

Fairclough's Concepts of Language Policy and Language Planning: A Comparative Study between Malaysia and Cambodia

Mohd Nazri Latiff Azmi*, Nurul Wahida Samsuddin, Mairas Abd Rahman

Sultan Zainal Abidin University, Malaysia

*Corresponding author: mohdnazri@unisza.edu.my

Received November 07, 2013; Revised November 09, 2013; Accepted November 11, 2013

Abstract This paper is a comparative study of two important journals which reflect the challenges faced by two developing countries: Malaysia and Cambodia. The objectives of this study are to investigate the problems, planning and challenges faced by both countries and also to justify the language policy and planning of both countries using Fairclough's concepts in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The findings show that language policy and language planning in Malaysia and Cambodia are majorly influenced by the political development at both of the countries themselves. Obviously, the national language of Bahasa Malaysia and Khmer has experienced development and standardization surrounded with the influence of second language, that is English.

Keywords: *Critical Discourse Analysis, Language Policy, language planning, Fairclough*

Cite This Article: Mohd Nazri Latiff Azmi, Nurul Wahida Samsuddin, and Mairas Abd Rahman, "Fairclough's Concepts of Language Policy and Language Planning: A Comparative Study between Malaysia and Cambodia." *American Journal of Educational Research* 1, no. 9 (2013): 375-379. doi: 10.12691/education-1-9-5.

1. Introduction

This paper intends to analyse the two major journals, which are "Language Planning and Language Policy of Cambodia" by Thel Thong (2013) and "Some Aspects of Language Planning in Malaysia" by John T. Platt (2013). The analysis consists of the general explanations on the two papers, as well as the similarities and the differences between the language policies practiced at those two countries, which are Cambodia and Malaysia, in association with Fairclough's concepts of power and hegemony in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). According to Fairclough (1995), CDA aims to "systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events, and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes".

Through CDA, Fairclough investigates the ideologically shaping of discursive practices by relations of power and struggles over power and explores how the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society is itself contributes to the presence of power and hegemony. Opacity is defined in a way that the linkages between discourse and ideology might be unclear to those involved. As quoted from Fairclough (1995), hegemony, which is a concept that originates from Lenin but further elaborated by Gramsci, is "leadership as well as domination across the economic, political, cultural and ideological domains of a society". It is said that "hegemonic struggle is embedded to a significant degree

in the discursive practices of institutions and organizations", which will be explored through the analysis of those two journals (Bourdieu, 2003).

2. Literature Review

Cameron (2005) highlights that critical discourse analysis is now an established approach to discourse analysis that has been around since 1980 and the main task of CDA is to uncover "hidden agendas" in discourse in order to unveil power relationships. For Van Dijk (2005, p. 352), "CDA is a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social problems abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context". Power is at the core of CDA, which makes it different from any other approach to discourse. Fairclough (1995) states that CDA's main objective is to denaturalize ideologies that have become so naturalized that individuals are not aware of them. As such, the purpose of CDA is to show how social structures shape the form of discourse and at the same time how discourse shapes social structures. And the social structures will mould the language planning and policy of a country.

3. Research Methodology

This comparative review of two major articles was framed in CDA, particularly the textual analysis approach proposed by Fairclough (1995, 2001, 2003). Fairclough's

approach aims at bridging a gap between discourse analysis inspired by social theory on the one hand, and pure linguistic analysis on the other. In a textual analysis approach these two perspectives are put together to offer a more comprehensive picture of the analysis of a text.

4. Analysis and Discussion

4.1. Explanation on “Language Planning and Language Policy of Cambodia” by Thel Thong

The purpose of this journal is to explore the language planning and language policy of Cambodia throughout the country’s historical context. According to this paper, the growth of Khmer language in Cambodia was influenced by Indian, Thai, French, and Japanese. Khmer language is the native language of Cambodia, as well as the medium of interaction at school; meanwhile Pali is the language of religion, which is the lingua franca of Buddhism in South East Asia; and French was the language used in modern education such in public school and tertiary education institutions. Throughout years, modern Khmer has been developing from its native language, and this paper covers the development of recent modern Khmer from the French occupation of Cambodia to the present.

During the reign of Thai in Cambodia, Thai influence on Cambodian language, literature, culture, and administration was inevitable, due to the assertion of its political supremacy over Cambodia. Due to this, there was the occurrence of dialect separation of Khmer in Thailand – the dialect of Surin and Chantabun. When French took over Cambodia in 1863, a Western school system was slowly introduced. During this year, monastery schools were established by the Buddhist monks. Although Khmer had been used as the medium of interaction at these schools, there were neither formal curriculums nor proper teaching methods. In 1911, Khmer teaching was ordered by a royal decree to be taught throughout the kingdom, and initiatives of full support from French governor and the Buddhist diocese had been carried out, such as to open a teaching method workshop centre for Buddhist monk teachers; Khmer was to be the medium of interaction; and basic curriculum was based on Cambodian morals, reading, writing, and basic arithmetic. In fact, the usage of Khmer was widened in the primary schools, the high schools of Pali and the Buddhist University as the medium of instruction, through the preaching of Buddhist doctrine in Khmer, and through the translation of basic Buddhist texts into Khmer by a group of educated Buddhist monks and well-known Buddhist lay people.

Pali, the second most importance language in Cambodia had also influenced the development of Khmer language. Khmer had been used as the language of instruction in the Pali schools from primary to tertiary level, which were organised by Buddhist monks with the support of religious leaders and Buddhist followers. Khmer progressed gradually behind the shield of Buddhism and in fact during the period, a certain degree of Khmer standardisation went on in the monastery.

During the reign of French, the French implemented a French language policy in Cambodia. French was used as official language in the administration of the Indochinese

colony. However, due to their desperate need of French-speaking Cambodians to assist them in running the country, a school for training Cambodian interpreters was opened in Phnom Penh in 1885. French too was the language of instruction in the modern education primary schools in Cambodia. To summarise, during this French reign, there were three types of schools with their own language policies: Pali in religious schools, Khmer in monastery schools, and French in public schools.

By Royal Decree in 1915, a National Commission was formed to compile a Cambodian Dictionary, in order to build the uniformity on Khmer spelling, and the Ministry of Education was responsible for this effort. Furthermore, in 1932, Khmer textbooks were published and made available to schools. French words used in general administration, jurisprudence, science and modern technology had also being compiled to coin corresponding Khmer words either from Khmer roots or from Pali and Sanskrit. In 1943, the Royal Government of Cambodia and the French Governor of Cambodia initiated the Romanisation of Khmer, to facilitate reading, writing and learning activities. Romanised Khmer was used widely in monastery schools textbooks, as well as in local administration, following a Royal Decree in 1943. However, this had sparked an opposition among religious leaders and members of the nationalist group which were against the French occupation in Cambodia. According to Thong (n.d.), romanisation had not been introduced to the public schools, and Cambodian romanisation had faced a failure due to the “lack of interest or hospitality of the French educated Cambodians” and the conservatism of the religious group against Khmer romanisation as they considered Cambodian scripts as sacred.

During the occupation of Japanese in 1945, the usage of Khmer in its traditional form had been restored. However, French was still the language of instruction in public schools, and following them taking over Cambodia again, the romanisation of Khmer was revived. In 1947, a National Cultural Commission was formed to coin new words as to meet the growing demand of new terms in administration as well as in other fields. They published a bilingual dictionary, the *Lexique Franco-Khmer*. In 1964, the government launched a massive literacy campaign for adults, to foster Khmer literacy and basic arithmetic. In the late 1970s, Khmerisation of public education was planned to reach the tertiary level, and it was made successful under the government of Heng Samrin.

Following the occupation of Cambodia by the Khmer Rouge, Cambodian education system and its infrastructure were completely disrupted. There was no mention of public education in the national constitution. Khmer was expected to be in the state of native language, under the feudal atmosphere. Thus, the development of Khmer occurred to match the hierarchical structure of the society. It was said that the political cadres were the principal agents of the Khmer Rouge policy on language, by which they adapted language as not a cultural heritage but an effective brain-washing device. For example, the Khmer Rouge cadres used the word /puu/ uncle, instead of well-known term *Samdech* to address Prince *Silhanouk*, which was one of the acts to eliminate Cambodian kinship and monkhood terms, and people had to use all new words and terms because nobody dared to reveal their social status.

During the ruling of Heng Samrin Government in 1979 to 1982, the revival of Khmerisation on 1960s was done by the ex-teachers through the textbook preparation for primary and secondary schools. The Cambodian language for every walk of life was restored.

4.2. Explanation on “Some Aspects of Language Planning in Malaysia” by John T. Platt

The purpose of this journal is to explore the language planning language treatment in Malaysia, based on the aspects of the choice of language or languages, and planned change within the chosen language or languages. In Malaysia, Bahasa Malaysia is the national language of the country. The development of this language was mainly influenced by the colonisation of British.

During the pre-independence, the colonial government had made English as the medium of education. Malay, Tamil and Chinese vernacular educations were provided free for the people, but English was necessary for those who wanted to obtain higher paid in employment of entry to tertiary education in Singapore. In fact, English was necessary for them to obtain the positions in European business and government service.

There major communities in Malaysia, Malay, Chinese, and India, spoke their own language and dialects. Their functions and place of living in Malaya was segregated by the British government. Due to the inter-ethnic communication between these three races, there was the presence of pidginized form of Malay, or Malay Bazaar (or Bahasa Pasar). According to Platt (n.d.), the Malayan Government had set about the establishment of Malay as national language, even before the independence in 1957. This was stated in Article 152 of the Federal Constitution, that Malay to be the national language in Malaya, and English remained the language of the Supreme Court. However, following the amendments in 1963 and 1967, all the proceedings in court are to be in the national language or the English or partly in one, or partly in the other.

In the education field, according to the Razak Committee in 1954, Malayan National Language was to be the medium of instruction in primary schools, and it was to be a compulsory subject in all school since it was the National Language. In fact, according to the journal, to ensure the widespread of Malay language usage, “knowledge of Malay would be required for the admission to all secondary schools supported wholly or in part from public funds, and for entry in Government service”. Due to its utilitarian value, English was compulsory. Chinese and Indian were taught in vernacular schools, and in secondary schools, the medium of interaction might be English or Chinese.

Starting from 1970, the English-medium schools have been in a gradual process of conversion to Malay-medium through the enactment of Education Act in 1961. In fact, the medium of instruction at the tertiary level had been gradually changed from English to Bahasa Malaysia. In fact in the media field, there was a strong emphasize on Bahasa Malaysia, whereby the newspapers published in Bahasa Malaysia are “a powerful tool in the introduction and repeated use of new vocabulary and syntactical constructions, particularly in their editorials and articles of

a more serious nature”, and that the proficiency of Bahasa Malaysia is required in the employment advertisements, not only for government positions, but also for positions with certain private firms.

On radio, Bahasa Malaysia was the predominant language, by which the music was announced in Bahasa Malaysia, and the news was broadcast in Bahasa Malaysia, English, Chinese and Tamil. On the National Channel, all programmes were broadcast in Bahasa Malaysia except canned programmes whereby Bahasa Malaysia subtitles were provided. School television programmes were broadcast in Bahasa Malaysia for teaching mathematics, science and other subjects, as well as for teaching Bahasa Malaysia and English.

The main Malay language planning body in Malaysia is Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, which was established in 1965. This body was responsible to encourage “the development of the Malay language, the production of Malay textbooks, and the study of Malay literature”. This was done through the production of various types of textbooks, and the publication of Malay literature. A well-known Malay linguist and activist, namely Asmah Haji Omar had played an important role towards the standardization of Malay, including the coinage of new terms. Citing from the journal, the practice of Malay national language policy was strongly influenced by Indonesia whereby no disinclination to the corporation of “foreign language” seemed to have occurred (Asmah, 1983).

4.3. Similarities

There are certain similarities found in the language policies practiced in Cambodia and Malaysia. Firstly, both of the language policies at both countries focus on the development of the national language of the countries, whereby in Cambodia, Khmer is national language and in Malaysia, it is Malay. This focus discover the development of those national languages mainly from the aspect of education, as it is a crucial field that determines the literacy of the societies in the countries upon the usage of the national languages.

Secondly, in both countries, the language policies were politically governed. Both of the countries have been occupied by Western government, such as French in Cambodia, and the British in Malaysia, which had played an important role towards the survival and the development of Khmer and Malay. Under each reign, different stages of the national language development have occurred, impacting on the how the national languages are used in the society. For example in Cambodia, under the reign of Khmer Rouge, Khmer had undergone major changes in its function in the society, whereby certain Khmer words have been treated differently as to fit the political scenario at that moment. It can be concluded here that language is a powerful tool contributing to the successful spread of political ideology in the country.

Thirdly, the language policy in each country is regulated by certain language bodies (Bialystock, 2001). These bodies are responsible upon the conservation and preservation of the national language. It is from these bodies that the hegemony on national language policy was asserted in each country. They regulate the language policy in each field, as approved by the ruling government.

4.4. Differences

There are also differences in the language policy practiced in Malaysia and Cambodia. Firstly, there was an emphasis on Khmer romanisation policy by the Cambodian government, instead of none of Malay in Malaysia. Due to the fact that Khmer scripts were influenced by Sanskrit and Pali writing system, it became quite hard to publicise Khmer scripts, as it was hard to be written and understood. In fact, due to the nature of the script, the publication of Khmer texts was limited on typewriters, thus the Khmer characters had to be romanised. This romanisation effort was influenced by French occupation during that time.

Secondly, in Malaysia, language policy of the national language had to be planned by giving an attention to the multi-racial existence in Malaysia. Due to the fact that Malaysia is consisted of Malay, Chinese, and Indian races, a thorough plan followed up but the implementation of national acts have to be made in Malaysia. The justification as of why Bahasa Malaysia should be considered as the national language and is a compulsory subject in schools should be well-informed to the public,

so as to avoid any racism demonstrations and other negative comebacks. In fact, the application of Bahasa Malaysia in all aspects of Malaysian administration, and education had to be done stages by stages, so that Malaysians were able to accept the changes.

Thirdly, there were different types of agencies of the language policy implementation in Malaysia, which were the education system, the media, and the language planning bodies, whereby the media was given less attention in Cambodia. These three agencies had given different impacts on the language policy implementation in Malaysia, as illustrated in the diagram below:

It can be seen from Figure 1, in which it shows that the media affected the older and younger sections of the population, whereby through media, it only affected those who read newspaper and magazines. Clearly, the most important agency to have affected the language policy implementation in Malaysia was the education system, as the implementation of Bahasa Malaysia as the national language started from here. In Cambodia, the most important agency was education system too, but it was done through Royal decrees, and efforts from Buddhist monks.

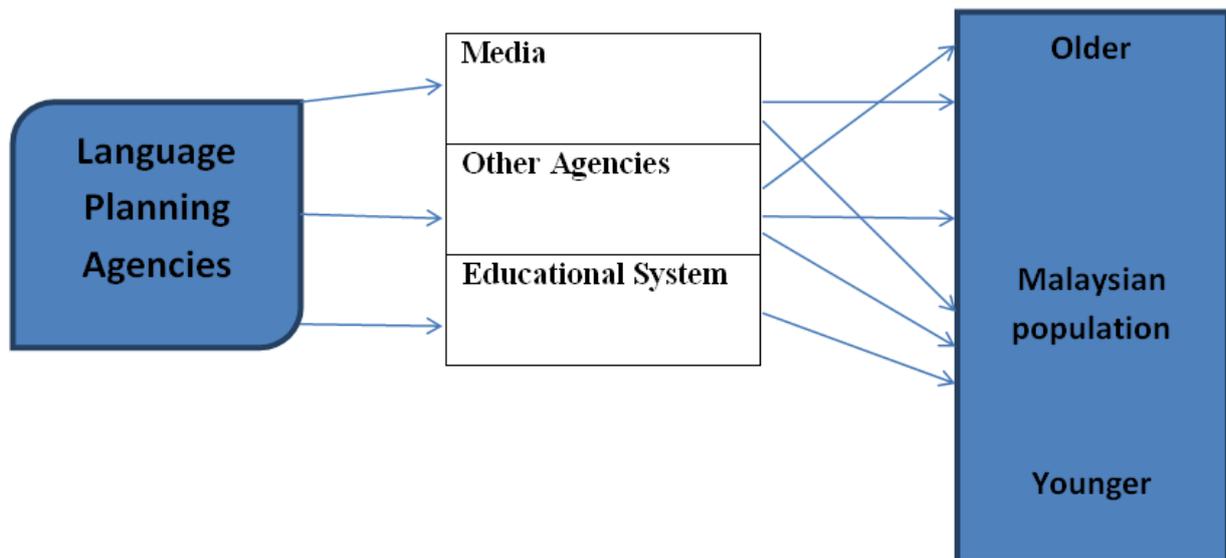


Figure 1. Three Types of Agencies of Language Policy Implementation in Malaysia

5. Conclusion

As for the conclusion, language policy and language planning in Malaysia and Cambodia was majorly influenced by the political development at both of the countries themselves. Foreign occupation and many other drastic changes in the government had severely affected language planning and language policy. Quoting from Thong (n.d.), “national institutions, committees, commissions, and private organisations have in the course of the time shifted or re-moulded their emphasis from one function to another”. These agencies or bodies had adapted functions or adopted new functions to meet the needs or new policies based on the ruling power. Throughout this process, the national language of Bahasa Malaysia and Khmer had experienced development and standardization. All in all, the findings from this comparative study prove that both Asian countries

experience a unique process of setting up their language policy and planning which is in line with Fairclough’s concepts of power and hegemony in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA (Capdevila, 2011).

References

- [1] Thong, T. (n.d.). Language Planning and Language Policy of Cambodia. Retrieved April 05, 2013, from <http://sealang.net/sala/archives/pdf8/thel1985language.pdf>.
- [2] Platt, J. T. (n.d.). Some Aspects of Language Planning in Malaysia. Retrieved April 05, 2013, from <http://www.langlxmelanesia.com/kivung%20vol%209%20no%201%20some%20aspects%20of%20>
- [3] Fairclough, N. (1995). Critical discourse analysis: the critical study of language. England: Pearson Education Limited.
- [4] Bourdieu, P. (2003). Language and symbolic power. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- [5] Cameron, D. (2005). Working with spoken discourse. London: Sage Publications.

- [6] Van Dijk, T. (2005). Critical Discourse Analysis. In D. Schiffrin, D. Tannen, D & H. Hamilton (Eds.), *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis* (pp. 352-371). Malden: Blackwell Publishing.
- [7] Fairclough, N. (2001). *Language and power*. Second edition. Malaysia: Longman.
- [8] Fairclough, N. (2003). *Analysing Discourse. Textual analysis for social research*. London and New York: Routledge.
- [9] Asmah, Haji Omar (1983). *The Role of English in Malaysia in the Context of National Language Planning. Varieties of English in Southeast Asia*. Ed. R.B. Ross. Singapore: Singapore UP/SEAMEO Regional Language Center.
- [10] Bialystock, E. (2001). *Bilingualism in development. Language, literacy, and cognition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- [11] Capdevila, I. (2011). *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical study of language by Norman Fairclough*. Retrieved April 06, 2013, from https://docs.google.com/document/d/1uA8M46-QyB4UMnIF4VdFQyvTcBgd2LxR2ypb7LRGXD0/edit?hl=en_US.