



7TH SEAMEO CENTRES POLICY RESEARCH NETWORK (CPRN) SUMMIT 2024

EMBRACING INCLUSIVITY IN EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND CULTURE TOWARDS A FUTURE-READY SOUTHEAST ASIA

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Language Policy and Language Education in Southeast Asia

R. Dian Dia-an Muniroh, Misbah Fikrianto, Limala Ratni Sri Kharismawati, Rina Dwiwana, Hasanatul Hamidah
SEAMEO QITEP in Language



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Background and Rationale

Southeast Asia's Linguistic Diversity

- Four major language families: Sino-Tibetan, Tai, Astro-Asiatic and Austronesian (Leinbach, n.d.)
- Malay is the most widely spoken in the region, followed by Indonesian, Vietnamese and Javanese (Tirosh, 2024).

Importance of Linguistic Diversity

- Enriches the culture and identity of Southeast Asian communities
- Reflects the region's rich historical heritage and cultural interactions

Dominance of English

- ASEAN Charter: "the working language of ASEAN shall be English" (The Association of Southeast Asian Nations, The ASEAN Charter, 2008)

Efforts to Strengthen ASEAN's Collective Identity

- Strengthening ASEAN's identity: ensuring the integration of ASEAN and its people's daily lives (The Association of Southeast Asian Nations, The narrative of ASEAN identity, 2023)
- Cooperation between ASEAN countries, especially in the development of language education

Research Questions



1

How are the regulations and/or laws regarding local, national and foreign languages implemented in SEA countries?

2

How are the regulations and/or laws regarding SEA countries' languages implemented in SEA countries?

3

What foreign languages, especially SEA countries' languages, are offered in various language institutions in the Southeast Asian region?



Methodology

Type of Research:

Descriptive research with a qualitative approach

Data Collection Technique:

Survey and FGD involving representatives from 11 SEAMEO Member Countries in Southeast Asia

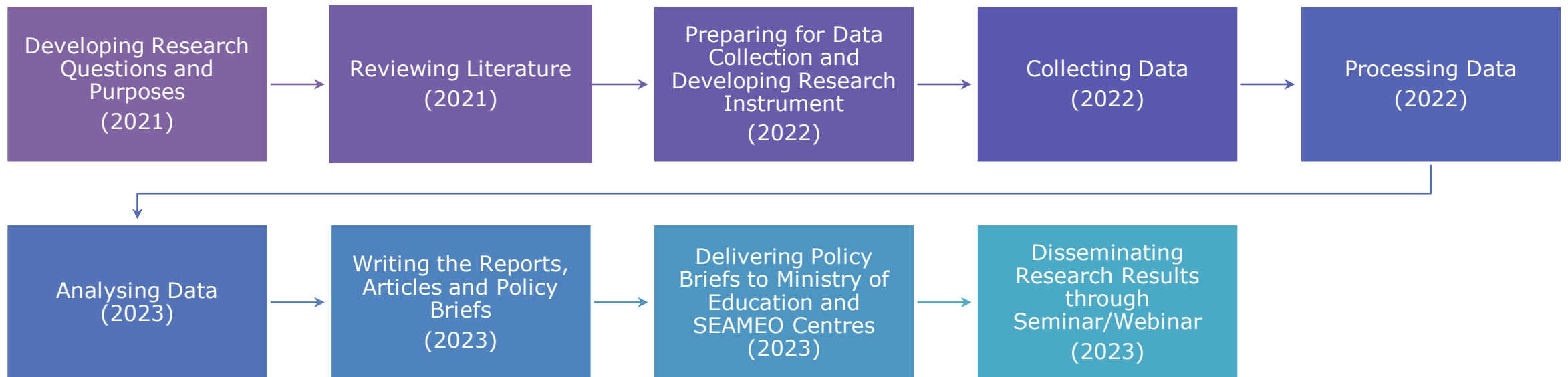
Data Analysis Technique:

Qualitative data analysis techniques. The analysis process involves several phases, including data preparation, initial immersion, coding, categorizing, theming and interpretation (Leavy, 2017)





Research Grand Design



Discussion of Findings



Local Language

1

- Local language regulations stated in several SEA countries.
- Vietnam promotes ethnic **minority language** learning under 2019 Law on Religion Education.
- Representatives emphasise **cultural importance of local languages**.

Official/National Language

1

- Most SEA countries regulate national/official languages.
- **Official scripts** include non-Latin-based ones like Khmer and Lao Script.
- The use of National Languages is in accordance with the policies of each country

Foreign Language

1

- Most representatives provide foreign language regulations.
- Some countries start teaching English from an **early age**: in Myanmar and Lao PDR.
- **Lacks of specific regulations and/or laws** regarding SEA countries' language

2

3

Language Education

- Language institutes across Southeast Asia (SEA) offer a diverse range of foreign languages to students.
- SEA countries' language: **Cambodia, Myanmar, Timor-Leste**

Lack of popularity in their own region?

Zang, Zhao, & Huang (2022): most countries have prescribed language requirements through the Constitution, including the "official language" or the status of other languages, which reflects the general language policy of a nation guaranteed by law.

Esman (1992): language policy serves as a method by which governments attempt to manage ethnic conflict.

lack of regulations reflects an invisible language policy (Zang, Zhao, & Huang, 2022)

SEAMEO QITEP in Language, 2023: ASEAN Charter and lack of awareness among language teaching experts



Various Languages Taught at Language Institutes

Country	Foreign language(s) offered by language institutes
Brunei Darussalam	English
Cambodia	Chinese, English, French, Japanese, Korean, Thai
Indonesia	English, Japanese, French, German, Malay, Russian, Korean, Italy, Arabic *In the language agency, the Ministry of Education and Culture, Research and Technology, especially the Centre for Language Development and Empowerment, SEA countries' languages are offered to teachers who are assigned to teach the Indonesian language in SEA countries, such as Thai, Filipino and Vietnamese.
Malaysia	English, Arabic, Japanese, German, French, Spanish, Korean
Myanmar	Chinese, English, French, German, Russian, Japanese, Korean, Russian, Thai
Lao PDR	English, French, German, Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese, Korean, Russian, Spanish
Singapore	German, French, English, Russian, Japanese, Korean
Thailand	English, Chinese, Japanese, French, German, Russian, Korean, Italian, Arabic, Spanish
The Philippines	German, French, Spanish *Different Embassies also offer courses for their countries' respective languages
Timor-Leste	English, Portuguese, Korean, Mandarin, Tagalog
Vietnam	No information provided

Conclusion



Almost all nations in SEA has its own rules regarding local, national and foreign languages.

Governments recognise the importance of language policies but need more comprehensive policies focusing on SEA languages.

Despite language institutions, SEA languages are not widely taught, hindering regional integration and cross-cultural understanding.

Policy Recommendations:

Initiate the formulation of language policies supporting the use and teaching of SEA countries' languages in the Southeast Asian region



Future Research Directions & Suggestion

Exploring other aspects of language policy as well as other areas that support the strengthening of ASEAN's collective identity

Exploring other areas that support the strengthening of ASEAN's collective identity

Conducting longitudinal research

Providing regulations and/or laws in document form



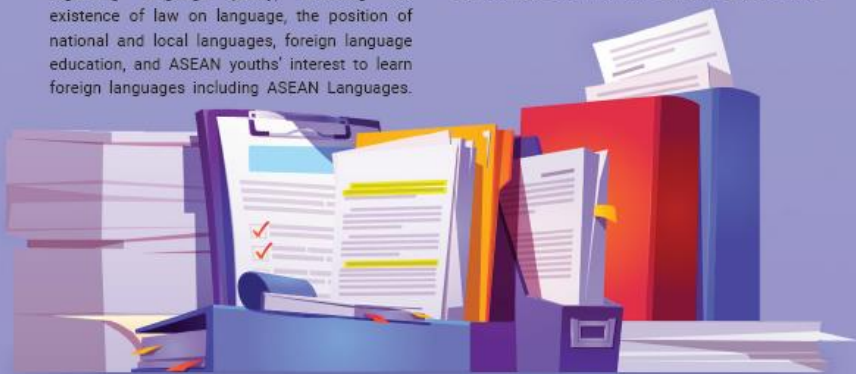
Collaboration between
SEAMEO QITEP in Language (SEAQIL) and
Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (UPI)
November 2023

Policy Brief: Language Policy in ASEAN Countries

Executive Summary

This policy research brief reports on the results of a joint study between SEAMEO QITEP in Language (SEAQIL) and Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (UPI), conducted from 2021–2023, aiming to identify language policy in all ASEAN countries. The study has been informed by the theory of language policy. The study involved two groups of participants: representatives of experts of language teaching and authorities from different SEAMEO Centres in ASEAN, and 4,219 youths, aged 15-25 from all ASEAN countries. The study used a survey and the data were collected through the use of a questionnaire distributed to the participants. The questionnaire consisted of questions regarding language policy, including the existence of law on language, the position of national and local languages, foreign language education, and ASEAN youths' interest to learn foreign languages including ASEAN Languages.

The results confirm the theory that language policy is a matter of choice as each country has its own policy on local, national, and foreign languages; and that language policy must be announced by the central government and enjoys legal backing as each country has its own law regarding language policy. The study also shows that with the youth's interest to learn ASEAN languages, there is a potential for ASEAN languages to develop in the region. However, this study also reveals that there is no language policy on ASEAN language, which is a shame, as ASEAN is famous for its superdiverse languages. This may be the impact of the fact that ASEAN, as indicated in the ASEAN Charter, has not been concerned with language development and accordingly ASEAN countries do not have commitment to teach and develop



Policy Brief



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please contact us at info@qiteplanguage.org.