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Urang versus Orang: The frequency of Bruneian students' use of Standard and Brunei Malay

Ili Arina Zainal

Abstract

Despite the various research done about the languages and many linguistic aspects in Brunei Darussalam, little is known regarding the current frequency and perception towards the official language, Standard Malay, as the majority of Bruneians prefer to speak in English and Brunei Malay. This paper investigates how frequent students use Standard Malay within their everyday life and whether it varies between different districts in Brunei Darussalam. Malay students from local sixth form institutions in Brunei Muara, Tutong and Kuala Belait participated in this study ($N = 60$). Three separate online surveys for each district were conducted. The research calculates the frequency of Standard Malay tokens in their output of two writing tasks as well as quantify their language preferences when speaking to familiar people and strangers. It was found that students from all three districts have low frequency of Standard Malay in comparison to Brunei Malay especially when speaking to their parents, friends, Malay tutors and Malay strangers from different age groups. However, English is dominant when speaking to friends, tutors and strangers from non-Malay ethnicities.

Keywords: Brunei Malay; Standard Malay; Language Preference; Language Perception

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Introduction*

Clynes and Deterding (2011) note that Standard Malay is the national language of Brunei Darussalam. However, a significant fraction of the locals speak Brunei Malay (Clynes, 2001). This raises the question of whether the national language is still being used. This research explores how often Bruneian students speak Standard Malay and whether the frequency differs with different districts in Brunei Darussalam. Furthermore, students' preferred language choice is not fixed and depends on whom they are speaking to in terms of age, rapport, and ethnicity.

This research focuses on sixth form students because Bahasa Melayu is no longer a compulsory subject in higher education institutions. This study will reveal if the decrease in exposure to Standard Malay in schools, influences student's language preference. It will also explore how the younger generation view the national language and its importance to the country.

The study includes sixth form students in Brunei Muara, Tutong, and Kuala Belait but excludes Temburong which has no sixth form institutions. It addresses three research questions:

1. Do students from Brunei Muara, Tutong and Belait district differ in the frequency in their use of Standard Malay?
2. Are there any differences in frequency with which students use Standard Malay when conversing between family, friends and teachers?

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3. Do students differ in the frequency with which they use Standard Malay when speaking to different age groups and non-Malays?

Literature Review

Pronouns, Vowels and /h/ sounds

What distinguishes Brunei Malay from Standard Malay is the use of pronouns, vowels, and omission of initial and some medial /h/ sounds. In terms of the use of pronouns, Conrad and Ozog (1996) note Malay speakers will avoid using the formal and informal first-person Malay pronouns which are *saya* and *aku* respectively, but instead speakers will tend to code switch to English either using ‘I’ or ‘me’ interchangeably. Using English pronouns when speaking in Malay is perceived to be more acceptable (Aqilah Aziz, 2020). To illustrate, speakers say “me makan nasi” instead of “saya makan nasi” which translates to “I ate rice” in English. Bruneians avoid using *saya* because it is regarded as being formal. This is similar to Bahasa Indonesia where the use of *saya* is seen as polite and formal which is commonly used in court or with the authorities, while *aku* is the informal variety which is used during casual conversations with friends and family (Werny, 2017). However, children do not use *aku* when speaking to their elders because this is disrespectful for Malays and the familial hierarchy (Normala Othman, 2006). Hence, Malay speakers use their own name or kinship terms such as *kakak* or *abang* to address themselves in the family setting (Hamilton & Oey, 1994).

Another main difference between Brunei Malay and Standard Malay is the vowels. Clynes and Deterding (2011) note Brunei Malay only has /a, ɪ, u/ vowels while Standard Malay has six /a, e, ɪ, o, u, ə/. Examples of the different vowel occurrences are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Vowel differences between Standard Malay and Brunei Malay

Standard Malay	Brunei Malay	English Translation
/e/: esok /esok/	/ɪ/: isuk /ɪsuk/	tomorrow
/o/: orang /oraŋ/	/u/: urang /uraŋ/	people
/ə/: beli /bəli/	/a/: bali /baɫi/	buy

Furthermore, Clynes (2001) states that Standard Malay words that begin with the initial /h/ sound are omitted in Brunei Malay. The /h/ sound is present in Brunei Malay but mostly pronounced as a final sound. For example, the initial /h/ in hilang /hɪlaŋ/ which means ‘gone’ is omitted and pronounced as /ɪlaŋ/. If the sound is in the middle, it may also be omitted depending on the speaker’s language style. For instance:

Standard Malay:	Saya/aku mahu beli air.
Brunei Malay:	I/me mau bali air.
English:	I want to buy water.

Language and Ethnicity

Standard Malay is viewed to be a formal language by most people, and it is only spoken by members of royalty, government, or used in the media such as the radio, television, and newspapers (Nothofer, 1991). Nothofer (1991) also claims that Standard Malay and Brunei Malay have a lexical cognate of 84% and that Brunei Malay is a dialect used commonly in the Brunei Muara district, but it is also used in other districts such as Belait, Tutong and Temburong. Furthermore, statistics from the United Nations (2019) states that Brunei has seven indigenous ethnic groups which are Dusun, Murut, Bisaya, Brunei, Tutong, Belait and Kedayan but most of the population are Brunei Malays. Relatively, Noor Azam Haji-Othman and Siti Ajeerah Najib (2016) claimed that all the other languages except for Brunei Malay are endangered. In addition, Deterding (2020) questions if the government feels threatened by the increase of English speakers or how locals prefer to speak Brunei Malay rather than Standard Malay which is why they promote the national language and prioritize the use of Standard Malay.

As Brunei Malay is used as a common language, it can also be used when speaking with non-Malays too like the Bruneian Chinese and Indians. However, it was also noted by Conrad and Ozog (1996) that Malay speakers tend to adjust and speak in English in the presence of non-Malays. As humans we tend to judge and assume speakers’ language repertoire which makes us want to reduce any possibilities of misunderstanding and switch to English. This relates with the accommodation theory where speakers intentionally or unintentionally adjust their pace, gestures, intonation, and language choice in hope that they can make their listeners understand better what they are trying to say (González, 2008).

Education

In Brunei Darussalam, Standard Malay is the national language, but most school subjects are taught in English, for example, Science, Mathematics, and Social Sciences. As a consequence, Noor Azam Haji-Othman and McLellan (2014) discovered that there is a gradual increase in L1 English speakers in Malay children. Moreover, Standard Malay is only the medium of instruction of very few subjects like Islamic Religious Knowledge, Melayu Islam Beraja (MIB) and physical education from primary to secondary schools. In sixth form institutions, Malay medium subjects include Syariah, Usuluddin and Bahasa Melayu only. In this case, a student's exposure to Standard Malay is decreased if they choose a subject combination of all English-based subjects.

Moreover, Nothofer (1991) found teachers tend to use Brunei Malay when teaching Standard Malay. This means students are comfortable and are more competent with Brunei Malay than Standard Malay. Students might also disregard Standard Malay as an important subject and language because the community at large does not speak Standard Malay in their daily life. Furthermore, since English is the medium of instruction for most of the subjects, this may reduce the students' preference to use more Standard Malay.

It was also found that locals who attained higher levels of education can speak English other than Brunei Malay fluently (Deterding & Salbrina, 2013). This means education has an influence on students' languages making English a widely spoken language in Brunei. Jones (1996) noted that the bilingual education system has been implemented from 1985 which encourages students to learn Standard Malay as well as attain proficiency in English. As a result, it may have increased in frequency of code switching. Rozaimie (2016) conducted a study to test frequency of code switching with 40 Malay UBD students and results show students were more likely to code switch to English during Malay conversations.

Methodology

Method and Distribution

An online questionnaire using Google Forms was used to collect data from the targeted districts of Tutong, Belait and Brunei Muara. There are three separate survey links specified for each district. The schools that represent each district are Maktab Duli (Brunei Muara), Pusat Tingkatan Enam Tutong (PTET) and Pusat Tingkatan Enam Belait (PTEB).

The link was shared via online platforms such as WhatsApp group chats and direct messages to the school's student council Instagram account. The student council was encouraged to share with the student body. The link makes it easy for people to spread the questionnaire to anyone they know who fits the participant criteria. The participant criteria were clearly stated in the form's description to only include sixth form students, ages 18 years old or older, first language Malay speakers, and reside in the specific districts.

Participants

A total number of 60 sixth form Malay students consisting of 18 males and 42 females participated in this study between 15th December to 25th December 2022. There are 20 respondents from each school/ district. The participant's age ranged between 18 to 20 years old. The gender and subject combinations from the three schools are distributed in Table 2. As shown the majority of students across all school districts receive an English centric education which reduces their exposure to Standard Malay.

Table 2. Participant details

Details		Maktab Duli	PTET	PTEB
Gender	Male	7	5	6
	Female	13	15	14
Subject English only		15	13	14
Malay only		-	1	-
Combination of both		5	6	6

Survey Design

There are seven sections in the survey which cover both quantitative and qualitative data (see Appendix). The first section collects informed consent and a confirmation if they meet the participant criteria stated in the description box. The second section asks for their age, gender, and what medium of instruction their subjects in sixth form use, that is, either English only, Malay only or a mix of both languages excluding their general paper (a compulsory English medium subject).

The third section reveals the students' perceptions of Standard Malay. It seeks to find how often they speak Standard Malay by answering either never, rarely sometimes or always. It will also show how exposed they are to the language at home and in school by using a Likert

scale of three: 1 as less exposed, 2 as neutral and 3 as more exposed. This will indicate their language preference and frequency of when they speak Standard Malay.

The fourth section is designed to test the student's frequency of Standard Malay. It will collect participants' output for their speech in written form. They are advised clearly in the instructions to write and spell as they would pronounce the words. Respondents need to write based on the prompt and instructions that are given. There are two writing tasks.

The first one is the Request Task where respondents ask their mother to stop by a convenience store. The story line is given to elicit certain tokens to be counted. The prompt was written as: "Imagine yourself inside a car on your way to your grandmother's house with your parents. You remember you ran out of eggs at home. Make a request to your mother to go to a convenience store before going home after visiting your grandparents' house to buy eggs. Write down exactly what you would say to your mother using the language that you would normally use. It could be in Brunei Malay, English or both or any other language you would normally use."

Participants were encouraged to write the specific details and write as they would naturally speak with their mother to gather a more realistic response. The specific tokens that are expected from this task are listed in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Expected tokens for Request Task

English	Expected Standard Malay	Expected Brunei Malay
can/ may	boleh	buleh/ bulih
convenience store	kedai	kadai
a moment	sekejap	sekajap/ kajap
after	lepas /selepas	lapas/ selapas
grandparent's	nenek	nini
want	mahu	mau
ran out	habis	abis
buy	beli	bali
eggs	telur	talur

Table 4. Expected tokens for Description Task

Expected English Tokens	Expected Standard Malay	Expected Brunei Malay
black	hitam	itam
green	hijau	ijau
big	besar	basar
short	pendek	pindik
small	kecil	damit

Table 4 shows the expected tokens for the second writing task, the Description Task. The prompt was written as “Imagine it is break time in school. You are describing a cat you adopted to your best friend. Describe FOUR features of the cat based on the picture below. Write down exactly how you would describe the cat to your friend using the language that you would normally use. It could be in Brunei Malay, English or both or any other language you would normally use” (see Appendix). The cat picture was digitally hand drawn on an iPad and used in this study to evoke respondents describing the precise features which are black fur, short tail, and big green eyes.

The fifth section relates to the second research question which seeks to find the student’s language preference with people they know such as their parents, siblings, friends and teachers. Meanwhile, the sixth section is relevant to the third research question by finding the student’s language preference when conversing with strangers from different ages of young and old as well as when talking with non-Malay ethnicities. They are to choose the language they normally use either Standard Malay, Brunei Malay, English or a combination. Respondents will also provide reasons about their language choice.

The final section will ask the students who or which unit influences them the most or is responsible for influencing their usage of Standard Malay. The options are family, friends, teachers, social media, and people in the community. The last question is an open question where participants can freely share their opinions or any further insights that are not mentioned in the survey about the research topic.

Analysis

The most pivotal part of the analysis is in Section 4 of the survey which answers the first research question. The written output was analysed by calculating the average number of words for the two tasks per school using excel. Next, the number of expected Standard Malay tokens were manually identified, counted and averaged. The Standard Malay tokens were verified through an established Standard Malay thesaurus called Pusat Rujukan Persuratan Melayu (PRPM).

There were also instances where the expected token was absent or replaced with another word. In this case it was counted as zero. However, there were novel words that were not in the expected Standard Malay list, and it was included in the calculations. The formula used to calculate the frequency of Standard Malay in the student's speech are as follows:

$$\frac{\text{Average number of Standard Malay Tokens}}{\text{Average number of words}} \times 100 = \text{frequency of Standard Malay \%}$$

This calculation was also done for Brunei Malay and English tokens. Where intra-switching occurs (i.e. a suffix from one language is added to a word from another language) this will be counted as a Brunei Malay token because the code-switched word can only be found or used by Bruneians such as “pawnya”; this was used by several students to refer to the cat's paw in the Description task. The percentages gathered were then compared between the three school districts. The data is presented in table form.

The quantitative data collected from Sections 5 and 6 were summarised in the form of frequency and percentage to be illustrated in bar charts to answer Research Questions 2 and 3 respectively. The study also offers reasoning based on the student's insights collected from Sections 3 and 7 by interpreting and analysing these data.

Results

Frequency of Standard Malay between Brunei Muara, Tutong and Kuala Belait sixth form students

The average number of Standard Malay, Brunei Malay and English tokens were calculated for each school. The summary of the analysis for the Request and Description Task can be seen in Tables 5 and 6.

Table 5. Average frequency of student's speech in Request Task

	Number. of words	Standard Malay	Brunei Malay	English
Maktab Duli	11.75	4.35 (37%)	4.85 (41.3%)	2.55 (21.7%)
PTET	13.2	4.9 (37.1%)	7.7 (58.3%)	0.6 (4.5%)
PTEB	12	4.75 (39.6%)	6.35 (52.9%)	0.9 (7.5%)

The frequency of Standard Malay in the Request Task ranges between 37% to 39.6% of student's speech. It is highest in PTEB (39.6%) and slightly lower in Maktab Duli (37%) as well as PTET (37.1%). However, the highest language frequency among the students is Brunei Malay compared to Standard Malay and English when talking to their parents. The data shows the frequency of Brunei Malay is highest in PTET (58.3%) followed by PTEB (52.9%) and Maktab Duli (41.3%). This is against Nothofer (1991) where he claimed that Brunei Malay is mostly common in Brunei Muara compared to the other districts. This research shows a language shift where the frequency of Brunei Malay is higher in students from Tutong and Kuala Belait. Lastly, English has the lowest frequency in student's speech. English is mostly used by students from Maktab Duli by 21.7% and less than 10% in PTET (4.5%) and PTEB (7.5%).

In contrast, the Description Task presents different findings. Firstly, the number of words is slightly higher, varying from 14.05 to 15.7, than those from the Request Task of 11.75 to 13.2 words. This is because describing a cat's features requires more specific details than making a request to stop by a convenience store.

Table 6. Average frequency of student's speech in Description Task

	Number. of words	Standard Malay	Brunei Malay	English
Maktab Duli	15.7	4.65 (29.6%)	4.55 (29%)	6.5 (41.4%)
PTET	14.05	5.85 (41.6%)	5.15 (36.7%)	3.05 (21.7%)
PTEB	14.65	3.75 (25.6%)	4.2 (28.7%)	6.7 (45.7%)

The frequency of Standard Malay in students also differs between all three district institutions. In this task, PTET (41.6%) has the highest frequency of Standard Malay compared to Maktab Duli (29.6%) and PTEB (25.6%). Moreover, PTET students show a higher frequency of Standard Malay than the other two languages when speaking to their friends. To compare, 41.4% of Maktab Duli students and 45.7% of PTEB students speak more English than the two Malay varieties. Another interesting finding are the instances of code-switching in student's speech as shown in Table 6, all of the languages are above 20%.

The distinct results of student's frequency of Standard Malay and language preference can differ across many factors but the independent variable that was manipulated between the two tasks is the conversational partner. This proves that the frequency of Standard Malay in sixth form students is not concrete but is dependent on the context of who they are speaking to and the speaker's intentions.

Frequency with which students use Standard Malay when conversing between family, friends, and tutors

The overview of Figure 1. shows how Standard Malay is spoken less frequently with all conversation partners below the 50% margin. The highest frequency of Standard Malay is observed when students speak with their Malay tutors (45%) which may be due to students showing more respect towards a professional figure compared to their family and friends. Moreover, the frequency of Standard Malay is lowest when talking with non-Malays (11.7%). To clarify, 83.3% of students said the language they use when speaking to tutors or friends also

depends on their ethnicity. This proves how ethnicity plays a role in affecting a student's language preference. As evidence, English is found highest in two categories which are non-Malay friends and tutors. Furthermore, the frequency of Brunei Malay is higher compared to Standard Malay when conversing with Malay tutors and this is perhaps caused by Malay teachers teaching in Brunei Malay or English which is in accordance with Nothofer (1991).

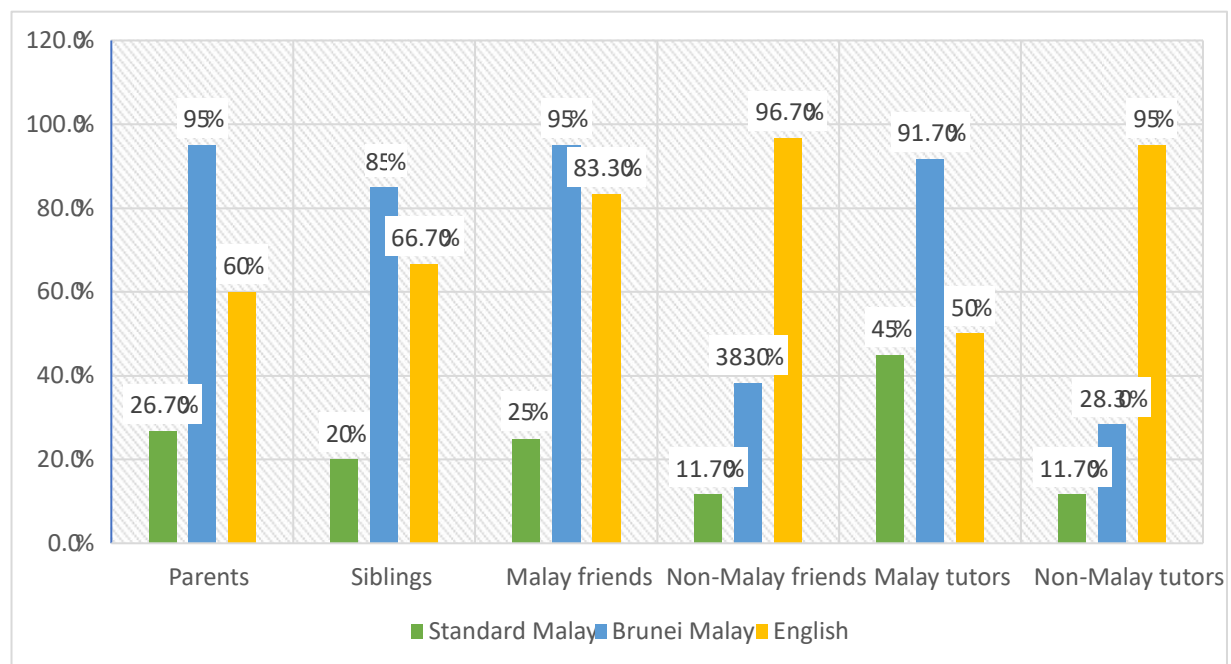


Figure 1. Percentage of student's language preference with family, friends and tutors

On the other hand, the language used by most students is Brunei Malay (between 85% to 95%), especially with family as well as with Malay friends and tutors. The data also demonstrate high levels of English with parents (60%), siblings (66.7%) and with their Malay friends (83.3%). Due to the high frequency of Brunei Malay and some English, it can be deduced that it is possible for students to code-mix.

In sum, the data collected shows very low frequency of Standard Malay compared to Brunei Malay and English which reflects the claim by Deterding and Salbrina (2013) that students who attain higher education can speak both languages fluently.

Frequency with which they use Standard Malay when speaking to strangers from different age groups and non-Malays

Figure 2 shows all the student's language preferences when speaking to strangers from different age groups. This study found only 15% of all the students using Standard Malay when speaking to peers and younger speakers while the highest frequency of 41.7% occurs when speaking to the elderly. Nevertheless, Brunei Malay remains to be the dominant language preference with highest frequencies ranging between 85% to 91.7% of the students across all age groups. English also has high frequencies when speaking to younger speakers (63%) and the same age group (66.7%) but the lowest frequency when talking with the elderly (11.7%).

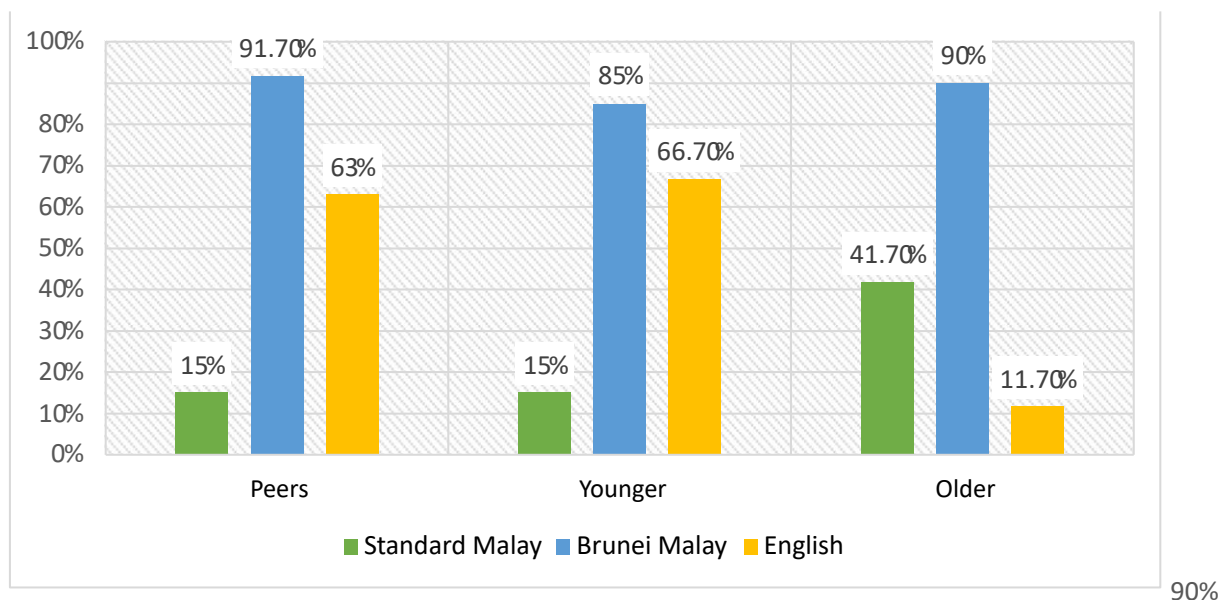


Figure 2. Percentage of student's language preference with Malay strangers from different age groups

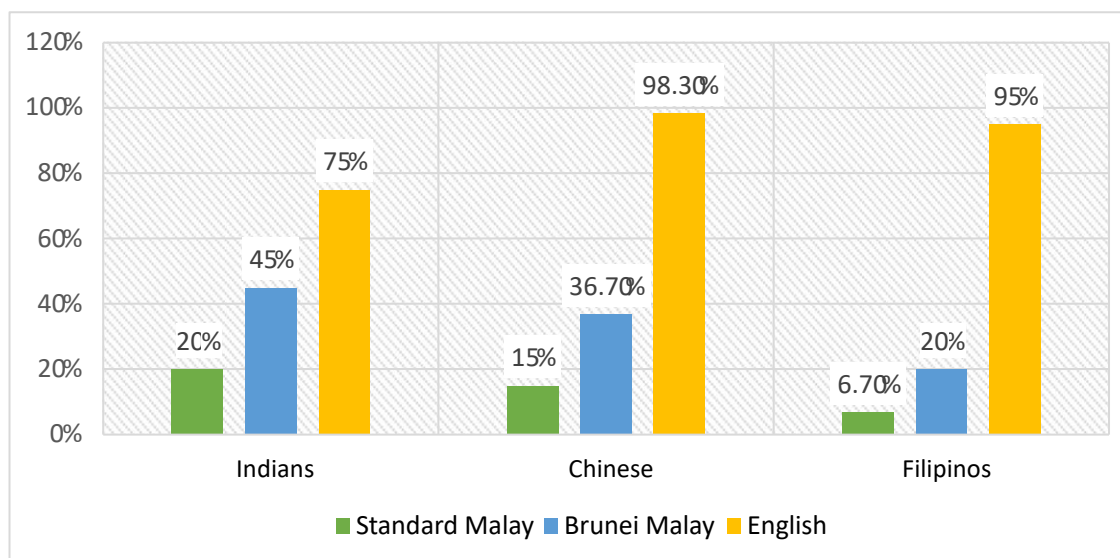


Figure 3. Percentage of student's language preference with non-Malay strangers

Next, Figure 3 displays the percentage of student's language preference when speaking to strangers that are non-Malays such as Indians, Chinese and Filipinos. The overall frequency shows English with the highest percentages (75% to 98.3%) compared to Standard and Brunei Malay. Both high and low Malay varieties are spoken more commonly when speaking to Indians but the percentage of speakers gradually decreases when speaking to Chinese and Filipinos respectively.

Discussion

Frequency of Standard Malay between Brunei Muara, Tutong and Kuala Belait sixth form students

In the Request Task, it was found that the frequency of Brunei Malay is higher than Standard Malay in all of the student's speech output when speaking with their parents. There is only a small difference between the three school districts (37% to 39.6%). Diglossia can be used to explain the reason behind the frequencies. Ferguson (1959) defined diglossia as two languages of high and low variety which can exist within the same community. In the Bruneian context, Standard Malay is the high (H) variety used in formal situations such as in the media, politics and education as stated by Nothofer (1991). Meanwhile Brunei Malay is the low (L) variety used for informal interactions such as with family and friends. This is supported by McLellan

(2020) who states that Brunei Malay remains to be the lingua franca of Brunei Darussalam. He explains that Brunei Malay is ubiquitous and even spoken by the minority indigenous groups.

Moreover, PTET students have the highest Brunei Malay frequency in the Request Task and the highest Standard Malay frequency in the Description Task. However, Maktab Duli and PTEB students have high English frequencies when communicating with their friends. Employing the field of sociolinguistics, the difference of language frequencies between students from PTET with PTEB and Maktab Duli can be explained by regional differences in development, and culture.

Zaidi (2022) mentioned how Tutong district is not industrialised and has less developed infrastructures unlike the fast-paced hubs in Brunei Muara and Kuala Belait. Acknowledging that Tutong is not as developed, there are less diverse jobs for immigrants from different ethnicities as well as few tourists visiting the area. Thus, Tutong is primarily populated by locals and their interaction in the community is limited to residents. However, this finding is tentative and requires more research to confirm. Nonetheless, according to Noor Azam Haji-Othman (2020), there are various languages spoken in the district including Bahasa Tutong, Dusun, Kedayan and Iban, but Brunei Malay continues to be the language of the majority. This explains the frequency of Brunei Malay in Tutong students.

Next, Baydak et al. (2015) states culture and language are interrelated. As mentioned, Tutong is relatively self-contained socially and culturally. Noor Azam Haji-Othman (2020) notes that Tutong people take pride in maintaining tradition and protecting their Tutong heritage. Therefore, transmission of Malay language is stronger and reinforced as the kampong community is closely knitted between neighbours and relatives.

The developmental changes in Brunei Muara and Kuala Belait since the 1950s and the exposure to outside influences have weakened the Malay language and community cohesiveness. This is not because parents think the Malay language is no longer significant but they doubt they have the ability to transmitting the language to their children (Salbrina & Noor Hasharina Hassan, 2021).

It is also interesting how English is not used more frequently in Tutong despite being centrally located in Brunei. This shows how firmly embedded the Malay language is in Tutong. Similar to Malaysia, English is widely spoken in the city center, used on the average in

semiurban areas and becomes less fluent in rural areas (Yeoh, 2018). Therefore, it can be said that it is possible for some regions to be more bilingual than others depending on the level of development and exposure to the external world.

Frequency with which students use Standard Malay when conversing between family, friends, and tutors

The highest frequency of Standard Malay is 45% and this increases when students speak to their Malay tutors. This may be due to their tutors' ethnic background and social status. Tutors are the representative of the education system; they hold a higher social position than family and friends. Therefore, students will try to speak more formally by increasing the frequency of Standard Malay in their speech.

Fishman (1970) explains how a person's language use depends on sociological variables. The SPEAKING theory by Hymes (2001) suggests how people converse can depend on the context of setting, participant, end goal, act sequence, key, instrumentalities, norms and genre. In this study, the conversational partners that the students are speaking to are changed and this may have caused different language frequencies. Moreover, Pennycook (2010) depicts language as a social practice and not a system based on structure. He states that the standard language is not only used by the upper-class or the informal variety is only used by the lower-class. Pennycook (2010) also argues that lay speakers can switch from colloquial to formal language based on where they are and their personal intentions. For example, a student sitting in a job interview can result in high Standard Malay frequencies.

Next, I will explain individual differences in terms of quality exposure towards Standard Malay. First, my research focus is on the student's current sixth form school. Unfortunately, there is an increasing number of students who reported that they experience lower exposure of Standard Malay in sixth form (63.3%) than they were in secondary level (16.7%). The prediction is that if students do not have enough social engagement or are given opportunities to speak Standard Malay in school then this can lead to lower frequencies.

Secondly, students may differ in exposure to Standard Malay, Brunei Malay and English because they went to different secondary schools. It should be noted that some students went to government schools with mostly local Malay teachers and few native English teachers from the UK and Australia to teach English (Ho, 2016). On the other hand, some might have gone

to private schools with higher frequencies of English because the majority of the student body and staff are non-Malay such as Chinese and Indians which affect Malay students' interactions and encourages them to use more English. Overall, 70% of the students agreed that teachers influence their frequency in the use of Standard Malay. The standard language must be taught because it is the "code of power" and it is the teacher's responsibility to act as a bridge of access to help students acquire the language (Delpit, 1988, p.284).

Finally, individual differences may be explained by the family environment. Gaynor (2018) states that the language used in the home is usually influenced by the parents. In this study, 58.3% of students agreed that parents play a big role in influencing their Standard Malay frequency. When asked how exposed they are to the language at home, 31.6% claim to have low exposure, 55% have neutral exposure while 13.4% receive high exposure. The reason why not many children are exposed to it is because some parents encourage their children to speak their indigenous language at home or place higher importance in acquiring English than Malay. This may also result in passive attainment of Standard Malay; the ability to read or listen but not speak or write easily because of lack of practice.

It is notable that English continues to be a minority language in the domestic domain despite the growing number of L1 English speakers in Malay children as stated by Noor Azam Haji-Othman and McLellan (2014). This supports the view by Noor Azam Haji-Othman and Siti Ajeerah Najib (2016) that Brunei Malay is not endangered and will not disappear in the near future. Nevertheless, this will only increase bilingualism and frequency of code-switching.

Frequency with which students use Standard Malay when speaking to Malay strangers from different age groups

Student's Standard Malay frequencies are lower than English and Brunei Malay, with Brunei Malay being the most popular language preference when speaking to Malay strangers in all three age groups. Compellingly, 55% of the students exhibit differentiation skills. Students state that they speak English and Brunei Malay more to younger speakers because they believe they are not exposed to the standard language yet. Inversely, students use more Malay varieties when speaking to the elderly because they surmise older people are exposed to limited English. Moreover, students choose to speak Brunei Malay with their peers because it is more casual.

This act is known as convergent accommodation. Gordon (2012) defines it as when speakers modify their linguistic variables in response to match or sound like their interlocutors, but if failed to do so, it can result in communication breakdown. Nonetheless, the students claim to accustom their language because they want to avoid any communication hindrance so they can build rapport and appear friendly. In addition, 13.3% of the students also shared how they want to be more formal and respectful to the elderly by using Standard Malay more (41.7%) because using English can result in misunderstandings while Brunei Malay may be perceived as rude, especially when using the pronoun 'aku'.

Strangers from different ethnicities

The outcomes of this study align with Conrad and Ozog (1996) whose work on Peninsular Malaysia and Brunei show a high frequency of English usage. The main reason is because 36.7% of students assume non-Malay strangers have insufficient language competency of Brunei Malay and Standard Malay. This relates with the accommodation theory where speakers may or may not consciously adjust their speech (González, 2008).

The second assumption, supposes that students choose to speak in English because it is considered to be the universal language that everyone is familiar with. Rao (2019) explains how English is a widely spoken language around the globe in spite of it being the native language in countries like the United Kingdom and the United States. About 56.7% of students also address how they would like to minimise any misinterpretations and try their best to accommodate non-Malays by using simpler words and grammar of English. However, Gordon (2012) also notes that overaccommodation can be condescending which will lead to negative consequences such as the conversational partner feeling uncomfortable. Fortunately, 75% of the students wish to speak with manners, friendliness and not sound patronising to non-Malay strangers.

Conclusion

The findings from this study found the frequency of Standard Malay in sixth form students to be of low levels when speaking to family, friends, tutors as well as with Malay strangers from different age groups and when speaking with strangers from different ethnicities. One significant finding was that PTET students presented slightly higher Standard and Brunei Malay tokens in the writing tasks compared to PTEB and Maktab Duli students and this could be due to differences in regional development.

On the other hand, Brunei Malay continues to be the lingua franca and the best explanation why it has higher frequency than Standard Malay is because of diglossia. In Brunei Darussalam, most people speak in Malay with two distinct varieties; Standard Malay the high variety used in formal settings, and Brunei Malay the low variety used in casual, everyday communication with friends and family. Furthermore, English was found to be a minority language in the home but increased in frequency when speaking with the participants' Malay friends or non-Malays. Ozog (1996, p.159) explained that Brunei Malay is the "language of the soul" while English has a practical role to help locals understand the world outside of Brunei.

Overall, students perceive the status of Standard Malay to be important but are uncertain about how to increase or maintain the language in their everyday speech since there is only a minority of people close to them using the language. Pennycook (2010) suggests for a language to be acquired or maintained, its speakers must practice the language in various situations with many different people. However, due to the current low levels of Standard Malay shown in this study, it can be predicted that the practicing frequency of Standard Malay will not rise.

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Appendix

Urang versus Orang: An Investigation on the frequency of Bruneian students' use of Standard Malay

Greetings and welcome! My name is Ili Arina and I am a final year student from Universiti Brunei Darussalam taking the module AN-4201: Research Project. This questionnaire is to aid my research for the following question; "Do sixth form Malay students in Brunei, Tutong and Belait district differ in the frequency with which they speak Standard Malay?"

Participants need to meet all the requirements to participate in this study:

- 1) A current sixth form student in Maktab Duli (2022)
- 2) Malay is your first language
- 3) Resides in Brunei Muara District
- 4) 18 years old or above

Your contribution is highly appreciated and that each of your responses as well as details submitted will be kept anonymous and confidential. The questionnaire will take less than 10 minutes to complete — Thank you for your time and responses for this survey!

1. I meet all the participant requirements and hereby give my informed consent to participate in this study

☐ Yes

Demographics

2. Age

☐ 18

☐ 19

☐ 20

3. Sex

☐ Female

☐ Male

4. Select your subject combination's medium of instruction in sixth form **excluding general paper/ English O' level.**

- ☐ English medium only
- ☐ Malay medium only
- ☐ English and Malay medium

Personal opinions

5. Do you think Bruneians should widely speak Standard Malay instead of Brunei Malay because the former is the official language of Brunei Darussalam?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

6. Explain the reason for your answer from the question above.

7. How often do you speak Standard Malay?

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Always

8. How exposed are you with Standard Malay at home with your family?
less exposed

1 ☐

2 ☐

3 ☐

more exposed

9. How exposed are you to Standard Malay in secondary school?
less exposed

1 ☐

2 ☐

3 ☐

more exposed

10. What is your view on **Bruneians speaking in Standard Malay**? *Check all that apply.*

☐ I think they might be foreign Malays

☐ I think they have a higher social status

☐ I think it sounds awkward

☐ I think they are being too formal

☐ Other: _____

Brunei Malay versus Standard Malay

This section is designed to see the frequency of Standard Malay.

Instructions

1. Read the prompts carefully and **write how you would speak Malay in everyday life.**
2. **Spell the words as you would pronounce it naturally when you are speaking.**
3. **Code-mixing languages are allowed if necessary.** This means your speaking style may include both Malay and English in a sentence which is natural and acceptable. For example, "Ku kan ke *LIBRARY* untuk cari buku" instead of "PERPUSTAKAAN".

For any questions, regarding this section you may send me an e-mail through:

19b0141@ubd.edu.bn

12.

Imagine yourself inside a car on your way to your grandmother's house with your parents. You remember you ran out of eggs at home. Make a request to your mother to go to a convenience store before going home after visiting your grandparents' house to buy eggs.

Write down exactly what you would say to your mum using the language that you would normally use.

It could be in Brunei Malay, English or both or any other language you would normally use.

13. Imagine it is break time in school. You are describing a cat you adopted to your best friend. Describe **FOUR features** of the cat based on the picture below.

Write down exactly how you would describe the cat to your friend using the language that you would normally use. It could be in Brunei Malay, English or both or any other language you would normally use.



Language preference with people you know

14. What language do you mostly speak with your **parents**?
- ☐ Standard Malay
- ☐ Brunei Malay
- ☐ Bahasa Tutong
- ☐ English
- ☐ Other:
15. If you have **siblings**, what language do you mostly speak with them?

- ☐ Standard Malay
- ☐ Brunei Malay
- ☐ Bahasa Tutong
- ☐ English
- ☐ Other: _____

16.

What language(s) do you use when speaking with your **Malay friends**?

Check all that apply.

- ☐ Standard Malay
- ☐ Brunei Malay
- ☐ English
- ☐ Other: _____

17. What language(s) do you use when speaking with your **non-Malay friends**?

Check all that apply.

- ☐ Standard Malay
- ☐ Brunei Malay
- ☐ English
- ☐ Other: _____

18. What influences the choice of language you speak with **your friends in general**?

Check all that apply.

- ☐ Their race
- ☐ The subject you are in together
- ☐ How close you are together
- ☐ Other: _____

19. What language do you mostly speak with your **Malay tutors**?

- ☐ Standard Malay
- ☐ Brunei Malay
- ☐ English

20. What language do you mostly speak with your **non-Malay tutors**?

☐ Standard Malay

☐ Brunei Malay

☐ English

21. What influences the choice of language you speak with **all your tutors in general**?

Check all that apply.

☐ Their race

☐ The subject they teach

☐ Rapport with tutors (friendship)

☐ Depending on the language they use outside of teaching

☐ Other: _____

Language preference with strangers

22. What language are you most likely to speak with **Malays within your age group**?

☐ Standard Malay

☐ Brunei Malay

☐ English

23. What language are you most likely to speak with **Malays younger than you**?

☐ Standard Malay

☐ Brunei Malay

☐ English

24. What language are you most likely to speak with **Malay elderly**?

☐ Standard Malay

☐ Brunei Malay

☐ English

25.

If there is a difference in your language preference between young and old age, please explain the reason.

26. What language do you tend to speak with **Indians**?

- ☐ Standard Malay
- ☐ Brunei Malay
- ☐ English

27. What language do you tend to speak with **Chinese**?

- ☐ Standard Malay
- ☐ Brunei Malay
- ☐ English

28. What personal reason/reasons influence your language choice when speaking to **non-Malay speakers**?

Check all that apply.

- ☐ You try to display friendliness
- ☐ You try to assert your social status
- ☐ It depends on the situation you both are in
- ☐ You try to accommodate your language to their understanding
- ☐ You assume their level of understanding towards the language of your choice
- ☐ Other:

29. If a **non-Malay** converses in **Standard Malay** with you, do you converse back in Standard Malay?

- ☐ Yes, I will communicate in Standard Malay only
- ☐ Yes, I will communicate in Standard and Brunei Malay
- ☐ No, I will speak a mixture of Brunei Malay and English
- ☐ No, I will speak in Brunei Malay only
- ☐ No, I will speak in English only
- ☐ Other:

Final Section

30. Check all the **contributors that influence your usage of Standard Malay?**

- ☐ Family
- ☐ Friends
- ☐ Teachers
- ☐ People in the community
- ☐ Social Media

31. Do you have any other opinions to share with regards to this research topic?

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