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Communicative Language Attitude and Language Choices of Bruneian Youths

Mas Ayu Mumin^{1*} , Azhan Ahmad² , Hayani Nazurah Yusof¹ , Atif Rahim¹ , Natashya Afdanizan¹ 

¹ Centre for Communication Teaching and Learning, Universiti Teknologi Brunei, Tungku Link BE1410, Brunei

² School of Computing and Informatics, Universiti Teknologi Brunei, Tungku Link BE1410, Brunei

ABSTRACT

In multilingual societies, individuals may choose to adjust their language to benefit themselves or the situation they are in. Notable methods of adjusting language in such communities include the use or disuse of a certain language. In recent years, there have been growing concerns for Brunei's diminishing utilization and falling standards of Malay (Azhari, 2023) and with it, the growing inclination of youths' preference for using English has also been the subject of much contention. As such, this research endeavoured to investigate the influence of language attitudes and demographic factors that constitutes the language choice of Bruneian youths. This study aims to provide an updated overview of youth language choice patterns that could further the understanding of the linguistic choices of local youths. Through this, the study sought to facilitate the development of better and effective strategies for language teaching and language learning, and to enhance efforts of language maintenance. The study made use of a survey questionnaire participated by 115 youths of Brunei. The findings posit a general inclination for Bruneian youths to use English over Malay. Participants were also found having more positive attitudes towards English compared to Malay, associating the former with ideas of success, achievement and modernisation. Despite this, the research noted that Malay still plays an important role in the lives of Bruneian youths, as a language that is tied to their emotions, their sense of self and their identities.

Keywords: Bruneian Youths; Language Choice; Language Attitudes; Language Use Patterns; Communicative Preferences

*CORRESPONDING AUTHOR:

Mas Ayu Mumin, Centre for Communication Teaching and Learning, Universiti Teknologi Brunei, Tungku Link BE1410, Brunei; Email: masayu.mumin@utb.edu.bn

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1. Introduction

Language is often regarded as a tool to facilitate communication. It is a multi-layered and dynamic phenomenon, and it can be affected by various external and internal factors. To satisfy their communicative needs, an individual will consciously make certain linguistic choices that they deem appropriate for the situation they are in. For individuals or groups within a multilingual society, this often includes switching between varieties of the same language or even between different languages. This, in turn, results in a unique, complex, and intricate linguistic landscape.

Although the importance of English in Brunei has been acknowledged, concerns regarding the diminishing use of Malay by the youths of Brunei have continually grown. In a session of a Legislative Council meeting, the Bruneian Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports is said to have addressed the heavy preference for English use over Malay as well as the rising inclination towards the use of ‘rojak language’ or code-mixing^[1]. He is further noted to have acknowledged the normalisation of the phenomenon as a disheartening development. This article is the latest among works published across several different local news platforms that echoes similar ideas of diminishing use and falling standards of Malay^[2-4].

To understand this phenomenon at a deeper level, and to contextualise the concerns of diminishing Malay use, the reasons behind youth language choices should therefore be explored. Research and studies on the reasons and rationale behind the language choice of youths, more specifically within the local context, have been brief. Thus, an in-depth exploration of factors that affect language choice such as age, gender and one’s attitudes towards a certain language will be necessary for a greater understanding of the complexities of the current linguistic landscape of Brunei Darussalam. In turn, this will also reveal the actions which need to be taken such as the development of better strategies or improved efforts for language use and language maintenance.

To contextualise the study, the nation of Brunei Darussalam is situated on the island of Borneo and exists to this day as a Malay Islamic sultanate. Its population is reported to be around 450,000 individuals in 2022 with a majority (67.4%) being Brunei Malays^[5]. The remaining individuals are comprised of the Chinese, expatriate workers, and

other Indigenous groups such as the Kedayan, Dusun and Murut. Consequently, the nation supports a diverse language landscape which includes Malay (Bahasa Melayu), English, Chinese and a few indigenous languages such as the Kedayan, Iban, Tutong and Belait languages among others^[6].

Malay is recognized as the official language of Brunei within the 1959 Constitution of Brunei Darussalam. About two-thirds of the population use Brunei Malay, which is the subvariety of Malay commonly used in Brunei^[7]. Standard Malay, on the other hand, is the form of Malay which is taught in schools and used in formal settings. Overall, Malay is the language that many associate with their cultural and national identity. It is reported that even among the local indigenous groups, there has been a shift from using their own ethnic languages to using Brunei Malay due to its perceived importance and status^[8].

Although this is so, the important role that English plays in the lives of the citizens of Brunei Darussalam is undeniable. The presence and prominence of the English language in the nation can be traced back to its British protectorate roots, a period when the use of English expanded immensely. In recent times, the implementation of the bilingual education system in Brunei, where Malay and English are used alongside one another, further contributes to the spread and perpetuation of the use of English in the nation^[9]. A majority of Bruneians are bilinguals in Malay and English, in part, due to the bilingual education system^[9]. In describing the overall linguistic situation of Brunei, Standard Malay is conventionally used in formal settings, Brunei Malay is the language mainly spoken in informal situations, while English is used by many, especially by those who are well-educated^[10].

Alongside the languages described, code-mixing, the alternation between two codes or languages, is also often considered to be a common occurrence in bilingual or multilingual societies^[11]. The act is also sometimes referred to as code-switching and the two terms may be used interchangeably. As Brunei is a multilingual society, it can be presumed that code-mixing also occurs frequently among its population alongside the use of Malay and English. Furthermore, with the variety of languages in the repository of most Bruneians, a propensity towards the use of a particular language over another is highly probable. The choice of language is often determined by a multitude of reasons including, but not lim-

ited to, language attitudes, demographic factors and social factors such as the setting or topic of conversation.

In reaction to the growing concerns about diminishing use of the Malay language in Brunei, this paper endeavours to explore the current linguistic situation in Brunei and to investigate the rationale behind certain language choices made by the youths of Brunei. Two theories will be presented to provide insights into the factors that potentially influence the language choice of Bruneian youths, namely, the Communication Accommodation Theory^[12] and the Social Identity Theory^[13].

This paper endeavours to not only reaffirm the current linguistic situation of Brunei but also aims to investigate the rationale behind the linguistic decisions made by youths of the nation. In particular, the two languages commonly used in Brunei Darussalam which are Malay and English will be considered. Additionally, this research also seeks to identify and examine the factors that influence the choice of language, specifically language attitudes and social demographics, as well as the impact that these factors have on language choice during communication. This study hypothesizes that there will be a stronger inclination towards using English compared to Malay and that language attitudes will have a significant impact on the language choice patterns of Bruneian youths. The researcher also hypothesises that language attitudes will have a significant impact on the language choice patterns and factors such as age and gender

will significantly influence the language choice patterns of Bruneian youths.

Theoretically, the paper will have profound implications for the potential developments of new theories or models in relation to language and language choice, especially in the Bruneian context. This, in turn, will have further implications for educators, students and policymakers as exploring the factors which influence language choice can explain the reasons behind the linguistic preferences of Bruneian youths. The findings could also benefit efforts in language teaching, language learning and even language maintenance for the nation. By furthering understanding of the reasons behind certain linguistic decisions made by the youths, strategies can be generated to tackle issues concerning language use. In particular, the research could result in the formation of comprehensive and effective plans for retaining or improving Malay language use rates in youths as well as provide a clearer insight into the linguistic situation of Brunei and the factors that influence language choice in the youths of the nation. Broadly, the research will contribute to the wider scope of linguistic research in Brunei and reveal the intricacies of the complex language situation within the nation.

Definition of Key Terms

Several key terms will be utilized for this research and the definition on **Table 1** below will demonstrate their scope of definition.

Table 1. Definition of key terms in this study.

Youth	Men and women aged 15–40 years old ^[14]
Language choice/use	Words, registers, styles, and languages to suit their various needs concerning the communication of ideas, the association with and separation from others, the establishment or defense of dominance ^[15]
Language attitude	“The attitudes which speakers of different languages or language varieties have towards each other’s languages or to their own language. Expressions of positive or negative feelings towards a language may reflect impressions of linguistic difficulty or simplicity, ease or difficulty of learning, degree of importance, elegance, social status, etc” ^[16]

2. Literature Review

2.1. Language Choice

The concept of language choice, a significant aspect of communication, along with several prominent theories about its communicative purpose, will be examined. Language, as one of the most prominent ways individuals can

communicate, is a crucial tool for meeting communication needs, especially for individuals living in a community^[17]. The development and use of language in response to communication needs have been the subject of extensive research. Previous works on language choice typically highlight the concept as the conscious action of choosing a language or specific features of a language with the goal of effective communication^[15, 18–20].

In most cases, the language choice a person makes depends on their linguistic repertoire, which refers to the range of languages and language varieties that they can use. These choices can include the selection of style, register, or the use of specific words. This is also true in the case of multilingual societies. Speakers are often found picking and choosing one language over another to meet their needs within a particular context^[21–25].

A variety of theories about language and its communicative purposes have been suggested. Most postulate that within a given context, if deemed necessary, a person will adjust their speech in a way that benefits them or the situation positively. Three major theories will be discussed due to their relevance to the paper and as potential rationales behind the language choice patterns of Bruneian youths. Among the more prominent theories which allude to language choice or the adaptation of one's language to the situation is the Politeness Strategy^[26]. The strategy is underpinned by the concept of 'face' and proposes that in each situation; a person will always be inclined to maintain their 'face.' Certain acts may threaten this 'face' and this threat is typically realised through the use or disuse of specific linguistic features during communication. Another prominent theory concerning language choice during communication is the Markedness Model^[27]. Similar to the Politeness Strategy, this model presents another potential explanation for language choice. In many communities, there is often a language considered the norm within its society, the unmarked language, and a language used less frequently in comparison, the marked language. The model posits that the unmarked language will often be chosen over any other language because it aligns with sociocultural norms and expectations.

The Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT)^[12] is another theory that offers itself as a potential reason behind language choice. Particularly, it details the adjustments a person might make to create, maintain, or decrease social distance between participants in a communicative event. CAT highlights how a person adjusts their communicative efforts, such as through the use or disuse of a language or a particular language feature. The theory also explains the rationale and consequences behind the intentional choice of using or not using a language. The three prominent theories concerning language choice that have been outlined describe potential reasons and rationale behind

language choice. However, only two will be considered in the paper and discussed in a later section. By framing the language choices of Bruneian youths through these theories, a better understanding of language use within the nation may be achieved.

In the local context, various studies have been conducted to investigate the language use patterns of Bruneians. Previous investigations into the language choice of Bruneians have revealed a pattern of growing inclination towards the use of English over Malay^[28, 29]. English plays a significant role in the lives of Bruneians, particularly in civil law courts, where the language is used exclusively or in code-switching^[30], and even in the education system through the nation's bilingual education policy, known as the 'Dwibahasa'^[29]. The language has even taken the place of Malay as the preferred language for communication, especially among young Bruneians^[29]. In response to concerns about the diminishing use of Malay, however, Malay dominates other languages to the extent that the use of and even the extinction of other Indigenous languages is increasingly declining^[31]. The Malay language still enjoys a dominant status in Brunei, with English coming in second place^[10]. Research into the influence of language attitudes and other social demographics on the language choice patterns of local youths has been limited and brief.

Briefly, the concepts of language shift and language maintenance will be discussed in relation to language choice. Language shift refer to the gradual or immediate change from one language to another that occurs in a speech community^[32]. Meanwhile, language maintenance refers to the trend whereby a speech community, as a group, chooses to continue using their traditional language^[33, 34]. The phenomena of language shift and language maintenance are the effects of language choice. This is especially true in immigrant families and multicultural societies^[35, 36]. The potential consequences of language shift, such as the decline of a minority language, and the benefits of language maintenance, such as the preservation of cultural heritage, underscore the urgency of understanding and addressing language choice issues.

2.2. Influence of Language Attitude on Language Choice

The concept of language attitude, a complex and multifaceted notion, is not easily defined. Language is said to

reflect a certain part of a community or a culture, highlighting existing social divisions and social identities^[37]. Through the use or disuse of a certain language, a person can signal their sense of belonging to a certain community or group. Attitudes towards a language play a pivotal role in determining the survival of a particular language, underscoring the significant impact of individual attitudes on the broader linguistic landscape^[38, 39].

The term ‘attitude’ is a psychological notion that can typically be found manifested as part of an action or behaviour^[40, 41]. Three major components can be used to define attitude, namely, the cognitive, affective, and behavioural constituents^[42]. The cognitive constituent acknowledges the influence of attitudes on one’s perspectives and views of the world; the affective constituent refers to the emotions associated with the attitude item, and the behavioural constituent outlines the impact of attitudes on one’s behaviour.

Broadly, past research has acknowledged the impact of positive attitudes towards the acquisition and consistent use of a language^[42–44]. This is because language attitudes are recognised as having an influential role in the reactions towards a given language and towards speakers of that language. Notably, positive attitudes towards a language can also serve as motivation for speakers of minority languages to use their native language. Language attitudes are therefore said to have the ability to influence language choice, language shift, and language maintenance^[45–48].

However, language attitudes cannot always predict or dictate language shift and language maintenance. Language attitudes can be attributed to other factors, such as the status of a language in a society or the values of an individual, including their religious beliefs^[49]. For example, the speakers of the Sumbawanese language are competent and possess a positive attitude towards the language. Despite this, the study reports that speakers rarely use the Sumbawa language and instead use the Indonesian language in contexts of interaction, such as hospitals, markets, and other public places^[48]. The participants cite reasons such as better career prospects, higher economic standing, and greater social status as the reasons for using the Indonesian language over the Sumbawanese language. As such, language attitudes cannot always be a true indication of language shift or language maintenance. Regardless, they can still be a great source of information for the phenomena mentioned^[50].

Additionally, research on language attitudes, particularly those that revolve around majority and minority speech communities, is especially important in ascertaining the status of a language and in institutionalizing language policies^[51]. Furthermore, language attitudes play a crucial role in policy implementation, particularly in the areas of language teaching and language learning^[52].

2.3. Influence of Demographics on Language Choice

Several other factors are also said to influence language choice. One notable factor is the age of an individual and its impact on their language choice. Youths are often thought to be “linguistic movers and shakers”^[53]. In contemporary times, adolescents are often the earliest adopters of new communication technologies that can influence language use^[54]. As such, their rich linguistic abilities can provide insight into language development, variation, and change.

Research has shown that, in the case of multilingual immigrants, the majority language will often diminish the use of the ethnic language, as children tend to prefer the majority language instead^[55, 56]. Some existing works highlight the different language choice patterns that exist between older and younger members of a society, particularly the preference of youths to use the language used by the majority, in contrast to older members^[25, 57]. In Brunei Darussalam, members of Indigenous groups can be seen shifting from using their ethnic languages to using Brunei Malay due to its importance and status^[8]. Gender is also believed to influence language choice. Previous research has validated a differing pattern of language use between males and females, depending on the societal expectations or opportunities available to them^[58–60]. In the Bruneian context, a study conducted at a local university investigated the language use of 240 undergraduates through their Facebook status updates, finding that women tend to use more code-switching between English and Malay compared to men, who tended to use a single language^[61].

2.4. Influence of Social Contexts on Language Use

Language choice is believed to be influenced by a variety of social factors. Language choice is affected by a variety

of linguistic and extra-linguistic factors^[62]. Prior research echoes the idea, underlining three particular social factors that influence language choice, including the social context, the communicators involved, and the functions and topics of the conversation^[63, 64].

Discussions of social factors influencing language choice often include an exploration of the concept of domains. The domain theory, coined by Fishman, is a concept wherein the term 'domain' refers to the different possible areas in which language might be used. It puts forth the idea that within a society, a language will typically be assigned to a certain function, a certain place or to certain people^[63]. A domain typically encompasses the typical communication that occurs between typical communicators in a typical setting. A few examples of domains include the workplace, family, or religious domains^[65, 66]. The domain theory can also be used to explain the influence that social expectations or norms have on language choice. Depending on the domain and the expectations surrounding it, a person's language choice will change.

Previous works on language choice in multilingual societies have also postulated a similar idea that language choice heavily relies on the setting in which communication takes place^[18, 24, 67–69]. One example could be an individual's predilection for using a different language at home than the one used at school or work. Such is the case for Eastern European migrants in East Anglia who tend to use English outside the family domain while using their first language within it^[70]. To explore the current linguistic situation among the nation's youth, this paper will examine several different domains and settings, as well as the participants and topics they typically encompass^[64]. These include domains such as family, employment, education, religion, and friendship.

Furthermore, the participants of a given communicative interaction are also said to affect language choice. This typically includes the different people with whom one might interact and the relationships that exist between them. The concept of domains incorporates this aspect under the social factors that influence language choice^[63]. To exemplify, the linguistic patterns of ethnic minority communities will be discussed. A study on three linguistic patterns of ethnic minority communities in London shows that a speaker is said to use a different language depending on who they are speaking to^[58]. When speaking with their grandparents, the speaker

will choose to use their minority language. When speaking to their siblings, the speaker will use the mainstream language or the language of the majority. When speaking to their parents, their language choice will consist of a mix of the mainstream and minority language. The justification for their choices lies in their respect for their elders and a sense of pride in the minority language that their parents have successfully maintained and passed down^[58]. Previous works have also suggested that these patterns of language use can be attributed to the age and gender of the speakers, as well as the identity of the person they are speaking to^[71, 72].

Lastly, language choice is also believed to be influenced by the topic of an interaction. It is assumed that a particular language might be more appropriate to use when discussing a topic compared to others, especially in a multilingual society^[73]. Previous works have underlined a similar idea. In an investigation into Sylheti-Bangladeshi teenagers, English was found to be used more commonly in public discussions, while Bengali was more commonly used in private settings^[72]. Similarly, a study of Iranians in Sweden found that Swedish, the majority language, was used for matters of the public domain. In contrast, matters of religion were spoken in Persian, the minority language^[69]. The same study also postulates that this choice occurs due to a limited competency in the majority language on certain topics, thus requiring the use of the minority language^[69]. The three social factors outlined are aspects that will be considered in the paper, particularly their influence on the language choice of Bruneian youths.

2.5. Communication Accommodation Theory

Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT)^[12] has been briefly described in a previous section and will be explored further in this section, focusing on the aims and objectives of the paper. CAT is a framework that can explain how an individual adjusts their speech to create, maintain, or reduce social distance^[12]. It is beneficial to examine the various ways an individual may accommodate their communication, the possible motivations behind these accommodations, as well as the consequences of those adjustments. Additionally, CAT addresses not only interpersonal communication but also intergroup communication, including issues and stakes that may arise during social encounters^[74].

In the context of the study, CAT acts as a framework to better understand the language choice patterns of Bruneian youths. This aligns with the research questions and objectives outlined earlier in the paper. Youths, especially those in a multilingual society, may choose a language that benefits them or the situation they are in. Additionally, the language they choose may help them to better conform to their community and to the societal norms and expectations that have been placed upon them. Conversely, young individuals could also choose to use or not use a language to distance themselves from certain groups or communities. As such, the research will attempt to discern the current youth language choice patterns through examining their language use in different contexts or settings. Using CAT as a point of reference, the rationale behind certain youth language choices will become clearer.

2.6. Social Identity Theory

Another notable theory relevant to the paper is the Social Identity Theory (SIT)^[13]. SIT is a framework which highlights the role of social group identification as a predictor of subsequent social behaviour^[75]. The theory is said to have played a crucial role in shaping the theoretical foundation of CAT. The framework discusses the concept of social identity as the sense of belonging an individual feels towards certain social groups^[76], which can then influence their beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours. With social identities, communication dynamics are dependent on the norms, values, and stereotypes that exist between the participants in communicative events^[77].

In the case of the research, SIT can also be used to contextualise the language choice patterns of Bruneian youths. As individuals derive their sense of identity from the social groups in which they are embedded, language choice can thus be taken as a marker of group membership. Individuals may feel more inclined to use a certain language if they believe it serves them better such as in improving their social standing, or if the language has status or prestige.

3. Methodology

The current paper draws upon a quantitative approach in its research design. A questionnaire was used to explore the current situation surrounding the language choice pat-

terns of Bruneian youths. Furthermore, it was also used to investigate the influence of language attitudes on language choice. The design takes a similar approach to previous research done in the local context which investigated the language use in Brunei^[29] that mainly revolved around English use and emphasised the diminishing use of Malay as well as the growing importance of English in the lives of Bruneians.

Along a similar thread, the questionnaire used in the current research adapted questions from two previously established questionnaires that were both modified to better fit into the local context^[78, 79]. The questionnaire was also designed with consideration for the CAT. The method of research was chosen to obtain data from a wider range of participants to garner a larger and more comprehensive pool of data. Using a questionnaire allowed for easy analysis of the data gathered which gave rise to statistics, patterns, and trends through which the relationships between the variables were inferred. Additionally, the approach would also allow for ease of reproducibility and replication in the future. Before any research was conducted or any data was collected, a Research Ethics Clearance Form was completed and submitted to the Ethics Committee of the Centre for Communication, Teaching and Learning (CCTL) along with related documents for approval. This was to ensure that the research aligned with ethical guidelines and that the rights and welfare of the participants were protected.

3.1. Population and Sampling

The target population of the research was youths of Brunei with ages ranging from 15-40 years old. This reflects the definition of youths as part of the National Youth Policy of Brunei^[14]. In consideration of the scope of the research, those younger or older than the projected group were not considered to ensure the quality of the data. The study used convenience sampling to collect data via online questionnaire through Google Forms. A QR code was created for easy online survey access and was disseminated to the general populace of Brunei, thus limiting the scope to only residents of Brunei. The dissemination took place in different public places often frequented by Bruneian youths such as shopping malls, local universities, and public parks where the researcher would approach them and ask if they were willing to be part of the survey.

Additionally, the questionnaire emphasised that partic-

ipants of the study needed to have knowledge of both the English and Malay languages. This was done to produce a more current reflection of the linguistic situation in Brunei that was relevant to the research.

3.2. Research Instrument

The paper sought to consider several different factors in relation to their influence on the language choice patterns of Bruneian youths. To assist in answering the research questions posed and the objectives outlined, a questionnaire was chosen as the method of investigation. This ensured a cost- and time-efficient manner of gathering data while also allowing easy replication in the future. By developing and deploying this questionnaire, the research attempted to reveal a more current reflection of the language situation in Brunei as well as the potential reasons behind the language choices made. Through the findings, the research aimed to bolster existing works surrounding language and language choice, especially in the local context. Furthermore, a more comprehensive understanding of the matter would also ensure the development of effective counters or solutions for the issues which have been brought to attention.

The questionnaire consisted of questions which were adapted from previous research on language choice. Namely, the language attitude and language choice questionnaire^[78], which investigated the influence of language attitude on language choice, and the Language Experience and Proficiency Questionnaire (LEAP-Q)^[79], which is an established questionnaire used to investigate language experience and proficiency.

The first section of the questionnaire was comprised of demographic information questions including age, gender, and the first language of the participants. Additionally, the section also asked the participants to self-report their linguistic proficiencies in Malay and English, particularly in aspects of speaking, understanding spoken language and reading. The participants were provided with a Likert scale to report their answers, which ranged from Perfect to None. The next two sections aimed to look at the basic language proficiencies of the participants, their language choice patterns as well as their general language attitudes.

The second section revolved around the language choices made by the participants, particularly in relation to the different scenarios that may affect language choice. The main objective of the section was to ascertain the preferences

of the target population in specific contexts and communication acts. The contexts and settings, or domains, included were adapted from the questionnaires by^[78, 79]. These included domains such as the family, neighbourhood, place of worship, media, governmental offices, and self-expression. Lastly, the third section of the questionnaire sought to investigate the attitudes that the participants have towards English and Malay. The section made use of a total of twenty-two statements which participants could choose to agree or disagree with using a 5-point Likert scale. The statements included in the questionnaire were mainly adapted from^[78], however, two other sources were also used as additional support. Through the questionnaire, the research aimed to reveal patterns of language choice and the factors which could influence it.

3.3. Measurement Scale

The first two sections of the questionnaire aimed to investigate the language choice patterns of the participants. This was done by allowing the participants to report their own language use in a variety of settings or when speaking with different individuals. Self-reporting reflects one's self-concept^[80] and the sense of self-concept is particularly important in its correlation to actual levels of ability, especially in a given domain^[81]. Although the accuracy of self-assessments can sometimes be questionable, the degree of specificity for the context or domain can affect the generated accuracy^[82]. Generally, self-assessments can generate more accurate results when there is a high degree of specificity. The questionnaire was designed to minimise the inaccuracies that come with self-reporting.

In terms of their language proficiency, the participants were provided with a 7-point Likert scale. Participants could rate themselves with Perfect, Very Good, Good, Adequate, Low, Very Low or None. Next, the participants were asked to report their language choice in different contexts. Across all domains and with all participants, the same five language options were provided for the participants to choose from, namely, Always in Malay, In More Malay than English, In Malay and English equally, The 'In Malay and English equally' category encompasses instances where Malay and English are used separately as well as when code-switching occurs.

As previously outlined, one major component of the questionnaire was a list of twenty-two statements which the

respondents could choose to agree or disagree with. The participants were provided with a 5-point Likert scale which ranged from Strongly Disagree, Disagree to Neutral and then to Agree and Strongly Agree. The sentences, which were edited to better suit the local context, were designed to reflect the attitudes of the participants towards English and

Malay. Depending on the response from the participants, the attitudes towards the two languages would be revealed and could then be examined.

The statements which acted to reveal the attitudes of the participants towards the Malay language are displayed in **Table 2**.

Table 2. Items for Malay language attitudes.

Variable	Item	Source
Language Attitudes towards Malay	Malay is a better language to express needs, feelings, sentiments and aspirations compared to English.	[78]
	When I am angry, I prefer to use Malay rather than English.	
	I consider Malay a better language to express myself in.	
	When I am happy, I prefer to use Malay rather than English.	
	I feel more self-confident because I can speak Malay well.	
	In general, I prefer to use Malay when greeting friends/classmates rather than using English.	
	In most cases, I prefer to use Malay when speaking to superiors and officials rather than using English.	
	National development can be accelerated through the use of Malay.	
	A person who speaks Malay fluently is usually well-educated.	(Ng & Zhao, 2015) - she didn't include in reference
	I feel more comfortable when hearing people speak Malay.	
	I think that the Malay language is more useful than the English language.	[83]

Similarly, **Table 3** showcases a list of statements that reveal the attitudes of the participants towards the English language.

Using the measurement scale described, the questionnaire

was able to reveal the language attitudes of Bruneian youths towards both English and Malay. The data generated from the questionnaire were analysed and then used to further address the research questions that were outlined in the first chapter.

Table 3. Items for English language attitudes.

Variable	Item	Source
Language Attitudes towards Malay	When I console a friend, I prefer to use English rather than Malay.	[78]
	When discussing school or work-related topics, I prefer to use English rather than Malay.	
	English should be kept as the media of instruction in all levels for more educational opportunities.	
	Achievement is linked more to English than Malay.	
	Success can be achieved faster when one has adequate control of English compared to Malay.	
	A person is considered smart and intellectual if they are proficient in English.	
	I think it will be easier to find a good job with a high salary if one is proficient in English rather than Malay.	
	Modernization and advancement can be better achieved through the use of English.	(Ng & Zhao, 2015) – she didn't include in reference
	To be a better and effective person, one does not need to be proficient in English.	
	I feel emotionally attached to English language more than Malay language.	
	I think that the English language is regarded higher compared to the Malay language.	

3.4. Data Collection and Data Analysis

The final online questionnaire was published and disseminated by sharing a link with the general populace on several different networking platforms. Although this method of survey distribution has its limitations in terms of sampling, the researcher attempted to minimise this through sharing the links with acquaintances, associates, friends, and family and requesting that they distribute the links further. The research gathered a total of 115 participants with ages ranging from 18-40 years old, the demographics of which will be described in the next chapter.

The data from the final version of the questionnaire were collated and collected after the questionnaire was circulated to the target population for a period of a month. Analysis only began once no new responses were received for a week. The data gathered were analysed using statistical calculations while descriptive analysis was used to identify and summarise the patterns revealed from the data gathered and recorded through an electronic spreadsheet. The data were then grouped and analysed accordingly.

In the case of the self-reporting of the language proficiencies, the division was as follows: Proficient if perfect, very good and good were chosen; Adequate if adequate was chosen and Low proficiency if low, very low and none were chosen. In terms of the language choice patterns of the participants depending on the contexts, the 5-point Likert scale was divided as follows: Malay-leaning if ‘always in Malay’ or ‘in more Malay than English’ were chosen; English-leaning if ‘always in English’ or ‘in more English than Malay’ were chosen and EQ if both languages were used equally. The data would then

be analysed for the language choice patterns of youths.

Much of the analysis also concerned statements which the participants could agree or disagree with. The 5-point Likert scale was also divided following a similar pattern: Positive attitudes if Strongly Agree and Agree were chosen; Negative attitudes if Strongly Disagree and Disagree were chosen and Neutral if Neutral was chosen. Once collated, the data gathered were analysed for the attitudes towards both languages.

Through the data obtained, the relationships between the variables were revealed. The current language choice patterns of the participants as well as the influence of different social factors on language choice were highlighted. Using the analysed data, a discussion was conducted to answer the four research questions.

4. Findings

4.1. Assessment of Demographic Profile

The questionnaire gathered a total of 115 participants. Among the 115 participants, 95 (83%) were female, and 20 (17%) were male. Many of the participants were in the 26–30 age group, which comprised 50 participants (44%). Meanwhile, the smallest group of participants was in the 31-35-year-old age range, with only 10 participants (9%). In terms of their first language, about 86 participants (75%) reported their first language to be Malay, while 21 participants reported English to be their first language (18%). Notably, 2 participants (2%) reported both languages to be their first language. A summary of the demographic profile of the questionnaire participants is reflected in **Table 4**.

Table 4. Demographic profile of the participants.

	Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	20	17%
	Female	95	83%
Age	18–20 years old	12	10%
	21–25 years old	30	26%
	26–30 years old	50	44%
	31–35 years old	10	9%
	36–40 years old	13	11%
Employment	Students	47	41%
	Employed	56	49%
	Unemployed	6	5%
	Self-Employed	6	5%
First Language	English Language	21	18%
	Malay Language	86	75%
	Both languages	2	2%
	Others	6	5%

4.2. Language Choice Patterns in Bruneian Youths

The language use patterns of the participants were revealed through an analysis of the data collected from the questionnaire deployed. In the first part of the questionnaire, the participants were asked to self-report their language proficiencies in both English and Malay. Generally, the 115 participants showed an overall high proficiency in both languages, with a higher percentage of self-reported proficiency in English than Malay. There were no recorded responses for the ‘None’ category in both languages.

From **Figure 1**, a majority of the participants showed a generally high to adequate proficiency in aspects of speak-

ing, understanding spoken language, and reading. The reading category saw the highest percentage of proficiency with 96 participants (83.5%), while the speaking category saw 78 participants (67.8%) reporting high proficiency. None reported their language proficiency in Malay in the ‘Very Low’ and ‘None’ categories. Despite this, there was a higher recorded percentage of low proficiency in Malay than in English, with 10 participants (8.7%) reporting low proficiency in the speaking category, 4 participants (3.5%) in the reading, and 4 participants (3.5%) in the understanding categories. In comparison, English saw only 6 participants (5.2%) reporting low proficiency in understanding, 6 participants (5.2%) with low proficiency in reading and 4 participants (3.5%) with low proficiency in speaking.

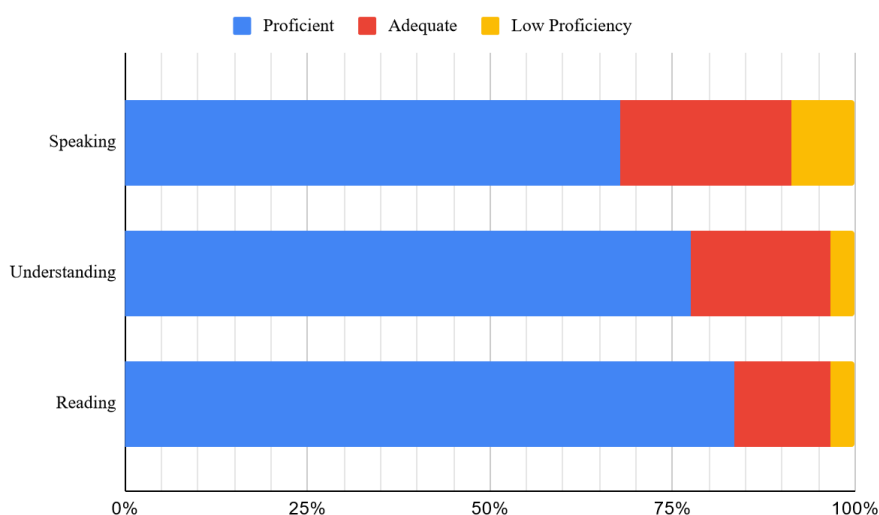


Figure 1. Malay Language proficiency of participants.

From **Figure 2**, similar patterns can be found. Overall, participants reported high levels of English language proficiency in the three aspects of speaking, understanding spoken language and reading. The reading and understanding spoken language categories showed the same pattern, with 104 participants (90.4%) reported to be proficient, 5 participants (4.3%) reported being adequate, and 6 participants (5.2%) reported having low proficiency. There were no occurrences of the ‘None’ category, but there were instances of ‘Very Low’ proficiencies in English.

The questionnaire also investigated the language use

of the participants in different scenarios, such as in different settings and with different individuals, to reveal their language choice patterns. For ease of data analysis, the different contexts were grouped according to the domains they belong to. For example, the different family members such as immediate family, elder relatives, and distant relatives, were categorised under the Family domain. The findings revealed that generally, there is a higher inclination among the youths to use English as opposed to Malay. In the contexts where English is the preferred language, equal use of both Malay and English comes in second place with Malay in third.

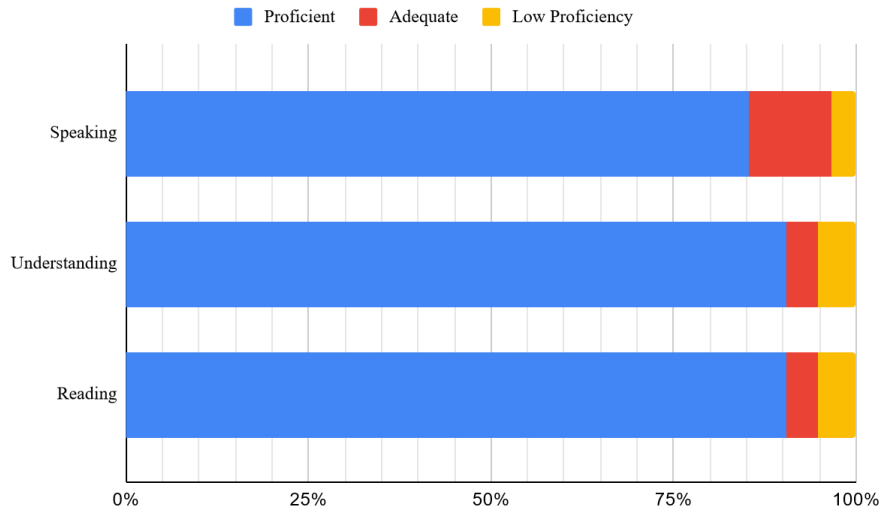


Figure 2. English Language proficiency of participants.

Notably, there are also instances where Malay is prioritised over English. Such is the case within the family domain, where a higher use of the Malay language can be found. Participants were more likely to use Malay with their immediate family (such as their parents and siblings), elder relatives (such as their grandparents, aunts or uncles) and distant relatives (such as their cousins). At least 50% of the participants reported mainly using Malay (either ‘always in Malay’ or ‘in more Malay than English’) when speaking to members of the family domain, with the highest recorded being 89.6% using Malay when speaking with elder relatives.

This is followed by 68.7% use rate with distant relatives and 50.4% use rate with immediate family members.

From **Figure 3**, there were also high percentages of Malay use, particularly when speaking to neighbours (76.5%) and in religious settings (73%). In these instances, the equal use of Malay and English was the second priority, with English-leaning category being last. Notably, when asked for language preferences at home, English use falls in last place (27.8%). In the same context, an equal amount of English and Malay is used commonly (41.7%) by the participants, followed by the Malay language (30.4%).

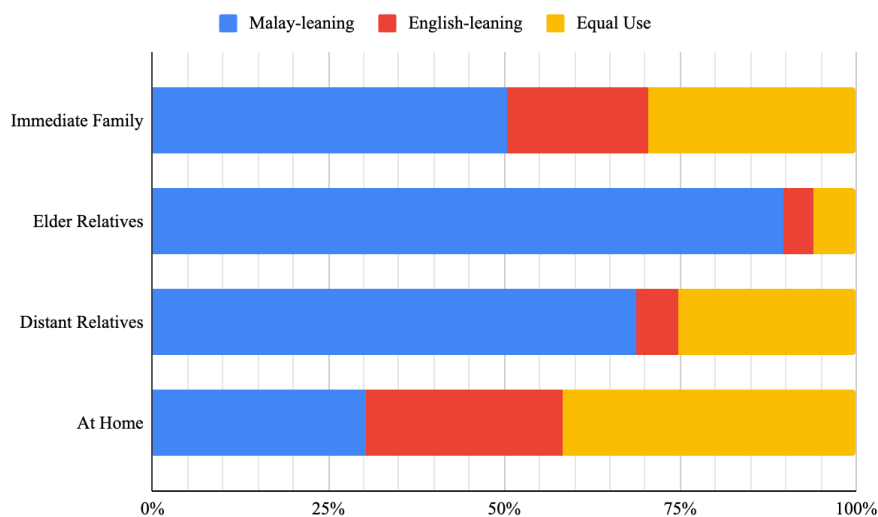


Figure 3. Language Use in the Home domain.

From **Figure 4**, another notable finding is the high level of English language use with friends, where participants tended to use more English than Malay. The highest percentage of English use was found when participants spoke with friends online with 76.5% of the participants reportedly doing so. In a similar pattern, equal use of Malay and En-

glish followed as the second most frequent, with exclusive Malay-use or Malay-leaning instances coming in last. Very few participants reported using Malay when speaking with their friends online (9.8%), however, this number almost doubled when the friends are outside of the classroom or the workplace (18.8%).

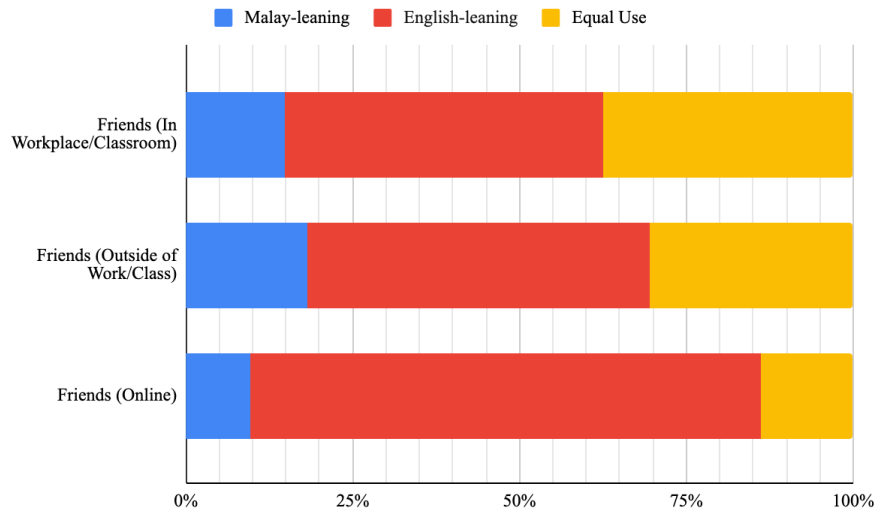


Figure 4. Language Use with Friends.

From **Figure 5**, high English use can also be found in the remaining contexts which include commercial places such as restaurants or shops, engaging in or discussing one's hobbies as well as when engaging in internal thought. Overall, the investigation revealed that there is a higher inclination for the participants to communicate in English compared to Malay. Aggregating the responses for all contexts revealed

that English language is preferred (either 'always in English' or 'in more English than Malay') with 41.8% usage, compared to the Malay language (either 'always in Malay' or 'in more Malay than English') with 33.5% usage. Additionally, the equal use of both languages was reported to be the least preferred compared to the other options with only 24.7% usage. This information is displayed in **Figure 5**.

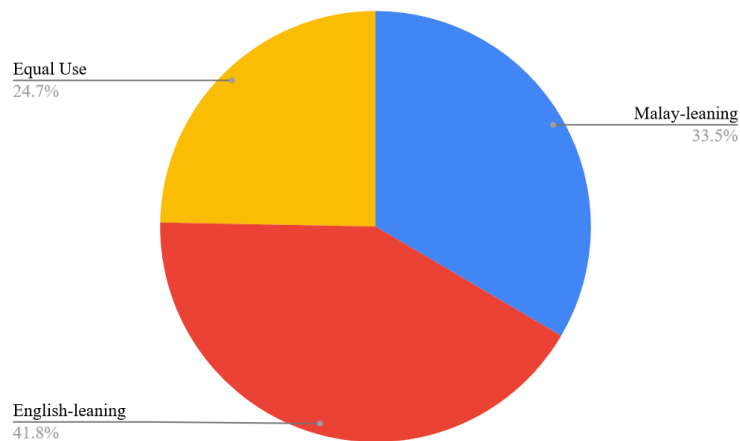


Figure 5. Language Use with Friends.

4.3. Language Attitudes towards English

The questionnaire made use of several statements which highlighted the attitudes of the participants towards the English language. In the case of attitudes towards the English language, the participants showed an overwhelmingly positive attitude towards the English language. The statements and the attitudes of the participants toward them are shown in **Table 5** below.

The general trend which can be seen across the data

is a high positive attitudes toward the English language. Except for statement nine, all the statements listed skew towards a preference for the English language over Malay. In most instances, over 50% of the participants responded positively to the statements which have been provided. Other notable findings included fairly positive attitudes towards statements 4, 5 and 8 which underlined notions of achievement, success, and modernisation. In statements that alluded to emotions or emotional ties, overall positive attitudes could also be seen.

Table 5. Attitudes of the participants towards the English language.

Statement	Positive Attitudes	Neutral Attitudes	Negative Attitudes
1. When I console a friend, I prefer to use English rather than Malay.	69 (60%)	26 (21.7%)	20 (17.4%)
2. When discussing school or work-related topics, I prefer to use English rather than Malay.	73 (63.5%)	26 (22.6%)	16 (13.9%)
3. English should be kept as the media of instruction in all levels for more educational opportunities.	55 (47.8%)	37 (32.2%)	23 (20%)
4. Achievement is linked more to English than Malay.	58 (50.4%)	31 (27%)	26 (22.6%)
5. Success can be achieved faster when one has adequate control of English compared to Malay.	51 (44.4%)	41 (35.6%)	23 (20%)
6. A person is considered smart and intellectual if they are proficient in English.	54 (47%)	27 (23.4%)	34 (29.6%)
7. I think it will be easier to find a good job with a high salary if one is proficient in English rather than Malay.	59 (51.3%)	31 (27%)	25 (21.7%)
8. Modernization and advancement can be better achieved through the use of English.	66 (57.4%)	37 (32.2%)	12 (10.4%)
9. To be a better and effective person, one does not need to be proficient in English.	54 (47%)	19 (16.5%)	42 (36.5%)
10. I feel emotionally attached to English language more than Malay language.	66 (57.4%)	37 (32.2%)	12 (10.4%)
11. I think that the English language is regarded higher compared to the Malay language.	71 (61.7%)	24 (20.9%)	20 (17.4%)

4.4. Language Attitudes towards Malay

Along the same thread, the questionnaire also presented several statements which highlighted the attitudes of the participants towards the Malay language. In the case of attitudes towards Malay, the participants also showed a generally positive attitude toward the language. The statements and the attitudes of the participants toward them are shown in **Table 6**.

The general trend which can be seen across the data is a higher percentage of positive attitudes towards Malay compared to neutral or negative attitudes. Despite being comparatively lower than the positive attitudes towards English, a positive reaction remains the most common response towards most of the statements. Notable findings included high levels of positive attitudes towards statement 8 (alluding

to national development), statement 9 (well-educated) and statement 11 (underlining the usefulness of Malay).

With statements that alluded to emotions, there was a generally positive reaction, such as feelings of comfort when hearing Malay and feeling more confident in oneself due to one's ability to speak Malay. Participants were also found reacting negatively towards statements 4 and 7, which alluded to the idea of using Malay over English when they are happy (42.6%) or when they are speaking to superiors or officials (37.4%). There was a single instance of a neutral majority, found in statement 1 with 39.1% remaining neutral about the idea of expressing needs, feelings, statements and aspirations in Malay as opposed to English. In comparison, the positive and negative attitudes were 34.8% and 26.1% respectively.

Table 6. Attitudes of the participants towards the Malay language.

No.	Statement	Positive Attitudes	Neutral Attitudes	Negative Attitudes
1.	Malay is a better language to express needs, feelings, sentiments and aspirations compared to English.	40 (34.8%)	45 (39.1%)	30 (26.1%)
2.	When I am angry, I prefer to use Malay rather than English.	64 (55.7%)	30 (26%)	21 (18.3%)
3.	I consider Malay a better language to express myself in.	43 (37.4%)	35 (30.4%)	37 (32.2%)
4.	When I am happy, I prefer to use Malay rather than English.	31 (27%)	35 (30.4%)	49 (42.6%)
5.	I feel more self-confident because I can speak Malay well.	54 (47%)	47 (40.9%)	14 (12.1%)
6.	In general, I prefer to use Malay when greeting friends/classmates rather than using English.	43 (37.4%)	38 (33%)	34 (29.6%)
7.	In most cases, I prefer to use Malay when speaking to superiors and officials rather than using English.	39 (33.9%)	33 (28.7%)	43 (37.4%)
8.	National development can be accelerated through the use of Malay.	52 (45.2%)	39 (33.9%)	24 (20.9%)
9.	A person who speaks Malay fluently is usually well-educated.	52 (45.2%)	43 (37.4%)	20 (17.4%)
10.	I feel more comfortable when hearing people speak Malay.	63 (54.8%)	47 (40.9%)	5 (4.3%)
11.	I think that the Malay language is more useful than the English language.	44 (38.3%)	39 (33.9%)	32 (27.8%)

4.5. Social Demographics and Language Choice

There are notable findings which concern the demographics of the participants such as the uneven distribution of male (17%) and female participants (83%). To avoid underrepresentation due to the largely unequal number of

participants from each gender, the research focused on the ages of the participants instead, as part of the social demographics factor. This is because, even though the distribution of participants in each age group was also unequal, sufficient representatives for each age group were found. This information is displayed in **Table 7**.

Table 7. Age and Gender of participants.

	Frequency of Participants				
	18–20	21–25	26–30	31–35	36–40
Female	8 (67%)	28 (93%)	45 (90%)	8 (80%)	6 (46%)
Male	4 (33%)	2 (7%)	5 (10%)	2 (20%)	7 (54%)
Total	12	30	50	10	13

A general pattern can be discerned from the data showing overall positive attitudes towards both Malay and English. In the case of the English language, all age groups responded more positively towards the language except for the oldest age group. The pattern is disrupted by participants from the 36–40 years old group with the lowest frequency of positive responses towards English (26.2%) and highest frequency of negative responses towards English (43.8%). Across all the age groups, participants in the youngest age group (18–20 years old) responded most favourably towards the English language with the highest frequency of positive responses (82.5%), with the 21–25 age group coming in second place (65%). This information can be found in **Figure 6**.

Meanwhile, the same can also be said for the attitudes towards the Malay language. Despite two age groups showing a neutral majority, there is generally a more positive reaction over a negative one towards Malay. Participants who showed a more neutral outlook towards Malay were those within the 26–30 age range (38.6%) and 31–35 age range (48.2%). Across all age groups, the 18–20 age group showed the highest frequency of positive responses towards the Malay language (59.8%), followed by the 36–60 age group (52.4%) and the 21–25 age group (45.4%). This is reflected in **Figure 7**.

Guided by the research questions outlined in a previous chapter, the chapter delved into aspects of language choice

patterns and language attitudes towards English and Malay. Overall, participants reported high proficiencies in both languages and showed a higher inclination towards the English

language use in most social contexts. Additionally, across all age groups, a general pattern of positive attitudes towards English and Malay was also found.

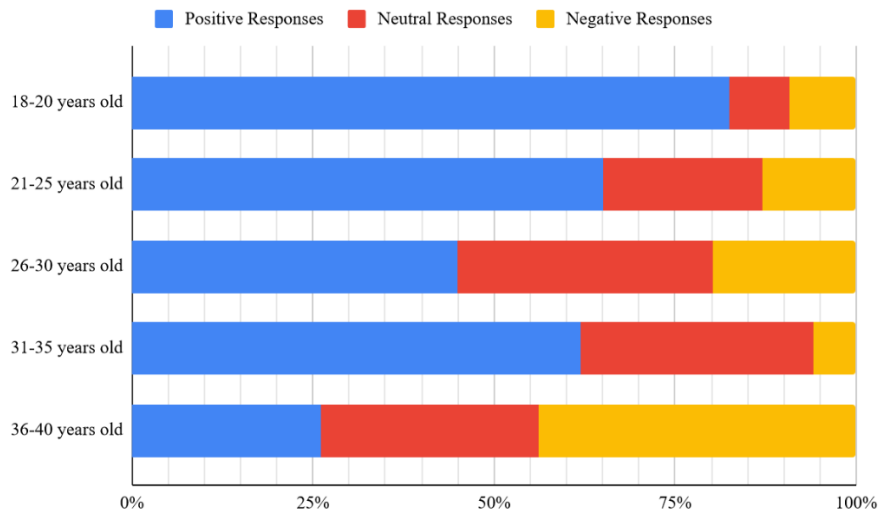


Figure 6. Attitudes of participants towards English Language.

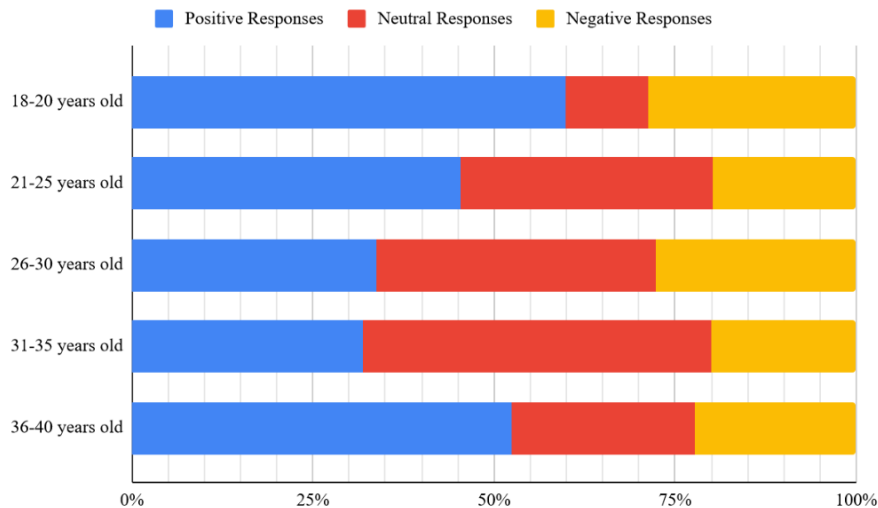


Figure 7. Attitudes of participants towards Malay Language.

5. Discussion

5.1. Language Choice Patterns in Bruneian Youths

The first research question posed aimed to reaffirm the current linguistic landscape of Brunei to better understand its complex nature. The questionnaire was administered to

explore the language use of youths who are often said to play a major role in its use and development^[54]. The research hypothesized that there would generally be a stronger inclination for Bruneian youths to use English more than Malay, based on the problem statement of the research.

The data gathered revealed a clearer insight into the current language choice patterns of Bruneian youths. Specifically, the data showed that many of the participants

have high to adequate control of both Malay and English, with minimal reports of low proficiency in either of the languages. The data also revealed a higher percentage of low proficiency in Malay amongst the participants compared to English, highlighting a degree of confidence in English use compared to Malay use. Although the self-assessments of the participants cannot be fully validated, the questionnaire allowed for a general pattern to be generated and for a clearer view of the current linguistic landscape of Brunei. This is especially important for efforts to better understand the current situation surrounding Bruneian youth language use as well as in formulating plans and policies surrounding language use.

Generally, there was a higher percentage of overall English language use (41.8%) compared to Malay language use (33.5%) across all contexts. The equal use of both languages in communication falls short at only 24.7% use. The trend seen from the data reflects the hypothesis presented for the first research question, where the research assumed that there would generally be a stronger inclination for Bruneian youths to use English compared to Malay. These findings are in alignment with previous research conducted in the local context that show a recurring pattern of preference for the English language over the Malay language^[28, 29]. In relation to the problem statement of the research, which underlined a growing concern over diminishing use of Malay, the results have revealed that the Malay language still maintains a fair amount of use. Furthermore, the equal use of both languages comparably has the lowest use rate which is in direct opposition to the common belief that a rising inclination for code-switching among the youths of Brunei.

To better understand why this is so, a closer look at the language choice patterns of the participants was necessary. The research did this through a reflection upon the languages used in various scenarios. There is a generally higher inclination to use English when communicating with different individuals or when in different settings. Two notable instances where English use is common include commercial places such as restaurants or cinemas, and when participating in activities surrounding their hobbies. Inferring from this, the prominence that the English language has appears to be, in part, due to the expectations surrounding those domains. In places such as cinemas and restaurants where western influences and media can often

be found (i.e. English movies or western dishes and menus), English would be the norm or even expected. Along the same thread, the high percentage of English use when participating in hobbies (such as listening to music, reading books, and talking about the activities that participants enjoy), can perhaps also be attributed to the English media that Bruneian youths are often exposed to and consume regularly. From the Markedness Model^[27] angle, English would be the unmarked language in these scenarios.

The questionnaire also looked at three instances of communication with friends: when in the workplace/classroom, when outside of the workplace/classroom and when online. In all three scenarios, English is the most used language. Social group inclusion is often dictated by certain social expectations^[84] and often, these include a linguistic aspect. Relating this to the SIT^[13], the use of English may be prominent in one's social network as it is what is expected of them. It could also be a marker of group membership and serve to show the bonds that exist between youths and their social network. Moreover, across the three friendship scenarios, the highest English use rate can be found when communicating with friends in the online sphere (76.5% use). Similar to the commercial places domain, the online sphere exposes individuals to a variety of popular social networking sites such as Facebook or YouTube and media wherein English dominates^[85].

While there is a generally higher inclination to use English, the use of Malay is still very much prominent. In certain cases, the Malay language even takes precedence over the English language. This is particularly true for the family domain which consists of one's immediate family (i.e. parents, siblings), elder relatives (i.e. uncles, aunts, grandparents) and distant relatives (i.e. cousins). Across all instances, the use of Malay is reported by over half of the participants. The highest recorded account of Malay use is when communicating with elder relatives at an 89.6% use rate, with the lowest recorded amount being at about 50.4% use rate when with their immediate family. Along the same thread, the use of Malay when with neighbours also proved to be quite high at 76.5% use rate. A possible reason for this is that Malay is, in most cases, the first language of most Bruneians. The findings are proportionate to the number of participants who reported their first language to be Malay (75%). Using their first language when

at home or when with family could be natural and, to an extent, expected. This would be in alignment with findings of previous works where individuals are found using their first language with those in the family domain or those that are older than them^[58, 67, 70].

Another notable instance where Malay takes priority over the use of English is in religious settings. The findings show that youths feel more inclined to use Malay (73%) when in places where many locals would congregate to perform their acts of worship. Elements of familiarity and informality could also explain Malay language use in religious settings^[86], causing the youths to feel more drawn to it over the use of the English language. Furthermore, religious settings, such as a mosque, would typically be populated by an older crowd. Drawing from this, youths may feel more inclined to use Malay in such settings because they would be communicating with those who are older than them. This would reflect the findings of previous works that have highlighted the tendencies of youths to use the language that they are more familiar with in certain contexts, depending on the age and gender of those they are speaking to^[69, 71, 72].

There is also the possibility that the participants are more inclined to use a language which is more familiar to all parties in the communicative event as a way of accommodating their speech to fit the situation appropriately and to decrease the social distance between them and their communication partner(s). In the context of this research, the more familiar and, perhaps, the safest choice would be the Malay language. This would, therefore, be considered an act of CAT^[12] where speakers choose to use a specific language that would benefit them the most.

5.2. Influence of Language Attitudes on Language Choice

Next, the influence of language attitudes on language choice will be examined. The analysis of the data gathered revealed overall positive attitudes towards both English and Malay. This supports the hypothesis for the second research question which projected more positive attitudes toward English over Malay. The questionnaire included statements which revealed the attitudes that the participants have towards a given language. The statements would also highlight whether the participants would use a language in

each context or situation. One example is “When I console a friend, I prefer to use English rather than Malay” which allowed for an investigation of the attitudes that participants have towards the English language as well as their preferred language choice in the context provided.

In the case of the English language, many of the participants gave an overwhelmingly positive response to all the statements provided. Several statements revealed the extent of their attitudes towards and the beliefs they have about the English language. Notably, statements that tie English with ideas of achievement (English statement 4), success (English statement 5), and modernisation and advancement (English statement 8) gathered high frequencies of positive responses. Among the participants, there was also a heavy belief that good control of English is necessary for them to succeed. Being used in almost all fields and for a variety of purposes, the English language has always been acknowledged as playing a major role in development and success, whether it be in academics or in the workplace^[7]. At the global scale, personal development and career opportunities have always been major motivations for learning English^[88]. This ties in with statement 3, where a majority positive reaction (47.8%) can be seen towards the idea of keeping English as the medium of instruction in all levels for more educational opportunities.

Similarly, the Malay language received relatively positive responses, although at a lower overall frequency compared to English. Interestingly, the current research found high frequencies of positive attitudes towards statement 8 which alluded to the acceleration of national development with the use of Malay as well as statement 11 which underlined the general usefulness of Malay compared to English. While ideas of success and achievement are commonly tied to English, the notions of national development being tied to the use of Malay or that Malay is more useful compared to English are seen less often in Brunei and amongst Bruneian youths. This finding, while needing to be researched further, underlines that the youths of Brunei still recognise Malay as holding great importance to them and to the nation.

Participants also found themselves feeling more self-confident (Malay statement 5) when they can speak well in Malay, comfortable when they hear others talk in the language (Malay statement 10) and feel as though that a person is well-educated if they have good control of the language

(Malay statement 9). Inferring from this, the impact of Malay language on their lives can still be seen, especially in scenarios which allude to feelings or emotions. From a theoretical angle, the use of Malay and the positive attitudes which they have towards it can perhaps be attributed to SIT where Malay is intrinsically tied to their sense of self and identity^[13].

In general, it does appear as though language attitudes play a role in influencing the language choice patterns of Bruneian youths. This thus supports the hypothesis outlined for the third research question which posited that language attitudes will have a significant impact on language choice patterns of Bruneian youths. Several presumptions can be made based on the results and data gathered. Across the many contexts and settings, English receives the most use from the youths of Brunei. However, Malay is also still commonly used, along with occurrences of code-switching between both languages. Additionally, youths also show generally more positive attitudes towards English compared to Malay. Motivated by ideas of success, achievement and modernisation, the youths of Brunei have shown a predilection towards English.

However, it cannot be assumed that Malay has fallen completely out of favour and into disuse. Malay still plays a significant role in their identity and their actions. The emotional ties which they have to the Malay language also encourages them to use the language, either because of feelings of familiarity or to connect with others better. Through this research, the reasons behind diminishing Malay use and falling standards of Malay can be understood better. In addressing the problem statement, potential solutions can be developed that will better fit the current linguistic landscape of Brunei. By understanding the reasons behind youth language choice patterns, new measures for language maintenance can be generated and existing ones can be reconsidered. With the findings of this research, some strategies towards increased and better Malay use in Brunei could be designed. These strategies could include encouraging the use of Malay in the home domain, in religious settings and in religious activities. Additionally, events that revolve around and encourage speaking and reading in Malay, as well as the production of entertainment media in Malay could also be beneficial for the linguistic landscape of Brunei. Lastly, the paper can also prompt an examination of existing policies surrounding language and language use as well as the formulation of new

efficient ones.

5.3. Age and Language Attitudes

The social demographics of the data gathered will also be discussed in relation to their influence on language choice. In particular, the paper will focus more on the demographic of age. This is due to concerns about representation of the genders caused by the unequal distribution of male and female participants. In the study, many of the participants were aged 26–30 years old (44%) and 21–25 years old (26%). Despite this, some trends could still be generated from the data received.

The research observed overall positive reactions towards both Malay and English across all age groups. In the case of the English language, most age groups reacted positively towards the language except for the oldest age group (36–40 years old) who mostly responded negatively (26.1%). On the other hand, the youngest age group (18–20 years old) held the highest frequency of positive responses (82.5%), followed by those in the 21–25 years old category (65%). The general trend which can be discerned from this is that youths at the younger end of the scale tend to see English more favourably compared to those at the older end. In the case of Malay, there is also a trend of generally positive responses towards the language. The trend is broken by participants from two age groups, the 26–30 age group and the 31–35 age group, that responded mostly with neutrality, with 38.6% and 48.2% in the neutral majority.

The findings of the questionnaire point towards the greatest appreciation for the two languages from the youngest age group. Youths have always been seen as linguistic innovators^[53, 54], and as such, their language use patterns can act as a lens into language development, variation and change. Notably, the oldest age group showed a lower positive attitude towards English and a higher positive attitude towards Malay. In relation to previous studies conducted in the global context and across different cultures, the current research reflects a similar trend where youths can be seen using the mainstream language more compared to older individuals^[25, 57]. The youths of Brunei who are at the younger end of the age groups can be seen showing a higher appreciation for English compared to those at the older end which could be attributed to the cultural and traditional values they hold. Despite the

concerns of diminishing Malay use, the research deduced that the youths of Brunei are still fairly cognizant of the role it has in their lives and the impact of its use. This can be reflected in the overall Malay language use which stands at 33.5% use, with English at 41.8% use. In answering the final research question, which asked about other factors that may affect language choice patterns of Bruneian youths, the research has found that age does play a role in influencing language choice patterns. This aligns with findings from previous studies in the global context across different cultures^[71, 72]. More extensive research, however, will have to be conducted to determine the extent of the influence of age and gender on the language choice patterns.

5.4. CAT & SIT in Relation to the Findings

CAT and SIT theories were selected to provide insights into the factors that can potentially influence youth language choice such as demographic and social factors, attitudes and societal norms. Both theories were also chosen as potential explanations behind language choice, particularly regarding the idea that individuals may choose, adjust and adapt their language choice to increase, decrease or maintain social distance. All this is done to benefit the individual or the situation they are in.

The paper will briefly compare the two theories and conclude by highlighting which theory may be more suitable and better aligned with the research and its findings. CAT examines the various methods that individuals accommodate their communication through adaptation or adjustment of language, the motivations and the consequences of such adjustments. Meanwhile, SIT takes the angle of social group identification being a predictor of social behaviour, highlighting the role that social identity plays in the language choice patterns of youths. In short, youths would be more likely to choose a language that reflects their social identity and group membership than one that does not.

Within the current research, youths of Brunei were found to be using English more (41.8%) compared to Malay (33.5%). The participants were also found to have more positive attitudes towards English over Malay, and would primarily use English when with their friends, in commercial places, when participating in their hobbies or when discussing news. However, the equal use of both English and Malay are also prominent among the participants. In most

cases, the equal use of both languages is second to English. Furthermore, Malay use is still very common when talking to members of the family. Taking all of this into consideration, CAT appears to be a more fitting theory for the research and its findings compared to SIT.

CAT takes into account the ways youths adjust and adapt the language that they use, depending on the situational context or the people they are communicating with. When the participants are with friends, they are drawn to using English, a language that sees a lot of use by Bruneians. When with family, they are more likely to use Malay as it is the first language of most Bruneians. The accommodation reflected by the findings shows that Bruneian youths have an awareness of which language may be more appropriate to use. The appropriate language is dependent on where they are, who they are with, and the benefits that using the language brings such as decreasing social distance and forming social connections.

6. Conclusions

The research has investigated the linguistic landscape of Brunei, specifically by examining language choice patterns of Bruneian youths. Overall, the research sought to further understand the current language patterns of youths and the influence of factors such as language attitudes and age on these language choice patterns. Several research questions were posed to guide the research. Through the analysis of the data gathered from a questionnaire, these questions were answered in an attempt to fulfil the objectives of the research.

The first research question aimed to generate a clearer picture of the current language choice patterns of youths. In support of the hypothesis, the research found that there is a stronger inclination for youths to use English compared to Malay across several different contexts. Most notably, youths can be found using English when speaking to their friends in the workplace/classroom, outside of the workplace/classroom and online. English use can also be found commonly in commercial places and when participating in different hobbies where youths are more likely to be exposed to western media such as movies, music or literature. Despite this, Malay is still prominent in the family or home domain where it is used in communication with parents, grandparents

or cousins.

The second and third research questions sought to investigate the general language attitudes of Bruneian youths towards English and Malay, and the role that language attitude has on youth language choice patterns. The research found the data to be in support of both the hypotheses outlined. There is generally a more positive attitude towards English compared to Malay, and this is reflected in the language choice patterns of the participants. A great majority of the participants were found associating ideas of success, achievement and modernisation with good control of English. Malay is also held in high regard by the youths of Brunei, reflected through the emotions that it is often associated with including feelings of comfort and self-confidence. The research deduced that despite the lower usage rate of Malay, the language still plays an important role in the lives of Bruneian youths, as an intrinsic part of their sense of self and identity.

Lastly, the final research question sought to investigate other potential factors that could influence language choice. As there was an uneven distribution of male and female participants, the research focused on the element of age and the role it plays in language attitude formation and language choice patterns. Younger participants were found to be showing greater appreciation for both languages, while the older participants showed more favour for Malay over English. This is in reflection of previous works that have been done in the global context which highlight the high tendencies of youths to use the mainstream language compared to those who are older. Furthermore, in consideration of the overall Malay language use, the research concluded that age and language attitudes that the youths have towards English and Malay do have a role in influencing the language choice patterns of Bruneian youths.

The findings of the research are important in efforts to better understand the current linguistic landscape of Brunei. The research will be particularly useful in developing and refining the current linguistic knowledge in the local context. New theories or models for language teaching and learning can be generated through understanding how and where people use which language. In terms of its implications for language policies and/or recommendations for education strategies for not only Brunei, but also other countries where similar multilingual contexts are shared, it is pertinent to

ensure contextualized language teaching without compromising the linguistic heritage. Understanding that there are often places and people that affect the use of a language can be beneficial, especially in language teaching and language learning. Hence, contextualized language teaching could help learners interact in meaningful, real-world contexts.

Furthermore, by discussing potential reasons for diminishing Malay use and falling standards of Malay, higher quality solutions to the problem can be generated. Efforts for language maintenance can be reconsidered and adapted to better suit the current linguistic landscape which this research has revealed. Through understanding the reasons for why youths may speak the way they do, effective measures for language maintenance could even be considered. In particular, the research could help in forming comprehensive strategies towards increased and better Malay use in Brunei such as encouraging the use of the language in religious activities and at home, holding events that revolve around speaking and reading in Malay as well as producing entertaining media in Malay. Additionally, the results of the research will also encourage an inspection of existing policies surrounding language and language use, while also potentially formulating new and efficient ones.

Future studies should attempt to generate more comprehensive research with a greater consideration for the number of participants as well as an equal distribution of their gender and age should also be had. Other factors that may influence language choice patterns such as the socio-economic status of the participants could also be accounted for.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization, M.A.M. and H.N.Y.; methodology, A.A. and H.N.Y.; software, A.A.; validation, H.N.Y.; formal analysis, H.N.Y.; investigation, H.N.Y. and A.A.; resources, A.A.; writing—original draft preparation, M.A.M., A.A., A.R. and N.A.; writing—review and editing, M.A.M. and A.A.; visualization, H.N.Y.; supervision, M.A.M.; project administration, A.R. and N.A. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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