

Patterns of Language Choice in the Education Domain: The Malaysian Context

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ABSTRACT

With Malaysia being a multilingual, multicultural and multiracial country, it is not surprising that everyone in Malaysia speaks at least two or more languages. Such a multilingual situation leads people to choose and use different languages for different purposes in different domains. Even within a single domain the choice of language varies on contexts, topics and participants. The purpose of this study was thus to investigate the patterns of language choice and use in the domain of education in Malaysia and also to investigate what influences this choice. The study examined the patterns of language choice among UPM (University Putra Malaysia) undergraduates through a questionnaire survey and the data was analyzed. The findings reveal that language choice in education varies on sub-domains. It is also found that language proficiency, ethnicity, gender, and discipline of study constrain the choice and use of language.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Multilingualism allows people to access two or more languages and this allows people to exercise a choice in using languages for different purposes in different contexts. Language choice may be constrained by several factors which include language policy, language proficiency, ethnicity, gender, profession, socio-cultural background and in particular, the domain in which language is used. Domain, in its simplest terms, refers to the context of language use, for instance, that of family, friendship, education, transactional. Fishman states, "Domains are defined in terms of institutional contexts or socio-ecological co-occurrences. They attempt to designate the major clusters of interaction situations that occur in particular multilingual settings. Domains enable us to understand that language choice and topic...are...related to widespread socio-cultural norms and expectations" (see Dil, 1972:248).

Language choice is a sociolinguistic phenomenon which refers to selecting languages for different purposes in different contexts. The choice of languages might be conscious or unconscious but it does not happen in a vacuum, rather, language operates in a context which is situated in a speech community. This speech community may be diglossic, bilingual or multilingual where languages have functional and contextual allocations. For instance, the classical or standard or high variety (H) of Arabic is used for literacy, formal, public and official uses whereas the vernacular, local or low variety (L) is used for informal purposes. Chatterjee (1986) shows that the allocation of the two varieties of Bengali to different functional domains is very strict, with no overlapping (cited in Coulmas, 2005:126). Fasold (1984) however talks about a diglossic situation that involves one H and several L varieties, and he also mentions the possibility of having different 'layers' of varieties where H and L forms overlap.

Multilingual societies inevitably face conflict over language choice. What makes this language choice an obvious issue and concern in a multilingual society? Is the choice natural or forced? What are the intentions of an individual when making a choice? What are the factors that influence the specific choice? In multilingual societies, language choice takes place on two

levels: macro and micro. This study considers only micro constraints which include language proficiency, ethnicity, gender, profession, socio-cultural background and domains.

Languages can be categorized according to status and domains of use. Parasher (1980) shows that people in India use the mother tongue and another language in the family whereas English dominates high domains such as education, government and employment besides some low domains, for instance, friendship and neighborhood. Hsi-nan Yeh *et al.*, (2004) reports that each individual non-Mainlander group tends to use the national language, Mandarin, more in high domains than in low domains, and their native languages more in low domains than in high domains. Researcher like Gal (1979) opines whatever the social situations, only the identity of the participants determines language choice. Other situational factors such as audience, setting, occasion, and purpose have each been shown to influence the form of speech in other communities, it is necessary to demonstrate rather than to assume the irrelevance of those factors to the Oberwart case in Austria. Lu (1988) also supports Gal with reference to the use of language in Taiwanese family (see Hsi-nan Yeh *et al.*, 2004).

Constraints of proficiency, ethnicity, gender and profession on language choice are also reported. With reference to proficiency, McClure (1977) argues that children start switching when they had acquired considerable linguistic proficiency in that language (cited in Appel and Muysken, 1990), whereas David (1999) reports that lack of proficiency in the ethnic language can account for a shift. As far as ethnic identity is concerned, Gal (1979) says that the choice of language can be predicted if one knows the identity of the informant and of the interlocutor. Pool (1979) also indicates the effect of ethnicity on language choice when says that the language to which a speaker shifts is a better predictor of his/her ethnic background than is the language from which he/she shifts. In relation to the influence of gender in shaping the patterns of language choice, Lu (1988) reports that differences in age, education, gender and residence show different attitudes towards maintenance and legitimate status for the native languages. Chan (1994), however, finds no significant gender difference in the language use of the Minnanrens' (cited in Hsi-nan Yeh *et al.*, 2004).

Linguistic Situation in Malaysia

Historically, the first European language that came to Malaysia was Portuguese, and this was followed by English, with the British colonization. During this period, Chinese and Indian languages also set foot with the migration of Chinese and Indians to Malaysia. This, in fact, contributed in no small measure to Malaysia's growth as a multilingual country. As a British colony, the use of English occupied several formal and informal domains. The use of English spread rapidly moulding an elite group of local users among the Malays, Chinese and Indians. This helped increase the number of English speakers. At the same time it was also noted that English medium schools in Malaysia was on the rise linked likely to the increasing popularity of the language. However, after independence, the English language declined in importance as the language in education. The Constitution of Malaya formally declared Bahasa Malaysia (BM) to be the national and official language of Malaysia. BM was the medium of instruction to be used in national schools and an exclusively BM medium public university called National University of Malaysia was established in 1970. However, other minority and indigenous languages continued to be used obviating issues of language conflict. The Chinese and Tamil vernacular

primary schools were constitutionally allowed to continue with their respective ethnic languages as the medium of instruction.

By the mid 1990s, tremendous changes further impacted language choice in education. A milestone change is the green light given by the government to start teaching science subjects in English at tertiary education (Ridge, 2004). In addition, the then Prime Minister Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad made it public in 2002 that mathematics and science would henceforth be taught in English. Generally, it set the direction towards a greater emphasis on Malays becoming bilingual (with BM and English) and non-Malays to be trilingual or multilingual (with BM, English and their respective ethnic language).

Theoretical Concern of the Study

This study is grounded on the theoretical framework advocated by Fishman (1968) in domain analysis. This domain analysis, in simple terms, refers to “*who speaks what language to whom and when*” (our italics). Fishman (1964, 1968a) suggested that one language may be more appropriate than another in certain domains and usually it is the standard or prestigious language that is used in high domains, while the vernaculars are selected in low domains (cited in Hsi-nan Yeh *et al.*, 2004:80). Fishman also asserted, “Proper usage indicates that only *one* of the theoretically co-available languages or varieties *will* be chosen by particular classes or *interlocutors* on particular kinds of *occasions* to discuss particular kinds of *topics*” (see Dil, 1972:244). Coulmas (2005: 126) quotes Chatterjee who says, “Ridiculous or sometimes comical will be the effect if the norms of situational selection between the two are violated”. This study analyzes language choice and patterns of language use in the education domain from the social and social-psychological perspectives.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study examined UPM undergraduates’ patterns of language choice and use in the education domain. It also investigated the relationship between the patterns of language choice and use and proficiency in languages, ethnicity, gender and discipline of study. \

METHODOLOGY

This study is descriptive and non-experimental. The data of the study were collected through a questionnaire survey administered to a sample of three hundred UPM undergraduates. The sample was selected through “multistage cluster sampling”. The questionnaire comprised three parts: Part I-the demographic profile of the respondents; Part II-level of proficiency in languages; and Part III-patterns of language choice and use in the education domain. The questionnaire was prepared by the researchers who adapted items from instruments of previous studies (e.g. Hsi-nan Yeh *et al.*, 2004; Hohenthal, 1998). The items were modified to suit the objectives of this research. A pilot survey was conducted to study the feasibility of the instrument. A reliability index of 0.74 (Part II) and 0.84 (Part III) were obtained (Cronbach Alpha). The overall reliability was thus 0.79. This is deemed an acceptable figure for the research instrument.

Upon the completion of the data collection, these were coded, classified and tabulated for computation and analysis. Seventy two questionnaires were found to be incomplete and therefore

were excluded from the final analysis. The analysis was carried out using SPSS to obtain percentage values, frequencies and correlations among the variables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section of the study comprises description of the demographic profile of the respondents, their proficiency in languages, patterns of language choice and use in education and the relationship between language choice and language proficiency, ethnicity, gender, and discipline of study.

Demographic Profile of Respondents

Respondents were categorized as per gender (male and female); ethnicity (Malay, Chinese, Indian and Others); and by discipline (Science and Social Science).

Table 1 presents the distribution of respondents as per ethnicity and gender. This table shows that the majority of respondents were Malay (60.7%) followed by Chinese (29.5%), Indian (8%), and Others (1.8%). Of the total respondents, the gender distribution (M=male and F=female) is as follows (see Table 1).

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents as per Ethnicity and Gender

As can be seen from the table the percentage of males was comparatively higher than that of females among the Malays and the Others ethnic groups whereas the percentage of females was comparatively higher than males among the Chinese and Indians.

Gender distribution as per discipline of study of the respondents is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Gender Distribution of Respondents as per Discipline of Study

It can be seen from the table that the percentage of male respondents in the science group (22.7%) was greater than the social science group (18.3%) whereas the percentage of female respondents in the social science group (81.7%) was greater than that of the science group (77.3%). What is interesting in this data is that the percentage of females was higher than males both in the science and social science groups.

Table 3 presents the ethnic distribution of respondents as per discipline of study. The table illustrates that in the science group, there were only the Malay and Chinese respondents whereas in the social science group there were Malay, Chinese, Indian, and Others respondents. As shown in the table, the percentage of Malay respondents was higher in the science group compared to the social science group but the distribution was reverse with the Chinese respondents.

Table 3: Ethnic Distribution of Respondents as per Discipline of Study

Respondents' Level of Proficiency in Languages

Respondents' proficiency in languages were obtained through the use of a five-point Likert scale questionnaire with 5= very fluent, 4= fluent, 3= satisfactory, 2= unsatisfactory, and 1= cannot use. Respondents were then categorized as having a low level of proficiency (1-6.7 points), mid (6.71-13.4 points) and high (13.41-20 points). Respondents' proficiency in BM, Chinese, Indian, and English are presented in table 4. It can be seen from the data that the respondents irrespective of ethnicity were highly proficient in all the four basic skills in BM. A majority of the respondents (about 89%) on an average reported themselves to be highly proficient followed by over 11% in the mid proficiency level. No respondent was found to have low proficiency in BM. Respondents reported to be better in listening and reading compared to speaking and writing.

As for the Chinese languages, over half of the respondents (58%) reported having low proficiency followed by 26% high proficiency and 6% mid proficiency. Respondents reported that they were better in listening and speaking compared to reading and writing. In Indian languages, a majority of the respondents (over 89%) said they had low proficiency followed by about 6% falling in the high group and about 5% as having mid proficiency level. Respondents reported that they were better in listening and speaking compared to reading and writing. And in English, over 59% of the respondents rated themselves as being mid proficient followed by 41% as high proficient. None of the respondents reported that they had a low proficiency in English. Respondents reported to be better in listening and reading compared to speaking and writing. From the overall picture, respondents were better in listening and reading compared to speaking and writing.

Table 4: Respondents' Proficiency in Languages

Respondents' Level of Proficiency in Languages as per Ethnicity

Respondents' levels of proficiency in languages as per ethnicity are presented in the table 5. The table shows that those who were highly proficient in BM were Malays and Indians (100%) whereas the distribution for Chinese was 73% and Others were 75 %. In the case of Chinese languages, no Indian and other ethnic respondent claimed to have a high level of proficiency. Though there were Malay respondents who reported having high proficiency in Chinese, the percentage (1.5) was very negligible. It was mostly the Chinese (93.9%) who were highly proficient in this language which was to be expected. But among the Malay, Indian and others, quite a good number (Malay 11.8%, Indian 22.2% and others 25%) of the respondents reported that they had a mid level proficiency. In the case of Indian languages, only Indians reported themselves as highly proficient. A majority of the other respondents (Malay 97.8%, Chinese 97%, and Others 100%) reported themselves as to be in the low category. In the case of English, the pattern that follows is: Malay and Chinese respondents had high 40% and mid 60% levels respectively. The Indians were placed in the highest percentage of high proficient users (94.4%). Among the Indians, the percentage of those in the mid proficient level was very low (5.6). What

is interesting is that Indians reported themselves equally proficient in English and Indian languages (in each language 94.4% as high and 5.6% as mid proficient).

Table 5: Respondents' Level of Proficiency in Languages as per Ethnicity

Patterns of Language Choice and Use in Different Domains

Respondents' choice and use of languages in the education domain was obtained through a five point Likert scale with 1= frequently (F), 2= sometimes (S), 3= not applicable (NA), 4= rarely (R) and 5= never use (NU). Respondents marked their choice of languages in eight sub domains of education. Their patterns of language choice in education are presented in table 6.

Table 6: Patterns of Language Choice and Use in Education

The details of the findings are as follows:

(1) Talk to teachers in primary school: Malays chose BM more (97.1% F) followed by English (6.6% F, 30.2% S). They were reported to choose Chinese languages also but the frequency was very negligible (1.5% F, 0.7% S). However, they did not choose the Indian languages. Chinese chose the Chinese languages naturally (89.4% F) followed by BM (19.7% F, 25.8% S) and English (9.1% F, 36.4% S). They did not choose the Indian languages. This shows that a majority of them went to Chinese primary schools. The Indians chose BM more (66.6% F, 16.7% S) followed by English (61.1% F, 22.2% S). They chose the Indian languages also, though not so frequently (33.3% F). They did not resort to the use of the Chinese languages. In comparison, they chose English more than any other ethnic groups in this domain. For them the frequency of choice between BM and English was almost same (66.6% and 61.1% respectively). Respondents from the Others ethnic groups chose BM more (75% F) followed by English (25% F, 50% S). They did not choose the Chinese and Indian languages. What was apparent in this data was that Malays, Indians and respondents from the Others ethnic groups chose BM more whereas Chinese chose Chinese languages more in this sub-domain. The reason was likely that the Chinese attend Chinese medium primary school and others join the BM medium primary school.

(2) Talk to teachers in secondary school: The Malays were inclined to use BM more (94.1% F) followed by English (8.1% F, 45.6% S). They reported that they also use the Chinese languages but the frequency was very negligible (1.5% F, 0.7% S). They did not use the Indian languages at all. The Chinese chose BM more (62.1% F, 27.3% S) followed by English (59.1% F, 36.4% S) and the Chinese languages (46.9% F, 21.2% S). Again they did not use the Indian languages. The Indians also used BM more (83.3% F, 16.7% S) followed by English (83.3% F, 11.1% S). They chose the Indian languages as well though less frequently (11.1% F, 16.7% S) but they did not choose the Chinese languages. Similarly, respondents from the Others ethnic groups chose BM more (75% F, 25% S) followed by English (50% F, 50% S). They did not choose the Chinese and Indian languages. It is interesting to note that the percentage of choice for BM increased among non-Malays when talking to teachers in the secondary school compared to the primary school. The reason for this could be attributed to the fact that after completing primary education, irrespective of ethnicity they received their secondary education in BM. The pattern of use for

English reveals that the use of English varies considerable among the ethnic groups. The Indians reported the highest frequency for the use of English followed by the Chinese. The Malays reported a very low frequency whereas the Others reported a fair degree of use as far as English was concerned. In terms of the use of ethnic languages, the data shows considerable use of the Chinese languages among the Chinese while low frequency of use of the Indian languages among the Indians. It could be summarized that the multilingual status among the various ethnic groups varies considerably. The Malays strongly preferred the use of BM while there was a balanced choice for BM, Chinese and English for the Chinese. The Indians appeared to maintain a balance between the use of BM and English while the uses of the Indian languages were far less frequent.

(3) Talk to lecturers: The Malays used BM most predominantly (89.7% F) when speaking to lecturers. Only a small percentage of the Malays used English frequently for this activity (19.9% F, 45.5% S). None chose to use the Chinese and Indian languages to speak to lecturers. The Chinese respondents used English (59.1% F, 36.4% S) more than BM (56% F, 30.3% S) and the Chinese languages (16.7% F, 13.6% S). They did not use Indian languages. The Indians also used English (83.3% F, 11.1% S) more than they used BM (50% F, 22.2% S) or the Indian languages (16.7% S). They did not choose to use Chinese languages at all. Respondents from the Others ethnic groups chose BM more (75% F) followed by English (50% F, 50% S). This group did not use the Chinese and Indian languages. It seems that BM and English are the two dominant languages used in this sub-domain. The Malay respondents and those from the Others ethnic groups generally favored BM more than English when speaking to lecturers. However, this pattern of choice was reverses for the Chinese and the Indians. These two groups preferred using English over BM. This seems to show that respondents are comfortable when using these two languages orally.

(4) Participate in classroom peer discussion: The Malays used BM more frequently (92.6% F) compared to English (10.3% F, 43.4% S). They also reported on the use of the Chinese languages but the frequency was highly negligible (0.7% F, 1.5% S). As expected, all the ethnic groups other than the Indians did not choose the Indian languages at all. The Chinese used their ethnic languages more (60.6% F, 30.2% S) compared to the use of BM (46.9% F, 36.4% S) and English (37.9% F, 54.5% S). The Indians on the other hand used English most frequently (72.2% F, 16.6% S) followed by BM (44.5% F, 22.2% S) and Indian languages (11.1 F, 16.7% S). They did not use the Chinese languages at all. Respondents from the Others ethnic groups used BM more (75% F, 25% S) followed by a much lower percentage for English (25% F, 75% S). They did not choose the Chinese languages. What is apparent here is that the Malays and the Others showed a strong preference for the use of BM in class discussion while the Chinese reported their preference for the Chinese languages. Of the two languages, BM and English, BM stands out as the more preferred language for this ethnic group. The Indians stated a strong preference for English over BM and the Indian languages.

(5) Talk to classmates of the same mother tongue: The Malays chose BM more (97.1% F) followed by a very small percentage of use of English (0.7% F, 43.4% S). They reported on a negligible use (0.7% S) of the Chinese languages. Following the earlier patterns the Indians languages were not used by the ethnic groups other than by the Indians. As expected the Chinese also stated a strong preference for the use of the Chinese languages (87.9% F, 10.6% S). English was more frequently used than BM. Indians chose Indian languages more (66.6% F, 11.1% S) followed by English (50% F, 27.8% S) and BM (11.1% F, 38.9% S). They did not choose

Chinese languages. The Others ethnic groups reported more frequent use of BM (50% F, 25% S) than English (75% S). They also did not use the Chinese languages. What is interesting here is that Malays, Chinese and Indians favored their own ethnic languages whereas respondents from Others ethnic groups favored BM.

(6) Talk to classmates of different mother tongues: The Malays used BM more frequently (82.4% F, 11% S) than English (18.4% F, 41.9% S). They reported a very negligible use of the Chinese languages (0.7% F, 1.5% S). The Chinese also used more BM (57.6% F, 24.2% S) though with a lower frequency compared to Malays. The Chinese used more English (37.9% F, 54.5% S) than the Malays in their communication with classmates of different mother tongues. The use of the Chinese language was also of low frequency (12.1% F, 19.7% S). The Indians however showed a strong preference for the use of English (66.7% F, 16.6% S) followed by BM (55.5% F, 27.8% S). They did not choose the Chinese languages. The Others ethnic group reported that they used BM more frequently (50% F, 50% S) than English (25% F, 75% S). The Indian languages were not chosen at all irrespective of ethnicity. From the figures the Malays used the BM the most. The Chinese preferred to use BM over English while the Indians appeared to be most comfortable using English to communicate with classmates of different mother tongues.

(7) Write assignments for tertiary studies: The Malay respondents chose to use BM more frequently (78% F, 11% S) than English (32.4% F, 36% S) when writing assignments. They never used the Chinese or Indian languages. The Chinese respondents on the other hand used English more (71.2% F, 21.2% S) than they used BM (42.4% F, 27.3% S) or the Chinese languages (15.2% F, 4.5% S). They also never used the Indian languages. English was most frequently used (88.9% F) by the Indian respondents for writing assignments followed by BM (27.8% F, 11.1% S). They also indicated that they never used the Chinese and Indian languages for this purpose. Respondents from the Others ethnic groups chose English (50% F, 50% S) followed by BM (50% F, 25% S). They also did not use the Chinese and Indian languages. What can be seen here is that BM is preferred by the Malays when writing assignments while the others ethnic groups seemed to prefer using English.

(8) Read up for tertiary studies: The Malays chose BM more (78.7% F, 11% S) followed by a small percentage of frequency of use of English (36.1% F, 37.5% S) when reading for tertiary studies. The Malay respondents reported that they never read in Chinese and Indian languages. Conversely, the Chinese, Indians and respondents from the Others ethnic groups indicated that they preferred using English (68.2% F, 30.3% S; 88.8% F; 50% F, 50% S respectively) when reading for tertiary studies. BM was chosen by Chinese and Indians with low frequency (31.8% F, 36.4% S; 33.3% F, 16.7% S respectively). Indians did not report choosing their ethnic languages but only a small percentage of Chinese respondents stated that they used the Chinese languages (16.7% F, 6% S) when reading for tertiary studies.

Relationship between Patterns of Language Choice and Use and Gender, Ethnicity, Discipline of Study and Language Proficiency

Chi-square tests were conducted to determine the relationship between variables. The test results are presented in table 7. It could be seen from the table that language choice and use in education was correlated significantly with ethnicity ($p < .05$) in all the sub-domains investigated. This

means that ethnicity constrains language choice. Similarly, language proficiency is also positively correlated with language choice and use as $p < .05$ in all the sub-domains except for the use of BM in writing assignments for tertiary studies where $p > .05$. This confirms that the status of BM is a uniform choice for all ethnic groups as far as written academic discourse is concerned.

The gender and discipline variables when correlated with language choice and use showed that significant correlations were not present across the languages. BM, Chinese and Indian languages were found not to correlate significantly with gender. However, there is a significant correlation between gender and the use of English ($p < .05$) in all the sub-domains except in reading for tertiary studies where $p > .05$. The correlation of language choice and discipline of study showed significant correlation only for BM and English ($p < .05$) in all the sub-domains except for the use of BM in talking to classmates of different mother tongue and writing assignment for tertiary studies and the use of English in talking to teachers in primary school and writing assignment for tertiary studies (as $p > .05$). This confirmed that the two languages are entrenched in tertiary study.

Table 7: Relationship between Patterns of language Choice and use and Gender, Ethnicity, Discipline of Study and Proficiency

CONCLUSION

The findings of the study indicate that there is a positive outlook in the use and development of BM and English in the education domain at tertiary level. Irrespective of ethnicity, respondents claimed high proficiency in all the four skills in BM. English was reported by the bulk of students as having mid level proficiency. These figures indicate that irrespective of ethnicity respondents were more proficient in BM in line with the national aspiration and objectives of establishing a national and official language. English however, is not neglected particularly in the sub-domains of talking to teachers in secondary school, talking to lecturers, writing assignments and reading for tertiary studies. In certain sub domains, such as when talking to teachers in primary school or speaking to classmates of the same mother tongue, ethnic languages were preferred. This language behavior illustrates that patterns of language choice and use are often tied closely to notions of identity. Language is also often regarded as an identity marker particularly seen among the Malay and Chinese respondents. These two groups show a strong preference for the use of the ethnic language. However, the Indians did not show their preference for ethnic languages.

A number of correlations were found significant between language choice and use and gender, ethnicity, discipline of study and proficiency. Generally, choice and use of all the four languages had significant relationship with ethnicity and proficiency. Gender was correlated with the use of English only. Discipline of study as expected was significantly correlated with BM and English. So, a study of this nature is able to provide a profile of the multilingual user in a particular situation and in a particular domain. The situation is peculiar to the unique Malaysian language ecology.

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Table 1: Distribution of Respondents as per Ethnicity and Gender

Ethnicity	Total Respondents	%	Male	%	Female	%
Malay	136	60.7	30	69.7	106	58.6
Chinese	66	29.5	10	23.3	56	30.9
Indian	18	8.0	2	4.7	16	8.8
Others	4	1.8	1	2.3	3	1.7
Total	224	100	43	100	181	100

Source: Survey, 2006

Table 2: Gender Distribution of Respondents as per Discipline of Study

Gender	Science	Percentage	Social Science	Percentage
Male	10	22.7	33	18.3
Female	34	77.3	147	81.7
Total	44	100	180	100

Source: Survey, 2006

Table 3: Ethnic Distribution of Respondents as per Discipline of Study

Ethnicity	Science	Percentage	Social Science	Percentage
Malay	36	81.8	100	55.6
Chinese	8	18.2	58	32.2
Indian	0	0	18	10
Others	0	0	4	2.2
Total	44	100	180	100

Source: Survey, 2006

Table 4: Respondents' Proficiency in Language Skills (%)

	Listening			Speaking			Reading			Writing		
	High	Mid	Low	High	Mid	Low	High	Mid	Low	High	Mid	Low
BM	90.6	9.4		86.2	13.8		91.1	8.9		86.6	13.4	-
Chinese	28.6	18.8	52.6	28.1	17	54.9	25.9	11.2	62.9	23.2	15.2	61.6
Indian	7.6	5.8	86.6	7.6	3.6	88.8	4.9	4.9	90.2	4.5	4.9	90.6
English	47.3	52.7		31.7	68.3		52.2	47.8		32.6	67.4	-

Source: Survey, 2006

Table 5: Respondents' Level of Proficiency in Languages as per Ethnicity (%)

Language	Level of Proficiency	Ethnicity				Others
		Malay	Chinese	Indian		
BM	High	100	72.7	100	75	
	Mid	-	27.3	-	25	
	Low	-	-	-	-	
Chinese	High	1.5	93.9	-	-	
	Mid	11.8	6.1	22.2	25	
	Low	86.7	-	77.8	75	
Indian	High	-	-	94.4	-	
	Mid	2.2	3	5.6	-	
	Low	97.8	97	-	100	
English	High	40.4	40.9	94.4	50	
	Mid	59.6	59.1	5.6	50	
	Low	-	-	-	-	

Source: Survey, 2006

Table 6: Patterns of Language Choice and Use in Education (%)

S	f	BM				Chinese				Indian				English			
		M	C	I	O	M	C	I	O	M	C	I	O	M	C	I	O
a	F	97.1	19.7	66.6	75	1.5	89.4	0	0	0	0	33.3	0	6.6	9.1	61.1	25
	S	2.2	25.8	16.7	0	0.7	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	30.2	36.4	22.2	50
	R	0	22.2	5.6	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	11.1	0	21.3	21.1	0	0
	N	0.7	31.8	11.1	25	97.8	4.6	100	100	100	100	55.6	100	41.9	33.3	16.7	25
b	F	94.1	62.1	83.3	75	1.5	46.9	0	0	0	0	11.1	0	8.1	59.1	83.3	50
	S	3.7	27.3	16.7	25	0.7	21.2	0	0	0	0	16.7	0	45.6	36.4	11.1	50
	R	0.7	4.5	0	0	0	9.1	0	0	0	0	16.7	0	16.9	1.5	0	0
	N	1.5	6.1	0	0	97.8	22.8	100	100	100	100	55.5	100	29.4	3	5.6	0
c	F	89.7	56	50	75	0	16.7	0	0	0	0	0	0	19.9	59.1	83.3	50
	S	8.9	30.3	22.2	0	0	13.6	0	0	0	0	16.7	0	45.5	36.4	11.1	50
	R	0.7	7.6	16.7	25	2.2	28.8	5.6	0	0	0	0	0	14.7	1.5	0	0
	N	0.7	6.1	11.1	0	97.8	40.9	94.4	100	100	100	83.3	100	19.9	3	5.6	0
d	F	92.6	46.9	44.5	75	0.7	60.6	0	0	0	0	11.1	0	10.3	37.9	72.2	25
	S	7.4	36.4	22.2	25	1.5	30.2	0	0	0	0	16.7	0	43.4	54.5	16.6	75
	R	0	9.1	22.2	0	0.7	4.6	0	0	0	0	16.7	0	19.1	4.6	5.6	0
	N	0	7.6	11.1	0	97.1	4.6	100	100	100	100	55.5	100	27.2	3	5.6	0
e	F	97.1	18.2	11.1	50	0	87.9	0	0	0	0	66.6	0	0.7	15.2	50	0
	S	2.9	9.1	38.9	25	0.7	10.6	0	0	0	0	11.1	0	43.4	50	27.8	75
	R	0	25.8	27.8	0	0.7	1.5	0	75	0	0	5.6	0	26.5	21.2	16.6	25
	N	0	46.9	22.2	25	98.6	0	100	25	100	100	16.7	100	29.4	13.6	5.6	0

f	F	82.4	57.6	55.5	50	0.7	12.1	0	0	0	0	0	0	18.4	37.9	66.7	25
	S	11	24.2	27.8	50	1.5	19.7	0	0	0	0	0	0	41.9	54.5	16.6	75
	R	2.2	10.6	11.1	0	0	22.7	0	0	0	0	5.6	0	16.2	6.1	11.1	0
	N	4.4	7.6	5.6	0	97.8	45.5	100	100	100	100	94.4	100	23.5	1.5	5.6	0
g	F	78	42.4	27.8	50	0	15.2	0	0	0	0	0	0	32.4	71.2	88.9	50
	S	11	27.3	11.1	25	0	4.5	5.6	0	0	0	0	0	36	21.2	0	50
	R	5.9	12.1	22.2	0	0.7	12.1	0	0	0	0	11.1	0	14	3	11.1	0
	N	5.1	18.2	38.9	25	99.3	68.2	94.4	100	100	100	88.9	100	17.6	4.6	0	0
h	F	78.7	31.8	33.3	50	0	16.7	0	0	0	0	0	0	36.1	68.2	88.8	50
	S	11	36.4	16.7	25	0.7	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	37.5	30.3	0	50
	R	5.9	12.1	11.1	0	0	16.7	0	0	0	0	22.2	0	13.2	1.5	5.6	0
	N	4.4	19.7	38.9	25	99.3	60.6	100	100	100	100	77.8	100	13.2	0	5.6	0

Note: S = Sub-domains, f = Frequency, M = Malay, C = Chinese, I = Indians, O = Others, a = Talk to teachers in primary school, b = Talk to teachers in secondary school, c = Talk to lecturers, d = Participate in classroom peer discussion, e = Talk to classmates of the same mother tongue, f = Talk to classmates of different mother tongue, g = Write assignments for tertiary studies, h = Read up for tertiary studies

Table 7: Relationship between Patterns of language Choice and use and Gender, Ethnicity, Discipline of Study and Proficiency

Language	Sub-domains	Gender		Ethnicity			Discipline			Proficiency		
		—	df Sig.	—	df	Sig.	—	df	Sig.	—	df	Sig.
BM	A	NR		134.130	9	.000	21.902	3	.000	30.945	3	.000
	B			35.156	9	.000	10.834	3	.013	23.465	3	.000
	C			45.758	9	.000	11.303	3	.010	11.525	3	.009
	D			71.054	9	.000	10.098	3	.018	12.846	3	.005
	E			176.711	9	.000	28.118	3	.000	24.971	3	.000
	F			21.841	9	.009	5.439	3	.142	10.427	3	.015
	G			45.530	9	.000	2.913	3	.405	4.123	3	.248
	H			57.378	9	.000	10.553	3	.014	8.225	3	.042
Chinese	A	NR		194.083	9	.000	NR			186.969	6	.000
	B			144.718	9	.000				145.870	6	.000
	C			97.790	9	.000				91.534	6	.000
	D			192.917	9	.000				188.532	6	.000
	E			214.044	9	.000				198.378	6	.000
	F			90.539	9	.000				96.566	6	.000
	G			50.889	9	.000				46.980	6	.000
	H			66.811	9	.000				69.988	6	.000
Indian	A	NR		94.947	6	.000	NR			101.020	4	.000
	B			94.947	9	.000				101.020	6	.000
	C			34.799	3	.000				37.025	2	.000
	D			94.947	9	.000				101.020	6	.000
	E			183.987	9	.000				218.263	6	.000
	F			11.496	3	.009				12.231	2	.002
	G			23.095	3	.000				24.572	2	.000
	H			46.610	3	.000				49.591	2	.000

English	A	9.080	3	.028	49.771	9	.000	6.087	3	.107	32.639	3	.000
	B	11.911	3	.008	58.808	9	.000	12.787	3	.005	44.926	3	.000
	C	8.198	3	.042	56.631	9	.000	14.479	3	.002	45.226	3	.000
	D	9.234	3	.026	64.835	9	.000	15.957	3	.001	39.447	3	.000
	E	9.066	3	.028	59.309	9	.000	21.442	3	.000	20.547	3	.000
	F	10.161	3	.017	42.308	9	.000	11.602	3	.009	49.746	3	.000
	G	8.808	3	.032	44.713	9	.000	5.319	3	.150	29.947	3	.000
	H	7.042	3	.071	39.683	9	.000	7.727	3	.052	28.671	3	.000

Note: A = Talk to teachers in primary school, B = Talk to teachers in secondary school, C = Talk to lecturers, D = Participate in classroom peer discussion, E = Talk to classmates of the same mother tongue, F = Talk to classmates of different mother tongue, G = Write assignments for tertiary studies, H = Read up for tertiary studies, NR = No Relation Found