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Maya Khemlani David, Faridah Noor Mohd. Noor

*Faculty of Languages and Linguistics,
University of Malaya*

LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE OR LANGUAGE SHIFT IN THE PORTUGUESE SETTLEMENT OF MALACCA IN MALAYSIA?

SUMMARY

This paper discusses the status of Kristang, a creole among the Portuguese Eurasians of Malaysia. The study focuses on members of the Portuguese Eurasian community who live in the Portuguese Settlement of Malacca. To determine whether community members are maintaining Kristang, a 47-item questionnaire was given to 62 of the 120 homes in the Settlement. To ascertain the future of Kristang, language choice and use between older and younger community members is compared. Over 70% of the respondents indicated Kristang as their mother tongue, although the younger members of the community had a more diverse range of languages which they considered as their mother tongue. Code mixing is prevalent in the speech of younger community members. The use of Kristang is dominant in older age groups and English in the younger ones. The author concludes that it is inevitable that language shift for the Portuguese community will take place.

KEY WORDS: Malacca, Portuguese, Kristang, language maintenance, English

Background to the Study

Malaysia is made up of Peninsular Malaysia (West Malaysia) and Sabah and Sarawak (East Malaysia). It is a multiracial, multiethnic and multilingual nation made up of Malays and other indigenous people (61%), Chinese (28%), Indians (8%) and various other ethnic groups (Khuo, 1991: 40). The Portuguese community of Malaysia falls under the umbrella of Eurasians of Malaysia. There are 20,000 Eurasians of Portuguese-Dutch descent in Malaysia, of whom 2,000 are in Sabah and Sarawak and 3,000 in Malacca (Ang, 1974: 30). Malacca was conquered by the Portuguese in 1511 and the Portuguese ruled it for 130 years. Intermarriage with the members of the local community, including descendants of the Dutch who took over Malacca from the Portuguese in 1641, resulted in the emergence of the Malaysian Portuguese Eurasians. The British, who took over Malacca from the Dutch established the Portuguese Settlement in Malacca, which then consisted of 26 acres in 1933 (Ang, 1974: 28).

The community in the Portuguese Settlement presently numbers about 1,000 and consists of 120 homes (Interview with the Regador or chief of the Community, September, 1996). Although members of the Malaysian Portuguese community are found in other parts of Malacca and in Peninsular Malaysia the largest concentration of members of the Portuguese community is found in the Portuguese Settlement of Malacca (Interview with Regador, 1996). A majority of the members of the community in this settlement have traditionally been fishermen. More recently, in order to supplement their limited income, they have also worked as part-time labourers, cooks, factory hands, attendants and clerks. The society is a closed one and the community small; hence members of the community know each other. The Roman Catholic religion, which is practiced, facilitates group solidarity. Currently, the language used by the Roman Catholic priests in services is English (personal observation).

The language used by members of the community is Kristang. According to Nunes (1996) “Kristang stands out as a unique creole and linguistic phenomenon, since it has survived a complete cut-off from one of its substratum languages (Portuguese), for over 300 years.”

Aim of the Study

The objective of this research is to determine the existence and extent of the use of Kristang among members of the Portuguese community who live in the Portuguese Settlement in Malacca, with a view to ascertaining the future of the survival of Kristang. About thirty years ago a fear was expressed by a leading member of the community, the parish priest, that “unless something is done soon, within the next thirty or forty years no one will be able to speak this language [Kristang]” (Pintado cited in Lee, 1974: 20).

Other Related Studies of the Portuguese Settlement

In an early study Chan (1969: 261) who conducted a geographical study of the settlement mentions in passing that in the Portuguese Settlement there was a bias towards the use of the mother tongue. Chan’s survey shows that 56% of the people in the settlement used the Portuguese patois or Kristang as the only language while English and Kristang were spoken by 36% of the settlers and Malay by 5%. English in 1969 was therefore the second most important language in the households next to Portuguese. As over half of the respondents spoke the mother tongue at that point in time it is safe to say that the ethnic language was fairly well established then. Chan (1969) correlates this use of the mother tongue with poverty as Kristang was most commonly used by the poorer households whereas other languages mainly English used singly or in combination with Kristang were more often

used by the more affluent householders. Other reasons cited by Chan for the continued use of Kristang include the presence of aged relatives, and a high rate of illiteracy among community members in the Settlement. Chan argues that the spatial concentration of the community in the Portuguese Settlement also facilitated and promoted greater ethnic language usage (Chan, 1969). A sociolinguist's contention that close and dense networks encourage ethnic language maintenance (Milroy, 1987) can therefore be used to explain the maintenance of Kristang among community members in Malacca.

In Chan's 1969 study of the Portuguese community there is no data of the language choices of younger community members. However, Chan hypothesizes that it is English. If this is the case, then with the demise of older community members, English may become the new mother tongue of the community. With the demise of the older community members there is a fear of language shift.

More recently, Nunes (1996) (who conducted a questionnaire study of the Portuguese community living in the Portuguese Settlement) finds that there has been a decrease in the number of Kristang mother tongue speakers. The result is that there is a variance between the number of older and younger community members who use the ethnic language. Nunes found that 75% of those aged 51 and above used Kristang as a mother tongue as compared to 54% of those aged 0–15 years. If this is the case then it is only a matter of time before Kristang dies. Nunes (1996) claims that there is a decline in the use of Kristang by Kristang mother tongue speakers. Yet despite the aforementioned claims Nunes maintains "Kristang has a strong position as a live language among the Portuguese Settlement dwellers."

In contrast, another researcher Marbeck (1995: VII), talks about the revival of the mother tongue thus implying that Kristang is not actively used. She states that the younger members of the community prefer to use English as they consider it a major language.

With such conflicting views on the status of Kristang it was felt that an in-depth study on a large sample, i.e. half the homes in the Portuguese Settlement so as to obtain a comprehensive picture of the future of Kristang was necessary.

Theoretical Constructs

The movement away from ethnic language use is known as language shift. Weinreich (1953) has defined language shift as "the socio-cultural process of individuals changing from the habitual use of one language to that of another." The domain construct is traditionally used to determine language shift. The concept of the domain was first used by Schmidt Rohr (cited in Fishman, 1966: 428) and was popularised by Fishman. The language used in a domain depends on the participants, their role relationships, the topics under discussion and the setting. The family and home domains appear consistently in all language shift studies while other domains like education and religion are investigated in some studies. Aikio (1986)

studying an indigenous minority community in Northern Calotte, concentrated primarily on the home domain while Fasold (1984) examining language choice among another indigenous minority – the Tiwa Indians in New Mexico, examined language use with community or ethnic members. The domains that are investigated in this study, which is also of an indigenous minority, are the languages used by ethnic members in the home and outside the home with other community members.

How much of the intensive or replacive language must be used before it can be categorically stated that language shift has taken place? Some questionnaire/census studies investigate the percentage of respondents who claim to use the intrusive language most of the time in the home (Young, 1990). Other studies focus on age correlation. If older speakers report making use of one language and younger speakers another, this is evidence of language shift (Gal, 1979). The analysis used in this paper is based on the responses of the respondents across age groups. It is important in a study on language maintenance and shift to determine the role of interlocutors from different age groups within the home and in intracommunity interactions outside the home. Sridhar (1978) maintains that the litmus test of language maintenance is the extent of use of the ethnic language by younger generations among themselves. The language used by the younger members of the Portuguese community both in interaction with their peers and with their elders will be determined to investigate the extent of use of Kristang. The role that older interlocutors play in language maintenance has also been noted. Clyne (1991: 114) in a study on the use of community languages in Australia found that "... children act as agents of language shift, whereas grandparents... are catalysts of community language use."

Methodology

A 47-item questionnaire was administered in 50% of the total number of homes in the settlement. The researcher spent about between half an hour to one hour in each home. The advantage of face-to-face interviews with respondents in their own homes is that the researcher was provided with an opportunity to observe language choice between other members of the family while interviewing one member of the family. Thus although only one member per household was interviewed the other family members of the interviewee were simultaneously observed so that a more complete picture of language choices was ascertained. Apart from the home-administered questionnaire, questionnaires were also given to ten respondents who are studying the Portuguese language, every Friday in the Carcosian Convent, which is in the Portuguese Settlement. In addition, an interview with the Regador of the Portuguese Settlement was conducted to obtain information of demographical details.

Description of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire was a wide, all encompassing one and was designed to establish an overview of respondents' use, attitude and proficiency in the ethnic

language. This macroscopic overview as perceived by the respondents was expected to provide a general picture of language choice.

The 47-item questionnaire was a close-ended one. The first few questions dealt with the personal history of the respondent, name, address, age, place of birth, sex, marital status, occupation, number of years in school and medium of instruction in school, ethnicity of spouse, number of children and salary of respondent. Similar information about the respondents' parents was inquired about. The mother tongue of the parents was inquired about.

It was also necessary to establish within a family the members of the family who continued using ethnic language and whether there was a generation difference in usage patterns. Questions 16 and 17 inquired about the language first spoken by the respondent's grandparents and parents to different members of the family when the respondent was a child while Question 18 asked about the language the respondent used with different members of his family. If the respondent's or his parents' first language was no longer the ethnic language this is clearly a situation of language shift, not only for the respondent but also for his parents.

If proficiency in the ethnic language has fallen it could be due to lack of use of the ethnic language. Questions 12–14 asked about the respondents' proficiency in the mother tongue and in other languages. Self-perceptions of proficiency levels affect language use. If one considers oneself competent in a language it has an effect on the use of the language one is comfortable with. The self-perceptions of the respondents with regards to their spoken abilities in three languages were investigated.

Question 18 inquired about the language used with different speech partners that is, spouse, children, siblings, ethnic friends, uncles and aunts and grandparents in the house. Language chosen for joking and anger, two intimate language functions were inquired about in Questions 24 and 25 and 42. Questions 41 and 42 were set to determine whether code switching was taking place. The respondents' attitudes to the ethnic language were obtained by Questions 32–37. The respondent's attitude to other languages like English and Malay were inquired about in Question 38–40.

Analysis of Questionnaire and Discussion

The primary data for this analysis come from 47-item questionnaire given to 62 respondents. The questionnaire elicited the following details: (a) demographic, (b) self perceptions' of language ability – both spoken and written, (c) mother tongue of parents of respondents and (d) use of ethnic language.

Demographic Profile of the Respondents

The respondents were sixty-two (62) members of the Kristang community whose ages ranged from ten to eighty years. For ease of analysis, the different age groups were divided into five main groups as shown in Table 1. The Table shows

that the three major groups of respondents in this study were in the 20–29 (22.6%), 30–39 (22.6%) and 40–59 (24.2%) age groups. As this study is not concerned with the gender of the respondents a breakdown by gender is not provided.

Table 1: Age groups and number of respondents

Age groups	Number of respondents	
	Count	Percentage
10-19	9	14.5
20-29	14	22.6
30-39	14	22.6
40-59	15	24.2
60-89	10	16.1
Total	62	100

The age range of the 62 respondents is shown in Table 1. 37.1% of the respondents were 29 and less years of age, 32.3% ranged from 30–49 years and 30.6% were 50 and above. Twenty-two (35.5%) of the N were not married, 28 (45.1%) were married to other Portuguese and 12 (19.4%) married out of the community. A 20% out-marriage rate could affect language maintenance and shift. David’s 1996 study of a minority ethnic community in Malaysia which has shifted away from the use of its ethnic language reveals that the Sindhi community also had a 20% out-marriage statistic.

The community is not on the whole highly educated. Of the sample 24 respondents, i.e. 38.7% had received only primary education, 58.1% secondary and only 3.2%, i.e. two (2) of the N had received tertiary education. The medium of instruction in school for 30.2% of the N was Malay but about 40% had English as the medium of instruction in school while another 29.8% had both English/Malay as the medium of instruction. Respondents were asked to indicate the medium of instruction in the schools they attended or were still attending at the time of the questionnaire. The results are shown in Figure 1 below:

Figure 1: Medium of instruction for different age groups

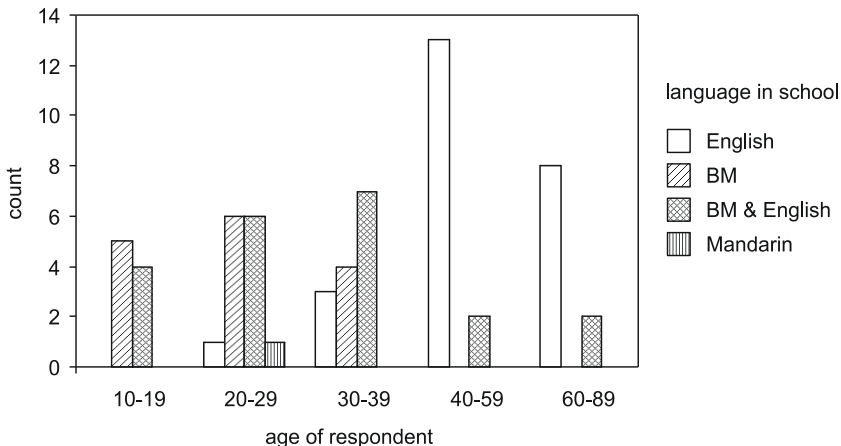
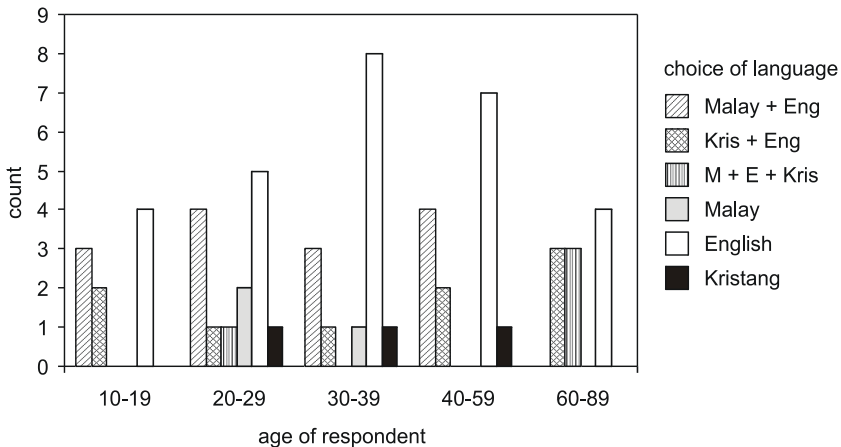


Figure 1 shows that the respondents of 40 and above had English as the major medium of instruction. English was at that point in time the official language used in all schools with the exception of a few Malay medium schools. The 30–39 age group went through the medium of instruction when it was in transition, i.e. when it was moving from English to Malay. The 20–29 age group had Malay as the medium of instruction and the youngest age group, 10–19, had undergone, or is still undergoing a system with Malay as the medium of instruction. English, however, is taught as an important second language in schools.

As attitudes are important in language maintenance and shift studies, respondents were asked which was language they considered as most important. In general, respondents across all age groups felt that English was the most important language. The second choice was a mixed choice of Malay and English for all age groups except for the 60–89 age group. This age group placed equal emphasis on all three languages, namely, Malay, English and Kristang as their second choice. The results are shown in Figure 2 below:

Figure 2: Language considered most important

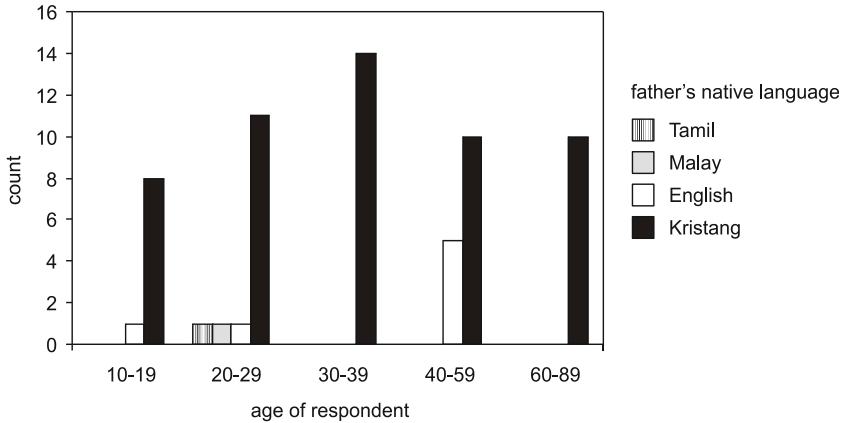


The difference in what each group considered as the most important language reflects the varying education systems that each group experienced in which the emphasis on English decreased with the younger respondents and Malay, instead, gains increased importance with them. This attitudinal shift *vis à vis* the importance of English is a reflection of the education system. It can therefore be said that the National Language Policy has been successful in making Malay the common language among native and non-native speakers (Faridah Noor et. al., 1996: 60).

To find out the major language used by parents, respondents were asked about the language their parents used within the household. Figure 3 shows that the predo-

minant language used by fathers of the respondents was Kristang.

Figure 3: Language used by father of respondent with family



Only the respondents in the 40–59 age group reported that their fathers used both Kristang and English with family members. Similarly, respondents were asked what their mothers' mother tongue had been. Table 2 clearly indicates that a majority of their mothers (82.3%) also had Kristang as their mother tongue. A few inter-ethnic marriages had taken place with either Tamil or Chinese speaking women. 10 respondents, i.e. about 16% of the N indicate that language shift had already taken place while they were growing up as the mother tongue of their parents had moved away from Kristang. The languages they had shifted to ranged from Dutch to English and for 2 respondents a dialect of Chinese.

Table 2: Mother tongue of mother

Age group	Mother's mother tongue						Total
	Kristang	English	Kristang + *Chinese	*Chinese	Malay + Tamil	Tamil	
10–19	8					1	9
20–29	10	1		1	1	1	14
30–39	12	1	1				14
40–59	11	4					15
60–89	10						10
Total	51	6	1	1	1	2	62

*Chinese refers to any dialect used

Perceptions of the respondents with regards to what they considered their mother tongue is shown in Table 3. Table 3 shows that the choice of respondents is divided between English and Kristang.

Table 3: Respondents' mother tongue

Age group	Respondent's mother tongue						Total
	Kristang	English	Kristang + English	English + Other	Malay	Tamil	
10–19	5	4					9
20–29	10	1		1	1	1	14
30–39	12	2					14
40–59	8	6	1				15
60–89	10						10
Total	45	13	1	1	1	1	62

Forty-five (72.6%) of the N indicated Kristang as their mother tongue while thirteen (20.9%) indicated English as their mother tongue. Only the 20–29 age group had a more diverse range of languages which they considered their mother tongue. These languages included Tamil, Malay and a mix of English and another local language. One (1) respondent from the 40–59 age group was unable to decide between Kristang and English as his mother tongue. In this particular case, the respondent's mother's native tongue was Kristang while the father's was English. The use of both languages in the household may have led to the bilingual status of the respondent (Respondent 53). In two instances, Respondent 39 and 49, each of the respondents' mother tongues or ethnic languages was the same as that of their mother's. They maintained the same mother tongue as their mothers which were Tamil and Malay, respectively. This shows the influence of the mother's language preceded that of their Portuguese father in these mixed households.

Self-perceptions of proficiency are generally important predictors of language choice and use. With regard to proficiency in speaking in their mother tongue 46% said they were fluent while about 30.2% said they had average competency in their mother tongue. At the same time it must be pointed out that 23.8% of the N stated they were not fluent, weak or did not know their mother tongue (Table 4).

When asked about their spoken language ability in English, 39 of the N i.e. 62.9% of the respondents said they were fluent in speaking English while 29% (18) reported average spoken fluency in the English language. Only 5 respondents i.e. 8.1% said that they were not fluent in spoken English. None of the respondents said they were weak in English or did not know it. They explained that English was important in order to communicate with relatives who had settled abroad.

When compared to the spoken skills in English, only 32.3%, i.e. 20 of the respondents said they were fluent in spoken standard Malay while about 50% reported average proficiency in spoken Malay. Only 4 respondents said they were weak in standard Malay, or did not know it.

Table 4: Self-perception of spoken language proficiency

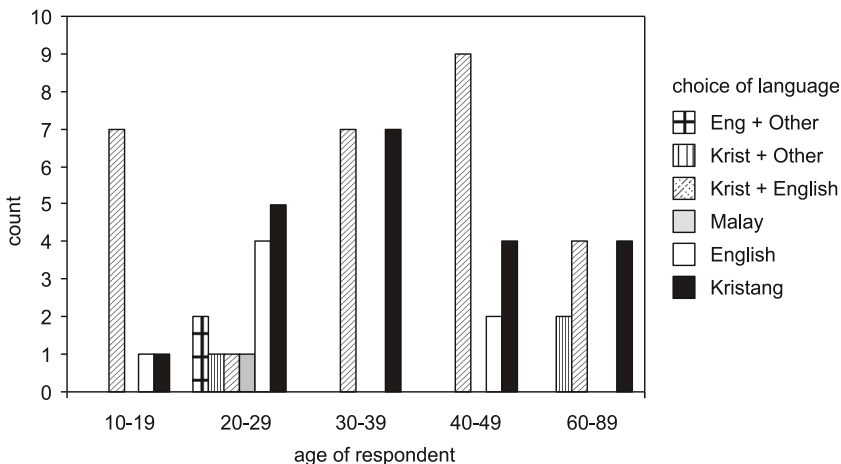
Spoken language	Level of proficiency		
	Fluent	Average	Not fluent/weak
Mother tongue	46.0	30.2	23.8
English	62.9	29.0	8.1
Malay	32.3	47.6	20.1

It can be seen from Table 4 that in their own estimation the largest number of respondents considered themselves to be more proficient in speaking in English as compared to the 46% who considered themselves proficient in speaking their mother tongue. Only a handful of respondents felt they were weak in spoken English as compared to about a fifth of the sample who considered themselves not fluent in speaking in their mother tongue.

When asked what they considered to be their proficiency in the written language, 38.1% of the respondents felt they were fluent in writing in English as compared to 82.5% who felt that they were weak and did not know how to write in their mother tongue.

Respondents were asked to indicate the choice of language used with family members. The 60–89 age group indicated that they preferred Kristang to other languages although they indicated that they do mix Kristang with English and other local languages. The results are shown in Figure 4. A majority (60%) of the 40–59 age group preferred to mix Kristang and English while the rest (40%) preferred to use only Kristang with family members. The 30–39 age group was divided into two equal groups: one that preferred Kristang and one that preferred a mix of Kristang and English. The 20–29 age group indicated a mixed choice of languages used with their family members. Five respondents (35.7%) of this age group preferred to use Kristang, while four (28.6%) preferred to use English with their family members.

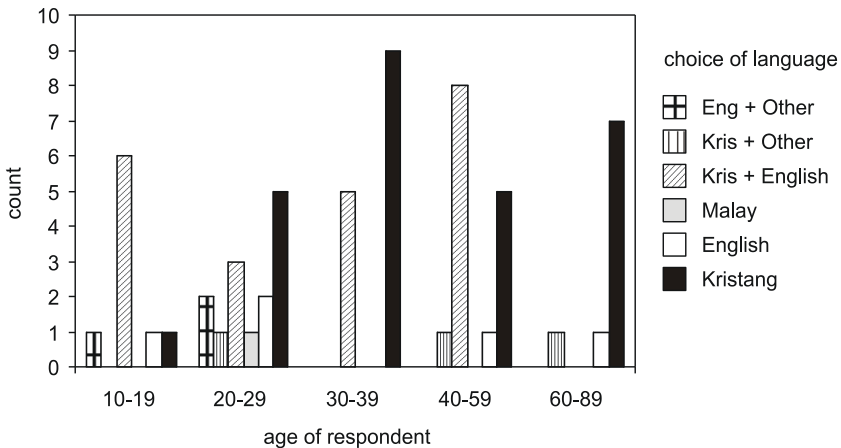
Figure 4: Choice of language among family members



Community members generally preferred to mix Kristang with English or other languages. The same individual who stated Malay as the mother tongue used Malay with family members. The majority of the 10–19 age group (77.8%) preferred to use a language which is a mix of Kristang and English among members of the family. Code mixing is prevalent in the speech of younger community members and code switching can be but the first step towards shift away from the mother tongue.

Figure 5 shows that the respondents were again divided into two main types on the choice of language when interacting with their ethnic friends. There is an overlap of Kristang and a mix of Kristang and English within each group except for the 10–19 and 60–89 age groups. The 10–19 age group preferred to use both Kristang and English in their social interactions with ethnic friends. Respondents from the 60–89 age group, on the other hand, preferred to use Kristang in their social interactions.

Figure 5: Choice of language with ethnic friends



The extreme contrast in the choice of language between the youngest and oldest age groups, a mix of Kristang and English and Kristang only, respectively, is a clear indication of language shift among the different age groups. The data indicates a move from Kristang to using both Kristang and English by the two middle groups (20–29, 30–39 and 40–59) and the total preference for a mix of Kristang and English by the youngest age group (10–19) in this study.

Figure 6: Choice of language for joking

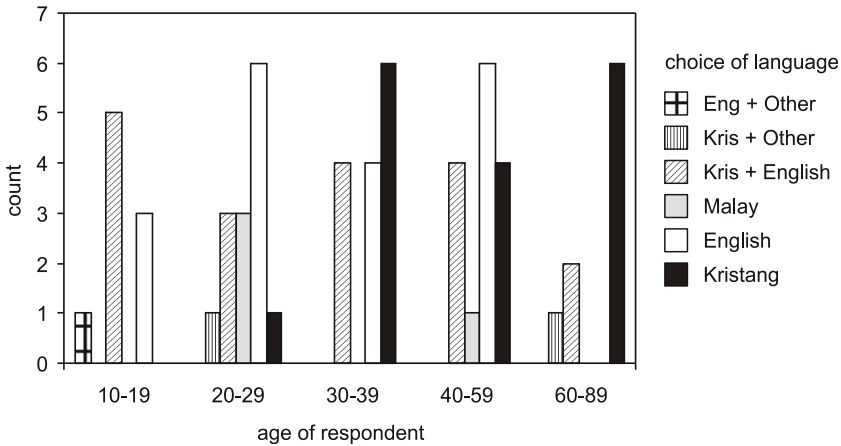
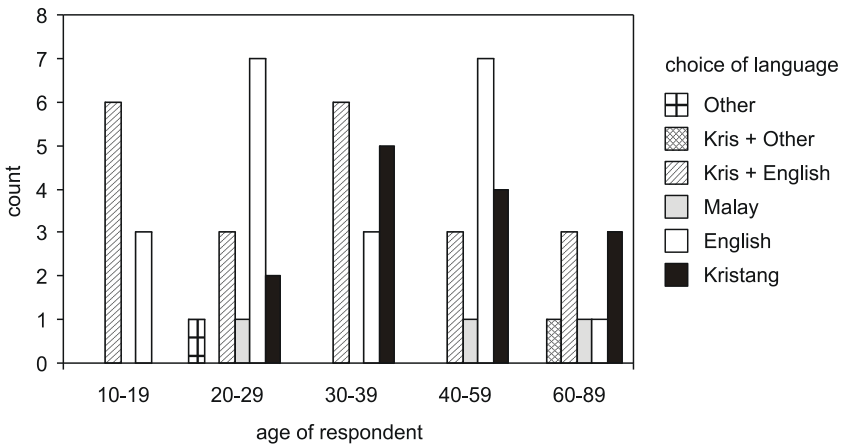


Figure 6 shows that when joking the 60–89 age group indicated that they preferred to use Kristang with a sprinkling of English. The 40–59 and the 30–49 age groups have a mirror image in their choice of language. While the first group preferred English, the latter preferred Kristang. But both groups indicated they also mixed Kristang and English when joking. A majority of the 20–29 age group preferred English while Malay and Kristang are also used in joking by this particular group. The first choice stated by the 10–19 age group is to use both Kristang and English and the second choice is English only. The move is towards the use of more English when joking.

Figure 7: Choice of language when angry

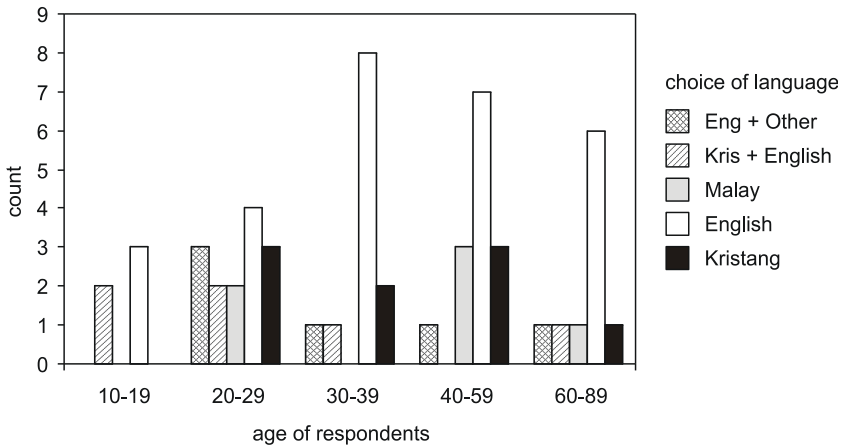


Respondents were also asked to indicate the language used when in anger. This may include language used when scolding or swearing at someone. Figure 7

shows that the use of Kristang is dominant in the older age groups while English is the more dominant language choice for the younger age groups (20–29 and 10–19). Again, a closer look indicates that the 10–19 age group preferred English to Kristang in their language choice when angry. Another study on Malaysian university students by Faridah Noor et al. (1996: 61) indicated English as the language choice when swearing as they felt if they swore in English it would not sound "as crude or rude as in their mother tongue." This could also account for one of the reasons why the respondents of this study chose English.

The choice of language of respondents when involved in any kind of business transactions is shown in Figure 8. This ranges from buying groceries to discussing a business deal. English is the preferred language for all age groups. The use of only Kristang for business transactions is not indicated in the 10–19 age group. The 20–29 age group remains as the group with a range of language preferences in which Malay was also indicated as a choice.

Figure 8: Choice of language for business transactions



Conclusion

This study was targeted at 62 householders in the Portuguese Settlement of Malacca, Malaysia with a view to determining if language shift has taken place. Is the community still making use of its mother tongue Kristang, or has it shifted away from the use of its ethnic language? A questionnaire was distributed from home to home with a view to determining if age-related variance in language choice, which often signals language shift exists. Forty-five (72.6%) of the N indicated Kristang as their mother tongue while thirteen (20.9%) indicated English as their mother tongue. However, the 20–29 age group had a more diverse range of languages, which they considered as their mother tongue. These languages include Tamil, Malay and a mix

of English and another local language. The younger members of the community, it appears, are moving away from their ethnic language use.

With regard to proficiency in speaking in their mother tongue 46% of the N said they were fluent in Kristang while about 30.2% said they had average competency. However, about a quarter of the sample, i.e. 23.8% of the N stated that they were not fluent in, that they were weak in or that they did not know their mother tongue. In their own estimation 62.9% considered themselves to be more proficient in speaking in English as compared to the 46% who considered themselves proficient in speaking their mother tongue. Even the 60–89 age group who indicated that they preferred Kristang to other languages admitted that they had a tendency to mix Kristang with English and other local languages. Similarly, a majority (60%) of the 40–59 age group preferred to mix Kristang and English as did the majority of the 10–19 age group (77.8%) who also preferred to use a language which is a mix of Kristang and English when interacting with family members. Code mixing is prevalent in the speech of younger community members and code switching can be but the first step towards shift from L1.

Furthermore, the extreme contrast in the choice of language between the youngest and oldest age groups, a mix of Kristang and English and Kristang only, respectively, is a clear indication of language shift among the different age groups. The data indicate a move from Kristang to using both Kristang and English.

When joking the 60–89 age group indicated that they preferred to use Kristang with a sprinkling of English. In contrast, the 40–59 and the 30–49 age groups preferred Kristang. Although they preferred using Kristang both groups acknowledged that they also mixed Kristang and English when joking. In contrast, a majority of the 20–29 N preferred English. Respondents were also asked to indicate the language used when in anger. This may include language used when scolding or swearing at someone. The use of Kristang is dominant in the older age groups while English is the more dominant language choice for the younger age groups (20–29 and 10–19). Again, a closer look indicates that the 10–19 age group preferred English to Kristang in their language choice when angry.

As community members scatter and move away from the settlement it is inevitable that language shift for the Portuguese community will take place. The constant mixing of Kristang with English by the younger members of the community also does not bode well for the vitality of Kristang. If the offspring of these young are to hear anything but this mixed language and if English is to take dominance in this mixed variety, it is inevitable that the community is experiencing language shift.

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Maya Khemlani David, Faridah Noor Mohd. Noor

OČUVANJE JEZIKA ILI JEZIČNI POMAK U PORTUGALSKOM NASELJU U MELAKI U MALEZIJI

SAŽETAK

U prilogu se raspravlja o statusu kristanga, kreolskog jezika portugalskih Euroazijaca u Maleziji. Istraživanje je usredotočeno na pripadnike portugalske euroazijske zajednice koji žive u portugalskom naselju u Melaki. Osnovni rezultati analize o tome održavaju li pripadnici zajednice kristang, dobiveni su upitnikom od 47 pitanja na koji su odgovorila 62 ispitanika. Upitnik je dan članu obitelji u polovini domaćinstava smještenih u naselju i iznosi sljedeće pojedinosti: a) demografske, b) samopredodžbu o poznavanju jezika – govornoga i pisanoga, c) o materinskom jeziku roditelja ispitanika, i d) o uporabi manjinskog jezika. Istraživana područja su jezici koje upotrebljavaju pripadnici etnije kod kuće i izvan nje s drugim pripadnicima zajednice. Da bi se utvrdila budućnost kristanga, uspoređeni su izbor jezika i njegova uporaba između starijih i mlađih pripadnika zajednice. Također je utvrđen izbor jezika različitih dobnih skupina u specifičnim jezičnim funkcijama i situacijama, primjerice u ljutnji. Istraživanje pokazuje da ispitanici u svim dobnim skupinama smatraju engleski svojim najvažnijim jezikom. Zapravo, u 16% ispitanika dogodio se jezični pomak već tijekom njihova odrastanja kako se materinski jezik njihovih roditelja kretao od nizozemskog do engleskog i čak do kineskog dijalekta. To se objašnjava prilično velikom stopom (20%) mješovitih brakova. Premda općenito mnogi ispitanici smatraju i engleski i kristang svojim materinskim jezikom, većina njih u dobnj skupini od 10–19 godina (77,8%) radije u obiteljskom okružju upotrebljava jezik koji je mješavina kristanga i engleskog. Takva mješavina kodova prevladava u govoru mlađih pripadnika zajednice i može biti prvi korak dalje od upotrebe kristanga. Ekstreman kontrast u izboru jezika između najmlađih i najstarijih dobnih skupina, mješavina kristanga i engleskoga odnosno samo kristang, jasan je pokazatelj jezičnog pomaka između različitih dobnih skupina. Podaci pokazuju pomak od kristanga prema uporabi i kristanga i engleskoga u srednjim skupinama (starost 20–29, 30–39 i 40–59 godina) i posvemašnju prednost mješavine kristanga i engleskog u najmlađoj dobnj skupini (10–19 godina).

KLJUČNE RIJEČI: Melaka, portugalski, kristang, očuvanje jezika, engleski

Maya Khemlani David, Faridah Noor Mohd. Noor

**SAUVEGARDE DE LA LANGUE OU GLISSEMENT LINGUISTIQUE
DANS LA LOCALITE PORTUGAISE DE MELAKA EN MALAISIE**

RÉSUMÉ

Cet article traite du statut du kristang, langue créole des Eurasiens portugais en Malaisie. Cette recherche est concentrée sur les membres de la communauté eurasienne portugaise vivant dans la localité portugaise de Melaka. Les résultats fondamentaux de l'analyse sur la sauvegarde du kristang par les membres de cette communauté ont été obtenus sur la base d'un questionnaire de 47 points auquel ont répondu 62 personnes enquêtées. Le questionnaire a été donné à un membre de la famille dans la moitié des ménages de la localité et porte sur les éléments suivants: a) démographie, b) autoévaluation de la connaissance de la langue écrite et parlée, c) détermination de la langue maternelle des parents de la personne enquêtée et, d) usage de la langue de la minorité. Les domaines étudiés sont les langues qu'utilisent les membres de l'ethnie à la maison et à l'extérieur, avec les autres membres de leur communauté. Pour définir le futur du kristang, l'auteur a comparé la langue choisie et son utilisation entre les membres âgés et plus jeunes de la communauté. L'auteur a également déterminé quelle langue est choisie d'un groupe d'âge à l'autre dans des fonctions et situations linguistiques spécifiques, telles que la colère. La recherche montre que les enquêtés de tous les groupes d'âge considèrent l'anglais comme leur langue majeure. En fait, 16% des enquêtés ont connu un glissement dès leur jeunesse, à savoir que la langue maternelle de leurs parents a cessé d'être le néerlandais pour devenir l'anglais voire un dialecte chinois. Ceci peut s'expliquer par le fait qu'un assez fort pourcentage de couples (20%) est mixte. Bien qu'en général de nombreux enquêtés considèrent l'anglais et le kristang comme leurs langues maternelles, la majorité du groupe de 10 à 19 ans (77,8%) utilise plus volontiers dans le milieu familial un parler qui est un mélange d'anglais et de kristang. Un tel mélange de codes domine dans le parler des jeunes membres de la communauté et peut être un premier pas vers une sauvegarde du kristang. Les contrastes extrêmes au niveau des langues choisies entre les groupes d'âge les plus jeunes et les plus âgés est un indicateur évident de glissement parmi les divers groupes d'âge. Les données recueillies montrent un écart entre l'utilisation du kristang et de l'anglais dans les groupes médians (20 à 29 ans, 30 à 39 ans, 40 à 59 ans) et une totale prédominance du mélange de kristang et d'anglais dans le groupe le plus jeune (10 à 19 ans).

MOTS CLES: Melaka, portugais, kristang, sauvegarde de la langue, anglais