



The Majority- Minority Nexus

Education of Ethnic Minorities
in Plural Societies

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N YAO SUA & R. SANTHIRAM

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Preface

The education of ethnic minorities is a complex issue in plural societies primarily because the educational demands of ethnic minorities have always been strongly contested by the majority groups who tend to dictate the national educational and language policies. This has put the development of education for ethnic minorities in a predicament. This monograph illustrates the various theoretical aspects of the education of ethnic minorities and posits a viable solution to resolve the majority-minority contestation over the provision of education in plural societies. It is a revised and expanded version of a paper initially presented at the International Conference on Minority and Majority: Language, Culture and Identity (23-24 November 2010, Kuching, Sarawak, co-hosted by the Malaysian Association of Modern Languages and the Centre for Language Studies, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak) and subsequently published as a journal paper in *Journal of Applied Research in Education* entitled “Education of Ethnic Minorities in Plural Societies” (Volume 14, No. 1, 2010, 95-116).

This monograph comprises eight chapters. Chapters One and Eight are the introductory and concluding chapters. Chapter Two explores the characteristics of ethnic minorities to illustrate that ethnic minorities do have varying degrees of strength and therefore should not be stereotyped as marginalised groups in plural societies. Also, some ethnic minorities are borne out of regional contexts and historical legacies. Chapter Three examines the concept of ethnolinguistic vitality, focusing on factors that influence the vitality of a particular ethnic group to uphold its

language and culture in the face of challenges from other ethnic groups. Chapter Four deals with two key issues relating to the education of ethnic minorities: the symbiotic relationships between language, culture and identity as well as the demand for mother tongue education among ethnic minorities. Chapter Five discusses language and educational policies for ethnic minorities involving the discourse between a common language policy and cultural pluralism. Chapter Six is an attempt to demonstrate the need to resolve the pluralist dilemma that stems from the contrasting stand adopted by advocates of a common language policy and cultural pluralism. Finally, Chapter Seven posits bilingual education as a mediating platform for education of ethnic minorities with the aim to maintain the minority languages within a shift to the majority languages.

It is hoped that the publication of this monograph will arouse interest on the many predicaments faced by ethnic minorities to safeguard their educational rights within a multiethnic setting. This is even more so in Malaysia which is a classic example of a plural society comprising three main ethnic groups, namely Malays, Chinese and Indians, with diverse linguistic, cultural and religious backgrounds straddled between a majority-minority nexus. For some reason, the education of ethnic minorities has not been a well-researched area in Malaysia not even within the studies of ethnic relations despite voluminous literature in this area by Western scholars. It is also hoped that the publication of this monograph will provide important insights to the readers on the dynamics of majority-minority relations that affect the development of education for ethnic minorities. Finally, we would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to Mr. Chong Ton Sin and the SIRD team for their efforts to publish this monograph. However, any shortcomings which remain are ours alone.

Tan Yao Sua

R. Santhiram

June 2015

Abbreviations

| | |
|---------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| BICS | basic interpersonal communicative skills |
| CALP | cognitive-academic language proficiency |
| Duzhong | Duli Zhongxue |
| EU | European Union |
| ICSS | Independent Chinese Secondary School |
| NSS | National Secondary School |
| NTCSS | National-Type Chinese Secondary School |
| POL | Pupils' Own Language |
| UCSCA | United Chinese School Committees' Association |
| UCSTA | United Chinese School Teachers' Association |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation |
| UPSR | Ujian Penilaian Sekolah Rendah |

CHAPTER 1

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Introduction

Society consists of numerous interconnected, interacting and interdependent groups. Of the many characteristics which differentiate these groups, perhaps the most important is their role in majority-minority relations. The tensions created by these intricate relations are the root cause of society's most difficult problems (Butera and Levine, 2009) and arguably the most contested issues in political life (Preece, 2005). Majority-minority relations are in fact an embedded feature of ethnic relations in plural societies. As Simpson and Yinger (1985) put it, no one is outside the field of majority-minority relations. All are involved, i.e. either as insiders or as outsiders. Such a view is particularly true in plural societies.

Before we proceed, it is important for us to define what constitutes a plural society. A plural society refers to a unit of disparate parts that mixes but does not combine with each group, thus holding to its own religion, culture and language as well as its ideas and ways (Furnivall, 1956). Although this is a narrow definition of a plural society, it is relevant to some of the issues raised in this monograph. Having said that, a plural society can also be defined in a wider sense, for instance, the multination and polyethnic states in the Western democracies could also be regarded as plural societies as well, though the formation of

these states differs from one another with the former constituted by national minorities while the latter by immigrant minorities (see Chapter 2). Suffice to say that ‘all societies are plural in varying degrees and varying ways’ but the core issue here is that ‘pluralism in a wider sense can take many different forms’ (Figueroa, 2012, p. 63). It is not the same in all places and produces differing outcomes which affect how plural societies organise themselves, particularly in the areas of language and education.

While it is generally agreed that minority groups in most plural societies are deprived of their rights as far as language and educational policies are concerned, there has also been the emergence of ‘the challenge of multiculturalism’ (Kymlicka, 1995, p. 10). By ‘the challenge of multiculturalism’ it is meant how minority groups are increasingly demanding recognition of their identity and accommodation of their cultural differences against the linguistic uniformity policy advocated by the majority groups. However, the success of such a challenge will depend largely on the relative power and status of the two groups. Although numerical size constitutes an important element of this relative power and status, other elements such as economic and political strengths as well as socio-historical traditions too play a part as far as the formulation of language and educational policies in relation to majority-minority relations are concerned (see Chapters 2 and 3). It is not surprising then that ‘different minority groups use different strategies for confronting majorities’ (Butera and Levine, 2009, p. 5) apparently based on their relative power and status. With the emergence of ‘the challenges of multiculturalism’, the education of ethnic minorities should not be taken lightly as it is a complex means through which the minority groups try to negotiate their educational pathways against the dictates of the majority groups in language and educational policies.

On this basis, the key concern of ‘the challenge of multiculturalism’ is of course the fundamental rights of ethnic minorities to education in their mother tongue. The education of ethnic minorities in plural societies has indeed generated intense ethnic contestation. It has a dynamic of its own, often involving minority linguistic and cultural claims that go against those of the majority group. This is especially true in the case of non-marginal minority groups who are in a better position to make such claims. While majority-minority relationships are often translated into ethnic domination and subordination, this should not be seen in absolute terms as both the majority and minority groups may have varying degrees of strength to argue for their rights. Such a view is important as most people tend to think of the minority groups as lacking in bargaining power to safeguard their rights. But as we will discuss, a typology of minorities will show different characteristics of minority groups which translates into different capacities to influence policy (see Chapter 2). Of particular importance here is how groups perceive their differences in status which may compel members of the majority and minority groups to differ in how they perceive their inter-group relationships and define relations between their groups (cf. Pettigrew and Tropp, 2011, p. 132). In other words, inter-group relationships may differ from case to case based on the relative power and status of the majority and minority groups and this will influence the trajectories of language and educational policies in plural societies.

There are differing views on what constitute minority rights. In specific reference to the national and immigrant minorities in Western democracies (see Chapter 2), Kymlicka (2001), a liberal multiculturalist, posits three stages of development regarding these rights namely minority rights as communitarianism, minority rights within a liberal framework and minority rights as a response to nation-building. The first two stages of development

involve the defence of cohesive and communally-minded groups against the encroachment of liberal individualism. The often asked questions about minority rights within a liberal framework are the following: If groups are indeed liberal, why do their members want minority rights? Why aren't they satisfied with the traditional common rights of citizenship? In short, 'communitarians argue that cultural communities are more fundamental than individuals and defend notions of collective group rights, while liberals argue the need for universal, individual human rights that do not make concessions to cultural variation' (Eriksen, 2004, p. 78). The communitarian perspective of minority rights may be applicable to other non-Western countries but not the liberal rights perspective which is strongly associated with Western democracies.

While these two stages in the development of minority rights have evolved out of different philosophical underpinnings, their main shortcoming is that they do not bring in the role of the nation-state vis-à-vis minority rights. In fact, these two stages of the development of minority rights have been the subject of much criticism (see May, 2008; May et al., 2004). May (2008), for instance, argues that indigenous peoples may demand special-representation rights on the basis of disadvantage and self-governing rights on the basis of their status as national minorities. However, the key point is that these claims need not go together. Likewise, an economically successful ethnic minority group may seek polyethnic rights but would have no claims to special-representation or self-governing rights. All this goes to show the difficulties of ascribing liberal and collective minority rights in Western democracies.

This then brings us to the third stage of the development of minority rights posited by Kymlicka (2001) as an alternative to earlier ones, minority rights as a response to nation-building. This stage of the development of minority rights merits our

attention as it largely reflects the current situation of minority rights in most plural societies following the formation of the nation-states as political entities with nationalism and intense identifications with the nation-state being the core of the nation-building process (Santhiram, 1995). The underlying questions are: Do majority efforts in nation-building create injustice for minorities? Do minority rights help protect the minority groups against these injustices? These underlying questions are crucial in that they involve the discourse of majority-minority relations in the upholding of rights against each other.

Citing Taylor (1997), Kymlicka (2001) notes that ‘the process of nation-building inescapably privileges members of the majority culture’ (p. 27). This leaves the minority groups with three options. First, they can accept integration into the majority culture and perhaps attempt to renegotiate the terms of integration. Second, they can seek the sorts of rights and powers for self-government needed to maintain their own societal culture – i.e. to create their own economic, political and educational institutions in their own language. In other words, they can engage in their own form of competing nation-building. Third, they can accept permanent marginalisation. While the three options are mainly targeted at the national and immigrant minorities that are found in large numbers in Western Europe, nevertheless, they are useful as comparative options to other types of minority groups. As will be discussed, however, there are in fact a host of alternative options for minority rights available to minority groups in relation to the nation-building process.

Despite the different categories of minority groups, the fact remains that minority rights for the use of languages are often a contentious issue. This is even more so when these rights are pitted against the language of the majority group and the nation-building process. For one thing, the majority language is usually recognised as the language of national integration and the sole

or the main medium of instruction in the national educational system in most plural societies, be it in the West or in other parts of the world. Thus, language policy and the education of ethnic minorities are usually subsumed by these overriding objectives.

In response to the antagonism between nation-state building and minority assertions, Skutnabb-Kangas (1981) suggests five options in the provision of education for ethnic minorities. The first option is monolingualism in the majority language for minority children through a submersion programme with a strong assimilationist goal at the societal-political level. The second option is the provision of monolingual education through the medium of minority language. The third option is monolingual education with bilingualism as a goal for ethnic minorities. The fourth option is bilingual education aimed at monolingualism for minority children. The last option is bilingual education with bilingualism as the societal-political goal so that the children are expected to reach a high level of competency in both languages.

The five options of education for ethnic minorities suggested by Skutnabb-Kangas (1981) provide insightful perspectives on the different trajectories of education that ethnic minorities could pursue. They could be seen in a continuum of progression from monolingualism to bilingualism. As far as this monograph is concerned, we argue that ethnic minorities should take a middle course so that their linguistic and cultural claims would not jeopardise their educational mobility in the mainstream as well as the nation-building process in plural societies. Such an act of balancing is not only necessary but crucial to the survival of ethnic minorities within mainstream society. It is a matter of choice between maintaining their 'life styles' or 'life chances' and it appears that bilingual education is a viable option. But as we shall see in due course, there are different models of bilingual education and some may not provide the delicate balance between language maintenance and language shift among ethnic minorities.

In short, we argue that, the education of ethnic minorities in plural societies is inextricably intertwined with majority and minority relations. The manner in which the minority groups negotiate this majority-minority nexus will have to depend on their relative power and status. But the minority groups must avoid an over-zealous stand to pursue their mother tongue education at the expense of their social mobility within the mainstream as well as their role in the national-building process. It is precisely for this reason that this monograph posits a bilingual approach as a viable alternative option.

CHAPTER 2

Characteristics of Ethnic Minorities

The Concept of Ethnic Minority

Since a minority is a group of people that can be easily distinguished by physical or cultural characteristics, it follows that anything which makes a population more heterogeneous may create a minority situation (Simpson and Yinger, 1985). In a literal sense, the term minority stands for the smaller in number of the two aggregates that together constitute a whole (Srivastava, 1984). Jeffcoate (1984) uses relative smallness as one of the identifying characteristics of ethnic minorities. Meanwhile, Schermerhorn (1970a) defines a minority group as one that forms less than half the population of a given society. Thus, minority populations are commonly understood to be numerically inferior components of a larger society who are, on the basis of size alone, inevitably outside the mainstream (Edwards, 1981a). More often than not, because of its smaller numerical size, a minority group constitutes a sub-system with limited access to roles and activities central to the economic and political institutions of a society (Schermerhorn, 1970a).

It is against this backdrop that a minority group is often regarded as relatively powerless (Jeffcoate, 1984). As a result of this, a minority group tends to occupy an inferior position

in terms of prestige, wealth and power whereby its members are typically excluded from full participation in a society. In most cases, its members are the objects of discrimination by the majority group; and their life chances, when compared to those of the majority group, are circumscribed (Yetman, 1991). Thomas (1974) provides a comprehensive definition of an ethnic minority in relation to its main defining characteristics as well as its status in society. A minority group, as Thomas sees it, comprises a group of people who are ethnically, linguistically, religiously or otherwise differentiated from a group which is numerically large and which politically dominates the nation-state in which the two groups (and perhaps others) live. He stresses that members of a minority group usually occupy a subordinate position in terms of prestige, privilege and power.

Thus, most scholars tend to regard the majority group, being larger in number, as the dominant group and correspondingly the minority group is relegated to a subordinate status. However, this is an over-simplistic view as numerical strength is not the only defining factor that determines the complex nature of ethnic domination and subordination in majority-minority relations in absolute terms, though numerical strength is an important determining factor. Thus, we should not think of ethnic minorities as always indelibly marked or as only those who experience overt and severe prejudice and discrimination (Marger, 2003).

Many scholars have come to accept the fact that statistical definitions of a minority group do not tell much about the actual social status of a minority group vis-à-vis the majority group in a given society. According to Marger (2003), numbers have no necessary relation to a group's minority status. This is supported by Edwards (1981a) who maintains that minority status may not always be inherent in small numbers. So is Garcia (1992) who states that a minority group is not always the numerical minority within its respective society. It is not surprising then

that Spiro (cf. Teske and Nelson, 1974, p. 354) argues that numerical superiority is not necessarily a condition of dominance in majority-minority relations.

Meanwhile, even though Wirth (1970) agrees that the size of an ethnic group may have some effects upon its status and upon its relationship with the dominant group, minorities are not to be simply judged in terms of numbers. He reiterates that in some cases, the people whom we regard as a minority may actually, from a numerical standpoint, be a majority. This implies that a numerical minority may actually control a numerical majority (Bennett, 1999). Rothermund (1986) classifies such majorities as underprivileged majorities. There are several examples of underprivileged majorities. Wirth (1970) cites the example of the Afro-American in many parts of the South in the United States who are an overwhelming majority of the inhabitants, but they are nevertheless an unmistakable minority in the sense that they are socially, politically and economically subordinate. Yetman (1991) provides other examples of underprivileged majorities, for instance under the system of Apartheid (now defunct) in South Africa, the Blacks were a numerical majority, yet they were systematically excluded from full social, economic and political participation. Similar situations have also existed in most colonial situations. In Malaysia, the Malays were an underprivileged majority group during the British colonial era despite their larger numerical size as compared to the Chinese and Indians who were immigrant minority groups. But the fact is that the existence of underprivileged majority groups is more an exception rather than a norm in plural societies.

From a sociological perspective, whether or not an ethnic group is also a minority depends on the degree to which it holds a subordinate status in the society (Bennett, 1999). For instance, Parrillo (2005) uses the term minority group to indicate a group's relative power and status in a society, not to designate

its numerical representation. Edwards (1981a) adds that while majority-minority relations are often reflected by differences in population size, the primary and important interests in these relations are the relative power and status of the two groups. Although some scholars maintain that this relative power and status are often correlated with group size (see, for example, Yang, 2000), this may not always be the case. It is thus oversimplistic to assume a minority group as a subordinate group merely because of its smaller numerical size. More importantly, numerical superiority does not necessarily ensure majority status (Yetman and Steela, 1973). As far as language maintenance and language shift are concerned, numerical superiority is only one aspect of ethnolinguistic vitality that affects the outcome of inter-group contact. Economic and political strengths as well as socio-historical traditions are also important intervening factors that influence the ethnolinguistic vitality of an ethnic group (see Chapter 3).

Citing the works of other scholars, Pettigrew and Tropp (2011) suggest that the majority groups are generally less inclined to display their groups' privileged status unless there are demands to do so in the immediate social context. By contrast, members of the minority groups tend to be well aware of their devalued status and live with the constant threat of becoming targets of prejudice and discrimination. Such a manner of inter-group relationships indicates the different socio-psychological mindset of the majority and minority groups. What is obvious is the siege mentality manifested by the minority groups.

In short, the status of majority-minority relations inherently reflects the distribution of power and not merely number (Simpson and Yinger, 1972). Thus, the patterns of domination and subordination will rely largely on the varying degrees of strength held by both the majority and minority groups, albeit there may be other intervening factors that influence the outcome

of majority-minority relations. In other words, majority-minority relations are typically a manifestation of ‘group differences in power’ (Yetman, 1991, p. 10) which does not necessarily reflect the absolute domination of the majority group over the minority groups, though there are minority groups who, for some reason, accept their subordinate status without much resistance.

Typology of Ethnic Minorities

As mentioned earlier, it is over-simplistic to generalise all minority groups as subordinate groups in plural societies without recognising the fact that minority groups do display different characteristics. Some minority groups even have varying degrees of strength to challenge the dominant position of the majority group in certain domains of society, while others gain strength on the basis of regional context and historical legacies which place them in superior positions. This is clearly exemplified by the different types of ethnic minorities categorised by sociologists.

Wirth (1970), for instance, categorises ethnic minorities into four types: pluralistic minorities, assimilationist minorities, secessionist minorities and militant minorities. A pluralistic minority is one which seeks toleration for its differences on the part of the dominant group. Implicit in this quest for toleration of one’s group differences is the conception that other cultures can flourish peacefully side by side in the same society. The aim of the pluralistic minority is achieved when it succeeds in wresting from the dominant group the fullest measure of equality in all things economic and political and the right to be left alone in all things cultural. It is clear that the pluralistic minority is very assertive about its basic rights in a society dominated by other ethnic groups. Groups that enter multiethnic societies as voluntary immigrants usually adopt such a position (Marger, 2003).

It is the willingness of the dominant group to absorb and of the minority to be absorbed that forms the main characteristic of the assimilationist minority. The ethnic differences that exist between the minority and the dominant groups are not necessarily an obstacle to assimilation as long as the cultural traits of each group are not regarded as incompatible with those of the other and as long as their blending is desired by both. The Afro-American in the United States is a strong case in point.

As for the secessionist minority, it is not content with mere toleration or cultural autonomy. The principal and ultimate objective of such a minority is to achieve political as well as cultural independence from the dominant group.

The final type of minority group categorised by Wirth is the militant minority. The goal of a militant minority reaches far beyond toleration, assimilation and even cultural and political autonomy. Instead, it has set domination over others as its goal. Far from suffering from a feeling of inferiority, it is convinced of its own superiority and is inspired by the desire of conquest. In the words of Marger (2003), militant minorities seek as their ultimate goal not withdrawal, as do secessionist minorities, but rather establishing themselves as the society's dominant group.

Ogbu (1983) provides another possible typology of ethnic minorities. He categorises ethnic minorities into three types: autonomous minorities, immigrant minorities and caste-like minorities. An autonomous minority, according to Ogbu, is a minority who is not totally subordinated by the dominant group in the numerical sense. In general, the autonomous minority may possess a distinctive racial, ethnic, religious, linguistic or cultural identity that is guaranteed by national constitution or by tradition. As for the immigrant minority, it encompasses people who have moved more or less voluntarily to their host society and occupy the lowest rung of the occupational ladder. In most cases, they lack political power and possess low prestige. Finally, a caste-

like minority is the polar opposite of the autonomous minority. Unlike the immigrant minority, this group of minorities is usually involuntarily or permanently incorporated into the society.

Within the geographical context of Southeast Asia, Noss (1994) observes that there are three types of minority groups, namely cultural minorities, religious minorities and political minorities that play a role in determining language policy. Cultural minorities are found all over Southeast Asia, usually with a distinct language (language group) serving as an identifying tag. Religious minorities are a source of conflict in the process of language planning. Because languages are associated with a given religion, they must be considered from the stages of early education as well as other domains of the society. Finally, political minorities apply to any groups that are not bound together by culture or religion, such as refugees, guerillas and secessionists, and legal political parties. These minority groups actually do not merit consideration in the formulation of language policy but because officials and citizens may have to deal with them on a daily basis, their languages must therefore be given due consideration so as to avoid miscommunication.

Elsewhere, especially in Western Europe, Kymlicka (1995, 2001) attempts to distinguish between two groups of minorities: national and immigrant minorities. National minorities exist in multination states where the 'nation' means a historical community, more or less institutionally complete, occupying a given territory or homeland, sharing a distinct language and culture. In the United States, these include the American Indians, Puerto Ricans, the descendents of Mexicans (Chicanos), native Hawaiians, the Chamorros of Guam and various other Pacific Islanders (Kymlicka, 1995). The secessionist minority posited by Wirth (1970) and the autonomous minority posited by Ogbu (1983) can be regarded as two types of national minorities if they are also historical communities. In the case of immigrant

minorities, they have traditionally accepted the expectation that they will integrate into the larger societal culture of a polyethnic state. Kymlicka (2001) observes that ‘few immigrant groups have objected to the requirement that they must learn an official language as a condition of citizenship, or that their children must learn the official language in school’ (pp. 29-30). In fact, the commitment to ensuring a common language has been a constant feature of the history of immigration policy (Kymlicka, 1995).

The foregoing provides a comprehensive understanding of the characteristics of ethnic minorities that exist in different parts of the world. This typology of ethnic minorities categorically refutes the generalisation that ethnic minorities are often marginalised in plural societies. It is in the case of non-marginal minority groups who are in a position to make linguistic and cultural claims that the issue of education of ethnic minorities becomes most contentious and needs to be dealt with by policy makers. But then, there are also ethnic minorities such as assimilationist minorities and immigrant minorities who, for some reason, are more willing to be integrated into the larger society than other types of minority groups. All this indicates the complex nature of dealing with the education of ethnic minorities.

CHAPTER 3

Ethnolinguistic Vitality of Ethnic Minorities

While it is generally true that the majority group is usually the dominant group in plural societies, not all ethnic minorities are subsumed by this dominance as the discussion on the typology of ethnic minorities has clearly demonstrated. Among other things, the extent to which the minority groups are able to challenge this dominance depends largely on their ethnolinguistic vitality vis-à-vis the majority group. Ethnolinguistic vitality is that which makes a group likely to behave as a distinctive and collective entity in inter-group situations (Giles et al., 1977). A higher level of ethnolinguistic vitality will strengthen the assertions for the provision of education for ethnic minorities to ensure language maintenance in plural societies. Those who do not possess such a high level of ethnolinguistic vitality will probably succumb to language shift. Indeed, language maintenance and language shift are two perennial issues confronting the education of ethnic minorities and their outcomes are often influenced by the ethnolinguistic vitality of the minority groups (see, for example, Lewis and Kindell, 2000).

Ethnolinguistic vitality of an ethnic group is premised on three intervening factors: demography, status and institutional support (Giles et al., 1977). Numerical strength is one of the demographic

variables that could influence the vitality of an ethnolinguistic group, especially in terms of the sheer numbers of group members and their pattern of distribution. It follows then that the more members an ethnic group has, the more the vitality of that ethnic group will increase. The concentration of ethnolinguistic group members across a given territory, country or region is crucial to the strengthening of group vitality (Giles et al., 1977). On the other hand, widespread diffusion of group members as individuals may discourage group solidarity and reduce group vitality. In other words, 'territorial dispersion interferes with intraethnic solidarity' (Van den Berghe, 1987, p. 218). Seen in this light, numerical strength provides an ethnic group the threshold or critical mass to exist as a competing language group that could resist assimilation by the dominant majority group (Rigg, 1991).

Political and economic strengths are two important factors that could influence the vitality of a particular ethnic group (Watson, 1985; Edwards, 1981a). This is where the relative power and status of the majority and minority groups have a strong leverage on their assertions for their rights. It is perhaps for this reason that Chai (1971) notes that racial differences in themselves are of no great significance in normal social relations, but when they are set in the context of economic and political competition for power, they take on an enormous importance. A politically powerful ethnic group will be able to safeguard its rights, including language and educational rights, as compared to one that is politically marginalised. This is why Giles et al. (1977) consider sufficient representation in the formal institutions (including political institutions) as vital in enhancing the vitality of an ethnolinguistic group.

On the other hand, economic strength enables a particular ethnic group to propagate its own language and culture. Economic status is one of the status factors that has an impact on the ethnolinguistic vitality of an ethnic group. Economic status as

defined by Giles et al. (1977) is the degree of control a group has over its own economic destiny. They cite the example of the success of the Jewish diaspora communities in maintaining themselves as distinct collective entities by, among other things, sound economic control of their immediate environment. Although Giles et al. do not explain how economic status could help in enhancing the vitality of an ethnic group as far as language and education are concerned, it could be argued that a language that is endowed with economic value will be able to sustain its functional role. In the case of Malaysia, for instance, Mandarin, despite being a minority language, has acquired an economic value due to the predominance of the Chinese in the country's commercial sector as well as the rise of China as an economic power on the global stage since the 1990s to the extent that many non-Chinese are now learning the language.

Indeed, ethnic minorities need to be able to influence mainstream political and economic institutions in order to establish the conditions for maintaining their own institutions as well as being able to exercise control over major cultural components such as language (Liebersohn, 1970). This is crucial to ethnic minorities in upholding their rights since the dominant ethnic group is usually the group at the top of the ethnic hierarchy, with maximal access to the society's power resources, particularly political authority and control of the means of economic production. This power advantage in the political and economic realms enables the dominant group to acquire a disproportionate share of the society's valued resources and thereby to further sustain its dominance (Marger, 2003).

The vitality of a particular ethnic group to uphold its language and culture is also influenced by its socio-historical traditions. Thus, privileged minorities that have a strong linguistic and educational tradition will resent the attempt by the majority group to impose a new medium of instruction on them (Rothermund,

1986). Meanwhile, numerically weak or psychologically weakened language groups tend towards assimilation (Nelde, 1987). In modern societies, numerically stronger, more homogenous language groups having traditional values, such as their own history and culture, prefer political resistance if their demand for education in their own languages is denied by policy makers.

The socio-historical status of an ethnolinguistic group is one of the status factors identified by Giles et al. (1977) as contributing to its vitality. They argue that the histories of many ethnolinguistic groups contain periods in which members of such groups struggled to defend, maintain or assert their existence as collective entities. These historical instances can be used as mobilising symbols to inspire individuals to bind together as group members in the present. It follows then that for an ethnic group that has a rich history, it could easily draw on the past to strengthen its solidarity and hence, its vitality.

Fishman's (1971) typology of language policies in post-colonial countries is, in many ways, influenced by socio-historical traditions. Fishman postulates three types of language policies: Type A, Type B and Type C, in the formulation of policies in newly independent countries. Under Type A policy, the language of wider communication (usually the colonial language) is selected as the national or the official language on the basis of nationalism. In contrast to nationalism which is built on socio-cultural unity, nationalism draws on geo-political unity (Fishman, 1968). It is not concerned with ethnic authenticity but with operational efficiency (Fishman, 1971). This type of language policy is underpinned by the fact that among the ethnic groups, there is neither an overarching socio-cultural past nor a usable political past that can currently serve integrative functions at the national level. There is no indigenous Great Tradition (no widely accepted and visibly implemented belief-and-behaviour system of indigenously validated greatness) that all or most of the ethnic

groups can immediately draw upon to make them one people and their country one nation.

Type B policy advocates the selection of an indigenous language to serve as the national language. This selection is based on the fact that there is a widespread consensus among the ethnic groups that a single indigenous Great Tradition is available to provide the indigenised and symbolically elaborated laws, beliefs, customs, literatures, heroes, mission and identity appropriate for nationwide identification. This Great Tradition and the indigenous language have been associated with each other for so long a time that they are by now considered inseparable from the point of view of socio-cultural integration at the national level. It appears that Type B policy draws on ‘the power of past images of greatness’ (Fishman, 1989, p. 113) as the underlying basis of the language policy.

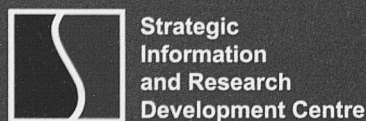
As for Type C policy, it advocates the selection of a language of wider communication (in most cases, a foreign language) as the working language of a newly independent country where there is an absence of a clearly overriding indigenous Great Tradition, but instead a conflicting or competing multiplicity of such Great Traditions. Since each of these Great Traditions is numerically, economically and ideologically strong enough to support separate and large-scale socio-cultural and political-operational integration, their co-occurrence within a single polity makes for rather constant internal tension and for nationalistic disunity, particularly in the absence of a superordinate threat. The selection of the language of wider communication as the working language is primarily for purposes of political-operational integration and primarily at the level of written and formal interaction.

The typology of language policies put forth by Fishman (1971) clearly illustrates the underlying importance of the indigenous socio-historical traditions of an ethnic group in the formulation of language policy in plural societies. An ethnic

This monograph examines the education of ethnic minorities in plural societies within the broader context of majority-minority relations. It comprises eight theoretical chapters dealing with various aspects of the education of ethnic minorities. The education of ethnic minorities in plural societies has always been a hotly contested area, having a dynamic of its own, often involving minority linguistic and cultural claims that go against those of the majority. This is especially true in the case of non-marginal minorities or active minorities who are in a position to make such claims. Notwithstanding the right of the minority groups to use their own language in plural societies, when such claims are pitted against the majority language, they have to accept the fact that the majority language is usually recognised as the language of national integration and the sole or the main medium of instruction in the national educational system and as such, their claims for minority linguistic rights should not override the supremacy of the majority language. It is perhaps for this reason that ethnic minorities have to take a middle course so that their linguistic and cultural claims do not jeopardise their social mobility as well as the nation-building process in plural societies. Such an act of balancing is not only necessary but also crucial to the survival of ethnic minorities within the mainstream society. It is essentially a matter of choice between maintaining their 'life styles' or 'life chances'. It is against this backdrop that bilingual education is perhaps a viable option for ethnic minorities to accommodate their educational needs as well as their role in the national-building process. While there are different models of bilingual education, the Malaysian model of transitional bilingual education for the ethnic minorities merits our attention. Despite some shortcomings in its implementation, this model of bilingual education has been able to ensure language maintenance within a wider shift to the majority language.

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