

## **BEYOND 2020: MALAY AND INDONESIAN IN A NEW LINGUISTIC WORLD ORDER**

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**Abstract.** This article departs from a discussion of Graddol's (1997) prediction that the hierarchy of world languages will change between 1997 and 2050. Current monopoly languages like English and French, notably, are forecast to be replaced by an oligopoly of languages led by Chinese, Hindi/Urdu, English, Spanish and Arabic by the year 2050. In order to examine this general assertion, a bibliometric case study of the foreign-language books on Malaysia and Indonesia is conducted. It is shown that no trend of the emergence of a new oligopoly of world languages or a beginning of such a trend can be observed. Neither Chinese nor Hindi/Urdu, Spanish or Arabic have gained any significant role that would be comparable to that of English. Further, by comparing the current flows of international student migration with the rankings of the world's top 400 universities, it is argued that the share of the English-language cluster might be even increasing slightly in the foreseeable future. Finally, the economic relevance of the world's most important languages is assessed, through a weighted calculation of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the world's countries and territories in relation to the languages used in these countries. In general, the English-language cluster seems to remain unchallenged as the world's most important academic and economic language. From Graddol's five new leading languages, only Chinese seems to be making some considerable advances in the economic field, while it is not yet a major international academic language. Instead, languages such as Japanese, German, French and Spanish seem to continue to play relevant roles, albeit only secondary to English.

**Keywords and phrases:** Southeast Asia, books, student migration, economic relevance of languages

### **A NEW LINGUISTIC WORLD ORDER?**

Previous research on the forecasting of the fate of languages (cf. Mackey, 2003) predicts the emergence of a new linguistic world order. The main hypothesis is

that the current linguistic world order, with the dominance of English and French, will be replaced by a multilingual scenario. Graddol (1997), for instance, predicts a new hierarchy of languages, led by Chinese, Hindi/Urdu, English, Spanish and Arabic. In particular, Graddol distinguishes between five categories of languages in 1997 and four such categories in 2050 (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Graddol's hierarchy of languages, 1997 and 2050

Status/Year	1997	2050
The big languages	English, French	Chinese, Hindi/Urdu, English, Spanish, Arabic
Regional languages	Arabic, Chinese, English, French, German, Russian, Spanish	Arabic, Malay, Chinese, English, Russian, Spanish
National languages	Around 80 languages serve around 180 nations	Around 90 languages serve over 220 nation-states
Official languages within nation-states (and other 'safe' languages)	Around 600 languages worldwide	–
Local vernacular languages	The remainder of the world's 6,000 plus languages	The world's 1,000 or fewer languages with varying degrees of official recognition

*Source:* Graddol (1997), from Maurais (2003, 17).

Table 1 not only contains changes at the *top* level, predicting a replacement of the dominance of English and French by an oligopoly of five *big* languages. At the bottom level of the hierarchy, Graddol also forecasts the extinction of thousands of languages. The middle strata is supposed to experience, for instance, the rise of Malay as new regional language, while German and French are forecast to lose their previous high status and decline into mere national languages. In the case of French, this predicted decline is particularly remarkable, given its previous status as one of only two *big* languages.

If Graddol's forecast comes true within the next decades, the consequences for the future of the studying and teaching of foreign languages will be considerable. For instance, instead of learning English and French as first foreign languages (depending on the country), the standard curriculum would have to focus on Chinese, Hindi/Urdu, Spanish and Arabic. This would also imply a revamping of the world's universities that are supposed to educate all these teachers with new language skills. The global flow of student exchange might also be affected since many more foreign students would want to study Chinese, Hindi/Urdu, Spanish, Arabic, Malay/Indonesian and Russian in the respective countries.

However, such profound institutional changes will probably not happen overnight. Graddol's hypothesis certainly needs more testing before expensive operations of revamping entire systems of primary, secondary and tertiary education will take place. In particular, the local and regional conditions have to be taken into account, as well as the trends of development since 1997. In the following, I would like to localise Graddol's world hypothesis with special reference to Malaysia and Indonesia, by examining several current empirical trends.

## TRENDS IN INDONESIA AND MALAYSIA

The first important aspect in the assessment of the future importance of foreign languages is the question whether certain foreign languages already enjoy a long-lasting and well-established advantage in the world's various regions that might continue in the decades to come. In the case of Indonesia, the question is particularly how influential the legacy of Dutch is. Before the Indonesian Declaration of Independence in 1945, Dutch as the language of the colonial power used to be the most prominent foreign language. Dutch discourses on Indonesian affairs were of great political, economic and cultural interest. This motivated many members of the Indonesian elites to learn Dutch. The question is how the decolonisation process influenced this previous prominent position of Dutch.

Methodologically, I approach this first question through a bibliometric analysis of the holdings listed at WorldCat (2009), which provides access to more than 10,000 library catalogues worldwide. Although the listings of WorldCat contain a certain bias against non-digitised libraries and libraries that do not participate in this kind of global information-sharing, it is considered a useful source of information for the current inquiry.

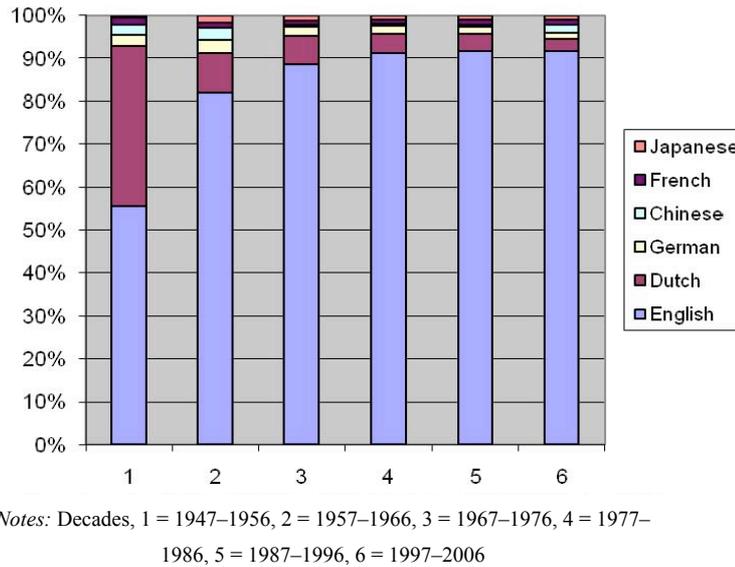
Table 2 and Figure 1 indicate the quantitative development of the publication of foreign-language books on Indonesia in the six decades since 1947, according to the holdings listed at WorldCat. This year is selected to facilitate in the following a decade-wise comparison with Malaysia, which declared its independence in 1957. Figure 1 illustrates that in the six decades since 1947, Dutch-language publications on Indonesia have decreased over time. This indicates that the Dutch (post-) colonial interest in Indonesia, often paired with accounts of personal experiences, dwindled after a few decades after the Indonesian Declaration of Independence 1945 (and its recognition by the Dutch government in 1949). During the same period, English-language books with the topic of *Indonesia*

**Table 2.** Foreign-language books on "Indonesia", 1947–2006

Language / decade	1947–1956, no.	1957–1966, no.	1967–1976, no.	1977–1986, no.	1987–1996, no.	1997–2006, no.	1957–2006, no.	1957–2006, %
English	2721	5260	8949	15722	19200	18385	70237	86.7
Dutch	1827	593	667	749	864	554	5254	6.5
German	127	198	196	324	354	282	1481	1.8
Chinese	123	184	45	70	110	374	906	1.1
French	79	78	97	174	207	220	855	1.1
Japanese	21	101	129	170	218	204	843	1.0
Russian	21	113	60	39	32	16	281	0.3
Spanish	13	37	24	21	58	86	239	0.3
Portuguese	23	29	33	19	30	74	208	0.3
Italian	12	17	28	28	17	36	138	0.2
Arabic	12	30	13	20	22	31	128	0.2
Thai	6	10	27	13	21	26	103	0.1
Korean	0	2	1	9	35	19	66	0.1
Swedish	17	6	10	8	4	7	52	0.1
Czech	3	18	9	1	2	15	48	0.1
Danish	13	9	5	1	9	2	39	0
Polish	1	7	12	3	9	5	37	0
Latin	2	8	7	4	1	1	23	0
Norwegian	3	5	0	5	2	6	21	0
Greek, Modern	0	0	3	4	3	2	12	0
Turkish	0	1	3	0	2	5	11	0
Hungarian	0	1	2	1	4	2	10	0
Persian	0	0	1	1	6	2	10	0
Croatian	2	2	1	1	3	0	9	0
Hindi	1	1	0	1	2	3	8	0
Romanian	0	3	0	1	2	0	6	0
Hebrew	0	0	0	1	1	2	4	0
Bulgarian	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0
Ukrainian	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5027</b>	<b>6714</b>	<b>10322</b>	<b>17390</b>	<b>21219</b>	<b>20359</b>	<b>81031</b>	<b>99.9</b>

*Source:* Based on the identified languages in WorldCat of the books on "Indonesia" (search 12 May 2009, "non-fiction", "non-juvenile", "books", individual searches for every decade).

came to dominate the foreign-language markets. Since about 1966/67, the share of English-language publications has always been above 90%. As the Dutch percentage declined even further in a decade from 1997 to 2006, the combined shares of Japanese, French, Chinese, and German publications grew slightly since 1997. However, so far the figures do not support Graddol's hypothesis of a decline of English and the global rise of Arabic, Malay, Chinese, Russian or Spanish in this particular case. As Table 2 shows, Arabic, Chinese, Russian or Spanish publications are far from obtaining any significant market share in the worldwide foreign-language publications on Indonesia.



**Figure 1.** Foreign-language books on Indonesia, 1947-2006

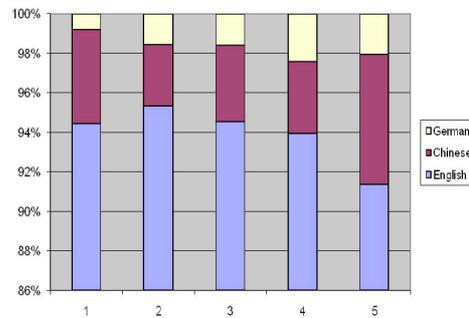
The comparison with Malaysia demonstrates that the finding is not only related to Indonesia (Table 3 and Figure 2). Rather, it seems to reflect a much wider trend of the global importance of English.

Table 3 and Figure 2 demonstrate that in the case of Malaysia, English as the former colonial language never experienced any considerable decline in terms of its share in the foreign-language books published on this country, possibly also because a number of English-language books are published on Malaysia itself. From the first decade after independence, 1957-1966, all the way through 2006, English-language books have always comprised more than 90% of the market of foreign-language books published on this country. From Graddol's five *big* languages, namely Chinese, Hindi/Urdu, English, Spanish and Arabic, only Chinese made some progress in terms of market share since 1997, although it also experienced some relative decline earlier, namely in the period of 1967-1976. The "Chinese-language" books also include those published in Malaysia itself.

**Table 3.** Foreign-language books on "Malaysia", 1957–2006

Language / decade	1957–1966	1967–1976	1977–1986	1987–1996	1997–2006	1957–2006	1957–2006, %
English	2813	6281	9695	12203	11529	42521	91.6
Chinese	141	205	396	471	829	2042	4.4
German	24	103	164	314	260	865	1.9
French	17	28	50	79	104	278	0.6
Japanese	22	32	36	66	48	204	0.4
Thai	11	26	14	20	42	113	0.2
Swedish	8	8	28	25	16	85	0.2
Dutch	4	5	20	18	21	68	0.1
Russian	4	19	18	9	5	55	0.1
Arabic	7	4	2	13	26	52	0.1
Spanish	0	0	7	8	16	31	0.1
Italian	0	3	1	10	9	23	0.0
Danish	2	0	0	6	12	20	0.0
Portuguese	3	4	5	4	2	18	0.0
Korean	3	3	2	4	4	16	0.0
Turkish	0	0	0	2	7	9	0.0
Persian	0	0	0	4	4	8	0.0
Norwegian	1	0	1	2	3	7	0.0
Polish	0	1	1	2	2	6	0.0
Czech	0	0	2	0	3	5	0.0
Hebrew	0	0	0	3	0	3	0.0
Latin	2	0	1	0	0	3	0.0
Hindi	0	0	0	1	0	1	0.0
Romanian	0	0	0	1	0	1	0.0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3062</b>	<b>6722</b>	<b>10443</b>	<b>13265</b>	<b>12942</b>	<b>46434</b>	<b>99.7</b>

Source: Based on the identified languages in WorldCat of the books on "Malaysia" (search 12 May 2009, "non-fiction", "non-juvenile", "books", individual searches for every decade).



Notes: Decades, 1 = 1957–1966, 2 = 1967–1976, 3 = 1977–1986, 4 = 1987–1996, 5 = 1997–2006

**Figure 2.** Foreign-language books on Malaysia, 1957–2006

Source: Based on the identified languages in WorldCat of the books on "Malaysia" (search 12 May 2009, "non-fiction", "non-juvenile", "books", individual searches for every decade). The threshold is 1%.

The market shares of Hindi/Urdu, Spanish and Arabic have always been below 1%, with no significant changes to be observed since Graddol's forecast was published in 1997. In general, the relative positions of foreign languages are in the case of Malaysia as unchallenged as they were 50 years ago. Surprisingly, this also holds true for the smaller foreign languages behind English, namely Chinese, German, French and Japanese, which approximately occupy still the same market shares as 50 years ago. These same languages are also the smaller languages behind English in the case of Indonesia, with the addition of Dutch as another small foreign language.

Based on this survey, the safest forecast would probably be that for the foreseeable future English will remain the main foreign language for Malaysia and Indonesia. Because of this overwhelming importance in foreign discourses on Malaysia and Indonesia, the most likely scenario for the teaching and learning of English in Malaysia and Indonesia is that it will probably be as widespread as possible in all levels, from the kindergarten to the primary level, all the way up to the tertiary level. This includes that the lion share of courses at language centres at universities in both countries will probably continue to be held by English.

## **SECOND AND THIRD LANGUAGES FOR HIGHER EDUCATION**

At the secondary and tertiary levels of education, second and third foreign languages could be of relevance for Malay and Indonesian students. A classical reason is the desire of high school students or undergraduate university students to continue their education abroad. Tuition fees and living costs play a role in the selection of destinations, while in the long term the quality of foreign universities will probably become increasingly important. In order to assess scenarios and possible trends of the global markets of student migration in higher education, I conducted two surveys. The first one looks at the current situation of global flows of university students (Table 4 and Figure 2), based on figures from the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) for 2006. The second survey attempts to identify the languages that are used in the world's top 400 universities which are ranked in the Times Higher Education Supplement—QS global university rankings 2008.<sup>1</sup> This is deemed useful as an indicator for the question in which languages high-quality university education is offered. As it is possible that in the long run global student flows are increasingly informed by such university rankings, any difference between the current situation (2006) of student migration and the market shares of high-quality universities and their languages can be interpreted as indicator of future trends for the popularity of

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<sup>1</sup> The Times Higher Education Supplement—QS global university rankings 2008 only give individual ranking positions to the top 400 universities, although the sample covers officially the "Top 500" universities.

certain languages as academic languages. In terms of methodology, the percentages for each country are weighted according to the official linguistic situation in the respective country. For this survey I use the data contained in the CIA World Fact Book 2009, assuming that this institution has a strong interest in producing accurate data that are of pragmatic value. For instance, the CIA World Fact Book provides current percentages for the linguistic situation in all countries and territories of the world. Employing these data for my survey, I can thus feature officially multi-lingual countries such as Switzerland or Belgium under several linguistic headings, weighted according to the linguistic situation. If a country, for instance a former French colony in Africa, has two official languages, for instance French and Arabic, I assume a weighting of 50% for each language; if there are three official languages, the weighting is 33.3%. Although this sort of assessment is probably not perfect in terms of assessing exactly the constantly shifting situation on the ground, it is deemed sufficiently appropriate for the purpose of the current inquiry.

**Table 4.** Destinations of foreign students in OECD countries, by language of host country, 2006 (detailed analysis)

Main language	Country of destination	Remarks	% of foreign tertiary students
English	United States		25.3
	United Kingdom		16.1
	Canada	3.9% of foreign students, country 59.3% English speaking	2.3
	Australia		3.0
	New Zealand	English language of Higher Education	1.1
	Ireland	English language of Higher Education	0.8
	<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>48.6</b>
German	Germany		12.7
	Austria		3.1
	Switzerland	3.1% of foreign students, country 63.7% German speaking	2.0
	<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>17.8</b>
French	France		5.8
	Belgium	3.6% of foreign students, country 40% French speaking	1.4
	Canada	3.9% of foreign students, country 23.2% French speaking	0.9

*(continued)*

**Table 4.** (continued)

Main Language	Country of destination	Remarks	% of foreign tertiary students
French	Switzerland	3.1% of foreign students, country 20.4% French speaking	0.6
	<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>8.7</b>
Dutch-English <sup>2</sup>	Netherlands		2.7
	Belgium	3.6% of foreign students, country 60% Dutch speaking	2.2
	<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>4.9</b>
Japanese	Japan		3.2
Swedish-English	Sweeden		2.4
Czech	Czech Republic		2.0
Spanish	Spain		1.9
Italian	Italy		1.7
	Switzerland	3.1% of foreign students, country 6.5% Italian speaking	0.2
	<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>1.9</b>
Danish-English	Denmark		1.1
Hungarian	Hungary		0.7
Norwegian-English	Norway		0.6
Polish	Poland		0.4
Portuguese	Portugal		0.4
Finnish-English	Finland		0.3
Korean	Korea		0.3
Turkish	Turkey		0.2
Greek	Greece		0.1
Icelandish-English	Iceland		0.1
Slovakian	Slovak Republic		0.1
Others (Outside OECD)			4.3
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>100</b>

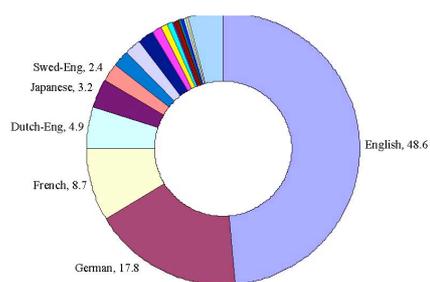
Sources: OECD statistics, <http://ocde.p4.siteinternet.com/publications/doi/files/962008041P1G020.xls> (accessed 15 May 2009); for the distributions of languages spoken in various countries: CIA World Fact Book, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/> (accessed 18 May 2009)

<sup>2</sup> For the linguistic situation in the Netherlands and similar countries where English is used widely in higher education courses attended by foreign students, but not in the country itself, I introduce an encompassing category such as "Dutch-English", encompassing the language itself (e.g. "Dutch") plus its various hybrid forms.

**Table 5.** Languages of destinations of foreign students, 2006, by language of host country (overview)

Main language	% of foreign tertiary students in OECD countries
English	48.6
German	17.8
French	8.7
Dutch-English	4.9
Japanese	3.2
Swedish-English	2.4
Czech	2.0
Spanish	1.9
Italian	1.9
Danish-English	1.1
Hungarian	0.7
Norwegian-English	0.6
Polish	0.4
Portuguese	0.4
Finnish-English	0.3
Korean	0.3
Turkish	0.2
Greek	0.1
Icelandish-English	0.1
Slovakian	0.1
Others (outside OECD)	4.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

Sources: as Table 4

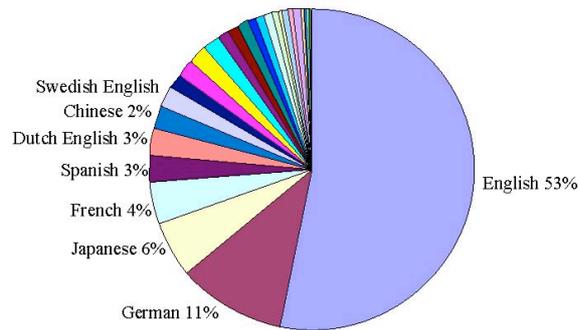
**Figure 3.** Destinations of foreign students in OECD countries by language of host country, 2006 (Source: Statistics from Table 3)

Tables 4 and 5 and Figure 3 indicate that universities in English language areas and countries occupy currently about 48.6% of the global market of international student migrants in the OECD countries. As the OECD is an organisation of only 30 countries that officially respect the principles of a Western-style representative democracy and free market economy and that are mostly high-income countries, certain popular destinations for Malaysian and Indonesian students are not included in this survey. Russia, for instance, is currently an OECD accession candidate, not yet a full member, and China as well as Indonesia are listed by the OECD as "Enhanced engagement countries". Malaysia is not yet a member of the OECD, however, it is possible that it will acquire that status after 2020, when it has reached the status of a fully developed country.

As Table 5 shows, currently, there are ten languages of university destinations of foreign students in these 30 OECD countries with a market share of more than 1%. The major markets of higher education after English (48.6%) use German (17.8%), French (8.7%), Dutch-English (4.9%) and Japanese (3.2%) languages. From this perspective, it is understandable if parents of high-school students and undergraduate students in Malaysia and Indonesia advise their sons and daughters to study German, French, or Japanese. Aside from broader cultural benefits, the knowledge of such languages opens the possibility to study later at a university in one of these countries and territories. Knowledge of French, for instance, could facilitate studying not only in France, but also at French speaking universities in Belgium, Canada, and Switzerland. With German, not only Germany might be an interesting destination, but also Austria and Switzerland. Some of these countries have very low tuition fees for foreign students, in comparison to many universities in America, the United Kingdom and Australia, which might influence the decision of the students and their families in the choice of the second or third foreign language.

The question is whether the current situation of international student mobility might change in the future, not least because more and more internationally mobile students tend to study the global university rankings first before they register at a foreign university.

Figure 4 illustrates the distribution of the world's top 400 universities, as assessed by the Times Higher Education Supplement—QS rankings 2008, according to the languages of the respective countries and territories they are located in. The concrete calculation follows a similar methodology as in Table 4, taking into account the linguistic distribution in multilingual countries according to the percentages of each language.



**Figure 4.** The languages of the world's top 400 universities, 2008

Source: Times Higher Education Supplement—QS Global University ranking 2008, <http://www.top-universities.com/worlduniversityrankings/>, accessed 14 May 2009, various own calculations.

**Table 6.** The languages of the world's top 400 universities, 2008

No.	Language	Main language in no. of universities	Universities ranked in the THE – QS Ranking, 2008	% of foreign OECD students, 2006 = NOW	% of top 400 universities, 2008 = INDICATOR FOR FUTURE ATTRACTIVENESS	Difference in percentage points	FORECAST: Possible trend of attractiveness of that language as academic language
1	English	212	Various ranks, 1–400	48.6	53	+ 4.4	increase
2	German	43	24, 57, 78, 93, 106, 115, 131, 137, 139, 147, 155, 166, 169, 188, 190, 192, 207, 216, 244, 256, 264, 271, 274, 276, 276, 284, 284, 303, 312, 318, 320, 325, 325, 328, 332, 347, 349, 349, 357, 368, 375, 382, 398	17.8	10.8	– 7.0	decrease
3	Japanese	23	19, 25, 44, 61, 112, 120, 158, 174, 180, 199, 214, 216, 267, 298, 349, 359, 362, 362, 378, 378, 378, 390, 396	3.2	5.8	+ 2.6	increase
4	French	16	28, 34, 140, 149, 161, 207, 207, 239, 266, 282, 288, 290, 293, 294, 362, 382	8.7	4	– 4.7	decrease

(continued)

Table 6. (continued)

No.	Language	Main language in no. of universities	Universities ranked in the THE — QS Ranking, 2008	% of foreign OECD students, 2006 = NOW	% of top 400 universities, 2008 = INDICATOR FOR FUTURE ATTRACTIVENESS	Difference in percentage points	FORECAST: Possible trend of attractiveness of that language as academic language
5	Spanish	12	150, 186, 197, 241, 254, 256, 306, 309, 320, 328, 342, 387	1.9	3	+ 1.1.	increase
6	Dutch-English	11	53, 64, 67, 78, 111, 126, 128, 142, 144, 155, 221	4.9	2.8	- 2.1.	decrease
7	Chinese	8	50, 56, 113, 141, 143, 144, 229, 386	n.a.	2	n.a.	n.a.
8	Swedish-English	8	63, 88, 162, 173, 239, 258, 280, 299	2.4	2	- 0.4	Decrease
9	Dutch (Flemish)-French	7	72, 136, 195, 116, 183, 214, 271	n.a.	1.8	n.a.	n.a.
10	Finnish-English	7	91, 211, 246, 313, 336, 372, 391	0.3	1.8	+ 1.5	increase
11	Italian	7	192, 205, 291, 296, 333, 349, 398	1.9	1.8	- 0.1	decrease
12	Korean	7	50, 95, 188, 203, 236, 344, 370	0.3	1.8	+ 1.5	increase
13	Malay-English <sup>3</sup>	5	230, 250, 313, 320, 356	n.a.	1.3	n.a.	n.a.
14	Chinese-English	4	124, 281, 341, 354	n.a.	1	n.a.	n.a.
15	Danish-English	4	48, 81, 133, 295	1.1	1	- 1.1	decrease
16	Portuguese	4	196, 249, 334, 387	0.4	1	+ 0.6	increase
17	Indonesian	3	287, 315, 316	n.a.	0.8	n.a.	n.a.
18	Norwegian-English	3	177, 320, 328	0.6	0.8	+ 0.2	increase
19	Thai	3	166, 251, 400	n.a.	0.8	n.a.	n.a.
20	French-English	2	91, 334	n.a.	0.5	n.a.	n.a.
21	German-French	2	50, 68	n.a.	0.5	n.a.	n.a.
22	Polish	2	300, 342	0.4	0.5	+ 0.1	increase
23	Russian	2	183, 224	n.a.	0.5	n.a.	n.a.

(continued)

<sup>3</sup> Introduced in this table as a separate category from the Indonesian entry because foreign students in Malaysia can opt for a postgraduate education that is mostly taught in English, while a modicum of Malay is still needed for administrative acts and for everyday communication purposes.

**Table 6.** (continued)

No.	Language	Main language in no. of universities	Universities ranked in the THE—QS Ranking, 2008	% of foreign OECD students, 2006 = NOW	% of top 400 universities, 2008 = INDICATOR FOR FUTURE ATTRACTIVENESS	Difference in percentage points	FORECAST: Possible trend of attractiveness of that language as academic language
24	Turkish	2	374, 376	0.2	0.5	0.3	increase
25	Arabic-English	1	338	n.a.	0.3	n.a.	n.a.
26	Czech	1	261	2.0	0.3	- 1.7	decrease
27	Greek	1	200	0.1	0.3	- 1.2	increase
		400			100.7		

Source: Times Higher Education Supplement—QS Global University ranking 2008, <http://www.topuniversities.com/worlduniversityrankings/>, accessed 14 May 2009, various own calculations.

Table 6 represents a juxtaposition of the data from Table 4 with the results of the ranking inquiry. Although the underlying datasets are not completely congruent, since there are a number of top 400 universities in countries that are not (yet) members of the OECD, the comparison gives nevertheless a rough indication if there are major discrepancies. The trend behind the difference of percentages in percentages is listed in the two columns at the very right.

Accordingly, English language will even increase its importance as academic language in the future, as 53% of the world's top 400 universities are located in English speaking countries, while currently only about 48.6% of foreign students choose a varsity in an English speaking country. In contrast, German and French seemingly will be the big losers among the remaining more important academic languages. Both German and French universities feature significantly less frequent among the world's top 400 universities than their current market share of international students. Among the reasons might be that tuition fees are in average still extremely low in both countries, which might attract many foreign students despite the linguistic obstacle of studying in German and French, and the current global ranking positions of German and French universities. Another aspect is of course that the worldwide university rankings are linguistically biased toward English speaking countries, since one of the main parameters used are bibliographic indexes that tend to over-represent English-language contributions. Nevertheless, as the global university rankings are increasingly consulted by internationally mobile students, they do have a real impact on future trends of academic migration, despite all underlying bias of the provided information.

Another aspect in the above juxtaposition is the possible increase in the importance of the Japanese, Spanish, Finnish-English and Korean language academic markets. In contrast, Arabic, Hindi/Urdu or Russian speaking universities seem to be currently not very prominent among the top 400 worldwide universities. If this is an indication of the attractiveness of these languages as academic languages in the future, Graddol's forecast might have to be revised accordingly.

## **ECONOMIC ASPECTS**

As Malaysia, Indonesia and other countries are increasingly developing their economies, the division of labour gets more and more complicated. After 2020, Malaysia plans to compete globally as an industrialised country under the heading of *Wawasan 2020* (Horison 2020). Indonesia intends to follow soon. This means that economic interactions will become generally much more diversified than they are in the moment. This entails the emergence of new specialisations in the labour markets of these countries, carrying to new specialised sub-markets and niches. The general implication for the future of the teaching and learning of languages is therefore a general trend toward diversification and specialisation.

Since the underlying process is determined by economic factors, it is most likely that economic aspects will also determine the development of the teaching and learning of foreign languages in these countries. Which new, unexplored markets can Malaysia and Indonesia tap in, besides the traditional English-language markets? Which languages are economically the most interesting? These questions are not only important for parents who want to prepare their children the best possible for the future, but also for the ministries of education and higher education in both countries, as well as for universities and their language centres. If one knew about the future economic relevance of the world's major languages, one could already start now to study and to teach them at least at the tertiary level.

An example from Europe is a new trend in the teaching and studying of Malay and Indonesian since the 1980s, i.e. since the economic rise of insular Southeast Asia. This trend contributes to the establishment of new centres of Southeast Asian Studies at a number of universities, this time combining the study of Malay or Indonesian language with business and economics studies. Hundreds of students have been thus trained to later work in European companies that have a special interest in the Indonesian-Malay language market. The students learn Malay and Indonesian for economic purposes and usually spend several months in internships in Malay and Indonesian companies, as well as in universities in that region. Clearly, companies who hire such skilled students have a competitive

advantage over other companies who assume that they can sell their services and products in Indonesia only in English. Such new programmes of Indonesian/Malay language plus business and economics studies have been established since the 1980s in universities in Passau, Konstanz and Bremen in Germany, in La Rochelle and Le Havre in France, in Amsterdam, in the Netherlands etc. Transferring this model to universities in Southeast Asia that want to prepare for scenarios beyond 2020, it might be viable for certain universities to design similar programs, combining certain foreign languages with cultural and business studies.

In order to assess the current and future economic relevance of the world's major languages, I conducted a detailed survey of market volumes of the main language clusters (i.e. clusters of countries using the same language). In particular, I weighted the main languages spoken in 182 countries with the relative share of GDP of these countries, according to the linguistic distribution. For the economic data I referred to current statistics from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which already takes the recent economic crisis since 2008 into account. As the IMF provides not only current data, but also individual forecasts for the GDP growth of individual countries until 2014, this allows calculating the estimated growth patterns of the major language clusters over the course of the next years. For simplification purposes, these languages clusters group also dialects and hybrid forms under the heading of the respective leading language. The overall result is represented in Table 7 and Figure 5.

**Table 7.** The major markets, by language of native speakers, 2008 and 2014

Language	Market volume 2008 (combined GDP in Billion USD, 2008)	%	Market volume 2014	%	Trend in 6 years (in %)	Average trend per year (in %)
English	20,582.172	35.3	23,416.270	34.5	-2.3	-0.4
Japanese	4,923.761	8.4	5,354.406	7.9	-5.6	-1.0
Chinese	4,901.946	8.4	9,051.392	13.4	+59.5	+9.9
German	4,414.969	7.6	4,024.153	5.9	-22.4	-3.7
Spanish	4,100.246	7.0	4,353.803	6.4	-8.6	-1.4
French	3,680.403	6.3	3,798.971	5.6	-11.1	-1.9
Italian	2,345.912	4.0	2,254.630	3.3	-17.5	-2.9
Portuguese	1,904.175	3.3	2,038.498	3.0	-9.1	-1.5

*(continued)*

**Table 7.** (continued)

Language	Market volume 2008 (combined GDP in Billion USD, 2008)	%	Market volume 2014	%	Trend in 6 years (in %)	Average trend per year (in %)
Arabic	1,866.522	3.2	2,569.083	3.8	+18.8	+3.1
Russian	1,817.102	3.1	2,452.370	3.6	+16.1	+2.7
Dutch	1,212.625	2.1	1,211.385	1.8	-14.3	-2.4
Korean	947.010	1.6	934.401	1.4	-12.5	-2.1
Malay/Indonesian	748.537	1.3	996.833	1.5	+15.4	+2.6
Turkish	742.707	1.3	661.917	1.0	-23.1	-3.8
Polish	525.735	0.9	499.193	0.7		
Swedish	499.620	0.9	478.288	0.7		
Norwegian	456.226	0.9	411.101	0.6		
Greek	357.549	0.6	389.202	0.6		
Danish	342.925	0.6	336.924	0.5		
Thai	273.248	0.5	372.673	0.5		
Hindi	247.985	0.4	356.697	0.5		
Persian	206.026	0.4	287.622	0.4		
Czech	206.006	0.4	204.062	0.3		
Romanian	205.797	0.4	283.892	0.4		
Hebrew	201.761	0.3	252.588	0.4		
Ukrainian	179.725	0.3	198.087	0.3		
Hungarian	156.284	0.3	186.149	0.3		
Irish	136.664	0.2	242.852	0.4		
Urdu	114.062	0.2	152.801	0.2		
	58,297.7	100.2	67,770.243	99.9		

Sources: IMF ([www.imf.org](http://www.imf.org), accessed 19 May 2009) for the economic figures, the CIA World Fact Book (<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>, accessed 19 May 2009) for the status of the languages in the individual countries, own calculations. Threshold: Combined GDP in current prices, in 100,000 Billion USD, 2008. Due to statistical inaccuracies such as rounding, trend and average figures for the smaller languages with values below 1.0 % are not shown.

Table 8 provides a more detailed analysis of Table 7, focusing on the winners. In particular, it is shown that Chinese seems to be currently the language with the fastest increasing importance, due to the forecast economic growth of the Chinese speaking countries and territories, notably The People's Republic of China (Table 9).

**Table 8.** The biggest trend winners, 2008–2014

Language	Annual change in market size
Chinese	+9.9
Arabic	+3.1
Russian	+2.7
Malay/Indonesian	+2.6

Notes: Threshold: 1% of combined GDP of all language clusters, 2008 or 2014

**Table 9.** The Chinese-language markets, 2008 to 2014

Country/territory	Total GDP 2008	Languages and their status/weighting	Weighted GDP 2008	Weighted GDP 2014 (IMF forecast)
China	4,401.614	Chinese	4,401.614	8,500.096
Taiwan Province of China	392.552	Chinese-Mandarin (official)	392.552	419.756
Hong Kong SAR	215.559	Chinese (Cantonese) (official), English (official), each weighed 50 %	107.780	131.540
			4,901.946	9,051.392

Sources: IMF ([www.imf.org](http://www.imf.org), accessed 19 May 2009) for the economic figures, the CIA World Fact Book (<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>, accessed 19 May 2009) for the status of the languages in the individual countries, own calculations.

**Table 10.** The Arabic-language markets, 2008 to 2014

Country/territory	Total GDP 2008	Languages and their status/weighting	Weighted GDP 2008	Weighted GDP 2014 (IMF forecast)
Saudi Arabia	481.631	Arabic	481.631	601.541
United Arab Emirates	260.141	Arabic (official)	260.141	336.589
Egypt	162.164	Arabic (official)	162.164	307.188
Algeria	159.669	Arabic (official)	159.669	193.044
Kuwait	158.089	Arabic (official)	158.089	165.173

(continued)

**Table 10.** *(continued)*

Country/territory	Total GDP 2008	Languages and their status/weighting	Weighted GDP 2008	Weighted GDP 2014 (IMF forecast)
Qatar	102.302	Arabic (official)	102.302	193.501
Libya	100.071	Arabic	100.071	121.890
Morocco	86.394	Arabic (official)	86.394	126.446
Iraq	90.907	Arabic 77,5% (est.)	70.453	95.536
Syrian Arab Republic	54.803	Arabic (official)	54.803	85.257
Oman	52.584	Arabic (official), English, Baluchi, Urdu, Indian dialects	52.584	72.023
Tunisia	40.348	Arabic (official)	40.348	51.623
Sudan	57.911	Arabic (official), English (official), each weighed 50 %	28.956	48.033
Lebanon	28.939	Arabic (official)	28.939	43.138
Republic of Yemen	27.151	Arabic	27.151	54.473
Bahrain	21.236	Arabic	21.236	26.343
Jordan	20.030	Arabic (official)	20.030	30.971
Chad	8.390	Arabic (official), French (official), each weighed 50 %	4.195	4.239
Mauritania	3.161	Arabic (official and national)	3.161	6.045
Djibouti	0.982	Arabic (official), French (official) each weighed 50 %	0.491	0.890
Iran, Islamic Republic of	344.820	Arabic 1%	3.448	4.771
Comoros	0.532	Arabic (official), French (official), each weighed 50 %	0.266	0.369
			1866.522	2569.083

Table 10 presents the second biggest estimated winner in the foreseeable future, namely the Arabic-language markets. Interestingly, aside from the economic heavyweights Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, the IMF predicts also impressive economic growth in many other Arabic speaking countries in the foreseeable future. This could be taken as an indicator that also the Arabic language might gain popularity among foreign language learners.

The third forecast winner is the Russian speaking cluster. Table 11 includes particularly those former Soviet block countries that, according to the CIA World Fact Book, in 2008 still retained sizeable Russian speaking populations, acknowledging Russian as official or otherwise important language. It is understood that in this case the figures can only be rough approximations since countries such as Ukraine also have Russian native speakers in their borders,

while the Russian Federation, weighted in Table 11 with 100% Russian speaking due to the official status of Russian, itself contains many non-Russian languages.

**Table 11.** The Russian-language markets, 2008 to 2014

Country/territory	Total GDP 2008	Languages and their status/weighting	Weighted GDP 2008	Weighted GDP 2014 (IMF forecast)
Russia	1,676.586	Russian	1,676.586	2,231.786
Kazakhstan	132.229	Russian (official, used in everyday business, designated the "language of interethnic communication")	125.618	198.463
Estonia	23.232	Russian 29.7%	6.900	6.880
Uzbekistan	27.918	Russian 14.2%	3.964	8.497
Tajikistan	5.135	Russian widely used in government and business, Tajik (official), each weighed 50 %	2.568	4.773
Azerbaijan	46.378	Russian 1.8%	0.835	1.130
Kyrgyz Republic	5.049	Russian 12.5% (official)	0.631	0.841
			1,817.102	2,452.37

**Table 12.** The Indonesian/Malay language markets, 2008 to 2014

Country/territory	Total GDP 2008	Languages and their status/weighting	Weighted GDP 2008	Weighted GDP 2014 (IMF forecast)
Indonesia	511.765	Malay (Bahasa Indonesia) (official, modified form of Malay)	511.765	679.318
Malaysia	222.219	Malay (Bahasa Malaysia) (official)	222.219	300.476
Brunei Darussalam	14.553	Malay (official)	14.553	17.039
			748.537	996.833

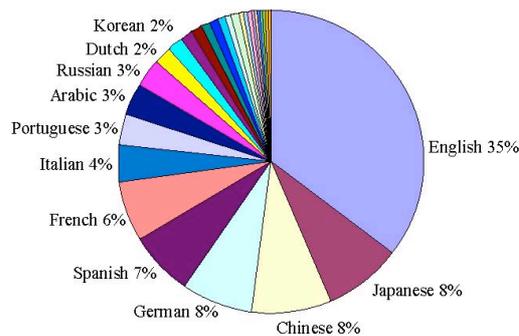
The fourth winner finally seems to be the Indonesian/Malay language markets, forecast to grow annually at an average of 2.6% from 2008 to 2014 (Tables 8 and 12).

**Table 13.** The biggest trend losers, 2008–2014

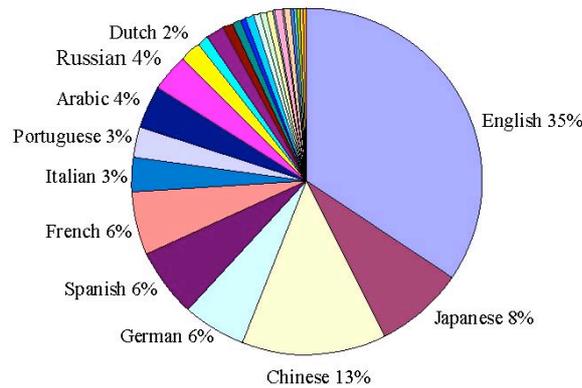
Language	Annual change in market size
Turkish	-3.8
German	-3.7
Italian	-2.9
Dutch	-2.4
Korean	-2.1
French	-1.9
Portuguese	-1.5
Spanish	-1.4
Japanese	-1.0
English	-0.4

*Notes:* Threshold: 1 % of combined GDP of all language clusters, 2008 or 2014

The forecast relative losers over the course of the next years will be Turkish, German, Italian, Dutch, Korean, French, Portuguese, Spanish, Japanese and English (Table 13). These are among the main languages of the current OECD member countries. In other words: the relative rise of markets that are currently outside the OECD seems to contribute to a shifting in the hierarchy of world languages. The main difference to Graddol's prediction of 1997 is that the Hindi/Urdu language markets have not yet developed enough economic importance such as, for instance, the Chinese, Arabic, Russian and Indonesian/Malay language markets.



**Figure 5.** Economic relevance of the world's major languages, 2008 (combined GDP of native speakers)



**Figure 6.** Economic relevance of the world's major languages, 2014 (combined GDP of native speakers)

Figures 5 and 6 demonstrate that, at least currently and in the foreseeable future, the market of native-speakers of English represents only about 35% of the world's major economic languages, its importance decreasing slightly per year at a rate of currently about 0.4%. Although English is learnt and studied as a second language by many more people, if companies really want to succeed in selling their products and services in markets such as France, Germany, Italy, Russia, Indonesia, Japan or South America, they are well-advised if they at least attempt to localise their strategies with the respective language skills. For instance, even if people in France might have learnt English at school, they might be less inclined to buy produce from foreign companies if it is only offered in English and not in French. As about 65% of the world's GDP is produced in countries that do not use English as the main language, tapping more into the non-English speaking markets might provide an abundance of new market chances, particularly for countries that want to achieve above-average growth rates beyond 2020. Particularly promising as a second or third language seems to be currently Chinese, aside from Japanese, German, Spanish, and French. From an economic perspective, Arabic and Russian might be also interesting to learn and study as second or third languages.

## CONCLUSION

This article departs from a discussion of Graddol's (1997) prediction that the hierarchy of world languages will change between 1997 and 2050. English and French, notably, are forecast to be replaced by an oligopoly of Chinese, Hindi/Urdu, English, Spanish and Arabic. In order to examine this assertion more than ten years after its initial publication, I first localise Graddol's hypothesis of

'global' trends by conducting as a case study an empirical bibliometric analysis of the foreign-language books on two important Southeast Asian countries, Malaysia and Indonesia. It is shown that since 1947 and 1957 respectively, no such trend of the emergence of a new oligopoly of world languages or a beginning of such a trend can be observed. Instead, in the case of books on Indonesia, Dutch was crowded out by English until the 1960s, and since then English has been the dominant language in foreign books, as was in the case of Malaysia since that country's independence in 1957. More than 90% of the international book market on these two countries continues to be occupied by English in the decade from 1997 to 2006. Despite Graddol's prediction, the role of Chinese, Hindi/Urdu, Spanish and Arabic has not changed significantly since 1997. This leads to the safe prediction that English will remain the first foreign language in primary, secondary and tertiary education for the foreseeable future.

As far as the second and third foreign languages are concerned, the international attractiveness of each language cluster's leading universities might be an increasingly important factor. By comparing the current flows of international student migration to the world's top 400 universities, as listed by the Times Higher Education—QS global university rankings 2008, it is demonstrated that the share of the English-language cluster might be increasing slightly in the foreseeable future, with the current share of the international OECD student population being 48% and the share of the top 400 universities being 53%. In contrast, the German and French shares might decrease, if only the ranking of the respective universities is considered and not additional factors such as very low tuition costs. In general, Graddol's prediction of the advent of very important positions for Chinese, Hindi/Urdu, Spanish and Arabic is currently neither supported by the flows of international students nor by the ranking of the respective universities. Rather, German language, Japanese and French speaking universities seem likely to remain the next choices after the English speaking academia, despite possible relative losses.

Finally, the economic relevance of the world's most important languages is assessed, through a weighted calculation of the GDP of the world's countries and territories 2008 and 2014 in relation to the languages used in these countries. It is shown that the volume of the native speakers of English is 2008 about 35.3% of the total, probably decreasing slightly to 34.5% in 2014, at an average of 0.4% per year. In contrast, the economic relevance of the Chinese-language market seems to currently grow at a rate of 9.9% per year, growing from 8.4% to 13.4% of the world's most relevant markets from 2008 to 2014. Other relevant winners include Arabic (+3.1% annual growth), Russian (2.7% annual average growth) and Indonesian/Malay (+2.6%). The relative losers are mainly the current main OECD language clusters, namely Turkish, German, Italian, Dutch, Korean, French, Portuguese, Spanish, Japanese and English. The general forecast is that in

economic terms the second language behind English will be Chinese, followed by Japanese. German, Spanish, and French are forecast to be economically of about the same importance, followed by Arabic and Russian.

In general, thus, in the light of these recent data, Graddol's prediction from 1997 can be revised in several points. At least in the foreseeable future, the English-language cluster seems to remain unchallenged as the world's most important academic and economic language. Secondly, from Graddol's five new leading languages only Chinese seems to be making some considerable advances in the economic field, while it is not yet a quantitatively important academic language among the world's top 400 universities or the global flows of international students. Meeting both the economic as well as the academic criteria, languages such as Japanese, German, French, and Spanish seem to continue to play relevant roles, albeit only secondary to English.

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