

LINGUISTIC MINORITIES

THEIR EXISTENCE & IDENTITY WITHIN LARGER COMMUNITIES

Editors

ASMAH HAJI OMAR

NORAZUNA NORAHIM



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Universiti Malaysia Sarawak
Kota Samarahan

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PREFACE

The selected articles chosen for this book, comprising empirical researches on multilingual communities in the region, mainly pertaining to Malaysia and Singapore, throw light on the plausibility that some minority languages will become extinct or be replaced by a more dominant language if signs and indications of these endangerments as empirically highlighted are ignored. In respect to their important work, we would like to extend our gratitude to the author-researchers for their significant contribution to the said field. At the same time we are humbled by the perseverance of the affected communities and are indebted for their continual assistance.

Language endangerment is an issue of prime concern to all of us, and undoubtedly literature on the subject is abundantly found. Nevertheless, much is still needed to be said of the actual state of language endangerment in this region. Also, some reports of endangered communities are conclusively derived at without evidences from the ground. Smaller languages are categorised as endangered primarily on the basis of having small number of speakers.

It is hoped that the book will shed profound insights on the linguistic and sociolinguistic consequences of language contact in the region, especially in relation to language choice and identity; a subject of much concern in this era. As there is a significant dearth in empirical knowledge on language choice and identity particularly amongst multilingual communities in the region, this book hence, is timely and has currency as it addresses this gap.

The book gives *macro-* and *micro-perspectives* of multilingual communities in the region. It informs the readers of the intricacy and novelty of language situations in the region.

We would like to thank Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS) for providing the financial support for the publication of this book. The book is a compilation of selected research articles presented at the *International Conference on Majority and Minority: Language, Culture and Identity* in November 2010, which was co-hosted by the Centre for Language Studies, UNIMAS and the Malaysian Association of Modern Languages (MYMLA). We would like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to MYMLA as well for their cooperation in co-hosting the said conference.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Khin-Khin Aye is a senior lecturer at the Faculty of Language and Communication, Swinburne University of Technology, Sarawak. Her current research interests are linguistic changes induced by language contact, the influence of substrate language on the emerging contact language, learner language, learner errors and the influence of learners' first language. Among her publications include *Language, Education and Nation-building in Myanmar* (2014), and *Singapore Bazaar Malay* (2013).

Khatijah Shamsudin served as a senior lecturer of English and Linguistics at the Faculty of Languages and Linguistics, University of Malaya until 2012. Her expertise includes TESL, and English for specific purposes, and she designs specially-tailored English language programmes.

Sakina Sahuri Suffian Sahuri is a senior lecturer of TESL and Applied Linguistics from the Faculty of Languages and Linguistics, University of Malaya. Her areas of research include ethnolinguistics, sociolinguistics and translation studies. Her recent publication is entitled *Preserving Indigenous Knowledge through Folk Narratives: Podi and Ngironyu* (2016).

Kamila Ghazali is a Professor from the Department of English Language, Faculty of Languages and Linguistics, University of Malaya. Her areas of academic expertise are critical discourse analysis and sociolinguistics with research on political discourse, media discourse,

and ethnolinguistics where she delves into the language and culture of the *orang asli* (indigenous peoples). Her interest in indigenous languages has brought her to the longhouses in Sarawak where she conducted a preliminary sociolinguistic survey of the Tatau, Lugat, and Punan Ba and to the jungles of Endau, Johor, to research on the Jakun community. She has published her work in academic journals, books and book chapters. Her research interest also includes the use of English as a medium of instruction in higher education and English as a *lingua-franca*.

Bibi Aminah Abdul Ghani is a senior lecturer of TESL and Linguistics at Universiti Malaysia Sarawak. Her expertise includes ethnolinguistic, culture and TESL. Her current research work examines language shift phenomenon among the Orang Miriek of Miri, Sarawak, and her recent publication is entitled, *Ethnotaxonomic systems can reflect the vitality status of indigenous languages and traditional knowledge* (2016).

Barbara Loester is a senior lecturer at the Department of English, Creative Writing and American Studies, University of Winchester. She is also a member of the International Advisory Board, Cross-Faculty Research Centre University of Gothenburg. Her current research works particularly focus on language and identity. One of her publication includes *Cultural identities, national borders and language ideologies in Central Europe-Bavaria, Austria, Germany, and the question of pluricentricity and greater autonomy* (2013).

Wang Xiaomei is a senior lecturer from the Faculty of Languages and Linguistics, University of Malaya. She has carried out research on many areas pertaining to sociolinguistics, such as the spread of language, language maintenance and language shift, ethno-linguistic vitality, teaching Chinese as a second language and multilingualism. Currently, she is involved in projects that examine ethno-linguistic vitality of Chinese and Indian communities in Malaysia. One of her publication includes, *The Mandarin Spread in Malaysia* (2012).

Patricia Nora Riget is a senior lecturer at the Department of Asian and European Languages, Faculty of Languages and Linguistics, University of Malaya. Her area of expertise includes French as a foreign language, and Ethno-linguistics. Her current research works particularly focus on multilingualism in Sarawak, and the Chinese diaspora worldwide.

Supramani Shoniah is a senior lecturer at the Department of Malaysian Languages and Applied Linguistics, Faculty of Languages and Linguistics, University of Malaya. His research area includes multilingualism, and language loss and maintenance in language contact situations. His recent publication includes a book chapter entitled, *Tamil education in Malaysia: A survival against the odds* (2016).

Koh Yi Chern is a lecturer at the Department of Asia and European Languages, Faculty of Languages and Linguistics, University of Malaya. Her area of expertise includes German as a foreign language, and multilingualism. Her research works focus on ethno-linguistic vitality of the Chinese and Indian communities in Malaysia.

Ting Su Hie is a senior lecturer at the Faculty of Language Studies and Communication Studies, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak. Dr. Ting's research works include areas of concerns in TESL and Sociolinguistics. Among her publications include *Sociocultural traits and language attitudes of Chinese Foochow and Hokkien in Malaysia* (2015) and *Language use and sustainability status of indigenous languages in Sarawak, Malaysia* (2012). **Yann-Yann Puah** was a Masters' student of the University.

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The world may have a thousand languages, or even more. But some are fast disappearing or on the road to extinction. This process has been going on through the ages and is not a new phenomenon. In the past, it was mainly due to the depletion of speakers caused by ill health and physical environment. Today, this danger lies in social processes which have created linguistic minorities in the face of dominant and powerful languages.

This volume tells the story of linguistic minorities - their existence and identity within larger communities. As a story, and is written with the general readers in mind and not just for linguists, it should appeal to those who are interested in the preservation of the languages and cultures of these minorities as part of the heritage of mankind. Different approaches employed by researcher-writers in methodology and analysis, as reflected in the various chapters, should prove to be interesting to linguists in the field.



Asmah Haji Omar is a world-renowned linguist. She was formerly Professor of Malay Linguistics, and the Dean of the Faculty of Languages and Linguistics of the University of Malaya. After retiring, she occupied the Za'ba Chair of Malay Civilization, and established the Institute of Malay Civilization (2001-2005), University of Education Sultan Idris, Perak. She is also a member of the Language Council of Brunei Darussalam-Indonesia-Malaysia (MABBIM), and is the author of various books among them, *The Encyclopedia of Malaysia: Languages and Literature* (2004), and *Languages in the Malaysian Education System: Monolingual strands in multilingual settings* (2016).



Norazuna Norahim obtained her doctoral degree from University Malaya in 2010. Her doctoral thesis was entitled, *Language Choice Patterns of the Bidayuh Graduates in Kuching-Samarahan Division*. She was formerly the Dean of the Centre of Language Studies, and the Dean of the Faculty of Language Studies and Communication Studies, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (2011-2016). She is currently working on language resource development of the Miriek language. Her forthcoming books are on *The Miriek Language*, and *Language Endangerment Scenario in the Baram valley*. The latter book focuses on smaller communities i.e. Narom, Kiput, Berawan and Penan.