



Repositioning Malaysian Chinese Educational Roles in Alignment with One Belt One Road Initiative

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Abstract. This paper aims to examine the new positioning and new development of Malaysian Chinese educational roles based on the reality with the rise of China, where the Chinese Language has risen in prominence to become a world language. The article points out that it is necessary to re-understand the advantages of Malaysian Chinese education and re-position its roles due to the inevitable trend of dissemination in the Chinese language to the world. The article suggests that the triple roles of Malaysian Chinese language and the triple functions of Malaysian Chinese education. Malaysian Chinese education should be promoted as a national strategy of Malaysia and to make Malaysia a base to support Chinese education in the nearby countries. Besides, Malaysia should also be a base of Chinese education theoretical construction, standard research and development base, as well as other innovative ideas making for Southeast Asian countries.

Palabras clave: Malaysian Chinese education, repositioning, One belt one road initiative

[zn] 一带一路倡议背景下马来西亚华文教育功能的新定位

摘要: 本文基于中国国力快速提升带来的汉语快速走向世界这一现实和未来预期, 审视了马来西亚华文教育功能的传统定位, 即华人内部的华语和中华文化的传承功能。文章指出, 在汉语快速向世界传播的必然趋势下, 有必要重新认识马来西亚华文教育的优势, 并对其功能重新定位; 提出了马来西亚华语的三重性与华文教育功能的三重性, 把发展华文教育上升到马来西亚国家战略高度来谋划, 把马来西亚建成中国以外主要服务东南亚各国汉语教学的重要基地, 把马来西亚建成东南亚国家华文教育理论、标准研发基地等创新观点。

关键词: 马来西亚华文教育, 新定位, 一带一路

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Contents. 1. Introduction. 2. Methodology. 3. Malaysian Chinese Education Development and Its Advantages. 3.1. Traditional Orientation of Malaysian Chinese Education before 1957 3.2. Traditional Orientation of Malaysian Chinese Education after 1957. 3.3. Advantages of Malaysian Chinese Education 3.4 Summary 4. OBOR and Its Impacts on Malaysian Chinese Education

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Development. 4.1. The Triple Roles of Malaysian Chinese Education. 4.2. The Triple Functions of Malaysian Chinese Education. 5. New Development Framework for Malaysian Chinese Education 5. New Development Framework for Malaysian Chinese Education. 5.1. The Development of Chinese Education should be considered as a Malaysian National Strategy Planning. 5.2. To Explore Malaysian Chinese Language as an Economic Resource. 5.3. To Build Malaysia as a Major Base for Chinese Teaching in the "Nanyang Countries". 5.4. To Build Malaysia as a Research and Development Base for Chinese Education Theory of "Nanyang Countries" 5.5. To Build Malaysia as a Role Model of Chinese education between China and "Nanyang Countries" 6. Conclusions. Acknowledgements. References.

1. Introduction

The uniqueness of Chinese Education in Malaysia can be attributed to its comprehensive education system, standardization in classroom teaching, and mass learners besides China and Taiwan. Malaysia has an education system that using Chinese language as a medium of instruction from primary school till tertiary education. The level of mastering the Chinese language among Malaysian students is admitted as higher as the students in Mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Macau (Ye, 2012). Furthermore, Malaysia is also the only country in Southeast Asia that has perpetuated the Chinese education system since it first established during the British colonial era (Ang, 2014).

From the perspective of language resources, Malaysia's preservation of the Chinese language is benefited not only the Chinese community but also an important national support for the whole nation. Nevertheless, from the perspective of politic, economy, culture, and education, there is a contradiction between the Malay-dominated national policy and the existence of the Chinese education system (Yap, 2013). Therefore, the presence of Chinese education in Malaysia is not something that should be taken for granted but the persistent efforts of the Chinese communities in the country (Ang, 2012). For most of the Chinese in Malaysia, Chinese education is crucial for cultural preservation and identity recognition. The positioning of Chinese education as "in-group" identity preservation social movement has existed for more than 100 years (Yap, 2013). This role of Chinese education, that being played thus far, has provided Chinese ethnic in Malaysia strength to preserve its own identity. Be that as it may the Chinese education social movement has united the struggling of Chinese in Malaysia; the same role has also become the weakness for Chinese education in Malaysia to take a more prominent part after the launching of One Belt One Road Initiative (OBOR) in 2013 by China government. Thus, the purpose of this research paper is to analyze the advantages of Malaysian Chinese education and how it may fully utilize these advantages to further strengthened social harmony, as well as take part in Chinese language dissemination for Southeast Asia.

This research is therefore aimed to achieve the following specific objectives:

- (1) To analyze the advantages of Malaysian Chinese Education based on historical perspective.
- (2) To evaluate the roles of Malaysian Chinese Education based on One Belt One Road Initiative.
- (3) To provide a future development framework for Chinese Education in Malaysia.

2. Methodology

This research paper is a preliminary study in analyzing and evaluating Chinese Education in Malaysia after the introduction of OBOR. The expected outcome of this research paper is to produce a future development framework for Chinese Education in Malaysia. Researchers intend to re-examine the development of Chinese Education since 1819 and analyze the advantages of Chinese Education based on this historical perspective. Besides, researchers will further evaluate the impacts of OBOR on Malaysian Chinese Education and repositioning its roles following this new development, and proposed the new development framework for Malaysian Chinese Education after OBOR initiative.

To achieve the objectives stated in this study, the following four steps have been applied to review the relevant article journals and reading materials.



Source: Creswell (2008).

Figure 1: Four Steps Procedure of Literature Review

Researchers started the search by identifying the key term “Malaysian Chinese Education”. After analyzed the articles identified in the searching process, researchers further expanded the searching process with other relevant terms such as, “One Belt One Road”, “Advantages of Chinese Education in Malaysia”, “Roles of Chinese Education in Malaysia” and “future of Chinese Education in Malaysia” to capture as many related concepts as possible.

With the above key terms identified, the CNKI (China National Knowledge Infrastructure) and ERIC (Educational Resources Information Center) database available in university library were visited to explore the article journals and other reading materials (such as an academic magazine, monograph, educational reports, etc).

A diagram or literature map was used to provide a visual picture of the literature found (Creswell, 2008). This literature map allowed researchers to display the idea of the study in the organized and manageable form so as the discussion of the literature can be drafted. The literature map was produced as following after the articles being analyzed.

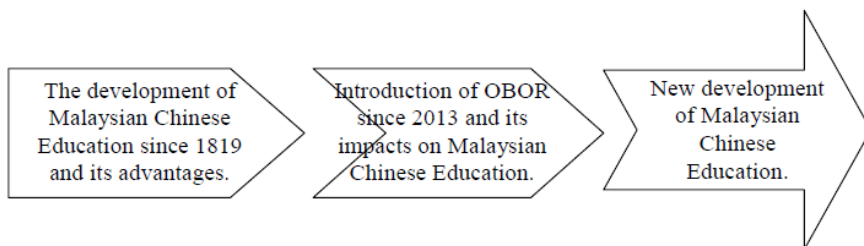


Figure 2: Literature Map for the Concept of Repositioning Malaysian Chinese Education Development.

3. Malaysian Chinese Education Development and Its Advantages

To discuss the new orientation of Malaysian Chinese education, it is necessary to review its traditional orientation. As for the Malaysian Chinese education, most of the scholars or articles were focusing on the issues of dilemmas, limitations, and challenges faced by Chinese education development in Malaysia (Ang, 2014). Traditional orientation is divided into two stages: the first stage is before the independent of Malaysia in 1957, and the second stage is after independent of Malaysia.

3.1. Traditional Orientation of Malaysian Chinese Education before 1957

Before the independent of Malaysia in 1957, Chinese education was mainly a kind of diaspora education, that is, the oversea extension of China national education. The diaspora education has three characteristics: one is the national identity which is they think they are Chinese people; the second is the curriculum and teaching content, and China's national schools are the same; third is the medium language is Chinese (Tan & Teoh, 2015).

At that time, Malaysian and Singaporean Chinese, like other Chinese in Southeast Asia, "only have the concept of 'Nanyang'" (Mo Shunzong, 2014). The concept of "Nanyang" refers to the state that has not yet established; therefore, it cannot produce the concept of national identity. The national identity of Chinese at "Nanyang" was referred to the motherland of China. The textbook of "Mandarin" published by World Bookstore in 1948 as an example, two of the texts in this textbook stated that: "You are Chinese, I am Chinese, he is Chinese, we are all Chinese people" and "You love China, I love China, he loves China, we all love China" (Nan & She, 2010). The overseas Chinese people at that time were considered themselves as a citizen of mainland China. On 31 August 1957, Malaysia obtained the independence from British colonization. Meanwhile, in 1965, Singapore separated from Malaysia and became an independent country. Most of the Malaysian Chinese people have obtained the Malaysia or Singapore citizenship; however, their recognition of mainland China as their motherland is challenging to change.

On the other hand, they also have difficulty in accepting Malaysia or Singapore as their own new country. Researchers name this dilemma as the "Nanyang Chinese motherland patriotism tangled" which refers to the nationality confusion and struggling between mainland China and the newly established nation. This dilemma existed even until the 1970s. Subsequently, this concept of national and cultural identity inherited by the Malaysian Chinese had resulted in conflict when the Malaysian government implemented the "one nation, one education stream, and one culture" policy. The monolingual and mono-cultural policy implemented by the Malaysian government led to the long-term struggling of Malaysian Chinese education in preserving Chinese language and culture.

3.2. Traditional Orientation of Malaysian Chinese Education after 1957

The second stage of traditional orientation is after the independence of Malaysia. As the second largest ethnic group involved in the formation of Malaysia (the Chinese population accounted for about 37% of the total population of Malaysia at that time), the Chinese educationists from 1952 to 1967 was attempting to safeguard the interest of Chinese education through the recognition of Chinese as an official language (Tan

& Teoh, 2014). However, this attempt was defeated by the Malay-dominated party United Malays National Organization (UMNO). Yap (2013) indicated this as the first Chinese education social movement after the independence of Malaysia.

The second Chinese education social movement after the independence of Malaysia was with the passing of "1961 Education Act". With the passing of this new Act, the ownership of Chinese secondary schools was handed to the government and school committee no longer enjoyed management power over the school property (Ang, 2014). Furthermore, the medium of instruction has to change from Mandarin to the national language of the country which is the Malay language. Chinese educationalists insisted on preserving the medium of instruction in Mandarin which sacrificed the financial subsidy from the government. Sixteen (16) Chinese independent schools remained and the revival movement of independent Chinese secondary schools was called on 1973 (Ang, 2014; Yap, 2013). Today, there are 60+1 independent Chinese secondary schools throughout Malaysia, and their certificate is recognized throughout the world.

The third Chinese education social movement was the lawsuit of Merdeka University from 1980-1986 (Ang, 2014; Yap, 2013). Chinese educationalists lost the lawsuit against the government in allowing the establishment of a tertiary institution in using the Chinese language as the medium of instruction. Besides these three main education movements, there are various attempts have been made by the Chinese educationists to liberalize the education policy in Malaysia. Therefore, the traditional orientation of the Chinese educationists after Malaysia independent is much more challenging and dealing with various issues of language preservation.

3.3. Advantages of Malaysian Chinese Education

China's rapid development and growing engagement globally especially after the introduction of OBOR in 2013 have prompted much discussion and debate about the Chinese language, especially its prospects for becoming a global language (Gil, 2011; Wu, 2016). From the global perspective, with the Chinese language rapid spreading throughout the world, "Nanyang" (which consists of Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, and Brunei) with such a large Chinese community, it is a privilege for global Chinese people, as well as the privilege for the Chinese language itself. According to Guo Xi (2007), "Overseas Chinese community is an important basement for Chinese language dissemination globally. Thus, the teaching and education of overseas Chinese should be placed with the utmost important position as it will benefit to the internationalization of Chinese language."

As such, Malaysian Chinese community and Chinese education should also be an essential resource available in the future of the development of international Chinese language spreading. Malaysia should play a more important role to disseminate the Chinese language in "Nanyang countries", as well as other countries along "Maritime Silk Road" regional communication.

Researchers are holding a different view from Malaysian local Chinese educators because we are standing outside of Malaysia to study their Chinese education. In another word, we are not "in-group" of Malaysian Chinese, and we are not confined to the historical perception of Malaysian Chinese language development. We perceive the Malaysian Chinese education holistically, which is unique and has missing features and

advantages which are not possessed by other countries and regions. We believe that Malaysian Chinese education has the following five main advantages.

Firstly, Malaysia has a comprehensive Chinese education system. The integrity of the Malaysian Chinese education system is not found in other countries around the world (except China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Macau). This education system covered from the Chinese kindergarten to the Chinese primary schools, independent Chinese secondary schools, and tertiary education. Currently, there are many Chinese language kindergartens, 1298 of the Chinese primary schools, 61 (included 1 for the branch) Chinese independence secondary schools and three private Chinese college-universities. In this system, there are large numbers of students, an example, the number of students in Chinese primary schools is up to 600,000 (which 80,000 students are from other ethnic groups).

Secondly, Chinese education in Malaysia has the standardization of curriculum and well-founded management mechanism. The United Chinese School Committees' Association of Malaysia (hereinafter referred to as "Dongzong"), which is the head of the educational affairs, as well as the research and development institutions, has done a lot of work for long-term development and standardization of Malaysian Chinese education. For instance, DongZong is responsible for developing curriculum for independent Chinese secondary schools which consist of the preparation of the teaching materials, to organize a unified examination, to conduct routine teacher training and many other measures. All these efforts are to ensure the education provided by independent Chinese secondary schools are more standardized, the evaluation criteria are scientific and fair, and ultimately make the United Examination Certificate (UEC) accepted by colleges and universities in mainland China and other countries throughout the world.

Thirdly, the native Chinese students' enrolments are sufficient. Malaysian total population is 32 million (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2017), of which about 7.23 million are Chinese people, accounting for about 23.3% of the total population in Malaysia. This figure is one of the most concentrated Chinese population areas beside mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Macau. According to the international recognized primary and secondary school students accounted for about 15% of the total population estimation, there is 1.08 million students' enrolment for primary and secondary schools. As 96% of Chinese children go to the Chinese primary schools, which provide a sufficient enrolment for Chinese education. Undoubtedly, some students may not choose the Chinese schools as their first choice; the remaining number of children eligible for primary and secondary schools is still in a considerable amount. Furthermore, it is also a small number of non-Chinese children choose to accept Chinese education, and it is in a rising trend. Therefore, the non-native speaker has become a group of learners that cannot be ignored by the Chinese educators.

Fourthly, the policy and social foundation is robust. Malaysian government only provides financial support to Chinese primary schools and does not offer any assistance to independent Chinese secondary schools and three Chinese colleges and universities. However, the Malaysian government legally accepts Chinese education. In recent year, the Malaysian government also promotes the Chinese language lesson in the national education system (which Malay language as a medium of instruction) as second language teaching. Indirectly, this measure provides Chinese education with political protection. Besides, Malaysian Chinese always adhere to Mandarin as a preferred

language for intergenerational heritage and community communication. In Malaysia, the practice of the Chinese community in accepting Chinese education is entirely a self-regulated action, and the donations to the sustainability of Chinese education have become a great tradition. All these essential factors come together to build a solid base for Malaysian Chinese education.

Lastly, Malaysian Chinese education has the effectiveness of organizational protection. For a long time, DongZong and the United Chinese School Teachers' Association of Malaysia (hereinafter refers to as "JiaoZong", both of these organizations are known as "DongJiaoZong"), which has played a leading role on promoting and regulating the Malaysian Chinese education. They lead the top design, equity struggling, financing and patronage, standardization control, diplomatic exchange and other aspects of measurement to ensure organizational security. The development of Chinese education in Malaysia clearly illustrates the strong resilience and commitment of the Chinese educationists to uphold the mother tongue education of the Chinese in Malaysia (Raman & Sua, 2015). The Malaysian Ministry of Education (MOE) has also introduced some measures in promoting Chinese as a second language at all levels of national language education.

Nevertheless, the Malaysian Chinese education system also has shortcomings, that is, the missing gap in producing of undergraduate, master and doctorate candidates from the Chinese education system. Hopefully, this problem can be overcome in the next few years, maybe with the cooperation with universities in China to achieve joint training.

3.4. Summary

In a nutshell, Malaysian Chinese education development experienced a lot of difficulties, problems and struggling for the past 100 years. However, as the times are different for future, we have to talk more about the advantages, cooperation, and development. We need to be more confident to re-examine the advantages of Malaysian Chinese education, its position, and functions, with a global vision to place it under the new world pattern, as well as to re-structure their developmental issues. We should fully understand the vital value of Chinese education as the national resource of Malaysia, and strive to engage with the development of OBOR, conform to the new situation of Chinese international spreading, take advantage of the opportunity to make it enhance the global competitiveness of Malaysia, promote mutual understanding and social harmony. Malaysia Chinese education should play a more critical role in the spreading of Chinese language along the Maritime Silk Road and bringing Malaysian Chinese education to a higher level of development.

4. OBOR and Its Impacts on Malaysian Chinese Education Development

In 2013, Chinese premier Xi Jinping announced a new development and trade initiatives for China, namely the "Silk Road Economic Belt" and the "Maritime Silk Road" together known as "One Belt, One Road (OBOR)" initiatives (Embong, Evers & Ramli, 2017). OBOR has been described as "the most significant and far-reaching initiative" in the history of modern China development. Five important goals are laid down as a broad framework of connectivity and cooperation in OBOR, namely policy coordination; facilities connectivity; unimpeded trade; financial integration; and people to people bonds (Winter, 2016). Subsequently to the embarking of these initiatives, the

Chinese trading business investors flooded to the countries within the OBOR regions including Malaysia. These Chinese investors contributing to the Malaysian economic growth; thus, the private and public sectors need to aggressively increase their staff proficiency level, especially, their basic speaking in Mandarin.

There is a positive correlation between language spreading and national strength (Wu, 2011). Ding and Saunders (2006) stated that the cultural resources influence national decision making, economic development, and social structure; likewise, they impact global and local conflicts. Therefore, not surprisingly, cultural power has received increasing levels of attention among policy-makers and policy-implementers in recent years. Thus, with the rapid improvement of China's national strength, the Chinese language will also be fast spread over the world (Ning, 2010).

China is now the world's second-largest economy. According to experts' prediction that China in 2020 will replace the United States becoming the world's largest economy. China's image in the eyes of the people around the world will experience a huge transformation. The understanding of the people pertaining global landscape will suffer huge impacts cognitively due to these changes. Many people from different countries hold positive expectations for China's future development. According to the world's leading independent research institutions, the United States Pew Research Center has released a national poll report on June 23, 2015, which covers 40 nations, shows that China has the similar level of popularity as the United States in the world. Most of the respondents believe that China is replacing the United States as the world's leading superpower. Out of the 40 countries that were surveyed, 27 of them hold this similar view (Richard Wike, 2015, June 23). This optimism is expected to be a potential motivator for learning the Chinese language. As long as China continues to develop, this optimism will continue to exist, and the dynamic mechanism of Chinese spreading to the world will continue to sustain. The issue of whether the Chinese language can spread around the world has become less and lesser controversial (Rui Yang, 2012). Chinese spreading around the world is an inevitable trend, there is no the matter of problem, but it is only a matter of time (Wu, 2011). Southeast Asia is the best region for Chinese dissemination in the world, and Malaysia is the best country in this region for Chinese language dissemination. Malaysia can play the role of "*quasi-mother language country*" in Chinese dissemination, namely a country that can represent China in Chinese language dissemination for the particular region. So, it is necessary to have a new understanding of its role and position after the tremendous transformation of the global landscape. Researchers have identified the triple roles and functions of Chinese education in Malaysia with the new trend of Chinese language dissemination.

4.1. The Triple Roles of Malaysian Chinese Education

Whether Chinese is a national language or a foreign language, this is a tangled question. We think that there are triplet roles in the Chinese language in Malaysia, which is the same as other countries in Southeast Asia. It is the mother tongues of the local Chinese and the foreign language for Malaysia and is also the common language of the Chinese in the region.

Firstly, the Chinese language as a mother tongue for Malaysian Chinese is undeniable fact and which has been discussed in detail in the previous section of this research.

Secondly, the Chinese language plays a foreign language role in Malaysia (Wu, 2016a). This is an objective reality. As for Malaysia, China (including Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macao), and Singapore are foreign countries. Therefore, the common language in China mainland which is “Putonghua”, and Mandarin in Singapore is one of the four official languages, is no doubt a foreign language for Malaysia.

Thirdly, the Chinese language plays a common language role for the Southeast Asian region. Maybe this issue seldom being raised in the past, but Chinese language usage among the people in this region does have a rapid increase trend. Chinese in Southeast Asia belong to different countries, but these countries have a lot of common grounds, like pronounce, vocabulary, and grammar. Especially concerning vocabulary, there are a lot of similarities between the countries in this region, and there are few barriers to communication. The term "region" refers to 11 countries, namely: Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, Myanmar, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Brunei, Philippines and Timor-Leste in Southeast Asia.

"The total number of overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia is about 33.486 million, accounting for about 6% of the total population of Southeast Asia, 73.5% of the whole population of overseas Chinese" (Zhuang, 2009). Especially in Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, and Brunei, the proportion of the Chinese population are very high. In Malaysia, 23.2% of the population is Chinese, which are 7.23 million people (The Malay Mail Online, 2017). Singapore, the Chinese population of about 4 million, accounting for 74.3% of the total population of 5.47 million (Population Trend, 2016), Indonesian Chinese accounted for 3-4% of the total population of 248 million (World population review, 2017), the total population of Chinese is about 10 million. Brunei national population is 393,000 (2013), Chinese accounted for about 9%, which are nearly 40,000 people. From the number of the Chinese population in Southeast Asia can be seen that the number have a wide population base (Wu & He, 2016). Even though many local Chinese cannot speak the Chinese language, but with the rapid development and the globalization of China's international influence, the Chinese education can achieve a better revive even after a generation gap.

4.2. The Triple Functions of Malaysian Chinese Education

The triplet roles of Chinese education in Southeast Asia determine the triplet functions of Malaysian Chinese education. As the most developed and comprehensive Chinese education system in this region, Malaysian Chinese education should play a leading role in three functions of Chinese education.

Firstly, the Malaysian Chinese education should continue its traditional role which is to inherit mother tongue education and to preserve Chinese culture.

Secondly, the Malaysian Chinese education should go beyond the traditional Chinese-speaking mother tongue and the educational function of Chinese culture, and strive to spread Chinese as the second language to the Malays and other ethnic groups. Living in Malaysia, as a Malaysian citizen, Chinese educators have the advantage and obligation to make their due contribution to teaching Chinese as a second language. For example, Chinese education plays a

vital role in teacher training, teaching materials, teaching theory, and method innovation and other fields for those teachers who teach the Chinese language as a foreign language. Civilization conflict is often caused by misunderstanding, language is a communication tool, if there are a large number of Malay can master Chinese, we believe people will have more understanding of Chinese culture, which is promoting the harmonious relationship between the Chinese and the Malays.

The Chinese community has played an essential role in the education of Chinese (native language), mother tongue and Chinese culture, and has played an active role in striving for Chinese rights and interests, building a multicultural society and cultivating Chinese economic and trade talents. However, merely adhere to the Chinese and Chinese cultural heritage role, obviously cannot adapt to the development of the times. Malaysian Chinese educator Wang (2015) has stated that Chinese education does not only matter the Chinese people, but also the matter of the country (Malaysia). Based on this understanding, Malaysian Chinese educators should take the initiative to adapt to the new situation, to determine the new position to plan and promote the Malaysian Chinese education to achieve leapfrog development.

Thirdly, Malaysian Chinese education should provide leadership and service function of Chinese education in Southeast Asia. Malaysian Chinese education should lead and guide Chinese education as the second language in Southeast Asia. The educators in Malaysia should share with other countries in Southeast Asia their successful experiences, new ideas and new methods of Malaysian Chinese education to promote the overall development of Chinese education in the region. Besides, Malaysian Chinese educators should also improve the training of Chinese teachers and Chinese teaching resources under the market-oriented mechanism to support and help this regional Chinese education.

5. New Development Framework for Malaysian Chinese Education

According to the above discussion on the triplet of Malaysian Chinese language and Chinese education functions, with the rapid spread of Chinese and the advancement of the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) Community, we should not only focus on the traditional Malaysian Chinese education. Malaysian Chinese education should also explore a new plan to improve the Malaysian Chinese education as a global leader in this area, under the regionalization and globalization approaches. Malaysian Chinese education is facing an unprecedented opportunity for development. An exploration of a new strategy with following the trend, global vision, international thinking, and at a higher-level position is necessary.

5.1. The Development of Chinese Education should be considered as a Malaysian National Strategy Planning

The development of Chinese education should be considered as a Malaysian national strategy planning in terms of the importance of language for the country. According to Zhao (2015), language is both soft and hard power for a country, and language has a vital role on national status, national security, economic development, technological innovation, social progress, cultural

construction, governance and other aspects of governance. He also pointed out that "in the era of information globalization, the instrumental role of language is more strengthened, its resource value and other functions are increasingly prominent, has become a great tool for social governance, economic development resources, cultural heritage innovation, scientific and technological innovation, engine of the international game, and the elements of security." Zhao (2015) further indicated that citizens' language skills and national language skills, as important parts of national strength, directly affect the national competitiveness, national development, national status, and national security.

Another scholar, Li (2011) also stated that the "Language resource has hard power" to show that language is essential to the development of the country. However, there is no official evidence to prove that the Chinese language can improve Malaysian resources and promote Malaysian international competitiveness. Besides, Chinese language education is not on the list of the programs of education development in Malaysia since independence. Malaysian education development only emphasizes the status of Malay and English. Therefore, the Malaysian Chinese education Non-government Organization (NGO), such as DongJiaoZong, and other related scholars should make recommendations to the government to clarify the importance of the Chinese language for the development of Malaysia. The Chinese educators should urge the government to support the development of Chinese education at the national policy level, especially teaching Chinese as the second Language at the national mainstream education system to the Malays and other ethnic groups to enhance the international competitiveness of Malaysia. Besides, the promotion of the Chinese language to the Malays and other ethnic groups will help to understand the Chinese and Chinese culture; eventually will promote social harmony in Malaysia. The international trade between China and Malaysia is closely related to the Chinese language, and one of the advantages of local Chinese is the interlinked language, which made local Chinese more advantage in the trade.

5.2. To Explore Malaysian Chinese Language as an Economic Resource

The spread of the Chinese language will be of great significance in promoting its economic cooperation and cultural exchanges with other countries (Cheng, 2015). Therefore, researchers believe that the Malaysian Chinese education can combine the Chinese language resources with the demands of neighboring countries to explore language learning market, such as the research of Chinese teaching materials, the construction of Chinese teaching resource database, the development of Chinese teaching software. This effort will not just support the Chinese education in surrounding area like Singapore, Indonesia, Brunei, southern Thailand, and other countries, but the Malaysian Chinese education will also gain economic benefits through paid services of Chinese education.

As mentioned by Li (2011), "Language is not only a cultural resource but also economic resources. It can produce economic benefits, and we should try to develop language industry and language professions, earn language revenue, investigate language plan from the perspective of economics, enhance the

economics thinking into language planning, apply the 'cost-profit' analysis to evaluate language activities, and estimate economic contribution of language. Advocate the awareness of language resource, cherish language resources and language talents, enhance public language skills, and national language skills."

5.3. To Build Malaysia as a Major Base for Chinese Teaching in the "Nanyang Countries"

Malaysia - Singapore - Brunei - Indonesia (referred to as "Nanyang countries") are sharing the same tropical rainforest climate, with the similar natural environment. The Malay language is lingua franca in this region. It is the official language of Malaysia and Brunei, as well as one of four official languages of Singapore. Malay and Indonesian language is the same language with a little difference. The main reason for the differentiation between Malay and Indonesian is due to political factors but not linguistic attribution. Besides, Islamic culture prevails in the above countries. Therefore, these four countries have similar language and cultural background. Thus, the Malaysian native Chinese which can speak Malay, English, and Chinese have the advantage of teaching the Chinese language in these countries. They have no barrier to adopt either the social culture or natural environment. In other words, Malaysian Chinese can teach the Chinese language in these countries without cultural or environmental hindrance as compare with any other country or region in reaching this advantage.

As Malaysian Chinese scholar, Mo Shun Zong (2014) said, "Singapore, for example, from its point of view, the Malaysian Chinese talents no need to adapt and integrate environment of Singapore, because the Malaysian Chinese and Singapore Chinese belonged to one family. Singapore and Malaysia are similar in the national conditions, culture, and even food, climate. Many Southeast Asian countries have the similar situation." In addition, the similarity of language, culture, and the natural environment has become the basis for the preparation of regional Chinese textbooks and Chinese as the second language teaching materials and their teaching materials, but also made teaching ideas advanced and provide a convenient for regional promotion (Mo Shun Zong, 2014). There is also the reason for much of the regional cooperation among these countries, such as on facilitating the mobility of university staff and students, research collaboration, and the exchange of ideas on institutional management and development (Lee, 2007).

In sum, Malaysia can become the most substantial Chinese international communication basement outside of China area. In facing the ASEAN Community, especially Singapore, Indonesia, Brunei and other countries, Malaysia should lead Chinese language teacher training, teaching materials researching, methodology innovation, and Chinese culture dissemination. Malaysia can serve Chinese language teaching in this region by playing a significant role in two areas: providing traditional Chinese education for local native Chinese students, and targeting non-Chinese students as a second language teaching, including both primary and secondary schools. Chinese as a second language will become the major part of Chinese education in "Nanyang countries". The reason is simply the non-Chinese population and student is in

large number. If the development of China is stable, and with deeper economic cooperation between China and this region, people who learn Chinese will continue to grow. For this prediction, the Thailand study case is the best circumstantial evidence. In the past decade, the number of people studying Chinese in Thailand has increased from tens of thousands to millions of people. The case study in Thailand also proved that the level of economic cooperation and the development of Chinese teaching are positively correlated.

5.4. To Build Malaysia as a Research and Development Base for Chinese Education Theory of "Nanyang Countries"

In term of "Nanyang countries", Chinese education theory is in urgency which needs to put on the development agenda. Malaysian Chinese education community should also take full advantage to construct the Chinese teaching theoretical system in "Nanyang countries". Malaysia is not only weak in the research field of Chinese language as a second language teaching in tertiary level, but also for primary and secondary schools' level. According to Malaysian local scholar Yap (2013), due to "*ethno-language dilemma*" and some other factors, Malaysia is still lack of the study on the profile, development factors and future development direction and strategy of teaching Chinese as second language education based on a macro and international perspective. Therefore, it is necessary to build Malaysia as a research and development base for Chinese education theory construction in order to support Chinese education as a second language in "Nanyang countries". Besides, it is also necessary to study the "Nanyang countries" Chinese as a second language teaching theory and practice. Such research does not only have good academic value, but have broad application prospects as well.

5.5. To Build Malaysia as a Role Model of Chinese education between China and "Nanyang Countries"

The motherland of overseas Chinese is China, the root of Chinese language and Chinese culture is in China too. To expand the China cultural interactions globally, which enhance China's soft power has become China's national strategy. In recent years, China's support for overseas Chinese teaching (including Chinese education) is growing, including both financial support and professional support, such as teachers and teaching materials. There are a lot of similarities between Malaysian Chinese education and mainland China education. Due to the rich experience of Chinese education in the Malay environment, Malaysian Chinese educationists have a strong basis to form the collaboration with mainland Chinese educationist to provide the teaching Chinese as second language education. However, thus far there are very few substantive cooperation and exchange projects between Malaysian Chinese educationists and mainland China educationists, which are disproportionate to the development of Chinese education in Malaysia. Malaysia and China should actively promote comprehensive cooperation in the international Chinese education. Chinese educationists in these two countries should show the role model to these "Nanyang countries" on how to guide and lead the cooperation for Chinese international education.

6. Conclusion

As indicated above, the functions of Chinese education have been seen as to serve Chinese culture inherited and ethnic identity by Malaysian Chinese educationist. For so long, the Chinese education has faced disadvantages and marginalization due to the "*ethno-language dilemma*". Researchers believe that with the rapid development of China and the ASEAN community, Malaysian should pay attention to the value of Chinese language resources and the role of Chinese education in the national and regional development. We should focus on the study of the evolution of Malaysian Chinese education based on the geographical and cultural advantages. Exploration of the new plan is necessary to enhance the status and influence of Malaysian Chinese education under the regionalization and globalization approaches. Thus, it is crucial to develop and utilize this language resource, which will enhance Malaysia's competitiveness at the international arena. Besides, it will promote the understanding of other ethnic groups in Chinese culture and community in Malaysia. Subsequently, social harmony in Malaysia will be further strengthened. Malaysia as the largest overseas Chinese international communication base outside China should play more and more critical role on teacher training, teaching materials innovation, teaching demonstration, culture inherited and regional Chinese education theory innovation in the ASEAN Community, especially for Singapore, Indonesia, and Brunei. Malaysian Chinese education should take advantage of China fast development, grasp the opportunities with full of confidence and creative, from the top down design, strengthen international cooperation, and achieve leapfrog development from local Chinese education to regional Chinese education.

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