



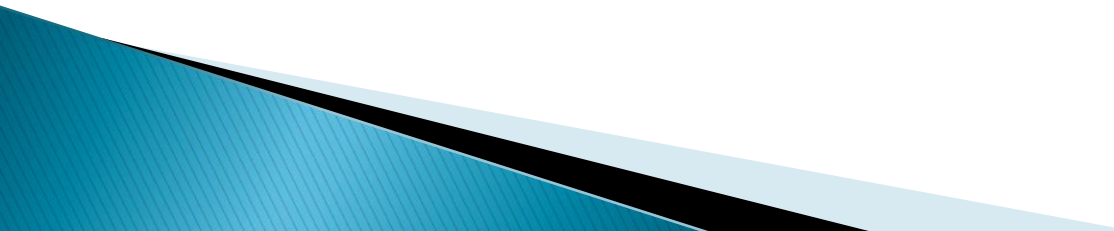
**“I speak English, but I’m still a Malay”:  
Language attitudes and identity amongst  
bilingual Bruneians living in London.**

19<sup>th</sup> English in South–East Asia Conference, King Mongkut’s  
University of Technology, Thailand, 22–24 June 2017.

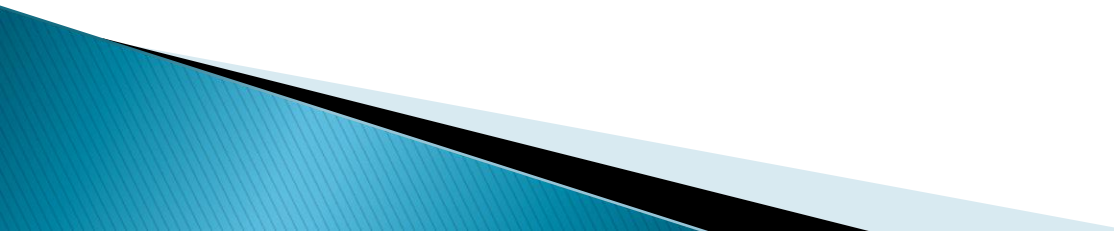
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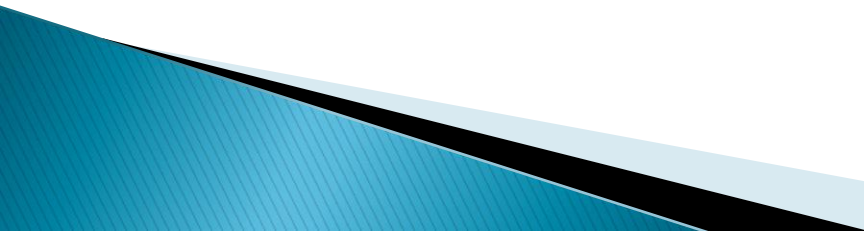
# Rationale

- ▶ Language choice and use among SE Asians living and working in ‘inner circle’ countries is relevant to the theme and subtopics of this conference (‘English in occupational genres’).
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# Introduction

- ▶ Teo Kok Seong (2000, 2006): a Malay speaker will be most likely to shift to English, as soon as he/she is exposed to a foreign setting;
  - ▶ Kamsiah Abdullah (1993): bilingualism of Malay and English cannot exist harmoniously;
  - ▶ Malay–English bilingualism can cause one’s Malay identity to deteriorate (Abdullah Hassan, 2009; Ainon Mohd., 1996; Teo Kok Seong, 2004).
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# Objectives

- ▶ This is a study of Bruneian Malay officers and students living in London.
  - ▶ Research objectives:
    - a) to elicit the current attitudes of Malay speakers towards their first language, and towards English;
    - b) to investigate whether bilingualism and the foreign setting can affect Malay identity;
    - c) to examine whether there is potential language shift among these bilingual Malay–English Bruneians.
- 

# Bruneians in London (Background)



- ▶ Brunei: a British Protectorate from 1906 until the resumption of full independence in 1984
- ▶ The United Kingdom remains a major destination for Bruneians pursuing higher education:

3,400 Bruneians have chosen to study outside Brunei, with 2,210 sent to the UK for education purposes (*British Council Research Report, 2015*).

- ▶ Mataim (2001) reviews the changes in attitudes towards Malay and English in the '*Dwibahasa*' (bilingual Malay–English) system of education;
- ▶ Zaim (2010) studies the language attitudes of young people studying at two major national universities;
- ▶ Exzayrani (2015) investigates language attitudes towards both Malay and English of students in a local Chinese school.
- ▶ These studies suggest that bilingualism in education and in the work environment, and the globalization of English are the main causes for Bruneians to choose English over Malay language.

# Background

- ▶ A qualitative investigation into language attitudes of Malay speakers living in London;
- ▶ As L1 Malay speakers, they are also important stakeholders in the future of the Malay language;
- ▶ Hypothesis – these speakers may shift their allegiance from Malay to a more globalized English, *due to English being ‘global’ and Malay not being ‘global’*;

# Methodology


- ▶ Four days of observation– 26<sup>th</sup>–29<sup>th</sup> Dec. 2016;
- ▶ Interviews were conducted at Brunei Hall, London – 29<sup>th</sup> Dec 2016.
- ▶ 18 questions were asked about
  - language use at home,
  - at work,
  - attitudes towards the use of Malay and English in local and foreign settings.
- ▶ Based on Baker's (1995) framework:  
**cognitive, affective and *conative*.**



# Research participants

- ▶ 3 officers working at *Unit Penuntut–Penuntut* (Students' Unit) at the High Commission of Brunei Darussalam in London;
- ▶ 9 undergraduate and postgraduate students living in the Brunei Hall;
- ▶ All identified themselves as Bruneian Malays ethnically and Muslims religiously;
- ▶ Age range – 18 to 47;
- ▶ 7 male, 5 female.

# Findings

- ▶ In spite of living in a foreign setting for more than a year, all participants still identify themselves as Bruneian Malays – 9 claim the language ‘Brunei Malay’ as their identity.
  - ▶ 1 male participant requested the interview to be conducted in Malay
  - ▶ 4 preferred all English
  - ▶ 7 favoured bilingual Malay–English.
  - ▶ Based on self–report data, language use in real settings may be more complex than expected.
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# Brunei Malay as identity/cultural marker

- ▶ “...cause it does like go hand in hand with our philosophy you know M.I.B.” (LON-DEC-16-BHS2; 4:23)
- ▶ “...the Brunei Malay so that people somehow I managed to meet my Malay friends, my Malaysian friends, they said oh Brunei Malay and Malaysian Malay is just the same, and when I speak to them, in Malay my Brunei Malay to them, they said wow I said *siuk* and they said *apa itu siuk?* aaa *seronok*, different *seronok macam* aaa other one like, there’s many Brunei words I want to share which, aaa for example aaa there’s many, so meaning that *Bahasa Baku Brunei* (the standard Brunei Malay) is different from Malay in Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia.” (LON-DEC-16-BHS5; 8:37)

# Standard Malay as the language of respect

- ▶ “...we use Standard Malay if we talk with *orang basar-basar*, so there has to be *ada protokol kitani, kalau family* yes normal (Brunei Malay), but Standard Malay we use if we talk with someone who at the higher ranking, with the *terasul lagikan kitani punya anu*, aaa okay, *kalau* for example *dato-dato yang cheteria apa ani ah*, Sometimes they speak in Malay but if in Malay of course we use Standard Malay.” (LON-DEC-16-BHO2; 6:28)
- ▶ “...depend *yatah kalau menggunakan percakapan lebih Bahasa Melayu Brunei sesama kami, tapi kalau sekiranya persuratan atau e-mel atu cigu menggunakan Bahasa Melayu Standard lah*, at the same time membiasakan *jua pasal kitani pegawai pelajaran ani kitani biasa membuat suratkan, membuat surat tu ndakan tani menggunakan Bahasa Melayu Brunei, nda*, we will use *Bahasa Standard.*” (LON-DEC-16-BHO3; 5:50)
- ▶ “...*kalau membuat surat yes Standard Melayu mesti*, cause we’re dealing with officer-officer *kan jua, so atu memang Standard Melayu.*” (LON-DEC-16-BHS7; 5:09)



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DOA KESYUKUKUAN  
 SEMPERA MEMBUTAH HARI KEBANGSAAN NEGARA BRUNEI DARUSSALAM KE 33  
 25 JANUARI 1438H / 22 FEBRUARI 2018M  
 SURAU BRUNEI HALL  
 TAMAN SULTAN MUHAMMAD MAHBUB BINTEN MASJID

### Kategori

- ≡ Kerja Lapangan (field trip)
- ≡ Pelajar Berterusan
- ≡ Pelajar Tahun Akhir
- ≡ Pelajar Perubatan
- ≡ Acara Penting

[Lagi \[...\]](#)

**Unit Penuntut-Penuntut**  
 Suruhanjaya Tinggi Negara Brunei Darussalam di London, UK

[...Pemedulian...](#)

### Titah

"Jika kita padat dengan kesetiaan dan memiliki semangat patriotik, sudah barang tentu perkara ini tidak mungkin berlaku. Kepentingan Negara tentu sahaja akan diutamakan melebihi daripada kepentingan diri...". Jadi sukalah beta

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### Mutiara Iman

Rasulullah SAW bersabda: Yang pertama sekali dihisab atas seorang hamba di hari kiamat nanti ialah sembahyang. Jika baik sembahyangnya nescaya baiklah amalan-amalan lainnya dan jika rosak sembahyangnya maka binasalah

### Jadual Waktu Sembahyang



# English as the construction of 'professional identity'

- ▶ “I guess so usually among my friends, *dorang Brunei* I prefer *cakap Brunei walaupun dorang cakap English*, so *macam okay dorang cakap English*, *aku cakap Brunei saja*, I feel more comfortable and I feel *lebih senang untuk express menggunakan Melayu pasal ia macam labih tajamkah*, *kalau English probably in academia*, my professional identity.” (LON-DEC-16-BHS7; 3:06)
- ▶ Only for academic and work purposes;
- ▶ For international reach:
- ▶ “One reason would be that the target audience. Since BruROSA is UK-based, we are targeting students studying in the UK. Since most of the students are able to understand English better, hence the English medium. Some of Bruneian-Chinese students are comfortable in English than Malay. It is also because English has been made an international language, so we could reach out to more groups of people, not just Bruneians.”(Muhammad Hamizan Haji Zaini, Former President of BruROSA 2014–2016)

# The co-existence of Malay & English

- ▶ “...*Bahasa Melayu kan tapi, at times dipakai jua Bahasa English atu.. most of the time anulah, what have been preferred lah, Bahasa Melayu kalau becakap sama orang-orang kitani sini, depends situation, kalau situation di luar walaupun dalam keadaan berkumpul sama bahasa orang-orang kitani, tapi kalau ada presence of orang luar apa, mau tu ikutlah memakai English lah, ikut audience-nya lah, depends on the anu tu, the situations.*”

(LON-DEC-16-BHO1; 2:35)

- ▶ “...well that depends on the occasion though, If it's more to like a formal event like *majlis-majlis ah.. tahlil or khatam*, I'll use Malay, yea but if in different occasion like ice breaking session or sport event then I'll use English, that depends on the audience.”

(LON-DEC-16-BHS1; 1:48)

- ▶ “...most of the time it's English but if I feel the need to like be like articulate something further, then I will use Malay, but just to, so that they will understand what I'm trying to say like, to get the message across, then I use Malay.”

(LON-DEC-16-BHS3; 2:37)

- ▶ On identity:
- ▶ “...it will affect my language use, but I think it won’t affect my identity, because I personally think that the use of language won’t really like affect your identity as, the Malay identity, but it’s more to different factors that, different variables that will change your identity as a Malay.”

(LON-DEC-16-BHS4; 8:25)

- ▶ “...basically *memang di sana tu penggunaan bahasa* despite you speak in English, *penampilan atu perlu jua ditekankan, bukan saja penampilan, dari segi keulahan, dari segi sikap, atu menampakkan kita ani orang Brunei, tapi inda semestinya* if you speak English, that your *kebruneian atu hilang, ada setengahnya orang, ia becakap English ya tapi masih lagi kejiwaan Brunei atu masih ada wah*, it’s only representing, representation of through *becakap saja...*”

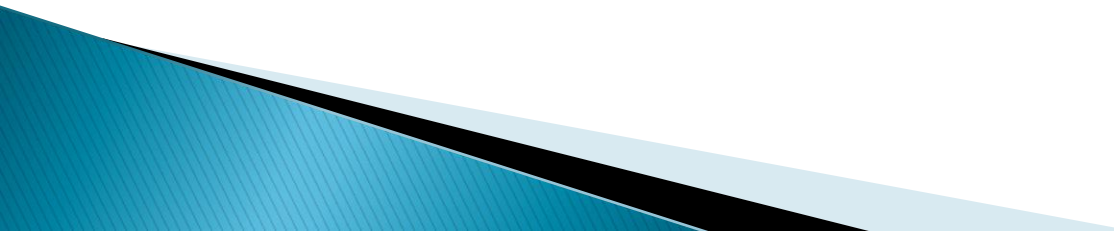
LON-DEC-16-BH01; 8:41)

- ▶ “...for me like language is a tool to communicate with others, essentially how you communicate with others, it’s basically how you define yourself, so in terms of the choice of language, I don’t think it matters to me like the choice of language or the structure of that language is the focal point of the identification of yourself, because like saying that I speak Arabic doesn’t necessarily mean I’m religious and saying that I speak French doesn’t make me aristocrat, yeah.”

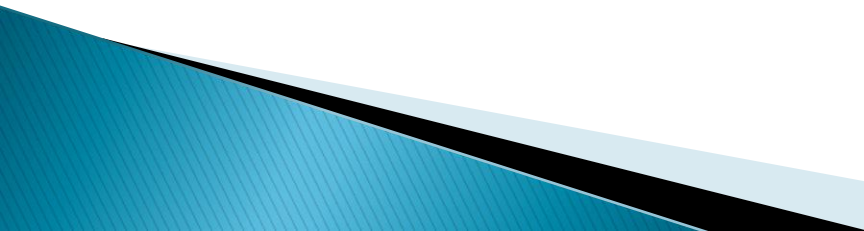
LON-DEC-16-BHS9; 10:45)



# Intergenerational transmission of Brunei Malay

- ▶ ALL of the participants claim their first language is Brunei Malay (their parents = Bruneian Malays).
  - ▶ ALL of the participants state that they will pass on Brunei Malay as their children's first language.
  - ▶ They show positive parental attitudes towards heritage language.
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# Discussion

- ▶ Findings are similar to Normaliza's (2011) study on the language use of 35 Malay families living in Lucan, Ireland.
  - ▶ Her study on intergenerational transmission and language use of the Malay families also found that the Malay language is still being used in their everyday lives, including intergenerational transmission, festive and religious events.
  - ▶ This suggests that the foreign setting may not necessarily be the main cause of changes of attitudes and identity of the Malays.
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# Summary table

	Cognitive	Affective	Conative
Brunei Malay	+	+	+
Standard Malay	+	-	+
English	+	-	?
Bilingual Brunei Malay + English	+	+	+

# Review of research objectives

- a) to elicit the current attitudes of Bruneian Malay speakers in London towards their first language, and English:

*done, on a limited sample*

- b) to investigate whether bilingualism and foreign setting can affect Malay identity:

*preliminary finding = no, identity is unaffected*

- c) to examine whether there is an occurrence of language shift among these bilingual Malay speakers:

*preliminary finding = no evidence of any shift, but use of multilingual repertoire according to setting and participants*

# Future directions?

- ▶ Comparative study on language use, attitudes and identity of young people in Brunei and elsewhere;
- ▶ Gender differences?

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# Sekian. Terima Kasih.

Thank You.

Questions. comments welcome.



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