

ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND THE LANGUAGE OF DEVELOPMENT: A MALAYSIAN PERSPECTIVE

Mohd. Faisal b. Hanapiah
Department of Modern Language
m-faisal@utm.my

Abstract

English language is the main international language. It is also said that English is the language of progress and development. In this age of Internet and globalization, the use of English has increased tremendously. In Malaysia, English has an impact in certain major developmental areas. This paper investigates, analyzes and further explains the interrelationships between English and the process of development in the country. Discussion includes specific parts of interest: the historical background of English in Malaysia, English and the concept of development communication, functions of English in Malaysia, English and Information Communication Technology (ICT), and roles of English in development. The writer also intends to share with readers the reality and challenges in the use of English in non-native English speaking countries like Malaysia and expresses his ideas on possible recommendation to the issues.

INTRODUCTION

In essence, the most traditional and impalpable medium of communication whereby man has maintained and will continue to use is language. There are thousands of languages spoken by 6.9 billion people throughout the world. But, English language emerges as the chief international language. This is an interesting fact, indeed.

English language has an impact in the advancement and growth in Malaysia from certain major developmental areas. This paper investigates, analyzes and further explains the interrelationship between English and development in the country from development communication perspective. Discussion includes specific parts of interest: the historical background of English in Malaysia, English and the concept of development communication, functions of English in Malaysia, English and Information Communication Technology (ICT), roles of English in development communication, reality and challenges and recommendation.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF ENGLISH IN MALAYSIA

The influence of English language in Peninsular Malaysia can be traced through history as early as nineteenth century. It all began when the British Empire expanded its mission of searching for gold, glory and propagating of gospel to the South East Asia including Malaysia. The British colonists had first landed in Penang headed by Sir Francis Light. True enough, in the beginning, they communicated with the locals using sign language and English. Gradually, they took control and intervened in the local and administrative affairs of the traditional Malay states.

The increase in government services and the introduction of the Resident System in the 1870's had further established the presence of the British and subsequently the spread of English among the local people. Platt and Weber (1980) said, British officers were employed to head departments involved in collection of revenues, road construction and supervision of mines. They also recruited a small number of local Malays who were able to understand and, to a certain level, speak some simple everyday English.

Later, the expansion of commerce and trading especially in town areas had influenced the level of use of English among the people. Early traders from different places, groups and races, for instance, came to the port cities of Singapore, Malacca and Penang. Although in the sixteen century Malay was the *lingua franca* for business communication purpose, the presence of British power in the Peninsular of Malaysia had changed it to English. They formulated various rules and regulation pertaining to commercial activities in English.

Another factor, which helped the spread of English in Malaysia, was the increase in educational facilities during the British colonization period in Malaysia. By 1950's there were many types of schools opened for the local people comprising of mainly the Malay, Chinese and Indian communities. As part of the strategic British's *divide and rule* political policy, they formed vernacular schools to improve the educational aspect of the people: the Malay medium schools, Chinese medium schools and Tamil medium schools.

Apart from that, the British also introduced English medium schools like *high schools* and *convents*. At these schools, the language medium used among students and teachers was English. Moreover, reference books were also being imported from United Kingdom. The betterment in the provision of education and the spread of English had resulted in the rise of some local English class educated groups. Those who reached a certain level of education or graduated from the English medium schools were highly regarded in the society and were also given the chance to hold important civil service posts in the government.

However, the number of Malay students enrolling in English schools was very small. The students were children of royal families, businessmen and aristocrats. Professor Dr. Jomo K. S. had written some articles about the early and modern education scenarios in the Peninsular Malaysia in his book *Masyarakat Malaysia: Cabaran Sosio-Ekonomi*. He mentioned:

"Although limited by constraints, English education was developed to train workforce who are recognized by the British in view of the expanding capitalist sector. But, as the tuition fees were very high and most schools were located in the town, English school registered a small number of Malay students only."

After independence and in the 1970's the spread of English in Malaysia was particularly related to the roles of mass media. National radio and television networks used both Malay and English programs. There were also certain English newspapers like the old version of the New Straits Times. However, Platt and Weber (1980) argued that the influx of English films was a very critical factor in spreading English in Malaysia. At the time when going to cinemas was a trend, people from different walks of life and racial backgrounds thronged cinemas to watch and enjoy English movies. This getting together for movie entertainment, to some extent, helped foster

social tolerance and unity. Indirectly, many learned to pick the language, in particular, through listening to English phonetics and conversations by watching English films.

Nowadays, the importance of English in Malaysia and in the world, generally, needs no further elaboration. The spread and influence of English has reached almost every house and area in Malaysia. The government has, since a long time ago, declared English as the second most important language in Malaysia after Malay language. It is therefore necessary to examine the role and position of English in development in Malaysia.

ENGLISH AND DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION

Leading development communication speakers like Nora Quebral and Juan F. Jamia assert that the main purpose of development communication is to further encourage and stimulate development. This includes providing education and increasing literacy rates among the people, developing socio-economic status and promoting greater equality and freedom.

In the process of development, an important observable yardstick remains that there must be some change taking place. The change can be in the form of better situations, skills, education or physical and technological facilities. In sum, development leads to a higher standard of living. English language is a medium of communication. It is also used as a communicative skill or tool, which is related either directly or indirectly to the people to help them realize their potential to take part in the development process through participatory and democratic ways.

FUNCTIONS OF ENGLISH IN MALAYSIA

This paper shall concentrate on the present functions of English language in Malaysia. Understanding on the current major functions is essential, as we will later discuss the roles of English as an important and dynamic medium of communication in stimulating growth and development communication in Malaysia. Since the launch of Vision 2020, which is the national strategic and ambitious aim of becoming a fully developed nation by the year 2020, certainly the functions of English need to be closely identified, analyzed, acknowledged and further developed to accelerate achieving the vision.

The functions of English can, in a general sense, reflect the relative importance of English. There are many functions of English. This paper discusses the functions of English according to several domains as the following:

1. The Business Domain.
2. The Employment Domain.
3. The Education Domain.
4. The Domain of Politics.
5. The Domain of Tourism.
6. The Domain of Law.
7. The Media Domain.
8. The Domain of Translation.

1. *The Business Domain*

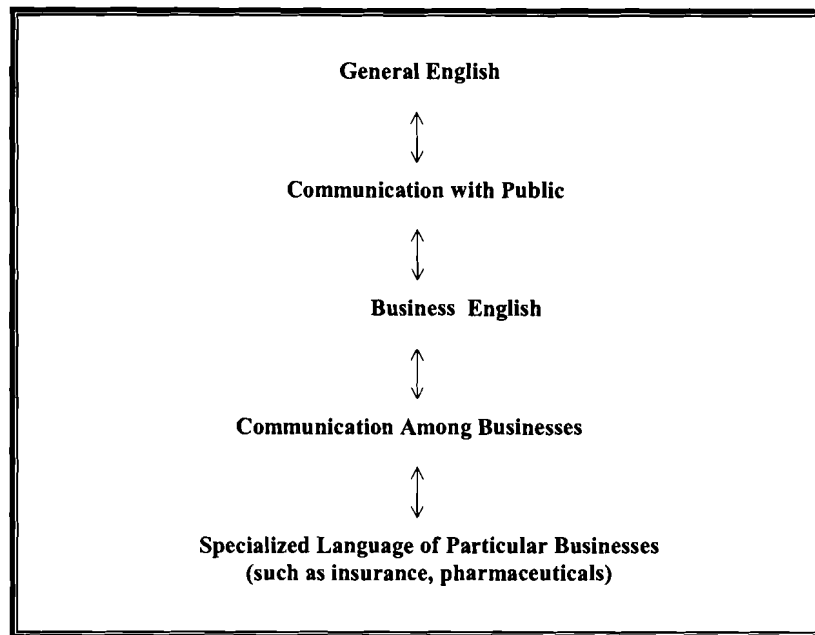
The use of English in the business domain in Malaysia is apparent and it will continue to develop in the future. English is fast establishing its presence as *the official language* in the business and corporate sector. Businesses and organizations have understood the importance of English as a tool required for business expansion, image building and sometimes as a matter of survival in today's era of globalization where local businesses are constantly facing intense competition both from local counterparts and foreign companies. Business organizations which are proficient in English in their promotions, advertisements and marketing plans are believed to be at the edge, professional and having more competitive energy compared to businesses which are less proficient in the language.

Realizing the importance of English, therefore, business strategists and organizations have taken some efforts or initiative to improve their command of English. A good example goes to The Ampang Puteri Specialist Hospital – a private hospital in Kuala Lumpur. On the 5th January 2001, the hospital management launched “Let's Speak English” campaign with the objective to motivate staff to learn and inculcate confidence in speaking the language. The management is planning activities for the staff to enhance the level of English proficiency so that English can soon be its primary medium of communication. Besides, the use of English at the hospital helps improve the organization's image in the eyes of the public.

Evans and St. John (1998) suggest two particular aspects of English to business communication, which can be observed in Malaysia as well as in other free market economies. They conclude that there are English communications

“..... with the public and communication within (intra) a company or between (inter) companies.”

These two types of business English communication involve different groups of people and also depend on particular business segments using specific language or terminology. This is illustrated in the following diagram.



However, in Malaysia, business English communication does not necessarily mean that the communication is in full English. Businessmen, sometime, like to mix English with Bahasa Malaysia especially in less formal situations when dealing with other local businessmen, customers, and the public.

2. *The Employment Domain*

The function of English in the employment domain is both obvious and prevalent in the Malaysian scene. People with paper qualifications (academics), computer skills or technical skills and have good proficiency in English can expect to get employment easier and faster than those who are merely having qualifications. Generally, companies are searching for potential candidates who are, while fulfilling certain requirements, able to speak and write in both Bahasa Malaysia and English. Proficiency in English is understood and recognized as a 'standard' condition outlined everyday in the job advertisement columns of English leading newspapers like the New Straits Times, the Malay Mail and The Star.

In April 2000, there was an issue highlighted in the newspapers and television about the reasons behind the inability of some 39,000 graduates in the country to get job. The Minister of Education, Tan Sri Musa Mohamad, as quoted in the New Straits Times, said,

"..... employers did not just look at one's qualification but also factors like personality, potential, English proficiency and experience."

Musa's emphasis implies that graduates seeking employment should try to achieve certain level of mastery of English to help them secure appropriate jobs particularly in the private sector. There are also general understanding

that job interviews for professional vacancies in critical fields like Law, Accountancy and Engineering are expected to be conducted in English.

Not only does English become a contributive factor for employment needs, it is still necessary for one's professional career development. A person who demonstrates a high ability in the use of English, for instance, when dealing and communicating with customers and visitors faces a brighter future in his career advancement. He would be looked upon as one who can represent the organization or business and thus would be considered favorably to hold key positions. This, in turn, can be translated into certain promotions and more financial rewards. In short, we can say that English plays an important role in the employment perspective in Malaysia.

3. *The Education Domain*

The development of English in Malaysian education domain is vital. The past two decades, and currently, have shown greater and more commitment on part of the government in creating awareness to the people, especially the Malay students, about the importance of mastering English language with respect to education from primary to tertiary level. Campaigns and activities have been designed in order to instill the interest to learn, understand and use the language more effectively. The Ministry of Education also makes suitable changes in its policies with the objective to arrest or reduce the declining standard of English among the students.

The Ministry of Education had introduced Malaysian University English Test (MUET) a few years ago. It is a special English examination, which is almost equivalent in terms of standard like the international English examinations, for example, Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL-USA) and International English Language Testing Service (IELTS-UK). The MUET comprises of four main sections namely writing, reading, listening and speaking. This gives an examiner a general understanding on a student's understanding of the usage of English. The MUET must be taken and passed before a university or college student is allowed to graduate. It is increasingly becoming an indication used by employers to know a job candidate's proficiency of English by looking at the level of pass in MUET.

Another development of English from educational perspective was reported in a Berita Harian news article dated 23rd November 2000. The article, 'Subjek Bahasa Inggeris Untuk Murid di Tadika' (English Subject for Kindergarten Pupils). The Ministry of National Unity and Community Development wants to expose the language to children as early as the age of four to six. Currently a big number of selected female kindergarten teachers from various parts of the country are undergoing training courses in the teaching of English at the Universiti Sains Malaysia. According to its minister, Datuk Dr. Siti Zaharah Sulaiman,

"..... the effort to expose children below the age of five to English is good because they can master the language better. We will probably implement this idea to all kindergartens in Malaysia in 2001."

It is clear that English has its function looking at the educational scope. It is getting more important as the government takes the initiatives to place English firmly in the Malaysian Education domain. The public, too, have long understood that English is a very important subject which is related to academic success. For instance, it is said that successful graduates at the university level, specifically those who achieve first class degrees, are people who have a very high level of mastery in English. This is because they certainly need to read and subsequently analyze a lot of reference books which are mostly written in English and complete assignments. The more they read and develop better understanding and writing skills, their performance in academics will also probably appreciate.

4. *The Domain of Politics*

Now let us consider the function of English in the political arena by discussing the influence of the language on a politician's credibility and popularity. It is an acceptable perception in Malaysia that if a person, in particular a Malay, man or woman, is able to communicate well and clear in English, he or she is look upon highly in the eyes of the public. This is because of three factors. First, English is assumed to be the language spoken by businessmen or professionals. Second, there are, in reality, Malay people who can speak good English are not in the majority. Third, English is associated with education – the better the level of English proficiency one possesses, the higher the level of education he or she is thought to acquire.

For a politician, mastery of English is obviously a plus factor to further develop and secure his political career in the future. A very clear example is Dato' Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohammad who is the longest serving Malaysian Prime Minister in history. He is an exemplary leader who has the ability to give ideas and deliver speeches perfectly well in standard English both in formal and informal ways. Therefore, he manages to convince lots of people to agree with his viewpoints, become very popular and increase his credibility. In the international scene, he is known as an eloquent English speaker with smart political and analytical ideas who has, to a large extent, helped develop the image of Malaysia abroad.

The previous general election, nevertheless, indicated a decline in overall public support for the ruling party. But however this happened because of political reasons. Certainly, he does have an excellent command of spoken English, which helps determine his high political profile particularly in the past ten years.

5. *The Domain of Tourism*

Tourism industry has been developing rapidly particularly in the last two decades in Malaysia. There are many factors contributing to the growth and development of the industry. Good infrastructures, efficient public transportation systems, better accommodation facilities, campaign and promotion strategies both at domestic and international levels as well as effective communication skills have all contributed to the expansion of the industry. For example, in 1999 Malaysia had launched a mega campaign on

tourism with the aim to attract as many as possible foreign tourists to come and visit the country. Thus, 1999 was declared as the 'Visit Malaysia Year.'

Apart from the campaign done at national level, all states too take initiatives to promote local tourism. In all the campaigns and promotions, the role of English becomes evident as a medium of communication to disseminate information regarding places of interest, travel and flight arrangements, range of facilities offered, hotels and so on. English as an international language is used in the publication of brochures, magazines and talks on tourism activities.

Hotel industry is closely related to the development of tourism industry. An increase in tourism industry will also stir an increase in hotel industry. Tourists especially the foreigners need proper and comfortable accommodations to stay and they are also hoping for hospitable treatment from the hotel staff. Therefore, front office assistants of hotels, who are in direct contacts with them, should be able to communicate well and politely. Again, the function of English comes to the surface.

But, the question is that do the front office assistants have the crucial English language competency to convincingly deal with foreign tourists? Can they speak in good English? Mei Yuit (1998) did a study on *English Language Communication Training Needs of Front Office Assistants of Hotels in Kuala Lumpur*. Her study involved several four and five-star hotels in the capital city. Based on the survey and interview, she finds that the standard of English among the front office assistants is generally not up to the level yet and therefore language training becomes a necessity for them. She summarizes that,

"..... hotels in Kuala Lumpur should provide English language communication training to Front Office Assistants (FOAs) as a means to enhance their current job performance as well as a means for self and career development."

In short, the above discussion points that at least there are two main conclusions of English in the domain of tourism industry in Malaysia. It is an essential language used in campaigns and promotions to develop the industry. Second, front office assistants need to have a high competency level in English to communicate better with tourists who may come from any parts of the world.

6. *The Domain of Law*

Malaysian law and constitution is very much influenced by the British and commonwealth legal systems. This is the result of the British occupation and established codes of governance which had shaped various aspects of law and order in Malaysia especially before the independence in 1957. The law is basically enacted, interpreted and implemented according to the British judiciary and constitutional system. As Malaysian law imitates British's, most of the working legal terms and comprehensions are therefore in English. It is not an easy task to translate each and every legal terminology from English to

Bahasa Malaysia as there are not sufficient vocabulary in Bahasa Malaysia to adequately and closely represent meanings of English words.

Although there are suggestions urging those in the legal sphere especially judges and lawyers to adopt Bahasa Malaysia instead of English in the court, the efforts had so far not really been effective. Many lawyers and judges feel more at ease communicating in English because they are use to the language for direct debate and discourse among themselves, and sometime, with the clients who are competent in English. Even formal legal documents are also prepared in English. For example, the Sale and Purchase Agreement or SPA, which is related to bank loans in house purchase. Thus, it is obvious that the function of English from legal perspective is deeply rooted and used in Malaysia.

7. *The Media Domain*

The function of English can also be seen in the media domain. Malaysia is increasingly becoming a multicultural society with the coming of immigrants and workers particularly from neighboring Asean countries like Myanmar, Bangladesh, Thailand, Philippine and Burma. Thus, it is not practical anymore to use Malay language solely as the medium of communication in the development of mass media. As a second language, English is also widely used in the media – books, magazines, newspapers, television programs, radio programs, etc.

English is used to disseminate information, knowledge and a variety of messages to the public. Currently there are four major popular English medium newspapers in the country as follows:

1. New Straits Times.
2. The Star.
3. The Malay Mail.
4. The Sun.

8. *The Domain of Translation*

The domain of translation indicates that there is a function for English which should be understood. Usually translation from one language to another language is related to or done for transfer of knowledge purposes. For example, a new understanding on a particular subject matter written in Arabic texts need to be translated to the Malay language so that similar understanding can be achieved by people who do not use Arabic but who use Malay language.

Similarly, there is always an abundance of knowledge, skills, concepts and ideas written in English that are imperative to garner development in terms of improving the ethical, economical, educational or political aspects of the people. These kinds of positive societal advancements can be gained through the rigorous and systematic work of translation from English to Bahasa Malaysia whereby the transfer of knowledge and skill process takes place.

In their book, *Advanced English for Translation*, Dennis Chamberlin and Gillian White (1993) explain the need to learn and acquire some

fundamental skills for producing effective and quality translation work. They agree that a translator must have an acceptable level of competency in English and good writing skill. In Malaysia, especially in local universities, there are always demands for translation works on various academic subjects like in the discipline of engineering, medicine, human resource development, etc.

True enough, English in the translation perspective does help in the effort to improve the level of the language itself, too. According to the President of the Association of Malaysian Education, Tan Sri Awang Had Salleh,

“the ability to translate between English and Bahasa Malaysia helps to solve the problem of decreasing standard of English especially among students in the rural areas.”

He believes that students should develop certain fundamental skills in simple translation in order to improve their command of English more effectively.

ENGLISH AND INFORMATION COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The function of English is parallel with the development of Information Communication Technology (ICT) in Malaysia, specifically, and in the world. English is as inseparable as pivotal element in the growth and usage of ICT practically in almost every aspect of life. This includes business, politics, law, medicine, media, engineering, administration, or at the hospital, the university, the school, etc. The use of internet in the computer particularly since early 1990's in Malaysia has created greater awareness on the influence and function of English language. Over 95% of the websites in the Internet are in English, which can be accessed at any time by Internet users here or everywhere in the world.

English language develops in line with the advancement of ICT in Malaysia. For example, the Multimedia Super Corridor or MSC which is the nation's expensive and ambitious project calling for the participation of ICT giant players like Microsoft and IBM. Although MSC was undoubtedly the brainchild of Malaysian government, the language of the ICT and MSC will remain to be English, thus, further establishing the function and importance of English in the country. Universiti Multimedia Malaysia is another proof that the government is not taking the ICT and, indirectly, English issues lightly.

Rahmah Hashim (1996), quoting several local newspapers as example, discusses the function of IT in relation with media in an article 'New Communication Technology and Public Policy.' Says she,

“The New Straits Times (NST) in Malaysia is the most progressive and modern newspaper in the Asian region. Computer technology is used for editorial work (storage, processing, copy search, news retrieval, editing), production (job control), and classified advertisements (bookings, preparation).”

Computer technology offers both speed and efficiency, for instance, in the editorial work of the newspaper. A special English software can perform spelling and grammar checks for news articles, therefore, reducing the editors' workloads. As this spelling and grammar software available is currently only in English it benefited, for editing purposes and to a large extent, mostly the English newspapers like The Sun, The Star and The Malay Mail.

Besides, another example on the function of English in the development of ICT is the opening of MPSJ Hypermedia Library by Subang Jaya Municipal Council. Its main objective is to inculcate reading habits among the public so that a knowledge society, which is IT literate can be materialized by the year 2005. Among the library services available are Internet services, CD-Net access services, audio services and borrowing of books. Virtually all reading materials are in English. Therefore, a library user who wishes to know or develop his or her skills in ICT needs to firstly understand what he or she is reading. In conclusion, English becomes and will continue to be a leading medium of communication together with the advancement of ICT particularly in Malaysia.

ROLES OF ENGLISH IN DEVELOPMENT

As a Mode of Communication

English language emerges as an important mode of communication in Malaysia. As a developing and increasingly multicultural community, people generally use Bahasa Malaysia to communicate with each other. Bahasa Malaysia retains its status as the main or national language. Nevertheless, historical and political background in the country dictates that English is recognized and accepted as the second language. Therefore, the public can communicate either in Bahasa Malaysia or in simple English or in other languages. But, for cross cultural communication which involves foreign people participation, English is much preferred for providing direct and smooth line of communication.

An Input for Human Resource Development

Industrialists and corporate leaders know that their most important asset in ensuring progress and development is human resource. Human resource is a critical input for development that has to be trained and improved although other contributing inputs like land, capital, government policy and political stability and dynamic leadership do play their roles in development which can never be despised. Human resource development includes developing efficient managerial skills, communication skills, acceptable level of education, acquiring of new skill and knowledge. Being courteous and knowing how to speak well and clear using standard English, in today's reality, means a good skill of communication.

To Accelerate Development

Transfer of knowledge and technical know-how is one of the utmost priorities given by the Malaysian government. This works in line with its strategic, long-term master plan to be at par with other developed nations in the world by the year 2020. Transfer of knowledge and technical skill occurs essentially through the provision of better education and training courses. At universities and polytechnics, students are exposed and taught various disciplines of knowledge in science and technology. Apart from reading English references, sometimes teaching is also being conducted in English both by local and foreign instructors. For training purposes, particularly when staff or workers are sent abroad to Europe, Australia, United Kingdom or United States of America, preliminary, they are always been equipped with certain basic English language training skills.

To Decrease Social and Economical Inequality

Though it sounds incomprehensible, English can help to close the gap between the rich and the poor in the society in Malaysia and elsewhere – in countries whereby English is not used as the first language. Better provision of educational system with higher emphasis given to create awareness and consequently improve the command of English helps, to some extent, decrease social and economical inequality. When more people become educated, the opportunity to participate in business and economy becomes bigger. The ability in written and spoken English is an added advantage to secure a good employment as many organizations in the private sector have made both academic qualification and competency in English as their fundamental conditions for job seekers. Thus, one who fulfils both conditions, regardless of his or her social or economical background, can be successful.

To Develop Knowledge Society

Another role of English from development communication perspective is to stimulate growth and gradual formation of knowledge society in Malaysia. Knowledge society is a society which is educated and IT based. The use of information communication technology particularly the computer is a common feature in a knowledge society, which can be observed in many parts in developed countries, for example, Japan and United Kingdom. In order to use IT, the society uses English since it is the language of IT.

To Increase Standard of Living

English too can contribute toward increasing standard of living in Malaysia. This is mainly because it is known as the formal medium of communication in business and corporate world. In addition, a person who receives a high level of education with a high level of mastery of English will have more chance to land professional, well-paid jobs. This certainly leads to a better standard of living and increased purchasing power. Apart from the betterment of standard of living, a good command of English can help develop one's confidence, self esteem and self respect in the society in which he or she lives or works with.

REALITY AND CHALLENGES

The above discussion has clearly underscored several essential roles of English as a skill or tool of development. In reality, however, there are some challenges and imitations hindering effective use of English. Some major challenges are explained in this paper.

First, the government policy as well as critiques which emphasize the status of Bahasa Malaysia as the national language has, in effect, to some extent, discouraged the public to use English. For example, court proceedings should be conducted in Bahasa Malaysia. Road or traffic signs as well as advertisements are written in the national language. True enough, some people develop a misleading perception that having conversation in English or even other languages rather than Bahasa Malaysia would make them less patriotic. So, this group of people, either in the city or village, are not only unwilling to communicate in English, they do regularly discourage or criticize those who support the English *crusade* too.

Second, lack of qualified English language teachers or instructors. This is another obvious challenge in using English for development. Actually there are problems, and let me highlight two; English teachers who are female in majority are often not prepared to move and teach in remote areas and lack of well-designed, communicative nature training programs for English teachers. Female teachers especially with husbands and children are not as mobile as male teachers – oftentimes they need to follow their husbands and take care of the small ones. The latter issue on the lack of training programs is related to English teaching organizations which are usually been given little time and financial support to developing proper training activities. White Ron et. al. (1999) comment that,

“English staff development is a crucial way of ensuring that they learn and develop and that the standard of teaching can grow and respond to a (eg. changing environment).”

Third, incompetent English teachers. It is an ironic situation in Malaysia that there have been complaints made by students and parents that some qualified English teachers are, in actuality, not able to speak in English properly. They do not have the confidence to have direct conversation with other people and sometimes they prefer to speak in a mixture of languages – English, Malay and even Chinese when talking to students. A student in a news article entitled 'Calls to master English hailed' in the New Straits Times highlighted this malady. These English teachers who are supposed to set an example for effective usage of English fail, and thus, they could not contribute much to the improvement of the students' level of English proficiency.

Fourth, language problems which cause lack of interest and awareness in using information technology as a valuable resource. Rahmah Hashim (1996) comments that linguistic difficulties as a consequence of inadequacy in English language as programs, training manuals and databases are mostly in English. This problem particularly affects two groups of people; those who are in the lower income group and people living in rural areas. Lack of exposure to the use of English is perceived to be a major reason related to the generally low level of awareness to the importance of IT.

RECOMMENDATION

Unless and until the challenges and problems of using English for the sake of development in Malaysia are fully addressed, the people in Malaysia may not benefit as much from using English. Here are certain recommendations to help rectify and improve the standard and usage of English in Malaysia: -

1. **Government Policy.** The government should be the driving force in creating the interest in the use of English as a 'strong' second language in Malaysia. The policy and attitude toward English must be as transparent and as observable as in its implementation. The government has recently shown a renewed and greater determination to inculcate the use of English language particularly in the teaching of Science and Mathematics as early as at the primary educational level.
2. **English Teacher Training.** Effective and systematic training strategies should be adequately planned, provided and evaluated to ensure that English instruction can fit well with changing environment. Thus, sufficient allocations for English training courses should be given priority.
3. **Students' Attitude.** Students at all levels should take the initiative to not only learn the language but also practise it as frequently as possible. Even the best English teachers could not help students who do not have interest and refuse to use the language themselves, in particular, in their daily activities. However, teachers as well as parents should also motivate and guide the students to improve their level of English.
4. **The Public.** Cooperation from the public to increase the use of English in business and social ordinary life engagements are vital. Clearly, English is the language of progress in many aspects of life. Thus, negative perceptions such as speaking English will make them less nationalistic should be responded to.

CONCLUSION

We can perhaps better understand now the crucial roles of English in Malaysia from the perspective of development. However, mere understanding on the essential functions of English in development and communication changes nothing. As explained, all parties including the government, the society, students, English teachers and teachers of other subjects should, first of all, realize their specific parts and potential and together making more efforts toward using English language as the language of development. It is indeed a task that demands more participation, from everybody, as a whole. Recent developments tell us that a greater use of English requires a stronger political will, too.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ahmad Sarji A. H. editor. 1993. Human Resource Development: The Education and Training Aspects by Ungku Abdul Aziz. *Malaysia's Vision 2020*. Petaling Jaya: Pelanduk Publications.

- Berita Harian*, 23hb November 2000.
- Bolton, W. 1983. *Communication. General and Communication Studies*. Kent: Butterworths
- Chamberin, Dennis & White, Gillian. 1993. *Advanced English for Translation*. (10th ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Evans, Tony Dudley & St. John, Maggie Jo. 1998. *English for Business Purpose. Developments in English for Specific Purpose: A Multi-Disciplinary Approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hurst, Charles E. 1995. *Racial Inequality. Social Inequality: Forms, Causes and Consequences*. (2nd ed.). Massachusetts: Allyn & Bacon.
- Jomo K. S. 1991. *Pelajaran dan Ketidaksamaan di Semenanjung Malaysia. Masyarakat Malaysia: Cabaran Sosio-Ekonomi*. Petaling Jaya: Insan.
- Mei Yuit. 1998. *English Language Communication Training Needs of Front Office Assistants of Hotels in Kuala Lumpur*. Unpublished Master's Project Paper, Universiti Pertanian Malaysia, Serdang.
- New Straits Times*, 2nd January 2001.
- New Straits Times*, 3rd January 2001.
- Platt, John & Weber, Heidi. 1980. *English in Singapore and Malaysia*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Rahmah Hashim, compiled by Anura Goonasekaran *et al.* 1996. *New Communication Technology and Public Policy. Impact of New Technologies on Communication in Asia and the Pacific*. Kuala Lumpur: Communication Magazine
- Robinson, Virginia P. 1978. *The Meaning of Skill. The Development of a Professional Self*. New York: Ams Press.
- The Star*, 12th January 2001.
- White, Ron *et. al.* 1999. *Staff Development Management in English Language Teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press *Hypermedia Library Brochure*, (Online <http://www.bl-mps.gov.my>).