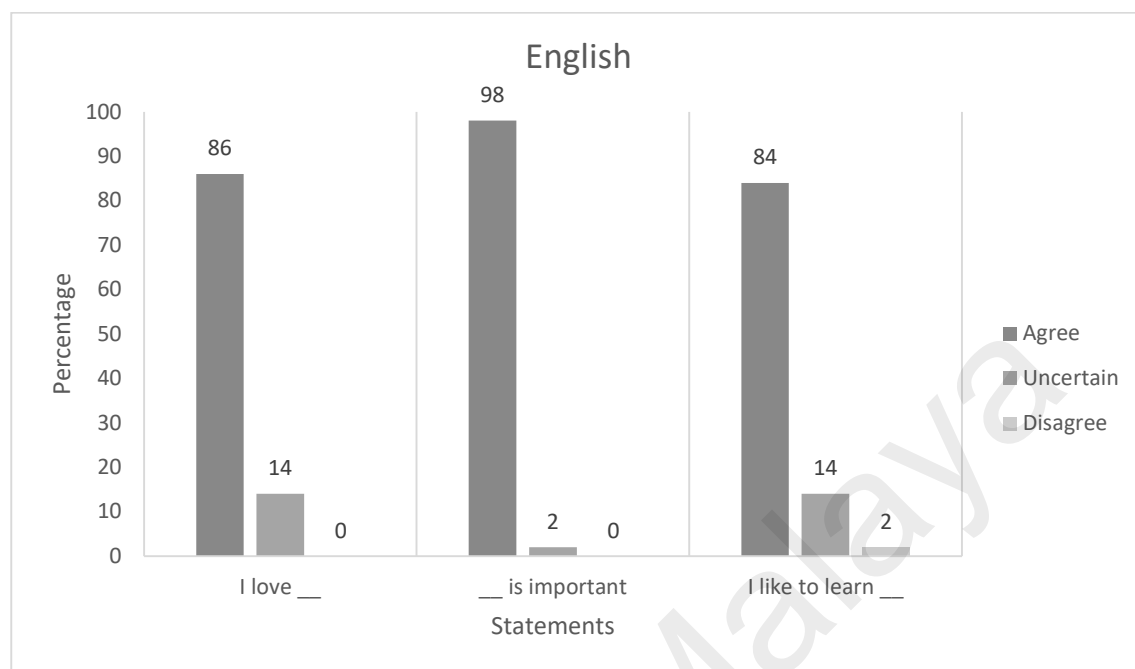


**Figure 4.6:** Attitudes of Chinese adolescents towards the usage of Mandarin in Miri, Sarawak

The findings indicated that the respondents held positive attitudes towards the usage of Mandarin (**Figure 4.6**). The result showed that 86% of the respondents love Mandarin, 57% think that Mandarin is important and 86% would like to learn Mandarin. However, 35% of the respondents reported that they were uncertain whether Mandarin is important. Overall, the respondents showed the positive attitudes toward Mandarin.

We can infer that the respondents love learning Mandarin, and they showed great interest towards Mandarin. Albert Einstein once said: “Interest is the best teacher”, the incentive which spurs the students on. It is the force that enables the respondents to maintain enthusiasm in learning Mandarin. Besides, the respondents knowing that they are Chinese, in order to define and express their identity as Chinese, they have to learn Mandarin. In addition, they thought it is important to learn Mandarin in the contemporary world. The rapid development of China’s economy is the most significant catalyst for Mandarin learning. Grasping Mandarin can broaden their minds, enhance their horizon, or even increase the probability of finding a better job. Thus, they wish they could speak fluent Mandarin and they want to continue learning Mandarin. These favourable attitudes towards Mandarin learning are beneficial to their study of Mandarin.

#### 4.4.2 Attitudes towards English



**Figure 4.7:** Attitudes of Chinese adolescents towards the usage of English in Miri, Sarawak.

The findings showed the respondents has positive attitudes towards the usage of English. The result showed that 86% of the respondents love English, 98% thought English was important and 84% like to learn English. Meanwhile, none of the respondents showed any negative attitudes towards English.

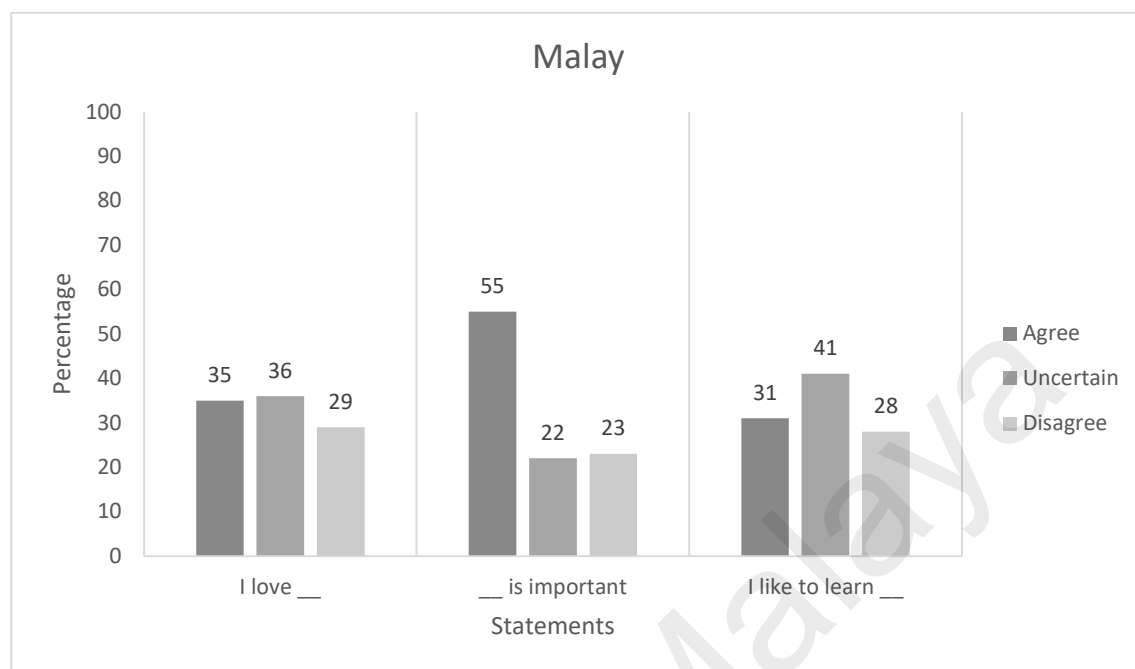
According to the respondents, English is the most powerful language. Speaking English shows that they belong to a higher status. English serves as the international language which connects people with different national languages during communication. So, handling English language well can make traveling become easy. Furthermore, English is based on an alphabetical system and, compared to Mandarin, it can be easier to learn. In addition, English also serves as the communicate language in the field of science and technology. So, it is necessary to master English in order to excel in the current science and technology era.

The popularity of the usage of English in Internet is increasing from year to year as many websites, e-forums and also e-discussions are designed in English language. So, it is necessary to understand English in order to get involved in the e-era. The increasing popularity of using English and the fact that a lot of the countries are English speaking, accounts for the more than thousands of schools and universities around the world that offer their courses in English. Therefore, there are lots of opportunities available to find an appropriate school and course to study in future.

The respondents in this study learned English in formal and informal settings like the classroom and social media. As the language is closely connected to culture, learning a foreign language requires the mastery of grammatical rules, language proficiency, communicative skills, and even a shift in attitudes towards culture. When learning English, one has to intertwine language learning with culture learning such as the customs, values, beliefs, attitudes and ways of thinking in daily life. Through the interview session, it was found that the respondents also enjoyed English music and loved to listen and sing English songs.

The study revealed that the respondents have positive attitudes towards the usage and learning of English. They are motivated to learn it regardless of their family backgrounds and proficiency levels. The respondents whose parents have higher education levels tended to be more proficient than those whose parents did not. They liked to learn English probably because the English learning method is fun. The foreigners who currently work in Miri speak English and many of the students wish to be friends with them.

#### 4.4.3 Attitudes towards Malay



**Figure 4.8:** Attitudes of Chinese adolescents towards the usage of Malay in Miri, Sarawak.

The respondents showed negative attitudes towards Malay language (**Figure 4.8**). There were only 35% of them who stated that they loved the Malay language, and 36% are uncertain. However, 55% agreed that Malay language is important. In terms of learning the language, 41% are uncertain if they like to learn the language and 28% disagreed with the statement.

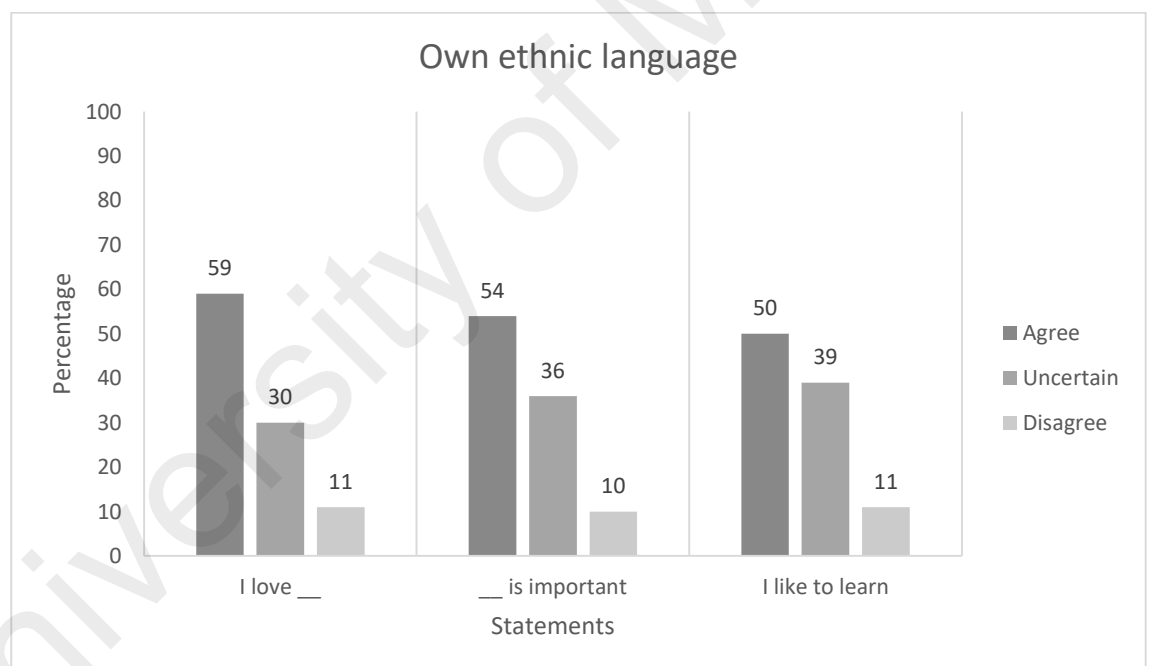
According to the interviewees, they learn Malay language mainly for examination purposes. They did not like it because they find the Malay language was difficult to learn. A lot of effort was needed to learn Malay in order to pass the subject in the Malaysian Certificate of Education. The big challenge in scoring high in the examination resulted in their giving up from learning the language.

Although standard Malay is the language of administration and is taught in schools, it is usually used in its written form. The people in Miri speak a local variety of Malay

which is Sarawakian Malay. The Sarawakian Malay is different from the standard Malay that they learn in school. Therefore, the respondents choose to use English with the administrators in the government departments as they do not know how to speak Sarawakian Malay.

According to Coluzzi (2016), the low popularity in usage of Malay for daily communication is mainly due to the other races who do not speak it as a first language even if Malay is the national language (Coluzzi, 2016).

#### 4.4.4 Attitudes towards their own ethnic language



**Figure 4.9:** Attitudes of Chinese adolescents towards the usage of their own ethnic language in Miri, Sarawak.

The majority of the respondents responded in the statements about thier own ethnic language with 59% of them showing their love for their own ethnic language, 54% believed that the ethnic language was important and 51% was showed an interest to learn their ethnic language.

The interviewees wished to keep their own ethnic language because they do not want to lose their language in the future. However, they are unsure how to maintain their own ethnic language since they are not able to speak the language. They have pride in their ethnic language, but showed little loyalty and awareness towards the language because they seldom or do not use it in their daily conversations.

#### **4.5 Factors affecting Language Use**

This section presents the answers to the third research question of the study, which is “What are the factors affecting the Chinese adolescents’ language use in Miri, Sarawak?”

The language use of the Chinese adolescents in Miri, is influenced by their family members’ language use, their first language (L1), and their abilities to speak it. However, they have problems typing in Mandarin using the communication devices such as computers and smartphones. This is the only reason why they opt to use English in such situations. In short, the Chinese adolescents’ language use is affected by the combined contributions of their personal backgrounds, language use in the social environment and language abilities.

##### **4.5.1 Language use and personal background**

A language can be used to express the identity of the language user (Crystal, 2003) and individuals have multiple identities, e.g. personal, social, and political. The language that speakers use can reveal information about their background, education, vocation, age, gender, geographical location, belief system and other personal characteristics. Most of

the respondents in this study acknowledge themselves as being Chinese, but not specifically defined by any Chinese sub-group like Foochow or Hakka.

The respondents' personal background such as their family members' language is linked to their choice of language in different domains. Most of the respondents' mother tongue is Mandarin (80%), and thus they mostly preferred to use Mandarin. Their attitudes towards Mandarin is also positive because they love to learn it. They believed that English would not replace Mandarin in the future although English is a global language. This revealed their loyalty and pride towards Mandarin.

Those from the mixed marriages use English most frequently and their mother tongue is English. On the other hand, 10% of the respondents whose mother tongue is their own ethnic language, this group of students using their own ethnic language mostly in the family domain, especially when communicating with their grandparents and elder relatives.

We can conclude that the respondents' language use is closely related to their personal background, especially their family's language as in Wee (1990), Wang (2009) and Ang (2009). This is also in line with Scheffler's finding that "the learners' language background is one of the factors that may influence the amount and functions of own-language use" (Scheffler, May, Krzebietke, & Askland, 2016).

#### **4.5.2 Language use in a social environment**

The respondents' language use is closely related to the language used in a social environment as a common communication language, an international communication language, a language for science and technology, a language for social media, a language



of books, and many more. So, the school children cannot avoid the multilingual setting in this Malaysian environment (Kuang, David, & Mohd. Don, 2006).

These Chinese adolescents preferred to use Mandarin in their conversations as the Chinese in Miri speak Mandarin. Since there is no dominant dialect or ethnic languages spoken in the community, Mandarin has become the lingua franca among the Chinese. In conclusion, the influence of the language used in the social environment caused the respondents to use Mandarin on transactional domains such as speaking to hawkers in the wet market, shopkeepers in the sundry shop or supermarket, waiters in the restaurant, bank officers, and librarians.

English is widely used because it is a lingua franca among the people in Miri. This study revealed that the language used is closely related to the language in the social environment; as a result of this the respondents chose to speak English with people of other ethnicities.

From the interviews, the respondents believe that Mandarin would become the global language in the future although the current international language is English. The respondents also reputed that people in Miri should be able to speak all the languages, i.e. Mandarin, English and Malay. This is because Miri is not only a multiethnic city but it is also an international city.

#### **4.5.3 Language use and language ability**

During the administration of questionnaires, the respondents were given the freedom to answer in any of the three languages. 80% of the respondents chose to answer in Mandarin, while 20% chose to answer in English, and none of them chose the Malay questionnaire. They chose the language they felt the most comfortable and familiar with

in answering the questions, so that they could understand and express their thoughts with confidence. Mandarin was the language they mostly preferred and also the language they could express their thoughts proficiently and confidently. This is similar to the findings whereby the respondents used Mandarin most frequently in four out of the five selected domains.

The respondents that chose the English questionnaire basically did so due to a few reasons which included English being their mother tongue, their English proficiency level being higher than Mandarin, English enabling them to feel higher in status. They felt more comfortable to speak and write in English compared to Mandarin. This showed that a person's language ability constitutes a factor that affects language use and attitudes.

The respondents seldom spoke Malay during their conversation because they disliked the language. The respondents indicated that they learned the Malay language just to obtain a certificate that was recognised by the government. They believed Malay language will not help them in their future study or careers, which is a peculiar case for a national language. They seldom use Malay due to the high difficulty of learning Malay as well as the high difficulty to get good result in examinations. They described learning Malay as boring, not as fun as learning English, and this led to their being less motivated to learn Malay. This indirectly showed they had negative attitudes towards the language, which is similar to Crystal's findings whereby if speakers have negative attitudes towards a language, they develop resistance towards using it (Crystal, 1997).

#### **4.6 Conclusion**

It was found that the Chinese adolescents in Miri are multilingual, they are able to speak at least three languages, i.e. Mandarin, English and standard Malay, while only a few of them could speak their own ethnic language. The data obtained indicated that the Chinese adolescents use Mandarin the most frequently in four out of five selected

domains such as family, school, transactional and government department. In the social media domain, they use English the most frequently due to the problems of typing Mandarin characters using communication devices such as computers and smartphones.

Among the languages that they used, Mandarin ranks the highest with a significant majority of the respondents using it most often. English is liked by almost all of the respondents and it is used as a lingua franca between the different ethnicities in Miri, Sarawak. Although Malay is the official language, the respondents seldom use it in their daily life.

Basically, the respondents in this study choose to use a language basically depending on the addressees' language ability. They choose to use the language that they are most comfortable with and the language that can express their thoughts proficiently and confidently regardless of the settings and topic of a conversation.

The data revealed positive attitudes towards the usage of Mandarin and English, this being in line with the languages used in the five selected domains. However, the data revealed negative attitudes towards the usage of Malay and their ethnic languages, and this is also in line with their language used in their daily conversation. The language they use is affected by their personal background, the language used in the social environment and their language ability.

Scholars in linguistics agree that elements such as loyalty, pride, awareness in language attitudes are the factors influencing the use of language. Loyalty to a language motivates the language users to maintain their language. A sense of pride in one's language causes the language user to continue and expand the use of his/her language as an element of his/her ethnic identity and this serves to unite the community, while an awareness of the language reminds the language users to use the language carefully and

politely. However, the findings of this study seem to reveal that the usefulness of a language is the main reason that affected language use and attitudes.

University of Malaya

## **CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter briefly sums up the findings regarding the study concerning language use in the different domains, attitudes towards the usage of languages and factors that affect the language used among the Chinese adolescents in Miri, Sarawak. This chapter summarises the findings of this study, its implications and recommendations for future research.

### **5.2 Summary of the Research Questions**

#### **5.2.1 Language Use in Five Selected Domains**

Previous study demonstrated that the Chinese adolescents in Miri are able to speak at least three languages, i.e. Mandarin, English and Malay in their daily life, however, only a few of them can speak their own ethnic language. Among all the languages they used, Mandarin ranks the highest with a significant majority compared with other languages. English is preferred by the majority of the respondents who use it as a lingua franca between the different ethnicities in Miri. Respondents seldom use Malay language in their daily life even though Malay is the official language in Malaysia.

In conclusion, the Chinese adolescents in Miri prefer to use Mandarin in the family, school, transactional, and government department domains, while English is used in the social media domain. However, the usage of their own ethnic language has not diminishing. Generally, the respondents choose to use the most comfortable language regardless of location and the topic. They will choose an appropriate language that suits their addressee.

English is the language preferred for inter-ethnic communication compared to Malay. A small number of respondents use their own ethnic language in the family domain and mainly with their grandparents and elder relatives.

From a sociolinguistic point of view, a person with positive attitudes towards a language usually demonstrates loyalty to that language. In addition, a person is more likely to use a particular language in various domains. Scholars in linguistics agree that the elements such as loyalty and pride in language attitudes are the factors influencing the usage of language. Loyalty to a language motivates the language users to maintain their language. A sense of pride in one's language causes the language user to continue and expand the usage of his/her language as an element of his/her ethnic identity and this serves to unite the community. It is believed that the usefulness of a language is another crucial factor that affecting the usage of the language.

### **5.2.2 Attitudes towards the Usage of Languages**

The findings of this study on language use and attitudes can be summarized in eight statements as suggested below:

1. Mandarin is the most favourite language.
2. Mandarin is the friendliest language.
3. Mandarin is the language that expresses our thoughts proficiently and confidently.
4. Mandarin is the language that symbolises our ethnic identity.
5. English is the most prestigious language.
6. English is the language that shows us as high status.
7. English is the most important language in future.
8. We love Mandarin and English, we like to learn Mandarin and English.

The data revealed positive attitudes towards the usage of Mandarin and English, this being in line with the languages used in the five selected domains. The respondents disclose that in order to survive in the current competitive society, they need to master both strong languages, which are Mandarin and English. English is an important international language that everyone needs to master in this increasingly globalised world (Coluzzi, 2011). Same goes with Mandarin which the respondents believed that will become a future international language as well.

The respondents revealed negative attitudes towards the usage of Malay and their own ethnic languages, and this is also in line with the language used in their daily conversation. The respondents believed that Malay and their own ethnic language have lower economic value when compared to Mandarin and English and this has lead them to use less Malay and their own ethnic languages. Although Malay is spoken in countries such as Indonesia, Brunei and Singapore, the usage of Malay language in each country varies with their historical and cultural circumstances, and anyway is hardly used in Singapore. The usage of their own ethnic language (dialect) is limited, thus it loses its economic value.

### **5.2.3 Factors affecting Language Use**

Language use and attitudes are considered primarily to be directly or indirectly related to the respondents' personal background, language environment and language abilities. Therefore, factors that affect a person's language use can be grouped into three categories which are the language user's personal background, the language environment and language abilities.

Language use of the Chinese adolescents in Miri was affected by their family members, especially their parents. Their parents are the people who determine their first

language (L1) or mother tongue. A family is the typical domain that influences a person's choice of language. A person acquires their first language from their family member, therefore, the main factor affecting the Chinese adolescents' language is their personal background.

Chinese adolescents' language use is also affected by the social environment. Social environment refers to the immediate physical and social setting in which people live or in which something happens or develops. It includes the culture that an individual lives in, and the people and institutions he/she interact with. The Chinese adolescents have a simple social life. Their daily activities are mostly in school, transactional, as well as through social media domains, and family domain. If the people in the social environment speak a particular language, the Chinese adolescents will use that language to suit the addressee's needs.

The ability to speak a language is another factor that affected the Chinese adolescents' language use. Language abilities refer to the verbal repertoire of the speaker and the listener. The Chinese adolescents in this study are trilingual or multilingual, they speak at least three common languages in Miri, such as Mandarin, English and Malay. Thus, they are free to use any of the languages as long as the language is easier to discuss a particular topic, regardless of location. However, they have problem typing in Mandarin using communication devices such as computer and smartphones. This is the only reason they opt to use English.

In short, the Chinese adolescents' language use is affected by the combined contribution of their personal backgrounds, the language in the social environment and their language abilities.



### **5.3 Implications of the study**

This study is an insight on language use and attitudes among the Chinese adolescents in Miri. It is a current trend to try to understand language use in this increasingly diversified society not only as far as the Chinese adolescents are concerns, but also their families and the community in a broader sense.

The findings of the study bring to light that the Chinese adolescents have to know how to maintain the Chinese language heritage and recognise what kind of language attitudes are helpful to them, their families, their younger ethnic members as well as the society they are living in. It is essential to know the importance of the attitudinal factors in order to help the Chinese adolescents develop a positive attitude towards their ethnic language and the dominant languages such as Mandarin, English and Malay.

The relevant authorities dealing with national language education planning and language policies should come up with more scientific and feasible policies for languages in education. This is to encourage the youngsters to master both spoken and written Mandarin, English, and Malay in order to be more competitive in their careers. We should understand that multilingualism is of great importance in providing cognitive and social advantages to the future development of Chinese adolescents, and all the Malaysian Chinese adolescents are urged to cherish the cultural heritage of their ethnic language and of Mandarin. The Chinese community need to make an effort to promote the usage of their own ethnic languages among the younger generation, as well as to develop a positive and balanced view on multilingualism.

An understanding of the socio-historical, socio-political and socio-psychological makeup of the community is very helpful for an accurate analysis and interpretation of the findings.

#### **5.4 Suggestions for Future Research**

This study dealt with a sample of 100 Chinese adolescents who are currently students in a Chinese conforming school in Miri, Sarawak. Thus, this study cannot be generalized to all Chinese adolescents in Sarawak or in the rest of Malaysia. However, the researcher think that many of the findings would not differ much as shown, for example in Coluzzi 2011 and 2016. Therefore, further study is recommended to be conducted on a larger sample that would include not only those who live in Miri but also those who live in other parts of Sarawak in order to determine language use and attitudes among Chinese adolescents at large. Also, further research can be conducted on Chinese adolescents in other parts of Malaysia for the purpose of establishing comparisons between language use and attitudes among Chinese adolescents in Sarawak and in other states in Malaysia.

Similar studies should be conducted among other ethnic minorities in order to investigate similarities and differences concerning language choice in terms of language use, factors supporting language choice and language attitudes.

The researcher also recommends conducting studies which examine formal and functional constraints determining and restricting the language choice, and different variables such as gender, mood, educational level as well as purpose in order to integrate the findings of this study.

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## **LIST OF PUBLICATIONS AND PAPERS PRESENTED**

The findings of the study have been presented in the following conferences:

1. 6th Faculty of Languages and Linguistics, University of Malaya Postgraduate Research Conference on 5th October 2016 at University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur.
2. International Conference on Education 2016 (ICE2016) on 18th to 19th October 2016 at Metriz Hotel Miri, Sarawak.

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