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We are very proud to present this first Special Edition of *The Linguistics Journal*. The purpose of *The Linguistics Journal* is to provide a means for the dissemination of original and high quality research in theoretical as well as Applied Linguistics. It is gratifying to all of us involved with the journal to see how much we have grown in recent times both in terms of readership and of the quality of publications. The journal is increasingly attracting a bigger readership and is gaining wider recognition as an international scholarly journal of Linguistics. This is due to the high quality of the articles published, and these high standards have been possible due to the many talented authors who submit their research to us and to our capable team of editors and proofreaders who make sure all published articles are of the highest possible standards.

This is the first Special Edition commissioned by the journal. It is the product of a year-long process that has excited and challenged us as editors of this burgeoning linguistics journal. As the first Special Edition we decided to focus on the sociolinguistic exploration of Asian languages, cultures and identities and we are pleased to present eight articles on this theme, which are further confirmation of the great progress our journal has made in the last few years.

Sociolinguistic research by Asians in Asia has received relatively little recognition in other parts of the world, especially work done in India and Japan in the early 20th century (Coulmas 2005). Back in 1992, Kingsley Bolton deliberated on how to ‘marry’ western Linguistics with the burgeoning Asian style of research. Today, Sociolinguistics in Asia has come to be more rightfully recognised, as exemplified by
the number of excellent researchers in the field now. Asia offers a varied and challenging environment for research, and Asian linguists, and linguists from elsewhere, carrying out research in Asia, are now exploring the continent’s rich linguistic diversity and we can look ahead to more exciting and high quality research. The growth of Linguistics, and Sociolinguistics in particular, in Asia has also been helped by the increase in Asian tertiary institutions teaching Linguistics. In turn, these institutions graduate a significant number of Asian researchers every year. This influx of researchers has led to Sociolinguistic research in Asia today becoming incredibly diverse, in topic and approach, and with a focus on a multitude of languages that is hard to match by the Linguistics scenes in Europe and the Americas.

This Special Edition of *The Linguistics Journal* is an example of this, with the articles presented here dealing with languages as diverse as Cantonese, Santal, Turkish, Persian, French, and English in different Asian contexts and by a variety of Asian scholars; and geographically encompassing countries from the west of Asia, such has Lebanon, Iran and Turkey, to Bangladesh in South Asia, to Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand in South East Asia, and Japan in East Asia. Approaches also vary from discourse and genre analysis to language policy and intercultural communication, while the topics are as varied as the geographical areas investigated.

The majority of the articles fit into the theme of this issue and that is issues of language and identity. Baker discusses what the concepts of language, culture and identity mean in relation to English used as a lingua franca (ELF) in Asia. He posits that English functions as a language of communication in Asia that should be viewed as separate from ‘native speaker’ norms of English use in nations seen as predominantly English-speaking. His discussion is based on an ethnographic study of users of English in Thailand. Wong presents a discussion on the identity of ethnic Chinese in Hong Kong who have had a substantial stay overseas and how students from HK perceive: their own national identity before they left for an English-speaking country to further their studies; whether these HK Chinese had changed their perceptions towards their own national identity when they were abroad; and their perceptions of their national identity on returning to Hong Kong. Winchester’s is an examination of what verbal expressions of the self concept, assessed through analysis of self descriptions, reveal about an individual’s identity claims in a given interaction. This study is an interesting exploration of Japanese Diaspora in Britain and, specifically, looks at the communication behaviour of a number of Japanese women conversing in
English with a British interlocutor in England. The issue of cultural identity turns out to play an extremely salient role in these women’s self concept in intercultural communication.

Identity is also the topic of discussion of the next two papers, one from Iran, a country that is becoming increasingly more active in Linguistics research, and the other Lebanon. Mahdavy’s paper is an empirical study into the reflection of Iranian identities in the headlines of national daily newspapers. The study suggests that identities are reflected differently in each newspaper investigated, for example, with some being relatively negative towards a more western identity while others see it more conservatively. Diab investigates Lebanese university students’ perceptions of their ethnic, national, and linguistic identity and their preferences for choice of first foreign language (FL) and medium of instruction in pre-university schools in Lebanon. Findings revealed: the first FL learned was an important factor influencing these students’ preferences for medium of instruction; the importance of English as an essential international language for Lebanese university students in this study; and that some students whose first FL is French expressed a strong affiliation with French language and culture.

The next three papers deal with minority groups in a number of countries. Over the years, voices have been raised for legal rights for the indigenous minorities of the world and for the preservation of indigenous languages. Baykal studied the discursive strategies employed for the revival of the ethnic identities of Romani people living in the Sulukule region in Istanbul, Turkey. While the group is linguistically Turkish, the ‘gentrification’ process in the region has threatened their human, social, cultural, and historical rights. David, Cavallaro and Coluzzi describe the language policies, planning and implementation in Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei and the Philippines and discuss the impact of such policies on the maintenance of a number of minority languages. The findings indicate that some countries have language policies that benefit some of the minority languages; while others do not seem to be doing enough to prevent the shift to majority languages. Finally, Cavallaro and Rahman present the plight of the Santals, a significant speech community among forty-five other distinctive minority groups in Bangladesh. With its rich cultural heritage and history, the Santali language has a unique value for the Santal and deserves special attention for conservation. This paper first gives a detailed description of the Santals and their language. Issues of linguistic rights are discussed in the context of indigenous people in Bangladesh, and suggestions are made for the process of integrated public involvement in the
multilingual education process for the Santals as an effective way to enable indigenous people in Bangladesh to learn their traditional language, the national language, Bangla, along with English.

Finally we would like to thank the authors, the editors and the proofreaders for their efforts in putting this Special Edition of *The Linguistics Journal* together. We hope you enjoy reading these articles and we look forward to your continued support.

**References**


Language, Culture and Identity through English as a Lingua Franca in Asia: Notes from the Field

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Biodata

He currently teaches Applied Linguistics/ELT at the University of Southampton. He completed a PhD in Applied Linguistics at Southampton on the subject of intercultural awareness and intercultural communication through English in Asia. Before coming to Southampton in 2005, he taught at Silpakorn University in Thailand. He has worked as an English language teacher for over 10 years in both the UK and Thailand. His research interests include: intercultural awareness, intercultural communication, English as a Lingua Franca, English language teaching, and second language learning.

Abstract

This article will discuss what the concepts of language, culture and identity mean in relation to English used as a lingua franca (ELF) in Asia. It will be argued that English functions as a language of communication in Asia that should be viewed as separate from the traditional ‘native speaker’ norms. To support this, the discussion will draw on data from an ethnographic study of seven users of English in Thailand. The data suggests that English in this context is used to articulate and enact cultures and identities which are fluid, liminal and emerge in situ. This challenges existing categorisations of languages, cultures and identities; in particular, the supposedly inexorable links between a target language and target culture. Furthermore, such dynamic and emergent notions of cultures, languages and identities expressed through English have important implications for the teaching of English in Asia and other lingua franca contexts.

Key words: English as a lingua franca, culture, language, identity, Asia, English language teaching
Introduction
The spread of the English language both globally and in Asia has given rise to a plethora of issues, which if we follow Brumfit’s often quoted definition of applied linguistics as “the theoretical and empirical investigation of real world problems in which language is the central issue” (2001: 169), are of importance to all in the field. In particular it challenges fundamental tenets in applied linguistics concerning traditional conceptions of the relationships between languages, cultures and identities. Global English use brings into question the inexorable link between a particular language and culture, as proposed in the strong form of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis (Whorf, 1939), and earlier discussions of foreign language teaching and culture (for example Valdes, 1986), which were often based on a simplistic correlation of language, culture and nationality. This article offers a ‘theoretical and empirical investigation’ of how these relationships may be expressed through the use of English as a lingua franca (ELF) in Asia.

To set the context a brief definition of ELF will be offered related to English use in Asia. The article will then draw on notions of language, culture and identity from a post-structuralist perspective, in which the boundaries and legitimacy of all three of these categories are not taken as defined, uncontested or of given relevance (Sarup, 1996). This incorporates the kind of dynamic, fluid and even contradictory characterisations necessary to understand how communication works in diverse and transitory ELF situations. This will be combined with data taken from an ethnographic study of English language users in Thailand, to illustrate how culture and identity are referenced and enacted through English for these users.

It will be suggested that the use of English as a lingua franca in Asia, illustrated by the data from these users, necessitates a reconsideration of the supposed inexorable links between culture and language. Languages and their relationships to cultures and identities need to be understood as fluid, liminal and emerging in instances of communication, rather than as a priori defined categories. Moreover, this raises important issues for English language teaching (ELT) in Asia, suggesting that ELT needs to incorporate a more dynamic and fluid conception of language, culture and identity than the traditional target language-target culture correlation.

ELF and Asia
ELF can be defined simply as “a way of referring to communication in English between speakers with different first languages” (Seidlhofer, 2005: 339). While lingua franca communication has not traditionally included native speakers, it must be recognised that native English speakers (NES) are also part of the global use of English. This has resulted in a wider definition of ELF in which native speakers are included; yet crucially the norms of ELF communication are not driven by NES norms, whether lexical, grammatical, phonological or cultural (Baker, 2008b; Cogo and Dewey, 2006; Deterding and Kirkpatrick, 2006; Jenkins, 2000; 2006; 2007; Seidlhofer, 2004). A reformulated definition of ELF has been offered as communication in English between participants who have different ‘linguacultures’ (Jenkins, 2006: 164), whether categorised as NES, or second/foreign language users. The inclusion of the term ‘linguacultures’ is also useful in highlighting the language-culture connection and the importance of different languages and cultures in communication. This conception of ELF, thus, recognises the plurality of forms of English and the power of the majority of non-NES users. In so doing ELF, in definition at least, is removed from exocentric ‘monolithic’ language and communication norms associated with ‘native speaker’ English.

Turning to Asia, English is now commonly described as the lingua franca of the region (McArthur, 2003; Kachru, 2005; Kirkpatrick, 2007; Tsui and Tollefson, 2007). While Asia contains other widely distributed languages such as Chinese, Hindi-Urdu, and Arabic, which have a worldwide usage, they are mainly used within concentrated geographical areas and are not used on a pan-Asian scale in the same way as English. Furthermore, as McArthur notes, speakers of these languages also learn and use English as a language for international communication alongside these languages (2003: 20). Thus, the scale of English use in Asia is immense. Although the numbers are hard to predict accurately, rough estimates of English users in India and China have been put at around half a billion making them the largest ‘consumers’ of the language in the world (Kachru, 2005: 14; Kirkpatrick, 2003; McArthur, 2003: 22). This leads McArthur to propose that while the centre of native speaking English may be the North Atlantic countries, the centre of English as a second language is South and East Asia. Furthermore, English has been used in parts of Asia such as India, Singapore and the Philippines for almost 200 years, which compares well with Australia and New Zealand in terms of historical penetration (Kachru, 1998: 91). Kachru (2005) has adapted his model of the three concentric circles of English to Asia. The inner circle, norm providing countries include Australia and New Zealand; the outer circle, norm developing countries include India, Malaysia, the Philippines and Singapore; and
expanding circle norm dependent countries include China, Indonesia, Japan and Thailand. While there are a number of problems with this model, a discussion of which is beyond this paper¹, the distinction between inner circle, outer circle and expanding circle, if somewhat generalised, is useful.

As suggested by Kachru’s circles, in many Asian countries, such as India, Malaysia, and Singapore English functions as, to use McArthur’s phrase, a ‘second first language’ (2003: 21). More significantly for this discussion English is used as the lingua franca between other Asian countries in which it does not have official status. In a number of SE Asian countries, including Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam and Thailand (the setting of this study), English is used as a language of trade and tourism as well as the language of the elite and has largely replaced French (McArthur, 2003: 21). The political role of English in the region is illustrated in ASEAN’s adoption of English as its working language (Kirkpatrick, 2003; 2007). This extensive penetration of English within Asia and its adoption as both a first and second language leads both Kachru and McArthur to refer to English as more than a lingua franca in Asia, but as an Asian language in its own right. Therefore, we have a picture of English use in Asia as being both at the local level, for local needs within countries, and also at the global level as a lingua franca used to communicate across the region and internationally.

Such extensive use of a language which is not ‘native’ to the region has generated debate about the merits of this situation. While this article cannot deal with them all in depth there are issues related to linguistic power relations which cannot be ignored. Most significantly is what Kachru refers to as ‘the albatross of mythology’ (2005: 16-17) whereby the NES or inner circle countries wield immense but subtle control over the language. This includes the myth of the native speaker as a model to which all should conform, reinforced through teaching practice and materials. Equally significantly it includes the exporting of knowledge and ‘expertise’ produced by the NES countries at the expense of more locally grounded knowledge (Canagarajah, 2005; Mühlhäusler, 1996; Pennycook, 1994; Phillipson, 1992; Tsui and Tollefson, 2007). This is countered to an extent in regions where English functions as an established second language, or Kachru’s ‘outer circle’, and has become an accepted “nativized medium for articulating local identities within and across Asia” (1998: 103).

¹ A particular problem with Kachru’s three concentric circles is the association between English languages and geographical regions rather than users of the language. This does not incorporate the fluidity of English language use as speakers move between different settings. For a fuller discussion see Bruthiaux, (2003), Jenkins, (2003), Pennycook (2007) among others.
However, in relation to the expanding circle countries the situation is more complex. As Jenkins (2007) extensive survey of attitudes to English highlights, there is still a high degree of ‘linguistic insecurity’ among non-native speakers (NNS) in the expanding circle, especially so in SE Asia. Jenkins believes the influence of the standard language ideology of NES is still widespread in the region, and results in a correspondingly negative or deficit view of NNS English. However, she also suggests that there is some ambiguity in the attitudes of NNS English teachers towards NES norms. Jenkins interprets this as an indication of the beginnings of a possible shift towards acceptance of other norms than NES, and in particular emerging acceptance of ELF as a legitimate variety. Indeed given the vast number of ‘non-native speakers’ engaged in ELF communication on a daily basis in Asia, inner circle native speaker norms should no longer be considered of relevance in such communication. Exactly what this might entail for the form ELF communication takes in Asia will be examined below.

The study

To support and illustrate the theoretical discussion data will be presented from an empirical study of English use conducted in Thailand. Thailand is part of the expanding circle of English, and currently does not have its own codified variety of English (Butler, 1999; 2005; Watkhadarm, 2005), although there is an informal folk variety known as ‘Thinglish’. Therefore, it seems reasonable to expect English to function predominantly as a lingua franca for intercultural communication in Thailand (Kirkpatrick, 2007; Taylor, 2006). Indeed English is the most commonly used second language in a wide range of domains. It is a compulsory second language in schools and in tertiary education and forms an important part of the most recent Education Act (1999) and the National Education Curriculum (2002 cited in Wongsothorn et.al. 2003). Wongsothorn et al. (1996: 93-95) found English the second most commonly used language in the media, after Thai. English was also the most frequently used second/foreign language in business both with native and non-native speakers. There is an overall perception of English as an essential part of Thailand’s development and as a lingua franca to connect culturally, intellectually and commercially with the rest of the world (Baker, 2008a; Foley, 2005; Wongsothorn et al, 2003). The penetration of English in Thailand and the perception of its role in national development are features shared with many other Asian contexts in which English functions as the main second or foreign language (Nunan, 2003; Tsui and Tollefson, 2007).
Furthermore, the study was conducted in an academic, university context. This is another context where we might expect to see English functioning as a lingua franca. As Jenkins (2007) makes clear, in the expanding circle ELF is the predominant form of English communication in academic settings. However, it is important to note that ELF does not refer to a geographical location or context but rather a type of communication, and can thus take place anywhere. Nonetheless, it is reasonable to expect ELF communication to be a feature of academic settings in an expanding circle country such as Thailand.

The data used in this article is drawn from a larger ethnographic study investigating intercultural awareness, intercultural communication and second language learning for seven users of English at a Thai university. The seven participants were all undergraduate English majors with a level of English at around intermediate or above, and Thai was the first language for all. Data were collected over a six month period using interviews, recordings of intercultural communication, questionnaires, journals, fieldwork notes and relevant documents from the research participants’ environment, such as government policies on language education and local curricula. The interviews and intercultural recordings formed the main data resource with the other data sources used to triangulate this.

All of the participants were recorded in two interviews of approximately one hour each. The objective of these interviews was to obtain background ethnographic information about the participants; their attitudes and experiences of language learning, intercultural communication and cultures; and their interpretations of and reactions to the research process. The interviews followed a semi-structured format (Richards, 2003) with areas to be covered but no strict order of questions, and the possibility of developing the interviews in directions related to the participants’ responses.

The intercultural communication recordings involved three recordings of each participant in groups and individually engaged in conversation with a non-Thai English speaker. All of the participants were recorded in discussions in which they were provided with topics to discuss and in conversations in which there was no given subject. Where possible the participants’ interlocutors were a mix of people they did not know and people whom they were familiar with (although not all the participants were able to record conversations with familiar interlocutors). With one exception the data was not naturally occurring in that the conversations and discussion were organised by the researcher. However, the researcher was only present for one of the discussions and the participants were free to take the
discussions and conversations in any direction they wished. Although, they were artificially initiated these recordings represent real examples of intercultural communication since the participants were engaged in communication with interlocutors from other cultural backgrounds than their own.

Data analysis was primarily qualitative with the participants’ interviews and intercultural communication transcribed and coded. The data presented in this article are extracts from the transcriptions of the interviews and intercultural communication recordings (the transcription conventions are presented in the appendix). These extracts have been selected due to their relevance to the topics under discussion, their degree of typicality in relation to the rest of the data, and as representing critical incidents that illustrate key points in the discussion.

There are, of course, a number of limitations to the data. Firstly, although focusing on a small number of participants enabled an in-depth, rich description of their English use and attitudes to intercultural communication and other cultures, this is at the expense of generalisability. The limited number of participants and the single setting obviously restrict extrapolation to other contexts. However, while this researcher is unable to generalise from the data, it is hoped that through providing rich descriptions readers may find features which resonate in other environments in Asia and beyond.

The influence of the researcher and the research process also needs to be considered. While the research aims and precise focus were not made available to the participants, the general area of the research, culture and language use, was explained. Furthermore, through the interview questions and recordings of intercultural communication the participants would also have become focused on the areas of culture, language and identity, albeit in a very general and less explicit way. Nevertheless, the fact that the participants were able to discuss these topics in detail during their interviews suggests that these were not new areas to them, and that they had previously considered them.

**Language and ELF**

This article will begin with a position on language in which form, function and meaning are seen as interrelated. As Lantolf and Thorne remind us “meaning and form are dialectically dependent upon one another and that one without the other presents a distorted picture of language” (2006: 5). Thus language should be studied in reference to the situation in which it occurs. It is this socially situated approach to
understanding language use and learning that has been most extensively adopted in ELF studies, accompanied by a rejection of many of the more mainstream SLA concepts of native and non-native speakers, interlanguage and language learners versus language users, as inadequate in accounting for ELF communication (Canagarajah, 2007; Firth and Wagner, 2007; Jenkins, 2006; 2007; Kramsch and Whiteside, 2007; Seidlhofer, 2004) Furthermore, such a socially focused approach is more likely to yield insights into the relationships between languages, cultures and identities in ELF.

This does not entail a rejection of the need to understand the more traditional formal features of language such as lexis, syntax and pronunciation, and ELF studies have dealt with these areas. One of the most extensive studies is Jenkins’ lingua franca core (2000) which has attempted to identify features of pronunciation in ELF communication which are different from native speaker English, but which do not hinder intelligibility and as such, Jenkins believes, should be regarded as a legitimate form of English. Within Asia Deterding and Kirkpatrick (2006) investigated the pronunciation features of ten ELF speakers from ASEAN countries. Like Jenkins they also claim to have identified shared features of communication between the speakers which were different to NES norms, but did not impede understanding. The lexis and syntax of ELF has also been documented, most significantly through the Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English (VOICE) which has recorded and transcribed over a million words from spoken ELF interactions and lead to a greater understanding of the lexico-grammar of ELF (Seidlhofer, 2004). Further research in this area has also been undertaken by Cogo and Dewey (2006) and within academic contexts by House (2003) and Björkman (2008).

Of equal importance to an understanding of the phonological and lexico-grammatical features of ELF is a flexible approach to the use of language itself. ELF communication, in common with other forms of intercultural communication, can also be characterised by mixing between varieties of a language and also code switching with other languages (Canagarajah, 2005; 2007; Firth and Wagner, 2007; Kramsch and Whiteside, 2007; Meierkord, 2002). Thus, successful ELF communication is based on more than proficiency in the language code. The previous authors stress the necessity of skills such as accommodation, negotiation and an awareness of different frames of reference, often culturally based, in ELF communication. Therefore, as suggested at the start of this section, the manner in which language functions in ELF cannot be properly understood through examining formal features alone.
While the focus of the research presented here was not specifically on language itself, the interviews with the participants reveal much about their linguistic behaviour and attitudes towards the English language. Firstly, the participants express tolerance towards code mixing and adapting language to local needs. In example one below Yim describes the way in which the boundaries between English and Thai are mixed. English influences local linguistic norms, but at the same time English is changed to ‘become a word in Thai’.

Example 1
1. YIM: yes because err at the moment I think there are people especially young people who use like
2. internet or those kinds of things and then they watch TV they listen to English songs they look up
3. the English information in the on the internet so sometimes it is it seems like they mix the two
4. languages together …and then some words in English become a word in Thai

Drawing on personal experience another participant, Oy, talks about the ease with which she switches between English and Thai with a friend in example two. In example three she also demonstrates that she is comfortable mixing both languages in talking with her boyfriend.

Example 2
5. OY: both English and Thai if we wanna gossip about one person or a person who
6. just walk past or anything we just switch into English but if we are in the room
7. just two of us we spoke in Thai

Example 3
8. OY… I quite like doing that in Thai … this funny thing he like texted me like ello still in bed
9. /mai gin khao yang/ like have you eat /yang/ he not really have you eat yet did you eat yet like
   {have you eaten yet} {not yet}
10. did you eat /yang/ like Oy what are you doing Jim so I quite like it
    {not yet}

Some of the participants also feel that there is no need to follow native speaker norms in pronunciation either, as Ton explains in example four, in which he is discussing if it is necessary for Thai people to speak like a NES.
Example 4

11. TON: err I think it’s not important to to to . err I think it’s not important but we
12. don’t have to force ourselves to be to speak as good as they speak because we
13. we we are Thai from born in Thai we born Thai and we cannot and some …
14. accents and some words we cannot practice it’s difficult to speak like err they
15. speak I think it’s quite difficult

However, in this example Ton reveals some ambiguity in his response, he seems to suggest that native speaker English is better “we don’t have to force ourselves to be as good as they speak”, even if it is unnecessary. Moreover, despite her bilingual conversations and code mixing, Oy also identifies most strongly with a native speaker accent.

Example 5

16. OY…my friends ask me sometime they say can’t you do it in Thai or in American
17. accent and I say umm yeah but that would be funny to me and I don’t really
18. like it… I got a bit of a London accent

Thus, while the participants may engage in language use that follows NNS norms, and it would appear also consciously switch between and mix languages, the model of the native speaker still seems to be prevalent as a standard by which other communication should be measured. These findings are similar to those reported in Jenkins much larger study of attitudes to ELF (2007). Her respondents’ attitudes were similarly ambiguous in according NES accents highest status, while at the same valuing local varieties of English and retaining local accents. Given the scale of ELF communication and the need for flexible approaches and adaptation in intercultural communication, alternative models to native speaker English need to be promoted and accorded equal status based on the realities of ELF communication.

Culture and ELF

The relationship between culture and language, and how this is manifested in languages used as a lingua franca is central to this discussion. Semiotic theories of language and context, cultural or otherwise, have explicated the crucial role of language in representing and creating our environment (Geertz, 1973; Halliday, 1979). Similarly, discourse based approaches to understanding cultures also place language at
the centre of our social world (Kramsch, 1993; 1998; Gumperz, 2003; Scollon and Scollon, 2001). As Gumperz (2003: 215) states discourse is currently the prime site for the study of culture and language.

In lingua franca situations the relationships between specific languages and cultures are unlikely to entail a straightforward target language – target culture correlation. This brings into question the perceived inexorable link between cultures and languages as proposed by linguistic relativity (Whorf, 1939; Gumperz and Levinson, 1993). Critical approaches are needed which incorporate the fluid and dynamic nature of intercultural communication, and the manner in which languages and cultural forms and references function in them.

Risager (2006; 2007) argues that in global contexts a language and culture are not inexorably linked. She draws an important distinction between languages and cultures at a ‘generic’ general level and at a ‘differential’ level. At the generic level the links between language and culture are, as linguistic relativity proposed, inexorable with languages always enacting and embodying cultures. However, in the differential sense specific languages such as English are not necessarily tied to specific cultures. In examining what she refers to as the global flows and global complexities of language use and social groupings, Risager proposes that languages are changed and adapted to the local needs and contexts of their users and not fixed to defined social and cultural groupings. Rather the links between a language and its cultural references are made new in each instance of communication and in relation to each participant. Therefore, English used as a lingua franca does not necessarily embody English native speaking cultures, but the meanings of its users and the surrounding context in which it is used.

The notion of global flows is taken up by Pennycook (2007) in his study of global hip-hop cultures, including Asia, and the English language. He demonstrates the manner in which English is moulded to the cultural contexts of its users, while at the same time influencing and changing those contexts. However, the process does not stop there. Pennycook suggests that these local adaptations of languages, cultural forms and practices are then in turn sent back out into global contexts where the cycle of change continues. Canagarajah (2005; 2007), whose writings deal extensively with Asian Englishes, also draws attention to the tensions between the global and the local resulting in the flow, flux and fixity of linguistic and cultural forms. For Canagarajah this means a re-evaluation of English language use and
teaching that moves away from native speaker norms towards the type of communicative skills needed to function in such hybrid and dynamic linguistic and cultural contexts.

Scollon and Scollon (1999; 2001; 2003) have undertaken extensive studies of intercultural communication in Asia which lead them to question the assumption that culture should be treated as a given category in intercultural communication. Rather, they believe, culture should be approached as an emergent discourse that may or may not be relevant to understanding a particular instance of intercultural communication, alongside other equally relevant discourses such as those of gender, generation and profession. While this does not entail that we ignore the concept of culture, it does highlight the need to see culture as one of many interrelated social groupings which can be drawn upon in communication for various purposes.

Kramsch (1993) proposes that languages and cultures in foreign language use exist in a ‘third place’ between specific languages and cultures, along a ‘cultural faultline’ where novel linguistic and cultural practices are possible. Rampton (1995) demonstrates similar notions of language and culture in his study of intracultural communication between different ethnic groups, in which language use is ‘liminal’, being freed from the normal conventions of specific social groupings. Brumfit (2006) also reminds us of the liminal and individual nature of all language and cultural forms in communication, whereby language and cultural forms are made anew, as Risager also proposed, in each instance of communication. In sum, this would suggest that in examining intercultural communication through ELF we need to work with notions of culture and language that are situationally emergent, hybrid, and liminal, and related to global, local and individual contexts (Baker, 2008b).

Many of these features of cultures and languages through ELF are brought up in the interviews with the research participants and also demonstrated in examples of intercultural communication. In example six Muay offers an explanation of one of the ways she thinks global cultures have influenced Thai culture. She describes how the balance between valuing modesty versus expressiveness has changed in Thailand as a result of English speaking cultures – the US and the UK. However, in lines 26-29 she also adds that this is not simply copying other cultural values, but adapting other behaviours to Thailand in a way that does not undermine Thai culture or values which are ‘proper of Thai’. Likewise,
Nami in example seven, on the same topic, also believes it is necessary to adjust or adapt behaviour to the cultural context in which it occurs.

Example 6

19. MUAY: uhu I think so people nowadays are more . extrovert I think Thai traditional
20. people quite err introvert not express themselves to others and in some I mean
21. value of cultures like being modest umm being err expressive but when I I think
22. English culture and any other like American culture came and Thai people change
23. they are more expressive they can do what they want be more brave to show who
24. they are who they really are
25. WILL: ok and do you think this is a good or a bad thing
26. MUAY: both good and bad in some way it’s good I think people should be more
27. should be brave to show who they really are but in some value like err about err I
28. mean showing love in front of the public I mean kisses or many other things it’s
29. not it’s not proper for Thai it’s still not proper for Thai I think

Example 7

30. NAMI… if you are Thai if I’m Thai I need to understand that ok . it’s not good to . to be arrogant
31. with the person who is older than you or to be so self confident with the person who worked
32. before you something like that and in America sometimes (well) you need to show your
33. confidence when you work for example but in Thailand different right and so then you can adjust
34. yourself in a suitable situation with a suitable behavior in a situation

Not only do the participants view culturally appropriate behaviour as situationally dependent and adaptive, some also feel that the boundaries between cultural categories are no longer clearly defined for them. In example eight Por is struggling to describe differences between parenting in Thailand and the US, and concludes that for her clear distinctions between ‘real’ American culture and ‘real’ Thai culture are problematic.

Example 8

35. POR: because I get used to American culture and I can’t see the difference because I’ve been there
36. and I came back and I just can’t figure it out which one is real American which one is real Thai
37. like like the culture is mixed
In example nine Nami goes a step further in suggesting that English is a language that can transcend particular cultures. Moreover, she specifically refers to lingua franca communication between non-native speakers of English. She believes it allows people to express themselves in a way that is more ‘open’ and free from cultural constraints. Nami’s account here compares with the freer and liminal communicative practices described in Rampton’s study of intercultural communication, and also meshes well with Kramsch’s notion of third places between cultures, and thus freed from them.

Example 9

38. NAMI: it’s different because in English you you can express yourself more you you
39. it’s also because of the cultural thing when when you umm yeah when you speak
40. with the native speaker right they are more open because of their culture as well
41. but even if you speak with the other people who isn’t who are non English
42. speaker err English is a kind of message containing something that it will make
43. other people more open I don’t know maybe I’m wrong but that is what I observe
44. people people speak more people tend to forget their own culture for a while and
45. they become more open

The final example in this section, ten, offers an insight into the nature of global cultural references in ELF communication in practice. In this extract Nami is having a conversation with a Belgian/French friend in Bangkok. Firstly there are no NESs present but most importantly the cultural context and references are in no way related to NES cultures either. The setting is Bangkok and specifically a large shopping mall/leisure complex in the centre of Bangkok called MBK. Additionally the subject under discussion, a ‘cos play’², is also removed from NES cultures and related to global or at least pan-Asian cultures. Indeed, cos plays began as a specifically Japanese phenomena, although there are US equivalents, but have now taken on more global references. This extract illustrates, like Pennycook’s (2007) examination of hip-hop cultures, the way in which the English language and the forms and practices it is used to describe and create, are related to both global and local contexts which are interconnected in complex and dynamic ways.

² Cos play – ‘a costume play’ in which fans of Japanese manga, anime and pop dress up and role play their favourite characters, see www.cosplay.com
Example 10

46. FR: oh ah just when I was waiting for you right they are like outside there is like
47. this podium and girls dancing singing
48. PL: where outside of MBK it’s a cos play right
49. FR: I don’t think so
50. PL: Japanese cos play
51. FR: I don’t think so
52. PL: oh it’s not (cool)
53. FR: no it isn’t cause my friend my student would be there they’re are crazy about
54. cos play
55. PL: yeah my roommate too . yeah

These examples offer an impression of how the research participants characterise cultures and their relationships to English for them. It shows how for many of them cultures are not clearly identifiable and bounded entities, but rather mixed, hybrid and constantly undergoing change. The cultural references, forms and practices expressed through English are not tied to any one culture. Instead the relationships between ELF and its cultural contexts are in-situ, hybrid and liminal, or to paraphrase Nami, ‘open’ and unconstrained. Thus, from these participants we can gain an insight into how Kramsch’s third places manifest themselves for ELF users in Asia.

Identity and ELF

Notions of identity are clearly closely related to those of culture. Cultural identity is one of many identities which can be drawn on in intercultural communication. Furthermore, the primary role language plays in creating and expressing identity has been well documented (see for example Joseph, 2004). Post-structuralist conceptions of identity and its relationships to cultures and language (Sarup, 1996) remind us that identities are changeable and always in formation rather than inherited and static. Furthermore, we all hold multiple identities which may or may not co-exist comfortably. Thus, contradiction and fracture are also a significant feature of identity. People may chose different group associations in different situations, which it may sometimes be acceptable to hold simultaneously but at other times not. Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000) in examining the writing of immigrants, suggest that in learning a new language in order to become part of a new culture it may be necessary to ‘give up’ or replace aspect of the original cultural identity to be accepted as a ‘native speaker’. This also reminds us that identity depends on two dimensions: an individual identifying with a grouping and being accepted
by the members of that group as part of the group. However, users of an L2 may also reject the identities or roles allocated them by L1, ‘native speakers’ and create new or alternative identities (Norton, 2000; Duff, 2002).

Turning to L2/FL cultures, identities and language, as already suggested, do not exist in a straightforward correlation. In many cases of foreign language learning the users of a language such as English have no desire to give up their original L1 identities and any attempt to question or undermine L1 nationalist identities may be viewed as politically threatening (Byram, 2008a). It is also true that in many contexts of English language learning and use, including Asia, the users have no desire to become ‘native speakers’ of the language. Rather, as definitions of ELF suggest, the aim is to be able to communicate successfully through English with people from many other cultures both regionally and globally.

However, this situation results in a number of difficulties or contradictions. Although NES are in the minority in ELF communication in Asia, the ideal of the native speaker model is still heavily promoted in Asia (Adamson, 2006; Baker, 2008a; Jenkins, 2007; Kachru, 2005; Patil, 2006; Toh, 2003; Watson-Todd, 2006). Yet, as has been argued throughout this article, this model is inappropriate to the communicative reality and needs of ELF users. Furthermore, the type of identity changes needed to be accepted as a NES, would be both inappropriate and undesirable for ELF users who have no intention of residing in an English speaking country. Nevertheless, as Jenkins’ (2007) study revealed, attitudes towards NES as the ideal to which all speakers should aim are still mixed. Many participants in her study, which covered a number of Asian countries, still rated NES accents as the most desirable in terms of ‘correctness and intelligibility’. However, Jenkins also proposes that English teachers’ identities in expanding circle settings are often in conflict or contradiction. There is an orientation towards native speaker norms as a desirable goal, particularly from a professional standpoint, while simultaneously many teachers are also proud of L1 identities expressed through English and view themselves as “going in between” (Jenkins, 2007: 230) or having ‘negotiated identities’.

Another perceived difficulty with ELF is that if the NES is removed as the model for all language use then no agreement will be possible on shared communication norms. While there is not the space here to deal with all the ramifications of this argument, in relation to identity a number of alternatives can be put forward. If English language learning is no longer to be associated with particular peoples and
their cultures, then language learning may become a more mechanical task in which language functions simply as a tool with no cultural dimension or associated identity issues. This may already be the case for language learning at relatively low levels, especially when confined to more academic classroom based exercises. However, when language is used to communicate and represent the individual partaking in that communication this can never be true. It may be possible that a language such as English can be imposed on top of the original L1 identity and be used to express this. Yet, this seems unlikely; firstly, this would most likely lead to communication difficulties with interlocutors not familiar with the participants C1, and thus defeat the aim of English for intercultural communication. Secondly, given the global influences on English language use and that languages are rarely learnt in isolation cultural references, other than just those of the L1, may well be present. Furthermore, as already discussed, local contexts are also fluid, changing and influenced by global forces. Speakers may thus be able to choose the extent to which they use language to represent particular cultures or identities, moving between local and more international contexts depending on situation and interlocutor (Canagarajah, 2005; Kirkpatrick, 2007; Meierkord, 2002).

Alternative identities for ELF users, in contrast to either L1/C1 identities or NES, are those of the multilingual, multicompetent users of language who can mediate and negotiation between different languages and cultures (Baker, 2003; 2008a,b; Byram, 1997; Canagarajah, 2005; 2007; Jenkins, 2006; 2007; Kramsch, 1993; Risager, 2006; 2007). Jenkins believes that such features may lead ELF speakers to identify with one another in a ‘community of practice’ in which users are joined in a shared endeavour with similar resources to draw upon (2007; 232). A recent proposal in language education, which provides a commensurable aim and identity for L2/FL users, is that of the ‘intercultural citizen’ (Alred et. al. 2006; Byram, 2008a; 2008b). Byram believes that the competencies involved with being a successful user of a language for intercultural communication, as outlined above, extend beyond surface behaviour and entail emotional levels which are related to identity. Thus, “we might expect an identification with a group” (Byram, 2008b). This group, Byram believes, will be other successful intercultural communicators who can mediate and negotiate between cultures: a multilingual and multicultural group of intercultural citizens.

The perspectives on identity associated with ELF users in expanding circles are also articulated by the participants in this research. The conflicting identities and associations are frequently expressed
by many of the participants who display positive attitudes to both NES norms, especially accent, as demonstrated in the discussion on language, while at the same time wishing to maintain and taking pride in their L1/C1 identities. In the previously discussed example five, Oy demonstrates her attachment to having a ‘London’ accent rather than an L1 (Thai) English accent. However, as example eleven shows, she does not feel that identifying with native speaker English diminishes her identity as Thai. For her Thailand is still her home and her original culture.

Example 11

Extract a

56. OY: …as I am a Thai women or girl however you wanted to put it that way I still have to keep the
57. culture with me

Extract b

58. OY: yeah but I (don’t know) in my life I still have to come back here and die here because it’s my
59. home like

Similarly, Yim in example twelve also feels that learning English and learning about US culture has not undermined her identification with Thai culture, rather she claims it has made it stronger. Indeed, Yim is expressing an idea that is prevalent in the intercultural communication literature; that dialogue, contact and comparison with another culture can give one a deeper understanding of one’s first culture (Bakhtin, 1986; Byram, 1997; Morgan and Cain, 2000).

Example 12

60. YIM: … when I was in the US I have learn about the US and it has become my second hometown
61. you know but then one thing that I was surprised was that I love Thailand more and more because
62. when I was there I knew that what we have in Thailand is not what they have in the US and then if
63. we lose it it’s one day we lose what we have at the moment we cannot find anywhere else so .
64. it’s just when when you see something different just learn about other and at the same time I get to
65. learn more about myself as well so it is interesting

However, other participants also reveal the tensions that the process of learning English and contact with other cultures can bring about. Nami in example thirteen, when reviewing how she feels about the
research, explains the difficulties she has in discussing her feelings with those who do not speak English and have not shared similar experiences.

Example 13
66. NAMI: err I feel it’s good because it’s been a long time that I wanted to express
67. myself about the culture things yes also what I think and observe people yeah
68. because sometimes like this idea is just wandering with me and I cannot speak
69. with the my room mate for example because they cannot understand because they
70. don’t speak English and they do not really absorb Western culture like I am I
71. have and so sometimes it’s like umm you become a little psychotic ((laughs))

Remaining with Oy, Yim and Nami they also discuss the process of change, including emotional change, which learning and using English has entailed for them. In particular it seems to involve overcoming initially negative attitudes to other cultural practices and taking a more relativistic position, as shown by Nami in example fourteen and Oy in example fifteen.

Example 14
72. NAMI: at first I can’t I couldn’t overcome my feelings of being offended by the cultural difference
73. but then I you know it’s like a level at first it’s like it’s exactly you told me in the course like at
74. first you just I don’t understand why it’s like this and then you just absorb it and like oh it’s the
75. way that people are and then it’s like ok I can understand it it’s maybe it’s the history .

Example 15
76. OY:…the English people or people from Western they tend to put their hand in the back and I the
77. Thai people feel a bit offensive about that so yeah but the thing that I kept on I kept on telling my
78. mate don’t do it you can do it but not really like in public yeah
79. WILL: so how do you feel about that when they do that
80. OY: offended for the first time but I started to get used to it but I’m trying not to let myself to let
81. anyone do that to me so they’re the limits where to go and where can’t go

Yet, it is also important to note that for Oy being ‘used to’ others behaviour does not mean she simply follows that behaviour. She feels that she needs to set ‘limits’ in how much her behaviour will change. So while she is no longer perhaps following C1 norms, neither is she following C2 English ‘native speaker’ norms. Rather she seems to be taking more of a middle ground or ‘third place’. Yim in example
sixteen also feels changed by her contact with other cultures and languages but, like Oy, feels the need to adapt or ‘fit’ what she has learnt into her own context rather than just adopt it wholesale. Nami too, in example seventeen, makes it clear that she is not simply mimicking English speaking cultures in her behaviour, but critically evaluating what she believes will benefit or ‘develop’ her life.

Example 16
82. YIM: … the more you learn about other cultures and other languages err other languages you’re
going to adoptive something without knowing that you are so sometimes I adopt something in
83. from the book and from those people if they good so why not just try it if they are confidences if
84. they confident and they’re doing good at their jobs and they’re success- they’re successful so why
85. not try it because Thai people sometimes we are too shy we are not we just don’t feel like
86. standing in front of others and say something strongly so yeah I have seen good examples
87. before so it has become a part of me that I can do that too if I want to if it if I have a chance and
88. it is not something bad to do just go for it just try it if it is fit so it’s going to work out so I think it
89. has become a part of me in that way just like good examples and then just try it myself if it
90. works just do if it doesn’t work so maybe I have to leave it behind

Example 17
92. NAMI: …yeah it’s not not like a passion that I want to be like American people I want to be like
93. British people it’s not like that but it’s just the way oh that’s interesting that you know that .
94. people . for example people . go drinking people earn their money in a certain age compared
95. with Thai people Thai people we just stick with our family until we get married … so I feel like
96. ok maybe we should do something something like that something that you should develop your
97. life yeah it's not just the Thai way but also the other way that you think that is good from that

Finally, these three participants who are the most experienced, and arguably the most successful intercultural communicators, also articulate a view of themselves as mediators between cultures. Thus, they seem to be taking on the type of role or identity suggested earlier by Byram and others as a feature of successful intercultural communicators. In example eighteen Yim believes that her experiences of learning English will enable her to ‘delete the gaps’ or ‘spaces’ between native speaker expectations of English writing and the perceived problems Thai users of English have in academic writing.

Example 18
98. YIM:… when there is a way to help Thai people with the English language and if there is a
99. possibility to do that I will want to do that because like I like I told you earlier that about like the 
100. teaching writing … there is some spaces between the foreign teachers and the students and yeah 
101. and I think as I have had some experience with those problems and I should be able to you know 
102. to delete the gaps between yeah and solve the problem some of them

In example nineteen Oy sees her role as being someone who can help others adapt to Thai culture through her experience of both cultures.

Example 19

103. OY: … I’m telling people from the other part of the world as well that is wrong and what 
104. way the Thai culture is like basically teaching them at the same time so they can adapt 
105. themselves to be able live in the society in Thailand

Finally, Nami also sees herself as an ‘interpreter’ between cultures. In example twenty she believes that to communicate successfully between two cultures it is necessary to understand the cultures of the participants and interpret or mediate between them.

Example 20

106. NAMI: … one day you will use what you learn like English or German with the people 
107. who is the native speakers so I think it’s quite important when you communicate with 
108. them but then you speak something or you behave something badly in their point of view 
109. you know people don’t like you at all what’s the matter why do you use it why you 
110. should be interpreter between two two countries and then you speak something and then 
111. you you know you need to know the culture

Interesting, both Yim and Nami in these examples discuss the idea of mediating between native speakers and Thai users of English (or German). However, neither feels that the Thai speakers should change their English to match native speaker norms but rather mediation, adaptation and interpretation is needed. Moreover, all three of these participants are discussing communicating within Thailand rather than in inner circle native speaking countries; demonstrating that for them the most relevant context of English use is the expanding circle. Once again this reveals a somewhat ambiguous or contradictory attitude to native speaker English and ELF. On the one hand for Yim and Nami in these examples the NES is still a presence, but on the other hand the participants also express a role for themselves in
moving communication away from exclusively NES norms, and adapting, interpreting and mediating between NES and the Thai context. This suggests an affiliation or association with some of the more liminal and fluid cultures and contexts of ELF outlined earlier.

**Conclusion**

It is difficult to draw conclusions about Asia in general from such a narrow range of data. Nevertheless, based partly on the data and on the wider discussion regarding ELF, culture and identity, a number of themes emerge. Firstly, as suggested at the beginning of this article, English is used in Asia to express identities and cultures which are fluid, dynamic and liminal. The use of language, the associated cultural references and practices, and the orientations or identifications of the users are not to one defined culture, but rather to a range of interrelated contexts including local, regional and global. Such norms are often far removed from the traditional native speaker norms of the inner circle countries. However, the native speaker ‘myth’ is still present in the context under investigation here, as it is in the region at large. Yet, as with Jenkins’ study (2007), English language users’ attitudes towards native speaker English are somewhat ambivalent. Positive attitudes towards other uses of English and particularly local English uses exist. Furthermore, in regards to cultural identity none of the participants in this study, despite the advanced level of some of the users, had any desire to become native speakers or to reside in inner circle countries for an extensive period. Rather they described their English speaking identity as operating alongside or in addition to their L1/C1 identity. Furthermore, the more advanced or successful intercultural communicators also expressed a view of themselves as mediators or translators between different cultures, as envisaged in Byram’s notion of the intercultural speaker and citizen (2008a,b). In keeping with such multilingual and multicultural identities the participants’ uses of English also displayed a tolerance towards code switching and adaptation to local contexts. Moreover, the cultural references of English in this setting were removed from those of NES inner circle and instead were related to local and global contexts.

This has important implications for English language teaching. If it is to meet the needs of users of ELF in Asia, than many of the reoccurring themes of this article need to be addressed. The native speaker model of English has been under attack for decades, but is still pervasive in Asia. Alternatives to this model such as ELF users, intercultural speakers and intercultural citizens need to be actively promoted. The associated notion of a ‘target language’ and ‘target culture’ connection, especially inner
circle cultures, also needs to be broken. In its place should be a recognition of the fluidity, hybridity and liminality of English and its multifarious cultural associations and identifications in Asia. To cope with such a dynamic conception of communication through ELF the traditional focus of English language teaching, grammar and vocabulary, needs to be supplemented with the equally important skills of negotiation, mediation, adaptation and accommodation (Baker, 2003; 2008a; Canagarajah, 2005; 2007; House, 2003; Jenkins, 2006; 2007; Kirkpatrick, 2007). These skills are crucial for successful intercultural communication in Asian ELF settings.

In sum this article has attempted to contribute to documenting ELF in Asia with a focus on the complex relationships between the English language, culture and identity in the region. However, further research recording ELF in practice throughout the many Asian contexts in which it is present is necessary. In particular more empirical evidence of the type presented here is needed to support the theoretical and political discussion. This is crucial if we are to understand English use in Asia and its relationship to culture and identity. It is also of great importance if we wish to teach English in a manner that reflects the complex uses and needs of Asian users of English as a lingua franca.

Appendix

Transcription conventions

Spelling: British English spelling is used.

Punctuation: New utterances begin on a new line with no capital letter. Capital letters are used for pronoun ‘I’ and proper names. Apostrophes are used for abbreviations e.g. don’t, haven’t.

(?) = inaudible

(xxx) = uncertain that word is correctly transcribed

((laughs)) = Non-linguistic features of the transcription

. = brief pause

… = indicates a section of dialogue not transcribed

[ ] = overlapping or interrupted speech

CAPS = strong emphasis

/yang/ = transliteration of participants’ L1 (Thai)

{not yet} = translation
References


Identity Change: Overseas Students Returning to Hong Kong

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Biodata
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Abstract
National identity is a problematic concept to many ethnic Chinese people in Hong Kong. It had been more than 10 years since HK had been returned to China, how would those HK people, who had received overseas education, view their national identity on their return? This paper focuses on investigating how 3 international students from HK viewed their national identity. Particularly, I attempted to explore (1) how the 3 international students from HK perceived their own national identity before they left for an English-speaking country to further their studies; (2) whether these HK Chinese had changed their perceptions towards their own national identity when they were abroad; (3) whether their perceptions towards their national identity could be sustained after returning to Hong Kong.

Keywords: national identity; Chinese, overseas education
1. Introduction

How people perceive their own identity depends on individual cultural background and upbringing. Identity is not static because of its association with the social environment and it changes and shifts over time as people grow older. Meanwhile, stereotypes that society places on a particular group of people can be a great contribution to their sense of pride or shame about their national identity, and can be a source for identity conflicts.

Most people in HK are ethnic Chinese. However, Hong Kong’s legal system, economic system, financial system and political system were all different from Mainland China when it was under British colonial rule from 1898 to 1997. Therefore, identity has always been an ambiguous issue for HK people to actualize, internalize and self-categorize. Interestingly, whenever there are international events like the World Cup or the Olympics, people in HK feel that they are “Chinese”. However, when it concerns human rights, people will perceive themselves less associated with China. This “national displacement” also occurs in some other regions or nations. For example, a similar phenomenon happened to Germans. After the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, nearly 3 million ethnic German returnees came to Germany from the former Soviet Union. These “returnees” suffered from national identity crisis (Ortoff & Frey, 2007).

HK Chinese who were born during the British colonial period had been suffering “identity crisis” for a long time. However, it was recognised that people who had received education overseas perceive this problem as being less difficult to handle. Doubts over their national identity faded away after several years of staying in a foreign country then returning to Hong Kong. Little research has explored the complex interactions between international education and the negotiation of identity of overseas students.

Even though there have been public opinion polls conducted to investigate how HK people categorise or
label their identity since 1997, they only described how, in general, HK people label themselves but have not examined how specific reasons influence HK people’s decisions about national identity labeling, or the development of national identity change of a particular group of HK people. Similar studies examining similar topics also share the same research gap. One example is Maramba’s (2008) work. She investigated how Filipino American students negotiated their home environment and university experience in the States (for similar studies, see Pyvis and Chapman, 2007). Because of the limited work examining how a particular group of HK people have their national identity changed because of international education, I attempt to explore the frame of reference of three international students from HK; how they had their national identity imagined, negotiated through various identity positions and altered after returning to Hong Kong.

2. Terminological Issues

In this paper, “national identity” is discussed. Smith (1991) claimed that identity reveals “who one is” and serves as the root of behaviours and actions of individuals. Individual identity is made up of a series of social roles and cultural categories. Self is composed of multiple identities and roles like familial, territorial, class, religious, ethnic and gender. However, using “identity” as a general term to describe “who one is” is far from satisfactory as identity has multiple interrelated facets.

When talking about “national identity”, it inevitably associates with “nationality” and “nation”. The term “nationality” is problematic in nature. The legal sense of nationality refers to citizenship. Meanwhile, nationality can also mean membership in a cultural/historical group related to political or national identity, even if it lacks a formal state, for example the Kurds, Welsh, Scots, Tamils and so on. As nation can be a human, cultural, or a social community, it may be considered as an “imagined community”-- a concept coined by Anderson (2006) which can be seen as a form of social construction.
Also, Hobsbawm (1990) pointed out that the nation was the product of nationalism. A nation is created by the unification of various people into a common society or community.

Because of the dispute over “nation” and “nationality”, the debate over national identity is therefore inevitable. Smith (1991) provided the most comprehensive definition for national identity. He concluded that national identity and nations are complex constructs composed of a number of interrelated components—ethnic, cultural, territorial, economic and legal-political. Because the focus of this paper is on overseas students’ national identity change in a post-colonial period in respect to a specific political situation, this paper adopts the construct of national identity composed of cultural, territorial and legal-political components.

3. Review of Literature

There have been studies about the uniqueness of HK identity since the Sino-British Joint Declaration in 1984 (Bong, 1988, 1993). The period of transition provided an opportunity to carve out a distinctive social identity associated with being both Chinese and Hong Kong. Fu, et al’s (1999) study found that people in HK had their perceptions altered towards their HK identity when there was contextual change in society. This is in accord with Turner’s self-categorisation theory (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher & Wetherell, 1987). When a minority group of people were situated next to a mainstream culture, they started to reflect and self-categorise their identity according to the differences between their own and that of the mainstream culture. Brewer (1991) also suggested that changes in one’s identity are context-specific.

However, these theories and studies only investigated how national identity was associated with general social contexts, no specific social reasons had been identified. Even with studies conducted in the
HK context, the same problem arose. For example, according to the HK Transition Project in 1993 (conducted during the colonial years), there was only a minority of HK residents who identified themselves as “Chinese”. The majority of respondents identified themselves as “Hong Kong-Chinese.” According to Ming Pao, 60% of secondary school students recognized themselves as “HK People” rather than “Chinese”, while 30% claimed themselves as “Chinese” in 2002. Fu et al. (1999) also found that respondents had negative evaluation of being a Chinese. Those who identified themselves as Hong Kong-Chinese were expected to have less desire to reduce the dissimilarity between HK and Mainland China (Hong & Chiu, 1996; Lau et al., 1996).

A further example is Abrams et al’s (1999) study in which they found that the majority of their respondents reported fairly strong feelings of their identification, pride in their status, and satisfaction with their current life in Hong Kong. However, looking towards the future of HK (after 1997), they were rather pessimistic. Abrams et al. (ibid) believed that how people in HK perceive their identity is strongly associated with the perceived status of Hong Kong.

Most of the above-mentioned studies, are outdated. Even Abrams et al’s (1999) work was conducted immediately after the post-colonial years, the relationship between HK and China and their socio-political statuses had also been changing and this relates to how HK people viewed their national identity.

Cheng & Wong’s (2002) started to look into specific reasons attributable to national identity change among HK people. They found that the percentage of Chinese in HK claiming themselves as being from “Hong Kong” was decreasing while claiming themselves as “Chinese” and “both Chinese and from Hong Kong” was increasing. 70% of respondents aged under 30 claimed themselves “from
Hong Kong” while 15- 20% claimed that they were Chinese. This was probably due to the rise of China’s economic power; and its increasing political power in international politics hence their self-esteem of being Chinese rose and probably directly led to self-identification as being Chinese. However, Cheng and Wong’s (ibid) work only investigated the specific reasons from the general public point of view and neglected the demographic characteristics of the sample which could have produced a significantly different result in their study.

In Hong Kong, the most well-known study to investigate national identity among HK people is the Public Opinion Programme (POP). According to the most recent POP (2008), conducted by HK University, it interviewed 1012 HK people. The survey found that HK people continued to score high in their sense of “Chinese people” identity, followed by “HK Citizens plus Chinese Citizen”, ‘HK citizens' followed closely, then ‘Chinese Citizens”. POP provided significant data for investigating how the HK general public have changed their views on identity from time to time. However, which specific reason affects a particular group of people on national labeling warrants further study and this paper aims to address this question.

To answer the above question about national identity change, related studies conducted in other countries and contexts are worth considering. Nevertheless, most foreign studies only examined how social factors affected their samples in terms of national identity. For example, Baca & Lunquist (1980) found that socialization factors affected identity change among Southeast Asian women. Hsieh (2006), Kiang (2008) and Riagain (2007) also found similar results for East Asian female overseas university students, Chinese American, and Irish, respectively.
Apart from the above factors which can be related to the fostering of national identity, most studies found that national identity could in fact be shaped by education. For example, Salomon and Ket (2007) found that education was the main factor attributing to national identity formation in contemporary Vietnam. Merry (2005) researched the relationship between schooling and national identity maintenance. Similar studies have been conducted in different countries, e.g. Su (2006) & Liu and Hung (2002) examined how Taiwanese school curricula placed impact on political ideology and national identity. Su (2007) analysed the content of textbooks and their ideological representation of national identity. Bass (2008) also studied how the Tibetan primary curriculum affected the formation of Tibetan identity. Collet (2007) examined how Canadian school policies and practices supported and challenged the identities of a Muslim traditional (Somali) group in Canadian public schools. Johnson (2007) found that the formal curriculum of Ecuador attempted to erase the significance of Black people from the economic and social development of the nation. Students of African descent meanwhile also attempted to move towards “Whiteness” as they negotiated the dominant discourse of national identity. Lall (2008) investigated how education was used to create antagonistic national identities in India and Pakistan. Yonah (2008) investigated how the Israeli education system handled a Palestinian minority group in Israel.

Having reviewed related studies conducted in foreign contexts, social factors and education appear to be the main sources of national identity change. As for the HK context, it was again found that relevant studies conducted in HK context have been limited. The most recent ones were Lo and Merryfield (2008) and Yuen and Byram (2007). Apart from the works of Lo and Merryfield and Yuen & Byram, relatively recent works include Law and Ho’s (2004) and Ho’s (2003) studies.
In the post-colonial years, studies related to national identity change all focused on how civil education affects students’ national identity change. Past studies had tried to find out how overseas education reaffirmed students’ Chinese national identity. Lo & Merryfield (2008) researched how education fostered HK elementary students’ national identity. At the school subjective level, Law and Ho (2004) and Ho (2003) investigated how the teaching of the national anthem developed HK students’ sense of national identity after the return of HK sovereignty to China. The teaching of Government and Public Affairs (GPA) has also helped enhance students’ national identity and patriotism (Yuen and Byram, 2007).

Because of the problems of different research foci, time conducted, and the samples chosen, this paper would like to fill a gap of previous research and attempt to inform future studies.

4. Methodology

This article describes how overseas students had their perceptions changed towards identity after returning to Hong Kong. Face-to-face and semi-structured interviews with 3 interviewees were conducted. Semi-structured, face-to-face interviews were chosen as the most appropriate research strategy for collecting qualitative data because of its advantages in focusing on the specific experience and perceptions of individuals engaged in real-life.

All interviewees had left HK for at least 7 years and returned to HK after 1997. They were all aged from 28-30 in 2007 (aged 16-20 before they left for further studies) and were born during the colonial period. Countries in which these interviewees received their senior secondary and tertiary education were the United Kingdom and Canada.
Interviews with the respondents were conducted in Cantonese—the first language of the respondents. Respondents were reminded that the interview would be tape-recorded and their responses would remain confidential. Participants were asked to describe themselves: (1) Hong Konger / from Hong Kong, (2) Chinese, or (3) from China, according to their experiences of three phrases: (1) before they left Hong Kong, (2) during their studying abroad and, (3) after their return to Hong Kong.

The guiding interview questions were:

- Before you left for UK/Canada, would you describe yourself as a Hong Konger / from Hong Kong, Chinese, or from China? Why?
- While you were in UK/Canada, how did you describe yourself to people you met? As a Hong Konger / from Hong Kong, Chinese, or from China? Why?
- After you came back from UK/Canada, had you changed your perception about who you are? Why?

5. Results / Account of Interviews

Different questions emerged from the responses to the question: How did you perceive your identity whilst being in Hong Kong, studying abroad, and after returning to Hong Kong. Responses were classified into several areas for further consideration: experiences before leaving Hong Kong, during their stay overseas and after returning to Hong Kong. General discussion was to be followed after presentation of interview responses.
5.1 EXPERIENCES BEFORE LEAVING HONG KONG:

INTERVIEW RESPONSES

(a) From HK not from China

All respondents responded that their answer would be from HK if they were asked where they came from, because HK was their place of residence and where they grew up. However, they clearly stated, “I am certainly not from Mainland China and HK is my motherland.”

(b) No close relationship with China

Respondents expressed little relationship between themselves and China. They described their relationship with China as “a stranger” and “unacquainted”. More radical expressions were “resistance” and “do not want to have association with Mainland China or the people there”. They attributed their feelings to China as a place that is “backward and not civilized.”

(c) Pessimistic being a Chinese

Before studying overseas, all interviewees were pessimistic about being a Chinese solely because they believed China had too many problems in nature, which would obstruct its development. The main problems of China, in their opinion, were “China’s economy can hardly catch up with Hong Kong”, “no justice”, “no freedom”, “too much corruptions” and “have bad record of human rights”. In their mind, these problems China had were difficult to be altered and improved on. One said, “I think it is natural to be pessimistic about being a Chinese because you witnessed all. It is inevitable.”
(d) Prefer being a colonial citizen

To the informants, they preferred being ruled by the British government than the Chinese government. They did not mind being a colonial citizen as they stated “I was very much worried about the coming of 1997 as I didn’t know what the future would hold, especially under the ruling of China. I felt less inferior to claim myself a HK Chinese or British National (Overseas) rather than a Chinese.” An example quoted by one of the interviewees: “I hate going through the Chinese Custom at the border because I was always forced to write “Chinese” instead of British (HK) under the column of “nationality”.

(e) Confusion over identity

All interviewees expressed confusion over “who they are”. They clearly knew that they were from Hong Kong. However, they all had confusion over the term “identity”. One responded, “HK is a city, not a country. Identity has to be related to a country, not a city. I can’t say I am a British because I am not white nor I can say that I am a Chinese from China because I have been influenced by western culture. I am not any of these types. So who was I then? I did not really have a conclusion.” This quotation not only showed that the participant was confused about his/her identity, but also attributed skin colour as a factor to decide his/her nationality.
5.2 EXPERIENCES DURING THEIR STAY OVERSEAS:

INTERVIEW RESPONSES

(a) “I’m from Hong Kong”

When asked about how they introduced themselves while they were abroad, all of them claimed that they were from HK although the resistance of stating themselves as Chinese was less. One claimed, “Stating yourself from HK did make you feel better from a psychological perspective although you knew other people did not really care whether you’re from HK or China at all. To them, people from HK and China are the same”.

(b) Chinese as an ethnicity is more used

Respondents admitted that they started to use “Chinese” to describe themselves more often, and willingly because: “Chinese is more general to describe my ethnicity...Plus ‘I am a Chinese’ is politically correct and is a very legitimate statement to claim my identity after 1997.”

(c) Cultural ambassador

Living abroad and meeting people from different countries provided the respondents with chances for cultural exchange and broadened their horizons. One respondent said, “To be frank, there isn’t much about HK you can share with your friends since HK is so small and insignificant in comparison with China. China has such a long history. Its culture, politics and economy are hot issues among foreigners. The more I talked about China, the more I felt myself is a Chinese. At that very moment, I was no longer ashamed of being a Chinese.” During the process of exchanging culture, respondents found that they had looked at China from a different perspective
and this altered their opinions towards China in more positive ways. They saw China from a more “subjective”, “global”, “macro” and “long-term” perspective.

(d) Cultural realisation

Cultural differences also brought identity realization to respondents. As one respondent said, “I can never be a British because of my appearance, language and living style. Even I can speak fluent English, mingle with local British friends only and adapt to their eating habits; that still won’t make me a British because all my behaviours are derived from my background, values and ideology which can never be changed. I tried but I couldn’t. That convinced me that I am a Chinese.”

(e) Difficult to find local friends as close friends

All respondents agreed that they found it very difficult to have local friends as their close friends. “It is not difficult to make friends with the local students. However when it gets to deep conversations, they automatically assume that you won’t fully understand them. They prefer turning to local friends rather than you for solution. Of course, this applies to me too. I would only turn to friends from HK for problem solving. These experiences give me chances to convince myself that I am different from them and there is no perfect cultural integration.”

(f) Language and socio-cultural barrier

All respondents agreed that even though their English was competent, it did not win them further social integration. One respondent whose English was considered very competent said, “It’s not difficult to realize that there aren’t much common grounds between you and the local...The local people use different spoken discourse when talking to you like slow down their speech, use less
slang and idioms fearing that you don’t understand them…some even speak louder to me.” All respondents believed that no matter how good their English was, they would never be able to integrate with the local culture completely. Language and socio-cultural barrier had brought them opportunities to consider their identity.

5.3 EXPERIENCES AFTER RETURNING TO HONG KONG:

INTERVIEW RESPONSES

(a) Feel better being a Chinese

After 1997, all respondent found that it was more “legitimate” to claim themselves as Chinese. All indicated that they would not mind introducing themselves “from China” anymore as it was “politically correct”. Not only because of the political situation but also the economic development had made them feel “less ashamed” of being a Chinese.

(b) Better understanding of HK and China

Leaving HK for a period of time had enabled respondents to understand their identity. One admitted, “Once you have lived abroad and found that you are different from the people around you, then you will think of your own origin and realize where you belong. England is certainly not my country but China is”.

(c) Closer relationship with China

When respondents were asked to compare their before-and-after relationship with China, all respondents believed the development of the economic and political situations since 1997 in China had brought them closer to China. “The joining of WTO has accelerated Chinese economic development more rapidly while HK is not improving much. Future business development of every company in HK is to expand their business to China. Everything I am doing now is associated with the Chinese market. Learning Putonghua is one. Making friends with Mainland Chinese is another.” “It is not difficult to realize that the number of Westerners in HK is getting smaller but the number of Mainland Chinese immigrants is getting larger, possibly because of marriage and business relationships.”

(d) Optimistic being a Chinese and China’s prospect

The respondents were very optimistic about the prospects of China because of the current economic and political situations in China. “I think the development of the future China is very promising. I wouldn’t mind working in China if there is a chance. Having met some elites from the Mainland has also broaden my horizon and made me realize that China is really growing. Not only its economy, but also its people.” Respondents gradually believed that their worries over China’s ruling HK was erased. “It’s a good time to be a Chinese than an American.”

(e) More nationalistic

Respondents found that they were more nationalistic after returning to Hong Kong. “Personal growth has changed the way I look at China and the more I traveled to China, the more I feel myself is a Chinese and China is my country. There is a linkage between China and I. While I was traveling in China, I was very proud being a Chinese because of its history and civilization.”
“One interesting incident is that I used to support the Brazilian team in the World Cup, but this year I feel less enthusiastic about Brazil because I support China. This is the first time I feel what patriotism is.”

(f) Choosing passport

Before 1997, people of HK held British National (Overseas) passport as their international travel document. After 1997, people can keep using their BNO, apply for HK Special Administrative Region Passport or keep both documents. All respondents admitted that they preferred using an SAR passport rather than a BNO one, although they still had a BNO document. “BNO is a colonial product. It represents our history not the present. SAR passport symbolizes our unique politically status among all Chinese citizens. Keeping my BNO is just like a souvenir from the British government.” “Going through customs really distinguishes whether you are a Chinese or not. You go to a slower track if you are a non-Chinese.”

(g) Chinese symbols

All respondents agreed that HK was becoming more “Chinese”. “When you travel to foreign countries, it’s not difficult to see their national flags or symbols everywhere. Before 1997, we did not see much national symbols in HK but now it is the opposites. We have our national day, national flag and national song. This will certainly make us more nationalistic.”

(h) Independent variables recognition

Respondents concluded that there were certain independent variables that they could not change and which confirmed their identity. “There are several factors confirm my identity from a different perspective... I can’t possibly be an European because of my colour of skin, surname,
and most of all, food. I can’t stand eating western food every meal. Those days I lived on campus had proved that I am a Chinese because I must have a little bit of rice everyday, otherwise I’ll feel something’s missing.”

5.4 Discussion

Confusion over identity was not an exclusive problem for overseas students; perhaps it is a problem of every HK citizen who was born during the colonial period. This paper aimed to find out how overseas students had changed their points of view and their sense of national identity after returning to HK; and explored respondents’ frames of reference, and which was the most salient in the process of negotiating their identity.

Before these HK born students left HK for other countries to study, they felt “ashamed” and “inferior” being a Chinese for various reasons, such as human rights and economic development. They preferred introducing themselves as being “from Hong Kong” rather than “I am a Chinese.” Being a colonial citizen gave them more psychological assurance than being a Chinese. One respondent said, “I felt less inferior to claim myself a HK Chinese or British National (Overseas) rather than a Chinese” (5.1d).

HK people preferred claiming themselves as either a “HK citizen” or “Hong Kong Chinese” but not “Chinese”; this may imply that they would like to be differentiated from “Mainland Chinese cultures” and to align themselves with both the broader Chinese culture as well as with HK culture, acknowledging not only their ethnic heritage but also their national status as a HK citizen. The reason behind this hyphenated Chinese identification appears to be two-fold: 1) they could not hide or deny their Chinese identity; (2) they would like to identify themselves as “non-Mainland Chinese” but “from Hong Kong” because of the socio-economical inferiority of Mainland China in the past. There was research
showing that HK people who claimed themselves to be Hong Kongers tended to have more prejudicial perceptions of Mainland Chinese (Lam et al. 1997., Lau et al., 1995). As Brewer (1991) suggested, being a Hong Konger was the superordinate social category, while the Chinese ethnic identity was the subordinate social category, which served the need for distinctiveness from the Westernised HK culture.

Besides, this Chinese identification was also due to their confidence over China which was affected by the Tiananmen Square Incident, and the fear of HK being ruled under the Beijing Government (Abrams, Hinkle & Tomlins, 1999). Further studies conducted in other contexts also explained the same phenomenon. Haynes, Tikly & Caballero (2006) found that mixed heritage people like the White/Black Caribbean were more likely to have “identity problems” and low self esteem because of their socio-economic background.

Apart from a psychological barrier, Faure (1997) indicated that HK people’s confusion over their own identity was due to a political reason--the rule of the British colonial government. Leung (1992) claimed that the policies of the colonial government had effectively “de-ethnicised” the people of HK and “diluted” their sense of “being Chinese” (for related studies, see Wong, Lee & Chan, 1997; Ng, 1998; and Siu, 1999). In Russia, a similar situation happened: Coleman & Podolskij (2007) found that a group of Soviet veterans from Russia and the Ukraine reaffirmed their Soviet identity even after the fall of communism.

Lee (1998) however believed that the characteristics of colonial government influencing people’s perception of their own identity had been fading as the influence of the Chinese Government had becoming strong, as claimed by Rivas-Drakes al. (2008). They claimed that Chinese American youth’s
own positive attitudes toward their ethnic group were positively associated with high self-esteem because of the rise of China in the past decade.

Two years after the handover of sovereignty to China, research by Fu et al. (1999) found that nearly 63% of respondents claimed themselves as Hong Konger, nearly 30% claimed themselves as Chinese, which was higher than that reported before the handover. The recent popular opinion poll (2008) also confirmed Lee’s study in 1998 that HK people claimed themselves “Chinese” more than “HK people”.

Although students were confused about their identity before they left for further studies, the experiences of studying overseas and interacting with people of different cultures enabled them to ease their confusion over identity. When they found that their frame of reference had shown them their culture was different from that of local people, the boundary between Chinese and non-Chinese became rather salient (See 5.2 c & e). Changes of context, even they are only temporary, have proved that they have an effect on people’s sense of identity (Abrams, 1996; Abrams & Hogg, 1987; Haslam & Turner, 1992; Haslam et al., 1992; Waddell & Cairns, 1986). As Turner et al. (1994) believed that self-categorisation is inherently variable, fluid, and context-dependent because self-categories were social comparative and were always relative to a frame of reference.

When students were studying overseas, they started to readjust their sense of national identity with the change in their frame of reference. In a foreign culture, they realized the mainstream of Chinese culture had provided a repertoire of shared values and traditions to assure who they were and where they were from. As Smith (1991) explained that the use of symbols – flags, coinage, anthems, uniforms, monuments and ceremonies – people would be reminded of their common heritage and cultural kinship and feel strengthened and exalted by their sense of common identity and belonging. By rediscovering
different cultures, people rediscovered themselves. With the political and economical change, international students further acknowledged their Chinese national identity.

When overseas students were in a foreign country, their skin colour and their mother tongue had further reaffirmed their sense of national identity of being Chinese. Personal characteristics, such as skin colour, language use and proficiency are important to consider in terms of young adults’ choice of national identity (Phinney et al., 2001). Levels of ethnic identity can be positively related to the retention of a national heritage label, but this depended on how one defined one’s ethnic group members. When students were studying in a foreign country, HK culture had become a subculture of Chinese culture and this was not known to many foreigners. Chinese international students’ skin colour also affected their sense of Chinese ethnicity and national identity, simultaneously.

After students’ returned to Hong Kong, their sense of “national identity” was confirmed as a result of several both subjective and objective reasons. Transition to a Special Administrative Region of China represented a fundamental change in the legal, institutional and economic situation for the people of HK (DeGloyer, 1993). This fundamental change provided people with opportunities to rethink, re-establish and re-internalize their perception of identity (as mentioned in 5.2 d & f). Positive economic aspects were attributes that benefited HK since most people viewed the transition positively (Bond & Hewstone, 1988), especially as the transition was viewed as an opening up of opportunities, a chance for HK people to take advantage of the new opportunities in the Chinese market place (HK Transition Project, 1996). It is therefore natural to explain why the 3 international students had their sense of identity of being “Chinese” enhanced.
In the past, it was believed that students who had received a western education would become “westernized”. However, this study has shown the opposite. These international students had further reaffirmed their sense of Chinese national identity after an overseas learning experience. With the nature of the appropriate context, including the political situation, overseas education can in fact play a significant yet positive role in identifying colonial adolescents’ sense of national identity.

5.5 Conclusion

In this study, students were found to see themselves as “Hong Kongers” before they left Hong Kong. These results echoed previous studies (Hong & Chiu, 1996; Lau et al., 1996; Wong, Lee & Chan, 1997; and Siu, 1999; Fu et al., 1999) and can be explained by an analysis of historical reasons, such as: a fear of communism, uncertainty about Beijing ruling Hong Kong, the economic and political power of the Beijing Government. As Tajfel (1981) indicated, there are crucial situations in which individuals might face identity crisis. One of them is the ill-defined or marginal social situation of a group, which presents the individuals involved with difficulties of defining their place in a social system.

However, respondents found that they had a closer relationship with China after they had returned from overseas. Their frame of reference affirmed their being Chinese. Respondents started to have their perceptions of identity changed during their stay in a foreign country where culture was different from that of Hong Kong.

This study shows that the experience of biculturality is indeed complex and contradictory, leading respondents to feel in-between. However, experiencing a different culture can transmit the result of a concrete process of cultural selection and omission. Such an overseas experience can be understood as a
cultural construct, a selection from available cultures at a particular time. To further investigate whether this is applicable to other contexts, further studies need to be conducted.

However, a limitation of this study is that it cannot identify whether the handover of HK in 1997 or experiences of living abroad, had a greater impact on altering people’s perceptions towards their sense of identity. To find out which one plays a more major role will require further research. Meanwhile, how and why a particular age group of HK people have their national identity changed or sustained also warrants further studies. For example, whether the elderly who were born and raised during the colonial years have had their sense of national identity changed after the handover could be a development of this study.

References


Ming Pao: F1 Students most nationalistic. (30 September 2002)


The Self Concept, Culture and Cultural Identity: An Examination of the Verbal Expression of the Self Concept in an Intercultural Context

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Abstract
This paper is an examination of what verbal expressions of the self concept, assessed through analysis of self descriptions, reveal about an individual’s identity claims in a given interaction. Based on the findings of a larger study into the communication behaviour of a small number of Japanese women conversing in English with a British interlocutor in England, the paper concludes that cultural identity plays a salient role in an individual’s self concept in intercultural communication. The paper begins with a definition of the self concept and a critical evaluation of the analytic tools to assess it. This is followed by background information on the aforementioned study, an overview and discussion of the findings and a conclusion.

Key words
Self concept, culture, cultural identity, intercultural communication
The Self Concept

From a cultural psychology perspective the effects of culture on emergent individual selves can be considerable: ‘Becoming a self […] will require a tuning and coordinating of one’s responses with the prevalent pattern of public meaning and situations – or cultural practices’ (Kitayama et al. 1997: 1247). Accordingly, as the sociocultural context differs, so does the ‘self’ presented in interactional encounters: ‘The sociocultural contexts people are embedded within provide them with the materials of identity construction. People then seek to create selves that are relevant and appropriate to the characteristics valued in these social contexts’ (Oyserman and Markus 1993: 192). The self concept then is the ‘locus of sociocultural influence’ (Ibid) which gives individuals information on ‘how to be a self’. This means that the self concept can be viewed as a multifaceted and dynamic construct. Given its pluralistic nature and the fact that not all aspects of an individual’s self concept are accessible at any given time, I shall make reference to participants’ ‘working’ self concept (Ibid: 191) to refer to a ‘continually active, shifting array of accessible self-knowledge’ (Ibid).

The working self concept is linked to, yet distinct from, identity in that it may be revealing of an individual’s identity claims (i.e. verbal expressions of the self concept may signal what the participant intends the hearer to infer about his or her identity, rather than being indicative of a particular aspect of his or her identity) within a specific context. In other words, an individual’s interactional intentions need to be taken into consideration in the analysis of verbal expressions of the self concept.

In the context of an intercultural study, it is held that cultural (or ethnic) identity is particularly salient in participants’ predominant working self concepts (Winchester 2007), particularly at the early stages of a relationship: ‘During initial encounters in intercultural situations, individuals are likely to use their cultural identities to guide interactions’ (Oetzel 1998: 200).

Assessing the Self Concept

As previously stated, the self concept is a dynamic construct, the content of which is influenced by the social situation at a given time, in addition to being influenced by an individual’s current goals, emotional and motivational state (Kanagawa, Cross and Markus 2001: 91). Consequently, individuals’ working self concepts emerge in social behaviour and can be accessed through their declarations about
the self (i.e. their self-definitions). These give an indication of how individuals evaluate the context, in addition to how they wish to be perceived by the co-participant(s) in a conversation.

The Twenty Statements Test (TST), originally devised by Kuhn and McPartland in 1954, is designed to capture the linguistic manifestation of the working content of the self concept. The TST requires participants to write down their responses to the question ‘who am I?’ twenty times, after which their responses are systematically coded. The test has been widely used to examine cultural variation in the self concept (e.g. Bochner 1994; Bond and Cheung 1983; Cousins 1989; Kanagawa, Cross and Markus 2001), as well as to explore distinctions between the private self and the collective self (Trafimow, Triandis and Goto 1991), the effects of priming (Gardner, Gabriel and Lee 1999; Gardner, Gabriel and Dean 2004; Trafimow et al. 1997) and gender differences in the self concept (Watkins et al. 2003).

Criticisms levied at the TST as a cross-cultural measure of differences in the self concept include the potential limitation of having only twenty self descriptions offered in a restricted context, the ‘fuzzy boundaries of some of the categories’ used in the coding system (Watkins et al. 1997; Watkins et al. 1998; Watkins et al. 2003), the number of coding systems which have been used (Watkins et al. 1997), as well as differences in the weighting given to different self descriptions (e.g. Bochner 1994 codes only 10 statements and weights them according to rank order). Despite these potential limitations, the TST can still be regarded as ‘one of the least culturally biased means of assessing the self-concept’ (Kanagawa, Cross and Markus 2001: 93).

In addition to the TST as a tool to assess the self concept, qualitative analysis can also be conducted on individuals self descriptions in conversation. These freer descriptions, based on the active, salient vocabulary of individuals, give a further insight into individuals’ working self concept (Church 2001) and counter many of the limitations of taking a purely quantitative approach.

In both approaches, self descriptions are systematically coded. In the study under discussion in this paper (Winchester 2007), I use Kanagawa, Cross and Markus’s (2001) coding system, which is in
turn based on Cousins’ (1989) system of dividing responses into five broad categories (physical, social, attributive, global and other) which are subsequently sub-divided, as can be seen in Table 1:

Table 1 categories used to code the TST (categories and examples from Kanagawa, Cross and Markus 2001: 95)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(A) Physical</td>
<td>I am tall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I have short hair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(B1) Relationships</td>
<td>I love my family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I am the youngest child in my family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(B2) Social membership and roles</td>
<td>I am a student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I am a member of a tennis club</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(C1) Preferences, interests</td>
<td>I like to cook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I like to see movies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(C2) Goals, aspirations</td>
<td>I want to be a nurse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I would like to go to Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(C3) Activities (including short-term activities)</td>
<td>I often work out at the gym</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I bought a t-shirt today</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(C4) Qualified traits</td>
<td>I am sometimes grouchy in the morning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I am apt to get tense in public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(C5) Pure psychological attributes</td>
<td>I am outgoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I am self-centred</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(C6) Attitudes</td>
<td>I am not a racist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I am against the Japanese troops going to Cambodia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(C7) Abilities</td>
<td>I am good at math</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I am not able to play any musical instrument</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(D) Individuating self references</td>
<td>My name is Michelle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I am a human being</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(I) Immediate situation</td>
<td>I am hungry now</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I am in a psychology class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(J) Others’ judgements</td>
<td>I am considered good at sports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>People say that I am mercurial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(O) Possessions</td>
<td>I am running out of money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I have a driver’s license</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(M) Miscellaneous</td>
<td>I was born in April</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My phone number is xxxx</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In an intercultural study evaluating cultural variation in self concepts, self descriptions can be evaluated according to how closely participants’ self descriptions accord with typical patterns of responses, gleaned from the findings of previous studies, from individuals sharing similar cultural backgrounds.1

**Background Information on a Study into Working Self Concepts in Intercultural Interactions**

The broader aim of the intercultural study under discussion (Winchester 2007) was to examine the effects of culture on the communication of linguistic politeness styles of seven Japanese women who had lived in Britain for varying lengths of time (between 2 and 13 years). As the researcher, I did this by assessing the links between participants’ linguistic expressions of the psychological variable of the self concept and evaluations of the behavioural outcome of linguistic politeness styles in the English language and by relating any apparent links to participants’ orientations to the cultural constructs of individualism and collectivism.

The methodological approach deemed suitable for the study of intercultural communication is one which does not stereotype participants and one which acknowledges the importance of context in the interpretation of findings. Consequently, a largely qualitative methodological approach with some quantitative elements (with roots in pragmatics and ethnography) was held as a valid one for a study of this nature. This comprised qualitative (or ethnographic) interviews/conversations which largely took their structure from subjects raised by questionnaires (which all dealt with ‘cultural’ issues such as attitudes, values, views of individualism and collectivism and perceptions of cultural differences between Japan and Britain), and the use of questionnaires as counting techniques to assess participants’ individualism and collectivism orientations, as well as their working self concepts. As the researcher, I conducted the interviews and administered questionnaires with individual participants in settings of their choice. The discussions took place in English as, being British myself and with very limited knowledge of the Japanese language, this was the lingua franca. Both the transcripts of the interviews and the questionnaire data were analysed in order to assess participants’ orientations to individualism and

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1 In the study under discussion in this paper (Winchester 2007), participants’ working self concepts are also evaluated in conjunction with evaluations of participants’ orientations to the cultural constructs of individualism and collectivism as well as to their predominant linguistic politeness styles in order to gain a deeper insight into the effects of culture on communication in intercultural encounters.
collectivism, their predominant working self concepts and their linguistic politeness styles\(^2\). A comparative analysis of participants’ predominant working self concepts and linguistic politeness styles was then made and correlated with participants’ orientations to individualism and collectivism from which conclusions could be drawn as to the likely role of culture in participants’ linguistic behaviour in an intercultural context (Winchester 2007).

The participants, all female and aged between 28 and their late 40s, were based in London and Manchester and were all introduced to me by ‘gatekeepers’, namely friends, colleagues and other participants and so were unknown to me at the start of the study. My relationship with each participant ranged from being more distant and professional to more friendly and informal depending, to a great extent, on how I was perceived in my role as a researcher, and this was reflected in both the interview format and content. An overview of the participants involved in the study can be seen in Table 2:

Table 2 profile of length of time participants have spent in Britain and estimation of social contact with British people in order from most time/contact to least time/contact (all names are pseudonyms)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Years in Britain</th>
<th>Level of social contact with British people</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yuriko</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Very high (married to English man)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Namiko</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Very high (most friends are British and was married to English man)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ryoko</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Very high (married to English man)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aiko</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Very high (married to English man)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midori</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Low (married to Japanese man and recently socialises less with British people)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Etsu</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Moderately low (married to Japanese man, although attends British university)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chika</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Low (teaches Japanese, socialises mainly with French and Spanish people she met on language courses)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The study demonstrated that culture has both a direct (through the processes of socialisation and enculturation) and indirect (through the psychological construct of acculturation) effect on individual communication behaviour, as has been predicted in some of the literature, mediated through the self concept. It also demonstrated that there is a complex interplay between cultural, situational and

\(^2\) Only the initial, media and final transcripts were analysed in order to assess changes in politeness styles over time.
motivational factors that contribute to communication in intercultural contexts and that, of the sociopsychological factors involved, cultural identity is particularly salient.

In order to assess participants’ linguistic expressions of the working self concept, participants’ self descriptions from their completed TSTs and the transcripts of their interview data were labelled more typically ‘Japanese’ or ‘British’ according to the findings of a previous study (Kanagawa, Cross and Markus 2001)\(^3\).

Based on these findings, it was possible to devise hypotheses for both the TST and the content analysis of participants’ conversations that focused on the length of time spent in Britain and level of social contact with British people and how these related to the likelihood of participants generating more traits and attitudes in their self descriptions (i.e. demonstrating a predominantly ‘British’ self concept) or generating fewer traits and attitudes and more physical attributes, activities, individuating self references and references to immediate situation and possessions in their self descriptions (i.e. demonstrating a predominantly ‘Japanese’ self concept). In other words, it was hypothesised that those participants who had spent longer living in Britain and who socialised predominantly with British people would be more likely to demonstrate a predominantly ‘British’ self concept) whilst those who had spent the shortest time living in Britain and who socialised predominantly with Japanese people would be more likely to demonstrate a predominantly ‘Japanese’ self concept.

The findings of the TST and content analysis of participants’ conversations were presented as percentages and summarised in bar chart form in order to give a comparative overview of participants’ predominant working self concept. In addition, numerous examples of participants’ self descriptions were extracted from the transcripts of participants’ initial, medial and final recordings to give a qualitative overview.

\(^3\) The findings from Kanagawa, Cross and Markus’s (2001) study were used in this study as they were the most recent and were grounded on the most comprehensive analysis of all the studies which examine cultural variation in the self concept. It must be pointed out that the label ‘Western’ in Kanagawa, Cross and Markus’s (2001) study is substituted with ‘British’ in the study under discussion. Although not totally unproblematic, this was done as the one finding common to all of the studies into cultural variation of the self concept is that there appears to be a tendency for a more typically ‘Western’ (British, Australian or North American, depending on the study) self concept to feature far more psychological traits than a more typically ‘Japanese’ one.
An Overview of the Findings of the Study

According to the findings, the hypotheses were only partially confirmed. As expected, three of the seven participants, Yuriko, Namiko and Aiko, who had lived in Britain for relatively long periods of time (thirteen, eight and six years respectively) and who socialised predominantly with British people, did demonstrate a predominantly ‘British’ self concept in the TST and in conversation. Likewise, Etsu, who had lived in Britain for one of the shortest periods of time (two years) and is married to a Japanese man, demonstrated a predominantly ‘Japanese’ self concept in the TST and in conversation as expected.

Three out of the seven participants, however, did not conform to expectations. Despite living in Britain for eight years, being married to a British man and socialising mainly with British people, Ryoko generated the second highest proportion of ‘Japanese’ self descriptions of all the participants. Another participant, Midori, demonstrated by far the most apparently ‘Japanese’ self concept in her conversations compared to the other participants despite having lived in Britain for five years. This could be partly attributed to the fact that she is married to a Japanese man and socialised mainly with Japanese people. A final participant, Chika, also did not conform to the hypotheses by demonstrating a predominantly ‘British’ self concept despite having lived in Britain for only two years and having comparatively little social contact with British people (she did, however, socialise with Western European [French and Spanish] friends she had made on an English language course and this may have been a contributing factor to these results).

An overview of these results can be seen in Figures 1 and 2:
Figure 1 Participants’ ‘Japanese’ and ‘British’ self descriptions in the TST

Figure 2 Participants’ ‘Japanese’ and ‘British’ self descriptions in conversation
Discussion

A clear pattern can be perceived in the analysis of the content of participants’ working self concepts. The same participants demonstrated either a predominantly ‘British’ self concept (namely Yuriko, Namiko, Aiko and Chika) or a predominantly ‘Japanese’ self concept (namely Etsu, Ryoko and Midori) in the analysis of both the TST and conversations. This consistency points to the solidity of the TST as an analytic tool.

Given that the hypotheses were only partially fulfilled, these findings suggest that factors other than length of time spent in Britain and level of social contact with British people (i.e. cultural effects) affect the content of the working self concept. The context of the participants’ meetings with the interlocutor should be considered as this could influence participants’ interactional goals, emotional and motivational states which are thought to have an effect on the working self concept (Kanagawa, Cross and Markus 2001: 91). Additionally, the content of discussions should be taken into account as this may prime participants’ self concept in a given situation (e.g. Gardener, Gabriel and Lee 1999; Gardner, Gabriel and Dean 2004).

The different settings for meetings, as chosen by each participant, do not appear to have had a sizeable influence on the content of participants’ working self concept. Both Chika and Ryoko arranged to hold two of the three meetings under discussion in a café and yet they differ in the predominant self concepts that they demonstrated. The same is true of Midori, who met me in my home on each occasion and Namiko, who met me in my home on two of the three occasions under discussion; Midori demonstrated a predominantly ‘Japanese’ self concept and Namiko demonstrated a predominantly ‘British’ self concept indicating that the setting had a negligible effect on the content of their working self concepts.

Neither does content of discussions seem to have been a salient factor in determining participants’ predominant self concepts. In order to achieve a degree of comparability, the interlocutor took the approach of basing her ethnographic conversations with the participants around a number of common themes, all of which encouraged a cultural focus. A high degree of comparability was achieved with regards to the content of participants’ discussions, making it unlikely that any individual participant was primed differently to any other.
On the understanding that language use and language attitudes are inextricably linked to (cultural, social and personal) identity issues (Gudykunst and Schmidt 1988; Oetzel 1998; Tracy 1990; Walters 1981), it seems inevitable that participants’ self descriptions (in their TST responses and general conversations) will reflect these. Participants’ cultural (or ethnic) identity assertion in intercultural interactions can be viewed in terms of the extent to which they appear to acculturate to (or position themselves in relation to) the British culture. Acculturation options include assimilation, integration, separation and marginalisation (Berry, Kim and Boski 1988).

The assimilation option entails surrendering one’s cultural identity to a great extent, the integration option allows one’s cultural identity to be retained whilst integrating into the host culture (individuals who do this can be termed ‘bicuultural’: they are able to integrate aspects of their own culture with the new one), the separation option self-evidently involves distancing oneself from the host culture and the marginalisation option entails losing cultural and psychological contact with both the traditional and host cultures (Ibid).

Based on this overview, it may appear that those participants with predominantly ‘British’ working self concepts (namely Namiko, Yuriko, Aiko and Chika) are largely assimilating to a ‘British’ culture (as far as it can be defined as such) and distancing themselves from their Japanese cultural backgrounds. It is the author’s view, however, that this apparent assimilation is more likely to be connected to participants’ ‘bicuultural competence’ (Gardner, Gabriel and Dean 2004), which allows them to maintain distinct cultural identities and switch frames depending on the cues in the social environment. One of the main cues in the social environment in the context of this study is the language in which participants’ have to communicate with me as the researcher:

Forcing respondents to answer questionnaires or to be interviewed in a specific language will influence their responses. Since individuals’ choice of language is a function of their ethnic identity and influences their responses, care must be taken in interpreting results of studies where they are forced to use a specific language (Gudykunst and Schmidt 1988: 5)
As participants in this study in effect had no choice over the language in which they could complete the TST or converse (as I cannot speak fluent Japanese and English is the lingua franca), their predominant working self concepts should be viewed in this light. In other words, the same participants who demonstrated predominantly ‘British’ working self concepts in the context of this intercultural study may well produce predominantly ‘Japanese’ working self concepts if the same study were being conducted in Japan and/or in the Japanese language. In this sense, the language that participants use may prime their responses (Trafimow et al. 1997). In addition, participants’ responses can also be primed by the (intercultural) situation they are in (Gardner, Gabriel and Dean 2004).

That the effects of (language and situational) priming do not appear to be as considerable in those participants who demonstrate primarily ‘Japanese’ working self concepts (namely Etsu, Midori and Ryoko) suggests that they are either ‘separating’ themselves from the host culture to some extent, by adhering to their psychological attachment to their traditional culture (Berry, Kim and Boski 1988), or that they may be less ‘biculturally competent’ (Gardner, Gabriel and Dean 2004) than the other participants. As the ‘degree of self-categorisation as a member of an ethnic group must be considered in […] research on language and social identity’ (Gudykunst and Schmidt 1988:4), an appraisal of all the participants’ self descriptions, in their TST responses and in their general conversation, which give clues to their senses of cultural identity, will be helpful at this point.

Interestingly, only three of the seven participants (namely Midori, Ryoko and Yuriko) defined themselves in relation to their nationality in the TST. They all described themselves by writing ‘I am Japanese’ (or ‘I am a Japanese’ in Ryoko’s case), although it may be noteworthy this is the first self description that Midori offers, the fourth of twenty self descriptions for Ryoko and the eighteenth of twenty for Yuriko. The higher rank of the cultural descriptor in Midori’s and Ryoko’s responses is in line with the fact that they demonstrated a predominantly ‘Japanese’ working self concept, unlike Yuriko. In addition, Midori stated ‘I come from Nagoya’ and ‘I am taller than average Japanese girls’, which may give further clues to her (predominantly Japanese) cultural identity.
Every participant used the pronoun ‘we’ as an inclusive cultural indicator in their conversations. It was used most often by Ryoko (on nine occasions) to signal her psychological alignment with her Japanese cultural background. Chika also made extensive use of inclusive ‘we’ to represent ‘the Japanese’ (there are eight instances), although it is noteworthy that she said:

‘in some point I want to be like this [more British] but in some points (. ) I-I want to keep my culture a little bit [...] I want to control (. ) both cultures’.

There are four occurrences of Midori and Aiko using ‘we’ as an inclusive (Japanese) cultural indicator, although Aiko changed the pronoun ‘we’ to the distancing pronoun ‘they’ in mid-sentence on one occasion:

‘yeah respect seems to be very different from wha- we-we/ they [...] (. ) have in Japan’.

Aiko also made the point in two separate conversations that the way she behaved was not necessarily related to cultural background:

‘I’m more or less me myself wherever I am as (. ) other people may say’ and ‘I’m a kind of person even in Japan I (. ) talk too much probably’.

Midori on the other hand asserted that:

‘I s-still you know ((laughs)) keeping the Japanese behaviour’.

Although Etsu used the inclusive ‘we’ to refer to herself as Japanese on three occasions, she also used the pronoun to include herself with the British once:

‘we have no choice but to be patient’ [discussing waiting for public transport in Britain].

Etsu also stated:

‘inside I try to be (. ) a little bit (. ) more British way ((laughs))/ I’d like to: (1.0) ah accept a little bit (. ) this element (. ) to my Japanese ((laughs)) elements’.

Finally, Namiko and Yuriko used ‘we’ as (Japanese) cultural indicators only twice. Moreover, Namiko clearly used the pronoun to describe herself as British on one occasion:

‘we were just very very British’ [she and her former colleagues].
Both Yuriko and Namiko present a slightly confused representation of their cultural identity in their conversations. Yuriko stated in one conversation:

‘I’m not sure I’m very (.) very Japanese’

but seems to contradict herself in a later conversation when she said:

‘I’m really Japanese’.

She also possibly reveals her own ambivalence regarding her cultural identity when she commented that:

‘when I speak to somebody Japanese (.) living in this country and I feel (2.0) different’ and ‘probably I’m too negative about my own country ((laughs))’.

Yuriko’s apparently diminished cultural awareness may be responsible for this ambivalence. Despite demonstrating a psychological attachment to collectivism, perhaps 13 years spent away from Japan prevents this from being translated into her behaviour.

Namiko presents an image of herself as a reluctant outsider in relation to other Japanese people with comments like:

‘I feel very strange [when going back to Japan]’, ‘I do still think I’m a proper Japanese person/ (.) a bit weird ((laughs)) but still Japanese’, ‘[other Japanese people] find me (1.0) very strange ((laughs))/ they can’t see me as human ((laughs)) or (.) normal’ and ‘I’m somewhere in between [neither wholly Japanese nor British]’.

In addition, she demonstrated a psychological attachment to collectivistic values and practices, whilst she nevertheless positioned herself closer to an individualistic orientation than a collectivistic one. In the face of these comments, her declaration,

‘I really do have a very strong sense of (.) the Japanese identity’

sounds a little plaintive.
From the above analysis it is possible to attempt to define the participants’ acculturation stance (Berry, Kim and Boski 1988) more accurately. With regard to Yuriko’s and Namiko’s strong assertions of Japanese identity, it seems that they are indeed showing a high level of ‘bicultural competence’ (Gardner, Gabriel and Dean 2004) in their linguistic politeness styles in an intercultural context (suggesting that they have ‘integrated’ into the British way of life, rather than been ‘assimilated’ by it), although both may feel slightly marginalised from their traditional cultural backgrounds to some extent (most notably in Namiko’s case; she may even be suffering from ‘acculturative stress’ [Berry, Kim and Boski 1988: 64], a form of psychological stress experienced as a result of coming into contact with different cultural norms. Namiko appears to be unhappy that she is viewed as an outsider by other Japanese people she meets, both in Britain and in Japan, presumably because of her perceived high level of integration into the British way of life). Aiko too has evidently integrated into ‘British’ culture and may even be ‘assimilated’ to it. Unlike Namiko and Yuriko, she does not appear to feel marginalised from her ‘Japanese’ cultural background. In fact, she appears to position herself closer to British norms and values than any of the other participants and is openly critical of Japanese cultural norms. Whilst Etsu appears to demonstrate a desire to integrate into the British way of life, the fact that she demonstrated a predominantly ‘Japanese’ working self concept may be indicative of a comparative lack of ‘bicultural competence’ at this stage, unsurprising given her limited time in Britain (only two years) and social contact with British people. Chika also appears to demonstrate a desire to integrate into the British way of life. The fact that she demonstrated a predominantly ‘British’ working self concept after only two years in Britain and limited social contact with British people (although extensive social contact with people of other Western nationalities) may denote a higher degree of ‘bicultural competence’ than Etsu. Finally, Midori and Ryoko are unique in this study in that they do not appear to wish to integrate into ‘British’ culture, but appear content to separate themselves from it.

In summary, cultural identity does appear to play a salient, but complex, role in participants’ predominant working self concepts. Whilst there seems to be a strong connection between participants’ ‘cultural identity assertion’ and their predominant working self concepts, other factors, such as participants’ bicultural competence, personal and social identity issues, also need to be taken into account. Furthermore, the relationship can be influenced by language and situational priming, in particular their positioning of themselves in relation to the interlocutor in the course of social interaction, making it difficult to assess conclusively.
Conclusion

The apparent clear pattern formed in participants’ predominant working self concepts in the TST and in conversation is not conclusively explained by the length of time participants have been in Britain, or the level of social contact they have with British people, as hypothesised. Even where a correlation does seem to exist (Yuriko, Namiko, Aiko and Etsu appear to confirm the hypotheses), this may have comparatively little to do with the time they have spent in Britain or the level of social contact they have with British people. Other factors such as identity issues and participants’ level of bicultural competence could be responsible for the link.

Overall, these results show a ‘complex interplay of cultural conventions, social relationships, and communicative behavior’ (Yu 2004: 114), making a precise assessment of the nature of the relationship between them extremely difficult to attain. It is the author’s assertion that factors related to identity have the most significant influence on participants’ predominant working self concepts: namely their integrative motivation, bicultural competence, and, most notably, cultural identity as expressed through acculturation patterns.

This assessment leads to the suggestion that culture can be linked to individuals’ working self concepts, although they may be (more loosely) associated rather than (more directly) related as Ellis and Wittenbaum suggest (2000: 706) suggest. Whilst the cultural processes of socialisation and enculturation alone are not indicators of self concepts, the psychological construct of acculturation, with its strong connection to cultural identity, can be. In this sense, the working self concept, assessed through analysis of self descriptions, can be highly revealing of individuals’ identity claims, particularly in intercultural interactions where cultural identity is likely to be to the fore, rather than revealing of their identities per se. This is because identity is a flexible and fluid construct, shaped by cultural practices and distinct situations (note the possible effects of priming), with individuals having access to multiple identities. Consequently, the predominant working self concepts must be assessed in an intercultural context, and should not be regarded as static entities.
References


Identities in the Headlines of Iranian National Newspapers

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**Abstract**

It is believed that Iranian collective identity is comprised of Persian identity, Islam, and Modernity (e.g. Roholamini, 1999; Rajaie, 2005). Persian identity was formed during the Pre-Islamic era of Iranian history (1500 BC-632 AD) and with the Arab invasion and emergence of Shi’ism, Islamic identity developed. During the Qajar dynasty and industrial developments in the West, Iran was...
involved in the process of modernization. In the headlines of national newspapers, Iranian identities are reflected everyday but it is not empirically known to what extent each identity is represented in different newspapers and what the attitudes are of newspapers towards these different identities. The present study aims to deal with the problem by conducting a content analysis of the headlines of the newspapers, Kayhan, Ettelaat, Iran, and Shargh. The results indicate that Kayhan favors revolutionary Islam and is negative about western identity while Ettelaat is more concerned with traditional Islam and describes western identity more conservatively. Ettelaat, similar to Iran, favors national identity and finally Shargh contains the lowest number of headlines describing Islamic identity. Therefore, the four newspapers do not represent identities similarly and have different attitudes towards them. The study will draw on identity theory, such as the one proposed by Castells (2004), to show that the present situation is a consequence of neglecting the role of Islamic identity in the contemporary history of Iran.

**Keywords:** Persian, Islamic, National, Modern, Western, Identity, Newspapers.

**Introduction**

Iran is a land of multiple identities. Some scholars believe that Iranian collective identity comprises Persian, Islamic, and modern identities (Roholamini, 1999). During the Sassanid dynasty Persian identity was formed but many years later with the Arab invasion of Persia (637-651) a new historical era began which lead to social, religious, and cultural transformations in some aspects of Iranian life and the integration of Islamic identity into Persian identity (Rajaee, 2005). During the Qajar dynasty (1781-1925), Iran was impacted on by modernity and western technological advancements but resisted the incorporation of some of these into its collective identity. Ayatollah Khomeini led protesters who denounced the Shah’s secular pro-western policies and finally, in 1979, established an Islamic government which urged revival of Islamic identity at all levels of society. At present Iran is an Islamic Republic and the Iranian government expects all social institutions including the media to observe Islamic rules. Therefore, Iranian national newspapers need to project an image of Iran which, according to Iranian political leaders, is to the benefit of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Iranian people.
The present study aims to investigate the reflection of national, Islamic, and western identities in Iranian newspapers by analyzing the language of a representative sample of headlines collected from 4 Iranian national newspapers published during 2006-2007 in Iran.

**Conceptualizing identity and language**

Anyone in search of his/her identity might pose the question “who am I?” Defining identity has been a most controversial topic and much previous scholarship in the humanities has been directly or indirectly concerned with identity issues. Goffman (1956) proposed a symbolic-interactionist model of identity which posits that individuals play certain social roles and therefore are constantly involved in the dynamic process of identity formation by interacting with others and making themselves cognizant of their interlocutors’ perceptions. Giddens (1991) also argued that identity construction happens in the process of socialization and, similar to Goffman, suggested that identities are constructed and reconstructed through everyday life. Tajfel’s social identity theory is regarded by many as a coherent theory of identity (e.g. Turner, 1999). Tajfel (1978) posited that identity formation is the result of undergoing 3 main processes of social categorization, comparison and a search for psychological distinctiveness in an intergroup setting. According to this theory, individuals first tend to categorize themselves into various social groups which can determine their social positions in a meaningful way. In the next stage of identity formation, individuals compare characteristics of their own groups with those of other social groups and discover features which are unique to them. And in the last stage members of the intergroup maximize their positive features and try to be accepted by other social groups.

Subsequently, Castells (2004) suggested that there are 3 types of identity: legitimizing, resistance and project identities. Legitimizing identity is introduced by the dominant social powers and aims to rationalize their domination. Castells noted that social institutions respond to this domination by resistance and working out principles which are different from the rules the dominant social institution dictates. And project identity is formed once social actors construct a new identity for themselves on the basis of available cultural materials which have been made available.

Identity construction has been also discussed in terms of individuals’ roles in society. According to Turner (1978), an individual may be identified with a role depending on the extent to which the identity of the role is integrated with a person’s overall self-definition. He further noted that one result of greater role-person merger will be more extensive social ties related to the role. Another result is the
display of relevant role-indicative cues and role-appropriate attitudes and behaviors. One of these characteristics is undoubtedly the individual’s linguistic behavior which can be one of the most important barometers of a person’s identity.

Joseph (2004) discussed the relationship between identity and language and after reviewing contributions of some well-known linguists concluded that Saussure, Jespersen and Sapir, Firth, Halliday and Chomsky have proposed essentialist theories of language which imply that it is the linguistic system that determines an individual’s identity. Joseph proposed that Bruner’s early works on language learning are constructivist due to the fact that in Bruner’s terms learners are unique in terms of the way they approach language and, depending on different decisions they make in the process of language learning and type of linguistic exposure, they create their own identities. However, he further noted that Bruner backed away from his strong constructivist position and incorporated some aspects of linguistic theories proposed by essentialist linguists such as Chomsky. Joseph finally came to the conclusion that one should strike a balance between essentialist and constructivist positions and adherence to one should not lead to the exclusion of the other.

Therefore, it seems, identities are constructed and reconstructed in the course of time and as a result of interaction with other identities. Identities may develop on the periphery but they may re-emerge as prominent ones in different social contexts. The relationship between identity and language is also another controversial topic. The complexity of the relationship is not only because of the complex and multi-faceted nature of identity but also because language can both shape and reflect identity.

**Iranian identity**

A variety of identities have been formed throughout the history of Iran. National and religious identities together with modernity and tradition could be claimed to be the pillars of Iranian collective identity (Rajaee, 2005). Rajaee believes that scholars have been attracted to various aspects of this identity and reviews the contributions of a number of Iranian scholars. Safa (1967) identified ‘Persian language’ and ‘the institution of the Kingdom’ as the primary social identities of Iranian people. Motahari (1983) considered Iranian and Islamic identities and tried to explain how the two can be juxtaposed. Meskoob (1992) considered ‘history’ and ‘language’ as important aspects of Iranian identity and Soroush (2002) proposed that ‘Iranian culture’, ‘Islamic culture’ and ‘western culture’ are the most important
components of Iranian identity; and discussed how the three identities can be interwoven. Rajaee (2005) noted that Iranian identity mainly comprises Iranianhood, religion, tradition and modernity. He argued that Iranians have acquired Gnostic individualism and cultural indulgence from their ancient history, and justice and equality from the Islamic era. He further suggested that tradition has given Iranians temperance, moderation, modernity, responsibility and rational freedom. Soltani (2005) reviewed Bashiriye’s classification of post-revolution political forces and organizations in Iran and suggested that the Islamic Republic welded together Islamic and traditional ideologies with modernity and that these come into a fused existence by having a republic which is based on a constitution, parliament, democracy and freedom. Bashiriye (2002) divided Iranian ideology, after the revolution, into populist, constructive and democratic ideologies. The populist ideology which rejected other ideologies was formed during the recent war period, but in the 1990s was revised and changed into a constructive ideology. Finally, democratic ideology which replaced ‘rejecting others’ with ‘looking after others’ gained power at the end of the 20th century.

Iranian identity has been formed over at least 3000 years and it is not possible to capture the essence of it without discussing the historical events which contributed to the formation of Iranian collective identity. The long history of Iran also shows that different ethnolinguistic groups, such as the Azeris, Kurds, Arabs, Baluchis, Turkmens, etc identified themselves and were identified commonly as Iranians but preserved their values, customs and languages in which traces of Iranian identity can be found. Therefore, Iranians are comprised of heterogeneous ethnolinguistic groups who have been constructing and reconstructing Iranian identity for thousands of years. The focus of the present study is on the representation of Iranian identity in the headlines of national newspapers.

**Timeline of Iranian identity**

The ancient history of Iran is associated with Cyrus the Great (648-330 B.C.) who established the Achaemenid Dynasty. Cyrus’s religious reputation made many historians regard him as a religious hero. The charter of Cyrus, which is believed to be the first declaration of human rights, describes Cyrus’s humane treatment of the inhabitants of Babylon after its conquest by the Iranians (Ravandi, 2004). During the Achaemenid dynasty, Zoroastrian monotheism played an important role and during the dynasty of Sassanids (224-651 CE) became the official religion of Iran. The last years of the Sassanids
era were marked by the dissatisfaction of people with local rulers and Arab invasion. The Islamic conquest of Persia caused the decline of the Sassanids Empire and Zoroastrian religion (Ravandi, 2004).

During the reign of Umayyad, the first dynasty of the Muslim Caliphate (661-750 CE), Hajjai ibn Yusuf who was feeling threatened by the widespread use of the Persian language compelled peoples of the conquered lands to replace Persian with Arabic as the official language. However, according to historians, the Persians were able to beautifully weave together the two pre-Islamic and Islamic identities (Frye, 2000). The Persianization process culminated in Shi’ism whose followers believe that Muhammad’s descendents, through his daughter Fatemeh and his son-in-law, Ali, are the best source of obtaining knowledge about the Qur'an and Muhammad’s Sunneh, tradition. Iranian traditional Islamic identity is basically associated with the events during this era.

Many years later, during the last years of Qajar dynasty, Iran was facing the increasing intervention of outside political forces and people’s dissatisfaction with the corrupt Qajar rulers. This resulted in Iran’s constitutional revolution and the establishment of a parliament in 1905. The first newspaper was published in 1837 under the auspices of Mirza Saleh Shirazi and then came Amir Kabir’s newspaper under the name of Darol Khelafeh Tehran, which was published in 1850 (Tabatabaie, 1978). It was hoped that the new reforms in Iran would modernize the country and protect it against the encroachment of western nations. However, in 1921 Reza Khan seized power in a coup against the weakened Qajar and immediately after becoming the king initiated the modernization of Iran by establishing a national education system and establishing various infrastructures. During World War II Reza Shah became close to Germany and this alarmed Britain and Russia, Germany’s enemies. In 1941 Britain and Russia invaded Iran and forced the Shah to abdicate in favor of his son, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi (Kasravi, 1984). In 1951 Mosaddegh was elected Prime Minister and became extremely popular by nationalizing the Anglo-Iranian oil company. In response, Britain collaborated with the US and plotted against him and finally overthrew him (Madani, 1982). The Shah of Iran continued to modernize the country by seeking assistance from western countries and stifling opposition voices.

According to Ayatollah Khomeini who became an outspoken critic of the Shah and his father, Iran was excessively reliant on foreign powers and the Shah of Iran was forcing the nation to abandon Islamic values and tradition and favor westernization and the pre-Islamic history of Iran (Madani, 1982).
Ayatollah Khomeini was sent to Turkey, then to Iraq and finally to France but continued to denounce the Shah. Under the leadership of Ayatollah Khomeini, protests made by demonstrators and critics forced the Shah to flee Iran in 1979. In the same year Ayatollah Khomeini returned from exile to Tehran and a few months later Iran officially became an Islamic Republic (Madani, 1982).

Soltani (2005) made the point that both traditionalists and modernists became the followers of the charismatic leader Ayatollah Khomeini but after his passing, traditional discourse gained power. In 1997 Mohammed Khatami became the Iranian president and in 2001 was re-elected for the second term. Khatami led the reformist movement in Iran and in his lectures and books has spoken of democracy, civil society, rule of law and freedom. During his administration, the number of publications suddenly increased; however, some were later banned by the judicial system which was governed by the conservatives. Solatani (2005) suggested that during Khatami’s presidency, republican discourse was emphasized in this Islamic Republic.

In 2005 Mahmoud Ahmadinejad became president by emphasizing his modest life and promising he would improve people’s living conditions. Ahmadinejad has always introduced himself as a politician who acts on the basis of Islamic and revolutionary principles. The conservatives’ victory in the election was a defeat for the reformists and many reformist newspapers such as Shargh, Hammihan and Veghayeh Etefaqieh were closed down.

History of journalism in Iran

The first Iranian newspaper was published in 1838 for the government by Mirza Saleh Shirazi who had been sent to England as a student in 1815. This newspaper which was first nameless was later named Kaghaze Akhbar, which is a literal translation of the word newspaper. Darol Khelafeh Tehran was published by Amir Kabir in 1850 and was later called Veghayeh Etef aqieh. Publication of different newspapers such as Iran, Vaghayeh Adlieh, Nezami, Elmi, Daneshe Darolfonun, which were now given more freedom, was not without consequences. The contents of some of the publications infuriated Naseridin Shah who imposed a ban on the publications which, it was felt, would corrupt people’s minds and were considered to be against morality and Islam (Tabatabbie, 1988).
After the constitutional revolution, Iranian newspapers were given more freedom. However, the publishers were not seriously educated in journalism and the country was not prepared for free journalism. Publications such as Hablol Matin and Sour Esrafil even dared to chastise the King. After the Russian Cassock Liakhov attacked parliament, journalists such as Dehkhoda who had been writing for Sour Esrafil, Sheik Ahmad Torabi, the manager of Rouhol Qodos, and many others became the main target of the King’s wrath. When Ahmad Shah Qajar came to power in 1909, journalists were once again given the freedom but this led to the relegation of the status of journalism to an arena for slandering among various political parties which were connected to different foreign powers (Kasravi, 1975). In 1921 Ahmad Shah was pushed aside in a military coup by Reza Pahlavi. Reza Shah changed the press law and his forces attacked local journalists. After Reza Shah and departure of American, British and Russian forces, newspapers temporarily regained their freedom but soon various parties which were affiliated with foreign powers formed and once again newspapers began a filthy war of profanities. The Fadaeen Islam which means extreme devotees to Islam and the Tudeh, who were pro-Soviet Iranians, organized networks of execution and assassination and journalists were the main target. In response, Teymoor Bakhtiar who later became the founder of SAVAK, the Iranian intelligence and security organization, was given the responsibility to mitigate the political tension and, naturally, journalists such as Hossein Fatemi and Amir Moghtar fell victim. The press was not allowed to make any criticism and the newspaper pages were filled with naked photos and horoscopes. In 1978 the infuriated Iranians put an end to the rule of the Pahlavi dynasty and Ayatollah Khomeini became the Iranian leader. 

Therefore, as history shows, closure of newspapers in Iran is not a recent phenomenon. Historians (e.g. Tabatabaie, 1988) believe that there are many problems in Iranian journalism. Intellectual and political activists during the constitutional era demanded the rule of law and this diminished the Shah’s power. Many of these activists made important contributions to the development of Iranian journalism; however, one of the problems was journalists’ lack of familiarity with professional journalism. Newspapers, such as Hablol Matin, Sour Esrafil and Rouhol Ghodos, in the early years of the constitutional era began to castigate everyone in such a way that in less than a year and half, they faced a united front of infuriated influential people such as powerful businessmen, the clergy, members of parliament and local governors. As a result, the strict Press Law was passed by the Parliament. The second reason is the fact that although the decree for the constitution was signed in 1906 and respect for the rule of law gained more importance, the throne was still owned by the Qajar dynasty and little change
had taken place in people’s thoughts, morality and culture. In other words, people were not made ready to modernize themselves by localizing the concept of democracy, civil society and the rule of law. Finally, some of the newspapers which should have been primarily at the service of progress and development in the country were directly or indirectly controlled by foreigners who were not necessarily taking into account Iranian national interests.

After the revolution, in 1979 the Ayandegan newspaper, which was believed to have affiliations with the former Shah’s Rastakhiz (Resurrection) party, was banned; however, Kayhan (universe) and Ettelaat (information) fell under the control of the Islamic republic and were allowed to publish. Kayhan is an influential newspaper which is published by the Kayhan institute. The managing editor of this newspaper is Hossein Shariatmadari who is a well-known conservative figure in Iran. The Ettelaat newspaper is claimed to be the oldest Iranian newspaper and has been publishing for eighty-two years (Ettelaat, 2007). The managing editor of this daily is Seyed Mahmoud Do’ayi. Another newspaper in Iran, which was founded in 2002, is Shargh (East) which was managed by Mehdi Rahmanian. The editor in chief of this leading reformist daily was Mohammad Ghouchani. Shargh was published during Khatami’s presidency but was temporarily closed down by the judiciary system on February 18, 2004. After the removal of the ban on February 28, 2004, it was published again on March 3, 2004. However, it was again shut down on September 11, 2006. Shargh was allowed to republish in 2007 but it was banned again in August 2007. The Iran newspaper was banned in May, 2006 but after the introduction of a new director, Kaveh Eshtehardi, was republished in October, 2006. Iran, in comparison with Kayhan and Ettelaat which are regarded as conservative newspapers, was a more moderate daily while Shargh belonged to the reformists who gained power during the two terms of Khatami’s presidency.

Before the Islamic revolution, opponents of the Shah who demanded the revival of Islamic values and were furious about the interference of western countries were suppressed. For example, Shariatmadari, the editor in chief of Kayhan, and Hojatoleslam Do’ayi, the editor in chief of Ettelaat, were prosecuted by the Shah.

The present study aims to investigate reflections of Iranian identity which, according to many scholars, is comprised of Iranian nationality, Islam and modernity in the headlines of four Iranian
national newspapers: Kayhan, Ettelaat, Iran and Shargh. The results will be interpreted within the historical and political context of the country.

**Data collection**

From among miscellaneous newspapers which have been published in Iran, Kayhan and Ettelaat, which are conservative newspapers, were selected because of their orientations and influence in the country. Two other newspapers selected for the study were the well-known reformist dailies Shargh and Iran. Twelve issues of Kayhan and Ettelaat were collected by randomly selecting one issue of each month’s publications over one year and then twenty headlines were randomly selected from the headlines of each issue. Since Shargh and Iran were temporarily closed down at the time the researchers were collecting data, collection of headlines of these two newspapers were made over six months and two issues of each month’s publication were randomly selected. But the same twenty headlines were randomly drawn from the headlines of each issue.

**Data analysis**

The headlines of four national newspapers were analyzed in terms of words which projected a dimension of Iranian identity: Iranian, Islamic, and western identity from which modernity was imported. Words such as “Iran”, “Iranian”, “our” etc. were categorized as words which indicate the quality of Iranianhood, a term to differentiate people who are living in this country from people in other countries. Presence of national identity words in the headline was also investigated by inferring the intended meaning of the writer who could emphasize nationality by focusing on positive aspects or could be neutral by simply indicating a fact. The writer could also be critical of having this nationality and project a negative image of this identity:

A. A positive headline about national identity

**Iran** Biggest Economic Power in Middle East. (Kayhan)

B. A neutral headline about national identity

Former German Chancellor’s Views of **Iran** (Shargh)
C. A negative headline about national identity
Everyday 40 Cars Stolen in **Country** (Iran)

The same procedure was also utilized for the analysis of headlines in which reference was made to the West using words such as ‘England’, ‘Europe’, ‘United States of America’, ‘Israel’\(^1\), ‘Europe’, etc. Western identity in these headlines could be positively, neutrally or negatively described:

A. A positive headline about western identity
**British** Press Admire Iranian national Player (Iran)

B. A neutral headline about western identity
**America** and China discuss North Korean Nuclear Activities (Ettelaat)

C. A negative headline about western identity
Unemployment in **England** highest in six years (Iran)

In example A, a positive perception of westerners about the Iranian identity is included in the headline and this creates a positive image of the West. Such an image is not created in example B and in example C the headline projects a negative image of western identity.

Islamic identity was categorized into traditional Islamic and revolutionary Islamic identities. The former refers to religious values such as prophet Mohammad, Imams, Islam, Muslims, etc. Post-revolutionary values which have been formed since the Islamic revolution in which religion and politics were integrated include the supreme leader, Palestine, Lebanon, etc

A. A headline containing traditional Islam
**Eid Al-Ghadir** Ceremonies in Iran and in the World (Ettelaat)

---

\(^1\) Israel is regarded by many politicians as a western ally in the Middle East, although the majority of Israelis are Hebrew and Judaism is the religion.
B. A headline containing revolutionary Islam

**Lebanese Hezbollah Activist: High Morale of Lebanese People Owes to Ashura Culture**
(Kayhan)

**Results**

The four newspapers were analyzed in terms of the distribution of words which represent national, Islamic and western identities in the headlines. The percentages of Kayhan newspaper headlines reflecting national, Islamic, and western identities were 13.75, 31.66 and 14.6 respectively and the remaining headlines did not include any of these identities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>National</th>
<th>Islamic</th>
<th>Western</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kayhan</td>
<td>13.75</td>
<td>31.66</td>
<td>14.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ettelaat</td>
<td>21.25</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>4.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>19.58</td>
<td>15.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shargh</td>
<td>16.66</td>
<td>5.83</td>
<td>5.41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The percentage of Ettelaat headlines showing national identity was 21.25. 27.5 percent of the headlines in this newspaper represented Islamic identity and only 4.16 of the headlines concerned western identity. From among Iran newspaper headlines, 22.5 percent include national identity, 19.58 percent Islamic identity, and 15.83 percent western identity. The percentages of headlines reflecting national, Islamic and western identities are 16.66, 5.83 and 5.41 (see Table 1). The results showed that Iran has the highest number of headlines reflecting national identity (22.5) and western identity (15.83) while Kayhan contains the highest number of headlines with Islamic identity (31.66). Furthermore, it can be understood from the table that Kayhan and Ettelaat are generally more concerned with identities in general in comparison to Iran, especially Shargh.

Another factor investigated was the distribution of the journalists’ attitudes towards Iranian national identity. The percentage calculations indicated that the majority of headlines in all four newspapers positively or at least neutrally reflect Iranian identity and very few of them question it (see Table 2). Compared with the other three newspapers, Shargh is the only newspaper with headlines which
are critical of Iranian national identity, though the number of headlines which are neutral in this newspaper is considerable.

**Table 2. Percentages of positive, neutral and negative headlines about Iranian national identity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Negative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kayhan</td>
<td>11.18</td>
<td>9.79</td>
<td>2.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ettelaat</td>
<td>14.17</td>
<td>24.40</td>
<td>1.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>15.82</td>
<td>19.42</td>
<td>3.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shargh</td>
<td>13.43</td>
<td>35.82</td>
<td>10.44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, the percentage of headlines which positively describe western identity is considerably lower among all the newspapers (see Table 3). The majority of the headlines reflect western identity negatively or neutrally. For example, Kayhan which contains a relatively large number of headlines in which western identity is projected (Table 1), has the highest number of headlines which are indicative of this newspaper’s highly negative attitude towards the West. Iran and Shargh contain more headlines which neutrally present western identity.

**Table 3. Percentages of positive, neutral and negative headlines about western identity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Negative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kayhan</td>
<td>.69</td>
<td>8.39</td>
<td>14.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ettelaat</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>4.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>17.98</td>
<td>6.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shargh</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td>10.44</td>
<td>7.46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two types of Islamic identity have been formed throughout Iranian history. Revolutionary Islamic identity came into existence with the victory of the Islamic Republic. As the table below shows, Kayhan headlines focus on both Islamic identities, but headlines which reflect revolutionary Islam are relatively larger in number and compared with headlines of the three other newspapers, Kayhan’s emphasis on revolutionary Islamic identity is much stronger. Ettelaat’s focus is more on traditional Islam and compared with Kayhan, Iran and Shargh, it contains a large number of headlines, more than half of which project traditional Islam.
Table 4. Percentages of headlines with traditional and Revolutionary Islam

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Traditional Islam</th>
<th>Revolutionary Islam</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kayhan</td>
<td>25.87</td>
<td>27.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ettelaat</td>
<td>51.96</td>
<td>19.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>19.42</td>
<td>14.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shargh</td>
<td>8.95</td>
<td>11.94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Similar to Ettelaat, the Iran newspaper contains more headlines with traditional Islamic identity and Shargh, which has few headlines reflecting Islamic aspects of Iranian identity, has a relatively higher number of headlines in which revolutionary Islamic identity is referred to.

Conclusion

Based on the results of headline analysis, it can be claimed that each newspaper emphasizes one dimension of Iranian identity. Both Kayhan and Ettelaat give weight to Islamic identity; however, for Kayhan the type of Islam which was revived after the victory of the Islamic revolution has priority. Ettelaat devotes more than half of its headlines which reflect an aspect of Iranian identity to traditional Islam which clearly has its origins in the Safavid era. In comparison to Kayhan, Ettelaat is more concerned with Iranian national identity because of the presence of a larger number of headlines in this newspaper which positively describe Iranian national identity; this newspaper can be regarded as more nationalistic. Moreover, Ettelaat contains fewer headlines in which Iranian national identity is associated with negative qualities and the number of such headlines in both newspapers is very low. The two newspapers are also different in terms of their attitudes towards the West. Kayhan contains a comparatively large number of headlines with western identity but it also devotes a much larger number of headlines to disparage western identity. Ettelaat rarely refers to western identity and is much more cautious about introducing the West negatively.

In comparison to Kayhan, the Iran newspaper more frequently refers to national identity and contains more headlines which describe Iranian national identity positively. Iran also contains more headlines which present a negative picture of Iranian national identity or, in other words it is more critical of this identity. However, as was already mentioned, negative reflection of national identity is very rare. Another difference between the two newspapers is in the amount of emphasis put on Islam. In Iran there are relatively few headlines showing Islamic identity and, contrary to Kayhan, Iran puts more emphasis on traditional Islamic identity. Compared with other newspapers, in both Kayhan and Iran a
A considerable number of headlines represent the West but the majority of these headlines in Iran are neutral descriptions of the West while Kayhan’s descriptions of the West are extremely negative. In comparison with other newspapers, Iran has the most positive descriptions of western identity, though the number of such headlines is very small.

There are many differences between Kayhan and Shargh. Contrary to Kayhan which has been in power since the Islamic revolution, Shargh which is a reformist newspaper has been banned several times. For Shargh it is not generally important to reflect different identities and the very low frequency of headlines in which an aspect of Iranian identity is referred to testifies to the fact. Compared to Kayhan, Shargh contains more headlines about Iranian national identity and a relatively larger number of headlines which positively describe national identity. Therefore, Shargh is a more nationalistic newspaper compared with Kayhan. However, there are also more negative descriptions of Iranian national identity. Generally speaking, from among these four newspapers, Shargh is most critical but it is not as critical as Kayhan is of the West. Contrary to Kayhan which devotes a large number of its headlines to Islam, Shargh contains very few headlines in which reference is made to Islam. Shargh, similar to Kayhan, reflects revolutionary Islam to a greater extent.

There are similarities and differences between Ettelaat and Iran’s headlines. Both Iran and Ettelaat devote the largest number of their headlines to the reflection of national identity but Iran contains a few more headlines describing national identity. Interestingly, there are more positive descriptions of Iranian national identity in Iran. In comparison with Ettelaat, there are fewer neutral descriptions of national identity in Iran but compared with Ettelaat, this newspaper is more critical of Iranian identity, though the difference is very small. Iran’s emphasis on Islamic identity is not as strong as Ettelaat’s but similar to Ettelaat, it focuses on traditional Islam. Contrary to Ettelaat, which devotes very few headlines to the West, Iran has the largest number of headlines which refer to the West but the majority of these headlines are neutral descriptions of western identity. Iran also contains the largest number of headlines which positively describe western identity, though the frequency of such headlines is still very low. The number of headlines which negatively describe western identity is more than the number of such headlines in other newspapers except Kayhan.
Comparison between Iran and Shragh indicates that Iran is much more eager to reflect national, Islamic and western identities. In Iran there are more positive descriptions of national identity but Shargh contains more neutral description of this identity. Shargh has the largest number of negative headlines about Iranian national identity, as already mentioned, Shargh is the most critical newspaper. In comparison with Iran, Shargh focuses less on traditional Islam but the frequency of headlines in this newspaper which refers to Islam is the lowest. Compared to Iran, Shargh contains many fewer headlines which refer to western identity but similar to Iran, the majority of these headlines neutrally describe western identity. Shragh contains more negative headlines about the West, though the difference is very small.

For Kayhan, Islam, especially revolutionary Islam, has priority over Iranian nationality and it categorically denounces western identity. This newspaper has no doubts that the West is evil. This newspaper’s animosity towards the West could be interpreted as a reaction to historical events which contributed to the modernization process during the constitution era in Iran. One critic who was suppressed by the Shah was Shariatmadari, the editor in chief of Kayhan. In response to a question posed by a frontline interviewer he said:

“… We uphold the worldwide Islamic movement. We believe the world order should change. It was previously dominated by two poles, and then it turned to a one-superpower system, at the will of the United States, after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Countries must have their independence, and our emphasis is the Islamic version of world order. So we defend the Islamic Revolution in our country, and we view events from that perspective. …”

In comparison with Kayhan, Ettelaat is a more moderate newspaper which regards nationality and Islam as almost equally valuable and seems to be more attached to tradition rather than revolutionary Islam. It rarely reminds the readers of western identity and is not an outspoken critic of the West. What differentiates Kayhan from Ettelaat is Keyhan’s focus on political Islam which, as was mentioned by Shariatmadari, emphasizes ‘the Islamic version of world order’. However, in comparison with Keyhan, Ettelaat is more concerned with traditional Islam. Hojatoleslam Doa’ie, editor in chief of Ettelaat, was a political activist both before and after the Revolution and was regarded as a threat to the Shah.
Compared with Kayhan and Ettelaat, Iran, similar to Shargh, is a more nationalistic newspaper and contains the largest number of headlines which neutrally describe the West which indicates that Iran is less conservative than Ettelaat which hardly reflects western identity. Perhaps the most striking difference between Iran and Shargh is the fact that Shargh is a more critical newspaper. Mouhammad Ghouchani, the editor in chief of Shargh, started his career with Jam’eh Daily, the most famous reformist newspaper after Mohammad Khatami took office in 1997. Khatami emphasized democracy and introduced the theory of Dialogue Among Civilizations which finally caused the United Nations to proclaim the year 2001 as the year of Dialogue Among Civilizations.

Despite efforts made by a number of scholars (e.g. Motahari, 1983; Meskoob 1992; Soroush, 1995) to weave together various aspects of Iranian identity, the disproportionate distribution of identities in the headlines of the newspapers indicates that the efforts have not been much successful. Contrary to what was suggested by Tajfel’s social theory of identity, members of the new intergroup, supporters of western identity in Iran during the Pahlavi dynasty, rather than maximizing their positive features and trying to be accepted by other social groups and other identities in Iran mostly dominated them.

As was discussed by Castells (2004), social institutions resist the domination of a force which tries to legitimize its domination by means of constructing a new identity, which he called project identity, on the basis of available cultural resources. As is reflected in the headlines of Iranian national newspapers, it seems that a rapid introduction of western identity and the establishment of western institutions are perceived as domineering, trying to legitimize western presence, along with a lack of due respect for Islamic identity; this caused the rise of Islamic resistance movements, which finally culminated in the Islamic Revolution and empowerment of a once suppressed Islamic identity.

References


Lebanese University Students’ Perceptions of Ethnic, National, and Linguistic Identity and Their Preferences for Foreign Language Learning in Lebanon

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate Lebanese university students’ perceptions of their ethnic, national, and linguistic identity and their preferences for choice of first foreign language (FL) and medium of instruction in pre-university schools in Lebanon. The study also aimed at exploring the differences in perceptions of identity and preferences for FL learning in Lebanon between male and female students, students from different religious backgrounds (Muslim and Christian), and students whose first FL is English and those whose first FL is French. Eighty-six students completed a survey, and follow-up semi-structured interviews were conducted with 24 students in order to clarify responses and obtain more in-depth data. Findings revealed that the Lebanese university students in this study valued the importance of English as an essential language to know, mostly because of the practical importance of English as an international language, while some students whose first FL is French expressed a strong affiliation with the French language and culture. Moreover, students from a Christian religious background were much more likely than their Muslim counterparts to construct an identity of
themselves that is ethnically and culturally distinct from the rest of the Arab World. Finally, the first FL learned was an important factor influencing these students’ preferences for choice of medium of instruction.

**Key Words:** Identity; English as a Foreign Language; French as a Foreign Language; Medium of instruction; Religious background; Lebanon

**Introduction**

Lebanon is an established multilingual society with three active languages, Arabic, the native language, and two important foreign languages, English and French (Shaaban & Ghaith, 2002). The arrival of Western missionaries in Lebanon in the 18th and 19th centuries, the colonization by France right after the end of World War I until Lebanese independence in 1943, and the emergence of English as a leading international language for business, technology, and communication, all had a major influence on the learning and teaching of English and French in Lebanon. Following the establishment of religious ties between various Lebanese religious communities and the West, competing missionaries, primarily French Jesuits and American Protestants (Shaaban & Ghaith, 1999), established several schools in the country, exposing the Lebanese to Western cultures and languages. In addition, during the period of the French mandate (1920-1943), the French language became an official language in Lebanon in addition to Arabic; French was taught in all schools and was the medium of instruction for sciences, mathematics, and social studies at all levels of education (Shaaban & Ghaith, 1999).

After the Lebanese independence in 1943, Arabic became the only official language in Lebanon; moreover, in 1946, English became one of the two compulsory foreign languages in secondary schools (along with French), and the Lebanese government’s official curriculum for public schools gave equal importance to French and English, which remained “deeply rooted in the Lebanese educational system” (Shaaban & Ghaith, 1996, p. 101) and both remained dominant as media of instruction in many Lebanese schools. Economic reasons mostly contributed to this spread of foreign languages as media of instruction, especially English, which at that time was starting to become more influential than French in Lebanon, mainly because of the international influence of the United States and the growing importance of the English language in international business, science, and technology. Up to and during the civil war...
in Lebanon (1975-1989), Arabic-French bilingualism remained an important identity marker for certain Christian groups, while Muslims viewed Arabic as an essential symbol of their identity, one that links them to the rest of the Arab world (Suleiman, 2006).

Currently, the traditional cultural-linguistic conflict between Arabic and foreign languages as media of instruction is being gradually replaced by a struggle between English and French, with English gaining ground so far, mainly because of economic and practical considerations (Shaaban & Ghaith, 1999). Along the same lines, Constantine (1995) argues that the importance of the French culture and language in Lebanon has been gradually weakening, mainly because of the competition from American culture. Moreover, Suleiman (2006) argues that in Lebanese linguistic politics, the reduction in the power of Arabic and French to index group and national identity constructions is part of an ongoing realignment in favor of a more utilitarian perspective on languages that values them, first and foremost, for their economic relevance… English in Lebanon has therefore gained considerably at the expense of French (p. 130).

Several recent studies have also supported the notion of English being perceived as more useful and practical than French, even among those whose first FL is French (Abou, Kasparian & Haddad, 1996; Ghaleb & Joseph, 2002; Shaaban & Ghaith, 2002).

On the other hand, according to Suleiman (2003), “the presence of French in Lebanon is endowed with political, religious and cultural connotations that bear directly on questions of the conceptualization of national identity, in spite of the fact that the official status of the language was dropped after independence in 1943” (pp. 205-206). Politically, French supports the concept of a Lebanese national identity that views Lebanon as separate from Arab nationalism, and proponents of French in Lebanon stress its role as an important medium of cultural and religious expression that helps the Christian Lebanese maintain ties with the Christian West, mainly France (Suleiman, 2003). According to Simpson (2007),

[a]s a symbolic marker and index of individual and group identity, language has the potential to function as an important boundary device, separating distinct sub-populations off from neighbouring others with different, possibly unintelligible language habits, and binding the former together with shared feelings of identity and group self interest (p. 1).
This argument definitely applies to many Christian Lebanese who function fluently and often dominantly in French and emphasize the importance and prestige of the French language and culture.

Similarly, Joseph (2004), who provides an examination of Lebanese language/identity patterns, argues that, in spite of the fact that proficiency in English is currently very highly valued in Lebanon and that recent Lebanese educational policies advocate trilingualism in Arabic-English-French, Arabic-French bilingualism remains a prominent identity marker for many Lebanese, particularly Christian Lebanese, who are therefore likely to hold different perceptions of their ethnic, national, and linguistic identity than Muslim Lebanese. According to Suleiman (2006), there are two identity constructs involved: “an Arab Lebanon versus a Lebanese Lebanon. The former is of the Arab Middle East and the latter is in the Arab Middle East” (p.132). More specifically, according to Suleiman (2003),

[s]upport for French on the Lebanese cultural scene is generally linked to conceptualizations of Lebanese national identity which propel it outside the Arab orbit and lodge it in the sphere of a Western or non-Islamic Mediterranean culture... Lebanese national identity is therefore not purely Arab or purely Western, but must partake of both to remain genuinely authentic and true to its roots. The presence of French is seen now as part of a long-established multilingual tradition in Lebanon which takes the country back to the times of the Phoenicians, for whom multilingualism was a fact of life. (p. 205)

Indeed, some Christian Lebanese deny that they are Arab and hold the firm belief that they are direct descendents of the Phoenicians, thereby claiming an “older, historical-cultural presence than their Muslim countrymen” (Joseph, 2004, p. 209). As Kraidy (1998) aptly points out, Lebanon apparently suffers from an “identity crisis:” Is Lebanon, as some Lebanese argue, “a unique country with Phoenician ascendance, Western affinities, distinct from its Arab environment,” (p. 3) or is it an inseparable part of the Arab world, sharing the history, culture, and ethnic identity of its neighboring Arab countries? It is expected that the answer to this question will vary considerably depending on several factors, including the religious background of the Lebanese respondent. Thus, this factor obviously plays an important role in influencing Lebanese students’ perceptions of ethnic, national, and linguistic identity and their preferences for foreign language learning.

Moreover, being either “French-educated” or “English-educated” is a salient identity marker in Lebanon (Diab, 2006). Most Lebanese students today belong to one of the two dominant types of schools: “English-medium” (which introduce English before French and use it as a medium of
instruction) and “French-medium” (which introduce French before English and use it as a medium of instruction). Shaaban and Ghaith’s (2003) survey of university students’ perceptions of the utility of Arabic, English, and French in Lebanon revealed that, in addition to religious background, the first foreign language studied at school (English vs. French) influenced the linguistic attitudes of students in Lebanon towards these three languages. Similarly, in Diab’s (2006) survey of Lebanese university students’ beliefs about language learning, first foreign language learned was a prominent factor influencing students’ beliefs about learning English and French. For many Lebanese, studying at French-medium schools and being fluent in French is an essential aspect of their identity, one that separates them from non-French speaking Lebanese. Thus, the first FL studied, in addition to religious background, may obviously play a major role influencing Lebanese students’ preferences for choice of medium of instruction (Shaaban & Ghaith, 2003). A third possibly influential factor is gender, since females may have more positive attitudes towards foreign language learning than males (Abu-Rabia & Feuerverger, 1996; Diab, 2000).

The Present Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate Lebanese university students’ perceptions of ethnic, national, and linguistic identity (i.e. their definition of “Arab”, of “Lebanese”, whether they believe Lebanese people are “Arabs,” and what language(s) in their opinion are essential to know in Lebanon) and their preferences for choice of first foreign language (FL) and medium of instruction in pre-university schools in Lebanon. The study also aimed at exploring the differences in perceptions of ethnic, national, and linguistic identity and preferences for foreign language learning in Lebanon between male and female students, students from different religious backgrounds (Muslim and Christian), and students whose first foreign language is English and those whose first foreign language is French. Specifically, the study aimed at addressing the following research questions:

1. What are Lebanese university students’ perceptions of “Arab” and “Lebanese” identity?
2. What languages do Lebanese university students believe are essential to know in Lebanon?
3. What are Lebanese university students’ preferences for choice of first FL and of medium of instruction in Lebanon?
4. Are there any differences in Lebanese university students’ perceptions of ethnic, national, and linguistic identity related to gender, first FL, or religious background?
5. Are there any differences in Lebanese university students’ preferences for FL learning related to gender, first FL, or religious background?

Method

Participants

The participants in this study were 86 Lebanese students at an English-medium private university in Lebanon. Forty-five percent of the participants were males and 55% females, and they ranged in age between 18 and 28, with a median age of 20. The participants came from a variety of disciplines, namely natural sciences (34%), business (23%), humanities (15%), engineering (14%), social sciences (9%), and computer science (5%). In addition, 63% of the students studied English as their first FL and attended English-medium pre-university schools, while 37% studied French as their first FL and attended French-medium schools. Moreover, 65% stated that they are Muslim, while the remaining 35% specified that they were Christian. Finally, all 86 participants stated that their native language is Arabic.

Instrument

A questionnaire (see Appendix) was devised by the researcher in order to investigate the students’ perceptions of ethnic, national, and linguistic identity and their preferences for choice of first FL and medium of instruction in pre-university schools in Lebanon. The questionnaire consisted of two sections. The first one included background items in order to obtain background information about the respondents, such as their religious background and first FL learned. The second section addressed the students’ ethnic, national, and linguistic identity and preferences for FL learning in Lebanon. In an attempt to elicit detailed responses, the survey contains three open-ended questions in the second section (namely items 1, 3, & 8). In addition, the remaining five closed-ended questions all have an option for respondents to provide alternative responses. Finally, all the items in the second section were used as guide questions for the semi-structured interviews, in order to clarify and obtain more in-depth responses.
Procedure

Invitations to participate in the study and copies of the survey were sent to a random sample of 150 students; 91 students responded (61% response rate), but five were excluded because the respondents were not Lebanese but international students. In order to triangulate the study and obtain more in-depth responses, the 86 students were again invited to participate in semi-structured interviews. Twenty-four students volunteered to participate: 10 male and 14 female students, 15 students whose first FL is English and 9 whose first FL is French, and 10 Christian and 14 Muslim students. The interviews lasted from around twenty-five minutes to an hour and 10 minutes. All interviews were done voluntarily and the participants’ confidentiality was assured. Participants were encouraged to speak frankly and could respond either in English or in Arabic. Since the researcher is a Lebanese who speaks Arabic, most of them chose to respond in Lebanese Arabic but, as is often the case in the Lebanese multilingual setting, they frequently code-switched into English and sometimes into French. Similarly to Kim (2003), the status of the researcher an an “insider” helped in understanding the complexities and subtleties of the participants’ responses, which would have not been possible for a non-Lebanese researcher.

Data Analysis

Survey data were analyzed by summarizing the responses to the background items and calculating percentages for the closed-ended items. In addition, the students’ responses to the free-response items were categorized and summarized. Moreover, cross-tabulations and chi-square tests were computed in order to investigate the relationship between the background variables (gender, first FL learned, and religious background) on the one hand and identity and preferences for FL learning on the other. As for the interview data, they were analyzed qualitatively by developing coding strategies and trying to identify concepts and categories in the data. After preliminary coding categories were established, the transcripts were examined further in order to identify more categories or subcategories. Finally, a set of codes was established and the data were scrutinized and labeled accordingly. Several dominant themes emerged from this qualitative analysis.
Results and Discussion

Perceptions of ethnic, national, and linguistic identity

In order to address the first research question, the students’ responses to the relevant items in the questionnaire were summarized. In response to the question: “Who would you identify as Lebanese?” the students provided a variety of responses, ranging from the expected political definition of “anyone holding the Lebanese passport/nationality” (28 respondents), “anyone born in Lebanon” (15 respondents), anyone with Lebanese parents (14 respondents), and “anyone whose ancestors are Lebanese” (9 respondents) to unusual descriptions such as “anyone who speaks three languages: Arabic, English and French” (3 respondents). Moreover, four students emphasized that a Lebanese can be of any religion and is “multicultural and open.” Finally, it is worth mentioning that four respondents provided responses that were meant to be humorous but that are nevertheless indicative of their perceptions of what it means to be “Lebanese”: “someone who can take advantage of all situations,” “smart, manipulative,” and “has no sense of patriotism to the country, only loyal to a particular religious group or political party.”

Moreover, there was considerable variety in the students’ responses to the two questions “Who would you identify as Arab?” and “Would you include Lebanese people in your definition of Arab?” Regarding the first question, most students (60%) defined an Arab as one who speaks Arabic as a native language, 19% stated that an Arab is one who is a citizen of specific countries in the Middle East, 13% replied that Arabs are people living in the Middle East, and only 8% stated that Arabs are citizens of Islamic countries.

Regarding the second question, most respondents (75%) included Lebanese people in their definition of Arabs, while 25% did not. Consistently with the responses to the first question, the majority of respondents who answered in the affirmative to the second question provided the linguistic factor as a reason: Since Lebanese people speak Arabic, then they are Arabs (63%). The other two reasons provided were the location or geography of Lebanon (25%) and shared history/culture with other Arab countries (16%).
Analyses of the interview data confirmed the above findings and further revealed interesting discrepancies in students’ perceptions of Lebanese ethnic identity. Two emergent themes were the issue of Phoenician/non-Arab vs. Arab Lebanese ethnic identity and the argument that “Arab does not equal Islam” vs. the counter-argument that non-Muslims cannot be considered Arab. Students from a Christian religious background tended to have very different opinions about the first issue than students from a Muslim religious background. Interestingly, some respondents emphasized the fact that other Lebanese may not share their opinion. For instance, a female Muslim student whose first FL is English stated that “even if many Lebanese people refuse to acknowledge their Arabic origins, they are Arabs.” Similarly, another female Muslim student with an English first FL background stated that “most Christians say they’re not Arab, that they’re Phoenician, but I think Arab represents a culture and does not pertain to just one origin.” Two additional Muslim students mentioned the Phoenician issue and that in their opinion, Lebanese are Arabs who are not descendents of the Phoenicians.

A few respondents also made a point that although they agree that Lebanese are Arabs, they also believe that they share some common characteristics with Western culture:

“We do not really share the same values and lifestyles of neighboring countries” (female Muslim student, first FL English)

“Lebanese people have other characteristics and culture that are different from Arabs” (female Muslim student, first FL French)

“I think Lebanese people identify with Western thought... the community has a mixture of Arab and Western values” (female Muslim, English first FL)

“Some Lebanese are inclined to the West and cannot be fully identified as Arab” (female Christian student, English first FL)

Most striking were some of the responses that were provided by students who did not agree that Lebanese people are Arabs:

“I think Arab civilization is far from the Lebanese civilization” (male Christian, English first FL)

“To my knowledge, Arab is a race attributed to those living in the Gulf region. In general, Lebanese are not Arabs unless their ancestors trace back to people from that (Gulf) region” (female Christian, English first FL)

“Arabs are citizens of specific countries in the Middle East and Gulf, such as
Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. Lebanese people are not part of these countries. They are just neighbors. In fact, Lebanese people come from an independent civilization called Phoenicians. This is why I do not include them in my definition of Arab” (male Christian, French first FL)

“I consider my origin as Phoenician, not Arab” (male Christian, French first FL)

“We’re originally Phoenician but some people who are Lebanese think they’re Arab and who am I to argue with them” (male Christian, English first FL)

Moreover, two respondents, one Christian and one Muslim, focused on the issue of religious background and affirmed that “Arab does not equal Muslim, so Lebanese, even though some are not Muslim, are still Arabs”. On the other hand, two other Christian students stated that “Arab connotes Islamic people living in an Islamic country. Lebanese are not Arabs” and “Only Lebanese Muslim people should be included in my definition of Arab.”

As seen above, religious background seems to have an influence on the students’ perceptions of ethnic identity. Indeed, as will be revealed by the cross-tabulations and chi-square computations, there are significant differences between Muslim and Christian students specifically in their construction of Lebanese ethnic identity as Arab or non-Arab.

In order to address the second research question, the students’ responses to items 4 and 6 were summarized. In response to the question: “What is/are the most important foreign language(s) one should learn, and be fluent in, in Lebanon?” the overwhelming majority of respondents (82%) chose both English and French, 16% chose only English, and only 2% chose only French. Consistently, in response to the question “What foreign language(s) do you want your children to be fluent in?” most students (80%) chose both English and French, 19% chose only English, and 1% chose only French. It is also interesting to note that some students were very enthusiastic about foreign language learning in general, proud that the Lebanese are “fluent speakers of foreign languages,” and wanted their children to know, in addition to “the usual” (i.e. English and French), Spanish, German, and “as many languages as possible.”

Data from the interviews supported the findings about the value and importance of English and French as foreign languages in Lebanon. However, the interviews also revealed attitudes about the
relative importance of these two languages and the reasons behind the students’ motivation to learn them. Not surprisingly, all students agreed that English is essential to know, mostly because of instrumental reasons and the importance of English as an international language, but only those students whose first FL is French expressed a strong affiliation with the French language and culture and believed that it is important to know French in Lebanon because “it’s part of our identity,” as expressed by one female Christian student. Two excerpts that clearly illustrate this difference are the following:

Of course I would want my children to know French. I cannot imagine not using French, with my parents, friends, everywhere. You know, once I was on a plane and the woman sitting next to me did not realize I was not from France until I told her. She then said, “ah of course, all Lebanese speak French very well” (male Christian student, first FL French)

There’s no real reason to know French, not like English. English is essential, for everything, for our education, career. I wouldn’t really care if my children learned French or not, but English is a matter of life or death, of being successful and making it or not (male Christian student, first FL English)

Nevertheless, it is important to point out that some students who emphasized the important instrumental reasons for knowing English may have deeper cultural connections to the language; specifically, students who believe that Lebanese are different from Arabs may obviously regard being fluent in either English or French as an important identity marker of a “non-Arab” Lebanese. According to Simpson (2007), learning English as a foreign language in Asia ranges across a continuum from one extreme of learning the language in the same way that other skills may be acquired, such as the case of many EFL learners in Japan, to the other extreme of having “elite” English-speaking groups in many countries in Asia who are perceived as detached from other members of the population. It is safe to assume that in the Lebanese case, most English speakers would fall somewhere in between and some would definitely be closer to the “elite English-speaking” end of the continuum.

Preferences for foreign language learning in Lebanon

In order to address the third research question, the students’ responses to items 5 and 7 were summarized. In response to the question: “What language should be the medium of instruction in Lebanese schools?” the majority of students (78%) chose both English and French as possible media of instruction, 18% chose only English, 3% chose Arabic, and 1% chose only French. In addition, in
response to the question “What foreign language would you want your children to start studying first?” 58% chose English, 28% chose French, and 14% stated that they would prefer that both languages are taught at the same time.

The interview data supported the above findings and provided more in-depth responses regarding the students’ preferences for foreign language learning in Lebanon. One emergent theme was the importance of knowing foreign languages in Lebanon and pride that the Lebanese are fluent in foreign languages:

We speak foreign languages amazingly well, and we’re proud of that. Knowing two (foreign) languages gives us a big advantage compared to other countries (female Christian student, French first FL)

Lebanon is known for being that way (multilingual). That is why Lebanese are distinguished outside. Both English and French should be emphasized (in schools) (female Christian student, English first FL)

It’s great that Lebanese people are so good at speaking foreign languages (male Muslim student, English first FL)

Lebanese people are prominent immigrants so it’s important for them to know many foreign languages (male Muslim student, English first FL)

Another theme that emerged was the students’ preferences for medium of instruction and their opinions about the relative importance and relative difficulty of learning English and French in Lebanon. Similarly to the Lebanese university students in Diab (2006), the respondents believed that learning French before English makes it easier to learn both languages. Some students also suggested that English and French should be taught as equally important foreign languages. When it came to choosing medium of instruction, however, these same students went back to choosing the FL that matches the one they have studied first. The following are some excerpts illustrating this issue:

Most French-educated students are fluent in both French and Arabic and have a good command of the English language. Most English-educated students have a good command of English and Arabic but barely know French. I think students should be encouraged to pursue a third language… Even if English is used (as medium of instruction), French should be emphasized more (female Christian student, English first FL)
I think French should be the medium of instruction, since it’s really easier to be good in both languages (English and French) if you study French first (male Christian student, French first FL)

I don’t think it’s necessary to have French as medium of instruction in schools, but we can just learn it as a foreign language. If we learn French first, probably we will speak both (French and English) very well, but English is much more important because it’s more international (male Christian student, English first FL)

French should be the medium of instruction because we can learn English easily. We need fluency in both equally. It’s easier if we start learning French before English (male Muslim student, French first FL)

English is very important but French is becoming extinct. We should replace it by German, Japanese, or Chinese (male Muslim student, English first FL)

Not surprisingly, first FL background seems to have an influence on the students’ preferences for choice of first FL. Indeed, as will be revealed by the cross-tabulations and chi-square computations, there are significant differences between students whose first FL is English and those whose first FL is French in their preferences for choice of first FL in Lebanon.

A final emergent theme from the interviews related to students’ preferences for foreign language learning was the importance of Arabic as the native language and the danger of Arabic being “abandoned or allowed to deteriorate,” as stated by a female Muslim student whose first FL is English:

We need to strengthen our Arabic skills, as it is our native language, and it is part of our identity (female Muslim student, English first FL)

In school Arabic should be stressed more. People are learning so many languages in Lebanon to the extent that they are forgetting Arabic (male Muslim student, English first FL)

Arabic is our mother tongue so it should get some priority. I don’t think we can use it as medium of instruction though. It would be hard to do that, because we are so used to learning sciences and so on in either English or French (female Muslim student, French first FL)

It’s very beneficial to know foreign languages, but they shouldn’t become part of our own culture. People here have psychological complexes. We want to be like them (speakers of English and French). We think if we speak foreign languages we’ll be like them (male Muslim student, French first FL)
The above excerpts are in line with Shaaban’s (1990) argument concerning the “Arabization” of education in Lebanon. While some Lebanese groups have been trying to advocate making Arabic the official and only medium of instruction, other groups vehemently oppose such a policy. He provides the example of the (then) Minister of Education in Lebanon, a Maronite Christian, stating in 1991 that “under no circumstances would we think of Arabizing education in Lebanon,” (as cited in Shaaban, p. 25), a strong statement that the Lebanese Makassed Islamic Philanthropic Association reacted angrily to, since this association had initiated a project to Arabize the teaching of mathematics and sciences at the elementary and intermediate levels in its schools. Moreover, according to Shaaban, using English or French as a medium of instruction can be considered “a form of conscious identification with the West” for some groups in Lebanon, who feel that knowledge of foreign languages and cultures, namely French and English, “sets them apart from the rest of the Arabs and brings them closer to the western heritage” (p. 25). It seems that such feelings are still prominent among some Lebanese, as shown by the last excerpt above.

Relationship between background variables and perceptions of ethnic, national, and linguistic identity

In order to address the fourth research question, cross-tabulations and chi-square tests were computed to test for differences in ethnic, national, and linguistic identity between male and female students, students whose first FL is English and those whose first FL is French, and students from different religious backgrounds (Muslim and Christian). Findings revealed one significant difference between Christian and Muslim students in their responses to the question “Would you include Lebanese people in your definition of Arab?” (df=1, chi-square=12.356, p=.000) Table 1 shows the cross-tabulation.

Table 1: Religious background and perceptions of Lebanese Arab vs. non-Arab ethnic identity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Lebanese Arab ethnic identity</th>
<th>Lebanese non-Arab ethnic identity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen in Table 1, in line with the arguments outlined earlier regarding the influence of religious background on Lebanese perceptions of ethnic, national, and linguistic identity (Joseph, 2004; Suleiman,
2003), the overwhelming majority of Muslim students perceived Lebanese as Arabs, while the Christian students were much more evenly divided in their perceptions. Thus, not surprisingly, the latter are much more likely to construct an identity of themselves that is ethnically and culturally distinct from the rest of the Arab World.

*Relationship between background variables and preferences for foreign language learning in Lebanon*

In order to address the fifth research question, cross-tabulations and chi-square tests were computed to test for differences in preferences for foreign language learning between male and female students, students whose first FL is English and those whose first FL is French, and students from different religious backgrounds (Muslim and Christian). Findings revealed one significant difference related to first foreign language learned in response to the question “What language(s) do you want your children to learn first?” (df=2, chi-square=12.725, p=.002). Table 2 shows the cross-tabulations.

**Table 2: First FL learned and choice of first FL**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>English First</th>
<th>French First</th>
<th>English and French at the Same Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First FL English</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First FL French</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen in Table 2, while most students whose first FL is English prefer that their children learn English first, only 38% of students whose first FL is French do so. Even more strikingly, half the latter would like their children to learn French first, while only 15% of the former chose this option. This finding is especially revealing in light of the fact that most Lebanese believe that learning French before English is easier or better (Diab, 2006); nevertheless, very few of these English-educated students, even though they would like their children to know French, would want them to learn French first. This finding can be explained by the arguments made earlier regarding the first FL studied being a salient identity marker in Lebanon. Thus, those whose first FL is English and come from English-medium
schools would want their children to continue in this tradition, in spite of believing that learning French first would make it easier to learn both languages. At the same time, those whose first FL is French, in addition to wanting their children to know English because it is an important international language, would still want their children to learn French first and become fluent in French as an important aspect of their identity.

Conclusions

Based on observations made in this study, three main conclusions may be drawn. First, in line with previous research (Abou, Kasparian & Haddad, 1996; Diab, 2006; Ghaleb & Joseph, 2002; Shaaban & Ghaith, 2002), the Lebanese university students in this study valued English as an essential language to know, mostly because of the importance of English as an international language rather than any affiliation with American or British culture, while some students whose first FL is French expressed a strong affiliation with the French language and culture, supporting Joseph’s (2004) argument that fluency in French remains an important identity marker for some Lebanese. Nevertheless, it is important to point out that even some students who emphasized the important instrumental reasons for knowing English may also view fluency in the English language as an important identity marker differentiating them from Arabs in neighboring countries.

Moreover, students from a Christian religious background were much more likely than their Muslim counterparts to construct an identity of themselves that is ethnically and culturally distinct from the rest of the Arab World, supporting the arguments made by Suleiman (2003) and Joseph (2004) regarding the influence of religious background on Lebanese perceptions of ethnic, national, and linguistic identity. Finally, in line with Diab (2006) and Shaaban & Ghaith (2003), the first FL learned was an important factor influencing these students’ preferences for choice of medium of instruction. Those whose first FL is English and come from English-medium schools would want their children to continue in this tradition, in spite of believing that learning French first would make it easier to learn both languages. At the same time, those whose first FL is French, in addition to wanting their children to know English because it is an important international language, would still want their children to learn French first and become fluent in French as an important aspect of their identity.
Since the student sample in this study was drawn from one English-medium university in Lebanon, it is obviously not representative of all Lebanese university students. Students enrolled in French-medium universities may hold different opinions regarding foreign language learning, as may students enrolled in public universities such as the Lebanese University, who typically come from a different socio-economic background than those in more expensive private universities. Thus, future research investigating the opinions of Lebanese students enrolled in public and French-medium universities and comparing them to those of the private English-medium university students who participated in this study may provide valuable insights and clarify further the complex relationships among the diverse Lebanese population.

Appendix: Questionnaire

Part I: Please complete the following items.

1) Sex: _____ Male _____ Female

2) Age: __________

3) Major: __________

4) Academic level: _____ Freshman _____ Sophomore _____ Junior _____ Senior _____ Graduate

5) Religion: _____ Christian _____ Druze _____ Muslim _____ Other (specify)

6) Nationality: ___________________________

7) Language Background: First/Native Language: __________

   1st Foreign Language: __________

   2nd Foreign Language: __________

   Other Languages: __________

8) Language of instruction at the primary (elementary) school level: __________

9) Language of instruction at the secondary (high school) level: __________
Part II. Please answer the following questions. There are no right or wrong answers. The researcher is simply interested in your opinions.

1. Who would you identify as “Lebanese”?

2. Who would you identify as “Arab”?
   a) People living in the Middle East
   b) Citizens of specific countries in the Middle East
   c) People whose native language is Arabic
   d) Citizens of Islamic countries
   e) Others __________________________

3. Would you include Lebanese people in your definition of “Arab”? Why or Why not?

4. What is/are the most important foreign language(s) one should learn, and be fluent in, in Lebanon?
   a) English
   b) French
   c) German
   d) Some Combination: _____________
   e) Other: _________________________

5. What language should be the medium of instruction in Lebanese schools?
   a) Arabic
   b) English
   c) French
   d) German
   e) Some Combination: _____________
   f) Other: _________________________
6. What foreign language(s) do you want your children to be fluent in?
   a) English
   b) French
   c) German
   d) Some Combination: ______________
   e) Other: ________________________

7. What foreign language(s) do you want your children to start studying first?
   a) English
   b) French
   c) German
   d) Some Combination: ____________
   e) Other: ________________________

8. What other comments do you have about foreign language learning in Lebanon?

References


The Discursive Construction of Ethnic Identity: Sulukule Case, Turkey

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Abstract

In this study, the discursive strategies that are employed for the revival of ethnic identities of Romani people living in the Sulukule region in İstanbul, Turkey are investigated. As a result of the ‘gentrification’ process in the region, the residents are trying to make their voices heard by opposing to what they define as an unjust treatment of their human, social, cultural, and historical rights. The arguments put forward for this opposition to the gentrification process are analysed within the framework of discourse-historical approach outlined by Wodak (2001). What local authorities define as ‘urban regeneration’ becomes ethnic cleansing in the words of the residents of the gentrified area. The study is an attempt to combine the notions of architecture with the methods of discourse analysis to emphasize the discoursal and societal effects of a city planning project discussing one more time the multi-disciplinary nature of critical discourse analysis studies.
Key Words: critical discourse analysis, discourse-historical approach, ethnic identity, urban regeneration, gentrification

This article analyzes the oppositions Romani people in Sulukule region, İstanbul, Turkey raise against the gentrification process which started in 2005 in the area. More specifically, the study evaluates discursive strategies and linguistic structures that are used in this opposition discourse to base the argumentation put forward by Sulukule people and their supporters against the mistreatment of their social, cultural, economic and historical rights and values by local authorities.

An Overview of Romani Communities in Turkey and Their Image in Turkish Society

The overview is limited to the conclusions drawn from a feasibility study conducted by the International Romani Studies Network (IRSN) during the period of September 2004- March 2005 by a group of researchers and scholars in various districts in İstanbul. The reason why this study cites information from this overview is it is the most recent.


There is a common assumption that the problems facing Romani people in Turkey are shared by many others, without distinction, and that there are no particular aspects of their conditions that are unique and specific to themselves.

Romani people in Turkey are more consistently under-educated, under employed, suffer much higher levels of ill-health, have poorer housing, and higher incidences of discrimination on the basis of their ethnicity, than any other group in Turkey. There are almost no examples of Romani intellectuals, film-makers, writers, journalists, teachers and lecturers, bankers, accountants, or many other occupations. The only accepted societal space for successful (and openly declared) Romani people is music, where they are heavily represented as musicians, but not as producers, studio directors and entrepreneurs.
The situation of the Romani people in Turkey especially those in and around İstanbul is likely to be better in economic and social terms, than in any other parts of Anatolia, where discrimination and exclusion are more rigidly enforced.

On the whole, the Romani people of Turkey do not respond affirmatively to the suggestion that they constitute an ethnic group, as this is clearly seen to be outside of the identity matrix Turkish/Muslim/Romani and family/clan/mahalle (community). An emphasis upon an ethnic identity per se is perceived to be clearly undesirable, both by Romani people and the wider society. There are a number of legal impediments to integration that remain on the statuses currently.

In Turkey, unlike Europe, the notion of regarding Gypsies as a separate ethnic minority is largely rejected, as it is seen as divisive and therefore discriminatory. As a result of this, little recognition of Gypsies exists outside the ‘disadvantaged group’, or ‘brilliant musicians’ categories.

Romani community define themselves differently according to generation and profession. They are proud of being first Turkish and then Romani. It is also important to appreciate that many Gypsies in Turkey feel proud of their Turkish identity.

It is unfortunate that there are so few positive Gypsy role-models. Those who are successful in non-Romani terms often feel the need to ‘hide’ their ethnicity. This makes it difficult to change the unbalanced image of the Gypsy population as a largely marginalised and poor segment of Turkish society.

The Romani people generally emphasize that they are Turkish and (Sunni) Muslim, thereby matching the Turkish ethno-religious norm (Reaching the Romanlar: A Report on the Feasibility Studies, International Romani Studies Network, British Council, Turkey).

**A Brief History of Sulukule**

The community of Sulukule are the descendants of Romani people who arrived almost a thousand years ago in the then Byzantine capital, Constantinople. Their presence is recorded in sources by Evliya Çelebi that tell us that they lived in black tents, practising fortune-telling, bear leading and music and dance for the residents of the city. The presence of Romani people involved in these activities dates back to the 17th century in several districts in Istanbul including Sulukule.

They were especially made to settle in the area where they are living now by Fatih Sultan Mehmet after the conquest of Istanbul in 1453. When the city fell to the Ottoman conquerors in 1453, it
was the Sulukule gate that first was breached, and many of the cannons and other artillery were forged by Romani metal-workers and smiths of the Ottoman army.

So often the history of the Romani people has remained unrecorded or unrecognized except for the odd reference in non-Romani sources to their presence in cities and towns, to their occupations and trades in the streets and countryside.

According to some other unrecorded sources, Romani people came to this area in 1054 from India. In Byzantine times, they were accused of practising fortune-telling and being magicians by Orthodox churches and then forced to move out and live by the borders of citywalls. After the conquest of Istanbul in 1453, they were invited to settle down inside the citywalls, in areas where Ayvansaray and Sulukule are located to revive the city. Romani people chose to become Muslim at this period. During the Ottoman reign, they made many contributions to the social life of Istanbul especially to the entertainment world by their music and dance and started up the Mehter team of the Ottoman Palace.

After the fall of Ottoman Empire, during the Republic Period, their role in the world of entertainment continued but not until after 1946 do we hear the name of Sulukule Evleri (Sulukule Houses) well-known both nationwide and worldwide with their famous music and dance rituals and motifs.

Sulukule houses became most popular during the period 1950-1960. They were so popular that it was only by appointment that one could join the performances there. Not only for Turks, but for tourists too, Sulukule was an attraction that ranked in popularity with Sultanahmet’s Blue Mosque and Aya Sophia.

During the period of the Menderes government, for the construction of Vatan Street, part of the historical city walls and twenty-nine houses located in Sulukule were demolished. The remaining parts were combined with the now existing Hattıcesultan and Neslişahsultan districts. The 1980 military coup was another turning point in the unfortunate fate of the Sulukule people. Because of martial law, people had to stay indoors after a certain time in the evening which caused the infamous Sulukule Houses to lose their popularity. This was the time when Sulukule people first became financially insecure as these houses were their only bread winning source. In 1985, Romani people living in Sulukule officially applied to the Ministry of Tourism with a project of ‘Gösteri Evleri’ (Show Houses). However, this project did not get the approval of local authorities and the municipality of Fatih. Yet people continued to perform unofficially and the number of houses went up from three to thirty-four. When Sadettin Tantan (the former Minister of Interior Affairs) was appointed as the director of the Police Force in
1990, continuous disruption and nagging under the name of security checks forced the Romani community to close these places one by one. There were approximately 10,000 people living in this area before the forced eviction policy of the *Fatih* Municipality began in 1992. The municipality suddenly closed down the music and entertainment venues, arguing that they were not paying entertainment taxes and that they could not organize such entertainment in this neighbourhood. However, these people paid their taxes without receiving the official document indicating that they had paid their taxes. Therefore the people living in the neighbourhood became unemployed and thus became unable to pay their electricity, water and heating expenses and now the area is not able to receive such services.

(http://istanbul34.tribe.net/thread- from an open letter by Şükrü Pündük; the head of *Sulukule* Romani Culture Development and Solidarity Association)

In October 2005, the local authority considered measures to redevelop the area based on the law, decree number 5366 (the law mainly tells about the protection of cultural and historical heritage). However, from a range of choices the authorities adopted the decision to demolish the existing housing, where large numbers of Romani people have lived for centuries.

Even intervention by UNESCO, which listed the city walls that surround the neighbourhood as a site of international heritage did not stop the process. The Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality in cooperation with Housing Development Administration of Turkey (*TOKİ*) and *Fatih* Municipality signed a legal contract on July 2006 to start the project to build new houses.

At the moment, there is a very active opposition movement against this gentrification project to raise awareness and to inform the public about the realities of the problem. Romani people called this movement 'Sulukule Platform', which gets support from various circles ranging from journalists, academics, architects, artists, photographers, activists and university students.

**What is Gentrification?**

It is exactly forty-three years since the term 'gentrification' was coined by Ruth Glass in 1964 (*Atkinson, 2005*). Early definitions such as that given by Glass, tended to focus on the residential housing market and the rehabilitation of existing properties. The notions of urban regeneration and gentrification are defined as notions generating each other. Urban regeneration tries to establish four main criteria:
1. to put an end to the architectural decay in big cities and to preserve the historical texture
2. to enliven economic activities
3. to increase living standards in cities and activate cultural dynamics
4. to ensure participation from all those involved during this process

Some who view gentrification as an urban policy, regard the high-middle class inhabitants of gentrified areas to be the active elements for these places to gain a new identity and to become physically improved. Physical regeneration is not independent of the social and economic dynamics of society (Smith, 1979, 1987). Gentrification divides living areas in cities and categorizes city dwellers as 'insiders' and 'outsiders'. Physical structures have priority over human factor. The gentrification process conflicts with the 'social equality' notion of urban regeneration (Bondi, 1999). Modifications in socio-cultural structure mean displacement of the original occupants of a rehabilitated settlement.

As a result, low-income workers, immigrants and those generally marginalized have to leave the rehabilitated areas (Ergun, 2004). When examples from both Turkey and abroad are examined, it is observed that the previous inhabitants of the historical areas which went through restoration and rehabilitation processes have deserted these places by either selling, renting or being evicted. Attempts against gentrification are intensified to preserve the original characteristics of the settlement, its ethnic differentiation, its small-scale businesses and affordable rent values (Atkinson, 2000).

Gentrification in Turkey

During the 1980s, there were significant changes in the lives of Turkish people as many of them changed their lifestyles due to changes in the political and economic world order as well as in the development of foreign commercial relations of Turkey (Ergun, 2004). As a result of this development, the production of many goods was realized according to the demands of world economies. The clearest sign of this evolution was the increase in the import trade numbers (İslam, 2003). These foreign originated economical activities were mostly hosted in Istanbul which added a new dimension to its popularity considering its geographical location and historical background. With these new economical activities, there was a need for housing near the city center for people who wanted to work at one of the sectors developed after 1980 (Coşkun & Yalçın, 2007).

Istanbul entered a process of change both on the residential structure of the city and the social structure of its' inhabitants with the contribution of the globalizing tendencies (Behar, 2006). A new
middle-class was formed together with the demands to live in the inner city or right at the city center in order to be closer to their offices and socio-cultural activities and to people alike. However, the lack of housing at the city center presented a problem for these new comers. The need for housing resulted in 'gentrification' which can be defined as the restructuring and renewal process of residential areas and historical structures of the city that were already occupied by their first owners.

Gentrification process took place in different parts of Istanbul in three significant waves:
1. Kuzguncuk, Arnavutköy, Ortaköy along Bosphorus at the beginning of 1980s,
2. Cihangir, Galata, Asmalimescit in Beşiktaş at the end of 1990s,
3. Haliç, Fener, Balat at the end of 1990s,

The most recent gentrification project which is about to get started is the Sulukule Renewal project. This project is the subject of this study, concerned about the processes taking place in this area since the end of 2005 and the reactions of the residents living there from critical discourse analysis point of view.

**Theoretical and Methodological Framework**

The methodological framework of this article is based upon the complex and multidisciplinary theoretical framework of critical discourse analysis (CDA). The choice of discourse strategies in CDA is guided by theory, as well as the main aims of CDA, namely the critical study of the discursive reproduction of domination in society (Wodak, 2001:101). Fairclough defines CDA as 'discourse analysis which aims to systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between a) discursive practices, events and texts, and b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes- to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power; and to explore how the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society is itself a factor securing power and hegemony (1993:135). Van Dijk's contribution to CDA is his insight on socio-cognitive dimensions of CDA research. He defines social cognition as 'the system of mental representations and processes of group members' (1995:18). According to van Dijk, 'mental representations are often articulated along “Us” versus “Them” dimensions, in which speakers of one group will generally tend to present themselves or their own group in positive terms, and other groups in negative terms' (1995: 22).

Another assumption in CDA is that all discourses are historical and can therefore only be understood with reference to their context (Wodak, 2001). In presenting discourse-historical approach in
CDA, Wodak tries to develop a conceptual framework for political discourse and fit linguistic theories into her model of discourse. To achieve this, she makes extensive use of argumentation theory (list of topoi) (Wodak, 2001).

In investigating historical, organizational and political topics and texts, the discourse-historical approach is its endeavour to work with different approaches, multimethodically and on the basis of a variety of empirical data as well as background information (Wodak et.al, 1998, Wodak et. al, 1999).

In evaluating discourse, this study mainly draws upon the discourse historical approach in CDA detailed in Reisigl and Wodak (2001) with an emphasis on the ‘us’ versus ‘them’ dimension.

When investigating the opposition discourse held against the gentrification process in Sulukule, this study mainly focuses on the discursive strategies given in Table 1 (Wodak, 2001:73).

Table 1. Discursive Strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Devices</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Referential/nomination</td>
<td>Construction of ingroups and outgroups</td>
<td>Membership categorization, metaphors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>metonymies and synced-oches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predication</td>
<td>Labeling social actors more or less positively or negatively, deprecator-ily or appreciatively</td>
<td>Stereotypical, evaluative attributions of positive or negative traits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argumentation</td>
<td>Justification of positive or negative attributions</td>
<td>Topoi, fallacies and counterfactuals used to justify inclusion or exclusion, discrimination or preferential treatment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perspectivation</td>
<td>Expressing involvement, reporting, description, narration</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>framing, or discourse framing</td>
<td>positioning speaker’s point of view</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>representation</td>
<td>or quotation of events or utterances</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(discriminatory)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intensification, mitigation</td>
<td>Modifying the epistemic status of a proposition</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intensifying or mitigating the illocutionary force</td>
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<td></td>
<td>of (discriminatory) uterances</td>
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With these discursive strategies in mind, the study will try to find answers to the following questions:

1. How is the act of gentrification referred to linguistically? How are the Romani community in Sulukule and local authorities referred to linguistically?
2. What are the stereotypes, characteristics, qualities and features attributed to Romani community, local authorities, government, people responsible for the planning and running of the project?
3. With which arguments do both sides try to justify and legitimize their opposition to the process and the project?
4. From what perspective are the positive or negative predications of the ‘Self’ and the ‘Other’, and the arguments for or against the gentrification process expressed?

**Data Collection**

The main material for the analysis in this study is opposition discourse. This includes the conflicting views or opinions concerning the way the gentrification process is held and the very nature of the process itself. The continuing attempts to verify and legitimize what has been done by both the local authorities and the Romani community living in the area comprises much of the data gathered. To find out on what grounds the oppositions are raised, a selection of press releases, press conferences, petitions, news articles and books are analyzed.
The second set of data are composed of in-depth interviews done with two members of the Sulukule Romani community; the first one is a well-known, respected sight and is a famous musician, the other one is the President of Sulukule Romani Culture Solidarity and Development Association. This is a recording of 65 minutes in total.

There are quite a few written documents on the issue of the gentrification in Sulukule. It is a process that is very alive, has gained attention from many diverse circles and is subject to many battles. It is possible to find books and articles written about Romani people in general, giving information about their history, demographic details, lifestyle, traditions etc. as well as perceptions, stereotypes, prejudices and even discriminatory acts taken against this community but there is no officially written document relating to the gentrification process except for the ones one can encounter on the internet.

**Referential/ Nomination Strategies:**

The focus in this discursive strategy is the very genuine attempt by members of the Romani community, living in Sulukule, to declare how unjust and inhuman the practices and procedures are during the gentrification process. This is done through lexicalization, emphasizing that the Romani community is defined as an outgroup; there is a process of ‘othering’ by the local authorities by means of their practices during the demolition of the houses. ‘Othering’ of local authorities is made through the Sulukule people’s efforts to shout out loud how discriminatory their whole treatment has been. They achieve this by pointing out references to the project, showing their perspective or interpretations of what they are going through including protests coming from both the inhabitants and the people who support the platform.

One academic refers to the whole process as a ‘crime’. ‘It is a crime committed against people living there and to the place where all this is taking place’ (*Derya Nükhet Özer, Radikal* 2, 28 October 2007). We might even name this act a ‘social crime’ as one architect states; ‘by means of this project they try to erase the social tissue from this neighbourhood. This social crime will even cause the loss of ‘the soul of Sulukule and the souls of the people living there’ (Matthieu Chazal, www.mimarizm.com, Article, 5 February 2008).

According to one journalist, this is ‘a project which could bring bulldozers to Sulukule soon’(*Onur Burçak Belli, Turkish Daily News, 9 June 2007*). This can be interpreted as putting an end to a period of history, a period of life. The historical aspect of the location is emphasized by making
reference to the buildings, streets and the very old Ottoman-looking silhouette of the setting. It is also stated that there is total ignorance of these historical facts as long as this project is realized, no matter how great the historical importance of this space and its approval both by authorities in and outside Turkey.

The President of the Sulukule Romani Culture Solidarity and Development Association refers to the project by defining it as an ‘ethnic cleansing of Romani people from the area’.

‘Yenileme adı altında postmodern sürgün ve yıkım ...... Belediyanın amacı belli; semti çingelerden temizlemek’.

‘This is a postmodern exhalation and demolition process under the name of reconstruction..... What the municipality aims for is to cleanse the area of Romani people’.
(Bulutsuzluk Özlemleri Forum, 4 May 2007)

The President further comments that ‘this is not a matter of houses, money or projects anymore, it is actually a matter of a cultural mosaic, a society, a culture being on the verge of extinction. The most important of all is the destruction of human rights’ (From the interview with the President, 15 August 2008). He also calls this project an assimilation project. Another reference concerning this project is the Romani community’s consideration of this project as part of a conscious process of removal of the community from the city centre. For some others, this project has a political dimension. The project is referred to as ‘a political project not a simple civil engineering project’. The efforts of Sulukule people to be given the right to stay in their own neighbourhood is considered to be a very ‘democratic act’ in line with their democratic and human rights. There is obviously the benefit of local authorities and even the government as an MP from the Opposition Party, Çetin Soysal in support of the residents named the project an ‘urban division not urban transformation’. (Cumhuriyet, 9 April 2008).

What can be further emphasized is that if the authorities were not ignorant of the arguments put forward by local people, there, this project could have been nominated as one of the very good samples of urban transformation projects by those from within and outside Turkey.

More striking are the totally different references attached to the project by the local authorities. For the Greater Istanbul Municipality, this is a transformation which had to be undertaken long ago inside the Historical Peninsula (Press Release, Istanbul Greater Municipality, 11 November 2007). A group of architects who are responsible for the realization of the project defines it as ‘a very humanistic and romantic project’ adding that ‘this is going to be a good opportunity for Istanbul’ (Article,
www.mimarizm.com, S. Velioğlu, 5 February 2008). The total opposition between the references and definitions generated for the project by both sides is worth noting.

**Construction of the ‘Self’ and the ‘Other’**

Categorizing people as in- or out-group is not value-free, but loaded with ideologically based applications of norms and values (Van Dijk, 2000). In this study, the praising of in-group qualities is a dominant strategy to implicitly emphasize ethnic discrimination and to give support to the opposition held against the gentrification process. The qualities of the out-group are a collection of oppositional statements by Romani people to the misapplication of the gentrification process by the local authorities and to their ignorance of the realities of the community living in *Sulukule*. The perceived ethnic discrimination is also a matter of complaint towards and about the out-group.

**Construction of the Self**

There is a consensus among all the members of Romani community in declaring that they are the oldest inhabitants of *Sulukule*, living there since 1054, that they are proud of their historical background which makes them more ‘İstanbullu’ (a person who comes from İstanbul) than any other İstanbullu (From an interview with Şükrü Pündük, the President of *Sulukule* Romani Culture Solidarity and Development Association).

Another group of the in-group qualities is composed of positive traits, characteristics and virtues of the Romani community. An older member of the community tells us that ‘from the very old times Sulukule people were very popular. They displayed good behaviour, followed Ottoman traditions, and spoke classical Ottoman dialect very well. They think properly and behave properly (from an interview with Ali Haşhaş, a member of the community, a well-known musician).

To emphasize their positive in-group qualities along the lines of nobility and genuine citizenship, *Sulukule* people consider themselves elite:


‘Actually they are not elite people. We are the elite. They are the rich. I am telling the truth. We are the true ladies and gentlemen of İstanbul....... These are my genuine feelings........’
Another area of appraisal is regarding the Romani community’s musical abilities and belly-dancing performances. The musical talent gets widespread recognition from quite a few circles with an emphasis on the tradition of ‘Sulukule Nights’ famous for its special entertainment rituals. What we further understand is that this musical knowledge is not learned in a haphazard way but through meticulous instruction.
‘Burası babadan oğula, anadan kıza bir okul. Müzik ve dans fakültesi’.
‘This is a school where sons learn from their fathers and daughters learn from their mothers. It is a music and dance faculty’.
And:
‘ .......... Çingene ezgilerinin payı, müzik otoritelerinin sözleriyle ‘şartıcı ve küçümsemeyecek düzeyde’.
‘.......... To music authorities, the contribution of Romani melody is surprising and worthy of consideration’.

(Interview, www.mimarizm.com, 5 February 2008)

Solidarity among the Romani community members is another positive in-group quality noticed by outsiders to the community (www.mimarizm.com, 5 February 2008)

The message given with this collection of in-group qualities is that there stands a community with a long history, equipped with good traditional values and special talents. It is hard to understand these discriminatory acts, in the Romani community’s terms, held against the community by means of gentrification.

**Constructing the Other**

The out-group, that is the local authority, is accused of being indifferent to the culture of the Romani community based on the interview data. As this group does not care about the historical and cultural background of the community, there is a planned effort to destroy the long-standing union and cooperation among them by dispersing them to different parts of Istanbul.

A common strategy observed among out-group members especially including the local authority which is responsible for the project is to equate the Romani community with some negative personality traits, stereotypes and even prejudices.
One complaint of the Romani community is the discrimination shown by the out-group.

‘Roman dediklerinde insanların kafasında hemen bir ayrımcılık yattıyor’.
‘When one hears the word Romani, there is discrimination lying under’
(From an interview with Şükrü Pündük, the President of Romani Culture Solidarity and Development Association)

Romani people are also accused of being involved in illegal acts. They are considered to be potential criminals. On account of this fact, these people do not reveal their real identities in their encounters with outsiders lest they are branded as such.

‘........ bizim büyüklerimiz bize Roman olduğunu söyleme (dediler). Romanca konuşma, Romanım dersen sana hırsız derler, uyuşturucuya, fuhuşla uğraşıyorsun derler. Seni kimse yanına sokmaz....’
‘........ our grandparents told us not to reveal our true identities. They also told us not to speak Romani. Because if you tell other people you are Romani, they will call you thief, they will accuse you of dealing with drugs and prostitution. Nobody will be friends with you’ (From the same interview).

Attribution of negative traits to the degree of downgrading the community is a common practice among out-groups, including the local authorities in formal circumstances.

‘In the City Council meeting, we have been categorized as being born to deal with prostitution. The head of TOKİ, Erdoğan Bayraktar names us ‘dark people’. How is that possible? We can not accept all these’ (Interview, www.mimarizm.com, 5 February 2008).

The denigration is spread and even made public in media using very derogatory language like cleansing a place of a supposedly second- class, ill natured people.

‘........ Mesela dün yeni açılmış bir kanalda bir şey seyrediyorum. Ölmenden önce İstanbul’un görülmesi gerekken 101 yeri gibi bir program yapmışlar. Orada bile adam Sulukule’nin çok güzel bir yer ve yakında temizlenince daha da iyi olacağını bahsediyordu’.
‘........ I was watching a program yesterday about the 101 places to visit in İstanbul before one dies. And the commentator was talking about how worth seing Sulukule was and it would be a better place to live once cleaned up’ (www.ntvmsnbc.com, Zeynep Yaymóğlu, 29 October 2008).

In general, it is clearly observed in the light of above examples that there is a planned effort to create a negative image of Romani people in general and Romani community living in Sulukule in particular by the out-group which seems to help the legitimation of the imposed gentrification project.
Another noticeable element in the above extracts is the Sulukule residents’ continuous emphasis and complaint about the denigration by the local authorities of them as a community and their values.

**Argumentation**

Argumentation is based on the various schemes of argumentation detailed by a range of topoi. Some examples of topoi, fallacies and counterfactuals, are examined in the data gathered for this study. In argumentation theory, ‘topoi’ or ‘loci’ can be described as parts of argumentation which belong to the obligatory, either explicit or inferrable premises (Wodak, 2001: 74). They represent a system of public knowledge; a discursive resource in which one may find arguments to support a conclusion (Anscombe, 1995 in Tekin, 2008: 742).

With a focus on the ‘gentrification process’, the list of topoi to support the arguments put forward by Romani Community and the local authorities are as follows:

- topos of advantage or usefulness
- topos of uselessness or disadvantage
- topos of definition, name interpretation
- topos of danger and threat
- topos of humanitarianism
- topos of justice
- topos of responsibility
- topos of reality
- topos of numbers
- topos of law and right
- topos of history

**Topos of advantage or usefulness:**

This topos can be paraphrased by means of the following condition: if an action is useful or advantageous, then one should perform it. To this topos, Wodak (2001) further states subtypes: the topos.
of ‘pro bono publico’ (to the advantage of all), the topos of ‘pro bono nobis’ (to the advantage of us),
and the topos of ‘pro bono eorum’ (to the advantage of them’ (p:74).

The supporters of the gentrification process, i.e. the local authorities, pose their argument about
how advantageous it will be for them and for the members of Sulukule Community if this urban
transformation or gentrification project is put into action. This is why the topos of ‘pro bono nobis’ and
‘pro bono eorum’ are analyzed in separate sections. The argumentation behind the given quotes under
these topos is that if this gentrification project is realized, both the authorities (to the advantage of us)
and the inhabitants of the area (to the advantage of them) will benefit along their line of interest.

**Pro bono nobis:**

This topos explains why the local authorities see the gentrification project to the advantage of
them by listing the benefits the project will bring to the services (such as preserving historical building
stock, providing earthquake-proof housing etc.) they offer to the residents of the area by means of the
quote cited below. The project will help them raise the quality of what they should provide to the local
people. This argumentation is supported by the authorities and the architects in charge of the project:
‘.... Tarihi Yarımada Fatih İlçesi Koruma Amaçlı Uygulama Planının çözüm getirememesi, depreme
karşı güvenli olmaman bakımsız yapı stokunun bölgede oranının fazla olması, eski eserlerin yok olma
tehlikesiyle karşı karşıya kalması, sosyo-ekonomik yapıdaki olumsuz koşullarda gerçekleştirilecek bir
iyileştirmenin yaşayan kullanıcı tarafından yapılmasıın güclüğü alanda acil ve kalıcı pratik çözümler
üretme sürecini doğurdu.’
‘... In the Historical Peninsula, because the Fatih District Practical Plan for Reservation did not bring any
solutions, the percentage of earthquake-proof buildings in the area is very low, the historical sites are
under the risk of demolition, it is very difficult for the people living in the area to better their living
standarts due to the poor socio-economic conditions; there arose a need to find immediate, practical and
long-lasting solutions’ (www.mimarizm.com, 5 February 2008)

Reading between the lines, this means this gentrification project needs to be put into action.
However, while there are many other areas of Istanbul which can be put into the above category, what
makes the authorities come up with solutions especially for this area is left unanswered.
Pro bono eorum:

This topos explains that the gentrification project is to the advantage of Sulukule residents by providing them with better living conditions. The project will give them the opportunity to live in more decent conditions while preserving the original architectural characteristics of the area which is very much to the advantage of the local residents. However, what we should pay attention to is the fact that all the quotes under this topos reflect the perspective of the local authorities. The people and institutions responsible for the project (this includes local municipality, the construction company, city planners, architects and engineers) stress that ‘...... we have come up with solutions which respected the historical, cultural and geographical realities of the area and preserving the existing social structure at the same time’ (Dust of the City, www.mimarizm.com, 5 February 2008). The Fatih Municipality, adding to the above mentioned qualities of the project, claims that:

‘ The residents wil receive compensation that will allow them to move to modern and safe apartments. The project is an opportunity for them’ (Turkish Daily News, Article, 9 June 2007).

The Greater Istanbul Mayor, Kadir Topbaş summarizes his ideas about the project as follows:

‘... Ufak da olsa bu bir başlangıç........ Düzenli, nezih ve bir turizm alanı olarak gelişmesi sağlanacak........... Kaç yıl daha bu çırkınlcte, bu çarşkıktta, bu kötü ve hijyenik olmayan ortamda yaşam sürdürülebilirler’.

‘......It is just a beginning, a small step........ We will try to transform the area into a well-planned, respectable touristic place....... For how many more years can these people live in this dilapidated, unhygienic, disorganized state?’ (Press Release by Greater Istanbul Municipality, 11 November 2007)

Topos of uselessness or disadvantage:

The common point in this topos is the Romani people’s attempt to prove how inappropriate or useless it is going to be for them to move to Taşoluk (the place where Sulukule people are to be moved as part of the gentrification project). It will be useless for them to move to another area because this is being done against their will and the living conditions there will bring them a lot of disadvantages such as being away from their surroundings, their neighbours, and their ways of life.
‘Yüzyıllardır burada yaşıyoruz ve başka hiç bir yerde yaşamak istemiyoruz. Bize sunmayı önerdiğiniz evler bizim yaşam gerçeklerimize uymuyor. Gitmemizi istediğiniz 40 km ötedeki yaşam da bizim gerçeklerimize uymuyor. Çok uygun koşullarda olduğunu söylediğiniz ödeme planları ise bizim için bir hayal, siz bizim ekonomik gerçekliğimizi bilmiyorsunuz’.

‘We have been living here for centuries and we do not want to live anywhere else. The houses you want us to live in are not appropriate for our lifestyles. The place where you want us to go, 40 km away, also is not suitable to our realities. The payment plans which are told to be adjusted to our economic situation are just an illusion for us. You really do not know our economic situation (budget)’ (www.mimarizm.com, 5 February 2008).

One resident complains about the multi-storey buildings they are going to be moved into and their sense of insecurity if they cannot practice their usual rituals with their neighbours in their small, humble, one storey houses in Sulukule (interview with a 26 year old lady from Sulukule, Birgün, 29 June 2006). Yet another resident is at a loss about how to continue driving phaetons when he cannot find a place to tie horses in front of an apartment building if he is to be moved to a place other than Sulukule (From a forum, Bulutsuzluğ.net, 4 May 2007)

**Topos of definition and name-interpretation:**

What we observe under this topos is the different interpretations of some terminology and concepts related to gentrification process by both Sulukule people and local authorities. Both sides have totally opposed definitions concerning the project; while the local residents define the project as a form of assimilation, the local authorities name it as social development. There seems to be a clash of interpretations of the project exemplified by the quotes under this topos.

‘Belediye diyor ki, ‘Sulukule için dünyanın en sosyal projesini yaptım’. Daha önce de sormuştuk şimdi de soruyoruz. Sokağa atmanın neresi sosyal?’.

‘The municipality claims that they have completed the most social project for Sulukule. We have asked before and asking again; what is social in being kicked out of one’s own house?’


‘Bu proje bence bir asimilasyon projesi. Sulukulelileri, Sulukule’den 40 km uzaga gönderen bir proje ancak bir asimilasyon projesi olabilir çünkü’.
‘To me, this is an assimilation project. Because, a project that sends Sulukule people 40 km away from Sulukule can only be an assimilation project, nothing else’ (An interview with Ş.Pündük, The President of Sulukule Romani Culture Solidarity and Development Association, www.mimarizm.com, 5 February 2008).

**Topos of danger and threat:**

In this topos, some of the possible dangers and threats are voiced against the insistence of local authorities in favour of the gentrification project. It is also very strikingly observable to understand and sense the hopelessness of Sulukule people concerning their future lives. Local people are under the threat of being kicked out of their houses unless they sign a contract with the local authorities ensuring their permission for the houses to be demolished (www.mimdaporg, 30 October 2008). There is also the danger for some residents of having nowhere to go if they are not in agreement with the authorities. The quote under this topos signifies this situation:

Mahalle sakinlerinden Şükrü Pündük, herkesin karşı çıkması halinde bile belediyenin projesinin uygulanacağını iddia etti. Mahalledeki kültür ve mozaiğin bitirileceğini ileri süren Pündük, İstanbul’un bir Sulukulesinin artık olmayacağını belirtti. .... Bizim hazırladığımız projeye ne kadar sahip çıkılsa da mahalle bitirilecek. Bu çalışmadan kesinlikle başarılı çıkılmayacak. Çünkü karşımızda bizi anlayacak kimse yok. Buradan gidemeyecek 100 aile var. Evlerin yıkılması halinde insanlar surların dibinde çadır kuracak.....

A member of the Sulukule community says: Even if everybody objects, this gentrification project will be activated. The cultural mosaic in the area will diminish. There will no longer be a place called Sulukule. The project we have prepared (he is talking about an alternative project prepared by the supporters of the Sulukule Platform) will not be enough to save the area however much support it gets. We will never ever be successful. Because the authorities do not understand what we are trying to say. There are a hundred families who can not leave this place. If the houses are pulled down, people will set up tents along the city walls......

(Sulukule Günlüğü, sulukulegunlugu.blogspot.com, 23 September 2008)
Topos of humanitarianism:

The data for this study is full of anti-humanitarian practices directly affected by the outcomes of gentrification process that are underway. Some of the very striking ones center around the theme that this whole process began without even informing Sulukule residents in advance of what is going to happen and without their consent. Sulukule residents also complain about the bad living conditions in Sulukule after their houses have been pulled down. The quotes under this topos try to reveal this unjust and anti-humanitarian treatment.

‘......zorla üç kuruşa evlerimizi almak istiyorlar. Bunun adı gasptır.’ Bu hayat benim hayatım, satmiyorum ‘divyen Gülsüm Hanım(60) iki evinin karşılığında neden bir ev teklif edildiğini sordu’.
‘they force us to sell our houses to an amount well behind their worth. This is illegal seizure. ‘This is my life and I am not selling it’ says Gülsüm Hanım(60). I do not understand taking my two houses and giving me one instead’ (From an interview with a Sulukule resident, www.bulutsuzluk.net/forum, 4 May 2007).

Sulukule residents also point out that ‘..... the decision was adopted without consultation with the community, nor any of the community representatives nor indeed the cooperation of all parties represented on the local municipality. The decision is one that neither reflects the result of any feasibility study carried out by the municipal authorities and made public, nor seems based upon careful research’ (Sulukule Press Release, istanbul34.tribe.net, 27 June 2006)

The bad living conditions appear as the following in the quote below:
‘...... kimimiz yıktılar arasında, kimimiz kanalizasyon patlaklarının arasında, kimimiz elektriksiz, kimimiz susuz yaşiyor. Mahalle bakkallarımız bir bir kapandı’.
‘..... some of us are trying to live among the remaining parts of our houses, we live by burst sewage pipes, some of us are without electricity, some without water. Our local markets are closing one by one’ (Press Release, www.mimdap.org, 10 October 2008)

Topos of justice:

The unequal treatment concerning the legal and social rights of Sulukule residents is questioned by way of comparison under this argumentation strategy. The main point in the argumentation of the local residents is that in other places where a gentrification project is active, the residents are in full
control of where they want to live with such conditions. However, Sulukule residents are deprived of this basic right to decide on their own where they want to live after their houses are demolished and this is something they categorize as unjust. There is pressure from local authorities forcing them to accept their conditions in the contracts they design.

‘Bir tür kamu eliyle uygulanan gentrifikasyon operasyonu ile karşı karşıyayız. Başka mahallelerde yaşayan insanların istedikleri yerde oturma, kendi evlerini tamir etme, yıkıp yapma hakları var. Ama onlar için yok’.

‘What we are going through is a gentrification project legalized by the local authorities. People living in other districts have the right to live wherever they want, to fix and rebuild their own houses as they wish. But they (Sulukule people) do not have this right’ (News, Birgün Newspaper, Ayşegül Savaşta, 21 July 2007).

**Topos of responsibility:**

Supporters of the Sulukule platform call the local authorities for action to at least minimize the damage the gentrification process will bring to the neighbourhood and the local people and to take responsibility in initiating the necessary steps to offer better life standards to people during the process. The quotes cited attributes this responsibility to both the local authorities and the government at large under this argumentation strategy. An architect who is involved in generating alternative projects for Sulukule (Aslı Kıyak İngin, www.mimarizm.com, 6 February 2008) reminds local authorities to establish a district office for better coordination between the residents and the local authorities and for the solution of many problems during the process, such as informing the local people about the project and answering their demands along the way.

The national government is also held responsible in the words of another architect concerned about the gentrification project in the Sulukule area.

‘Turkey should have presented this model to UNESCO on February 1, 2008. But there is no sign of it at the moment. A District Preservation Plan is a must if we want to preserve the area as it is......’

Topos of reality:

From both the local authorities’ and the local people’s perspectives, we sense a feeling of understanding of the realities of the situation. On the part of the local people the reality is the real need to have better living conditions in houses that are in good shape. However, the locals do not agree with the way this is being achieved. On the part of the local authorities, these residents, especially children, deserve better life standards. However, the locals do not seem to be happy with the authorities’ offer of regenerating the area. While accepting these unchangeable realities, both sides do not hesitate to offer solutions along their perspective of the issue.

‘.... Biz burada yapılacak bir kentsel yenilenmeye karşı değiliz; biz uygulanmak istenen bu projeye karşıyız. Biz de buraların iyileştirilmesini, evlerin elden geçirilmesini, harabe halindeki evlerin aynı şekilde yeniden yapılmasını ...istiyoruz’.

‘.... We are not against a regeneration project, but what we are against is this project. We, ourselves, also want to reconstruct our houses and put them into better shape’ (An interview with Şükrü Pündük, www.mimarizm.com, 5 February 2008).

One authority accepts the genuine desire of local people’s loyalty to people of the Sulukule and their desire not to leave the place for whatever reason. However, he also offers a reminder of the situation of children living under inappropriate conditions and advises that something be done.

‘There are some people who do not complain about the situation there. The President Şükrü Pündük says “we are happy, we have no complaints”. But do they deserve this? We should not pay injustice to children living there ’ (Voice of Aarti Planning, the company responsible for the demolition of the existing buildings and construction of the new ones within the framework of Sulukule Gentrification Project, www.mimarizm.com, 5 February 2008)

Topos of numbers:

This group of arguments is meant to emphasize the size of the damage given to the Sulukule people and Sulukule itself by means of numbers. The listing of numbers denoting a significant fact, one after another, makes very clear the fact that Sulukule people will become non-existent if they are forced to live elsewhere. The numbers state the very close organic connection between Sulukule residents and
their homes, and the area they are living in. Those numbers also indicate the fact that these locals can not afford to live somewhere else.

‘...... Sulukule fact is very clear. One out of four people’s monthly income is lower than 300 YTL, half of the people’s monthly income is lower than 500 YTL according to a household survey made with a group of Sulukule people at the renewal area. The 83% of these people have been living in Sulukule for more than 30 years. And again according to a household survey, 63% of these people have been living at the same house for 10 or more than 10 years, 24% of them have been living in the same house for more than 30 years....’ (Radikal 2,Derya Nükhet Özer, www.stargazete.com/pazar, 28 October 2007)

Topos of law and right:

Under this argumentative strategy, Sulukule people want to rest their case on solid or rather legal grounds taking support from various international agreements Turkey has signed. This project is against these agreements as it fails to provide the rights of the local people which they are entitled to and it is ignorant of the social, historical, cultural conditions of the to-be-regenerated area.

The Convention of Protecting World Natural and Cultural Heritage which emphasizes that the pieces of Cultural and Natural Heritage are also a piece of all humanity.... The Vienna Memorandum which says: ‘the changes happening all the time regarding economic development, political concept, social structure, functional usage and coming out as a “structural intervention” at the historical urban area can be accepted within the tradition of the city. In this manner, the decision takers should act with a vision covering the whole city..... The Agreement of Protecting Intangible Cultural Heritage which Turkey has signed on 21 January 2006 is ignored, too. Because in this agreement, it is told as ‘the intangible cultural heritage means the communities, groups and in some cases individuals, practices, representations, telling, information, skills and tools, materials and cultural space regarding these’ (Radikal 2,Derya Nükhet Özer, www.stargazete.com, 28 October 2008).

Topos of history:

The residents of Sulukule are trying to prove that the efforts to gentrify the area will not bring good results by giving an example from the past. They are arguing that similar attempts of regeneration
in other areas in Istanbul did not reach their aim. The quote cited gives an example from the 
Gaziosmanpaşa region in Istanbul.
‘.... There is a Romani community living in this neighbourhood under the threat of demolition from 
Gaziosmanpaşa Municipality. Therefore forced migration is not the solution to the urban renewal 
project. We are asking not to be removed or to be forced to live in apartments, which we are not used 
to.....’ (http://istanbul34.tribe.net, an open letter from Şükrü Pündük, the President of Sulukule Romani 
Culture Solidarity and Development Association, 2 August 2006)

Fallacies and Counterfactuals:

Under this category of argumentative devices, we can come across examples of fallacies and 
counterfactuals observed by the local people during the application of the project. The strong feeling of 
being deceived can be easily sensed in the words of local people given what local authorities say and 
what they do in reality do not match. The fallacies and counterfactuals are found in written and oral texts 
from Sulukule people’s point of view.

Straw-men fallacy:

This includes misrepresentation of opponents’ commitments in order to refute their arguments. In 
the quote below, the locals refuse the misrepresentation of their oppositions.
‘.... The Mayor of Fatih calls people who criticize Sulukule Project and offer new solutions as 
‘provocators’. This is frightening. The Minister of Culture Ertuğrul Günay blames people for stretching 
the situation into extremes…and thinks that these oppositions are very exaggerated.....’ (Derya Nükhet 

Argumentum ad hominem:

Ad hominem fallacies are used to refute the reliability of a person’s views by attacking that 
person’s membership of a particular group. They are mostly in pejorative forms (Walton, 1996). In our 
data, this fallacy is directed towards the government.
'...... By destroying its social and physical characteristics, a place in the Historical Peninsula is treated like an ordinary place. They aim for situating gentlemen there, a group of people whom this place supposedly deserve. This could be a very naive and cliche opposition but I am opposing this because of the reckless way this government is handling the situation with the secure and dizzying feeling of having won the elections......' (Derya Nükhet Özer, www.mimarizm.com, 5 February 2008)

**Fallacy of extreme-case formulation:**

This fallacy serves the speakers in a debate to condemn an action or policy option by means of starkly exaggerated terms (Van Dijk, 2000). The criticism is directed towards the government and the local authorities in the extract given below.

' Bu projeden hoşnut olanlar da vardır herhalde. Rakamlarla mı yantmak istemem ancak 1000 tane bina varsa, 100 kürsü kabul etmiştir belediyeye anlaşımayı. Öyle bir oran var. .... Bu acele niye?..'

' I guess there are people who are happy with this project. But this is a low percentage. I do not want to give a wrong impression with the numbers but out of a 1000 only a 100 must have accepted the offer by the municipality.... What is this rush for? (Zeynep Yaynoğlu, www.musikidergisi.net, 29 October 2008)

**Fallacy of authority:**

This practice is an attempt to get support for one’s own standpoint by referring to an ‘authority’ (sometimes incorrectly) (Van Dijk, 2000). A member of the Sulukule community questions the expertise of an authority defending the gentrification project.

' .... Aydınım diyen şu anki üniversite öğretim üyeleri, aydınım devip hala bu ayrımcılığı savunanların yemin ederim ki kafalarında tahtaları eksiktir’.

‘ ........ Those university professors who call themselves ‘intellectuals’ and those who call themselves elites and still support this discrimination must have something wrong with their minds, I swear’ (From an interview with Şükrü Pündük, the president of Sulukule Romani Culture Solidarity and Development Association).
Counterfactuals:

The counterfactuals we encounter in the data display the deceptive practices and outcomes of the project regarding the facts announced by the authorities. Moreover, Sulukule people express their disappointment concerning their ill-treatment and disillusions accompanying the project forwarded by local authorities.

‘The Sulukule issue now appears in the reports of European Union. It is being discussed in United Nations Human Rights Council. In the reports sent to this commission by Turkish authorities, all parties seem to have participated to the decision process. They try to give the impression that they made Sulukule community participate during this whole process ……’


‘They seem to have accepted the demands of the residents but what really happens is that the project continues without interruption behind the closed doors…. The real problem lies at the project production stage’ (Article, Derya Nükhet Özer, www.mimarizm.com, 5 February 2008).

Perspective:

This discursive strategy aims to express involvement or speaker’s point of view. To do this, discursive devices such as reporting, description, narration or quotation of (discriminatory) events and utterances are employed. This strategy is very actively used both by Sulukule people who are against the gentrification process and the local authorities who support the process. The same issue is discussed from totally different perspectives by both parties in such a way that one is at a loss to which side to believe. The first topic of disagreement is the processes followed at the initial stages of the project.

Local authorities:

‘Bölgede yaşayan herkeslehaftada iki gün olmak kaydıyla 2006 Mayıs-Temmuz ayları içersinde ada bazında toplantılar yapılmıştır. Toplantıda insanlara ne tür proje istedikleri, bu konuda belediyeden neler bekledikleri, projeye katılım süreçleri ile dilek ve temennilerinin neler olduğu detaylı bir şekilde ortaya konulmuş ve tartışılmıştır……’
‘In 2006 between May and July, number of meetings have been held two times a week with the local people concerning the area. In these meetings, local people have been asked about what kind of project they would like, what they expect from the local authorities, the processes they would go through during the participation project, and what they wish to happen during the realization of the project…..’ (From an interview with a consultant to the Fatih Municipality, Mustafa Çiftçi, www.mimarizm.com, 5 February 2008).

Local people:

‘2005 yılında gelindiğinde ise..... Sulukuleliler, Bakanlar Kurulu’nun onadığı ‘Sulukule Kentsel Yenileme Projesini’ her ne kadar belediye bir anket yaptığını ve Sulukulelilerin konuya ilgili görüşlerini aldığını iddia etse de, televizyondan öğrendiler. Sulukuleliler, belediye yetkililerinin evlerini ziyaret ettiklerini doğruladılar, ama ziyaret sırasında kendilerine yenileme projesiyle ilgili bilgi verilmediğini, sadece hane sayısının ve evlerin sağlam olup olmadığını tetkik edildiğini (eklediler).’

‘In 2005, Sulukule people learned about the ‘Sulukule Regeneration Project’ made official by the Council of Ministers from television although it has been claimed that the local people were informed about the project by means of questionnaires. Sulukule people confirmed that officials from the local municipality payed visits but no information were relayed to them whatsoever related to the project. What they asked was the number of people living in the houses and whether the houses were strong enough as far as the building quality was concerned’ (www.mimarizm.com, 6 February 2008).

Local authorities:

‘Sulukule projesi oradaki sosyal yaşamı ön plana çıkaran, mütevazi, az katlı yapılardan, bahçelerden oluşan sosyal bir projedir. İnsanların yerlerinden edilmemesine değil, sosyokültürel devamlılık, mekansal devamlılık ve oradaki çözülmesi gereken problemleri çözmeye yönelik çalışan bir proje bu’.

‘The Sulukule project is a social project aiming to prioritize the social life style in the area. It consists of buildings of one or two storeys with a humble outlook. This project does not aim for removing people from their locality, it tries to keep social and physical continuum and tries to solve the problems in the
area’ (From an interview with an architect in charge of the project, Selim Velioğlu, www.mimarizm.com, 5 February 2008).

Local people:

‘.... the project has been realized without the consent of the local people so far. The authorities have promised to protect the social and cultural characteristics of the area. They also have ensured people that they would not leave their houses and will be provided with facilities for giving courses for the unemployed. But what happens is, they send the tenants to Taşoluk and make the house owners pay long lasting instalments…….’ (Derya Nükhet Özer, www.mimarizm.com, 5 February 2008)

One extreme example of complete opposition in perspctivation can be observed in the following paragraph with the reported numbers from both sides.

‘Fatih Belediyesi yetkilileri bugüne kadar 620 dairenin 500 tanesi ile.... el sıkıştıklarını beliriyorlar. Sulukule platformu ise 620 evden 450 tanesinin üçüncü şahslar ve şirketler tarafından satın alındığını iddia ediyor’.

‘The authorities from Fatih Municipality claim that they signed contracts with 500 house owners out of 620 whereas supporters of Sulukule Platform claim that out of 620 houses 450 were sold either to companies or people who are not from Sulukule’ (Referans, Aram Ekin Duran, www.mimdap.org, 15 May 2008).

Another striking example of perspectivation reveals the insincerity of the local authorities behind all these events in the words of the President of Sulukule Romani Culture Development and Solidarity Association:

‘Şikayetlerimizi anlatmak için 25 milletvekilinden oluşan İnsan Hakları Komisyonu’na girdik. Komisyon odasının duvarındaki plazma gözüme takıldı; üzerinde Fatih Belediyesi’nin logosu vardı! İnsan Hakları Komisyonu’nda Fatih Belediyesi’nin logosunun ne işi var? Fatih Belediye Başkan’ın orada ne işi var? Ben Fatih Belediye Başkan'ından şikayetçiyim; şikayetlerimi onun yanında nasıl dile getireceğim? O logoyu orada gördükten sonra zaten benim içimden birakın derdimi anlatmayı, konuşmak dahi gelmedi. ‘We had a meeting with 25 members of Human Rights Commission to talk about our complaints. I noticed the plasma TV on the wall; it had the logo of Fatih Municipality on ! I thought what this logo was doing there and why the Mayor of Fatih was also present in the meeting. I was there to complain about the Mayor and he was there right across me. How I could word my complaints, looking at him.
When I saw the logo there, I did not want to talk at all let alone relay my complaints (www.mimarizm.com, 5 February 2008).

CONCLUSION

The areas that were gentrified in İstanbul before Sulukule were not so densely populated residential areas, were already deserted by their original owners long ago and new owners used this housing stock for business purposes most of the time except for one or two places such as Kuzguncuk and Balat. With the argumentations put forward, Sulukule residents want the public to realize that what they are going through, under the name of a gentrification project, is a planned and politically driven form of ‘ethnic cleansing’. This gentrification project is different in nature compared to the other projects under the name of gentrification. The local authorities are attempting to erase all the traces of Romani Culture by dispersing the Romani people living in the area to areas where they can not possibly continue living being so far from their people and land. The authorities, on the other hand, say they are doing the right thing by gentrifying the area to offer the residents better living conditions and better houses in which to live. At what cost this is happening is a very difficult question to answer. As Kolukırık (2007: 39) firmly states, in areas where gentrification is underway, to defeat the feeling of ‘social exclusion’ and newly formed cultural problems, the authorities have to be especially careful. The thing that certainly has to be avoided is the total removal of the Romani population to other places within the framework of gentrification projects.

Sulukule people do not believe in the authorities and their degree of sincerity when they define the gentrification project as a social project which is said to bring nothing else but advantages to them.

Sulukule residents base their argumentation on an ‘Us’ vs. ‘Them’ dimension. The discursive strategy that appears dominant in their discourse is the continuous attempt to praise and emphasize positive traits of Romani people, as discussed in the ‘Construction of the Self and the Other’ section of the paper. Among those positive traits that are foregrounded are being a genuine ‘İstanbullu’, (a person who originally comes from İstanbul) displaying good behaviour, following a traditional Turkish way of life, having expert musical knowledge and talent, among other things (pp. 12-13). The message to ‘them’ (the outgroup) is that it is irrational that you are attributing negative traits to ‘us’ (the ingroup) because we are not different from you, we have the same qualities as you believe to be proper and decent. This strategy of emphasizing the positive qualities is a form of protest and, in a way, a fight
against the misrepresentation of Sulukule residents by the outgroup, especially being branded as potential criminals, dealing with illegal acts such as prostitution and drug-dealing (pp.13-15). Together with this protest, the locals have put an end to the usual practice of hiding their (ethnic) identity (p.14) and have started making themselves known to everybody emphasizing their positive qualities. Another phase of the protest as a discursive strategy is the strong rejection or denial of the residents to be equated with ill-natured characteristics and acts. This is observed in some of the quotes cited in the paper within phrases such as: ‘Biz bunu kabul etmiyoruz’ (We strongly reject this) (p.14).

What Sulukule residents want to achieve indirectly and through this discursive strategy is to reveal the real agenda of non-Romanis (outgroup) which is to cleanse the area from Romanis just because of their misrepresented ethnic background. That is also why they call the project an ‘ethnic cleansing project’ as opposed to the authorities definition of a so-called ‘social project’ (p.19).

According to the review cited at the beginning of the paper, Romani people do not want to gain an identity which will separate them as an ‘ethnic minority’; they do not see any advantage to this separation whatsoever. However, what later appears, as observed in most of the quotes displayed in the paper, is that Romanis in the Sulukule district have this urge to revitalize and reclaim their ethnic identity, to begin with discursively by means of their argumentation against the inhuman and unjust treatment of their basic social, cultural, historical and human rights during the gentrification process when it means changing their house, their neighbourhood, and their lifestyle without their consent (pp. 18-31).

The most thought-provoking discursive strategy is perspectivation that appears in the final quotes of the paper; in a way it gives the message that as Sulukule residents we want you to judge the issue from our point of view by means of some evidence, such as not being informed about the project in advance and stating the fact that there are only a hundred people who agreed to sign contracts with local authorities (pp. 29-31). All this is done to display the authorities’ ideological stance-taking to a disadvantaged group with some politically-driven priorities in mind.

The picture drawn from above discussions appears as if we are talking about the same topic using two totally different discourses depending by which perspective you evaluate it and the argumentations put forward.
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Language Policies – Impact on Language Maintenance and Teaching:
Focus on Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei and the Philippines

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1 This is a substantially revised version of the papers presented by Maya Khemlani David and Paolo Coluzzi at the XII Foundation of Endangered Languages Conference, 24-27 September 2008, Ljouwert/Leeuwarden, Fryslân, The Netherlands.

2 Most of the paper is the work of Maya Khemlani David; Francesco Cavallaro contributed the sections on Singapore and language policies and language shift, and to the overall discussion; Paolo Coluzzi’s contribution is restricted mainly to the sections on Brunei.

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Abstract
This paper will describe the language policies, planning and implementation in selected ASEAN countries and discuss the impact of such policies on the maintenance of a number of languages. The paper will specifically examine the policies towards minority languages in Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei and the Philippines. The findings indicate that some countries have language policies that benefit some of the minority languages; while others do not seem to be doing enough to stop the shift to the majority languages. The revitalization efforts of these countries are also discussed. Language programmes in these countries show how the learning of minority endangered languages can take place in institutional or community settings. The use of ‘multiliteracies’ in such settings to revive threatened languages in new learning venues is also discussed.

Keywords, language policies, language revitalization, minority languages, multiliteracies, Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei Darussalam, the Philippines.
How do languages die?

Ethnologue (Gordon 2005) estimates that there are about 6,900 languages spoken around the world today. It is also estimated that only 4% of the globe's 6 billion people speak 96% of the world’s languages (Crystal 2000). This means that most nations are multilingual (Ricento 2006) and that the greater part of the languages spoken in the world can be classified as ‘minority’ languages. Nettle and Romaine (2000) estimate that about half the known languages in the world have disappeared over the past 500 years and Crystal (2000) suggests that an average of one language may vanish every two weeks over the next 100 years. This would lead to around half of the languages currently spoken around the world to disappear by the turn of the next century.

There are several reasons why languages die. One of the most common is through language shift and its ramifications. That is, in situations where different languages come into contact and through social or political processes one or more language(s) become dominant at the expense of the others (Cavallaro 2005). In multilingual societies, the languages spoken by minority groups are constantly under pressure. Their main competitors are the language of the majority group and, increasingly, internationally popular/dominant languages. This is certainly the case in South East Asia, where we see a large number of minority and indigenous languages being displaced by larger and/or more international languages.

Language policies and language shift

One crucial factor that can either help language maintenance or lead to language shift and eventually language death are the language policies of individual nations. In recent times there has been a significant amount of research directed at how language policies affect the ethnolinguistic minority groups’ efforts in maintaining their languages and cultures. The solution to these issues has been actively pursued by advocates of minority language rights (see May 2001, 2003, 2006) and of linguistic human rights (see Skutnabb-Kangas 2000, 2006; Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson 1994). The discussion in support of minority language rights is best put forward by May (2006) who posits four reasons why minority languages should be maintained. First is the responsibility of all involved parties to arrest the “… consequent exponential decline and loss of many of the languages spoken in the world today” (p. 257). If 4% of people in the world speak 96% of the languages, then it follows that the languages of the other 96% of the people are the ones that stand a better chance of surviving. The second is to do with the fact that most minority languages have not become “minoritized” through natural means, but “… the
majority-minority language hierarchy [...] is historically, socially, and politically constructed process.” (p. 259). That is, it is through the active intervention of government policies that an unequal power relation exists between the majority and minority languages within a community. The third point is the flawed belief that social mobility for minority language speakers can only come “… at the expense of one’s first language.” (p. 263 author’s emphasis). That is, by replacing their language with that of the majority. As Ricento (2006) explains it, this rhetoric categorizes the speakers of a majority language as forward looking and upwardly mobile and those members of a community who maintain their minority language as living in the past and not willing to modernize. It is, therefore, not surprising that speakers of minority languages see the adoption of the majority language as the only real alternative. Lastly, May concedes that no matter what steps are taken, majority languages will always dominate in any given community. However, speakers of minority languages “… should be accorded at least some of the protections and institutional support that majority languages already enjoy” (p. 265).

In this paper the language policies, planning and implementation in four selected ASEAN countries (Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei and Philippines) will be described with a view on how such policies have impacted on the maintenance of a number of languages. The second part of this paper will discuss how multiliteracies in various domains and settings are being used to maintain or revive some of the endangered languages in these countries.

Language policies, planning and implementation -- Case Studies

Malaysia

Malaysia’s 26 million people speak around 140 languages, and Grimes (2000) describes Malaysia as a truly multilingual and multicultural society. Malaysia is made up of Peninsular Malaya and the states of Sarawak and Sabah. While Peninsular Malaya is known as West Malaysia, Sarawak and Sabah are referred to as East Malaysia. Peninsular Malaya or West Malaysia gained its independence in 1957 and the states of Sarawak and Sabah joined them to form Malaysia much later. Out of the total population of Malaysia, Bumiputera (Malays and other indigenous group) make up the majority (65.1%), while the Chinese make up 26.0% and the Indians 7.7% of the population (Census 2000). While the Malay who form the majority of the population are for the large part indigenous, the non-Malay (i.e. the Chinese and the Indian) are considered immigrant communities since many of their ancestors were encouraged to come into the country by the British colonial regime.
While Malays, Chinese and Indians form the majority communities in Peninsular Malaya, there are many more communities and languages in Sarawak and Sabah. In Sarawak the Iban form the largest group followed by the Chinese, Malay and Bidayuh. There are smaller groups like the Kayan, Kenyah, Lun Bawang, Kelabit, Penan (collectively known as the Orang Ulu) and the Melanau (120,000) and there are even smaller groups like the Berawan, Bisayah, Kedayan, Kajang, Baketan, Sian, Ukit and Punan. Sabahans comprise of Kadazandusuns who form the largest group, followed by the Chinese, Bajau, Malay, Murut, Ilanun, Lotud, Rungus, Tambunuo, Dumpas, Margang, Paitan, Idahan, Minokok, Ramanau, Sulu, Orang Sungai, Brunei, Kedayan, Bisaya, Tidong etc.

Soon after Malaya became independent in 1957, Malay was established as the national language with the purpose of fostering national unity. Tunku Abdul Rahman (the first Prime Minister of Malaysia) explained in one of his speeches at the University of Singapore on 9th December 1964:

"It is only right that as a developing nation, we want to have a language of our own. If the National Language is not introduced, our country will be devoid of a unified character and personality - as I would put it, a nation without a soul and without a life. (Abdullah Hassan 2004)"

Malay was to be the medium of instruction and the changeover to Malay was implemented in an orderly fashion to avoid disruption and a drop in standards. The Government did not rush the change and it took 26 years (1957-1983) to implement the National Language and National Educational Policies for the primary and secondary level of education (Asmah 1992). English schools were converted to the Malay-medium in West Malaysia by 1983 (Asmah 1997), while English schools in Sabah and Sarawak (East Malaysia) were converted by 1985 (Solomon 1988: 46). The conversion of the English medium schools to Malay medium began in 1968 at a gradual pace (Solomon 1988: 47). Initially, those subjects that could adopt the Malay language as a medium of instruction without difficulty were the first affected by the conversion process (Asmah 1981: 15). From January 1968, all English medium primary schools were required to teach physical education, art and craft, local studies and music in Malay in Standards 1, 2 and 3. More of the Arts subjects were taught in Malay before the shift to Malay occurred for the Science subjects. In fact, for a short period of time during this transitional phase some schools ran the same course in science subjects in two streams, namely Malay and English. In 1976 all English medium primary schools were completely converted into schools where Malay was used as the medium of instruction and by 1982 all the former English medium secondary schools were converted to National
Schools in Peninsular Malaysia (Solomon 1988: 46). The Education Act was extended to Sarawak in 1977 and the change of the medium of instruction to Malay throughout the entire school system was completed in Sabah and Sarawak three years later, i.e. by 1985.

The idea of using a standard curriculum and mandating the study of the national language after independence was recognized as occupying an important role in establishing fundamental attitudes and images of national identity among the younger generation. The role and status of English were radically reduced, from being the medium of instruction in the education system during colonial times English was relegated to being taught in schools as a second language. In fact, in rural areas where there was almost no environmental exposure to the language, English was virtually a foreign language (see David 2004). Malaysian policy makers, however, always deemed English as the second most important language and English has been taught from year one in the national primary schools. However, whilst it is compulsory to obtain a credit in Malay for the school leaving examination (SPM) this did not apply to English. In 2000, after a gap of about 20 years, English was reintroduced as a subject in pre-university classes and pre-university students who wish to enter local universities have to sit for a compulsory Malaysian Universities English Test (MUET). More recently (2003) a new policy made it mandatory for mathematics and science to be taught in English (Spolsky 2004; Yaakub 2004). The rationale for this as explained by the government of the day was to ensure that Malaysia would not be left behind in a world that was rapidly becoming globalized. Due to much controversy over its use, after five years of implementation that policy is currently under review and the government has been soliciting views from various stake holders over the last six months but has yet to make a conclusive decision whether the policy is to be maintained or if the nationalists’ demand for Malay to replace English will be accepted.

It should also be pointed out that that even though Bahasa Malaysia is the official language in the education system and required for entry into public (government) tertiary institutions, English is the medium of instruction in private universities.

There are also Chinese and 526 Tamil primary schools where Malaysian children can be taught in their mother tongues i.e. Mandarin and Tamil for the first six years of school. In vernacular schools (today 95% of Chinese children attend such schools as do 55% of Indian children) both Malay and English are taught as compulsory subjects. Some 60 Chinese secondary schools where Mandarin is the
medium of instruction also exist but they are not recognized as part of the official government school system. The overwhelming majority of students in state primary schools or national schools today are Malays. At one time soon after independence Malaysia's national or government schools were mostly racially integrated, now they are largely segregated (Kissel 2008).

There has also always been a provision for the teaching of numerous other minority languages. ‘Pupil’s Own Language’ (POL) could be taught in schools if there were at least 15 students to make up a class (Jermudd 1999; Kaplan and Baldauf 2003; Kuo 1998; Smith 2003). This has been somewhat riddled with problems of obtaining 15 students in one school who want to learn a specific language.

In the East Malaysian state of Sarawak, other languages are also taught. The Iban language catering to the largest group in Sarawak is also a POL in both primary and secondary schools. However, the reality is rather different as there is a lack of trained teachers Consequently, few if any secondary schools offer Iban as a subject (Sercombe, personal communication). In the state of Sabah, also in East Malaysia, Kadazandusun has been taught as a POL in government schools since 1997 (Smith 2003), and the use of Murut has just started according to Kimmo Kosonen (2005). In West Malaysia an Orang Asli (the indigenous people of West Malaysia) language called Semai, is being used as a POL at lower primary school level in some schools where the community dominates.

The use of these minority languages does not mean that minority languages are alive and many languages survive only if they are maintained in the home domain. Unfortunately, the emphasis on Malay, the National language, and also English, the most widespread international language, are seen as more important than time spent on learning the mother tongue and a number of speech communities who do not see any economic value in their respective heritage languages are shifting away from the habitual use of their ethnic languages (see David 1996 on the Sindhis; Sankar 2004 on the Iyers; Nambiar 2007 on the Malayalees; David, Naji and Sheena Kaur, 2003 on the Punjabis; Saidah 2009 on the Bugis; Mohamad Subakir 1998 on the Javanese; David and Faridah 1999 and Ramachandran 2000 on the Portuguese; Martin and Yen 1992 on the Kelabits and the Orang Miriek (Jati Miriek) (see Tunku Zainah 1978: 24 cited in Bibi Aminah and Abang Ahmad Ridzuan 1992)).

Whilst most of these studies on language shift have focused on the Indians who have shifted mainly to English, many Muslim and other communities have taken on a Malay identity and have also shifted away from their heritage languages as noted in Subakir’s 1998 study of the Javanese community, Saidah’s 2009 study of the Bugis, Nambiar’s 2007 study of the Malayalee Muslims and David’s 2003
The study of the Pakistanis who married local Kelantanese. In Sarawak, in order to be identified as Malays, the Orang Miriek who also are Muslims have shifted to Bahasa Melayu Sarawak. The issue of being teased by members of the dominant group and the backwardness associated with the minority group not only makes the younger generation of Orang Miriek take on a Malay identity but this is also the case with other ethnic groups who have converted to Islam. As the constitutional definition of a Malay is one who practices the Islamic religion, has a Malay way of life and uses the Malay language, non-Malay Bumiputeras who are Muslims often adopt Malay culture and identity. When this happens, their children will shift language use to Malay because they have taken Malay names and joined Islamic activities where their peers are mostly Malay. The Bidayuh for instance, who are generally described as “a Christian race” (Minos 2000), have a number who have converted to Islam or “masuk Melayu” (become Malay). According to Chang (2002) there are about 300 families out of 10,750 Bidayuh families in the Kuching Division who have converted to Islam and hence this figure shows that about 3% of the Bidayuh population has embraced the Islamic faith in the Kuching Division already. Therefore, Bidayuhs who have converted to Islam, mostly through intermarriage with Muslims, adopt Malay culture and identity markers such as wearing ‘baju kurung’, speaking Malay and eating Malay food (see David and Dealwis 2008).

Younger members of the Chinese community in Peninsular Malaysia appear to be shifting to Mandarin as evidenced by the fact that 95% of the Chinese children who enter schools opt to attend Chinese schools where Mandarin is the medium of instruction. As in Singapore, the dialects appear to be losing out to Mandarin but perhaps not as drastically as there is no local decree not to use the dialects. Ting (2009) talking about the Chinese in Sarawak states that they are shifting to English and Mandarin. Smaller Chinese communities who have been living in Malaysia for a long time and whose ancestors married the local people are known as the Peranakan (Straits) Chinese. Teo (2004) believes that the Peranakan Chinese feel a sense of separateness from other Malaysian Chinese due to their illiteracy and inadequacy in their own ancestral language. Local communities, language foundations and non-governmental organizations have been working together in language development to have minority languages in the school system (Kuo 1998; Lasimbang and Kinajil 2000; Smith 2001, 2003). These will be discussed in the second part of this paper.
Singapore

Neighbouring Singapore is also ethnically quite diverse. Table 1 shows the composition of the Singaporean residents. We can see that the majority are ethnically Chinese and the Indians and Malay are comparatively small communities.

Table 1 Ethnic composition of Singapore residents (2005)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>Malay</th>
<th>Indian</th>
<th>Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>75.6</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>2.1</td>
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Source: 2005 General Household Survey, Singapore Department of Statistics

Following these ethnic lines, Singapore has four official languages: Mandarin, Malay, Tamil and English. A bilingual education policy was instituted as far back as 1956 emphasizing equality for all the official languages. At that time the decision makers were aware of the need not to favour any particular ethnic group; hence the choice of English as the language for all Singaporeans and of Mandarin as the language for all Singaporean Chinese. The policy stated that the four official languages were also designated as the media of instruction. However, because of the fear of the spread of communism, in 1987 the government closed all Chinese-medium schools (Kirkpatrick 2007). Around the same time, due to falling numbers, the Malay-medium schools were also closed. This reduced the Mandarin Chinese and Malay to being taught as second languages in primary and secondary schools, and English has since dominated the country’s education system (Pakir 2004).

In the Singaporean bilingual policy, Singaporeans are also expected to be competent in their mother tongues in addition to English (Wee and Bokhorst-Heng 2005). The general policy is centred on English being the sole medium of instruction at all levels of education, and the other official languages, which are now promoted as ‘mother tongues’, are taught as second languages (Grimes 2000; Jernudd 1999; Kaplan and Baldauf 2003; Pakir 2004). Singaporeans need to learn their ‘mother tongue’ in schools according to their ethnic background (Mandarin for Chinese, Bahasa Melayu for Malays and Tamil for Indians). The use of the term ‘mother tongue’ in the Singaporean context requires some qualification as, for most Singaporeans, the official languages were not and are not their ‘mother tongues’. This is particularly true for the ethnically diverse Chinese and Indian community where most speak languages other than Mandarin Chinese or Tamil at home. The 1957 census recognized 33 mother tongues spoken in Singapore. The census shows that Mandarin speakers only made up 0.1% of the
population, compared to 30% of the population being Hokkien speakers. In the same year only 60% of the Indians in Singapore were Tamil speakers (Kuo 1980). These figures had not changed much when the term ‘mother tongues’ was coined in the 1970s. As for the Indian community, a significant number speak Telegu or Malayalam at home. In short, for these members, the ‘mother tongue’ is not the language they are made to study at school. However, this linguistically controversial label is still in use today.

Various writers (e.g. Gopinathan 1980) have observed that since independence Singapore has practiced bilingualism (English and a mother tongue) because it is considered important for Singaporeans to present Singapore’s ethnic and linguistic diversity to the world. The objective of the bilingual policy is to improve the standard of English and to promote the use of mother tongues so as to ensure identification with and maintenance of traditional cultures and their values (Pakir 2004). Or as Wee and Bokhorst-Heng (2005:165) state, “… English is associated with accessing scientific and technological knowledge as well as Western values, and the official mother tongues are associated with traditional ‘Asian’ values.

Gopinathan (1988, 1998) explains that the need for social and political stability in a diverse multi-racial society which also facilitates rapid economic growth is the main factor influencing the Singaporean government’s thinking and language policies. Indeed, the bilingual policy was implemented to reduce inter-ethnic divisions that were very tense in the late 50s and early 60s, and to promote a Singaporean identity, whilst encouraging economic growth (Gopinathan, Ho and Vanithamani 2004). English is today the de facto national language in Singapore and is seen as a major source of economically valuable knowledge and technology as English gives the nation access to world markets. Indeed the government has continuously reminded Singaporeans, as Lee Hsien Loong, then Deputy Prime Minister said in his speech in Parliament, that

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\text{English is and will remain our common working language. It is the language of global business, commerce and technology. But the mother tongue gives us a crucial part of our values, roots and identity. It gives us direct access to our cultural heritage, and a world-view that complements the perspective of the English-speaking world. (1999)}
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Rapid economic growth since the 1980s seems to have helped convince the majority that knowledge of English provides better opportunities for Singaporeans as individuals, as well as for the country as a whole. Therefore, despite the emphasis placed on the teaching of ‘mother tongues’ many
Singaporeans are moving towards English as a home language. The 2005 Census indicates that Mandarin is spoken as the home language of only 47.2% of the Singaporean Chinese. Tamil is the home language of only 39% of Singaporean Indians and the ‘healthier’ looking minority language is Malay, spoken by 86.8% of Singaporean Malays (Figure 1).

![Figure 1 Language use at home in Singapore (2000-2005) (Source: 2005 General Household Survey, Singapore Department of Statistics)](image)

In the context of this paper, we need to look into Singapore’s language policies regarding its minority languages. There is no doubt that through a process of favouring recognized ‘international’ languages a clear perception now exists both among government officials and the public alike that success can be more easily achieved through the mastery of English and, thanks to the economic power of China, Mandarin. This means that in Singapore the two majority languages are English and Mandarin. This status is currently being reinforced for the former because of its widespread use by all ethnic and social groups in this island nation, and the latter through the sheer majority of numbers of the Chinese compared to the other ethnic groups, the Malay and the Indians. As described by May (2006) this has led to all other languages spoken in Singapore to being “minoritized” or “dialectalized” (p. 261). Among the Chinese this has also led to a rapidly diminishing number of speakers of other Chinese varieties. So much so, that they are in danger of dying out in Singapore.

There is, therefore, some concern regarding the overall shift to English of the Chinese community as well as the imminent demise of the so-called ‘dialects’ among Singapore Chinese families. The Chinese community in Singapore is made up of a number of language groups. These include Hokkien
(43.1%), Teochew (22.1%), Cantonese (16.4%), Hakka (7.4%), Hainanese (7.1%) and smaller communities of Foochow, Henghua, Shanghainese and Hokchia. Each of these sub-communities has its own language variety wrongly referred to as ‘dialect’ by Singaporean authorities. At present, as a result of the bilingual educational policy and the influence of the Speak Mandarin Campaign, young Chinese are bilingual in English and Mandarin Chinese. With Mandarin replacing the other Chinese varieties for intra-ethnic communication in almost all domains. Hokkien in particular has been severely displaced in the community. The 1957 census reported that 97% of the Chinese community spoke Hokkien. Recently it is not possible to obtain a breakdown of each ethnic group within the Chinese community, but the 2005 census figures show (See Figure 1) that only 23.9% of the Chinese in Singapore reported a Chinese variety other than Mandarin as their home language. Hokkien is known and still used, but mostly by older Chinese and the less educated. Mandarin is still by and large a High (H) language, while Hokkien and the other Chinese varieties remain dominant in hawker centers, on buses, etc. (Kuo and Jernudd 2003). It is not just the Hokkien speakers that have shifted to English and/or Mandarin. Li, Saravanan and Ng (1997) found that the Teochews have also moved away from their dialect to the use of Mandarin and English in the family domain. According to statistics from the Singapore Ministry of Education, 9.3% of the pupils of first year primary schools of Chinese origin used English at home in 1980. This increased to 45% in 2003.

In summary, the government policies have directly impacted on the well being of all Chinese vernaculars to the benefit of Mandarin and all such vernaculars are on the verge of disappearing. There is little scope for optimism that these languages will survive beyond one or at most two more generations. At the same time, even though Mandarin Chinese is currently promoted through Singapore’s bilingual education policy and through the public rhetoric of the Singapore government, the fact that Mandarin is taught almost solely as a second language and is not the medium of instruction at any level at school means there are real concerns as to whether it is being effectively maintained.

Singapore’s Indian population comprises 8.7% of the total population. Of that number Tamils comprise 63.9%, Malayalees 8.6%, Punjabis 6.7% and there are other smaller Indian linguistic communities, for example, the Bengali, Urdu, Sindhi, and Gujarati speech communities. However, in 2005 only 36.8% of Singaporean Indians used Tamil (Singapore Department of Statistics 2000) as compared to 1985 when 54% of the Tamils reported that they used Tamil as the principal family language (Kuo 1980). As for the other Indian speech communities, only 11.4% use Hindi, Gujarati, Malayalam and Punjabi. The Indian community’s shift to English has been well documented (Gupta
1995; Schiffman 1998, 2002). Saravanan (1995, 1999) reported that Tamil parents and their children tend to use English during family activities, although they use Tamil in prayers and in communicating with relatives. The low use of Tamil with friends, siblings, school and reading of primary students was reported by Ramiah (1991). Data from the 2005 Census confirms that the Tamils have shifted to English the most amongst all the main ethnic groups in Singapore. This shift is most prominent among young Indians (in the age range of 5-14 years), those of high socioeconomic status and those with high educational qualifications. It is clear that the Singaporean Indians are experiencing language shift. The reasons for this shift seem to be clustered around two issues. The first is that Indians in Singapore are highly mobile and highly educated. This seems to indicate that this group wizened up to the fact that economic success in Singapore and good education have been, and still are, intrinsically tied to a good command of English, and that Tamil does not have the same economic value. The other reason is that for a very long time the Tamil taught at school was not the variety spoken at home (Schiffman 1998). Tamil speakers use a more colloquial variety at home but for a very long time were made to learn a more formal, and significantly different, variety at school. So that there was no possible association with what students were learning at school and the language spoken at home. The way Tamil was taught in schools was revised when in 1996, the Singapore Indian Association (SINDA) requested the Ministry of Education (MOE) to establish a committee that would review the teaching and learning of Tamil.

Schiffmann (2002) also proposed an interesting analysis of the covert and overt impact of the language policy on the Tamil community. From an educational point of view, mandatory adoption of any language is surely a sign of support. However, Schiffmann pointed out that other policies, such as the distribution of housing which ensures that the Tamil speaking community is distributed evenly throughout Singapore, work against the existence of a community with critical population mass, a crucial feature of language maintenance. Though the covert impact may not be intentional, indeed the overt policy of the government is both egalitarian and pro-Tamil, the fact remains that it is extremely difficult for a minority language to be maintained if the fundamental reason for its existence is to pass school exams.

Not all research asserts that language shift is certain. More recently, Vaish (2007) reported that while there is widespread use of English among the Tamils in Singapore, there are also signs that Tamil is being maintained in certain domains. She found a complex situation where young Tamils use mostly English in almost everything they do. However, they also value their bilingualism and biculturalism by stating that they are more comfortable with friends who speak both English and Tamil. The same young
people love watching Tamil movies and to listening to Tamil songs. Interestingly, one domain that Vaish found was strongly associated with the Tamil language was religion. In her study her participants reported using Tamil almost exclusively for praying.

However, while the language shift occurring among the Chinese and Indian community is very clear, the situation is different in another minority community in Singapore i.e. the Malay community. The statistics do show that Malay is the healthiest of the three non-English official languages. The 2005 census (see Figure 1) shows that almost 87% of the Malays in Singapore still use predominantly Malay at home; although this is a decrease of 5% from the previous census in 2000.

The language policy on Malay has seen its status change considerably over the last four decades. In 1959 Singapore adopted Malay as its National language. This was done to reassure Malaysia that Singapore’s merging with the Malaysian Federation would not pose a threat to its interethnic stability (Lowenberg 1988). Even when Singapore seceded from the Federation, Malay was kept as the national language. This again was decided upon to keep in good relations with the Malay-speaking neighbours, Malaysia and Indonesia. However, subsequent policies have not been formulated with particular interests of the Malays in Singapore. So much so that now the remnants of Malay’s national language status can only be seen in Singapore’s national anthem, its coat of arms, military commands in parades and protocol in official government functions (Lowenberg 1988; Llamzon 1978).

The census figures show that Malay is still being maintained well and there is a relatively high ethnolinguistic vitality among the Singaporean Malay speech community. However, the census figures do not show to what extent English has intruded into the lives of young Singaporean Malays. Roksana (2000) and Kassim (2008) reported on the extensive amount of code switching between Malay and English occurring in the home domain. Cavallaro and Serwe (2009) found that there is no domain in Singapore where Malay is used exclusively. In fact, their findings show that young (18-25 year old) Malays in Singapore interact with other young Malays almost totally in English and use Malay solely with older relatives. One other aspect of the Singaporean Malay community that is not immediately apparent is that the community is not uniformly ‘Malay’. In fact many Malays are descendents of various ethnic groups such as Boyanese, Bugis or Javanese. These sub-groups have their own languages, which have been allowed to slowly die out due to them being neglected in the formulation of any language policies.
**Brunei Darussalam**

Like the rest of Borneo, Brunei is a very diverse country as far as its linguistic heritage is concerned. In addition to standard Malay, the official language, and English, another eleven languages are spoken: Brunei Malay, Kedayan (which may be also considered as dialects of Malay on account to their proximity to it), Tutong, Belait, Dusun, Bisaya (even though Dusun and Bisaya could also be considered two dialects of the same language), Murut (Lun Bawang), Iban, Penan, Mukah, which are all Austronesian languages, plus various Chinese varieties (which have been counted below as one language: Mandarin, Hakka, Hokkien, Cantonese, Hainanese, Teochew, Foochow). This number is remarkable considering the small size of the country (5,765 sq km).

All these languages occupy a low position in a diglossic relationship to Standard Malay and English (with the exception perhaps of Mandarin Chinese) and, with the exception of Brunei Malay, which is the language that almost everybody can speak now, can be considered endangered to a greater or smaller extent. Some of them are on the verge of extinction, for example Belait, while most are not doing very well with fewer and fewer younger people being able to speak them, e.g. Tutong, Dusun or Penan. Of these perhaps only three appear to be in a healthy state, i.e. Iban, Murut and Chinese (Martin 1995:49; Dunseath 1996). According to Martin’s (1995) and Niew’s (1991) estimates, there might have been as many as 137,000 people who spoke at least one of these languages (excluding Brunei Malay) out of a population of 292,266 inhabitants in 1995 (http://www.theodora.com/wbf/Brunei_people.html), i.e. about 46.9% of the population. If we consider that until the middle of last century, i.e. no more than sixty years ago almost all of the population of Brunei must have been fluent in at least one of the languages listed above (Noor Azam 2005), we can appreciate the swiftness in which language shift is taking place in Brunei.

Even though seven of the ethnic groups speaking these languages are officially recognized as indigenous groups of the Malay race (1961 Nationality Act of Brunei), such recognition has almost no

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1 Kedayan, Tutong, Belait, Dusun, Bisaya, Murut, Iban, Penan, Mukah are spoken by 77,000 people, whereas various Chinese dialects and/or Mandarin are spoken by about 60,000 people.
2 In November 2007 the estimate for the total population of Brunei was about 391,450 individuals (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brunei).
3 According to the 2004 census (Jones 2008), as few as 14.6% of Bruneians are either Chinese or belong to non Malay indigenous groups. The remarkable difference between these data and the ones based on Martin’s and Niew’s estimates is due to the fact that indigenous language minorities are considered by the Government as belonging to the Malay group and the figure of 3.4% of ‘other indigenous groups’ may refer to ethnic groups such as Iban, Penan or Mukah which are not considered indigenous.
4 These are: Belait, Bisaya, Brunei, Dusun, Kedayan, Murut and Tutong.
bearing on the status of their languages, and even less as far as their protection is concerned. Even though the importance of maintaining these languages has been occasionally affirmed both in official and non official settings, almost nothing has been done so far to try to slow down or reverse language shift towards Malay or English. It is interesting to notice that two of the three least endangered languages mentioned above, i.e. Iban and Chinese are not recognized as languages of Brunei as they are regarded as non-indigenous. However, in spite of their apparent ‘health’, Dunseath’s research (1996) shows that a shift is taking place from the various Chinese dialects to Mandarin and possibly even from the latter to English. On the other hand, even though the sociolinguistic survey carried out by Coluzzi (forthcoming) among the Ibans and the Muruts in the district of Temburong in 2008 shows an extremely high level of language maintenance (all Ibans can speak Iban and nearly all Muruts can speak Murut), the language they speak appears to be increasingly influenced, particularly at the lexical level, by Malay, which is the language spoken in most ‘high’ domains (see also Martin 1996).

At present minority languages do not have any space in public education in Brunei, while Mandarin Chinese is taught as a subject only in two private schools, all other subjects being taught in Malay and English like in all government schools in Brunei. The total absence of minority languages in education in Brunei obviously also applies to Iban and Murut. In neighbouring Sarawak both Iban and Murut have been the object of language planning, though only to a limited extent. For instance a few publications are available in both languages, particularly in Iban, but they have hardly managed to find their way to Brunei, whereas a few radio programmes from Sarawak can be listened to in Brunei. As far as compulsory education is concerned, as shown above, Iban has been used as a subject of instruction in a few Malaysian schools since the 1980s as ‘Pupils’ Own Language’ (Asmah Haji Omar, 2004:32-33), which means that some of the Iban textbooks that have been produced for that purpose could in theory be used in Brunei as well, in the unlikely event that Iban were to be introduced into primary or secondary education.

The survey referred to above carried out by Coluzzi in 2008 on the language use and attitudes of the Ibans and Muruts in the Temburong district (Coluzzi forthcoming) shows that as many as 92.2% of the Iban would like to see their language introduced in the schools of Temburong, 46.4% as a compulsory subject and 45.8% as an elective subject. As for the Murut, 92.6% are in favour of their language being taught in school, 27.9% as a compulsory subject and 64.7% as an elective subject.
The Philippines

The Philippines is a multi-ethnic country consisting of about 180 languages. The Bilingual Education Policy of the Philippines (1974, revised in 1987) states that English and Filipino (based on Tagalog) are the languages of education and the official languages of literacy for the nation. The goal of this policy is to make the population bilingual. In fact, only about a quarter of the population is estimated to receive education in their first language (Grimes 2000; Jernudd 1999; Kaplan and Baldauf 2003; Nical, Smolicz and Secombe 2004; Young 2002).

To some extent the language policy has influenced the abandonment of some Philippine languages. When bilingual education was implemented in 1970, Filipino became the medium of instruction at the elementary level. However, in non-Tagalog areas, the vernacular language was used as the medium of instruction from grade one to grade four and Filipino in grade five. In addition to Filipino, English was offered as a double period subject in grade five and grade six. In the intermediate level and High school both English and Filipino were used as media of instruction (Fonacier 1987: 145).

In 1973 an attempt to change the system was made where the use of vernacular language was implemented as the medium of instruction in grade one and grade two with English and Filipino as subjects. In grade three English was the medium of instruction with Filipino as a subject. However, this policy was not accepted immediately by the public and it resulted in a revision of the policy in the same year where English and Filipino were used as media of instruction at all levels (Fonacier 1987; Llamazon 1977). The policy was implemented in 1974 by the Department of Education, Culture, and Sports (DECS) as stated in the Department Order No. 25, s. 1974 (Espiritu 2007). Because of the revised policy, the vernacular language became an auxiliary language or second language in the school domain. The main objective of the government for implementing such a policy was to make Filipinos bilingual in English and Filipino. This is seen in the Department of Education and Culture Order No. 25 - "the vernacular shall be resorted to only when necessary to facilitate understanding of the concepts being taught through the prescribed medium of instruction: English or Pilipino" (Sibayan 1985).
A general overview of Philippine language policy changes over time is shown below.

**Language policy changes in the Philippines**

**1970: Policy of Bilingual Education**
Medium of instruction at elementary level
- **A. Tagalog area**
  Grade 1–5: Filipino.
- **B. Non Tagalog areas**
  Grade 1–5: Vernacular languages as media of instruction.
  Grade 5: Filipino as a subject.
  Grade 5–6: Filipino and English as media of instruction.

Medium of instruction at intermediate level and high school: English and Filipino.

**1973 Policy revamp**
Medium of instruction at elementary level
- **A. Grade 1–2:** Vernacular languages with Filipino and English as subjects.
- **B. Grade 3:** English with Filipino as a subject.

**1974 Revised Policy**
- **A. Bilingual Education:** English and Filipino as media of instruction for all levels as stated in the Department of Education, Culture and Sports (DECS) Order No. 25.
- **B. Vernacular languages:** auxiliary languages.

To sum up English and Filipino are the official languages in the Philippines, with Filipino as the national language. Local languages have been used in government schools as ‘transitional languages’ for initial instruction and early literacy up to primary Grade 3, but these are employed on a small scale. In the current revised policy, local languages have been elevated to the role of ‘auxiliary languages’. These local languages are used mostly to explain the curriculum to students and are not used seriously as media of instruction. In some cases, however, local language or multilingual learning materials are also used.
with good results, for example, the Lubuagan language (Dumatog and Dekker 2003). Situations vary depending on teachers and the availability of learning materials in local languages.

With the overall emphasis on two languages, Filipino and English as media of instruction at all levels, the importance and role of other vernacular languages appear to have diminished. Many minority language speakers have developed a more positive attitude towards English or Filipino for political, social and economic reasons.

There are a few languages in the Philippines that are slowly being abandoned by the new generation of speakers and one example is the Butuanon language, a member of the Visayan dialect family. It should however be mentioned that some well-established majority languages like Cebuano, Ilokano and Ilongo have not been affected as much as other minority languages.

It should also be pointed out that as the writing systems for most languages are fairly similar in the Philippines, many people literate in Filipino can often quite easily transfer their literacy skills into their mother tongue (Jernudd 1999; Young 2002).
Summary

A general overview of the language policy (acquisition planning) in Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei and the Philippines is shown in Table 2.

Table 2 Language policy (acquisition planning)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Malaysia</th>
<th>Singapore</th>
<th>Brunei</th>
<th>Philippines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Malay national language and medium of instruction in government (national schools) and Chinese and Tamil medium of instruction in national type primary schools with English taught as subject.</td>
<td>Bilingual policy – English medium of instruction and students learn mother tongue as a subject.</td>
<td>Bilingual policy – both standard Malay and English media of instruction.</td>
<td>English and Filipino media of instruction at different school levels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POL (Pupil’s Own Language) - minimum 15 students.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mother tongue auxiliary language at primary school level.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the above discussion it is clear that language policies and speakers’ attitudes regarding the pragmatic importance of learning some languages given their political and economic importance rather than language policy and medium of instruction in schools per se, have contributed to the language shift of minority languages in these countries.

Maintenance and revitalization of minority languages

Having provided the background of language policies let us move on to discuss how some of the endangered languages have been revitalized in new settings by making use of a range of literacies.

Approaches to language revitalization

According to Grenoble and Whaley (2006), existing educational programmes which focus on language revitalization can be categorized along a continuum according to the extent to which a local language is used. These programmes range from total immersion, where the local language is used for all instruction, to partial immersion, where the local language is used together with a majority language, to programmes
with very little local language content. In fact, Leanner, Hinton and Hale (2001) discuss five such programmes. These include programmes which are: (1) school based; (2) non-school based i.e. after school; (3) focused on adult language education; (4) which emphasise documentation and materials development; and (5) home based.

What follows is a selection of examples of existing programmes.

(1) School based programmes

Endangered language as a subject

Semai in Peninsular Malaysia is one of the 18 aboriginal languages protected by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs (JHEOA) formed in 1954. The Ministry of Education (MOE) started to introduce Semai as a subject in the national curriculum from year 1996 and it was fully implemented in some schools by 2000.

In Sarawak a playschool uses Bidayuh as the medium of instruction and this is funded by UNESCO in the Bidayuh Belt (a term coined by Dundon 1989). This belt refers to areas where the Bidayuh villages are located, namely Padawan, Bau, Serian and Lundu districts.

In the Philippines the Save Our Languages through Federalism (SOLFED) Butuan chapter solicited assistance from two NGOs to fund the teaching of Butuanon in public schools. The two NGOs signed a Memorandum of Agreement with the Caraga Department of Education to teach Butuanon in public schools in 2006 (Sunday Times, August 11, 2007).

(2) Children’s programmes outside the school

In Malaysia, Sikh children are learning Punjabi in classrooms in gurdwaras i.e. the Sikh temple. And Hindi classes are run every Sunday in the Lakshmi Narayan Temple in Kuala Lumpur. Many ethnic based associations, for example the Sindhi Association of Malaysia (SAM) also hold weekly language classes. Many of such ethnic based classes are however short-lived as attendance is erratic.
(3) Adult language programmes

Two adult classes for teaching Bidayuh in Kampong Quop in the Kuching District and Kampong Kakei in the Serian District (2003) started (Jey Lingam Burkhardt 2007). They are held once a week.

(4) Documentation and material development

Publication, field notes and recordings made by the speakers and researchers can be used by new generations to learn what they can about their languages, and are a rich source of material that can be invaluable to language revitalization programmes. Such documentation and materials have been used to help revitalize some minority languages. For instance, a proposed practical orthography based on linguistic analysis and preliminary phonological description conducted in November 1998 is being used to help the Iranun in Sabah, Malaysia, to revitalize their language. Professor Howard McKaughan and Dr. Jacqueline Kitingan together with Jim and Karla Smith of the Institut Linguistik SIL, Sabah, helped in the Iranun Language Project. Recording and transcription of Iranun traditional stories and history were also carried out. The results from these endeavours were:

- 175 different booklets, including children’s books, and calendars.
- An Iranun picture dictionary.
- A volume of traditional Iranun stories (printed by the Sabah Museum).

The Semai language was revitalized through the documentation and development of Semai language materials. A lexicon is being compiled and has helped to produce a dictionary and by September 2000 more than 2000 Semai words were listed.

In the Philippines the Butuanon dialect can only be spoken by fewer than 500 youngsters in Butuan itself (Manila Times, August 11, 2007). In June 2005 SOLFED Butuan Chapter started creating a Butuanon syllabus and grammar book, designed to be used by any classroom teacher with a working knowledge of English. Since Butuanon did not have any existing piece of literature in 2005, SOLFED used an existing grammar book (made by the Maryknoll Institute of Language and Culture in Davao), designed to teach Cebuano Visayan, as a guide. Cebuano Visayan is a close linguistic relative of Butuanon. SOLFED-Butuan members who were native
Butuanon speakers collaborated in designing a syllabus and numerous copies were made for distribution. The recordings can be played in classrooms.

The Development of Scripts

The development of Iranun language orthography i.e. a writing script for Iranun encouraged further development of the Iranun language. Iranun documentation and materials development have helped revitalize the Iranun language and create an awareness of the need to learn the Iranun language.

Due to the variations in their 29 isolects, one of the aims of the Bidayuh Language Development project set up in 2001 was to devise a common Bidayuh language. A unified orthography system was achieved for the four main Bidayuh dialects after a series of workshops held from March 2002 to August 2003 and this has resulted in a unified symbolization for Bidayuh words.

Computer technology

According to Hinton and Hale (2001), as computer technology is part of modern culture, it might be the ultimate solution for language revitalization. They discussed several uses of computer technology, which include:

1. Development of materials and self published books
2. Online dictionaries, grammars and other important language references
3. Multimedia curriculum for language pedagogy
4. Networking (which includes emails, online newsgroups, blogs)
5. Documentation of these materials
6. Digital Archiving (see for example http://www.mpi.nl/DOBES/ OR ELAR http://www.hrelp.org/archive/)

With the explosive growth of today’s technology, the internet has become a valuable resource for people globally in language learning. There are websites and blogs that promote the learning of minority languages. Some examples in Malaysia are:

2) Penang Hokkien language: www.penanghokkien.com (website) and www.chineselanguage.org (website)


These websites and blogs even show users how to pronounce words. Users are able to listen to the accurate pronunciation by clicking on the related icons. These websites also post songs, e.g. Telegu and Hokkien songs. Users can even have a discussion on their respective minority languages.

**Mass media**

Other than the above stated alternatives and strategies in revitalizing minority languages, mass media is also one of the important sources for revitalizing minority languages. A Chinese radio station in Malaysia – 988 started with a five minute Hokkien programme where two to three Hokkien words are taught daily through simple conversation. The DJs repeat the new vocabulary several times so that the listeners learn how to pronounce the words correctly. Malaysia Radio and Television (RTM)’s Chinese station also has five minutes news announcement in four different Chinese dialects (Hakka, Cantonese, Hokkien, Teochew) in the evening. Radio Malaysia Sabah (RMS) airs several ethnic languages, namely Bajau, Kadazan, Dusun and Murut. Based on the feedback and response of the ethnic broadcasters of both the Kadazan and Dusun slots the interviews display the roles of this medium in maintaining the Kadazandusun language. RTM Sarawak Bidayuh service broadcasts news items in Biatah, Bau-jagoi and Bukar-sadong dialects. The Catholic News in Kuching occasionally has news reports written in Bidayuh dialects and Utusan Sarawak, a local Malay daily, allocates one section for news in the Iban language. In short, radio stations and newspapers in Malaysia have become the source of minority language revitalization. In Brunei all that can be found on the radio is a one-hour weekly programme called ‘Bahasa mengenali bangsa’ where different minority languages are used together with Malay, but only those of the recognized indigenous groups, whereas five hours of programmes in Mandarin are broadcast every day.

As for television there are several Chinese dialects programmes in Malaysia. Cantonese drama series are shown on TV2, Astro channels, NTV7 and Channel 8 every evening (6.00pm – 8.00pm).
Lately, Channel 8 has started a Hokkien drama series from Monday to Fridays from 6.00pm to 7.00pm. Vaanavil, one of the Astro television channels, also shows half an hour each of drama in Telegu and Malayalam. One example of a Malayalam drama is ‘Gangotri’. Watching drama programmes in ethnic languages is an effective way to revitalize minority languages.

Songs in different Chinese dialects are produced in cassettes, CDs and DVDs. Michael Ong, a famous Malaysian Chinese singer and writer, sings Cantonese songs. Chinese New Year songs are produced in Hokkien yearly.

(7) In the Philippines the Subanen language in Zamboanga del Sur, Mindanao, has been maintained through songs and folk epics (Esteban 2003).

In Sarawak Bidayuh singers play a very important role in promoting and preserving the Bidayuh language. The Bidayuh lyrics are influential in teaching reading and spelling in Bidayuh, as well as transmitting Bidayuh words to the younger generation (Rensch et al. 2006: 18). As for the Philippines, Surigaonon, another minority language in the Northeastern part of Mindanao, is used in local songs, local newspapers and blogs.

Community Initiatives

It is also important for us to investigate how local communities have maintained their dialects in Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei and Philippines. In Malaysia, there are ethnic subgroups that have their own associations which focus on retaining their culture. Most of the associations have been focusing their activities on promoting their culture e.g. food, wedding ceremonies etc. For example, the Malaysian Hakka Association holds a Miss Hakka contest as one of their annual activities (http://www.hakkamalaysia.com/index.html). They do not however appear to be emphasizing the use of the dialect. The same applies to the language minority groups in Brunei who still go on celebrating their own traditional festivals, even though for some, like the Iban, the language still plays a central role. However, as stated above, basically no language planning is being carried out in Brunei for the local minority languages, if we exclude Mandarin Chinese, which is taught in two private schools, as an elective subject at the University of Brunei and can be listened to on the radio for five hours daily.
The Bidayuh communities in Sarawak have attempted to promote the use of the Bidayuh dialects. The Bidayuh Language Development Project (BLDP) is a language revitalization project initiated by the leaders of the Bidayuh community in Sarawak. The project goals are to:

- Revitalize the language, i.e. to recover forgotten and neglected terms
- Develop a unified orthography for all Bidayuh dialects
- Expand the body of literature in Bidayuh
- Facilitate having Bidayuh taught in schools

In Singapore the government is not playing any role in minority languages revitalization. In fact it has consciously and purposely presided over the eradication of the Chinese vernaculars and through their policy of favouring English above all other languages it is promoting a brand of English dominant bilingualism. In actual fact researchers have argued that Singapore English-Mandarin bilingualism is valued much more than the other types (English-Malay, English-Tamil), as these are harder to justify and place a pragmatic value to (Bokhorst-Heng 1998, cited in Wee and Bokhorst-Heng 2005).

The best that can be said is that after being urged by the respective speech communities to do so, today the government has accepted the teaching in community-run classrooms of some of the other Indian languages spoken in Singapore, for example, Hindi, Punjabi, Bengali, Gujarati and Urdu. All other efforts at encouraging the learning of other languages in Singapore by the government have been to allow (only) the best students (that is, those in the top 10%) to enroll in a third language apart from their mother tongue. In a positive note, recently this rule has been relaxed and Malay has been introduced as a third language in secondary schools to any student who would like to learn it (Kassim 2008).

The fact that English has become a global force and there are strong instrumental reasons for its adoption in many countries other than Singapore (Sonntag 2003; see also Phillipson 2006 and Schmidt 2006 for a summary) is an incontrovertible fact. In other places around the world, without any overt language policy favouring English, we see the same advancement of English (U.S.) cultural standards and English proficiency in many sectors. However, it is undeniable that official sanctions, together with natural forces, have created a sweeping momentum in the case of Singapore. Indeed, there have been many economic rewards accrued because of the language policies adopted in Singapore. Singapore is
widely considered to be a successful nation state largely because of a slew of far-sighted policies and good management. However, as in any language debate, there is a social cost to all gains.

Table 3 will give us a general overview of how minority communities in Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei and Philippines are revitalizing their minority languages, while Table 4 clearly shows the range of media used to maintain minority languages in Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei, and the Philippines.

**Table 3 Approaches to minority languages revitalization**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Languages revitalization strategies</th>
<th>Malaysia</th>
<th>Singapore</th>
<th>Brunei</th>
<th>Philippines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School-based programmes</td>
<td>Semai and Kadazandusun - POL</td>
<td>Mandarin, Malay and Tamil - taught as subjects in schools</td>
<td>Mandarin Chinese taught in two private schools</td>
<td>Butuanon - taught as a subject in government schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s programmes outside the school</td>
<td>A play school in Sarawak is using Bidayuh as the medium of instruction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult language programmes</td>
<td>Bidayuh adult classes</td>
<td>Hokkien and Teochew classes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Document and material development</td>
<td>Iranun traditional stories documented</td>
<td>Orthography and grammar developed</td>
<td>A few basic grammars and dictionaries have been published for Brunei Malay, Kedayan, Tutong and Belait. Some traditional stories have also been published for Dusun</td>
<td>Butuanon grammar book</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>175 booklets published</td>
<td>Picture dictionaries published</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Semai dictionaries</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Multiliteracies</th>
<th>Malaysia</th>
<th>Philippines</th>
<th>Brunei</th>
<th>Singapore</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CDs</td>
<td>Telegu,</td>
<td>Butuanon</td>
<td></td>
<td>All official languages and other Indian languages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cantonese, Hokkien, Hakka</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Websites</td>
<td>Telegu, Hokkien</td>
<td>Surigaonon</td>
<td></td>
<td>All official languages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blogs</td>
<td>Hakka</td>
<td>Surigaonon</td>
<td></td>
<td>All official languages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV programmes</td>
<td>Hokkien, Cantonese, Telegu, Malayalam</td>
<td>Some Chinese drama series and films are broadcast on Radio Television Brunei in Mandarin. Brunei Malay is used together with standard Malay in locally produced drama series</td>
<td>All official languages</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio programmes</td>
<td>Hakka, Hokkien, Teochew, Bidayuh</td>
<td>Surigaonon</td>
<td>Mandarin</td>
<td>All official languages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Songs and folk epic</td>
<td>Cantonese, Hokkien, Hakka (songs)</td>
<td>Surigaonon, Subanen</td>
<td></td>
<td>All official languages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspapers</td>
<td>Utusan Sarawak</td>
<td>Periodico Surigaonon</td>
<td></td>
<td>All official languages</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 Multiliteracies in minority languages revitalization
Summary and conclusion

Arguments for the maintenance of minority languages have been made by many linguists around the world (see Cavallaro 2005 for a summary). Crystal (2000) provides a number of reasons why it is important to maintain mother tongues and these include:

- Linguistic diversity enriches human ecology
- Languages are expressions of identity
- Languages are repositories of history
- Languages contribute to the sum of human knowledge: each language provides a new slant on how the human mind works, perceives and records human observation and experience.

The arguments for language maintenance speak for themselves and there is little need for more research into why languages should be maintained. The research should now concentrate on the mechanisms that best reverse language shift and on ways of promoting the maintenance of all languages spoken within a community (Cavallaro 2005). To this end we note that in Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei and Philippines language policies have affected minority languages in some way. However, only the governments of Malaysia and the Philippines have attempted to preserve some minority languages to some extent by introducing the teaching of some of these languages as subjects in the school curriculum. Communities, too, have invited experts to conduct research and campaigns to promote these languages. Unfortunately, most of the minority languages speakers, especially the young ones, have shifted away from using and appreciating their respective mother tongues. Due to their learning environment and their perception of the importance of the majority languages, language shift of minority languages has occurred. Some community leaders across the four countries discussed in this paper have expressed concern at this shift and have attempted to help preserve and maintain their respective languages.

In conclusion we would like to state that whatever the opportunities given by education systems, community leaders and externally funded organizations; whatever the many modes of documenting minority languages and encouraging people to use them through blogs, songs and other media, the desire to maintain and use ethnic languages depends on how ethnic minorities perceive the importance of their languages and also on their desire to use these languages. If a minority language has a use for the modern world and an economic value every effort will be made to ensure its retention. For minority languages to
live, opportunities must exist for their spontaneous use, and a value must be given to the language. The main purpose of language planning is precisely to give minority languages the prestige and usefulness, both in economic and cultural terms, which will help to slow down or stop the language shift currently under way (Coluzzi 2007: 139-144). What has been done so far is clearly insufficient, and if more effective and wide-ranging measures of language planning are not implemented, most of the minority languages discussed in this article are doomed, in the short or in the long term according to their present vitality.

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The Santals of Bangladesh

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Abstract
The Santals, a significant community among the forty five distinctive minority groups in Bangladesh, possess a rich cultural heritage and their language, Santali, bears their unique cultural identity. Over the years voices have been raised for legal rights for the indigenous minorities of the world and for the preservation of indigenous languages. With its rich cultural heritage and history, the Santali language has a unique value for the Santals and deserves special attention for conservation. A multilingual education system with provisions for mother tongue education is a way to promote awareness for their endangered linguistic heritage and can be an effective way to enable indigenous people in Bangladesh to learn their traditional language, the national language, Bangla, along with English. This paper first gives a detailed description of the Santals and their language. Issues of linguistic rights are discussed in the context of indigenous people in Bangladesh, and suggestions are made for the process of integrated public involvement in the multilingual education process for the Santals.

Key words: Indigenous people, Language Revitalization, Language Maintenance, Language rights, Santals, Santali, Bilingual/ Multilingual Education.

Indigenous people and Language rights
It is a widely accepted fact that by the turn of the next century 3,000 of the 6,900 languages still spoken around the world will disappear, and that around 2,400 will become endangered (Hale 1998). UNESCO has recognized this fact and has made the conservation of indigenous cultures and cultural diversity in general as one of its key responsibilities. On its sixty-first session on September 13, 2007 and following more than two decades of debate, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted a milestone declaration with an “overwhelming” majority of 143 votes in favour, only 4 negative votes cast (Canada, Australia, New Zealand, United States) and 11 abstentions. This declaration outlines the rights of the world’s indigenous people, numbering more than 370 million individuals and representing nearly 6000 languages and cultures, to maintain their traditional cultures and customs, and outlaws any discrimination against them (UNPFII 2007). While the numbers seem to indicate a healthy linguistic environment, most of these languages and cultures are “fragile in the face of political, social and economic changes” (Czermak, Delanghe and Weng 2003:1).
The United Nations has designated the Tribal People of the world as “Indigenous People”. Some other similar terms regarding the concept are “cultural minorities,” “ethnic minorities,” “indigenous cultural communities,” “tribals,” “scheduled tribes,” “natives,” and “aboriginals” (ADB 1998:1). Terms and definitions in relation to the concept may vary depending on the acceptance or preferences on a country-to-country basis, or on the basis of use by academic discipline, and even on the usage of groups concerned. A working definition of ‘indigenous peoples’ as reflected in ADB’s operations is:

Indigenous peoples should be regarded as those with a social or cultural identity distinct from the dominant or mainstream society, which makes them vulnerable to being disadvantaged in the processes of development.

(ADB working paper on “Policy on Indigenous Peoples” 1998:3)

‘Adivasi’ or Adibashi is a term to refer to indigenous peoples in Bangladesh in general (Sarker and Davey 2009). However, the terms ‘Adivasi’, ‘ethnic minority’, ‘tribal’ and ‘indigenous’ are used interchangeably in documents and literature in Bangladesh to distinguish these groups of people. For instance, in 2004, the then Prime Minister of Bangladesh used the term ‘indigenous’ in a message to the indigenous peoples on the occasion of United Nations International Day of the World’s Indigenous Peoples, whereas the government used the term adivasi/ethnic minority in the final version of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (Government of Bangladesh 2005). In “Primary Education Situational Analysis, Strategies and Action Plan for Mainstreaming Tribal Children” (MoPME 2006), they are called ‘tribal’. ‘Adivasi’ and ‘indigenous’ are used in this document since these people self-identify with these terms (Durnnian 2007:18).

The lack of recognition of the ‘existence of the different peoples within the country’ in the Bangladesh’s Constitution, and ‘a general reluctance’ of the state to acknowledge the ethnic minorities as anything but ‘backward segments of the population’, are often marked to be the reasons behind the low economic standings and low standards of education of the indigenous communities in Bangladesh (Borchgrevink and McNeish 2007:16). The term ‘Tribal peoples’ is the most common term used in political discourse in Bangladesh and is used without any association to territory as implied in the terms ‘indigenous’ or its complementary term in Bangla, ‘Adivasi’. Because of the political emphasis on Bangladeshi nationhood, the recognition of diversity and cultural rights has been inhibited. Despite the fact, there is a glimpse of hope against this general background, and ‘hopefully an indication of an emerging change’, as the Adivasi peoples in the country and related issues have been mentioned as a

The struggle of ethnolinguistic minority groups’ efforts in maintaining their languages and cultures has been the subject of considerable debate and research in recent times. See in particular the advocates of minority language rights (May 2001, 2003, 2006), and of linguistic human rights (Skutnabb-Kangas 2000, 2006; Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson 1994). There are many reasons why communities shift away from their (minority) mother tongues to the language of the majority. At the same time there are also many reasons why minority languages should be maintained (see Cavallaro 2005). These issues are beyond the scope of this article, and they have been dealt with to some degree in this issue by David, Cavallaro and Coluzzi.

Within the context outlined above, this paper presents a discussion of the Santal people, a minority group in Bangladesh. Their demographics, language and educational expectations are explored and discussed.

**Bangladesh**

Bangladesh is one of the five countries that comprise the vast land of ‘the Indo-Gangetic Plain’ (Eraly 2000:3-5). The history of the sub-continent abounds with the confluence of many cultural influences including Indo-Aryan, Austro-Asiatic, Dravidian, Mughal, Arab, Persian, Turkish and British influences. In world history, particularly in the history of the sub-continent, the geographical area recognized today as Bangladesh including neighboring territories, such as the Indian states of West Bengal, Orissa, Bihar, Assam, Meghalaya and Tripura, was known as Bengal. For more than five centuries, it was under the rule of the Mughal Empire. It then became the Bengal Presidency and came under British rule. The nation was known as East Pakistan after the Partition in 1947, struggled for self governance from the then Pakistani rulers and achieved independence in 1971 (Majumdar 1943; Rahim 1963; Rashid 1978; Muhith 1978; Rahman 1980; Rahim 1981; Baxter 1984; Mascarenhas 1986).

The majority of the people in Bangladesh is Bangali (Bengali), and speaks Bangla (or Bengali). This group of people is the direct descendents of the inhabitants of Bengal (Majumdar 1943). Ethnically, they belong to a rather mixed group comprising ‘eastern Indo-Aryan’ people or the branch of the Sanskrit speaking Indo-Aryans who migrated to the Bengal delta in 50 BCE (Eraly 2000; Keay 2001),
The history of the emergence of the Bangalis as the dominant group of people in Bangladesh is still contentious. According to one account, in its earliest period in history, different groups of people inhabited Bengal and the areas which they inhabited came to be known after the names of these groups (Banglapedia 2006). Thus the ancient *janapadas* (an Old Bangla word for ‘localities’) of Vanga, Pundra, Radha and Gauda were regarded as inhabited by non-Aryan ethnic groups with those names (Banglapedia 2006). There are accounts and references that point out that the ancient people of Bengal varied in race, culture and language from the Aryans, the compilers of the Vedic literature (Majumdar 1943; Eraly 2000; Keay 2001; Sengupta 2001). Dialects of the languages spoken since ancient times within Bengal (including the Austric, the Dravidian, the Sino- Tibetan or Tibeto-Chinese and the Indo-European (or Indo-Iranian) languages) are found in the Bengal Delta. Traces of the original settlers of Bengal (the non-Aryan ethnic groups of people) such as the Nisadas or Austric or Austro-Asiatics - are reflected in the appearances, lifestyles and cultural practices of the present day minority peoples known as Kol, Santal etc. All these tribes had their own languages and cultures. Non-Aryan dialects did not disappear altogether with the advent of the Aryanization process. Significantly, the languages spoken by all those ethnic groups and tribes contributed to the development of the language now known as Bengali, or Bangla. Hence the birth of the Bangla language is estimated to have taken place at around 700 A.D. The emergence of the Bangla language as a unifying force for the various groups was to start the slow process of the predominance of the Bangla-speaking people in Bengal (Sengupta 2001).

Since independence, Bangladesh has not had a consistent language policy. Hossain and Tollefson (2007) report how Bangla and English have been favoured while effectively ignoring the language issues concerning the country’s linguistic minorities. In Bangladesh, minority languages function as the Low languages in diglossic relationships with the High language, Bangla, the official language of Bangladesh. The minority language is used in informal settings and Bangla in official, administrative and educational settings (Lawson and Sachdev 2004).
In the Bangladeshi context we can look to May’s (2006) argument where he says that no matter what steps are taken inevitably in any community the majority languages will dominate. However, he goes on to say that speakers of minority languages “… should be accorded at least some of the protections and institutional support that majority languages already enjoy” (p. 265). In the following discussion, we will see that, until recently, Bangladeshi minority groups, and the Santals in particular, have not been treated on a par with the majority Bangla speakers.

There are about 45 tribal/indigenous communities in Bangladesh. The reliability of the data in the 2001 national census regarding indigenous population in Bangladesh is questionable for lack of specific questions on indigenous issues on the data collection form used for the past censuses (Durmnian 2007:18). The 1991 census data on indigenous people shows the total indigenous population as approximately 1.21 million (1.13% of the total population). The reliability of this data has been put to question for the inconsistency by the censuses in identifying the accurate number of the indigenous groups in Bangladesh: only 27 of the 45 groups were identified of which some communities were mentioned twice (Durmnian 2007:18-19). The current estimate by the World Bank (2008) is around 2 million indigenous people; while Borchgrevink and McNeish (2007) reported that Bangladesh has an estimated indigenous population of 2.5 to 3 million, or around 2% of the total population. The Bangladesh Adivasi Forum, an organized group for upholding the rights of the indigenous communities in Bangladesh, claims that the population is higher, at approximately 3 million (Durmnian 2007:19). In a recent study (Rafi, 2006), it has been claimed that the indigenous households comprise 1.5% of the total households in Bangladesh. Considering all these anomalies and applying a national average annual growth rate of 1.48 percent between the censuses of 1991 to 2001, Durmnian (2007:19) suggests that a more accurate estimate of the population of indigenous people in 2001 could be around 1.8 million people.

The geographical distribution of the 45 distinct indigenous groups in Bangladesh is given in Table 1. The geographical locations of the indigenous people, living mostly in remote areas, are scattered in six major areas or regions in Bangladesh (World Bank 2008).
## Table 1 Location and distribution of Indigenous People in Bangladesh

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Indigenous Communities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Greater Mymensingh</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Mymensingh Tangail Netrokona Jamalpur Shapur district)</td>
<td>Mandi, Barman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Garo, Dalu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hajong, Hodi</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Koch, Banai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rajbangshi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gazipur</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coastal Area (Patuakhali, Barguna and Coxsbazar district)</td>
<td>Garo, Barman, Koch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South-West (Jessore, Satkhira, Khulna district etc.)</td>
<td>Rakhain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chittagong Hill Tracts (Bandarban, Rangamati and Khagrachari district)</td>
<td>Chakma, Tanchangya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Marma, Khiang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tripura, Mru</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bawm, Asam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pangkhu, Gurkha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lusai, Chak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North-Bengal (Rajshahi, Dinajpur, Rangpur, Gaibandha, Noagaon, Bagura, Sirajgonj, Chapainawabgonj, Natore district etc.)</td>
<td>Santal, Bhil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Oraon, Kole</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Munda, Mahato</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Malo, Karmakar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mahali, Muriyar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Khondo, Pahan</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bedia, Musohor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bhumij, Paharia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rai, Sing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Turi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater Sylhet (Sumangonj, Moulvibazar, Sylhet, Hobigonj district)</td>
<td>Monipuri, Patro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Khasia, Kharia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Garo, Santal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hajong, Oraon</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The Chittagong Hill Tracts is the abode of most of the indigenous communities in Bangladesh but other areas in which these communities live include Jamalpur, Mymensingh, North Bengal, Gazipur, Sylhet, and the coastal areas of Patuakhali and Barguna.

Bangla is spoken as their mother tongue by an estimated 110 million people and by 250 million including those who speak it as a second language in Bangladesh and neighbouring India. The next two most spoken languages in Bangladesh are Chittagonian with around 13 million speakers, and Sylhetti with about 7 million speakers (Gordon 2005). Some of the smaller ethnic minority communities of
Bangladesh include Chakma, Garo, Manipuri, Marma, Munda, Oraon, Santal, Khasi, Kuki, Tripura, Mro, Hajong and Rakhain. The total population of some of these smaller groups in 1991 and 2001 is shown in Table 2.

Table 2 Indigenous population in Bangladesh (1991-2001)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indigenous groups</th>
<th>1991</th>
<th>2001</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bangshi</td>
<td>2,112</td>
<td>3,126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bawm</td>
<td>6,978</td>
<td>10,327</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buna</td>
<td>13,914</td>
<td>20,592</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chak</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>2,960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chakma</td>
<td>252,986</td>
<td>374,419</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Koch</td>
<td>12,631</td>
<td>18,694</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garo</td>
<td>68,210</td>
<td>100,951</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hajong</td>
<td>11,477</td>
<td>16,985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harijon</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khasi</td>
<td>13,412</td>
<td>19,850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khyang</td>
<td>2,345</td>
<td>3,471</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khumi</td>
<td>1,241</td>
<td>1,837</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lushai</td>
<td>662</td>
<td>978</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahat/Mahatoo</td>
<td>3,534</td>
<td>5,230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marma</td>
<td>154,216</td>
<td>228,240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monipuri</td>
<td>24,902</td>
<td>28,562</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Munda/Mundia</td>
<td>2,112</td>
<td>3,126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murang</td>
<td>22,178</td>
<td>32,823</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muro/MO</td>
<td>3,211</td>
<td>4,752</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pahari</td>
<td>1,853</td>
<td>2,742</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pankue/Pankoo</td>
<td>3,227</td>
<td>4,776</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rajbangshi</td>
<td>5,444</td>
<td>8,057</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rakhain</td>
<td>16,932</td>
<td>25,059</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santal</td>
<td>202,744</td>
<td>300,061</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanchangya</td>
<td>21,057</td>
<td>31,164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tipra</td>
<td>1,242</td>
<td>1,838</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tripura</td>
<td>79,772</td>
<td>118,063</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urang</td>
<td>11,296</td>
<td>16,718</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uruo/Urua/Uria</td>
<td>2,481</td>
<td>3,672</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>261,746</td>
<td>387,384</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,205,978</td>
<td>1,784,847</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Adapted from World Bank Report titled “Bangladesh - indigenous/tribal population and access to secondary schools (draft): indigenous peoples plan”, Report no. - IPP280, April 4, 2008, vol. 1, p. 3)

The distribution of four major indigenous communities – Chakma, Santal, Marma and Mandi (Munda/Mundia) - is illustrated in Figure 1, which shows a Santal concentration in the north western part of Bangladesh comprising the districts of Rajshahi, Dinajpur and Rongpur, a Mandi concentration in the Madhupur forest in Mymensingh, and a Chakma and a Marma concentration in the Chittagong division:
Figure 1. Distribution of the Major Indigenous Groups in Bangladesh. Source: Timm (1991).

The Santals

The Santals are one of the larger tribal/indigenous groups in Bangladesh (see Table 2). Communities of Santals are also located in India and Nepal. The number of Santal people living in Bangladesh is still debatable. In a survey conducted in 1941, the Santal population was recorded as 829,025 (Banglapedia 2006). In the censuses conducted after the Partition in 1947, the Santals were not distinguished from other minority groups. As a result, the accurate statistics of their population in the then East Pakistan (present day Bangladesh) are now vague and unclear. In the 1980s, the Christian missionaries estimated that the Santal population in northern Bangladesh was over 100,000. The 1991 census recorded the Santal population as over 200,000 (Banglapedia 2006). In 2001, according to one estimate, the Santal population in Bangladesh was numbered around 157,000 (Gordon 2005), but the World Bank report (2008) has estimated the number around to be 300,000 (Table 2).
The language of the Santals, Santali, belongs to the Austro-Asiatic language family and is a member of the North Munda subgroup (Anderson 2006a). This view is supported by Ethnologue (Gordon 2005) which specifies Santali as belonging to the Austro-Asiatic family. The Munda group of languages, often known as Kol or Kolarian, is split into the South Munda and the North Munda subgroups. Within the North Munda group there exists a dialect continuum between Korku and a sizeable group of Kherwarian languages, of which Santali is a member (Anderson 2006b; Majumder 2001).

The Santali script, which is known as ‘Ol Cemet’, ‘Ol Chiki’, or simply ‘Ol’, was created by Pandit Raghunath Murmu, a renowned Indian educationist, in the 1930s, as part of his efforts to promote Santali culture (Lotz 2004; Carrin 2008). The Santali script uses thirty letters and five basic diacritics, and includes six basic and three additional vowels. Before the development of this script, Santali was either not written at all, or was written using the Bengali or Oriya scripts. During British rule the Roman alphabet was established as the preferred written form of Santali.

Literacy rates are very low in Bangladesh as a whole, and particularly lower among the minority groups (Hossain and Tollefson 2007). The Santals in Bangladesh have very few educational, literary or public resources. The situation is quite different among the Santals living in India where there is a significant use of the Santali language in a “functioning network of organizations, journals and publications, supported by a sizeable (mostly urban) elite that organizes conferences or regional meetings and actively contributes to other public platforms” (Lotz 2004: 131). Anderson (2006b) also reports of short wave radio broadcasts in Santali in India and of the lobbying by the newly founded “Tribal” state of Jharkhand to have a form of Kherwarian declared as yet another state language. However, very few or no Santali books are available in Bangladesh, except for texts written by Christian missionaries to teach Santali (see Bompas 1909 for a translation of Reverend P.O. Bodding’s Santali folktales; Archer 1974). These are all in the Romanized script. Currently educated Santals write Santali in both Bangla and Romanized scripts but most prefer to write in Bangla because of the phonetic similarities between Santali and Bangla.

Like the dubious nature of their demographic data, the ethno-linguistic history of the Santals is also ambivalent. Researchers such as Majumder (2001) state that the Austrian-speaking Proto-Australoid
people (one of the earliest settlers of the Indian subcontinent who existed before the arrival of the Aryans in this part of the world) were the ancestors of the Santals. Majumder has shown that there is considerable debate about the evolutionary histories of these tribal people:

The proto-Australoid tribals, who speak dialects belonging to the Austic linguistic group, are believed to be the basic element in the Indian population (Thapar 1966, p. 26). Other anthropologists, historians and linguists (Risley 1915; Rapson 1955; Pattanayak 1998) have supported the view that the Austro-Asiatic (a subfamily of the Austic language family) speaking tribals are the original inhabitants of India. Some scholars (Buxton 1925; Sarkar 1958) have, however, proposed that the Dravidians are the original inhabitants, the Austro-Asiatics being later immigrants.

(Majumder 2001:534)

It is difficult to determine the exact time and reason for Santal settlement in Bangladesh. The 1881 census mentions that at that time Santal settlements were already present in the districts of Pabna, Jessore, Khulna and Chittagong. According to another viewpoint, the Santals migrated to Bangladesh during the British rule in search of employment. At that time, the Santals were living in India in the regions of Chotonagpur and Santal Pargana. (Sarker and Davey 2009).

In terms of education, employment and land ownership in Bangladesh, Samad (2006) reports that the Santals are at a considerable disadvantage in comparison to the majority population and even in comparison with some other minority groups:

The Santals are one of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable indigenous communities in Bangladesh. For hundreds of years, they have been facing serious violations of human rights and the pace has accelerated since the independence. Land-grabbing, threats, evictions and killings have marginalized them to such an extent that their existence in Bangladesh is currently at stake. They do not have access to decision-making bodies and don’t get justice. Thus, they have become one of the poorest and the most vulnerable sections of the population.

(Samad 2006:9)
The fact that the Santals are disadvantaged even in comparison with other smaller indigenous
groups can be explained by recent socio-political events in the relationship between the Bangladeshi state
and indigenous people. Borchgrevink and McNeish (2007) report of a clear distinction existing between
the tribal minorities situated in the Chittagong Hill Tracts in southern Bangladesh and those, like the
Santals, living in the plains area in the northern part of the country. This is because the indigenous
groups living in the Chittagong Hill Tracts waged an armed struggle against the central government for
over 25 years. The Peace Accord signed in 1996 ended the violence and recognized “the region as
‘tribally inhabited’, the traditional authority structures of the peoples, and opens up for a certain amount
of political autonomy” (Borchgrevink and McNeish 2007:16; Ramkanta 2003). While the advantages
gained through the Peace Accord are still rather limited in comparison to the majority population, they
are still much better than the conditions suffered by the indigenous people in the northern regions of
Bangladesh.

The Santals’ lack of access to education, employment opportunities and land rights is, as cited
above, to an extent, due to the negligence from the state, which so far has not been able to ensure these
rights to its minority communities. Since its independence from Pakistan, several political parties have
come to power, but none has worked effectively for the question of land ownership, which has been in
dispute since the India- Pakistan Partition in 1947, and education and jobs for the minorities in the
country:

Even the laws themselves promote the process, as for instance the act introduced after
partition of Pakistan and India that allowed the confiscation of land owned by Hindus
(adivasi traditional religion is in many cases referred to as Hindu), which was retained
with only slight modifications after Bangladesh gained its independence from Pakistan.
(Borchgrevink and McNeish 2007:16)

The ‘slight modifications’ brought to these laws have been of little help in solving the
landlessness of the Santals in Bangladesh. A section of the Bangla-speaking majority population has
been taking advantage of the lack of education and language skills in the majority language, and the
illiteracy of the minority groups in Bangladesh to take over the traditional land of these groups (Sarker
and Davey 2009; Lawson 2003). To date these disadvantaged people are struggling for survival in the
land that they have inhabited for generations.
Land loss often results from the manipulation of public records or bribery of judges and municipal officials. This process is simplified when the victim’s family is illiterate and belongs to a disliked minority group.

(Matthews and Ahsan 2002:250)

Facing such discrimination and violence, the disadvantaged community is struggling for survival and has had little time or energy to devote to voicing their demands for their rights to preserve their language and culture.

As stated above, in Bangladesh the Santals face discrimination from the majority community, and the Bangla speaking population and the government have done little to help the Santals protect themselves from the continuous land grabbing and dispossessions. Indeed there is a feeling among the minority peoples of Bangladesh that they are continuously being overlooked in favour of the majority group in all facets of life. These include employment opportunities and education. These issues have led to a deep sense of social insecurity. At the same time, the exposure to Christian run welfare programmes in the poverty-stricken communities of the Santals and as a result of financial aid from NGOs (see Gauri and Galel 2005 for a more detailed discussion on the roles of NGOs in Bangladesh), the desire for modern education is growing among the Santals.

The disadvantaged position of the Santali community vis-à-vis the majority Bangla-speaking population has also meant that the Santali language is facing the threat of extinction. The community is rapidly shifting away from its traditional language to Bangla as a consequence of competition from the majority language and from the lack of language maintenance support from the (Bangla-speaking) authorities who are responsible for policy making and language planning. Santali needs extensive research and educational efforts for it to be effectively revived, maintained and preserved.

**Multilingual/Bilingual education initiatives in Bangladesh**

As stated earlier, in Bangladesh, Bangla is spoken as the first language by the majority of the population, and, despite Bangladesh’s linguistic diversity, no language policy for the country’s ethnolinguistic minorities has been developed so far. At the same time, the country’s education policy documents emphasize the importance of mother tongue in primary education. However, ‘mother tongue’ in
Bangladesh seems to only refer to Bangla, the language of instruction and literacy in all formal schools, as well as in adult literacy classes.

The minority languages have not been able to make their way into the education sector. To make situations worse, there are very few teachers from the minority communities. The indigenous minorities have an exceedingly low level of literacy. Despite this fact, a glimmer of hope can be seen in Bangladesh’s commitment to achieve the Education for All (EFA)\(^1\) goals. There are now a number of non-governmental organizations are developing and administering non-formal schools around the country. A few of them are working in educational and literacy programmes among indigenous children. Most of these use the mother tongues of these minority learners as the media of instruction.

In line with such initiatives in the International Decade for the World’s Indigenous People, the EIC (Education for Indigenous Children) program was launched by BRAC [Building Resources Across Communities (formerly Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee)] in October 2001 concentrating particularly on ‘the needs of indigenous children’ in Bangladesh and to raise consciousness among the members of the mainstream Bengali society about indigenous issues (Sagar and Paulson 2003:1).

BRAC is the largest among all the NGOs operating within Bangladesh. In order to achieve its major aim of poverty reduction in Bangladesh, BRAC carries out a wide range of projects in fields such as education, micro-finance, health and research. It has been providing selected services in the ‘non-formal primary education’ (NFPE) sector in Bangladesh for more than two decades, but it has stepped up its presence in indigenous education in Bangladesh since the EIC program commenced in 2001 (Sagar and Paulson 2003:1).

In 2003, around 14,289 indigenous students were enrolled in 928 BRAC-initiated NFPE schools. These schools had a mixed (Bangla- indigenous) population or, in many cases, were made up solely of indigenous students. However, Sagar and Paulson (2003) also mention a number of problems among the indigenous students in BRAC’s NFPE programmes. They point to a low enrolment and high dropout rates of indigenous students due to “low self-esteem, poor relations with Bengali teachers and

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\(^1\) The Government of Bangladesh has committed itself to meet the Dakar Declaration Education for All (EFA) by 2015 and sequential agreements. EFA stresses that all children have access to a completely free and compulsory primary education of good quality (Durnian 2006:21).
classmates, [and] problems with Bangla as the language of instruction” as well as “negative misconceptions towards ethnic minorities both among Bengali children in the classrooms and within mainstream Bengali communities” (p. 1).

Sagar and Paulson (2003:2) report, though, that BRAC has recognized these problems and the need for a “targeted education strategy” for indigenous students and has conducted field observations, research, and discussions with indigenous parents, communities and other NGOs working with these disadvantaged groups in Bangladesh. The outcome is a Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)-funded six-pronged education program aimed at achieving the following main objectives:

- Increase the enrollment of ethnic minority children in mainstream education
- Boost the self-esteem of indigenous people
- Create a positive attitude among the mainstream Bengali population towards indigenous people.

The six programme areas, as in Sagar and Paulson (2003:2 – 6) are:

1. Establishment and administration of new schools for indigenous children incorporating their mother tongues as medium of instruction.
2. Material development in terms of ‘creation of new materials in Bangla and the students’ mother tongues for use in indigenous classrooms’.
3. Human Resources, Capacity Development and Training for school staff recruited from the indigenous communities.
4. Advocacy for ‘indigenous groups and creating Linkages among communities, government and other NGOs’.
6. Stipend programme for indigenous students to continue their post-primary and post-secondary studies as well as for indigenous teachers who wish to complete their secondary school certification or post-secondary education.

For the Santals, it is obvious that these programmes can be of enormous help. Although it will take some time for these programmes to be developed and for them to start having an effect, these
programmes have the potential to better equip the Santals to enter and stay within the mainstream education system. A good education would then enable them to improve their quality of life by enabling the Santals to have access to better job opportunities.

It has been found that many indigenous children in Bangladesh are denied admission to primary education because they often do not speak fluent Bangla (Save the Children, 2004 cited in Dunnian 2007:2). In Bangladesh, in comparison with the majority Bangla-speaking children, indigenous children have significantly lower enrolment rates, have higher dropout rates and receive fewer years of formal instruction than the national average (Dunnian 2007:2). The enrolment rates may vary among indigenous communities. On the whole, approximately 44.5 % of the indigenous children aged 6-10 years in Bangladesh get admission in primary schools compared to 80% of the Bangla-speaking group (Save the Children, 2004 cited in Dunnian 2007:2).

These marginalized people need to be literate in their L1 (Santali) and, in order to reap the benefits of the formal education system, in the other two dominant languages, Bangla and English. In order to achieve this end the CIDA-funded programmes are not enough. Initiatives are also required on the part of the local Santal community, the Bangladeshi government and educators. Concerted effort is needed from linguists, teachers and decision making bodies responsible for planning, assessment and evaluation of the curriculum and materials to design suitable bilingual/multilingual educational programmes for the Santals. Once implemented in Bangladesh, a bilingual/multilingual education for the Santals through mother tongue education will be instrumental in leading the community on the road to an improved socio-economic standard of these people and thereby, contributing towards the maintenance of their ethnic language.

**Challenges to Developing Multilingual Education Programs in the Bangladeshi Context**

Establishing the types and number of programmes outlined on the previous section is not an easy task. This is particularly true in a country like Bangladesh where educational resources are limited.

Malone (2003) posits that to compel someone - children or adults alike - to learn in a language ‘they neither speak nor understand’ would not be a rational way to extract better results from them (p.6). The above statement seems to capture the main problem with the Bangladeshi approach to indigenous
education, where minority speakers are forced to learn the majority language at school. The result, as stated above is low rates of enrolments, high dropout rates and low educational achievements by members of the minority groups.

Resistance by the majority groups towards minority educational programmes in the Bangladeshi context can be discussed in terms of the general reasons given by Malone (2003) as to why multilingual education “can’t be done” (see also Sarker and Davey 2009; Durnian 2006; Samad 2006):

*Supporting diversity will foster divisiveness and lead to ethnic conflict.* A widely held assumption regards linguistic and cultural diversity as the root to ethnic strife. The argument for such presumption rests on the belief that the unity of a nation depends on a monolingual and monocultural atmosphere. This viewpoint has been debunked by numerous researchers and educators (Cummins 2000; see also Harrison 2007; Nettle and Romaine 2000). John Waiko, the then Vice Minister for Education of the Independent State of Papua New Guinea, put it very succinctly:

Diversity means more viewpoints to clarify, more ways of solving problems, more creative ideas, a greater ability to deal with change. There are many examples of the power of harnessing diversity. The modern European community is as strong as its ability to harness its diversity. Where diversity is crushed and fought the nation becomes weak and divided

(Waiko 1997: paragraph 38)

Malone (2003) also contests this position through a contradictory argument: she argues that most often restraint on the mother tongue and ethnic identity leads to discontent and rebellion. To prove this point we need look no further than the national history of Bangladesh that shows how the Bangladeshis struggled and achieved independence from Pakistan primarily over the issue of mother tongue education. When Pakistan first gained independence Urdu was imposed as the national language of both West and East Pakistan. It was this issue that finally sparked the War of Independence (Hossain and Tollefson 2007). Cummins (no date) also argues for the endorsement of multilingualism and multiculturalism in a society and relates it to the nation’s socio-economic development en masse:
“In an era of globalization, a society that has access to multilingual and multicultural resources is advantaged in its ability to play an important social and economic role on the world stage.”
(Paragraph 7)

There are too few mother tongue speakers qualified to teach at the tertiary level. Since many ethnic communities are still deprived of quality education, there may be lack of teachers belonging to these communities with the minimum teaching qualifications required for instruction in the formal education system. In Bangladesh, for example, the presence of primary level teachers coming from the indigenous communities in the formal education system is unfortunately negligible. There is also the problem of getting qualified teacher to work in remote areas. Often, qualified Bengali speaking teachers holding university degrees or teacher training qualifications who do not want to be posted to remote indigenous areas hire people to work as their substitutes or proxies in their teaching positions. These proxy teachers (who may neither be university graduates nor have any training in teaching) may or may not show up at the school at all (Durnian 2007:3). The government has also been negligent in considering ethnicity when assigning teachers to their postings, as the following example from a government report shows:

There are 27 teachers in Netrokona district from the [Adivasi] community, but they are often not assigned to their own community schools.
(Ministry of Primary and Mass Education 2006:6).

It is, therefore, normally the case that rural areas where indigenous communities live do not have teachers speaking the minority languages, and the Bangla-speaking teachers face difficulty in communicating with indigenous children in the classroom.

In order to handle such problems, quality education for the minority communities should be ensured to enable the minority language speakers for developing teaching skills. Throughout the world, particularly in developing nations in Asia, a step taken in this regard has been ‘to equip non-professional minority language speakers as teachers, providing them with careful pre-service training and on-going supervision and support’ (Malone 2003:7). BRAC’s initiative of the “Education for Indigenous Children” program in Bangladesh is such an attempt in which the minority language speakers have been
provided with training and support appointing them as teaching assistants. In Papua New Guinea, members of such communities have been recruited as teachers for early primary grades as in the mother tongue elementary classes constituting the first three years of formal education (see Malone, 2003). Hornberger, and Swinehart (2009) report that the programme for Professional Development in Intercultural Bilingual Education for Andean Countries (PROEIB Andes) based in Bolivia has been increasingly successful in training indigenous teachers and then these teachers have been returning to their communities.

There are no instructional materials that ‘fit’ all the minority language communities. Mere translations of the dominant language curriculum into minority languages might end in alien and unsuitable contents for indigenous learners, particularly for communities living in remote places. The absence of mother tongue instruction for indigenous children in the primary education curriculum in Bangladesh has been noted as one major reason for the incompatibility of the curriculum in relation to these children (Durnnian 2007:6). As the Asian Indigenous and Tribal Peoples’ Network report states:

[T]he curriculum is prepared for the [non-Indigenous] Bengali plains. As part of the government’s overall scheme to bring indigenous peoples’ culture into the mainstream, the curriculum is entirely oriented to the dominant Bengali model, allowing no space for the religious values, ideas and aspirations of hill tribal culture. Conformity to the Bengali ‘norm’ lies at the heart of the lessons, which are themselves communicated by approximately 95% Bengali teachers, with some schools having no indigenous teachers at all.

(Asian Indigenous and Tribal Peoples’ Network 2003:36)

The research by Indigenous Children’s Education Forum (2006) mirrors the true picture portraying the dire consequences of following such culturally inappropriate curricula in Bangladesh:

[F]ailure to engage indigenous students in meaningful ways results in classroom experiences that are incomprehensible and culturally invalidating. The result is that indigenous children often lose interest, underperform and drop out, and remain trapped in conditions of deprivation and marginalization.

(Indigenous Children’s Education Forum 2006:22)
Development of integrative curricula appropriate for various ethnic groups may seem to be a mammoth task. However, there are answers to this problem. One ‘promising’ solution, according to Malone (2003), is that the national education department (such as the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education in Bangladesh) can prepare intended learning objectives alongside curriculum guidelines for each instructional level. These ‘centrally produced’ materials can help minority language teachers develop their instructional plans using culturally appropriate content to teach different subjects to the minority students (Malone 2003:7). Malone cites a remarkable example of such initiatives taken by the Department of Education in Papua New Guinea (see also National Department of Education 2003, in Kale and Marimyas 2003).

The minority languages lack graded reading materials that can be used in their schools or departments. Malone (2003) acknowledges the fact that very often minority communities ‘lack graded reading materials that enable new learners to gain reading fluency and then encourage them to continue reading’ (p. 7). She also admits that it is a challenging task to create literature in multiple languages. It has been recognized that the ‘education that indigenous children in Bangladesh receive is of a lesser quality than children from the majority group receive through the primary education system’ (Durnnian 2007:3). This is true in the case of the Santals and other indigenous communities in Bangladesh.

Nevertheless, it has been proven in many cases that minority language speakers have the capacity to develop outstanding reading materials if they are provided with proper training and support (Kosonen 2005, 2008; Premsrirat and Malone 2003; McCaffery, Merrifield and Millican 2007). Locally produced materials are found to be “especially enjoyable and stimulating to new readers because they are about people, places and activities that are familiar to them” (Malone 2003:7).

Minority communities lack funding to support their programs. Without external support it is difficult for the minority language communities to maintain their own education programs (Malone 2003:7). The communities need financial support to meet infrastructural costs such as classrooms and other instructional costs for the purchase of reading materials and other necessary classroom supplies. Even though the infrastructural costs can be managed when ‘community members offer their homes and other local buildings for use as classrooms and volunteer as teachers and writers’ (Malone 2003:7), the communities will still be in need of funding to bear the daily instructional costs. In a poverty-stricken
country like Bangladesh, financial hardship is the main obstacle for the education of the indigenous people.

Even when educational resources are available, these people, stricken by severe poverty, cannot even provide their children with the basic educational needs such as reading and writing materials, tuition fees and school uniforms. Many children in Bangladesh are not able to go to school or have to dropout from school very early because the financial conditions of their families compel them to look for employment at a very young age or because they need to look after their siblings in absence of the parents when they are away at work. Many indigenous children in Bangladesh are engaged as child labour in agriculture with their parents, or as ‘bonded labour’ at the households of local elite Bangalis (Sarker and Davey 2009:8).

There are a number of reasons behind the marginalization of the indigenous communities in Bangladesh and it is not within the scope of this article to discuss them. What needs to be highlighted is that there exist ‘negative socio-religious attitudes’ and ‘open discrimination’ against the indigenous minorities by the Bangla-speaking majority group. Because of this, most indigenous people live in remote areas far away from the majority Bangla-speaking communities. As a result, many of the government-funded schools are located very far from the indigenous habitations. Due to the lack of availability of schools within a manageable walking distance, many indigenous children never even attend school (Durnmnian 2007:2). To make situations worse, owing to the distance of schools from the indigenous communities, the lack of government interest and low participation of the communities in schools, the school buildings actually present in indigenous areas are usually in very poor condition and lack many of the basic facilities enjoyed by pupils in majority language speaking areas (MoPME 2006):

“[T]he schools are run down or non-existent and many of the teachers are absent or have never actually visited the schools.”

(AITPN 2003:36).

The recent joint programmes of various Bangladeshi government agencies, NGOs and of minority indigenous communities, some of them discussed earlier in this article, do seem to hold the promise that the necessary resources will be found. However, in a country such as Bangladesh, financial and educational initiatives aimed at helping the indigenous population are extremely slow in being
implemented and whether any of the government initiatives, such as construction of new classrooms and their maintenance planned under the Primary Education Development Programme II (PEDP II)\(^2\), have aided the indigenous communities or not, remains a question (Durnnian 2007:4).

**Conclusion**

Quality education, according to Durnnian (2007:3), is an education that is:

1. **relevant** (to children’s needs, context now and the future),
2. **appropriate** (to children’s abilities, language, culture and potential),
3. **participatory** (to able children, families to play a full role in the process of learning and the organization of the school),
4. **flexible** (to respond to different and changing contexts in which children live – environmental, economic, social developments and realities),
5. **inclusive** (accessible to all, all children active in their learning and play, seeing diversity and differences between children as a resources to support learning and play),
6. **protective** (from exploitation, abuse, violence and conflict).

Unfortunately, indigenous children’s learning needs, particularly education in their mother tongue, has not been actively pursued in Bangladesh. As a consequence, the education system has failed to provide an education that meets any of the six criteria listed above and has, therefore, largely failed the indigenous children of Bangladesh.

A recent government strategy for indigenous children in Bangladesh (MoPME 2006) identified that indigenous parents do not find government schools and their curricula appropriate to tribal/indigenous communities or livelihoods and that they do not represent their cultural values and language. Government reports sometimes mistakenly attribute the cause of children’s illiteracy to the indigenous parents’ unawareness regarding the importance of education (Durnnian 2007:7). These reports are, on the whole, misinterpreting the real reason for these children’s lack of education. Research evidence shows that parents are generally reluctant to send their children to a school if it is administered

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\(^2\) The PEDP II, a partnership initiative between the Government of Bangladesh and 11 international donor agencies, is a sub-sector programme to improve the quality of the formal primary education system in Bangladesh. To address the specific education constraints and difficulties of indigenous children, the “Primary Education Situational Analysis, Strategies and Action Plan for Mainstreaming Tribal Children” (2006) has been approved under the PEDP II and the umbrella of Inclusive Education. This is the only government plan to ensure education for indigenous children.
in an ‘alien’ language that the children do not speak (AITPN, 2003; ICEF, 2006). Parents, therefore, lose confidence in the quality and value of the lessons imparted through the education system and simply do not send their children to school. The exclusion of indigenous children’s mother tongues in schools has diminished local interest and participation in education.

The significance of universalising primary education and eradicating illiteracy before the end of the past millennium had been agreed on long since 1990 when representatives from around the globe (155 countries and 150 organizations) gathered at the World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand (5-9 March 1990) to discuss the issue. There the world community for the first time documented the goal of providing quality basic education for all people. In this meeting, the urge for “Education for All” to ensure equal access of all citizens, including girls and women, the poor, the disabled, and the AIDS affected, to develop opportunities and resources, was voiced unanimously. The principal objective of the Second International Decade of the World’s Indigenous People (2005-2014) declared by the United Nations General Assembly in December 2004 highlighted “further strengthening international cooperation for the solution of problems faced by indigenous people in such areas as human rights, the environment, development, education and health”. The economic and social instability that inflicts indigenous peoples with age-long suffering in many parts of the world has been reflected in the international community’s concern over the issue through the declaration of a Second International Decade. The inclusion of education for ethnic minority communities affirming their cultural and linguistic heritage and provision for quality lifetime learning opportunities in “Education for All” had been emphasized as obligatory in that conference.

The rich variety of ethnic languages and cultures in many parts of the world, particularly in Asia and the Pacific, are faced with the threat of extinction. Linguists and policy makers worldwide have debated the necessity, possibility and urgency of meeting the language and education needs of these ethnic minority language communities in different sessions of the UNESCO from 2001 to 2003. This shows that experts and policymakers are finally working together to promote the linguistic and educational requirements and potentials of indigenous people throughout Asia and the Pacific. However, more needs to be done to help countries like Bangladesh to achieve these lofty aims.
In Bangladesh, the Santali language is an integral part of the Santals’ cultural identity. Unfortunately it is under pressure from the majority language, Bangla. Steps need to be taken in order to sustain the linguistic heritage of the community and the centuries of traditions and customs it is associated with. Language education, more specifically, mother tongue education for the Santals, can be an effective measure to preserve the Santali language and culture. Research has shown that bilingual education, or a mother tongue based multilingual education system is an effective measure of conserving and revitalizing an endangered language (Cummins 2000; Fishman 1991, 2000; Alexander 2003; Hornberger 1989, 2003; Hornberger & Skilton-Sylvester 2000). Therefore, an effective, strong, culturally oriented and sustained mother tongue based bilingual/multilingual education program has to be developed for this minority group in Bangladesh in order to increase educational opportunities, which will play a crucial role in improving the Santals’ quality of life and facilitate the maintaining and revitalizing of their indigenous language.

The Santal people and their language are integral parts of Bangladeshi heritage. The conservation process for this unique cultural heritage can only be successful when the government, together with other interested parties, lends their support to the maintenance efforts of this minority community. At the same time the indigenous people themselves must be encouraged and recruited to actively participate in the teaching, learning, planning and policy making process of their language, traditions and culture. In this way a sense of pride and a common purpose can be established within the community. Only through such a comprehensive approach can conservation of this historically and culturally rich language be achieved.

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