iv. Restoring it as a medium of instruction till the primary level and later shift to the regional language.

v. The younger generation has to learn their mother tongue and use the same in many domains at home and at the community level. It can escape from the dominance of other developed languages because of their bilingual or multilingual nature.

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WILL TAMIL BE ENDANGEROSED IN MALAYSIA? A LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE PERSPECTIVE

Supramani Shoniah, Wang Xiaomei, Koh Yi Chern, Patricia Nora Riget
University of Malaya

1. Introduction

There are about 80 languages spoken in Malaysia (Asmiah 2004). However, these languages are not distributed evenly among the Malaysian population. In West Malaysia, the four frequently used languages are Bahasa Malaysia (Malay), English, Chinese, and Tamil, while in East Malaysia the language situation is more complicated. Iban, Chinese, Malay, Bidayuh, and Malanau are the major languages used in Sarawak, whereas in Sabah, Dusun, Malay, Sama-Bajau, and Chinese are more dominant compared to the other languages (see Table 1). Among these major languages, only the national language, Malay, is upheld by the language policy. As for the other languages, the Article 152(1) of the Malaysian Constitution states that the teaching and learning of the minority languages is not prohibited or prevented in Malaysia. In such a language scenario, will the minority languages such as Tamil inevitably become endangered? The aim of this paper is to investigate the use of Tamil in Brickfields, an Indian business area, from the perspective of linguistic landscape. The extent of language endangerment can be measured by using both the collected quantitative and qualitative data.

Table 1: Number of speakers of various languages in Sarawak and Sabah (Asmiah 2004)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sarawak</th>
<th>Sabah</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Iban</td>
<td>586,548</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>512,426</td>
<td>254,528</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malay</td>
<td>472,173</td>
<td>419,286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bidayuh</td>
<td>161,873</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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