



Language Policy, Medium of Instruction and Economic Development of Countries in Kachru’s Concentric Circles of Asian Englishes

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Received: 04/01/2021	<i>Abstract</i> <i>Language and culture are indispensable elements to the economic growth of the individual and society. They represent an important indicator of the individual’s satisfaction and quality of life. This paper is an attempt to answer Grin and Arcand’s (2013) observation that the part that language might play in economic development has long intrigued scholars from various disciplines, and up to the present decade no clear story has emerged from the investigations published and the empirical evidence remains inconclusive. Thus, in an attempt to come up with empirical evidence to establish the link between language policy and language in education to economic growth, this paper reviews the language policies and medium of instruction (MOI) in six countries, two countries each from each circle in Kachru’s concentric circles of Asian Englishes. Each circle was represented by a country with high and low gross domestic product (GDP) per capita. To determine the effect of language policy and MOI to countries’ GDP per capita, analysis of the similarities on the language policy and MOI of countries with higher GDP and those with lower GDP was done.</i>
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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Language and Development

Individuals’ development in a society would mean the development of their languages as well. Apparently, economic imperialism and linguistic imperialism are the two sides of the same coin. Economically powerful nations naturally use their languages to globally promote and situate their thought, their cultural values, and their ideologies to an extent of wanting or even forcing other peoples to adopt them. Consequently, global development also results in language development; that is because, according to Gnamba (1981), the most developed nations are able to develop their languages to affect the details and dynamism needed for development.

Basically, the term language economy has its core on the effect of language on economic activities and related fora. Conversely, it also deals with the effects of economics on language,

especially on the formation of specific modes of expression or on its use of a language in specific economic situation. In this context, the language has a specific value which is marked by the economic variables. Bourdieu (1991) believed that the economic value of a language is like a treasure; it cannot be isolated as a part of an encompassing social context.

In 1965, Marschak in his article entitled *Economics of Language* addressed questions on the language changes, extent of language preservation and the effectiveness of language means. For him, language was a conscious avenue to achieving certain goals. Hence, the choice of language for communications or the preference to learn a language is somehow dictated by the need to comply with the standards of microeconomics. This is in a way linked to all other economic decisions of the individuals, such as purchasing a product for investment. Apparently, Marschak (1965) emphasizes that there exists a fundamental connection between the inquiry and utility of language optimization and economics. Hence, language as an indispensable tool in human economic activities is characterized by value, utility, costs, and benefits.

Shortly after Marschak, other so-called economics of language literature were considered partly linked to what Marschak did. For instance, nationalism was institutionalized by countries that had just gained independence after World War II. Some of these countries enacted their official language or languages as a proof of their liberty after having been colonized for many decades. Canada, for one, had struggled for a long time about its official language problems, as they opted to provide an intellectual development favoring an economic analysis of language issues. Thereafter, Zhang and Grenier (2012) reported that literature on language policy and the relationship between language and income gradually become prevalent in Canada. In particular, Breton's study (1964, 1978) initiated the trend of applying economic analysis to language phenomena based on nationalistic perspective. Based on the identity function of a language in sociolinguistics, the earlier studies, however, considered language primarily as an ethnic attribute that describes only the economic status of different language groups.

Both culturally and linguistically, the interplay of economic and language processes at the micro and the macro levels is evidenced in the mutual acceptance or non-acceptance of different language groups. Conversely, considering the course of the interaction between language and economy in both directions is vital, and the transfer of the results (positive or negative) to the individuals in society is crucial. Indeed, economic factors are significantly relevant to the ethno-linguistic vitality of communities and to the evaluation of diversity and to the promotion of minority languages. In certain multicultural settings, the effects of economic processes are linked to the position of a minority, especially in the context of bilingualism as a value at the national and local levels, and not at wider international level (Lukanovič, 2008).

1.2 Theoretical Foundations on the Link Between Language and Economy

During the past years, the economic advantage of language competences has been recognized in the literature. Indeed, language proficiency is considered as one among human capital since, in the same fashion as formal schooling, it is an important asset of an individual who is expected to likely be productive in the labor market (Chiswick & Miller, 1995, 2007). Nevertheless, language is a social attribute with universal importance to bring about economic outcomes. In the labor market for instance, high returns such as salary and remuneration are given to workers who are fluent in the dominant language of a region than workers who are not. As a result, immigrants are obliged to learn the language of their new home countries (Jain, 2011).

Recently, Zhang & Grenier (2012) established two major theoretical basis for the interpretation of the relationship between language and earnings. The first one is human capital theory and the other is the theory of human discrimination. In human capital theory, knowledge of a language is considered as a skill. Therefore, it is an economic investment for an individual to learn one or more other languages. Since the 1980s, various studies have supported empirically that language, as human capital, plays a critical role in the determination of earnings (Carliner, 1981; Shapiro & Stelcner, 1981; Grenier, 1987; McManus, 1985; Chiswick & Miller, 1995, 1998, 1999, 2003, in Chiswick & Miller, 2007), especially for immigrants (Dustmann, 1994; Dustmann & Fabbri, 2003; Leslie & Lindley, 2001; Shields & Price, 2002; Bleakley & Chin, 2004; Aldashev et al, 2009; Yassin et al., 2020). Thus, Zhang and Grenier (2012) concluded that other things being equal, the more fluent an employee, the higher the wage he or she can get. In US for instance, the loss of wages and the difference in unemployment rate cause by the lack of English proficiency were estimated to be respectively between 3.8% and 38.6% and between 1% and 6.5% (Gonzalez, 2005). In addition, specific language skills (such as listening, reading and writing) all have positive effects on income (Chiswick, 1991; Carnevale et al., 2001). Hence, from the perspective of human capital, the desire and the motivation of people's learning a language are performed under pure economic incentives (Zhang,2008).

In the second theory, the members of minority language groups may be marginalized in the labor market due to discrimination so that they cannot obtain a good job and naturally, their income cannot be high (Zhang & Grenier, 2012). Lang (1986) had a model where the cost of learning a language and language discrimination explained wage differentials among members of different language groups. The relationship between language and earning is also related to ethnicity. Pendakur and Pendakur (2002) found that the low income of minority language groups in Canada was partly brought about by labor market discrimination against minority.

1.3 Purpose and Organization of the Paper

Language economics (or the economics of language) is commonly defined as a field of research on the fringes of the discipline of economics, with a strong interdisciplinary orientation. The definition specifically is a distinction between the economy as a human activity and the economics as a means of examining human behavior based on the standard economic variables such as interest rates, earnings and prices, or related processes including levels of production, consumption, and exchange. It would also cover varied related concerns such as in education, health, with the environment and language as well.

Grin (2008) classified language economics in two groups of approaches. The first group of studies dwells on the effect of language variables ($\{L\}$) on economic variables ($\{E\}$), illustrated as ($\{L\} \rightarrow \{E\}$). In this approach of research, economic variables are seen to the dependent variables which illustrate how economic variables explain, such as the effect on people's language skills on their labor income. The second group of approaches are strategies that illustrate the reciprocal causation of language variables such as language behavior in external conditions like international trade.

In this present paper, the researchers followed Grin and Arcand's (2013) approach of analyzing the language as independent variable and the term development as a dependent variable, emphasizing the association of languages with the English language as former colonial power. As in protocol, GDP per capita is the indicator of development. Various ways are given to define economic development which include UNDP's Human Development Index, it remains however that GDP per capita is the prime indicator because of its universal money metric that once converted into purchasing power parity, it becomes comparable across countries regardless of the vastly different

consumption patterns and non-traded good sectors which is shown to be applicable across countries at all periods. Even the World Bank identifies GDP per capita as an index of economic development.

Hence, the GDP of a country as one among the measures of a country's economic performance can be thought of as the total value of all goods and services produced in a country during a specific period, usually a year or a quarter. In fact, GDP per capita measures the total output of a country described as the ratio of the gross domestic product (GDP) and the number of people in the country. GDP is essential in comparing the relative performance of countries. Indeed, rise in per capita GDP reflects the growth in the economy and the increase in productivity.

Language policies and language of instruction in two countries from each circle in Kachru's Concentric Circles of Asian Englishes (Australia and New Zealand for the inner circle; Singapore and Bangladesh for the outer circle; Brunei and Myanmar for the expanding circle) were reviewed and analyzed. First discussed by Kachru (1991 in Torres & Alieto, 2019a; Torres, 2019), the World Englishes model exemplify the language use as evidenced by millions of multilinguals taking ownership of English and contextualizing it in their own lives. The researchers analyzed the features of language policies and language of instruction of countries with higher GDPs and compared them with that of countries with lower GDP.

The earlier part of the paper provides a background on the relationship between language and economic development as well as theoretical foundations that establish the link between the two concepts. Succeeding parts provides a comprehensive review on the policies regarding language use and the medium of instruction in the countries under study. The summarized features of language policies and medium of instruction along with the presentation of the 2016 GDP per capita of the selected Asian countries follow. Common features on the language policies and medium of instruction of the countries with higher GDP per capita and those with lower GDP per capita were identified to determine the possible link of economic growth, language policy and medium of instruction.

2. Language Policy and Medium of Instruction Across Nations

2.1 Australia

Composed of the immigrants, settler groups and indigenous people, Australia has a complex population than other countries. Hence, having English as the official language, is a multilingual and multicultural country. On the other hand, a variety of minority languages (i.e., immigrant languages and aboriginal languages) are coexisting. The nation's language policies have undergone three distinct stages of evolution together with cultural policies: assimilation (1901-1960s), integration (mid 1960s-1972) and multiculturalism (1970-present).

Multiculturalism refers to the presence of multiple cultural tradition in a single nation, usually considered in terms of the culture associated with an aboriginal ethnic group and foreigner ethnic groups. Although multiculturalism was firstly presented in Canada, it gained rapid development in Australia as a government policy. According to Bissoondath (2002), multiculturalism became an official national policy in 1971 so that the government could build up a harmonious coexistence of different groups. In 1987, Australia officially issued National Policy on Languages (NPL) as its first authorized language policy. Australia's NPL aims to: let Australians enjoy high standards of Australian English, bilingualism and all immigrant languages, and aboriginal languages will be accepted as unique heritage of Australia which are irreplaceable and worthwhile of preservation. From NPL, it can be clearly seen that Australia acknowledges English's status as their national language, stresses the bilingual education and protects the aboriginal language and culture at the same

time. The central essence of NPL has perfectly solved the old problems, pointing out a correct direction for Australia's foreign language education to develop. As an epoch-making education achievement in Australia, NPL is beneficial for the nation to make the best use of language resources available, to strengthen the intellectual and cultural diversity, and to preserve languages of various ethnic groups (Zhou & Zhou, 2017).

It is also necessary to understand that foreign language policy planning in Australia is obligatory since it is mandated as a national policy and circulated by the education sector to the entire nation. Besides, Australia's policy planning of foreign language is on a long-term basic, which indicates that it is framed so as to realize Australia's demand of national economic development. For example, from 1960s Australia had maintained a much closer trade cooperation with countries in Asia than with American and European countries, hence Australia recast its foreign language education policy in order to establish a wider export markets in Asia for economic interest. Zhou and Zhou (2017) noted that the new foreign language education policy mandated that students in middle-school be encouraged to learn Asia's history, culture and language with focus on China and Japan, and that the government opted those language specialist to go for special training, which is necessary for the trade cooperation and diplomatic affairs.

2.2 New Zealand

As a diverse society in a globalized international milieu, New Zealand has an indigenous language, te reo Mori, and a bicultural Maori and Anglo-Celtic foundation. Situated in the Asia Pacific region, many people from the Pacific and Asia have decided to settle in the country.

Based on the 2008 data from the Human Rights Commission, the ability to communicate in English is important to all New Zealanders that resulted in the use of English in wider domains. Te reo Maori and New Zealand Sign Language are recognized by law as official languages. Though a majority of New Zealanders currently speak only one language, there are however significant communities that maintain a heritage language other than English. Maori, Pacific and Asian communities alone make up nearly a third of the population. The most common community languages other than English are te reo Maori, Chinese languages, Samoan, and Hindi.

According to the NZ Bill of Rights Act Section 20, a person belonging to an ethnic, religious or linguistic minority in NZ shall not be denied the right in community with other members of that minority to enjoy the culture to profess and practice the religion, or to use the language, of that minority. Article 13 further stipulate that indigenous peoples have the right to revitalize, use, develop and transmit to future generations their histories, languages, oral traditions, philosophies, writing system and literatures, and to designate and retain their own names for communities, places and persons. With these, the language policy of NZ is grounded. Launched at LED in 2005, the purpose of the language policy was to provide a basic framework to prioritize, implement and monitor language policy development in New Zealand. It is believed, hence, that New Zealand has a responsibility under the Treaty of Waitangi and international law to protect and promote *te reo Maori* as the indigenous language of New Zealand. Further, New Zealand also has a special responsibility to promote other languages that are indigenous to the New Zealand realm. Lastly, it has a regional responsibility as a Pacific nation to promote and protect other Pacific languages.

New Zealand's language policy aims to revive interest on its national languages. Fueled by a realization that their greater ethnic and linguistic diversity brings with it a responsibility to ensure that the linguistic needs and rights of all citizens is met equitably. This is in view that young New Zealanders, in particular, need a greater range of linguistic and intercultural repertoire to meet the challenges and opportunities of its multilingual region, and globalization more generally. Hence, the country endorsed a comprehensive national language policy that would need to attend to both these

multifaceted issues with the revitalization of Maori, New Zealand's national language, as its foundation, across all policy fields. According to Kaplan (1994 in Nunan, 2003), what underlies New Zealand's current language problems include a high rate of poverty, a substantial income gap between the rich and the poor, and significant over-representation of minorities in unemployment and underemployment compounded by linguistic insensitivity and misunderstanding.

In addition to global responsibilities, New Zealand has a number of national functions, mainly as regards to te reo Maori and New Zealand Sign Language. This might be the reason why the languages of New Zealand forwarded not only its stature but also its citizen's economic levels. More so, there is no official status for languages not native to the New Zealand. This is, in effect, contributed to the language status of New Zealand. In terms of responding to languages in their multi-lingual context, it is clear that New Zealand has important human rights obligations. From an economic lens, language skills are modeled as in demand skills and so a simple job-market based approach is used. This poses an advantage to the citizens. For instance, Peddie (1991) noted that language policy in the country would also usher advantages like additional remuneration accrued to workers with language skills. This goes to saying that the more people use a language, the more valuable it becomes as a tool for those who already use it.

Indeed, a good consideration one country can learn from the language policy of New Zealand is the consideration of direct and non-direct impacts. Grin (2004) broadly outlined them as private monetary impact like increased earnings from developing a skill that is in demand or reaping cognitive benefits from language learning; private non-monetary effects such as personal satisfaction derived from engaging in activities in two languages and decreasing anxiety of new language experience.; and the social monetary effects including that cost or benefit the. society can acquire as well as the no- social monetary effects like that of harmonious social relationships. Nonetheless, a successful language policy is that ensure personal involvement with personal and social benefits. On top of these is the awareness of the people of these impacts.

New Zealand is home to a very diverse society and linguistic environment. But the advantage posted by the New Zealand's language policy is making the significance of the diversity of languages therein. As discussed by Waite (1992), understanding the profound impacts from transitioning to a multilingual country is important for a country like New Zealand to succeed linguistically, culturally, socially and economically.

Finally, like in New Zealand, the development of a national language policy should take place in the context of recognizing biculturalism or even multiculturalism in a linguistically and ethnically complex society.

2.3 Singapore

Singapore has three distinct periods when it comes to education policy. These include a survival-driven education system (1965-1978), an efficiency-driven education system (1979-1991) and an ability-driven education system (since 1992). With the birth of bilingualism in 1956, two of the following languages (i.e., English, Malay, Mandarin and Tamil) were recommended as the media of instruction. This was done for students to communicate in two or three languages. Then in 1959 was the birth of multilingualism whereby all four languages were treated equally. There was still emphasis on English proficiency and consideration of Malay as the national and official language. In 1963, a commission was created as an enquiry into education. The commission underscores the

significance of English pedagogy and learning and emphasized the learning of two languages and an official ethnic language.

In 1966, the rising status of English commenced with the introduction of the bilingual education. With the revamp in the educational system in 1968, focus was made on second language learning in English medium and non-English medium schools. Given that English was necessary for career and occupational mobility, and a tool for rapid economic development. English and Mandarin were adopted as medium of instruction at Nanyang University. To assist students to study under the English-speaking environment, the Joint Campus scheme was introduced in 1978. In the same year, the main medium of instruction in pre-university classes for the Non-English stream was English. For university students who are not proficient in English, a three-year course was offered.

Singapore implements an official bilingualism or multilingualism policy which is adopting two or more languages as the official language (Puteh, 2011). The policy was instituted as far back 1956 emphasizing equality for all the official languages. During that time, policy makers were aware of the need not to favor any particular ethnic group, hence the choice of English as the language for all Singaporeans and of Mandarin as the language for all Singaporean Chinese (Kirkpatrick, 2007). At the time of independence, the leaders of Singapore decided that there would be four official languages in the Republic (i.e., English, Malay, Chinese and Tamil). Those languages are also used as medium of instruction in schools. Malay, Chinese and Tamil represent Singapore's ethnic-cultural traditions. The international status of English along with the country's colonial background becomes one of the considerations in designating English being one of the official languages (Kuo 1983).

The bilingual policy of Singapore necessitates the citizens to be competent in their mother tongues and English (Wee & Bokhorst-Heng, 2005). The general policy is centered on English being the sole medium of instruction at all levels of education, and the other official languages, which are now promoted as 'mother tongues', are taught as second languages (Grimes, 2000; Jernudd, 1999; Kaplan & Baldauf, 2003; Pakir, 2004 in David, Cavallaro & Coluzzi, 2009). Singaporeans have to study their 'mother tongue' in schools based on their ethnic background: Mandarin for Chinese; Bahasa Melayu for Malays; and Tamil for Indians.

Gopinathan (1988 in Gopinathan, 1998) discusses that the need for social and political stability in a diverse multi-racial society, which also facilitates rapid economic growth, is the main factor influencing the Singaporeans government's thinking and language policies. The goal for introducing bilingual policy was to lessen inter-ethnic divisions that were very tense in the late 50s and early 60s, and to promote a Singaporean identity, while advocating economic growth (Gopinathan, Ho & Vanithamani, 2004). To date, English is the de facto national language in Singapore and is viewed as a major source of economically valuable knowledge and technology as English provides the Singapore the access to international trade. Rapid economic growth since the 1980s seems to have helped convince the majority that knowledge of English provides better opportunities for Singaporeans as individuals, as well as for the country as a whole. Hence, despite the emphasis put on the teaching of 'mother tongues' many Singaporeans are aiming English as a home their language.

The Goh report in 1979 as cited in Man Fat (2005), underscored the problems of bilingual education policy. The report showed that less than 40% of the students' population had the minimum competency level in two languages at the time. The report also indicated low literacy rate as one of the concerns. The situation was more alarming in the English stream and it contributed to a lot of wastage of resources in the education system. As a result, students were given the opportunity to do the 'first' languages and possibly a 'third' language to solve this problem. Competent students were

able to maximize their potential and less capable students could at least be proficient in one language (English). Thus, on 7 September 1979, the Speak Mandarin Campaign or formerly known as 'Promote the Use of Mandarin Campaign', which aim to lessen the toll brought by language learning, was implemented. Through this campaign, children begin to learn Mandarin at home prior to their formal schooling.

In 1980, the New Education system (primary level) was introduced. English was the medium of instruction for these institutions. The system enables above average and average pupils to be proficient in English and least literate in Malay, Mandarin & Tamil. Then, in 1981, the New Education system for secondary level was introduced. The system enables students to be proficient in English and other second languages. Finally, in 1987, English-for-all-year was implemented. The national stream of education was introduced whereby all Primary One pupils were taught in English as first language and mother tongues as second language.

In 2004, the Speak Good English Movement (SGEM) was launched. The aim was to encourage Singaporeans to have a better command of Standard English, which is needed to Singapore's economic success. English skills are relevant for academic achievement. The SGEM was promoted by holding language-related undertakings in institutions, themed broadcasts in the media, readings organized by the National Library Board, an "Inspiring Teacher of English Award" and through websites. As a result, lists of "Commonly mispronounced words", quizzes with Singlish sentences to be rendered in Standard English, and links were provided in adult language classes (Leimgruber, 2013).

2.4 Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, language planning for indigenous minorities is a complex issue mainly due to two conflicting issues: the 'sensitive and sentimental' (Baldauf et al., 2008, p.83) attachment to the national language, Bangla, and the growing appeal of English for earning a better income. There is also a large gap between the homogenous nature of the country's majority Bangali community and the diverse ethno-linguistic composition of the indigenous minorities.

As one of the poorest nations in the world, Bangladesh is a country in which 98% of the people speak the national language, Bangla, and identify themselves as Bangladeshi nationals. There are also 45 or more indigenous groups, which constitute the country's linguistic minorities, speaking more than 30 different languages, and ethnolinguistically different from the majority of the Bangla-speaking population. The country's educational policies have, until recently, ignored language issues in relation to the ethno-linguistic minorities. The National Education Policy 2009 proposes a first-language-based education policy for the indigenous minorities in the country (Rahman, 2010).

At the macro-level, language policies in Bangladesh are generally explicit, articulated as constitutional acts or presented as recommendations in educational commission reports or national education policies. For instance, Article 3 of the Bangladesh constitution stipulates Bangla as the 'state language' of the country (Government of Bangladesh, 1972). Bangladesh's overt language policy, as stipulated in the country's constitutions, is by and large monolingual as it neither state anything on protecting nor preserving any language but the national language, Bangla. Following independence, the Constitution drawn up in 1972 created the official status of Bangla by declaring it as the official language of communication as well as the medium of instruction in all state academic institutions (Mohsin, 2003). Bangla also replaced the previous official status of English, which was utilized for all official undertakings during Pakistani rule (Hossain & Toffelson, 2007).

Currently, Bangla has the status of the national and the major official language of the country. With such statute, it is used as medium of instruction and mode of communication in the workplace, public meeting and media. With so much emphasis on Bangla, the Constitution, does not talk anything on the status of either English or the indigenous languages in the country. It does not even recognize the role of English inside the country even though currently the language is considered to offer 'significant economic opportunities for its speakers' and is also 'linked with socio-economic class' as it is 'used in the home and in many social settings among upper-class families' (Hossain & Toffelson, 2007).

2.5 Brunei

As far as linguistic heritage is concerned, Brunei is a very diverse nation. Besides the standard Malay, the official language, and English (which is viewed as the principal language of business), there are other 11 Austronesian languages spoken (i.e., Brunei Malay, Kedayan, Tutong, Belait, Dusun, Bisaya, Murut (Lun Bawang), Iban, Penan, Mukah,) in addition to various Chinese varieties - which have been counted below as one language: Mandarin, Hakka, Hokkien, Cantonese, Hainanese, Teochew, Foochow. This number is remarkable given the country's small area (5,765 sq km). All these languages occupy a low position in a diglossic relationship to Standard Malay language and English (David et al., 2009).

In 1984, a bilingual system of education was set up in Brunei. The country's educational system has adopted two-language of instruction neither of which is indigenous to Brunei – Standard Malay and English. Of the two, English is clearly the most foreign, nevertheless, even Standard Malay has to be learned, it is not a language that children. Given much of the shared lexis and syntax, it might be assumed that learning Standard Malay is less of a problem for Bruneian children than learning English. This single educational system was marked by a gradual introduction of English as a medium of instruction. At lower primary level, all subjects except English Language were taught in Malay while at upper primary, English is taught as a subject. In addition, Mathematics; History; Science and Geography were also taught through the medium of English while Malay Language, Islamic Religious Knowledge, Physical Education, Arts and Handicrafts, and Civics were all taught in Malay. In Lower Secondary level, Malay, Islamic Religious Knowledge and History were taught in Malay, while other subjects were taught in English. In Upper Secondary level, only Malay Language was taught in Malay, though this depended to some extent on the stream that was chosen. Those concentrating on Malay language and/or Islamic religious studies would have a greater proportion of their subjects taught through the medium of Malay (Brunei Ministry of Education 2008).

In 1986, soon after the bilingual system of education was set up, an English Language Syllabus for Primary Schools was introduced. This was a structural syllabus containing over 150 items to be learned by the end of Primary 6. Three years later, in 1989, the Reading and Language Acquisition Program (RELA) was introduced for the teaching of reading during the first three years of primary school. It was an adaptation of the successful REAP (Reading and English Acquisition Program) previously introduced in Singapore. A fundamental aspect of this program was the use of 'big books', read jointly by teacher and class. This approach stressed involvement and enjoyment.

A new primary syllabus was introduced in 1996. This syllabus is influenced by the communicative approach, emphasizing integrated instruction around a series of five or six themes. The government has recently taken several initiatives in the field of education to ensure that the country will be able to face the challenges of globalization and technological advances. In 1999, computers were introduced in primary schools, and in 2001, secondary schools were asked to devise plans for using computers for teaching purposes.

In November 2002, the Ministry of Education launched Design and Technology as a new curriculum in schools to bring education in Brunei online and to keep abreast with the world digital trend in teaching and learning. Access to computers and the internet, whether for English lessons or other subjects, will of necessity bring students into more constant contact with the English language (Brunei Ministry of Education 2008).

2.6 Myanmar

The Republic of the Union of Myanmar is a very diverse nation, made up of more than one hundred ethnic groups who speak different languages. Depending on how these groups are counted there are between 60 and 135 different groups. The latter figure (which is twice the number of ethnic groups in China) is arrived at by counting groups like Black Miao, Red Miao, White Miao and Red and Black Miao as four distinct groups, while ethnologists who use the 60 group count them as one. Minorities make up to 30 percent to 40 percent of the population. According to Hays (2008), linguists have identified 110 distinct ethnolinguistic groups, and the government recognizes 135 ethnic groups (referred to as races). The Burmese account for about 68 percent of the population.

Even though Burma was a once a British colony time, less people in Myanmar speak English than in other former British colonies. In Myanmar schools, it is often forbidden to teach in languages other than Burmese. In the early years after independence, Burma had an extensive network of missionary schools that employed foreign teachers that children English and other subjects. In the 1960s, Ne Win decreed that English was the language of colonizers and should no longer be taught in schools. Foreign teachers were kicked out of the country.

Paw (2015) reviewed the many developments in the field of English Language Teaching in Myanmar. Some major developments that occurred in the field of education during the post-independence period had a major impact on the teaching of English in the country. The first took place in 1965 when all private schools were nationalized, resulting in all the schools in the country being brought together under a single uniform system of education for the very first time. Due to the change in 1965 with all non-state schools now being run by the government, the practice of using English as a medium of instruction in a private-run European Code schools and the system of teaching English from kindergarten came to an end. The teaching of English in Myanmar then was also made the sole medium of instruction at the Basic Education level. This had already been done at the university level a year earlier in 1964 with the enactment of the 1964 University Act. The English language was then termed a foreign language, and since it was the foreign language with which the Myanmar were most familiar, there was no reason why it should not be used as a medium for the acquisition of knowledge, if not for instruction. Thus, the aim of teaching English during that period from 1965 to 1980 was to impart reading and writing skills (Han Tin ,1990 in Paw, 2015).

The second development occurred in 1981 when the New Education Program was introduced, which stemmed from the Seminar on Education held in 1979. The New Education Program, which was introduced to upgrade the standard of education in the country, deemed it necessary to expand the role of English in education. As a result, from 1981 onwards, English has been taught from kindergarten and the aim was to develop all four communication skills. It also prescribed that English be used as the medium of instruction at the upper secondary level to teach the science subjects. At the university level too, English became the medium of instruction for all disciplines with the exception during the class in Myanmar language.

3. Language Policy, MOI and GDP per capita

Presented in Table 1 is the summary of the six countries' language policies, MOI and GDP

per capita in 2016. It can be deduced based on what is reflected on the table that countries (i.e., Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, Brunei) in which English is both considered as official language and language of instruction have higher GDP per capita as compared to countries (i.e., Bangladesh, Myanmar) in which English is not the official language and medium of instruction.

Table 1. Summary of Countries Language Policy, MOI and GDP per capita

Country	Language Policy and MOI	2016 GDP per capita* (in US dollars)
Australia (Inner Circle)	Bilingual policy; English is the official language; immigrant and aboriginal languages are accepted as the country's unique heritage; foreign language policy planning is obligatory since it is issued as a national policy and publicized by the education department to the whole country	\$49,927.8
New Zealand (Inner Circle)	English is the most widely used; Te reo and Maori and New Zealand Sign language are recognized by law as official languages	\$39,426.6
Singapore (Outer Circle)	Bilingual policy; English as medium of instruction and students learn mother tongues as a subject Other official languages and medium of instruction are Mandarin, Malay and Tamil	\$52,960.7
Bangladesh (Outer Circle)	Bangla is the official and national language. It is also used as medium of instruction and mode of communication in workplace.	\$ 1,358
Brunei (Expanding Circle)	Standard Malay and English serve as official language and medium of instruction; Austronesian languages and Chinese varieties are also acknowledged	\$ 29,938.5
Myanmar (Expanding Circle)	Burmese is the official language; English is considered a foreign language and it was only in 1981 when English has been used in education	\$ 1,275

**based on www.databank.worldbank.org*

The foregoing analysis conforms to the observation of Laitin, Ramachandran, and Roseberg (2013) that one of the distinguishing features dividing developed from developing states has to do with the choice of official language. As what Chiswick (1991) mentioned, language is a social characteristic with a near-universal importance in determining economic outcomes. Knowledge of certain varieties of English, coupled with particular skills sets obtainable only through high levels of education generally not universally accessible, is likely to enhance the social mobility of some individuals. Countries that have English as the dominant language (i.e. official language), and those relatively wealthy states that are able to provide affordable access to high-quality English language learning, and which have highly educated workers with skills in demand in knowledge economy-

related services, will be relatively advantaged compared to countries lacking in both (Ricento, 2012).

In the micro level, a study cited by Lotbiniere (2011) that looked into the economic impact of English learning in developing countries has found that the language can increase the earning power of individuals by around 25% and that developing economies need access to English if they are to grow and position themselves in the global economy.

Aside from the used of English as dominant language in countries with higher GDP, it was also observed that those countries also acknowledge immigrant and local languages such as: aboriginal and foreign languages for Australia; Te reo and New Zealand language in New Zealand; Mandarin, Malay and Tamil in Singapore; and Standard Malay, Austronesian languages and Chinese varieties in Brunei. Meanwhile for countries with lower GDP per capita (Bangladesh and Myanmar), it can be seen that multilingualism is not widely accepted in different domains such as education, government and workplace. This proves that when economic internationalization processes become part, 'economy' and 'multilingualism' prove to be two sides of the same coin: without international trade the spectrum of linguistic contacts would be much smaller and language families would not exist, at least in their present form.

4. CONCLUSION

Laitin & Ramachandran (2005) mentioned that colonialism's milestones has to do with the continuous utilization of the former colonial language as the official language in most postcolonial states. The two surmised that the official language, by serving as a gatekeeper for accessing education, labor force, and elite political networks, requires participation due to its linguistic distance.

The foregoing findings strengthens Nunan's (2003) claim that a common language decreases the costs of international trade. In a world with ever increasing international competitive pressures, the ability to be speak and be proficient in the English language – which is the most global of languages, the lingua franca of business, science, education, politics and even pop music- remains to be an important skill to actively involve in the global market (Wedell, 2008; Warschauer, 2000). As a result, proficiency in English is often associated with higher incomes as well as increased employment (Torres & Alieto, 2019b; Torres, 2010), trade and other economic opportunities and is promoted as a policy to improve the well-being of people in developed and developing countries alike.

The development of Asian countries relies on their heavy investments in the creation of human capital that fosters English-speaking cultures and advocate a climate of English usage. Countries that considered English as their official language and language in education, and still put premium in maintaining their minority languages have progressive economy than those countries which do not maintain their minority languages. In this global age, it is advantageous for a society to possess multilingual and multicultural resources to play a significant social and economic role on the global arena. This is in line with Cameron's (2002) observation that as the world becomes a smaller place due to global economy, language and how it is learned becomes significant. Further, in the absence of multilingual practices, a child's right to education through mother-tongue cannot be ensured in multilingual contexts like South-East Asia. As both the minority and heritage languages continue to work for recognition and preservation, multilingual practices are also equally important for preserving indigenous communities and their heritages from being extinct. Hence, the pressing need for acknowledging, respecting and preserving our diverse culture and language heritages can be

done by instigating them into the children through education.

In closing, it is worth mentioning what Mooneeran (2013) pointed out that the language policy of a country is directly related to its economic development for it determines the economic future of a country, it cannot be left to the whim of one politician, especially those who are not particularly visionary, and a few individuals who are strangers to the nature and aims of language planning. Nor can it be left at the whim of academics pushing out their own boats. This is why we need a clearly demarcated management of our rich linguistic capital.

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