Language Planning through Policy in Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore for Unskilled Migrant Workers

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ประชาคมอาเซียนไม่ได้มีนโยบายภาษาสำหรับประชาคม มีเพียงการประกาศไว้ในอาเซียนชาร์เตอร์ว่าให้ใช้ภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาในการทำงานของอาเซียน แต่ด้วยเหตุที่ประชาคมอาเซียนมีความหลากหลายของกลุ่มชาติพันธุ์ ศาสนา และวัฒนธรรม และแต่ละประเทศมีนโยบายภาษาที่แตกต่างกัน ดังนั้นผลของการดำเนินนโยบายภาษาในแต่ละประเทศส่งผลทั้งในด้านบวกและด้านลบต่อการพัฒนาทรัพยากรมนุษย์และการธำรงรักษาอัตลักษณ์ของกลุ่มชาติพันธุ์แตกต่างกัน นอกจากนี้การเคลื่อนย้ายประชากรในประชาคมอาเซียนที่มีปัจจัยผลักและปัจจัยดึงดูดให้มีการเคลื่อนย้ายแรงงานในประเทศสมาชิกอาเซียนและนอกประเทศสมาชิก โดยเฉพาะอย่างยิ่งแรงงานไร้ฝีมือ ดังนั้นบทความนี้ต้องการศึกษานโยบายภาษาของประเทศไทยเพื่อเปรียบเทียบกับมาเลเซียและสิงคโปร์ในฐานะประเทศปลายทางของการรับแรงงานไร้ฝีมือว่ามีการจัดการความหลากหลายด้านภาษาให้กับแรงงานไร้ฝีมืออย่างไรเพื่อนำไปสู่การวิจัยและหาแนวทางเสนอแนะเชิงนโยบายให้กับประเทศไทยและอาเซียนต่อไป

ผลการศึกษาในเบื้องต้นพบว่าประเทศไทยมีการร่างนโยบายภาษาแล้ว แต่ยังไม่นำไปสู่การปฏิบัติการที่เป็นรูปธรรม ผลของการไม่มีนโยบายภาษาที่ชัดเจนส่งผลกระทบในด้านลบต่อการพัฒนาศักยภาพด้านภาษาของคนไทยทั้งในระดับท้องถิ่น ระดับชาติ และระดับนานาชาติ และส่งผลต่อการจัดการศึกษาให้กับแรงงานและลูกหลานแรงงานต่างชาติไร้ฝีมือ นโยบายภาษาของมาเลเซียเป็นนโยบายผกผันเริ่มด้วยการใช้สองระบบคือ 1) ทวิภาษาในโรงเรียนรัฐบาลให้ใช้ภาษามาเลเซียและอังกฤษ 2) โรงเรียนชาวจีนและทมิฬให้ใช้สามภาษา: ทมิฬ-มาเลเซีย-อังกฤษ หรือจีน-มาเลเซีย-อังกฤษ ต่อมาเปลี่ยนมาใช้ภาษามาเลเซียภาษาเดียว แต่เมื่อผู้นำเห็นว่ามาเลเซียได้รับผลกระทบจากโลกาภิวัตน์เพราะการใช้ภาษาเดียวจึงปรับเปลี่ยนให้ใช้ภาษาอังกฤษในการสอนคณิตศาสตร์และวิทยาศาสตร์ และล่าสุดเปลี่ยนเป็นทวิภาษาคือภาษาอังกฤษและภาษามาเลเซีย สำหรับแรงงานต่างชาติไร้ฝีมือ ไม่มีนโยบายด้านภาษาที่ชัดเจนเพื่อช่วยเหลือ แต่มีภาคเอกชนที่ให้ความช่วยเหลือในเรื่องนี้ นโยบายภาษาของสิงคโปร์-ภายหลังเอกราช ผู้นำสิงคโปร์ประกาศใช้ทวิภาษาคือภาษาอังกฤษกับภาษาจีนแมนดาริน ทั้งนี้เพื่อสร้างชาวสิงคโปร์ให้สามารถเป็นพลเมืองโลกได้ โดยที่ไม่มีการปรับเปลี่ยนนโยบาย แต่นโยบายภาษาดังกล่าวส่งผลกระทบในด้านลบต่อภาษาถิ่นอื่นๆ และไม่มีนโยบายที่ชัดเจนสำหรับพัฒนาและช่วยเหลือทักษะด้านภาษาให้กับแรงงานไร้ฝีมืออย่างเป็นทางการ ข้อเสนอแนะสำหรับนโยบายภาษาของอาเซียนควรจะเป็นนโยบายพหุภาษา

คำสำคัญ: การวางแผนภาษา นโยบายภาษา ไทย มาเลเซีย สิงคโปร์ อาเซียน

Abstract

The ASEAN Community does not have a language policy for the community and only in the ASEAN Charter does it identify English as a working language in ASEAN. However, because of ethnic, religious, and cultural diversity, each country has its own language policies and the results of the implementation of the language policy of each country have both positive and negative impacts on the development of human resources and the maintenance of ethnic identity. In addition, the movement of people within the community has pushed and attracted migration based on labor in ASEAN member countries, especially unskilled workers. This article seeks to explore Thailand's language policy in comparison with Malaysia and Singapore as the destination countries for unskilled workers by studying the language policy as a whole, and how they manage unskilled migrant workers' language diversity for further research, and to propose suggestions to Thai national language policy makers and ASEAN.

The preliminary results show that Thailand has drafted a language policy but has not yet taken concrete action. The effect of not having a clear language policy has a negative impact on the development of Thai language proficiency at local, national and international levels. It also affects the education of unskilled laborers and children. The language policy of Bahasa Malaysia in Malaysia is an inverse policy, starting with two systems: 1) bilingualism in government schools and 2) three languages: Tamil, Bahasa Malaysia, English used in Tamil schools or Chinese, Bahasa Malaysia, English used in Chinese schools. Later it was changed to use only Bahasa Malaysia, but when the leadership realized that Bahasa Malaysia was disadvantaged in an era of globalization using one language, English was introduced as the medium for teaching mathematics and science. A revised bilingual policy - English and Bahasa Malaysia - is in current use today. For unskilled foreign workers, there is no clear language policy to assist except from the private sector. As for the language policy of Singapore, after independence Singapore leaders implemented bilingualism: English and Mandarin Chinese. This was done to make Singaporeans world citizens without having to change policy later, but it has also had a negative impact on other dialects. Singapore does not have a clear official policy for the development and assistance of language skills for unskilled workers. This study recommends that ASEAN language policy should be one of multilingualism.

Keywords: Language planning, language policy, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, ASEAN

Introduction

Southeast Asia is a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society which has more than 1,400 languages. In terms of linguistics, the majority belong to five language families: 1) Sino-Tibetan 2) Tai-Kadai 3) Austroasiatic 4) Austronesian and 5) Hmong-Yao. Moreover, members of other language family groups have migrated to this area, such as Indo-European speakers, Afroasiatic speakers, etc. In 2015, the ASEAN Community was established by the leaders of the ASEAN member countries, comprising three pillars: the Economic (AEC), Political-Security (APSC) and Socio-Cultural (ASCC), involving blueprints and based on the foundations of 'Prosperity, Peace and People' (Letchumanan, 2015). The AEC and APSC pillars have seen quite effective collaboration and implementation, whereas the ASCC has not been encouraged and promoted to the same extent.

With regard to language, the ASEAN Charter references language in the following Articles:

> Article 2: Principles: Respect for the different cultures, languages and religions of the people of ASEAN, while emphasizing their common values in the spirit of unity in diversity
> Article 34: Working language of ASEAN: Working language of ASEAN shall be English.

The ASEAN Community has agreed to use English as a working language, but there have been no studies on how to plan for multi-ethnic and multi-cultural societies within ASEAN for the empowerment and maintenance of ethnic community language groups. Therefore, majority language groups benefit while others remain marginalized.

The mobility of skilled and unskilled migrant workers has been agreed upon in principle within the ASEAN Community, so migration is mostly from the "push" countries to the "pull" countries, spurred by the impetus to earn a better living. Skilled migrant workers may not confront many problems, but unskilled migrant workers certainly do, in particular the language barrier. Therefore, this article offers a review of works on language planning in Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore, as examples of efforts made within ASEAN,

Community, and explores how these countries prepare to help unskilled migrant workers when they work in other ASEAN countries. This will lead to further research on identifying policy and proposals for further planning, which will strengthen the ASCC Pillar of the ASEAN Community.

1. Language Planning

Language planning (LP) is the attempt to control the use, status, and structure of a language through a language policy developed by a government or other authority. Normally carried out by official agencies, such planning usually passes through several stages: a particular language or variety of a language is selected; codification is undertaken to stabilize it, for example by agreeing writing conventions for previously non-literate languages; the codified language is adjusted to enable it to perform new functions, for example by inventing or borrowing scientific vocabulary; and mechanisms are devised, such as teaching syllabuses and procedures for monitoring the media, to ensure that the language is used in conformity with the policy. As such, LP is a multifaceted discipline whose aims and goals are interrelated with the political, economic and social aims of the community in question, which are in turn influenced by global events (Encyclopedia.com, 1998). Planning policy may be achieved through agencies at a number of levels in a state hierarchy. Governments may define their language policy throughout a country, ministries of education may define it within education, and institutions may contribute to planning through their own policies (Seran Doğançay-Aktuna, 1997; Encyclopedia.com, 1998).

Until the current draft of the national language policy of Thailand had never had a formal language policy implementation, apart from the use of standard Thai as the national language. Therefore, the country has never gained much awareness or direction using foreign languages in a proper way to prepare Thai citizens for international exposure. Moreover, there is no policy to maintain ethnic group languages, which are gradually being lost.

Following independence, Malaysia and Singapore planned their language policies for multi-ethic and multi-lingual diversity and integration. These two countries implemented top-down policies initiated by their respective governments.

Malaysia uses Bahasa Malaysia (BM) as the official and national language of the nation and English is widely spoken and taught in primary and secondary schools. In 1971, all national schools used BM as the medium of instruction for all subjects, except English. This led to a decline in the use of English in everyday life, which affected the exposure of students to globalization as well as Malaysia's Vision 2020 objective, besides the fact that English is also essential for the general economic and technological development of the country. Therefore, in 2003, English was reintroduced for teaching mathematics and science subjects from Form One and Lower Six in all government schools. There was some resistance as Prime Minister Tuan Dr. Mahathir Mohamad's decision was not discussed beforehand (Gill, 2005) and the English medium of instruction was a reversal of policy. In 2011, a bilingual education approach using Bahasa Malaysia and English languages in education at schools and in Higher Education programs was introduced under the "Memartabatkan Bahasa Malaysia dan Memperkukuhkan Penguasaan Bahasa Inggeris" (MBMMBI) policy.

As for Singapore, after its independence in 1965, a bilingual policy included using English and other ethnic Mother tongues: Chinese dialects, Bahasa Malaysia and Tamil. However, with the strong determination of the leaders to develop Singapore into a first rank country in economic terms, English and Mandarin were emphasized which contributed to the decline of other ethnic languages.

And with regard to mobility of workers in the ASEAN Community, there is no clear policy in any of these three countries on how to handle the mother tongues used by foreign workers in host countries. The following part is a review of language policy of Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore through education.

This article applies the ten functional domains in language planning of William Stewart (1968) as follows: 1) Official 2) Provincial 3) Wider communication 4) International 5) Capital 6) Group 7) Educational 8) School subject 9) Literary 10) Religious

2. Language Situation in Thailand

Prime Minister P. Pibulsongkram declared Thai as the national language in the State Convention 9 of 1940 (June 24, 1940). Surprisingly, the 1997, 2007 and 2017 Thai constitutions never mentioned a national language. However, the Thai government has pursued a policy of monolingualism, establishing Central Thai as the standard, particularly in government, education and the mass media. It is a fact that Thailand is home to numerous languages. In 2004, Mahidol University's Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia (RILCA) conducted a language survey and developed maps of the ethnic language groups in Thailand. This project was supported by the Culture Ministry of Thailand. The project found that there are 70 languages in the country, including Thai dialects and minority languages, distributed in all areas of Thailand. These languages were found to be from five linguistic families: Tai-Kadai, Austro-Asiatic, Sino-Tibetan, Hmong-Mien and Austronesian (Premsrirat: 2004). The resulting maps show the languages and cultures in each part of Thailand. This knowledge is useful for language planning and development, which impacts human development, educational development and national security.

2.1 Thailand National Language Policy

In 2006, the Royal Institute (whose name was changed to "Royal Society" in 2015) formed the Committee to Draft the National Language Policy (CDNLP). The purpose of the committee was to research the language situation in Thailand and submit a policy that would benefit the Kingdom and all its people (Warotamasikkhadit and Person, 2011).

There were six sub-committees to address the following issues:

1. Thai language policy for Thai students and Thai nationals including foreigners who learn Thai as a foreign language-aimed at modifying the Thai language teaching style towards a more natural way of learning languages.

2. Regional Languages policy including Tai language family and ethnic minority languages-aimed at preserving the use of local languages, also referred to as ethnic languages or mother tongues, in everyday life and in the education system.

3. Languages of Commerce, Neighboring Languages, and Working Languages policy- aimed at promoting the study of English, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, including other ASEAN languages to facilitate international trade.

4. Policy for Translation, Interpretation, and Localization Standards-aimed at improving language skills and language proficiency for both domestic and cross-border business which involve translation and interpretation.

5. Language policy for Migrants Seeking Employment in Thailand-aimed at helping promote the development of Thai language skills for communication, living and basic rights for migrant workers who come to Thailand for work.

6. Language Needs of the Visual and Hearing Impaired-aimed at promoting the development of Thai language skills for the disabled.

The National Language Policy draft was approved by two former Prime Ministers, Abhisit Vejjajiva in 2010 and Yingluck Shinawatra in 2012. Both Prime Ministers also authorized the Royal Institute to develop a strategic implementation plan.

The strategic implementation plan of the National Language Policy (2017 - 2021) is an important instrument for national economic and social development which leads to a long-term vision of improving Thailand's "Stability, Prosperity and Sustainability."

One interesting point in the National Language Policy draft is that it strongly supports ethnic languages, which have been ignored for a long time. The policy draft not only supports the preservation of languages, but also the use of ethnic languages in education, as in mother tongue-based bi-multilingual education. This shows the government's intention to respect and pay attention to all people in the country equally. It is hoped that this will lead to reconciliation and create a society of peaceful coexistence.

2.2 Key concepts for strategic language planning

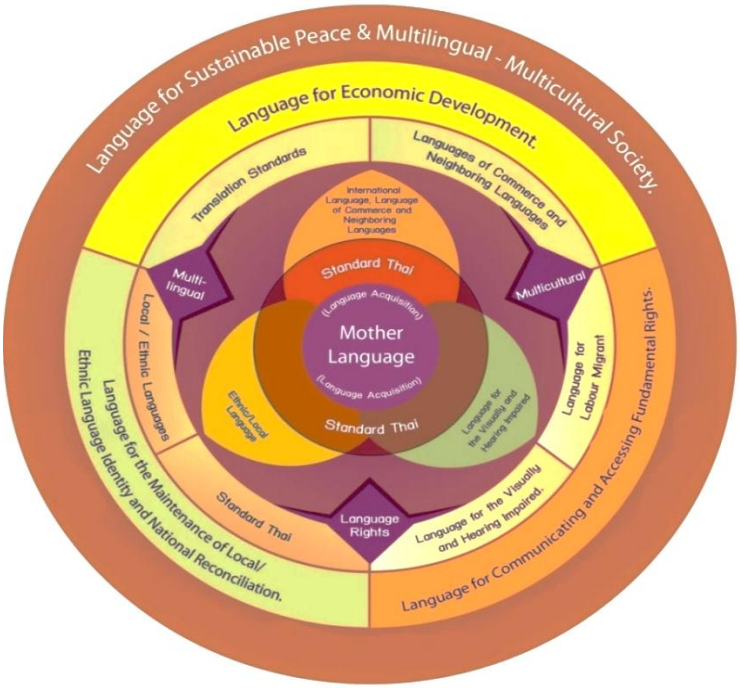

Figure 1 Framework for the national language policy

"Language for Sustainable Peace and Multilingual-Multicultural Society" is a key concept in the strategic planning for Thailand's National Language Policy. It aims for all people to be aware of Thai as the national language, increase awareness of local languages (which are key to the identity of ethnic minorities), and also highlights English and other foreign languages as being important in the global economy. Moreover, the policy concept focuses on the languages of neighboring countries to foster good relationships and commerce. The policy also seeks to help all Thai people, regardless of ethnicity or disabilities, to use language as a tool to improve their education and employment potentials. As shown in the illustration above, there are three major goals for the policy: (1) Language for the maintenance of local/ethnic language identity and national reconciliation (including support for Thai as the national language and local/ethnic languages) (2) Language for communicating and accessing fundamental rights

(for all Thai people–including the disabled–as well as migrant workers; and (3) Language for economic development (in border areas, the ASEAN community, and worldwide).

Effective implementation of the policy in different contexts should be carefully considered. One key factor will be to promote the concept of a multilingual, multicultural society with the aim to promote peaceful and sustainable coexistence inside the country as well as on the international scene.

Another key factor to successful implementation will be capacity building in language skills by using children's mother tongues in school- especially minority languages. At present, Thailand has a significant problem with illiteracy among the children of ethnic minorities. All minority groups have similar problems in relation to low literacy rates and low achievement in the national education system. The National Test (NT) given to third graders nationwide in 2008 shows that the 10 school areas with the lowest scores were from the North and Deep South where many minority students are found. Specific provinces included Maehongson, Chiangrai, Chiangmai in the North, and Yala, Narathiwat and Pattani in the South (OBEC: 2008).

The Royal Institute presented the National Language Policy draft in public forums in many places throughout Thailand. Most of the people who attended these forums were very supportive of the policy. However, this policy and the strategic implementation plan is still a "work in progress." When the strategic plan is completed, there will still be a need for a Cabinet resolution to enact lasting language policy legislation.

As far as the unskilled migrant workers in Thailand are concerned, most are from the neighboring countries, so numerous government departments overseeing adult education or local schools in the areas provide opportunities for these workers to learn Thai. Some children of the migrant workers are sent to local schools and learn through the Thai curriculum with regular Thai kids. Most efforts to empower the workers and their children involve classes run by private groups including some local monasteries. As there is no established language policy as yet, an unregulated means of assisting them is undertaken in each area, and so maintenance and transmission of their language and cultural identity to their children through education remains largely unrealized by many families.

2.3 Migration and Policy in Thailand

The Office of Foreign Workers Administration of the Department of Employment Ministry of Labour reports that Thailand had 1,848,295 registered migrants in 2017 most of whom∠around 1,178,678∠come from three main countries: Myanmar, Cambodia and Laos. Migrant workers can be found in all regions of Thailand but most∠around 987,077∠live in Bangkok and neighboring provinces: Samut Sakhon province has 207,162 migrants, the highest number in Thailand.

The main motivation drivers of labor mobility are job opportunities and wages. The data from the surveys on migrant workers in Thailand (Wasuprasat, 2010) found that Burmese migrants returned the highest amount of money (approximately 30,000 baht per month), followed by Laos and Cambodia. The amount of money returned to Burma is as high as 44 billion baht, Laos around 3.8 billion baht and Cambodia around 3.3 billion, which is important to the development of the source countries at the local level and the reduction of poverty overall in the country as well.

Migrants not only produce benefits for their home countries, but also contribute to the Thai economy in many dimensions, such as promoting mass production and containing wage-based inflation and associated higher costs of living. Also, Thai workers are averse to 3Ds jobs. (Wasuprasat: p.xvi)

However, the migrant worker policy in Thailand needs to resolve conflicting laws and regulations; the problem of migrant worker management in particular requires urgent attention. In addition, a rights-based approach should be used for migrant worker management as well as a social dialogue on national and international migrant mobility.

Moreover, the policy should include the taking care of migrant children. According to Article 28 of the 'Convention on the Rights of the Child', the Thai government is responsible for making compulsory education available free for all children living in the country. As a result, supportive government policy ensures special ID cards are provided to migrant children who study in Thai public schools which allow them to stay in Thailand for 10 years, in line with its regional and international commitments.

From a study on migrant children's education in Thailand by Institute for Population and Social Research, Mahidol University (2014) it was found that there were 17,292 school-age migrants in Samut Sakhon, but only 16% of them received formal education∠11% in public schools and 5% in NGO run learning centers. Furthermore, schools that accepted migrant children faced many problems such as the language barrier, adaptation difficulties, additional financial costs, attitude of Thai parents, the curriculum and content, and high dropout rates.

The number of migrant students has increased annually so the state must provide guidance on providing suitable education for them. Apart from being a fundamental human right, care and attention to education for migrants promotes the concept of a multilingual, multicultural society for the peaceful and sustainable coexistence within Thailand.

3. Language Policy in Malaysia

Malaysia is a multiethnic and multicultural nation which consists of Bahasa Malaysia (67.4%), Chinese (24.6%), Indian (7.3%) and other ethnic groups (0.7%) (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2010).

Language policy in Malaysia has undergone many changes throughout 60 years of independence (Tharmalingam, 2012). In the pre-independence period, English was the official language but after independence, and during the nation-building era, Bahasa Malaysia was declared as the national language. In 2003, a reversal phrase had English used as the medium of instruction for teaching of mathematics and science subjects, followed in 2011 by a re-reveral phrase, which saw Bahasa Malaysia take over from English for teaching mathematics and science subjects.

3.1 Language Planning in Malaysia

In 1951∠the pre-independence era∠the British government established the Barnes Committee to develop a national education system for British Malaya (Gill, 2005). This committee recommended: 1) a national school system, which would provide primary education for six years in Bahasa Malaysia and English, and 2) Bahasa Malaysia be

treated as the principal language" (Federation of Malaya Central Advisory Committee on Education, 1951). The reaction of the Chinese and Tamils to the Barnes' Committee's recommendations were not entirely positive. While the community agreed with the basic recommendation that Bahasa Malaysia be treated as the principal language, it felt that the Chinese and Tamil should be recognized as main components of a new definition of Malaya's identity. In order to pacify ethnic sensitivities, the British government approved a modified formula that would allow: 1) bilingualism in Bahasa Malaysia schools (Bahasa Malaysia and English); and 2) a three language "solution" in Tamil and Chinese schools (either Tamil-Bahasa Malaysia-English or Chinese-Bahasa Malaysia-English) recommending a common curriculum for all schools that would cover the way to a national school system ('Barnes Report', n.d.).

The 1956 Razak Report (cited in Gill, 2014) included an emphatic statement "to bring together children of all races under a national education system in which the national language is the main medium of instruction (Gill, 2014), but because of it's resolve to force all children to study in national schools where instruction in Bahasa Malaysia was standard, the other main ethnic groups∠the Chinese and Tamils∠protested. This proposal was ultimately dropped leaving a modified version to establish "a national system of education acceptable to the people of the federation as a whole which will satisfy the need to promote their cultural, social, economic and political dvelopment as a nation, having regard to the intention of making Bahasa Malaysia the national language of the country while preserving and sustaining the growth of the language and culture of other communities living in the country" (Government Printer Federation of Malaya, 1960). This final report became the basis for the education system and was incorporated into section three of the Education Ordinance of 1957 to serve as the educational framework for on independent Malaya.

In 1956, one year before independence, the government established a language agency called the "Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka" (Institute of Language and Literature) with a mandate "to develop and enrich the national language, to promote literacy growth and creative talents, and to publish books in the national language"

(Hassan Ahmid, 1988). One of its better-known activities was "The General Formula for the Coining of Terminology in Bahasa Malaysia", for creating new scientific and technological terms in Bahasa Malaysia. The Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka developed about half a million new words by mid 1980s and was a major accomplishment that demonstrated the strength of government support for the modernization of the Bahasa Malaysia language (Gill, 2005).

However due to an over-dependency on a single language, Malaysians were soon at a disadvantage in the face of global changes and thus in the early 1990s, the government under the Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad realized that Malaysians would be left behind and many not able to meet the challenges of globalization if they were not proficient in English. In admitting that the English language was fundamental for the future of Malaysia, the government knew that a drastic change in language policy was inevitable. The government's plan to change the medium of instruction to English for teaching Science and Mathematics was first disclosed to the press in 1995. This disclosure triggered massive opposition from all quarters, particularly from the Malays[i] and the Chinese; however, the government stood firm with its decision (Tharmalingam, 2012).

A reversal phrase came in 2002 when the Cabinet announced officially the teaching and learning of Science and Mathematics in English, known in Bahasa Malaysia as "Pengajaran dan Pembelajaran Sains dan Matematik Dalam Bahasa Inggeris (PPSMI)". This policy was implemented in all fully-aided government schools beginning from January 2003. Although this decision did not bode well for many, the policy was eventually implemented with Mathematics and Science being taught in English in Standard 1, Form 1 and Lower 6. However, PPSMI lasted for only a decade.

In 2011, in the re-reversal phrase, the government decided to discontinue PPSMI and replace it with a new policy called "Memartabatkan Bahasa Malaysia dan Memperkukuhkan Penguasaan Bahasa Inggeris" (MBMMBI) or *"To uphold Bahasa Malaysia and to Strengthen the English Langauge"*. The government opined that the new approach to the teaching of Science and Mathematics could uphold Bahasa

Malaysia, strengthen command of English and boost students' capability in mastering Science and Mathematics, which were vital for the nation's future.

The decision to revert policy triggered substantial reaction from all levels of the public, and split the nation into several factions, with views ranging between being totally against, to totally for the policy.

Many felt that the decision to reintroduce Bahasa Malaysia in national schools and Mandarin and Tamil in vernacular schools as a medium of instruction had been hastily taken, and that more studies should have been conducted before implementing the policy. The public also lamented what they considered to be a sheer waste of public funds as billions of ringgit had already been spent to implement PPSMI and parents were also worried that the frequent changes in language policy would affect their children's education (Tharmalingam, 2012).

3.3 Migration and Policy in Malaysia

Malaysia has over 1.9 million registered migrants, making it the largest importer of labor in Asia (Amarjit, 2007). Foreign workers engaged in various employment sectors in the Malaysian economy come from some 15 countries, the largest number coming from Indonesia, followed by Nepal, and Bangladesh respectively (Devadason and Meng, 2014; ILO, 2016).

In the Malaysian context, policies to control labor migration have generally remained ad hoc since they were first realized as an "interim solution" to fill labor shortages over twenty years ago. Visible features of the policy framework have included a quota system for the entry of migrants and efforts to regularize migration through non-permanent amnesties. These measures have often been followed by bans on new admissions and large-scale law enforcement activities to detain and deport those migrants who do not register with regulators. Although frequent changes have been made, the guidelines have been steady in respect to admitting migrants only for the purpose of meeting the immediate labor needs of employers rather than enabling longer term settlement (ILO, 2016).

In spite of their ubiquity within the labor market, the Malaysian Government has not quickly accepted the role that migrant employees play in filling the demand for the low-skilled. For many years, goals have been set and policies introduced to reduce the number the country employs in order to encourage monetary restructuring. The latest Economic Model of Malaysia this year and other covering documents have sought to reduce dependency on migrants by using a variety of strategies, including charging a levy because of their employment, introducing a minimum wage, raising the pension age and increasing the number of women coming into paid employment (ILO, 2016). However, changing the composition of its labor force has proven hard to achieve, with companies complaining of severe disadvantages in certain industries when more restrictive policies have recently been applied (ILO, 2016).

The key government ministries involved in developing and administrating labor migration policy in Malaysia are the Ministry of Individual Resources (MOHR) and the Ministry of Home Affairs (MOHA). The tasks have not been divided evenly between the two organizations as MOHA has taken the lead in policy-making and implementation for many years. As a result, Malaysia's labor migration policies are heavily oriented towards national security. Enacting actions to expand or deal with the number of migrants in the country and reduce irregular migration have been the principal concerns, rather than taking care of the broader impacts of labor migration on nationwide economic and social development or maintaining workers' protection under the law.

To control labor migration, Malaysia has negotiated bilateral MOUs with several countries (Devadason & Meng, 2014). The first MOU was the milestone Medan Agreement between Malaysia and Indonesia in 1984, followed by numerous MOUs between Malaysia and other countries including the Philippines, Bangladesh, Chinese suppliers, Vietnam, Pakistan and Asia (Devadason & Meng, 2014).

4. Language planning through policy in Singapore

Singapore is a small country with around 5,800,000 people (2017). It is a multicultural society with Chinese (74.3%), Malay (13.4%), Indian (9.1%) including Sri

Lankans, and others (3.2%) according to statistics from 2016. There are also sizeable groups of Eurasians, Arabs and Europeans. (Fah, n.d.) as well as non-residents or foreigners in various types of work, students, dependents and others on temporary passes, making up about 26% or 1.3 million of the total population (Teng, 2015:25).

4.1 Brief background of ethnic groups and their languages in Singapore

Before independence, people spoke mostly their own ethnic languages: Chinese, Bahasa Malaysia and Indian. Chinese is a major group with five main dialects spoken in Singapore: Hokkien (41.1%), Teochew (21.0%), Cantonese (15.4%), Hakka (7.9%) and Hainanese (6.7%), while Fuzhou dialect (Hokchia, Hokchew), Pu-Xian Min (HengHua), and Shanghainese have smaller numbers of speakers ('Languages of Singapore', n.d.). The national language is Bahasa Malaysia which is the language of the national anthem and English, Bahasa Malaysia, Mandarin and Tamil are official languages. According to Singapore Department of Statistics in 2010 there were two large South Indian groups in Singapore with Tamils from India∠including those from Sri Lanka∠representing the biggest group with a population of 188,591, or 54.18% of all Indians resident in Singapore. Malayalees from Kerala are the second biggest group with 26,348, or 7.57% of Indians in Singapore. The other three main North Indian groups in Singapore (the Punjabi, Gujarati, and Sindhi communities) made up 7.67% and 29.68% consisted of smaller groups∠Telugus from South India, Bengalis from East India and Hindustanis from the North. As for the education system, there are private Chinese, Bahasa Malaysia and Tamil-medium schools, as well as government schools taught in English; although most students in Singapore are enrolled in Chinese-medium schools (Sim, n.d.).

4.2 Language planning after independence

After independence from Malaysia in 1965, Lee Kuan Yew, the former Prime Minister, who is considered Singapore's founding father ('Lee Kuan Yew', n.d.), envisaged a bilingual policy for Singaporeans:

> "We knew that if we were just like our neighbors, we would die," Mr Lee told the New York Times in 2007. "As the colonial powers gave up their grip in the region, many turned to reinforcing their identity as independent nations by rejecting Western influence within their countries" (Ong, 2015).

With its limited shared space, if different ethnic groups used their own languages, a new country like Singapore would become fragmented. Therefore, Mr. Lee maintained a policy to use English as the working language and encouraged the ethnic groups to learn their mother tongues for cultural preservation, i.e. Mr. Lee held the view that the ethnic Chinese should use Mandarin in preference to dialects, Bahasa Malaysia for the Malays and Tamil for the Indians. (Sim Ann, 2016). However, this top-down bilingual policy is a challenge for many ethnic groups.

> "This was a tall order for a young nation with a complex linguistic environment. It was already hard for someone to learn a language that he does not speak at home. But for someone to make a significant adjustment, even a complete change in his daily language use, was even harder. For those who saw language as a core part of their identity, it was downright painful". (Sim Ann, 2016).

This change though was necessary for the young multicultural nation which needed peace and unity, the bilingual policy facilitated better understanding for nation building among the three ethnic groups: Chinese, Malays and Indians. In addition, Singapore, like other Asian countries, is threatened by western influences, so a bilingual policy can accommodate Singaporeans who aim to use English proficiently and internationally as well as maintain their ethnic identities and values. Therefore, four official languages: Mandarin, Bahasa Malaysia, Tamil and English were proclaimed for Singapore to promote harmony among the ethnic groups. Their mother tongues carry their cultural values, whereas English is a lingua franca for all ethnic groups. Such a bilingual policy treats all languages equally with the same prestige.

British English is encouraged and used as a medium of instruction for all subjects. For the other three national languages, Mandarin is used for Chinese, Northern Bahasa Malaysia is promoted as the standardized Bahasa Malaysia, and formal literacy

register of Tamil is used in schools and media (Gopinathan et al, 1999); these three ethnic languages are taught as a second language. Moreover, cross-communication between different groups occurs such as cases of Malays speaking Mandarin and Indian speaking Bahasa Malaysia (Stroud and Wee 2007). There is also the Higher Mother Tongue (HMT), provided as an additional and optional subject, which has a higher level of achievement for each selected mother tongue in primary and secondary schools. Any student who earns the HMT is waived junior college mother tongue classes.

4.3 Chinese Mandarin policy

As for the Chinese dialects, the government of Singapore considered that the Chinese dialects were too fragmented and hindered communication among the whole community. Therefore, in 1979, 'The Speak Mandarin Campaign' (SMC) was launched by promoting the use of Mandarin among Chinese Singaporeans including replacing traditional Chinese characters with simplified Chinese. Despite Mandarin not being the mother tongue of any particular ethnic group, it is the language of the largest Chinese group of Singapore and is strongly linked to Chinese traditions and culture, including the language of commerce. The government implemented SMC phase by phase as follows:

1) 1979-1984: the government launched a campaign *'Less Dialect. More Mandarin'*. This campaign encouraged all Chinese Singaporeans to use Mandarin.
2) 1985-1990: the government continued with another campaign *'Mandarin is for Chinese'*. This campaign encouraged parents to speak Mandarin with their children.
3) 1991-1997: the next campaign of the government was *'If you are a Chinese, make a statement in Mandarin'*. This campaign encouraged English-educated Chinese, who were losing their Chinese cultural heritage because of their speaking English.
4) 1985-present: the government's campaign is *'Speak Mandarin. It's an Asset'*. The government wants to promote Mandarin as the economic and commercial language that builds ties with China. (NG Chin Leong, 2010)

The reason for launching the SMC was undesirable western lifestyles that were influenced by the dominance of English including drug abuse, sexual permissiveness and political liberalism. Therefore, the 'SMC' policy was launched to restore the Chinese community and its ethnic identity under the banner of 'Western Science, Asian values' (Chua 1995; Chew 2007). According to the SMC policy–over more than 40 years– the strategy is to launch campaigns every five to six years until finally achieving the goal of the nation.

However, critics of the SMC complain that this is a top-down policy with little consultation with the Chinese community. Although people speak different Chinese dialects, they can communicate with each other and as a study by Platt (1980) found: "Singapore Chinese can speak not only his/her own native Chinese dialect spoken at home but also the dominant Chinese dialect (Hokkien) and an additional Chinese dialect acquired from friends or relatives". Moreover, one might argue that no matter whether eastern or western values, the important point is that Singaporeans should adopt good values from both eastern and western cultures, a mix which is unavoidable in a cosmopolitan society like Singapore. Chinese dialects preserve cultural heritage, not Mandarin, so the weakening of dialects may be diminishing the cultural base (Kuo 1985; Woon, 1992).

Nevertheless, the Chinese community still prefer their own dialects in informal settings such events as births, weddings and funerals, and even election rallies at which candidates often use local dialects (Tan 2007). According to Kuo (1985), most Chinese do not agree with the SMC of the government as it ignores the dialects, and losing dialects means losing their cultural roots.

After several decades of SMC policy implementation, the obvious result is that the majority of the young generation of Chinese cannot speak their parents' dialects to communicate with the elderly (Gupta and Siew, 1995). This shows that although the SMC policy has achieved its goal, the side effects include the loss of dialect use by the young generation. This may create tension between the Mandarin-speaking (Mandarin speakers) and the non-Mandarin speaking (Indians and Malays) who may feel resentment towards the dominance of Chinese Mandarin, which threatens to marginalize non-

speakers. In the long-term, the SMC may negatively affect the multi-ethnic and multi-cultural mosaic of Singapore (Zainuri, 1998 cited in NG Chin Leong, 2010).

4.4 The Speak Good English Movement replacing Singlish policy

From its launch on 29 April 2000, the government tried to promote the "First Speak Good English Movement" (SGEM) instead of Singlish,[ii] which is a creole English mixing many ethnic languages and is a marker of Singapore identity. Singlish is hardly understood by native English speakers and is regarded as substandard English and detrimental to Singapore's goal of becoming a first-world economy. According to former Prime Minister Gok Chok Tong, who launched the SGEM, there were five reasons for initiating the first SGEM campaign:

1) More than half of the children in Singapore are not exposed to English at home.

2) Some primary school pupils have difficulties identifying "good English from Singlish".

3) Singlish is used among secondary school students when discussing with their peers.

4) Polytechnic and university students have been found to use Singlish in semi-formal situations.

5) Popularization of the use of Singlish in the media has been found to be one of the factors that fosters its usage (Darlana, 2011:2).

Since 2000, campaigns have been launched annually in the form of various events and programmes, developing learning contents by producing materials and organizing workshops, seminars, contests and programs in collaboration with the British Council, the Society for Reading and Literacy and the Singapore Retailers Association (Darlana, 2011:1). There have been numerous themes used in promoting the SGEM policy since 2000, as follows:

1) 2000-2004: *Speak Well. Be Understood*.
2) 2005/6: *Speak Up. Speak Out. Speak Well*.
3) 2006/7: *Be Understood. Not Only in Singapore, Malaysia and Batam.*
4) 2007/8: *Rock Your World! Express Yourself.*
5) 2008/9: *I Can.*
6) 2009/10: *Impress. Inspire. Intoxicate*.

7) 2010/11: *Get It Right.*

8) 2011/12: *How You Speak Makes a Difference.*

9) 2012/13: *Make Good English Stick.*

10) 2013/14: *10 Tips to Improve Your English.*

11) 2014/15: *Grammar Rules Matter. Use Good English.*

Apart from setting the themes, the SGEM also aims at different groups of people through the year. For example, the service sector was the focus in 2004, 2006 and 2008 and youth were the target in 2007 and 2008 (Sim, n.d.). In the education system, the government focuses on using correct and standard grammatical English and the media is urged to reduce its use of Singlish. Subsequent Prime Ministers have discouraged using Singlish in schools and in formal settings, although it is not restricted in informal settings (Wong, 2015).

4.5 Bahasa Melayu as the National Language

After Singapore's independence in 1965, Bahasa Malaysia, became one of four national languages because of its widespread use among people as an expression of their identity, and its political value within the region (Alsagoff 2008, cited in Cavallaro, 2010). The Bahasa Malaysia language is written in Roman script otherwise known as Rumi. It is used in national ceremonies, the national anthem and language of command in the armed forces (Gintai, 2012). Apart from Bahasa Malaysia-lexified pidgin languages such as Bazaar Malay, Baba Malay are widely used, especially by older Singaporeans (Aye 2005, cited in Cavallaro, 2010).

According to a study by Kuo (1980b cited in Cavallaro, 2010), in 1957 almost half of Singaporeans (48.0%) were able to speak Bahasa Malaysia and in 1978 more than two thirds (67.3%) were still able to understand it. Bahasa Malaysia is offered as the third language option for non-Malays at Singapore schools and the top 10% of each cohort are able to enroll in a third language, which diminishes the number of learners. However, nowadays Bahasa Malaysia is open for any students interested in learning it (Kassim 2008, cited in Cavallaro, 2010).

Furthermore, although Bahasa Malaysia speakers have been able to maintain their language better than other ethnic groups, there is an increasing shift towards the use of only English by the young. According to Cavallaro's study (2010), households with a high income or higher education tend to use English at home more than lower income households and those with less education. This suggests that English is also regarded as having potential economic value and thus worth mastering.

4.6 Tamil and non-Tamil language policy

Tamil is one of the four official languages in Singapore. According to a study by Saravanan (1999), Tamil parents and their children used to use English for family activities except for prayers and communication with relatives. The young generation of Tamils, from 5-14 years old, tended to use English more than other ethnic groups and one of the reasons for this is that Tamil Singaporeans are highly mobile and well educated because they quickly learned that economic opportunities come with a good command of English. Another reason was that the Tamil language taught in schools differed from the colloquial Tamil used at home; although a revision of learning and teaching Tamil was made in 1999 by the Ministry of Education (David and others, 2009).

There are other groups of Indians in Singapore, but Tamils are the majority and there is a debate about Tamil and non-Tamil languages among the Indian population. In 1989, the Ministry of Education allowed non-Tamil Indian students to study one of the five official mother languages of India: Hindi, Gujarati, Bengali, Punjabi and Urdu. Although Tamil was the sole official language, it had lost its place as the only Indian Mother tongue language available for those enrolled in the National Education system in Singapore (Singh, 2011).

Furthermore, in the past 5-7 years, the demographics of the Indian diaspora in Singapore have changed as there are new migrant citizens and permanent residents who are mostly non-Tamil speakers. According to the census in 2010, less than 50% of the Indian population was literate in the Tamil language and just over a third of Singapore Indians spoke Tamil at home. Now, non-Tamil speaking Indians are seeking acceptance of the use of their own mother tongues, which makes for an uneasy state of affairs as Tamil is the only official Indian language of Singapore. It is time for all

stakeholders of Indian languages to have an open and honest discussion in order to find a better solution for all Indian groups in Singapore (Singh, 2011).

4.7 Migration in Singapore

According Ministry of Manpower in 2016, there were 1,393,000 foreign workers. Singapore has been one of the most popular destinations for skilled and unskilled labourers from Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Philippines and Thailand. The main reason for importing workers today is the aging society, and the high level of education of the Singaporean work force, who do not want to do the '3D' (dirty, dangerous and demanding) jobs. (Piper, 2005: 3; Teng, 2015: 27). There is a strong demand for foreign unskilled labours in specific sectors/jobs and since 1991-2001, several sectors such as transport and communications, financial and business services, and community and personal services have grown significantly (Piper, 2005: 3-4). Consequently, Singapore has become a land of immigration (Teng, 2015:26). According to immigration policy, the vast majority of foreigners in Singapore are temporary residents who will leave the country after the expiration of their work or other short-term passes. Low and semi-skilled are allowed to work provided they obtain work permits, which are valid for two or three years in the first instance, and renewable thereafter. After the completion of the contract, the holder of a work permit must return to their home country. Work permit holders may not marry Singaporeans without the prior approval of the Controller of Work Passes, or have children or settle in the country (Wong, 2011; Cai and Ong 2011, cited by Teng, 2015: 27).

Foreign professionals, skilled workers and investors ('foreign talent') are encouraged to settle in Singapore as permanent residents or even take up citizenship after a period of employment. Furthermore, some foreign students are encouraged to study in Singapore in the hope that some will remain and contribute economically to the country (Teng, 2015: 27).

Language training for domestic workers[iii], according to Piper (2005), is available in Singapore in places such as the Indonesian Embassy which provides language training courses: English and Mandarin for Indonesian workers, for religious guidance and

skills enhancement sessions. Madonna/Laksetha Skills Centers, run by Sri Lankan Catholic Community, provides English language training (Piper 2005: 12, 14), and the Social Development Initiative (SDI) Academy, started by a young junior college student named Sazzad Hossain (Bangladesh migrant) who wants to help overcome the language barrier faced migrant workers. Also, there is support from Yale and NUS and other examples of social enterprise (Lay, 2015).

5. Discussion and summary:

Although Thailand is a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society, Thais seldom realize or appreciate how important diversity is. Due to the fact that Thailand has never had a language policy to maintain the alternative languages used in its multicultural society, many ethnic groups there are losing their languages and some are now endangered. Moreover, standard Thai, including Thai dialects, is also in decline while the proficiency of Thais in foreign languages is low compared with neighbouring countries, which consequently affects their exposure to the international domain including competitiveness and advantages.

According to Thailand's national language policy and the language planning concept of Stewart, language policy design will incorporate the following features:

-Thai language is an official language, medium of instruction in education, school subjects in International schools, working language of migrant workers and group language for the disabled.

- Regional languages, Tai language family and ethnic minority languages are provincial and group languages. Moreover, some ethnic minority languages are trialed as mediums of instruction and as a school subject in some areas.

- Languages of commerce, neighboring languages, and working languages: English, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, including other ASEAN languages are international languages and school subjects.

Although Thailand recently drafted a National Language Policy (in 2015), it is yet to be actively implemented. This prospective scheme employs a 'bottom-up' approach

which is opposite to that of Malaysia and Singapore. Although it has emerged from an agreement among involved stakeholders, it is not enthusiastically implemented as the country's leadership fails to recognize its importance and effect on the language proficiency of its citizens.

According to the draft National Language Policy of Thailand, if it is implemented, it will cover all domains and most people in multicultural Thai society, all of whom will be supported and empowered. Once people have had their own basic right to use their mother tongue met, it will provide a good base for learning other languages easily and effectively. We hope that after a decade of the language policy implementation, we will see a change in the language proficiency of many Thai people. But if we do not move forward, we will diminish our national capacity and squander our most valuable resource–the potential of the people.

Furthermore, Thailand is a primary destination for unskilled migrant workers from neighboring countries working in 3 D jobs which Thai people do not want - much the same as Singapore. Although the government subsidizes help for the children of migrant workers to study in Thai schools, only some migrant workers use this service. Thai schools groom their children to become Thais gradually, which will prepare them to live in Thailand with fewer problems. If they want to be able to maintain their identity, including their mother tongue, their families should help them at home and in their society more. In reality though, their families are often simply too busy and struggle to earning their living. In the future, if they go back to their countries, the children of migrant workers may not be able to continue in their own education system and society. They may take some time to 're-acculturate'. However, there are alternative choices offered to them by temples or NGOs who run their own schools using their mother tongues as well as their own curriculum. The parents of these children prepare them to be able to maintain their language, culture and knowledge for when they return to their own country, Myanmar in particular.

Malaysia has had a language policy since independence using Bahasa Malaysia as the national and official language including as medium of instruction in education.

Chinese and Tamil languages are taught in their own schools at primary level as medium of instruction but not secondary onwards. Although one language may help unify the nation, it cannot cope with the tide of globalization. The leadership of the country soon recognized the limits of using only Bahasa Malaysia and the Prime Minister reversed the policy by introducing English as the medium of instruction in mathematics and science as subjects. This policy was active until 2011 after which a bilingual policy–English and Bahasa Malaysia–was promoted in education.

For unskilled migrant workers in Malaysia, there is no clear policy strategy on how to empower them language-wise. However, Bahasa Malaysia and/or English are the working languages of migrant workers.

The language policy of Singapore has been implemented over more than 50 years. Its impacts have been both positive and negative. By way of a top-down policy and the strong determination and vision of several former Prime Ministers who wanted to secure Singapore at the first rank of the world economy, today the fruitful language policy for producing international citizens is very successful. Moreover, although it has taken more than 50 years to succeed, we can learn how the strategic plan the government of Singapore was implemented for each language campaign launched. When the government wanted to drive the SMC, and SGEM policies–a period of years in the case of SMC, and annual steps for SGEM–strategies were planned to obtain the level of language they wanted people to achieve by promoting slogans or themes and implementing them decisively. As a result, most Singaporeans are bilingual or multilingual.

According to Stewart's concept, Mandarin, Bahasa Malaysia, Tamil and English are official and international languages of wider communication, education and religion. English is the working language of foreign workers.

However, the language policy of Singapore is like two sides of a coin: when one side faces up, the other side will face-down, unless there is vision in planning for diversity and the maintenance of other languages. According to studies, most of the young generation of all ethnic groups have already shifted to English, and ethnic Chinese

have also shifted to Mandarin. Therefore, there is a trend toward the loss of mother tongue languages, perhaps within two generations. The multicultural mosaic of Singapore will be changed forever if little heed is paid to this risk by the government, stakeholders and the users themselves.

From the examples of these three countries, the effect of the top-down policies of Malaysia and Singapore are obvious as it shows the vision of the leaders and direction of the countries. Language policy can be changed according to the situation at the time after monitoring its outcome. However, when specific mainstream languages are focused on, the decline of other smaller languages is almost inevitable. It is a challenge for both scholars and policy makers as to how to help them to maintain their languages and ensure that multilingual societies in ASEAN are promoted.

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[i] Malay refers to Austronesian ethnic group.

[ii] The vocabulary of Singlish consists of words originating from English, Bahasa Malaysia, Hokkien, Teochew, Cantonese, Tamil and to a lesser extent various other European, Indic and Sinitic languages. Also, elements of American and Australian slang have come through from imported television series and films.(Pete, 2008)

[iii] Migrant domestic workers in Singapore—classified as semi-skilled—lack many of the same protections as unskilled migrant workers, such as employment benefits, a minimum wage, and standardized working hours. Furthermore, because most work in private, domestic spaces, there is little to no government oversight over their relations with their employer, making the potential for abuse high (Sacco, 2016)