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Language as a Medium of Solidarity: The Case of Malay Language in Forging Solidarity and Patriotism Among Malaysians

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ABSTRACT

Malaysia is a nation state with a plural society in terms of race, culture, creed and language. Hence the questions of national integration and solidarity are critical issues in the effort of national development towards a developed status by 2020 as proposed by the government. This paper will focus discussion on the concepts of Malaysian nation state, national integration and solidarity, and will propose several strategies towards developing national integration and solidarity, namely 1) empowering Malay language as the language of education and higher learning, and 2) instilling the spirit of patriotism among Malaysians by making Malaysia as their homeland. Paul Kennedy's model of development in his *Preparing for the Twenty-first Century* (1994: 334-335), is used to evaluate Malaysia's viability of achieving the developed status as targeted.

Keywords: Heterogenous, national integration, cultural solidarity, nation state, patriotism.

Introduction

Malaysia is a nation state with a plural society in terms of race, culture, creed and language. Hence the questions of national integration, unity and patriotism are critical issues in the effort of national development to bring the nation into an advanced status. This article will propose three strategies towards developing national integration and patriotism, namely 1) empowering Malay language as the national and official language, language of education, higher learning and integration and 2) instilling love towards Malaysia and a sense of pride, belonging and commitment amongst all citizens towards Malaysia as their country where they are born and bred and as their homeland.

Malaysia as an Heterogeneous Nation with Issues of National Integration

Malaysia is a country with a population of different races, ethnicities, cultures, mother tongues and religions. Department of Statistics of Malaysia (<http://www.statistics.gov.my>. Retrieved on 20/11/2015) cites statistics on demography as follows:

Table 1

Malaysia is a Country with a Population of Different Races, Ethnicities, Cultures, Mother Tongues and Religions

Malaysia's Total population:	28,552,700	
Malaysian Citizens:	25,870,000	100%
Race/Ethnic among citizens		
i. Native/Indigenous..... (Malays=50.4%, Iban, Kadazan-Dusun, Bajau, Murut.Orang Asli, etc. =14.6%)	17,312.100	67.7
ii. Chinese.....	6,505,700	24.6
iii. Indians.....	1,943,500	7.3
iv. Others (minorities).....	368,500	0.7
v. Non-citizens.....	2,422,000	8.4
Religion among citizens		
i. Islam.....		61.3
ii. Buddhism		19.8
iii. Christianity.....		9.2
iv. Hinduism.....		6.3
v. Confucianism/Tao/Chinese traditional religi3n....		1.3
vi. Animist/religion unknown		1.0

(<http://www.statistics.gov.my>. Retrieved on 20/11/2015)

It is clear from the above statistics; Malaysia is not an integrated country in terms of demographic composition, but a heterogenic one with diverse racial, ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious backgrounds. Although the majority of the population are the natives/indigenous (Bumiputeras) and Islam is the dominant religion, however the situation is not an absolute majority as in the case with all the advance nations of the world where more than 75% of the population are made up by one dominant group, placing the group in a position of power and dominance, as shown below:

Table 2

The Countries of World Where More Than 75% of the Population are Made Up by One Dominant Group, Placing the Group in a Position of Power and Dominance

U.S of America:	80% white race
United Kingdom:	92% white race
France:	92.5% white race
Germany:	81% white race
Italy:	95% white race
Spain:	89% white race
Switzerland:	90% white race
Russia:	80% white race
Australia:	78% white race
Japan:	99% Japanese

South Korea:	98% Koreans
Taiwan:	98% Chinese,
People Republic China:	92% Chinese
Singapore:	75% Chinese

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/list_of_countries_by_population. Retrieved on 18/09/2015)

Paul Kennedy in his celebrated book *Preparing for the Twenty-first Century* (1994: 334-335) after extensively analyzing the economic condition of the countries of the world, states that countries that are in the best position to move forward achieving high status in the 21st century are:

“[...] the most likely at the moment appear to be Japan, Korea, and certain other East Asia trading states, Germany, Switzerland, some of the Scandinavian states, and perhaps the European Community as a whole... It is obvious that societies (or nations) which possess technical and educational resources, ample funds, and cultural solidarity are better positioned for the next century than those lacking all those strength”.

Paul Kennedy (ibid) described further the conditions for a country to move forward are:

1. Having the technical resources and sound educational system that can transform people into skilled, ethical, and disciplined human capital with the ability to create tools that are capable of developing the country,
2. Having sufficient funds, so as to provide sufficient capitals to invest in all spheres of development, and
3. Having strong cultural solidarity to ensure the stability, cooperation and peace among the population

Although “cultural solidarity” is mentioned last by the author, it is actually the most important factor, for without solidarity there would be no unity and cooperation among the population. This condition is prerequisite to develop the quality of cooperativeness and resilience amongst the people so as to exploit beneficially the first two assets namely educational, technological advancement and the nation’s wealth. As shown above, the condition of all the 14 developed countries of the world are integrated in terms of the demographic composition where over 75% of the population comprise one dominant group either by ethnicity or racial descent.

Nonetheless, having one dominant racial group does not guarantee stability, unity and development in a country. Pakistan (almost all are Indo-Aryan descents with 97% Muslims), India (Majority are Indo-Aryans in Northern India and Dravidians in Southern India, with 80% Hindus), Bangladesh (98% Bengalis with 90% Muslims) and Indonesia (majority are of Malayo-Polynesian family group with 86% Muslims) (Cf. websites on demographic structure of these countries), yet these factors failed to lead them towards cultural solidarity, unity and development. Indeed it is a fact that these countries are mired in conflicts and violence amongst religious, sects, ethnic groups and regional differences.

Malaysia, a case in point, is indeed very heterogeneous in ethnicity, culture, language and creed and has high tendency to spark prejudices and conflicts, as shown in the racial riot on the 13th May, 1969. Thus specific formulae or strategies, based on the three features mentioned above, must be developed to ensure the establishment of a common national

identity, pride and integration among its citizens so that strong spirit of patriotism will be fostered.

The Issue of Cultural Solidarity and the Concept of National Integration in Malaysia

The term culture has many definitions but generally it can be conceptualize as follows:

“It is a set of beliefs, values, norms, customs, traditions, rituals, and a way of life that differentiates one group from another.” (Lee Su Kim, 2003: 1)

A major factor of cultural solidarity is having common element in values, norms, customs, traditions, rituals and ways of life, including religious belief and language use. However, Malaysia as mentioned above is diverse in those culturally identifying elements, therefore, it lessens the possibilities of creating cultural solidarity basing on those elements. Thus, in order to create a bridge between races of different cultural, linguistic, and religious backgrounds, the government of Malaysia in 1970 developed the concept of national culture or “kebudayaan kebangsaan”, as an outcome of the government-sponsored National Culture Congress held on 16th to 20th August, 1970, a year after the racial riot significantly termed as the 13th of May Tragedy in May 13, 1969. The Government has come to realize the importance of unity, tolerance and a sense of solidarity among the people with diverse and plural society such as Malaysia.

The concept of national culture as proposed by the resolution of the 1970 Congress contains the following basic principles:

1. That it is based on the cultural elements of indigenous inhabitants of the region i.e. the Malays and the Bumiputeras,
2. That elements from other cultures, which are considered to be good and appropriate, might be incorporated into the national culture, and
3. That those universal Islamic elements would be the crucial component of the national culture.

However, according to Hassan Ahmad, former Director General of the Malaysian Language and Literary Board (Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka), asserted that National Culture Policy has failed to develop an integrated national culture of Malaysia, and the non-Malays have been against it ever since it was first formulated. (Cf. Hassan Ahmad, 1999, chapter 10, note 16, see also Kua Kia Song. 1985). Consequently, according to Hassan Ahmad, the government had set up another body, the National Cultural Advisory Council in 1996 to revisit and reformulate the concept of national culture and to accommodate it into the Vision 2020 proposed by the former Prime Minister of Malaysia Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamed as a framework to bring Malaysia to a developed nation status.

According to the Vision 2020, the concept of a one nation means that a sovereign nation whose people are so integrated that they cannot be identified by race, ethnicity or creed. Establishing a unified nation as espoused by the Vision 2020, is a prerequisite for progress, because without people having a sense of unity as a one nation, there will be no peace and stability and the country will not be able to develop and progress. To achieve this goal, attributes such as national unity, loyalty to the country, inter-ethnic harmony and tolerance become the focus of planning and efforts, rather than establishing a common national culture. Therefore according to Hassan Ahmad, a new idea has been proposed that is the "concept of the State Culture" (Kebudayaan Negara). It replaces the concept of "National

Culture" (Kebudayaan Kebangsaan). The fundamental characteristic associated with state culture of Malaysia is that it is not related to a race or any ethnic group.

Malaysia as a developed nation according to the Vision 2020, is to have the following features based on nine challenges or goals (Mahathir Mohamed, 1991: 22):

1. Establishing a united Malaysian nation with a sense of common and shared destiny. This must be a nation at peace with itself, territorially and ethnically integrated, living in harmony and full and fair partnership, made up of one "Bangsa Malaysia" with political loyalty and dedication to the nation,
2. Creating a psychologically liberated, secure and developed Malaysian society with faith and confidence in itself, justifiably proud of what it is, of what it has accomplished, robust enough to face all manner of adversity,
3. Fostering and developing a mature democratic society, practicing a form of mature, consensual, community-oriented Malaysian democracy that can be a model for many developing countries,
4. Establishing a fully moral and ethical society, whose citizens are strong in religious and spiritual values and imbued with the highest of ethical standards,
5. Establishing a mature, liberal and tolerant society in which Malaysians of all colors and creeds are free to practice and profess their customs, cultures and religious beliefs and yet feeling that they belong to one nation,
6. Establishing a scientific and progressive society, a society that is innovative and forward-looking, one that is not only a consumer of technology but also a contributor to the scientific and technological civilization of the future,
7. Establishing a fully caring society and a caring culture, a social system in which society will come before self, in which the welfare of the people will revolve not around the state or the individual but around a strong and resilient family system,
8. Ensuring an economically just society in which there is a fair and equitable distribution of the wealth of the nation, in which there is a full partnership in economic progress. Such a society cannot be in place so long as there is the identification of economic backwardness with race, and
9. Establishing a prosperous society, with an economy that is fully competitive, dynamic, robust and resilient.

The then Prime Minister, who proposed the Vision 2020, has laid down the following principles to form a united Bangsa Malaysia or Malaysian Nation (Mahathir Mohamed, 1991: 22):

1. A perceived common and shared destiny,
2. A peaceful nation which is integrated in terms of regions and races,
3. A nation with people living in harmony as full and equal partners, and
4. A nation of people with undivided loyalty and dedication to the country.

However, a question can be raised with regard to the language to be used for a vehicle of expression and discourse to disseminate those principles outlined above? The Vision 2020 did not specify as to what language to be used as medium of discourse.

In the developed countries of the world whether in the West or in the East, the language as the medium for the communication, adoption, expression, dissemination and strengthening of those basic principles of nationhood would be their own indigenous or national languages. This is the accepted law of nature, as asserted by the Malay maxim: "Wherever the earth is

trodden the sky is above your head (*Di mana bumi dipijak, di situ langit dijunjung*). For security, prosperity and well being of a person or a group of people who live in a settlement, a village, a municipal, a state or a region, they must be able to adapt themselves to the environment and culture where they are in i.e. its ecological system. In their natural habitat, human must adapt to the climate, weather, topography, fauna and flora surrounding them, so that they can live in security and prosperity. In cultural aspects, they must be able to adapt to the human ecology of local rules, customs, laws, and local language of for their safety, wellbeing and prosperity.

Therefore, in order to communicate and inculcate the values espoused by the Vision 2020, namely to strengthen the integration and mutual understanding between different regions and among different ethnic and racial groups, to develop science and technology among the general population, to foster a progressive society, that serve and promote moral and ethical values, as well as to be able to develop the economy so that people can be progressive and prosperous, the medium of discourse must be presented in the indigenous language or the native language of the nation, which is for Malaysia, none other than the Malay language, the national language. Malaysia has adopted and implemented Malay as the national language, the official language, the language in education and the language for national unity, with great success for almost 50 years, when the National Language Act 1963/67 was passed by Parliament. Hence, in order to foster and develop all the aspects mentioned above, there is no other alternative but to use the Malay language.

However, based on the government actions to encourage the use of English in teaching science and technology in higher education which was endorsed by the Education Act 1996 (replacing the Education Act 1961) and Private Institution of Higher Learning (IPTS) Act 1996, passed by Parliament in 1996, allowing the full use of English language as the medium of instruction in all private institutions of higher learning, and the new policy of teaching mathematics and science in English in school starting in 2003, clearly shows that the government's vision to bring Malaysia into the developed nation status is through the medium of English language. The Parent Action Group for Education Malaysia (PAGE) is spearheading the movement towards such a policy. Currently the Dual Language Programme (DLP) is planned to be implemented by the Ministry of Education in 300 selected schools in 2016, where English language will be the medium of instruction.

The preference in the use of English as the medium of education can be seen as driven by the elitist section of the society, who perceive benefits as well as profits in a short-term period without considering the negative consequences of the long term damages and divisions that can occur among the people of various races, cultures, religions and languages in the country. The elites believe that in order to develop a society or a nation in a shortest possible time, is by the transferring the knowledge, science and technology that have been developed and made available in all the developed countries such as the United States of America, United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand. Since all those knowledge are written, recorded and distributed in the English language, this situation has led to the assumption and perception that the most rational strategy for our students is to learn, inculcate and develop those knowledge in the English language as well.

This assumption can be equated with the perceived success of the fast food franchises such as McDonald, Kentucky Fried Chicken, Pizza Hut and etc that were adopted and implemented with great success throughout the world. However, the human factors are unlike the fast food ingredients that can be processed, blended, mixed and produced in mass production. With human beings, factors such as sense of national pride and dignity, social characteristics, heritage and national legacy of the people must be taken into account.

This false perception and assumption of the benefits of the English language among the elites were not really based on concrete findings worldwide, but mostly based on their own personal experiences and their observations on the scenario of progress and development of those Western countries, which has blinded their minds' eyes and falsified their conclusion. In the words of Holborow (1999: 56-57):

“[...] The dominance of English today is the continuation of a process started in the earliest days of capitalism, deepened by the expansion of the British Empire and given further impetus by the commanding position of the American capitalism in this century [...]” (Hashim Hj Musa & Mohd Rashid Bin Mohd Saad, 2004)

Strategies to Foster National Integration in the Nation State of Malaysia

The Concept of Nation State and The Nation State of Malaysia

The concept of a nation in general can be defined as a political community under the sovereignty of a government. However, a nation is also defined as:

“A relatively large group of people who feel they belong together by virtue of sharing one or more of such traits as a common race, a common language, a common culture, a common history, a common set of customs or traditions.” (Reo M. Christenson, et al, 1981: 20)

In this definition, a nation has no physical borders. However, as mentioned above it can also refer to people who share a common territory and government, as defined by the Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary:

“A nation is a community of people composed of one or more nationalities and possessing a more or less defined territory and government.” (Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 10th Edition 1996: 773)

The concept of nation-state of Malaysia as proposed by Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamed, the former Prime Minister of Malaysia, on launching the Vision 2020 in 1991, defined Malaysian nation-to-be, as follows:

“... a united Malaysian nation (*Bangsa Malaysia*) with a sense of common and shared destiny. This must be a nation at peace with itself, territorially and ethnically integrated, living in harmony in full and fair partnership, made up of one '*Bangsa Malaysia*' with political loyalty and dedication to the nation ... a matured, liberal and tolerant society in which Malaysians of all colours and creeds are free to practice and profess their customs, cultures and religious beliefs and yet feeling that they belong to one nation.” (Mahathir Mohammed, 1991: 2-3)

In summary the Malaysian nation or '*Bangsa Malaysia*' according the Vision 2020 has the following five characteristics:

1. A nation with a sense of common and shared destiny,
2. A nation at peace with itself, territorially and ethnically integrated,
3. A nation living in harmony in full and fair partnership,

4. A nation made up of one '*Bangsa Malaysia*' with political loyalty and dedication to the nation, and
5. A nation with a matured, liberal and tolerant society in which Malaysians of all colours and creeds are free to practice and profess their customs, cultures and religious beliefs and yet feeling that they belong to one nation.

Fostering National Integration and The Spirit of Patriotism in Malaysia

It is clear that the basic principle in the formation of the would-be Malaysian nation as espoused by the Vision 2020, is the consciousness or the feeling of unity or sense of belonging among its people firstly to the state, as the country where one is born and bred. Secondly, the feeling of unity or sense of belonging amongst all its people as fellow citizens, that is one is fully committed to mutual safety and well-being. This is actually the concept of patriotism that is the love and devotion for the homeland and fellow countrymen.

The English term "patriot" (derives from Latin *patriota* and French *pater* "father") meaning "one who loves his/her country and support its authority and interests". (The Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 1996:852). Thus according to the Vision 2020 the effort to instil and nurture unity among Malaysians is not by way of developing a common Malaysian culture, as was tried before, but to forge a common sense of belonging and identity amongst its people, that is to have a deep feeling of belonging, pride, love and commitment to the Malaysian nation.

The big question is what are the methods, formulas and strategies to nurture, develop and build an integrated nation with a common "sense of unity, belonging, pride, love and commitment" to Malaysia?

In this paper, as mentioned above, two strategies will be proposed to instil, nurture and cultivate a common "sense of unity, belonging, pride, love and commitment to Malaysia", that is the spirit of patriotism among Malaysian citizens; they are:

1. Cultivate love and pride towards the national language as the language of integration, the language of all official functions, the language of education, the language of higher knowledge, science, technology, and the language of Malaysian future civilization forged according to our mould and characteristics,
2. Instilling love, a sense of pride, and feeling of belonging and commitment amongst all citizens towards Malaysia as their country where they are born and bred as their homeland.

The inculcation of the feeling of common identity and sense of belonging to Malaysia amongst its citizens is essential for the idea of one united Malaysian nation to emerge, and only through the nurturing of those two common features mentioned above, viz common language and common historical legacy, will lead towards the fostering of social integration amongst Malaysian citizens. This is because based on the social and cultural characteristics, as detailed above, Malaysians are diversified in term of races, ethnicity, cultures, religions and mother tongues, and these varied elements are big barriers to unity and integration. They are in fact the likely sources of friction, conflict and disintegration as proven by the 13th May 1969 tragedy. Thus the issue of national integration is crucial to the development of Malaysian and fostering the spirit of patriotism.

The central idea of national integration, to our mind, is concisely captured by the following definition:

“The need to bind together the various regions and diverse peoples of a country into a functioning and interdependent whole.” (Christine Drake, 1989: 1)

Christine Drake also gave a detailed description of national integration as follows:

“..[N]ational integration is a multidimensional concept, incorporating five major dimensions. First, the historical dimension i.e.nationalism and shared national experiences ...and acts as cohesive forces. Second, the political dimension, which refers to ...the type of government, the formal distribution of power amongst the different regional units and ethnic groups ... [and] ... the functional outworking of both power allocation and popular participation in the political organisation of the state. Third, the socio-cultural dimension, which refers to... the degree to which national loyalty supersedes local, ethnic, or regional loyalty; the extent to which the state has a 'national culture' or 'national life' .. [and] ... the degree of mixing of different ethnic or regional groups. Fourth, the interaction dimension, which refers to ... the linkages between different regions in terms of road, rail, shipping and airlines, telecommunication lines, etc. [and] ... the mobility of the population and the resulting heterogeneity of peoples within a region. Fifth, the economic dimension, which refers to the interdependence and complementarities of the factors of production and distribution; and the interdependence of regions economically within the state.” (Christine Drake, Ibid)

National integration, as mentioned above, is closely related to and in fact prerequisite to the fostering of patriotism, that is the love and devotion towards one's nation state amongst the citizens. To evaluate the degree of patriotism among citizens of the various countries of the world, a survey was done in the year 1995-1997 which was based on one question “How proud are you of your country?” Based on a scale of 1 - 4 (1 = excessively not proud, 2 = not proud, 3 = proud, 4 = very proud), the findings for different countries are as follows:

Table 3

A survey was done in the year 1995-1997 which was based on one question "How proud are you of your country?"

Questionnaire: 1995-1997	
Country:	Score (maximum 4)
USA	3.92
Venezuela	3.73
South Africa	3.72
India	3.70
Peru	3.68
Slovenia	3.64
Poland	3:55
Australia	3:54
Spain	3:38
Argentina	3:29
Sweden	3:13
Moldova	2.98
Japan	2.85
Russia	2.69
Switzerland	2:59
Lithuania	2:47
Latvia	2:10
Germany	1:37
Average	3:12

(<http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org>. Retrieved on 20/09/2015)

It is clear that the United States of America (USA) has successfully implemented and foster the highest degree of patriotism amongst its citizens, as the result showed that almost 100% of the people surveyed were proud to be Americans as well as proud of their own country, whereas the citizens of Japan, Switzerland, Russia, Lithuania and Latvia were not proud of their countries (score of less than 3.00) and the Germans were least proud of their country (score of less than 2.00). However on the average people of the world are still proud of their own countries (scores more than 3.00).

How did USA managed to implement and foster such a strong sense of patriotism amongst its citizens?

From the above discussion, it is clear that to instil a strong spirit of patriotism amongst the citizens, meticulous planning and strategies should be devised in order to bring about national integration and unity amongst the people which are prerequisite to the condition of stability, equitable development and prosperity of the country. Only when such a condition prevails in a country, that a sense of pride and attachment in the hearts its citizens and strong patriotic feeling to the country can then be fostered. Without national integration a country like Malaysia which is heterogeneous in terms of cultures, races, religions, customs and traditions, achieving sustainable peace and stability is indeed very difficult.

As proposed by Christine Drake, at least five different dimensions should be addressed in order to bring about national integration, namely historical, political, socio-cultural, interaction and economic dimensions.

As proven by the survey above, USA has somehow succeeded in their effort to instil strong patriotism amongst its citizens. Several notable strategies were implemented by them. Firstly, all public educational institutions (schools, colleges, universities) funded by the government either at the federal, states or local authority levels, only use one medium of instruction namely the American English. This is strengthened further by the fact that in late April 2006, the U.S. Senate added two amendments to its immigration bill: firstly, declaring English as the national language, and secondly, recognizing it as the country's "common and unifying tongue." (Quoted in Mary Kent and Robert Lalasz, "In the News: Speaking English in the United States", *Population Reference Bureau* (<http://www.prb.org>, Retrieved on 17/11/2015).

Moreover, in American educational system, the study of American history and geography are compulsory subjects which strive to instil amongst its citizens strong awareness and deep knowledge of their own country's heritage, demography and territories, and thus fostering strong attachment and commitment to their homeland, attributes that are prerequisites towards fostering American patriotism.

The few notable strategies described above and the sheer superior status of the USA dominating the world scenario undoubtedly has instilled a sense of deep pride and attachment among its citizens towards USA, and this has brought about strong patriotic feeling among its citizens.

Empowering The Malay Language as The Language of Education, Higher Learning and The Language of Unification in Fostering National Integration

The function of a language is not only as a tool and medium of communication, but it plays a major role in shaping one's identity, fostering a sense of belonging (*esprit de corps*), and pride amongst the community of its speakers.

The use of language also reflects the attribute of refinement, status, and the level of education of the speakers. Language is also a tool to describe, record, accumulate and communicate the treasure of knowledge and wisdom of a nation and pass them down from one generation to another. Hence language and literacy are key elements in the formation and development of a civilization. Worldview, thought and knowledge of a society are also closely related to the language used. Hence, the use of Malay language which is the native language and the national language of Malaysia as a language of knowledge, science, technology, education, and the administration of the country, can give shape and colour to the forms of achievement, progress and the advancement of the nation in Malaysian particular mould.

Moreover, the enculturation of knowledge, science and technology in the native language can easily be comprehended, accepted and mastered by all the citizens of the country, and thereby intensify and heighten the use of the potential human resources as widely as possible among the general population. The wider and more extensive use of the potential human capital among the general population will result in the emergence of a large middle class community. A large middle class community is a prerequisite to the building of a wider base for the country's development, and this will trigger a more equitable progress and advancement in the country, as what is happening in Japan, South Korea and Taiwan. Such equitable development will foster inner strength, confidence and pride amongst the majority of the citizens, and this in turn will be able to cultivate in them a sense of dignity, pride and identity to their nation and country. These are seeds that will germinate a sense of belonging, commitment and spirit of patriotism among the citizens of a nation. On the other hand, if knowledge is imparted in a foreign language, only one small sector of the population become highly educated due to the more conducive environment of English usage in the

cities, forming a small elitist middle class community, whilst the majority of the population who are less educated and less skilled due to inability to master the foreign language, become the lower class citizens who are burden to the country's development and progress.

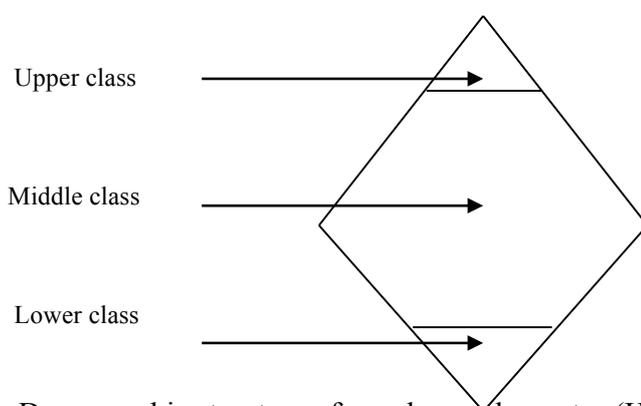


Figure 1: Demographic structure of an advanced country (Hashim Hj Musa, 2008: 122)

The demographic structure of an advanced nation is in the form of a diamond; the middle class form the majority of the population and they are the engine of development and progress because of their higher level of education and skills, whilst the upper class and the lower class are the minorities. On the other hand, in the developing and underdeveloped countries the demographic structure is in the form a pyramid, where the lower class is the majority and the middle class and the upper class are the minorities. The lower class are the burden to the country's development and progress due to their lower level of education and skills.

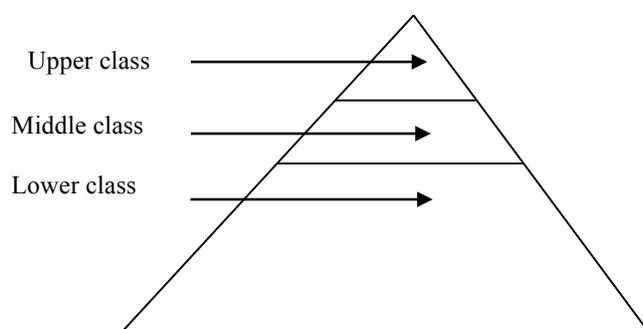


Figure 2: Demographic structure of an underdeveloped country (Hashim Hj Musa, 2008: 122)

The above conditions exist in almost all the countries of the world either in the west or in the east. In the advanced countries located in the core of their engine of development are their own native or local languages that become the medium for the search and acquisition of knowledge and skills, and also for imparting and enculturation of knowledge and skills amongst their citizens. These conditions occur without exception in all developed countries of the world.

However, one may cite Singapore as a developed country which uses the English language as the medium of education and administration instead of one of its own national languages. Singapore is a small city state with 100% urban population and a standardized educational system which ensure a completely standardized learning and teaching condition. Thus the mastery of English language and the imparting and acquisition of knowledge and

skills are almost equitable amongst its citizens. Hence, one may say that the majority of the population of Singapore is made of a middle class community which ensure its completely equitable development and progress in spite of using a foreign language as the language of education and administration. This condition is strengthened further by the fact that Singapore is a cosmopolitan nation with 1.4 millions non-residents (27%) made up mostly of expatriates communicating in English, out of the total population of 5.18 millions (cf. Department of Statistics Singapore (<http://singstat.gov.sg>)). It is also an entreport city with large inflow of international visitors communicating mostly in English.

For Malaysia, on the other hand, the role of the medium of acquiring knowledge and skills, and also for imparting and enculturation of knowledge and skills amongst its citizens, must and can be played by the Malay language as the national language, the official language, as well as the language of education, knowledge, science, and technology. Malay as the national language is also the language of unification, in order to foster integration, identity, and the spirit of nationalism among the heterogeneous society of Malaysia.

In short, language does play a big role in colouring the human ecology and activity of a society and a nation. Therefore, Malay language as the national language, official language and language of education must and can play a major role in fulfilling those functions.

Instilling The Sense of Pride, Belonging and Commitment Among The Citizens Towards Malaysia as Their Country of Birth and Their Homeland

The core characteristics of patriotism are loyalty, devotion and love to the nation which parallel or even supersedes loyalty and love to one's own racial or regional groupings; that is putting national interest ahead of factional causes or personal interests. Though this idealism is indeed very noble and lofty to be achieved by citizens of any country, it is needed as a definite goal or vision to spur and motivate the citizens to strive for it. In the very effort of striving and working for the goal, a gradual process of patriotic feeling could be fostered and cultivated amongst the citizens. However, common denominators with which all citizens can identify and associate themselves are needed to be the starting points of the efforts and strivings.

Conclusion

From the above discussion, it is clear that to achieve national unity and integration in Malaysia, planning and implementation must take into account all aspects covering the socio-cultural-political-educational-religious aspects. Without national integration, a heterogeneous country like Malaysia with highly sensitive and volatile issues on racial, cultural, religious, economic and political relations, it is very difficult to achieve sustainable peace and stability.

This paper has proposed two strategies to foster and strengthen unity and patriotism among the people of Malaysia. Firstly, empowering Malay as the national language and language of education and integration, and secondly instilling the spirit of love towards Malaysia among the citizens and cultivate a sense of pride, belonging and commitment amongst all citizens towards Malaysia as their homeland; their country of birth and growth.

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