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Language and National Identity in Asia: a Thematic Introduction
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1.1 Introduction

Studies of nationalism and the emergence and maintenance of nations regularly concur that language, and in particular the existence of broadly shared language, is very often a primary and critical component in the successful moulding of a population as a nation. As a symbolic marker and index of individual and group identity, language has the potential to function as an important boundary device, separating distinct sub-populations off from neighbouring others with different, possibly unintelligible language habits, and binding the former together with shared feelings of identity and group self-interest. Spread amongst a significantly wide population of speakers via the use of various mass media, a common language can assist in the construction of a geographically widespread, imagined community of speakers and the building of nation-like polities, providing linguistic links are also reinforced with other shared cultural properties. The promotion of a standardized, common language throughout a territory and its inhabitants also has the ability to even out socio-economic inequities present in a society and encourage the unification of a population through the provision of equal (or at least improved) opportunities for advancement and future prosperity. Following on from Barbour and Carmichael’s (2000) revealing, multi-authored study of *Language and Nationalism in Europe*, the present, similarly structured volume takes as its focus the theme of language as a force in the construction and maintenance of nations within Asia, and endeavours to probe and chart the linguistic tensions at play in the development of states in the Asian region.

In terms of the physical scope and geographical coverage of the volume, the full western and northern extents of Asia have not been included in the book’s contents and attention is instead firmly centred on the heavily populous spread of countries from Pakistan in South Asia through to Japan and Korea in Northeast Asia. Western Asia, more commonly referred to as the Middle East, is often approached as a special
socio-political area by itself and can be argued to be treated more appropriately in a separate volume considering the Arabic world, Islam, and Judaism. Similarly, various states of northern Asia have been left aside here in the belief that the ex-Soviet Union republics of Central Asia are better grouped in a study considering Russia and Mongolia and the historic associations that these territories have with each other. The vast residue of Asia, encompassing those areas most commonly evoked in lay speech with the term Asian, is organizationally grouped in the volume much in the way that the study of the continent is conducted within university departments, being divided into three major blocks: (a) South Asia – the Indian subcontinent, consisting in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Bhutan, linked up by ancient civilization and more recent colonial history; (b) East Asia, constituted by China, Japan and Korea, with many linguistic and cultural properties in common, the result of areal influence and borrowing during earlier periods dominated by imperial China; and (c) Southeast Asia, a vibrant and varied collection of multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic states emerging from the clash of different peoples and cultures coming into contact over many centuries.

Concerning the notion of ‘national identity’ and the units of population relative to which issues of belonging and loyalty are considered here, the term ‘nation’ is frequently used to pick out and refer to at least two potentially different types of entity. In much of the literature discussing nationalism, nations are suggested to be a relatively recent phenomenon, arising from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries onwards as the result of processes of industrialization, modernization, and the spread of democracy. The successful, co-operative function of populations in industrial, modern societies is argued to have necessitated a different form of internal organization from that present in earlier times, and to have caused the development of nations with a number of core, common properties. As instantiated by the first nations to emerge in Europe and the Americas, a nation is archetypically described as being a population/people which (a) is comprised of a single ethnic group with a common ancestry and shared history, (b) currently manifests a shared culture, including (often, though not always) a single religion, and (most frequently) a single language, (c) is contained within clear territorial borders, (d) is organized by a uniform, centralized bureaucracy, and (e) benefits from democracy, citizenship, and equal rights in the determination of the future of the nation. In addition to such outwardly observable objective properties, a further key ingredient of nations is argued to be a distinct subjective awareness amongst the people of a nation that they indeed comprise such an entity, and furthermore have affection for and loyalty towards such a grouping (Kellas 1998). Prototypical examples of emerged, modern nations are the nineteenth-century consolidation of Germany and Italy, the internal reorganization of England, France, and Holland as industrialized nations, and the twentieth-century development of nations in the eastern part of Europe (e.g. Poland, Hungary, and the Czech and Slovak republics).

A second, commonly heard use of the word ‘nation’ is to apply this term more broadly to all politically independent states, whether or not such territories also
exhibit the other features ascribed above to nations, such as having an ethnically homogeneous population with a common culture, language, and history. This second, less restrictive use of the term nation occurs in the title of the organization 'the United Nations', is common in everyday journalistic and other non-technical writing, and has resulted in a refinement of the use of the term nation in various discussions of nationalism. Nations in the first, narrower sense are sometimes referred to as 'ethnic nations', whereas simple independent states have been called 'official nations' or 'territorial nations' (Kellas 1998, Guibernau 1996). An ethnic nation may also have the status of being an official nation, if it has won territorial independence, but there may be many official nations which are not classed as ethnic nations due to being ethnically mixed. The reference point for the present volume, in its targeted interest in 'national' identity, is the situation of loyalties and identity in and towards the official nations of Asia, such as they exist today, and the focus of attention is on how language is and has been relevant for the cultivation of nationalistic feelings of belonging to such states, either in a positive, enabling way, or negatively, inhibiting the growth of an encompassing national identity.

In comparison with the paced emergence of many nations within Europe, the creation of modern nations in Asia has often been accelerated and followed two rather different paths of development. In one set of cases, involving Japan, China, Siam (Thailand), and Korea (prior to its occupation by Japan), nationalism and the rapid attempted development of modern states was a reaction to perceived threats from outside, and specifically the advancement of Western colonial powers into Asia. In such instances, states that already existed and were dominated by a single, major ethnic group judged that modernization was the key to strengthen and protect their territories against the intrusion of foreign hostile Others, and that nationalism offered itself as a useful means to help achieve this modernization. Internal reorganization and reform of the state and its administrative infrastructure commonly followed with a centralization of authority and the simultaneous promotion of national culture and language, in a process directly taking its lead from the nationalist development of states within Europe. In a great many other parts of Asia, however, modern, independent states were formed from frequently composite populations not as a preventative measure to ward off outside threats but instead as the result of the colonial process, and the withdrawal of an occupying power which had itself determined the borders of the state and the make-up of its population, in various cases resulting in an extensive mixture of ethno-linguistic groups within a single state (e.g. Indonesia and the Philippines). Rather than attempting to radically adjust and reconstruct the territorial divisions set up by colonial occupation, those who campaigned for self-determination and independence from foreign rule for the most part accepted the shape of the states they came to possess on departure of the preceding colonial rulers, and often inherited states which were already structured by modern bureaucracies and a centralized administration. Nationalist movements in such cases therefore resulted in the fairly rapid conversion of ethnically shared spaces into modern official nations, rather than
stemming from the more gradual transformation of genuinely ethnic nations into independent states.

As a consequence of the way that many states in Asia came into existence through this latter route to nationhood, concerted projects of nation-building were frequently only initiated following independence. Prior to achieving independent statehood, the principal energies of indigenous nationalists had been directed towards the goals of achieving democracy, increased governmental representation, and eventual independence rather than nation-building itself. Having finally won independence, and taken charge of modern, bureaucratically organized states, the pressing need for attempts to build together the new citizens of these states into integrated nations became extremely obvious and a primary focus of leaders concerned about the potential fragmentation of ethnically mixed territories. Such nation-building projects are in many cases very much still ongoing processes, and the characterization 'states in search of nations' has often been offered as appropriate for certain of the newly independent countries in Asia which have not emerged from a firm prior grounding as ethnic nations. The task of trying to stimulate a sense of cohesion among newly 'national' populations and encourage feelings of belonging and loyalty towards a co-inhabited territory has subsequently required much attention to the development of national identity in emerging states and the encouragement of a consciousness among citizens of collectively forming a single population with various common 'national' properties and a single shared future to invest in. The theme of national identity, its possible definition, creation, growth, and protection has, accordingly, assumed a major importance in dialogue and strategic planning carried out at governmental level in many states within Asia during the course of the twentieth century and continues to hold an important place in political and intellectual discussion both in potentially fragile multi-ethnic states and in countries with a single dominant ethnic group, where traditional ideas of national identity may now be changing under the threat of new forces of globalization.

In the attempted construction and maintenance of national identities, language has regularly been assumed to have a highly significant role to play, and while the knowledge and use of a common language throughout a particular territory may serve to unite its population in a shared national identity, the occurrence of multiple languages in formal and informal domains within a single state has often been perceived as standing in the way of unity and the development of a desired national consciousness. Consequently, following language-related aspects of nationalist ideology shaped in the West, the view came to be adopted by many in positions of power in Asia following, or anticipating, independence, or seeking modernization to avoid external threats, that the success of their emerging nations would be well served by the promotion of national language and a single official lingua franca that could be used throughout the state, in all domains of life. The phenomenon of the selection and sponsoring of national languages and the effects of such policies on other languages spoken within a single state has therefore had a widespread prominence
in Asia much as in the West and remains a topic of considerable importance in many states with ethno-linguistically mixed populations. The chapters of this volume set out to describe the different interactions of language and national and other competing forms of identity that have occurred in Asia, from Pakistan to Japan, as the result of the formation of Asia into modern nations. The chapters consider the extent to which language may or may not be involved in bonding (or separating) people within nation-states in Asia, both in the past and in the present, and what the relevant ethno-linguistic, political, and historical conditions are in each state that may allow for and constrain such relations. In the remainder of the present chapter, an overview of the specific kinds of issues facing language development in Asia and its relation to national identity is now set out, along with a preview of the variety of approaches that have been adopted and the kinds of reactions and effects these have provoked, ranging from violent conflict and secession in certain instances, through passive indifference and disinterest to considerable nationalistic 'success' in others.

1.2 Building Materials, Decisions, and Outcomes

1.2.1 Population Types and Homogeneity

The national language-planning policies of states within Asia have naturally been guided by consideration of the type of population contained in the territory of a state and the degree of ethno-linguistic homogeneity it exhibits. Attempts at nation-building are commonly described as being considerably assisted by the presence of a homogeneous population; however, many states in Asia are not homogeneous and a range of variation exists in the ethnic composition of national populations, in part due to the way that many states arose from colonized territories, but also due to patterns of internal migration and military expansion within Asia, leading to the absorption of a range of ethnic groups in the territory controlled by a single dominant group. At one end of the 'homogeneity parameter/scale', there are states such as Japan, Korea, and Bangladesh where one ethnic group accounts for almost all the population of the state (around 99 per cent), but there are also a number of new Asian nations with extremely mixed populations and a broad occurrence of different ethno-linguistic groups, such as the Philippines, Indonesia, Pakistan, and India. In between these two extremes, there are many countries in which a sizeable majority of the population is constituted by one particular ethnic group, but a further significant proportion of the population is made up by minority groups which may be many in number but relatively small (as for example in Thailand, Laos, and Burma/Myanmar), or contain a group that is numerically large but still a minority when compared to the size of the dominant ethnic group (as in Sri Lanka, Malaysia, and Bhutan where, respectively, Tamils, Chinese, and Nepalese constitute significant minorities). A further complication concerning the distribution of ethno-linguistic groups relative to national borders, considerably relevant for the establishment and growth of national identity, is that
there are various instances in Asia where large populations of a single ethnic group are split by an international border and separated in two distinct polities. This is the case with millions of Bengalis, now distributed in large numbers both in Bangladesh and the Indian state of West Bengal; with Lao people, present both in Laos and in Thailand, with the majority of speakers actually in the latter country; and with Tamils, significantly present in Sri Lanka, but maintaining links to a much larger Tamil population in the south of India. An especially striking case of a split population in Asia is that of the Korean ethnic nation, now divided in two politically divergent states. Hence even with largely homogeneous populations such as those in Bangladesh and on the Korean peninsula there are important issues relating to the scope and boundaries of the nation which have effects on the successful development of populations as modern nations.

1.2.2 National Language Policies

In terms of language policy adopted and pursued at the national level, countries within Asia have either followed a predominantly monolingual approach, in which a single language is designated as the official, representative language of the nation and subsequently (often) mandated for use within formal domains, or have attempted to function with a multilingual national system, promoting more than one language as the national/official languages of the state. The former type of single national language model has rather naturally been followed in countries with highly homogeneous populations, such as Japan, Korea, and Bangladesh, but has also been pursued in many multi-ethnic states, inspired by the goal of building nations with integrated populations newly connected up through the knowledge and frequent use of a single lingua franca, and through exposure to new ‘national’ culture embodied in and transmitted by means of such a language. A single national language has been selected and promoted in multi-ethnic states with a range of different population dynamics, and with different degrees of success. The single language model is first of all found in countries such as Thailand and Burma/Myanmar where a majority ethnic group lives alongside a large number of other, smaller ethnic groups, and the language of the dominant majority is promoted as the official language of the state. Secondly, it occurs in states such as Malaysia, Sri Lanka, and Bhutan, where a significant minority group is present in addition to a more numerous majority (which selects its language as the official national form). Thirdly, it is also found in certain states where the selected national language is actually not the mother tongue of any single ethnic group comprising more than 50 per cent of the population, as for example is the case in Indonesia, Pakistan, and the Philippines.

In contrast with the more widespread decision to specify that a single language is to be the national language and targeted as a form that will (come to) bind the nation and its population together, other multi-ethnic states have opted for models in which more than one language is recognized in official ways, in attempts to give formal
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linguistic representation to a range of ethnic groups within a state. This is essentially the situation in India, which recognizes over twenty different languages as the national languages of the country – those listed in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution (chapter 3) – and allows for the extensive use of these languages in education and administration when selected by individual states. It is also part of the general policy of cultural pluralism which has been adopted in Singapore, where there has been vigorous, extensive promotion of (Mandarin) Chinese, Malay, Tamil, and English as fully equal languages of the state, and attempts at nation-building have been focused on the image of a multi-cultural, economically successful population with broadly shared ‘Asian’ values, rather than on the potential expansion of any single ethnic identity to encompass others in the state (chapter 17).

In assessing the single vs. multiple national/official language approaches of different states, it is furthermore useful to bear in mind that there may be different degrees to which a language designated as ‘national’ is ultimately imposed in administration, education, and other formal domains in a state, and there are various countries which actually supplement the use of a single indigenous national language with a second, non-indigenous official language such as (now most commonly) English. The linguistic interference in the development of national languages in much of Asia from the presence of a colonial language entrenched in government bureaucracy, legal systems, and education is something which has not been experienced in a parallel way in the emergence of national languages in western Europe, and continues to be an important challenge to the full acceptance of national languages in a number of modern states.

1.2.3 Issues in the Selection of a National Language

Where the leaders of a state have made the decision that a single language should be designated for use as a national language, the selection of this language is not always straightforward and in multi-ethnic populations often raises issues concerning the justification of the choice. In India at independence in 1947 (and prior to the established official multilingualism that is now characteristic of the country), Gandhi perceived the need for a single Indian national language to bind its population as one nation. Hindi was then presented as the language that should be chosen for this purpose as it was said to be spoken by 40 per cent of the population and to have significantly more speakers than any other language in the subcontinent. However, this was (and is) a potentially misleading simplification of language patterns in northern India, where there is a vast dialect continuum stretching from modern day Pakistan through to Bangladesh and Assam, and no clear-cut boundaries between different languages in their spoken form. ‘Hindi’ as justified as the natural choice for

1 In addition to the languages of the Eighth Schedule, which have been referred to as the national languages of India since Nehru initiated such a practice, two languages are designated as official languages of the country – Hindi and English – for use in national-level administration.
A national language in fact included many language varieties that locally went by other names, such as Rajasthani, Maithili, Braj, and Awadhi, but differences between these varieties and standard Hindi were classed as being merely dialectal variation rather than indicative of independent language status. As noted by Amritavalli and Jayaseelan in chapter 3, these ‘varieties’ of Hindi are however actually as different from standard Hindi as the separate languages Urdu or Punjabi are, raising important questions about the language–dialect division and how this may sometimes be manipulated for political reasons. Where people are informed by those in authority that their language variety is in fact simply a dialect of some other language, and this subsequently comes to be believed due to trust in those with higher levels of education and knowledge, the result can be the creation of super-linguistic identities which can then be invoked for broader identity-building purposes.

In contrast to the clumping together of different varieties of language under a single language label ‘Hindi’, the distinction of Hindi and Urdu as two different languages is well known as an example of one language form being assigned two different labels as the result of non-linguistic polarization in the populations speaking these varieties, in the case of Hindi–Urdu this polarization being along religious lines. Though Hindi and Urdu are indeed mutually intelligible (though making use of different scripts and having certain vocabulary differences), Hindi is claimed as the language of Hindus and Urdu as the language spoken by Muslims. In this case it is critically religious identity which is signalled by the different names assigned by speakers to essentially the same language. It is also for primarily reasons of religious identity that Urdu was selected as the national language of Pakistan, following the separation of this area from India and the creation of a predominantly Muslim state. Though comparatively few of the inhabitants of the area of Pakistan could actually speak Urdu when Pakistan was established as a state in 1947, Urdu was selected over other languages present in Pakistan which were spoken by many more millions (e.g. Sindhi, Punjabi) in order to project a specific Islamic national identity, Urdu being associated with Muslims in South Asia, and also being spoken by many of the influential Mohajir immigrants who arrived in Pakistan in 1947 (chapter 5).

Within Southeast Asia, various multi-ethnic states have been faced with clear challenges when attempting to institute a single national language, and arrived at solutions with differing degrees of success. In the Philippines, the absence of any indigenous language with a nationwide strong majority of speakers meant that the selection of the language of any of the larger ethnic groups as national language was almost bound to trigger a negative reaction from others, and this indeed occurred. When the language of the most numerous ethnic group, Tagalog, was determined as the primary base of the new national language, this initiated decades of complaints that such a choice conferred unfair socio-economic advantages on native speakers of Tagalog while disadvantaging other groups. The symbolic renaming of Tagalog as Pilipino and later Filipino in its role as national language did nothing to convince the population that Pilipino/Filipino was anything other than Tagalog
and felt to be an inequitable imposition on a majority of citizens in the country (chapter 16). Elsewhere in multi-ethnic Southeast Asia, however, better-received and more successful choices of national language have been made on independence from a colonial power. In Indonesia, the most numerous and politically dominant ethnic group, the speakers of Javanese, resisted any temptation to try to promote Javanese as a new national language for all of Indonesia, realizing that it is a language that is considerably difficult to learn as the result of much complexity in the grammatical and lexical encoding of social distance and politeness in the language. Instead of Javanese or the language of any other proportionately large and influential ethnic group in the Indonesian archipelago, nationalists in Indonesia decided to adopt a form of Malay already in use as a trading lingua franca and develop this as a new national language. Such a decision proved to be very successful and ‘Bahasa Indonesia’ has come to be widely learned and accepted as a useful nationwide form of communication now associated with much prestige and felt to be ethnically-neutral among the population (chapter 14).

In other instances, very clear political forces have led to the stipulation or selection of a particular language as a nation’s representative language. In Taiwan, following liberation of the island from fifty years of Japanese colonial rule, the arriving Kuo Min Tang (KMT) leadership of the Chinese nationalist army declared that Mandarin Chinese would be the national language learned and used in all schools and governmental institutions, even though Mandarin was hardly known by the inhabitants of Taiwan, who instead mostly spoke other, quite different forms of Chinese such as Hokkien and Hakka. The reason for the imposition of Mandarin Chinese on a population who found it largely unintelligible was that the KMT government on Taiwan claimed to be the government of all of China (even though it had been obliged to evacuate completely to Taiwan after defeat by Chinese communist forces on the mainland), and the promoted national language of China had been decided to be Mandarin Chinese (based on a form of Chinese widely known in the north of China). The future political goals of a powerful minority leadership thus forced an unknown tongue on a whole population as its national language and for many years caused widespread negative feelings towards the language as a regular symbolic reminder of the often harsh rule of the nationalist regime (chapter 11).

The widening of mass participation within politics through the spread of democracy and voting rights was responsible for a further instance of national language selection in Asia, which has had highly negative effects, the selection of Sinhala as national/official language of Sri Lanka in 1956. As the full population of Sri Lanka came to have the right to vote following independence in 1948, this resulted in pressure being exerted on political parties to pay close heed to popular issues and led to the exploitation of a particular mass ethnocentric sentiment among the Sinhalese in the elections of 1956. Following calls from Sinhalese nationalists for the installation of Sinhala as the sole official/national language of Sri Lanka, promoting it to a position dominating Tamil (spoken by the second major linguistic grouping on Sri Lanka), the promise that Sinhala would be given such a status within twenty-four
hours of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party obtaining power directly helped the latter win a massive victory at the polls. The post-election implementation of Sinhala as the country's single national/official language subsequently had a disastrous effect on Sinhalese-Tamil relations, and created a deteriorating domestic situation of animosity and conflict that eventually escalated into civil war and still has reached no lasting, peaceful solution (chapter 6).

1.2.4 Standardization Issues

Following resolution of the selection of a particular language form as a state's intended national language, in many instances processes of development and standardization of the language have become necessary, raising a range of important issues. Frequently where the pre-independence use of a colonial language has dominated most formal functions within a state, there is a critical need to develop an expanded vocabulary for the newly promoted indigenous national language, so that this will allow for the language to be used in all domains of national life. How this increase in vocabulary is then effected may have repercussions on perceptions of the independent, national status of the language. One route that can be followed is for linguists to search for fully indigenous words that can serve the diverse needs of the language in the modern world, via a number of strategies, for example, through the redefinition of words that have fallen into disuse, via compounding of the existing stock of native words/roots, and through the wider deployment of words previously restricted to occurrence in dialect varieties of the language being developed. Alternatively, new words may be coined through the use of a second language source, as has been common in many modern languages of South and Southeast Asia where Sanskrit, Pali, Persian, and Arabic have frequently been made use of in the creation of new terminology. This latter mode of building new vocabulary may however threaten to impinge on the 'national' nature of the language if the second language used as a source of new words is felt to be too much of a foreign component which reduces the authentic, native character of the national language. In the case of classical languages such as Sanskrit, or languages with well-respected and welcome religious connotations such as Arabic (in predominantly Islamic nations) or Pali (in Buddhist countries), this has generally not led to any negative perception in the creation of new words, and words formed from such prestigious languages have often been considered to be of high literary style and consequently well-valued. However, where loanwords relating to items of science and technology and contemporary culture are adopted from modern 'outsider' languages such as English, quite different reactions may be triggered and generate the feeling that this borrowing introduces genuinely foreign items into a nation's language, affecting its desired status as an original symbolic system representing the people of the nation.

The intrinsic 'purity' of a national language may become a fresh concern also among long-established, widespread languages during periods of high nationalism.
and lead to calls for a rejection of foreign borrowings and a purification of the language. A large scale programme removing many thousands of (mostly) Chinese and Japanese loanwords and coinages occurred in North Korea in the 1950s and 1960s during the construction of its nativized Cultured Language, and was also accompanied by a rejection of Chinese characters as part of the written representation of Korean, despite the fact that Chinese characters had been used to represent Korean since the language was first ever written down well over a thousand years ago (chapter 10). Similarly in Sri Lanka in the 1940s, the Sinhalese nationalist Hela movement argued that even age-old Sanskrit words should be stripped from Sinhala, along with any other more recent borrowings, to return the language to its original pure, untainted state, as the noble vehicle of Sinhalese culture, Sinhala being held (by the Hela movement) to be a superior and unique language descended from no other known tongue (chapter 6).

A second broad issue in the standardization of a national language is that such a process of modernization, allowing all citizens of a state spoken and written access to a national language, may meet with unanticipated resistance when this results in the attempted modification of traditional forms of a language. In the early twentieth century when Japanese was being shaped as a national language there were suggestions that the shape of Chinese characters in its writing system should be altered, so as to make these less difficult for people to acquire. However, such proposals were fiercely resisted by members of the upper classes proficient in Chinese characters, who argued that to tamper with the accepted, long-standing way of writing Japanese would be to weaken Japanese tradition, and with it the national spirit, and it was only after the Second World War that the simplification of characters could finally be effected (chapter 9).

A third issue raised by language standardization which also relates to writing systems is the question of whether a language that has not undergone any standardization, and which possibly may resist full standardization for certain reasons, can in fact function as a sustained, successful symbol of identity for large populations of speakers in the modern world. This issue raises itself in particular with regard to the viability of varieties of Chinese such as Minnanhua/Hokkien (also referred to as ‘Taiwanese’) and Cantonese as linguistic codes of identity potentially equal to other genuinely national languages. Although Hong Kong is not a sovereign territory and Taiwan has a complex political status, being claimed by the People’s Republic of China as part of China but neither accepting this claim nor alternatively declaring independence, both territories have established quite individual identities due to the special circumstances of their development, being formally separated from mainland China during most of the twentieth century. In Taiwan during the second half of the twentieth century, the Minnanhua dialect of Chinese spoken on the island by the majority of its inhabitants came to be associated with nationalism and calls for a declaration of independence from China, and in Hong Kong Cantonese similarly emerged as a strong symbol of the identity of the colony’s modern and successful
population, which oriented itself both towards Asia and the West, and showed much independence in its approach to business, trade, and contemporary culture (chapter 8). With both ‘Taiwanese’ and Cantonese, and all non-Mandarin forms of Chinese, however, a serious problem faces their potential use and expansion as the symbolic, representative, and official language of a major population. To date there is no satisfactory, widely accepted way of writing either language variety, and despite significant efforts to develop both Romanized and character-based written forms for Taiwanese and Cantonese, regular written ‘Chinese’ in both Hong Kong and Taiwan essentially remains a representation of Mandarin Chinese. Difficulties of standardization in the area of writing may therefore seem to impose an important inherent restriction on the way that certain languages are able to develop a potentially higher-level official status and represent the identity of a population of speakers in both formal and informal domains.

Finally, with regard to standardization issues, we can note here the specific issue of a situation where processes of standardization have led a single language in two different directions. Following the division of Korea into two official parts in 1948, controlled by regimes with significantly different political orientations, Korean underwent two separate processes of standardization, resulting in the formation of Cultured Language in the North, based heavily on the dialect of Pyongyang and incorporating many northern dialect words as replacements for Sino-Korean expressions, and a Southern standard based on the dialect of Seoul, maintaining a very substantial number of Sino-Korean words. Although there is still a certain amount of disagreement as to how far North Korean and South Korean have already undergone divergence, the existence of two independent standardized forms of the language clearly raises the question of whether a formally diverging language can be felt to encode a single national identity, and how long the impression of connectedness between speakers in North and South can be maintained if separate standardization seriously affects mutual intelligibility.

1.2.5 Promotion and Suppression

In addition to selection and standardization, the successful use of language in nation-building requires the broad promotion of national language and its spread throughout the population of a country. This is often naturally achieved through introduction of a selected national language into a state-wide educational system for at least part of students’ regular curriculum, through the improvement of general literacy and reading ability among the adult population, and via the dissemination of a range of media employing the national language such as radio and television programmes, newspapers, and other written materials. Following the winning of independence from foreign colonial powers, a number of states in Asia identified a major immediate political goal to be the eradication of adult illiteracy so that nationalist or in some cases communist/socialist propaganda could be more effectively communicated to
the public at large. In North Korea and North Vietnam, such initiatives are considered to have been extremely successful, and intensive programmes of instruction resulted in dramatic increases in literacy among lower socio-economic sections of the population, as far as can be ascertained. Elsewhere, in Ceylon (Sri Lanka) at the beginning of the twentieth century and for several decades prior to independence, the introduction of superior printing technology allowed for a rapid growth in the number of publications in the majority indigenous language, Sinhala, and caused a significant improvement in the previously low prestige of the language, establishing its position as a future cornerstone of Sinhalese nationalism. In Siam (Thailand) in the 1930s, radio broadcasting in particular was used with great effect to send a nationalist message in Standard Thai throughout the country and reinforce the idea among its citizens of belonging to a unified, forward-looking Thai people. In all such instances, the nationwide propagation of a single language form through various types of media functions to anchor and fix a standardized, shared language, and may simultaneously be used to associate this language with the ideas of nationalism. Where the aspects of modernization, domestic infrastructure, and organization which facilitate such nationwide programmes are absent or underdeveloped in a country, the spread of (national) language as a means of building up a strong national identity have not been so effective, as for example in the case of Laos and Cambodia.

The vigorous promotion of a national language may in certain instances be accompanied by the suppression of other languages and forceful attempts to assimilate diverse ethnic groups to the targeted national identity. During the development of modern Japanese as a national language, use of the Ainu and Okinawan languages was suppressed within Japan and use of Japanese required in their place (in a complete change of policy for the Ainu, who in the eighteenth century had actually been forbidden to speak Japanese – chapter 9), and in the overseas expansion of the Japanese empire in Korea and Taiwan, the attempted assimilation of local populations as Japanese nationals resulted in Japanese being the only language permitted in schools, banks, and government offices. The governments of various other multi-ethnic states have also made attempts to assimilate mixed populations to a single, dominant identity, in many cases that of the majority ethnic group, as for example in Nepal during the Panchayat regime (1960–90) where those in power emphasized that there should be 'one country, one dress, one language', and tried to enforce a uniform national culture and language on a very mixed population (chapter 4). Where the use of a promoted national language is spread through widespread introduction into the educational system, this may frequently lead to the mandatory discontinuation of other languages as mediums of instruction in public schools, as has occurred in Thailand and Bhutan, and private schools offering tuition in specialized languages may additionally be subject to closure, a prominent example of this being the gradual closing down of Chinese schools in Thailand and Indonesia during the course of the twentieth century. Ironically, though, the deliberate suppression of languages in such a way may increase the 'bounce-back' strength prohibited languages enjoy when their
use is eventually permitted again. Following decades of suppression under first Japanese colonial rule and then Chinese nationalist (Kuo Min Tang/KMT) control, 'Taiwanese' re-emerged as a very strong force in political and public life in Taiwan from the 1980s onwards, and the end of the Panchayat regime in Nepal saw a massive resurgence in the championing of minority languages, despite thirty years of heavy government promotion of Nepalese.

1.2.6 Acceptance, Prestige, and the Pragmatic Value of Indigenous National Languages and English

What is critically important for the successful widespread adoption of a newly promoted national language among a targeted population is that the language win the enthused acceptance of the latter and also provide certain concrete advantages to those who attempt to learn and use it. Languages such as Standard Thai, Indonesian, and Mandarin Chinese have become associated with the positive values of progress, modernity, success, education, and higher social status, enhancing their attractiveness as national languages and considerably stimulating their spread and use in everyday life.

In addition to the general prestige value of a national language, the potential pragmatic utility of acquiring proficiency in such a language is a major factor in assisting its spread throughout a population. Where the learning of a language may lead to economic advantages and improved prospects of employment, there is regularly a very clear movement towards acquisition of the language, in particular among rising generations. In many new nations, a working ability in the national language has been made necessary for securing positions in government offices and administration, and as the civil service in a number of countries in Asia functions as the largest and most important state-wide source of employment for the general population, this has introduced a highly significant motivation in the learning of national languages. With the development of successful national economies in much of Asia, the private sector and market forces have also encouraged a knowledge of broadly shared language among a nation’s population, in many domestic instances (i.e. for use in domestic business and the service industry) this naturally being knowledge of the national language.

A good illustrative example of the clash that can however sometimes occur between the promotion of an indigenous national language and the forces of pragmatically driven language planning and behaviour is discussed in chapter 4 relative to the small mountainous state of Bhutan. Rhoderick Chalmers notes that while there is a major promotion of Dzongkha as part of the government’s attempt to define a distinct Bhutanese national identity, there is also a pragmatic recognition that Bhutanese citizens are more likely to be successful in dealing with the outside world if equipped with English, and consequently the medium of all education in the country is indeed English (and has been so since the 1960s), posing a potentially serious threat to the spread and continued widespread use of the national language.
Quite generally, the pragmatic value of English in Asia has both remained high in many states that were earlier occupied by British (or American) colonial forces, and has also been growing at a high rate in other Asian countries due to the global growth of English as a lingua franca. A pattern that is striking in its repetition in many ex-British colonies and also the former US-occupied Philippines is the continued post-independence maintenance of English as a language available for official and formal functions (including use in education) or alternatively its reintroduction in an official-like capacity some decades after the achievement of independence. For example, in both Pakistan and Malaysia, it was indicated at independence that English would continue to be allowed for use in official domains for a certain time, and then be fully replaced by Urdu and Malay respectively, but the complete sidelining of English has not in fact occurred, and it still remains available as an alternative to the national language in formal situations in both states (and is much used in this way in Pakistan). In 1993 Malaysia also took the step of reintroducing English as medium of education in universities after several decades of Malay dominating this domain. In India in 1967 and the Philippines in 1987, English was reintroduced as a full official language of the state after a period of experimentation with the promotion of a single national language (Hindi and Pilipino/Filipino). In the Philippines, Filipino is still presented as the single national language of the country, with English being distinguished as an official language (Filipino is also given official language status), yet the nuances of a technical distinction between national and official language may sometimes not be very obvious in everyday life and English retains much of the strong and influential presence it had in formal domains in pre-independence times.

In a number of instances where the use of English has been reintroduced or increased over the last few decades, it can be noted that this has been in response to calls from the public or due to consumer demand and has not been a government-led imposition from the top. In India it was a hostile public reaction in various parts of the country to the attempted spread of Hindi as the single official language which caused English to be reinstalled as a co-official language of the state, and in the area of education, it has most commonly been pragmatically driven public demand that has fired the strong regrowth of English. For example, though the post-independence government of Singapore made education available in the four official languages of the territory, Tamil, Malay, and Chinese-medium schools were eventually converted into English-medium schools due to an almost complete lack of enrolment of students in the former (chapter 17). As reported in chapter 3, currently in India the demand for private schooling in English is no longer the preserve of the urban middle class as in earlier times, but has now become a phenomenon spread through less prosperous rural areas of the country too, and a similar consumer-led spread of a demand for the learning of English can be identified in many other countries in Asia, not only those with a history of English as a colonial language, but also other states with different linguistic backgrounds which are now looking forward to increased integration in international markets, such as Vietnam and Thailand.
This upward development of English in Asia raises the question of how the learning of English impacts on the linguistic identity of speakers and whether the increased use of English may perhaps pose a challenge to the success of a national language in binding a population together. At one extreme of a spectrum of rather different situations, Nanette Gottlieb observes in chapter 9 that the learning of English in Japan generally appears to have minimal effect on the maintenance of a distinctively Japanese view of the world and does not introduce significantly different ways of thinking. English is simply learned as a linguistic system in the same way that other computational skills might be acquired. At another extreme, however, one finds that there are elite groups in many countries who may function almost fully in English and are perceived as being considerably detached from other members of their ethnic groups and may not be proficient in the national language of their country. The existence of such an English-educated semi-estranged elite is noted in the chapters on Sri Lanka, Pakistan, India, and Singapore (with regard to the English-educated Chinese), and periodically extends to include even the leaders of a nation, as, for example, in chapter 5 where Christopher Shackle notes that most leaders of Pakistan have had to have their speeches translated into the national language Urdu, and are otherwise more comfortable communicating in English. In between these two extremes, English may intrude and modify an existing ethnic or national identity in different ways. Studies in Hong Kong of native speakers of Cantonese with an advanced competence in English have shown that there is a considerable reluctance to speak English in groups of Chinese where there is no non-Chinese/Cantonese person present, as this is felt to conflict with a more basic, shared Hong Kong Cantonese identity (Pennington and Yue 1994). Though knowledge and use of English may therefore bring an additional component of Western culture, in such cases it is still far from reaching any kind of dominance of a more fundamental ethnic identity, and this situation is most probably characteristic of the majority population in many countries in Asia where English is widely known.

1.2.7 Superiority, Pressure, Minorities, and Language Loss

In the stimulation of a national identity through the promotion of a national language, a certain deliberate emphasis on the prestige value of the national language will regularly assist its adoption and use amongst a population of potential speakers. Where such highlighting of the positive properties of a language is driven to extremes, however, this may lead to what has been called 'linguistic' or 'language nationalism' and the idea that a nation's language is actually superior to those of other groups. Commonly thought to have its origins in the writings of Fichte and Herder and the nineteenth-century development of nationalism in German-speaking areas of western Europe, and also perhaps in the linguistic attitudes of certain leaders of the French revolution, the clearest instance of language nationalism described in the present volume is in chapter 10's focus on state-promoted attitudes towards the Korean
language in North Korea. There it is noted how important government-sponsored publications on language and linguistics regularly stress the clear superiority of a wide range of properties of the Korean language, from styistics right through to particular aspects of morphosyntax and the lexicon, and how reference to the superior nature of Korean has also been a recurrent feature of the public speeches and writings of North Korea’s two powerful post-war leaders, Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong-il. Chapter 6 on Sri Lanka points to a similar nationalist-linguistic fervour in assertions of the unique properties of Sinhala, as made by the Hela movement during its push for a revival of a fully pure form of Sinhala.

In South Korea, strong nationalist passions of a linguistic type are directed most obviously towards the Korean alphabetic system of writing script known as hankul, and Ross King underlines how ‘script nationalism’ is heavily present in the form of ‘an almost cult-like respect and even worship-like reverence’ for hankul and the fifteenth-century inventor and promulgator of Korean writing, King Sejong.

Quite generally, national and also sub-national script forms in Asia are often a focus of high feelings and have the potential to generate much emotion. In addition to functioning as clear boundary symbols between populations with different identities, as for example with Hindi and Urdu, where the most obvious difference between the two ‘languages’ is the script used to represent them, or the ‘tactical’ use of Gurumukhi script by Punjabi-speaking Sikhs in attempts to establish a distinct identity that would help with calls for independence (see chapter 3), there is frequently clear pride in the invention and ownership of a distinct writing system (with Thai reverence for King Ramkhamhaeng’s creation of the Thai script being another example similar to the Korean veneration of King Sejong and hankul, though less intense), and script forms have in some instances been invested with almost sacred qualities to be fiercely protected as embodiments of a nation’s identity, as in Japan during early twentieth-century attempts to modernize the language.

Interestingly, both clearly positive and negative attitudes towards script forms can be identified, with such different attitudes sometimes being directed towards essentially the same representational system, underlying the rather arbitrary and fluctuating power that script forms may possess as symbolic systems. Two cases can be noted as examples here. In Vietnam, quoc ngu originated as a system of Romanization for the Viet language created by Western missionaries and was then made use of by French colonial administration. Because of its associations with the French, quoc ngu was seen as a symbol of attempted foreign domination and negatively valued during the early stages of Viet nationalism. Later, however, its ease of learning (compared to previous complicated character-based forms of representation) made it a useful tool for the propagation of nationalist ideas, and over time the writing system became positively valued in nationalist ideas and is now a clear symbol of the fully independent Viet nation (chapter 19). A second pertinent example is the markedly different attitudes towards Chinese characters present in Japan and China during the development of nationalism in the first half of the twentieth century. As already noted, a strongly
positive attitude towards the traditional system of Chinese characters was held by those in control of power in Japan during the interwar years, and this succeeded in blocking any suggestions of possible modernization of the writing system. In China, however, as described by Ping Chen in chapter 7, an extremely negative attitude towards the use of characters as a writing system was maintained by significant numbers of the country’s intellectual elite and those in charge of engineering language planning and policy, and there were frequent, vociferous calls for the complete abandonment of characters and their replacement with some form of Romanized spelling. One particularly colourful and damning characterization of China’s traditional writing system noted by Chen and illustrative of some of the force of negative feelings present at the time was voiced by the General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party, Qu Qiubai, who protested critically and with high emotion in 1931 that: ‘Chinese characters are like the filthiest, most abominable, most wicked, medieval night soil cesspit’ (chapter 7, section 7.3.2).

As Chen observes, in the minds of many nationalists in China in the 1920s and 1930s, the pragmatic imperative of making available a form of writing that could be widely acquired by common people significantly outweighed the potential value of characters as symbols of a pan-Chinese national identity and so led to calls for a new alphabetic writing system to replace the use of characters.

At the other end of the scale from language nationalism and positive feelings of linguistic superiority, the spread of standardized national languages across the population of a state regularly causes speakers of non-standardized languages to increasingly perceive their own mother tongues in negative ways, leading in many instances to patterns of language shift and language loss. Such a downward development is particularly common amongst smaller minority groups, and is accelerated by population movements which dilute the density of a minority in a certain area, when pressure on land for settlement brings speakers of larger languages into regions originally occupied by minorities. From the point of view of establishing a single national identity within a state, the continued existence of ethnic minority groups may be seen as representing pockets of non-uniformity in a targeted homogeneous nation. Nevertheless, in a number of countries in Asia such as Indonesia, China, India, and Vietnam, there have been periodic attempts to recognize minority ethnic groups and provide certain legal, linguistic, or other assistance supporting the maintenance of their languages, primarily with reference to the use of language in education. In India, for example, the constitution declares that all minorities are entitled to ‘establish and administer educational institutions of their choice’ (chapter 3, section 3.4.2), and similar overt expressions of protective concern have been made in various other countries. The degree to which such government decrees then translate into real on-the-ground help is however a very open question, and it is often difficult to obtain clear information about the actual ethno-linguistic state of minorities with regard to the maintenance of their languages. With the general expansion of national populations across Asia and increased contact with majority groups, however, the signs are that smaller minority groups in economically challenged situations are increasingly
switching to the use of larger languages and not managing to maintain their original ethno-linguistic identities as in earlier times.

1.3 Long-term Issues and Results

1.3.1 Successes

If one tries to identify what might be considered relatively successful or effective instances of the role of language in nation-building and maintenance in Asia, either as the result of deliberate efforts or through the inheritance and continued strength of a broadly shared language, a number of cases stand out as clearly strong and effective national languages. In the northeast of Asia, Japan and Korea are examples of nations with a very high degree of ethnic homogeneity where language has significantly helped in the reinforcement of perceptions of cohesion. With the development and propagation of a standardized form of Japanese in the early twentieth century, communication throughout Japan came to be possible in a single language after centuries of compartmentalization of the country and the lack of a broadly shared lingua franca. During the nationalist period, the ‘Japanese language’ was then presented as embodying the spiritual essence of the Japanese nation with a philosophy referred to as kotodama (chapter 9, section 9.2.3), and successfully used to emphasize the idea of a homogeneous and harmonious, unique people separated off from the rest of the world through a language that was almost impenetrable and supremely difficult for non-Japanese people to learn. Similarly in Korea during the twentieth century, the national language has functioned as a major symbol of national identity and has inspired passionate outbursts of linguistic nationalism, and despite the fact that the nation is now divided into two states with radically different socio-political systems, the belief in a common Korean people connected by use of a single basic Korean language continues to be widely held, though recently also challenged by fears of North–South divergence in the language. Elsewhere in East Asia, the development and spread of a national form of language has been important and generally successful in the vast territory of China and its attempts at the building of a modern nation. Faced with a massive population of ethnically Chinese people speaking different, mutually unintelligible varieties of ‘Chinese’, a common form of Chinese ‘Mandarin/putonghua’ has now been very effectively disseminated throughout the country, and though not triggering the level of nationalist fervour sometimes enjoyed by Korean, patterns of language shift and choice in a range of domains seem to suggest increasingly positive attitudes towards the national common language (chapter 7).

In Southeast Asia with its much higher degree of ethnic heterogeneity in national populations, two countries where national languages have been well spread and embedded into a wide range of domains and generally fulfil a strengthening role without being simultaneously over-repressive are Thailand and Indonesia. The former has benefited from having more of a homogeneous population than the latter but also
put significant effort into the promotion of Standard Thai as the country’s national language, and has succeeded in generating largely positive attitudes towards the language. Indonesia with its considerably varied ethno-linguistic population and mostly tolerant outlook on linguistic diversity has managed to win a broadly parallel level of acceptance for Bahasa Indonesia through a rather more staggered and less overtly nationalistic route, allowing and even encouraging the continued maintenance of other languages alongside the national language, while promoting the nationwide usefulness and prestige of the latter. A third example of a country in Southeast Asia which has engineered a clearly effective national language policy, though of a quite different type, is the small modern state of Singapore. Having decided to pursue a pluralist approach to national/official language so as not to over-favour any particular section of its mixed population, the government of Singapore has engaged itself vigorously in the provision of equal linguistic opportunities for four major languages and those who might choose to speak these languages since achieving full independence in 1965, a fine balancing act and high risk enterprise, requiring constant attention and continual readjustments, but ultimately being very successful thus far.

Turning to South Asia, India and Bangladesh are the two countries which can most easily be characterized in positive terms with regard to the way that language and state-directed language policy have affected the building and maintenance of a nation, though in quite different ways. In the continent-like state of India, with its large number of languages and ethno-religious groups, a major achievement of the government has been to adopt policies that manage to reduce the potential for language-related conflict to occur, and having retreated from an early problematic attempt to spread Hindi as the sole nationwide official language of the country, there has been significant emphasis on allowing regional languages to function as official languages within territories reorganized as optimally homogeneous ‘linguistic states’ (chapter 3). Such a primarily defensive policy recognizing the strong multi-ethnic nature of the country has helped minimize the likelihood for fragmentation of the nation to stem from language problems, and has therefore contributed in a significant way to the maintenance of India as a single, national unit. Contrasting with this broadly multi-lingual situation of containment in India, Bangladesh can be said to be the sole example of a state in South Asia where a single language enjoys a widely popular status as national language among a large population (without this having also caused major internal problems, as in the case of Sinhala in Sri Lanka). The important role that Bangla (Bengali) has as a symbol of the nation and the affection in which the language is held by much of the population is a result of both the high degree of ethnic homogeneity in Bangladesh and the prestige associated with Bangla due to the central role it played in the separation of Bangladesh from (West) Pakistan and the struggle for an independent Bangla-speaking state (chapter 2). Combined with the fact that Bangla has a long and well-respected literary history, Bangladesh is a good example of a country in which there is a close natural correspondence between nation, national language, and
state, the only major complicating factor in such a picture being the existence of a very sizeable Bangla-speaking population in neighbouring India, similar to the existence in Europe of large German-speaking populations in countries adjacent to Germany.

1.3.2 Negative Effects of National Language Policies

Considering how language may have figured negatively in the construction of national identity, either giving rise to conflict and problems that may not have previously been present, or simply failing to establish a hoped-for bonding among a new ‘national’ population, a number of different situations can be noted, the most striking of which relate to language and the post-independence development of states in South Asia.

Within South Asia, the two countries where specific, attempted national language policies have had the most dramatic long-term consequences and associations with conflict are Sri Lanka and Bangladesh (in the latter’s early relationship with Pakistan). In Sri Lanka, the imposition of Sinhala as the single official language of the country in 1956 triggered a rapid deterioration in relations between the minority Tamil population and the majority Sinhalese who were seen as symbolically excluding the Tamils from a united and equally shared future in the nation through the formal promotion of Sinhala over Tamil, as well as threatening their economic future via new requirements that only Sinhala be used in central government administration. Combined with the introduction of important language-specific restrictions on university entrance which seemed to favour Sinhala speakers, and the formal recognition of Buddhism (practised by most of the Sinhalese) as having a privileged position in Sri Lanka (as opposed to Hinduism or Islam, practised by Tamil-speakers), such government-initiated measures led to a gradual worsening of ethnic relations in the 1960s and to the initiation of violent conflict, which then escalated out of control into a disastrous situation of civil war that has still not reached a fully peaceful conclusion.

Further north in the Indian subcontinent, in the newly established independent state of Pakistan early language policy decisions also had very serious effects upon national unity. Having been created as a homeland for Muslims in South Asia in 1947, Pakistan originally consisted in two geographically separate entities with quite different populations – the very mixed West Pakistan (modern day Pakistan) where a variety of languages were spoken, and the relatively uniform East Pakistan (formerly East Bengal, now Bangladesh), where Bangla/Bengali was spoken by most of the population. For largely symbolic reasons, forces in West Pakistan insisted that Urdu (which was in fact known by only a small minority of the population in West Pakistan, but which had a traditional association with Muslims in South Asia) be made into the national language of all Pakistan and used throughout both West and East Pakistan in official business. Initial suggestions that Bangla be used as the national language on account of the large proportion of native speakers present in Pakistan (44 million out of a total population of 69 million) were rejected, as were more modest calls for Bangla to be made a co-official language of the nation along with Urdu and English.
Such a clear and fairly aggressive dismissal of the possibility of Bangla receiving official recognition as an important language component of the new nation led to considerable agitation in East Pakistan and disillusionment with the union with West Pakistan. When several protestors were killed by police during a demonstration calling for Bangla to be accepted as an official/national language of Pakistan, this agitation heightened further and became widespread, engendering a language movement which subsequently grew into a more general liberation movement calling for independence from West Pakistan. Fuelled by other perceptions of unfair treatment of East Pakistan by those holding power in West Pakistan, Bengali nationalists finally declared East Pakistan to be independent as the People’s Republic of Bangladesh, and achieved formal separation from West Pakistan in 1971 following a bitter nine-month civil war.

In both Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, language issues have consequently been at the very centre of serious civil unrest and have significantly evolved into wider movements of dissatisfaction and resistance. Furthermore, once the lack of attention to initial language-related problems has led on to broader secessionist-type movements, the momentum of the latter is difficult to halt with simple changes in language policy. In Sri Lanka and also Pakistan, there was actually a procrastinated recognition of Tamil and Bangla, respectively, as official languages of the state (Tamil in 1978, Bangla in 1954/56). However, such apparent rectification of the initial linguistic cause of discontent came too late in both instances to repair the damage done to ethnic relations and avoid the further widening of major fault-lines within the nation.

More recently in the 1990s, a consideration of Nepal reveals the instructive example of a state where a language policy which had outwardly long been presented as successful in helping build a united nation retrospectively shows very clear signs of having been quite unsuccessful. From 1960 to 1990, the authoritarian Panchayat regime forcefully imposed ‘Nepali’ as national language on the very mixed population of Nepal as part of a drive to mould a uniform national culture from the large number of ethno-linguistic groups present within its borders. Projecting the image of a country strongly united in a shared national idea with language at the centre, characterized by the common slogan ‘one language, one country’, it seemed to many both inside and outside Nepal that the nationalist programme of measures imposed by the regime had won the broad acceptance of the people. When the Panchayat regime fell from power in 1990, however, a strikingly widespread and strong rejection of the government’s monolingual nationalism became apparent in a major upsurge of new ethnic organizations and claims for minority language rights, with the result that the description of Nepal in the new constitution of 1990 was obliged to explicitly recognize the country as being multi-ethnic and multilingual and retreat from the previous official image of being a population fully unified by the willing adoption of a single ‘Nepali’ language and culture. Three decades of attempts to coerce a national culture centred on a single national language therefore ultimately failed to win the significant allegiance it openly claimed to enjoy.
serious divisions and violent conflict in a nation. Two examples of such a situation are Laos and the Philippines, which share a broadly similar profile in relation to the development of national language. In both multi-ethnic countries the selection of the language of the most numerous ethnic group as the national language has first of all generated negative (or simply disinterested uninterested) feelings towards the language amongst other groups, which themselves make up a very sizeable proportion of the total population. The failure of the government to then vigorously spread the selected national language throughout the country, combined with the general lack of shared national identity brought about by other symbolic means has in both cases led to a rather apathetic attitude towards Lao and Filipino as national languages among significant portions of the populations of Laos and the Philippines, and in the latter country this has been confounded further by the widespread presence of English as a competitor language of prestige. The potential for language to serve as an integrative tool in the building of a national identity has consequently not been taken advantage of to any effective degree in these countries and in fact has generally been an impediment to the creation of a united national consciousness.

1.4 Further Issues Relating to Language and the Construction of National Identity

1.4.1 Competing Identities: Religious and Regional Loyalties

Potentially complicating the successful development of national identity via linguistic means are the loyalties that individuals may feel to other groups and areas of their lives, such as religion and sub-national locale. Concerning the former, it has regularly been noted that religion is a particularly strong element of identity formation in South Asia, to the extent of having been the direct cause of the post-independence separation of India and Pakistan, creating in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan ‘a virtually unique case of a multilingual Asian country whose frontiers were explicitly defined by the religious identity of the majority of its inhabitants’ (Shackle, chapter 5). Where a nation predominantly consists in adherents of a single religion, as in the case of Pakistan, this clearly poses no challenge to the strength of national identity, and the alignment of religious and national identity may be emphasized and symbolically linked. However, where there exist differing religious loyalties within a single state, these may possibly hamper and override attempts to construct a broader national identity on the basis of other linking forces available such as the promotion of a shared national language. For example, the strong association of Standard Thai with Theravada Buddhism has been a reason for many Muslims in the south of Thailand to hold negative attitudes towards the national language and instead maintain a form of Malay with its preferred associations with Islam practised close by in Malaysia. In contrast to this, however, there are also certain instances where national language may seem to be a more important factor in identity than religion. As noted above in section 1.3.2
Introduction

Chapter 2. Language problems arising between Islamic West and East Pakistan due to the division of the nation are explored in this chapter. Language is a crucial issue that has been a source of conflict in the region. The partition of India in 1947 led to the division of the Indian subcontinent into two separate nations, India and Pakistan. This led to a migration of people from one country to another, resulting in a linguistic and cultural divide.

The introduction of English as an official language in both Pakistan and India has also been a contentious issue. It has been argued that English could serve as a lingua franca for both countries, bridging the linguistic divide. However, this has not been the case, and the languages of the two nations remain distinct.

Religious and cultural identities, which are closely tied to language, have also been a source of conflict. The diversity of languages in the region has contributed to the formation of regional and sub-regional identities. This has led to a sense of belonging to a particular region, which in turn has contributed to the formation of national identities.

A second instance of the unity of language in the region is represented by the Bengali language, which is spoken in both Bangladesh and West Pakistan. The use of Bengali as a national language has been a point of contention, and its adoption has been a source of conflict.

The existence of sub-national regional identities linked to language may also be a force that can hinder the use of a single national language to stimulate and develop national identity. This may be the case in countries where the two may be fact and regional conflict, and potentially also cause national identity to be only rather weakly held and present in other situations where there is no direct conflict of interests with regional identity.

A consideration of the role of language in Asia from a linguistic point of view reveals that different languages and their respective regional identities, and while the occurrence of regional language and identity may have been deliberate attempts to consolidate populations into linguistic states (chapter 3), the internal reorganization of many of the more populous states in Asia in fact encouraged and facilitated the maintenance of regional languages in the past (Thailand, for example, chapter 18). The official language in certain countries is not only a symbol of the nation's cultural heritage but also serves as a means of communication among the nation's citizens. The Sinhalese language, for example, is spoken in Sri Lanka and is an important symbol of national identity.

The language of the Sinhalese, for example, is spoken in Sri Lanka and is an important symbol of national identity. The Sinhalese language took this role during the mid-twentieth century and significantly united Buddhist and Christian Sinhalese as a group in a composition with the Tamils of Sri Lanka. The existence of sub-national regional identities linked to language may also be a force that can hinder the use of a single national language to stimulate and develop national identity. This may be the case in countries where the two may be fact and regional conflict, and potentially also cause national identity to be only rather weakly held and present in other situations where there is no direct conflict of interests with regional identity.

Although it is sometimes observed that it may be possible that regional identities may be unfulfilled and so may allow for an imbalance in the relative strength of associated loyalties, where a regional or ethnic grouping identity is more regularly strengthened than feelings of belonging to a national unit, this may significantly result in regional loyalties being valued higher than those to the nation in situations where the two may be fact and regional conflict, and potentially also cause national identity to be only rather weakly held and present in other situations where there is no direct conflict of interests with regional identity.
competence in (Mandarin) Chinese. In a similar way, Indonesia in recent decades has indicated a clear willingness to allow regional languages to flourish and characterized these as useful resources for the nation rather than as forces creating a threat to national identity. In different countries there may consequently be different outcomes with regard to the strength of regional linguistic identity vs. national identity. In the Philippines, where promotion of symbols of a Philippine national identity, including the national language, has been generally weak, regional identity and regional language are commonly considered to enjoy a higher degree of loyalty and to be more important to individuals in their daily lives than national identity and the national language, Filipino. There may also be certain natural variation within a single country in the strength of regional identities and languages, depending on the attitudes and affection held towards these in comparison with national language and the broader identity it supports. In China, for example, chapter 7 reports an ongoing erosion of the Min and Wu regional varieties of Chinese and an increase among the young in the use of Mandarin Chinese in domains that used to be the common reserve of local dialect. This seems to signal a fairly classic prestige-driven move towards a national linguistic identity which is now more attractive than local identity and its representative form of language associated with the speech of the older generation and the less sophisticated. In contrast to this, however, in Canton province it is reported that the proportion of Cantonese spoken relative to Mandarin is significantly higher, reflecting a very buoyant, confident, and individualistic Cantonese identity that is much less oriented towards alignment with a national linguistic norm emanating from the north of China. Given the concern some commentators have that China may face increasing challenges to its internal cohesion as regional economic inequalities become more pronounced with time, these fluctuating linguistic indications of regional identity and national integration will be useful to pay attention to.

1.4.2 Globalization, Multilingual Education, and Media Expansion

Closing this general introduction to themes discussed in the upcoming chapters of the volume, three final recent trends and challenges affecting the use of language to develop national identity will be outlined here and noted as ongoing issues that may have an increased relevance during the opening decades of the twenty-first century when Asian economies and technology continue to develop and lifestyles adjust accordingly.

The first of these is the impact of globalization on patterns of language use, traditional culture, and national identity. One major consequence of the rapid increase in international business, communication, and travel in recent years has been an accelerated spread of English in many parts of Asia, with various important effects, including a potential lowering of the high prestige that might otherwise automatically be accorded to a national language. Processes of globalization and the spread of components of modern Western culture have also resulted in the loss of traditional
culture in various places in Asia. In Thailand, for example, there is regular public
discussion of the concern that adherence to traditional Thai ways and national culture
is being weakened by the growing attention that is given to imported, modern forms
of entertainment and the globalized lifestyles portrayed in cinema and television,
particularly among the rising young generation in towns and cities. Elsewhere, in
Singapore, the government has repeatedly expressed worries that the learning of
English, which it sees as necessary for technological advancement of the country
and its competition in world markets, brings with it potentially dangerous aspects of
Western liberal thinking which may be harmful to the continuation of multicultural
harmony in Singapore, and has encouraged Singaporeans to be vigilant in the
maintenance of traditional Asian cultural values as a safeguard against decay. Semi-
defensive reactions to globalization may be detected as emanating naturally from
within populations too, as well as being present in high-level academic and govern-
ment discussion; for example, chapter 18 observes the beginnings of an interesting,
spontaneous regrowth of interest in local language and culture in parts of Thailand,
which is both aided by a new emphasis on 'local wisdom' and stimulated by negative
reactions to Western influences following the Asian financial crisis of 1997. It will be
interesting to note how pressures of globalization and the defensive reactions this
occasions will continue to interact and compete over the next decades, influencing
and directing the nature of Asian national identities. Earlier, in the late nineteenth and
early twentieth centuries, the strong revival of Sinhalese language, culture, and
religion which ultimately led to Sinhalese nationalism can be noted to have been a
direct reaction to the prior loss of traditional culture and lifestyles caused by the
arrival of the British and their economic transformation of Sri Lankan society (chapter
6). When the initial attractions of change instigated by outside forces lose their
anticipated benefits, this can quite naturally cause a resurgence in tradition and a
reaffirmation of the local and familiar. A strengthening of national identities in Asia
based on local language and culture might therefore also not be an unlikely by-
product of increased globalization in certain instances.

A second issue relates to the linguistic consequences of pursuing high levels of bi-
multilingual competence in education. With the simultaneous promotion of both a
national language and English as mediums of instruction in schools and universities in
states such as Singapore, India, and the Philippines, a heavy learning burden is being
imposed on rising generations, and early expectations that bilingual education should
lead to students attaining a high level of proficiency in two widely useful languages are
often not being met, the results instead being characterized as producing a low level of
academic attainment in either one or both languages used in the classroom. To
consider the example of the situation in the Philippines, as a result of the introduction
of bilingual education in 1974, schools have been constrained to teach certain subjects
through Filipino and others through English, both of which are likely to be different
from students’ mother tongues in non-Tagalog-speaking areas, hence in the larger
part of the nation. This results in second language learning becoming a major and
critically important task for students, essential for a proper understanding of the range of subjects learned in school from an early age onwards. In various cases, it is reported that standards of English (in particular) are considerably below what had been initially anticipated and there is a widespread perception that the system of bilingual education is to blame for this. Similar reports of poorer than expected standards of language attainment in education have also been made in situations where one of two languages used as a medium of instruction is actually a mother tongue of those present in the classroom, as in Singapore and Hong Kong, and have drawn much attention from concerned government members and public alike (chapters 17 and 8). Such patterns of apparent underachievement relative to expectation are challenges to the belief that the attainment of high levels of bilingual competence is possible for broad populations of speakers, and have led to calls for a change in approach to bilingual education. The existence and prevalence of English-based code-mixing in forms such as ‘Singlish’ and ‘Taglish’ in Singapore, the Philippines, and other states has additionally been heavily criticized in certain quarters as an indication that standards of English are in decline or have not been properly attained by many progressing through the educational system. This subsequently leads to the difficult question, not yet widely resolved, of deciding which language might be sacrificed from the classroom and downgraded from the status of medium of instruction to simple subject in order to simplify students’ learning task – English or perhaps the national language of a state? Economy-related pragmatic reasons may in many instances make individuals reluctant to give up the pursuit of a hoped-for competence in English which can offer access to better opportunities of employment, and so in future may add considerable pressure on the continued presence of other national languages as mediums of instruction in education. As the use of national languages in schools and universities has been a primary mechanism employed by governments for the spread of a common, binding language among multi-ethnic populations, the further rise of English and the difficulties now becoming apparent in achieving high levels of bilingual competence may therefore at some point conspire to undermine the continued high-level transmission of various Asian national languages.

The third and final recent issue to be mentioned here concerns certain changes in patterns of media broadcasting that have been noticed as beginning to occur in various parts of Asia, and the way this may affect exposure and attitudes particularly to non-national languages. In the early years of radio and television broadcasting in most countries of the world, it has been common that the comparatively small number of radio and television channels that have been made available have been state-run and sometimes also censored and directed by government bodies. In recent years, with the development of non-government-owned commercial television and radio, and a significant expansion in the number of channels of entertainment available to viewers and listeners, control of the content and style of programming has frequently moved away from governments and come to be directed instead by commercial forces and the marketing of products to viewers/listeners as potential
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In chapter 3 it is noted that such a change is having a significant effect on the type of language now heard regularly on television and radio in India, and that freedom from government control over the media has led to a surge in the use of regional and local languages, with many programmes now being either made in or dubbed into these languages. Such a change, which it is likely may be repeated in other countries with expanding consumer-led broadcasting services, may well serve to increase the prestige value of many non-national languages and decrease the amount of regular exposure to programming in the promoted national language of a country, bringing a potentially new pressure to bear on the reinforcement and successful maintenance of national languages in multi-ethnic states. It is already widely known how significant a role the media and entertainment industry can play in the spread and acceptance of language. In India, for example, it is thought that the growth in familiarity with Hindi in recent decades has in many parts of the country not been so much the result of state-sponsored programmes of promotion and education but has arisen more spontaneously through the success and popularity of Bollywood films and television produced in Hindi. Elsewhere, in Southeast Asia, chapter 18 notes the example of media-related language habits in Laos, where the ease of tuning in to Thai television, with its perceived higher quality of programmes, has led to a decrease in attention to Lao state-run programming in the national language and a distinctly increased knowledge of Thai. A third simple illustration of the influence of the media on language behaviour in Asia relates to Korean: in many parts of East Asia it has been observed that a striking new popularity of Korean television soap operas generated over the last few years has caused a clear upsurge in interest in the learning of Korean among speakers of other languages and a significant augmentation of the prestige enjoyed by the Korean language outside Korea itself. The privatized, commercialized media therefore now has an increasing potential to stimulate new patterns of language growth that do not necessarily correspond with government-led initiatives to embed the regularized use of a national language. Whether a change in language attended to in the media may pose anything of a serious and sustained challenge to the strength and attractions of a national language as offered by its pragmatic usefulness, economic value, and general prestige remains to be seen, and the distracting effects of regional language featuring in (or even dominating) local broadcasting are likely to have greater force in multi-ethnic states such as India, the Philippines, and Indonesia than countries with more homogeneous populations. Nevertheless, it will be useful to monitor in a general way how changes in media technology conspire with forces of commercialization to affect the paths of national and non-national languages and their competition for attention, taking an important aspect of influence over language consumption further away from the control of national governments.

With such an eye on just a few developments now coming into view and already well present on the horizon in certain cases, it is time to close this preview of general themes discussed in the volume. In the chapters that follow, the reader will find more detailed description and reflection on the wide range of pressures
constraining language and its role in the building and maintenance of nations in Asia, and how different sociolinguistic, historical, political, and ethnic configurations have resulted in a clear spectrum of variation in language-related national identity in the Asian region. Beginning with multi-ethnic South Asia and the challenges faced in shaping post-colonial national identity, continuing on to East Asia with its different traditions, population types, and experience of the twentieth century, and finally considering Southeast Asia with its great ethno-linguistic complexity and cultural variation, there is much to relate and a great wealth of information bearing on the issue of language and national consciousness. Though obvious practical restrictions on the size of such a volume have meant that authors have needed to be selective in the topics presented and discussed, it is hoped that the chapters together with their bibliographical references will stimulate readers to delve further into this fascinating area of study and that the attempt at providing a synthesis of information on language as a force in nation-building in Asia within a single volume will prove to be a useful resource for all those hoping to broaden their knowledge of the socio-political effects of language in Asia, past and present.