

LANGUAGE VITALITY IN TRI-GENERATIONAL CHINESE FAMILIES IN
MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT

This research examines the language vitality of the tri-generational families in Malaysia. It specifically examines how the Chinese dialects and Mandarin language are maintained in Chinese families in Malaysia. This research was carried out by collecting data from tri-generational Chinese families through interviews and observations. A total of fifteen people from five families in Kuantan, Pahang participated in the study. After the interviews, transcribing and analyzing the collected data were done. The analysis was based on whether communications between the three generations were affected by some factors such as communication domains, educational background, and loyalty towards the language. The findings of the study show that tri-generational Chinese families tend to lose the Chinese dialect because of their preference in Mandarin. The first generation tends to use their Chinese dialect when speaking with the second generation and their peers. The second generation uses the Chinese dialect in communicating with the first generation and their peers. However, the third generation speakers are not exposed to the Chinese dialect as a result they lose it. The findings show that the second generation speakers play an integral part in maintaining the Chinese dialect because they can converse in Mandarin and Chinese dialect. They are able to bridge the gap between the first generation and third generation speakers. In view of the results shown, it is recommended that further research in this field of study in Malaysia is needed because the data gathered in this research is limited only in one state.