

The Language Attitude of Chinese in Malaysia

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Living in a multilingual country, the Chinese in Malaysia not only speak Chinese language and Chinese dialects but also other languages such as English and Malay. The various problems on language usage since independence of Malaysia in the year 1957, the type of language learnt and the level of language competency among Chinese are all closely related to language attitude. By the use of questionnaire, this paper surveys the language attitude of the Malaysian Chinese comprising of three generations in the same family. This paper focuses on three main languages namely Chinese, Malay and English bearing different social status and commonly used in Malaysia. Malaysian Chinese are found to have language attitude which are of contradicting in nature. They recognize the importance of Chinese language as their mother tongue yet consider English language and Malay language are important as well. Besides, they also do not resist education in other languages. This contradiction on language attitude indicates that changes in cultural identity may have taken place.