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The role of English and the sociocultural structure of *Bahasa*: a study of Brunei Darussalam

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Abstract

This paper looks at the role of English in Brunei and the sociocultural structure of Bahasa/ language in Brunei Darussalam. The aim of this research is to critically analyse sociocultural theory from Vygotsky's "peak psychology" approach and understand depth-knowledge of sociocultural theory from other scholars' perspectives. The scholars' views on education, language and sociocultural importance-related topics have been analysed by Barry, Goode, Jones, Haji-Othman, Sharbawi and Gardiner. These scholars' ideas give a better understanding of the sociocultural importance of Bruneian's individual development. For this research, a qualitative method applies and collected data is critically analysed in detail. This research has the potential to discuss the link between language evolution and Bruneian sociocultural development. The "Citizenship Acts 1961" is relevant to discuss the theoretical concepts like, 'nationality' and 'ethnic identification' from the Bruneian context. To put it in a nutshell, the ratification of "Melayu Islam Beraja" or "Malay Islamic Monarchy" and the impact of linguistic diversity in Brunei consist of a Bruneian identity. In bilingual education policy, Bahasa Melayu and English have a major role in the child development. Although a balance of regional languages and English is essential to maintain the "Bruneian" identity. Brunei is a small country but it is diverse, multilingual and multicultural.

Keywords: Brunei, Sociocultural, Bahasa Melayu, English, Education

Introduction

Not only English language is the widely used in offices, companies and academics but it has a major role in all levels of countries and human development. Today, we can see that the English language has replaced the use of other languages. Since the colonial, postcolonial and neocolonial times, we can see that changes in language use and its preferences always bring an impact on society. English has emerged as a second and foreign language in more than one hundred twenty countries. This expansion happened because of commercial, cultural and political expediency reasons. Many world scholars (such as Burke, 2020; Reksulak et al., 2004) understand that the factors behind the selection of the English language have various reasons—majorly, those are related to economic and political developments. However, with the pressure of globalization (to connect with

other countries) for the economy and international political relations plenty of countries have implemented the use of English as a communication language. Also, one of the reasons can be seen in the “association of English with higher social and economic status” (Sercombe, 2014, p. 29). Brunei Darussalam is not an exception to see the dominating role of the English language existence in their society so, this research aims to explore the dominating role of English and its impact on the existence of Bahasa.

Researchers from politics, linguistics, economics, sociology and education disciplines have started to take an interest in political economy. Their interest is for their particular concern to investigating the English impacts on globalization (Burke, 2020). Language promotion and general usage or communication are dependent on the extent of government support and accessibility of foreign aid agencies. Also, it has been implemented through the target language support from the government’s grants monetary aid and support in the teaching policy. However, in a well-supported environment (providing the language-related policy and promoting agenda to one or many other languages), only resources (availability of teaching and learning sources—those can be accessed through the media, libraries, schools and institutes of higher education) help to have accessibility to the language and to acquire it (Crystal, 2003). Understanding the importance of providing governmental support, Brunei plays a vital role to promote language support through “*Melayu Islam Beraja*” or “Malay Islamic Monarchy” (MIB) as well as MIB’s support started to provide an educational environment and required aid to support the Bahasa Melayu and English languages. Institutional public policy and the official use of English have a major impact on Brunei society. In this research, we find that this impact directly challenge to several significant aspects, such as: 1. The socio-linguistic, and education fields, 2. The dominant role of the English language on other local or indigenous languages (endangered risk) is still a worry for many young scholars. So, the quest for revitalization creates a need for serious concern for the Bruneian languages. This research is undertaken in the Brunei context which leads to the direction of these existing challenges. Even these challenges can also be seen in any postcolonial country (e.g., Malaysia, Indonesia, Philippines, Vietnam and many other countries). A strong commitment to this interdisciplinary study offers a broad understanding of the role of English and its impact on other Bahasa or languages.

Aims and objectives

From the thirteenth century till today, the MIB and the continuity of the Muslim monarchy legitimize Brunei’s social hierarchy (Chuchu et al., 2009). Brunei’s official language is Bahasa Melayu (Malay language). Many Bruneians are bilingual and Bruneians speak Melayu, Belait, Dusun, Tutong, English and even Chinese languages. Brunei’s linguistic, ethnic, historical and social situations are often lacking scholarship so this research aims to underlie Bruneian’s relation to its sociocultural (particularly educational and social) background.

This research updates the knowledge about the role and shifts of languages in Brunei. A study of Brunei in reference to its history, identity and social development needs a sociocultural approach to examine its various linguistic shift. This study aims to sketch a colourful knowledge map through a sociocultural theory and with a discussion

of Vygotsky's model. Also, other scholars' ideas, political angle and educational backgrounds are examined through a critical review of the sociocultural approach.

Method and methodology

World's (e.g., Bruneian, Russian and Swiss) sociocultural theories have been critically analysed in depth to understand the sociocultural development of a particular country and social community in reference to Brunei. Sociocultural theories linking it to interdisciplinary studies (e.g., culture, education, language and social perspectives) have given serious attention to knowing Brunei's Bahasa structure. This research leads from a general sociocultural theory to Vygotsky's theoretical concept to understand Brunei's Bahasa structure and development. To consider its significant role, this research has investigated a 'sociocultural theory' from the contextual framework of Brunei's linguistic development. In a sociocultural-related theoretical discourse, Vygotsky's approach to "peak psychology" defines the role of society and culture. His "Peak psychology" approach plays a major role in human development and social constructivism. Obviously, it is not genetically given or carried from generation to generation. But it can be created by environmental factors which strengthen the intellectual personality of a person to learn any language and to have a creative mind through education and language studies. However, this theoretical concept of "peak psychology" is an extension and a disagreement with three theories—Piaget's theory, Kharkovite's position and Stern's theory. The detail of the disagreement has discussed further in the paper. In addition, this research finds that a linguistic cultural environment has played a major role to develop students' creative minds and strengthen the common person's overall development.

Generally, language is related to the sociocultural, ethnic and academic spheres. Interestingly, the linguistic and educational history of the sociocultural background creates a need to understand the Bruneian sociocultural setup. This research is an interdisciplinary work in the sociocultural field. As this study covers cognitive, ethnic, linguistic, political and educational interrelated approaches. All these approaches help individuals' development and boost the creative mind. This development is for Bruneians' future development to have a quality of education (literacy) and connect them with its cultural roots. A close connection between Bahasa Melayu and English languages can be seen through a bilingual education policy whereas its impact on the other Bruneian minority languages also cannot be ignored. So, the discussion on minority languages has explored in this research.

However, this research provides a depth-knowledge to comprehend the significant impact of Bruneian languages in sociocultural and educational institutions. The sociocultural approach in relation to language gives a theoretical framework to understand many scholars' ideas about Bruneian development. Also, the role of English and the sociocultural status of Bahasa in Bruneian society requires an inquiry through an interdisciplinary approach. The interdisciplinary educational, social and cultural perspectives pertaining to the sociolinguistic situation in the Bruneian context. This framework has been applied to understand the sociocultural structure of languages and the role of English in Brunei. The insight of interdisciplinary opens with an educational challenge and a sociocultural approach. However, it contributes to the proliferation of scholarship on bi-/multilingualism practices in Brunei or/and to establishing theoretical contributions

to look at an educational and sociocultural in relation to language as a theoretical framework with the contemporary Barry (2011), Goode (2020), Jones (2015), Haji-Othman (2005 & 2012) and Deterding and Sharbawi's (2013) ideas. Language and social relations give a shape to the Bruneian as an individual and Brunei whole for its social development. This can be given through past and present relations. This has been crucially reviewed by theoretical models like Fairclough (2001), Vygotsky (1986), Hassan (2009), Phinney (1996) and Kumpoh (2016).

The data collection for this research is based on online and printed (journals and books secondary) published materials. This research has used qualitative methods to collect and analyse the data from published materials.

The sociocultural approach in relation to language

"Sociocultural is a term related to social and cultural factors which means common traditions, habits, patterns and beliefs present in a collective group"—What is Sociocultural?

A "sociocultural theory examines students as active participants in the construction of learning processes and considers language learning as a social practice" (Ozfidan et al., 2014, p. 186). Also, a sociocultural theory is related to social interaction and cultural institutions (Donato et al., 1994, p. 453) which helps one's to have a cognitive development. The sociocultural approach in relation to language can be explored through interdisciplinary (i. e., through a study of language teaching and Lev Semyonovich Vygotsky's 1930s theory through a "child's cognitive study") fields. Similar to the line of Vygotsky, Ohta finds that a "Second Language Acquisition" (SLA) can be acquired through its understanding of human cognition and one's level of development. In this acquisition a sociocultural theoretical background is required to have multicultural, and multilingual environment. In addition, this can be achieved through one's social and cultural mediation of the mind. Furthermore, founded by L.S. Vygotsky and his colleagues, the approach was not applied to second/foreign language education until recently, as seminal works had not been translated (Ohta, 2017). However, Vygotsky defined his approach as "peak psychology," majorly focused on studying higher forms of mind and argued that the mechanisms of human development are not genetically inherited. But it has introduced by culture and society (cited in Zavershneva, & Van der Veer, 2018). Vygotsky's "higher psychological functions" and "peak psychology" linguistic and cognitive studies related concepts are for the idea of a utopian society to have a "superman." This research puts an effort to critically analyse this idea and it's important to study through Bruneian society and testify the Vygotsky's sociocultural development.

Language and power

Languages are different in their own forms and there are significant barriers to seeing their multi-levels of aspects through cross-cultural communication. Due to linguistic differences in understanding, one's message and emotion are sometimes very difficult to convey the other person. Interestingly, inter-cultural communication is not impossible and difficult, it is depending only on the differences in the concerned culture (Buenaventura, 1965). Language is "a set of human habits which is to give expression to thoughts and feelings" (Jespersen, 2007) as well as human language is a "system

for expressing” or “communicating thought” (Devitt et al., 1987, p. 5). Generally, language is used to greet one, ask questions, command the order, crack a joke, offend, abuse and intimidate (Ibid). Also, language is used for special purposes in different expert fields or subjects as an academic and administrative language. In simple words, language is a way of presenting culture. It is a medium of expression and communication. Also, language plays a major role in giving information through verbal and non-verbal communication modes. Besides this general meaning of language, it has an important role in every society. Similarly, Bahasa Malayu, Dusun, Tutong, English and many other languages have a vital role to build a strong sociocultural background in Brunei. A historical shift from European colonialism to the Sultanate, MIB, modernity and revolutionary digitalization have an impact on Bruneian society. A Bruneian language policy transformation (i.e., Bahasa Melayu, official use of English and bilingual use of both languages in schools), a power to take the decision and the selection of language have highly shaped the Bruneian identity. This language shift/implementation of a particular language attracts many worlds scholars’ interest to know:

1. How does Brunei’s sociocultural change and development impact the other minority languages?
2. How do the various aspects impact the sociolinguistic situation in Bruneian society and the education system?

To holds a language and sociolinguistic studies interest, Fairclough writes about the context of language along with a great concern for social power:

Language and power are about how language functions in maintaining and changing power relations in contemporary society, about ways of analyzing language which can reveal these processes and about how people can become more conscious of them and more able to resist and change them (Fairclough, 2001, p. viii).

Fairclough is one of the founders of ‘Critical Discourse Analysis’ (CDA). He identifies that people were conscious of their individualism and thought of being out of society. Thus, they start to use language in a way so that they can demonstrate a social relationship with their language, family and ethnic identities. Hassan believes, “there are five elements that shape the identity of a race, that is, the same ‘ancestry,’ ‘language,’ ‘culture,’ ‘religion’ and ‘local’” (Hassan, 2009, p. 59). The internal ethnic identity construction is associated with the understanding of the self-identity in connection to the group’s collective identity. Phinney’s (1996) model of “minority ethnic identity” is a process of exploration and flexibility of any particular society. This exploration questions to the preexisting ethnic attitudes and it searches the past and present experiences of one’s group—this Phinney’s model fits the Dusun identity in Brunei (See, Kumpoh, 2016). To discuss an ethnic minority concern, Kumpoh (2016) finds that the emphasis on Bahasa Melayu in the Brunei education system since the 1950s and the dispersion of the Dusun due to education and occupation pushed the members of the ethnic group away from caring for the Dusun language and ethnic activities respectively. However, Bruneian languages are ethnic identities, national identities

and social community markers that shape a 'Bruneian national identity.' Their Bahasa Melayu, Dusun and other language identity give them a sense of 'Bruneian citizen and nationality.' Due to their language affection, they feel very closely associated and belong to Brunei land.

Bruneian languages are related to Bruneian identity, cultural, ethical, linguistic, philosophical, political, psychoanalytical and sociological markers. Linguistics claim to various aspects of language when a language becomes a lingua franca. English as a "world language" has become a lingua franca in this post-modern era and is often taught as a second language worldwide (Fraser, 2009). Regarding the English language elasticity, "English is the language associated with the process of local modernization" (Sercombe, 2014, p. 23). English has welcomed nature to borrow words from other languages—Danish, French and Latin. Also, English vocabulary, expressions and idioms have come from many sources. Mainly Latin, French, Germanic, Hindi, Hungarian, native American and Australian languages (Knowles, 1997, p. 3; Fraser, 2009, p. 93). The use of English in Brunei is for political and economic benefits. However, some critics (See, Jones, 2022; Ryan, 2022) argue that English is easy to learn for its grammatical construction. The paucity of inflection, simplicity and expressions has become the world's language. Also, English is a sign of elite groups' language so, the speaker feels rich/elite when they speak in the English language than their mother tongue. However, the availability of a dictionary is another easy way to learn English. The English dictionaries were published with more added vocabulary as Charles Richardson's *A New English Language Dictionary*. To see the sociocultural background importance is that "considering the influence of a range of individual and sociocultural factors on expressive vocabulary size of young children" (Southwood, et al., 2021). Vygotsky finds that a problem of linguistic development in Stern's theory, is when Stern talks about an individual person's leads to a theory actually, Stern is ignoring the social role of developing a personality (Vygotsky, 1986). So, Vygotsky's theoretical discussion becomes an important from our point of view. This Bruneian context is easy to understand a linear contemporary development as an individual, student and as a community.

Nationality and ethnic identification in Brunei

'Ethnic' word is derived from the Greek 'ethnos' or 'nation.' A nation is defined as a community (with its shared cultural tradition, history and languages). Remarkably, the discussion about ethnicity is for the ethnic majority—which is a socially dominant, established or well settled whereas the minority—is socially marginalized and came from migration history (Evans, 2015, p. 3; Thomas, et al., 2004). The most crucial point about language is that it is a label of a person's identity. It can be recognized by the person's origin, geographical area, culture and ethnicity. Brunei is a country where various ethnic groups exist and have individual cultures and languages, identifying their belongings and roots. Language becomes a part of defining the geographical area to recognise your belonging place. Bruneian languages (Bahasa Melayu, Dusun and other languages) are linguistically identical remarks to Bruneian identity. However, language and geographic remarks are not only limited to the construction of linguistic identity but language is also related to other aspects. For example, we can see how a language represents the 'person's identity,' 'national identity' and 'geographical identity.' Similarly, for Bruneians

Bahasa Melayu is a marker of national identity and it represents the Bruneian's connection to the country or land. In addition, the Bahasa Melayu language is often associated with the culture, geography and social backgrounds of Brunei whereas Dusun and other minority languages have emerged from their linguistic, ethnic and migration history. It is interesting to study today's status of Bahasa Melayu and other Bruneian languages with the implementation of the "nationality act."

The 'Malay by race' label was coined in the "Nationality Act of Brunei" (1961) which stated that there were seven indigenous groups within the 'Malay by race' category, these are: the Belait, Bisaya, Brunei, Dusun, Kedayan, Murut and Tutong ethnicities. Historically, these groups were said to be the original inhabitants of Brunei. As opposed to the Ibans and the Punans which the Constitution of Brunei Darussalam recognizes as 'native to Borneo' but not specifically to Brunei Darussalam (Haji-Othman, 2012, p. 175). Although the study reveals a high level of tolerance by the informants toward linguistic diversity. There is evidence to show that the minority ethnic population is abandoning their traditional languages and shifting to Malay, a synchronous convergent evolutionary process of identity shift is occurring too. The implications of linguistic diversity are diminishing in Brunei and so, there is a cultural collapse (Haji-Othman, 2005). Around 25% of the indigenous population who were not speaking Malay but were assimilated into Bahasa Melayu by the government. In 1993, the government started implementing Bahasa Melayu as a medium of instruction in all schools.

After 1918, the Iban and the nomadic Penan (non-indigenous groups) settled in the district of Temburong. Miri and Lawas areas of Sarawak, Sipitang in Sabah and the island of Labuan started to settle. The Kadayan are Muslims and tend to identify with the dominant Bahasa Melayu. The Kadayan intermarry with them and work for assimilation is evidence of Bahasa Melayu's connection to other ethnic groups, such as Lun Bawang, Tutong and Belait, being absorbed into Kadayan communities (Jones, 2015; Ooi, 2004). Chinese languages are spoken in Brunei, i.e., Hakka (around 3000), Mandarin (around 15,000), Foochow or Mindon (around 6000), Hokkien or Min Nan (around 10,000) and Cantonese or Yue (around 3500) (Sercombe, 2014, p. 33). According to constitutional and census purposes, the Brunei government classifies the society into two core groups: i) 'indigenous' and ii) 'non-indigenous.' In the context of language study, it is prominent to note that a number of languages and dialects of Brunei are spoken outside the boundaries. Bahasa Melayu and Kedayan languages are spoken in the north and south coastal areas.

Vygotsky's concept is that language is the main tool for transforming the natural mind into a higher mind. It allows accumulating and transmitting the experience of generations. With the help of speech and verbal thinking, the individual gradually becomes an autonomous person capable of free choice (Zavershneva, & Van der Veer, 2018). According to Vygotsky's model, the Bruneian's regional two core groups always have been transferring their language to the next generation. Therefore, the transformation of the natural mind is also spread to other places beyond Bruneian boundaries. The transformation and accumulation also can be done by the two factors, such as cross-racial marriages (Kedayan intermarriage) and the diaspora (a spread of Bahasa Melayu and Kedayan languages). Martin (1995, p. 29) mentions in the "Government of Brunei's report," information about the *pauk jati* (indigenous ethnic groups) and languages have

been structured in the constitution. Indeed, many minority languages and dialects in Brunei are spoken outside the country.

According to the “Constitution of Brunei Darussalam,” the importance of Article 82 (under “Official Language”) is its Bahasa Melayu (Malay language). Article 82(1) is about “the official language of Brunei Darussalam shall be the Malay language and shall be in a such script as may by written law be provided” (The Constitution of Brunei Darussalam, 2013, p. 35; Constitute rev. 2006). After this article, to maintain Bahasa Melayu the Nationality Act for citizenship has played a vital role to construct nationality and ethnic identification in Brunei. According to the report, under the “Brunei Nationality Act,” the citizenship act has passed through male representatives only. Bruneian female citizens who are married to foreigners or bear children by foreign fathers cannot pass their Bruneian citizenship to children. Even these children are born in Brunei. This act has resulted in the creation of a sizable population of stateless children, estimated at more than 5000 residents who are entitled to live in Brunei and the documented for travel by the Government but who cannot enjoy the full privileges of citizenship, including the right to own land (United States, 1996, p. 556).

Brunei’s education system requires strict adherence to learning experiences and subjects that must be appropriate, culturally acceptable and aligned with the MIB (Hamid, 2021). The ratification of MIB is based on the ‘Islam is a status of official religion’ and ‘the institution of an absolute Monarchy’ and ‘encouraged to use Malay official language.’ “Article 5A” was amended in 2004 which states that a Supreme Court’s proceedings should be in English. The MIB national acknowledgment has impacted linguistic diversity in Brunei. Haji-Othman’s (2005) lens of the ‘ecology of language’ study reveals a high level of tolerance by the informants toward linguistic diversity. There is evidence to suggest that the minority ethnic population is abandoning their traditional languages and shifting to Melayu. A synchronous convergent evolutionary process of identity shift is occurring too. The implications are as linguistic diversity is diminishing in Brunei so, there is cultural diversity.

The impact of the MIB can be seen in society, culture, education and other levels of structural changes. Kohler’s “Chance Theory” defined no general theory of intellectual actions. Once we acknowledge the historical character of verbal through, we must consider it subject to all the premises of historical materialism. These are valid for any historical phenomenon in human society. It is only expected that on this level the development of behaviour will be governed essentially by the general laws of the historical development of human society (Vygotsky, 1986, pp. 51–53).

Bruneian media, sultanate and English

Majorly, Malay and English languages have used by the Bruneian media. Most radio programmes broadcasted by Radio Television Brunei (RTB) are in the Malay language. However, there is an English service and limited Chinese services available for Bruneians. There are also a few programmes in Gurkhali (for the Gurkha battalions stationed in Brunei). “Persatuan Sahabat Pena Brunei” (PSPB) is an organization that frequently contributes articles to Malayan newspapers, namely *Saudara* and *Utusan* Melayu. In the twentieth century, the ‘Minister of Home Affairs’ launched the second English daily paper titled, “The Brunei Times.” It was a great step to progress because there was just

only one English-language newspaper available, its “Borneo Bulletin.” Its Malay-language edition is “Media Permata.” The government publishes a weekly newspaper titled, “Pelita Brunei.” This was distributed free to the Bruneian public (Damit, 2007; Martin, 1995; Sidhu, 2010). The role of *Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka* (National Bureau for Language and Literature in Brunei, also exists in other Malay nations, DBP) to maintain the Bahasa Melayu language and indigenous languages amid the hegemony of English in Brunei. DBP was established in 1960 and is now under Brunei’s ‘Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports.’ They have a cooperative network with the ‘Brunei Darussalam Malay Language Standing Committee,’ ‘Brunei Darussalam Indonesia Malaysian Language Council’ and the Southeast Asian Literature Council (MASTERA). DBP has a great list of children’s book collections and a number of journal issues available in Bahasa Melayu. It is managed by the ‘Language and Library Council, Brunei Darussalam’ (*Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka*, 1960).

Bahasa Melayu has been the official language of Brunei Darussalam since 1959. However, the country has long been more ethnically diverse, with at least eight other Austro-nesian languages (Mehisto et al., 2015). Crystal (2003) points out, the English language journey from the west to a global language received a great success. This was possible because of the English language which has been becoming the medium of communication—to give information to the public through newspapers, articles and television. English use was for the news and a medium of communication across the globe. It continues to make the news daily in many countries so, it has become a media language to give a national to international daily updates. After achieving a global status and getting recognition in almost every country, English becomes a second and foreign language across the globe and so in Brunei it becomes a second language.

As mentioned in the Brunei’s report (2011), the Sultanate has since formed many healthy international relations. Brunei is a member of several international organizations, such as the ‘Association of Southeast Asian Nations’ (ASEAN), the ‘UN,’ the ‘Organizations of Islamic Conference’ and the ‘Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum.’ Politically all deals have been done in English language.

Academic spheres and Bahasa: students’ development

The British impact on Brunei started in the nineteenth century. From 1888 until 1983, Brunei was under the British Protectorate. English became a marker of elite status (imitating or hybridity came) where people started believing that an English speaker was more knowledgeable than any other language speaker. After 1920, English usage have started in many fields, such as commercial/business meetings, private industrial sectors, the finance field and in multilingual groups’ meetings as well. There was only the English language which had the power to cover all sectors and businesses and fulfill all purposes to be connected with other countries. From the educational point of view, the first ‘Brunei Town Government English School’ (1951) and ‘English Secondary School’ (1953) were opened in Brunei. By 1959, only three English-medium schools were opened as compared to fifty-two Malay primary schools. A language survey from 1989 to 1990 showed that young Bruneians in a large number were using English in daily use. In the current structure and format of the school, for the first three years, Bahasa Melayu becomes the language of education, with English as a subject. From year four, English

becomes the language of instruction for mathematics, science and geography and year four is the first year of English-medium education—all subjects having been taught in Bahasa Melayu during the previous three years (Deterding and Sharbawi, 2013; Mejía, 2002; Arthur et al., 2006, p. 178). According to Vygotsky's concept, we can see that the cognitive development of students started from the Bahasa Melayu where children started learning their own language, culture and so on. In a proximal zone development these children also learn English and extend their learning with what they have already learnt.

In the education sector, the 'Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah Institute of Education' (SHBIE) is an undergraduate teacher education programme. Brunei needs more training centers like SHBIE and other similar digital English education centers or 'Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages' (TESOL) programmes. A "critical TESOL is an umbrella term for various approaches, investigations and responses to the practice of English language teaching" (Barry, 2011, p. 204). Barry finds that there is a paucity of research and analysis of Brunei's unique TESOL context. It is required to critically examine deeply. Barry's article goes some way to redress this paucity by providing a critical analysis of Brunei's English language teaching situation. He asks several critical questions to Bruneian highly qualified teachers about their reason to go to the UK or Australia. Also, some of his 8 critical questions are crucial to find the answers from the Brunei context so that the contemporary challenges can be sorted out. However, he is interested to see how the Brunei is edifying a role of the TESOL industry. Generally, this plays a role in either the maintenance of imperial regimes or the extinction of minority languages (Barry, 2011). TESOL programmes help Bruneians to learn English as a second language. Like Bruneian society, "in many postcolonial societies, teachers and pupils face a daily challenge of accomplishing teaching and learning in a language which is not their own" (Arthur et al., 2006, p. 176). Thus, the University of Brunei Darussalam (UBD) tries to complete the demand for local graduate teachers and maintain its teaching standard (Cummins & Corson, 1997, p. 247).

The 'Ministry of Education' in Brunei has a more prominent role and responsibility to provide more practical approaches and many digital course programmes for dealing with the local English teachers' profession. So, the sociocultural development in teachers and students to learn and teach in English existed through these programmes. Bruneian who majorly were speaking only one or two languages, in their life another language English became an important part of their life. English is to learn, to teach, to read newspapers and to use in education and political spheres.

Kumpoh and Sulaiman (2021) have done a case study related to the 'UBD's Community Outreach Programme' overseas, investigating the Bruneian students' experience. The impacts of such experiences on the students' growth and transformations have positively impacted social and educational change. Kam (2002) writes about education systems and English language teaching from the Asian context. Kam writes English is a second language in Brunei schools. English is studied as a subject from primary one to three. From primary in four to six classes, English and Standard Malay languages (bilingual/*Dwi Bahasa*) are the languages of instruction. English teaching program 'Reading and Language Acquisition' (RELA) started in 1989 with first-grade pupils. In

this programme, there were two main strategies used by the teachers. Those were based on: 1. 'The shared book technique' and 2. 'The language experience approach.'

However, the 'Centre for British Teachers' (CfBT) has a prominent role in supporting English in Brunei. Since 1984, CfBT has supplied teachers with 40% from the UK and New Zealand. The remaining 20% was from Australia and elsewhere (these numbers vary over time) to boost the standard level and stimulate English language teaching. It shows that CfBT influences passing rates at the 'O' level has been gradually growing, suggesting they have been quite successful (Kam, 2002; Deterding and Sharbawi, 2013). Jones et al. (1993) write, among the pragmatic reasons a shift to Bahasa Malay was the need for a language of wider communication. Indeed, there was a desire to provide a firm language base prior to entry into the educational arena and social access. The symbolic power associated with Bahasa Malay and now it is hastening the decline of the minor languages.

The role of English and its impact on Bruneian Bahasa

Till late 1983, Brunei was a British protectorate so, English was the language of administration and a medium of assertive international communication. Many people in Brunei consider English more valuable and prestigious than Standard Malay (Gorter, et al., 2012, p. 237). In the Muslim majority of countries like Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei, Reid can see the versions of Bahasa Malay:

If Malaysia, Indonesia and Brunei today each have a 'core culture,' as I think they do, its historical basis in all three cases seems to be Malayness, a cultural complex centered in the language called Melayu...Eventually, the three modern states have made their respective versions of Malay almost the sole medium of education, and thereby the social cement intended to hold their respective societies together (Reid, 2001, p. 297).

Malayness is the same in these three countries, although there are differences in their languages (but we are not going into the study of its complex relation to understand). As Brunei's internal language study is the main aim of this study to know its sociocultural historical and educational impacts of Bahasa Melayu and other languages. Generally, it is considered that "different regions of the country are associated not only with different language combinations but also with different sociocultural environments, even among speakers of the same language" (Southwood, et al, 2021, p. 3) as "the dialects of Malay, viz., *Kampong Ayer, Brunei Malay, Kedayan and Standard Malay and Bahasa Dalam*" are the result of socio-linguistic hierarchy (Chuchu et al., 2009, p. 42).

To define the relationship between the Islamic religion and the Anglo-Bruneian connection, the first one is a national cultural identity in disparity to a private preference for using English and to promote the second (Braithlinn, 1992, p. 20). Thus, the three languages spoken by most Bruneians—Brunei Malay, English and Arabic. Brunei Malay is used for social interaction, English is for business, law and recreational purposes and Arabic is for religious concerns (Beardsmore, 1999). The effect of social and cultural interaction on development can be studied with Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural model "Cognitive Development of Child." The major disagreement between the Kharkovite Peter Zinchenko's position and Vygotsky's was epitomized by Zinchenko's statement

that “social development cannot be reduced to the history of the development of culture” (Vygotsky, 1986, p. xviii).

William Marsden attempts to articulate the meaning of what he understood: “Every Mussulman speaking the Malayan as his proper language and either belonging to or claiming descent from, the ancient kingdom of Minangkabau” (Cited in Reid, 2001, pp. 302–303). Similar to the Malay variety, English is influenced by the local cultural impact and has become part of the debate on the local versus international varieties of English. Gloria Poedjosoedarmo (2004) has studied this variety of English and regional relations from the Bruneian context but Gardiner and Deterding (2019) have discussed the problem. They mention that despite the increasing use of English as a global language to facilitate communication in international settings and the acceptance of nativized varieties of English as models for teaching in some places in the outer circle. Many countries continue to enforce standard types of speech based on inner circle usage in their education systems. Pieronek (2001) has mentioned strategies for English teaching and teachers’ problems in the case of upper Primary Brunei Darussalam teachers’ responses to English teaching.

Coluzzi refers, Dr. Haji Azmi Abdullah’s (a lecturer at the UBD) expression was on “no harm in learning other languages provided one must master the Malay language first” (Coluzzi, 2011, p. 233). Here, Dr. Haji Azmi Abdullah gave value to learning first Malay language and then he suggested that Bruneian can learn other languages. Haji-Othman, et al. (2005) write that well-educated Bruneians are all proficient in English, although they speak Brunei Malay. In the UBD, *Bahasa Malayu* is generally the lingua franca among students and local staff. For the English language an explosion in Brunei can be seen from the view of Alexander K. Adelaar and Nikolaus Himmelmann, they give a reason—from a globalization perspective, oil has brought widespread affluence, near-universal education, new aspirations and expectations, even a traditional rural life and a new Bruneian ethnic and national identity. Thambipillai (2008) writes that while Arabic and Bahasa Melayu would be the main languages of instruction at the Universiti Islam Sultan Sharif Ali (UNISSA), the English language would be incorporated into some of the courses, such as business studies, without duplicating courses already available at the UBD or the Institute of Technology.

To concern the Bruneian minority language loss, a marriage across traditional ethnolinguistic boundaries has further hastened language loss (Adelaar and Nikolaus, 2005, p. 453). Another reason is to assimilate self with other communities and not to practice and speak their ethnic language. Ooi believes that the Tutong and Belait communities have been towards being Muslim and assimilating from the Malay and Kadayan. Tutong, Belait’s original ethnic culture and language have mainly disappeared. They are part of a much larger, submerged cultural complex of peoples scattered in Sarawak and western Brunei’s lower Baram River basin. They demonstrate the consequences of identifying with and assimilating Brunei Malay culture (Ooi, 2004, p. 273). Literature and other writing have their own significance and these are mediums to reach the reality of the people. There is limited published literature in some of the more minor languages in the neighbouring Malaysian states of Sabah and Sarawak; there is nothing in Brunei (Martin, 1995, p. 35). Here, Martin claims that Brunei has

nothing of its minority language literature to a broader level as compared to its other countries who have maintained a diverse literature background.

A sociocultural development in reference to Brunei

Goode's review is about education policy and practice in Brunei. Her remark is on multicultural Brunei and the evolution of Bruneian English. In this article, she gives an outline of Bahasa Malayu to English direction—how secondary school students are aware of the need for English learning. Even, the response from the students and education policy change have been given priority to the students' development through education. Furthermore, she writes, while the government has been consistent with its bilingual education policy for more than 35 years, it is clear that policy has nevertheless evolved at all levels (from primary through to tertiary), with a shift towards learner-centered teaching and a focus on preparing students for success in work and/or further study as well as closer attention being paid to teacher training and to international partnerships in education. Goode (2020) finds:

(i) There are concerns over the impact of English on the Malay language...the majority of attitudes appear to be very positive about the use of English in Brunei, including in education; ii) the bilingual education policy has evolved over time, and now places an emphasis on English as a key competency for the 21st century; iii) the student experience in the bilingual context is a particularly under-researched area... which may be applicable in many settings (Goode, 2020, p. 21).

Goode mentions the above review results are after the secondary material studies in education concerning English on the Malay language in Brunei.

Jean Piaget is a Swiss psychologist, his theory is based on four stages: 1. "Sensorimotor stage" (0–2 years old), 2. "Preoperational stage" (2–7 years old), 3. "Concrete operational stage" (7–11 years old) and 4. "Formal operational stage" (11 years old through adulthood). Each stage has constructed a new understanding of the world. His four stages are called: 1. "Sensorimotor intelligence," 2. "Preoperational thinking," 3. "Concrete operational thinking" and 4. "Formal operational thinking." His observations and clinical interviews help to know the mind and creativity stage levels of the children's development. This biological maturation in children has been studied with cognitive development thus, many theorists disagree with Piaget's findings and observations. This scope creates discourse and discussion among the theorists. But Piaget's theory has been observed by many theorists where the cognitive linguists (Bruner, 1966; Vygotsky, 1978) claim that the sociocultural development in children has been ignored. Also, Cherry (2019) questions the formal operational stage and a research method problem in the selection of the students. To this line, Vygotsky believes that social interaction is also important for cognitive development and this vital approach has been ignored by Piaget. Vygotsky writes, Jean Piaget's theory of "cognitive development" is based on the reality that the relations between a child and reality that are missing in his theory. The process of socialisation appears as a direct communication of souls which is divorced from the practical activity of a child. In short, a disregard for social practice is beside his theory's central point. A child reveals the originality of his mental organisation but its development depends on the circumstances (Vygotsky, 1986, pp. 51–53). In these circumstances, language plays a

main role in cognitive development. A Bahasa Melayu and English language use implementation in the school provides children with a circumstance to learn these languages. Even a command of teachers to teach in these languages is also important in cognitive linguistic development. For children, linguistic competence in their first language can be gained from social interaction. In the role of English in the Brunei context, accessibility to learning and teaching the English language is important to have a teacher's command of English.

Arabski, and Wojtasze write on the importance and the use of English is for:

English was thought to unite in that it furthered the cause of intercultural, international, and inter-religious harmony. It also facilitated global travel and communication. However, it was also felt the English had the power to create and or perpetuate elitism and alienate its users from their own culture and people (Arabski, & Wojtasze, 2011, p. 143).

Arabski and Wojtasze mention the 'National Education System' for the twenty-first century (SPN21) and in 2009, the first stage was implemented. A significant number of objections were raised in the media due to the favour of English over Melayu/Malay. In a report, under the headline titled, "SPN21 lays stress on Malay, say experts" (Brunei Times on 24 April 2009), two Bruneian Malay language specialists say:

We are too focused on riding through the globalization that we're forgetting our heritage that is the Melayu/Malay language; if we excessively emphasize the usage of English, it will change our culture (Ibid).

The Brunei experts were worried about having another form of colonialism in Brunei which will impact the Bruneian Melayu/Malay culture. The English language transfers a non-native (other) culture into it. The excessive use of English language definitely change the local culture. So, these language experts were against the excessive emphasis on English. To keep a balance in Bahasa Melayu, English and other Bruneian languages, a minority language speaker can be hired as a teacher. The government should provide them a language teaching training to handle bi- or multi-lingual students. However, the schools must have an optional language courses or optional subjects for minority languages. This way the beauty of multi-cultural and multi-lingual can be maintained with these actions and plans to achieve overall development.

Discussion

To relate and discuss the whole complex linguistic diversity in Brunei, sociocultural influences on children and youngsters have been widely studied but from the Bruneian context very limited research covers the endangered languages, sociocultural and various facets of linguistic diverse perspectives. A complex relationship between languages and their roots expresses language development models and interacts with cultures to develop sociocultural linguistic forms. A death of knowledge about today's language form, a requirement and revitalization of endangered languages and no trace of history wipes the identity of the ethnic minority community. The ethnic endangered languages in Brunei question minority languages (Dusun and Tutong)

over the use of Bahasa Malaya and English. Also, the overuse of English always questions Bahasa Malaya. So, some practical steps will bring a more sociocultural environment for the Bruneians' creative minds and for other developments.

"Sang Jati Dusun Association" (PSJD) and "Majlis Perwakilan Kampung" have been organising programmes for presenting and celebrating the Dusun's way of life (Yaw, 2007; Othman, 2011; Fee et al., 2022). To promote minority languages, some blogs have taken the initiative to give information about their language and culture. Those blogs are "Sang Jati" (See, Sang Jati blogs 2013a, b) and Isi Kandungan's "Tuntut Sang Jati" (2017). These are accessible for youngsters to make familiar with the Dusun language. But again, the question arises here, are these steps sufficient to preserve minority languages? To answer this, we have to look back to our historical journey of the language impact on the sociocultural background and find out the ways to make alive the endangered or Bruneian other minority languages.

This research discusses many interesting points of Brunei and tried to cover the less discovered areas to demand to strengthen more multilingual and multicultural backgrounds. It also focuses on the need to intertwine the role of English and the sociocultural structure of Bahasa. For building a nationality and ethnic identification in Brunei, ratification of the MIB (for Bahasa Melayu), articles and acts (Article: The article 82(1), 5A; nationality act: Melayu/Malay by race status given in 1961 under the "Nationality Act of Brunei"), educational role (in bilingual—Bahasa Melayu and English or for English—as monolingual education medium instructions) have played a major role in the individual and social development. A theoretical discourse of sociocultural theorists (like Vygotsky, Goode and others) needs a detail study through interdisciplinary approaches. As there are many factors that exist and those somehow impact the sociocultural environment.

Significance of the study

A sociocultural approach has been applied to demonstrate the structure of Bahasa/languages and the role of English in Brunei. We need to re/visit the educational and sociocultural history of Bruneian Bahasa/languages to understand their needs and see their evolution in Bruneian society. This research emphasizes comprehending a more significant impact on Bruneian society, culture and academic spheres. Furthermore, the views presented by Jespersen, Devitt, and Sterelny are straightforward but the answer to what language is not too simple to define from a researcher's perspective. Thus, this research is an answer to knowing how language is not just a medium for them to express or communicate but it is a reflection of linguistic, cultural and ethnic identity too.

Conclusion

This research critically reviews how Goode's work deals with education policy and practice in Brunei which supports English and students. Also his ideas help to understand today's need for English and we find the need for keeping a balance in Bruneian languages. Another scholar Vygotsky rejects the theories of Jean Piaget's "cognitive development" and Cherry's formal operational stage due to their sociocultural ignorance of child development. The sociocultural role and limited research have created a curiosity to Vygotsky for developing his theoretical concepts through this research. A linguistic

diversity discussion is significant to understand the Bruneian sociocultural journey of Bahasa Melayu and other ethnic minority languages' status and impact on the socio-cultural level. The role of English is vital in Brunei. Although, due to excessive use of English has created tension among Bruneian scholars. For this worry, Brunei needs a plan for language revitalisation and for preserving the culture of minorities. Also, there is a need for a balance in linguistic diversity to have a cognitive development through school education. 'Ecology balance of language' for minorities will bring multicultural and multilingual Brunei. Jones's optimistic view is relevant in Brunei as familiarity with Brunei and standard varieties of Melayu and English should not prevent speakers of Tutong, Dusun, and other endangered languages from continuing to use them (Jones, 2015). After exploring the language status in Brunei, a recommendation from Haji-Othman et al. (2017) is that Dusun and Bisaya are also severely threatened and their worry is for Belait and Tutong languages as Belait is extinct and Tutong is threatened thus, some university classes offered by the UBD can be preserved.

One cannot undermine the importance of the Brunei Bahasa Melayu language, as it is a language marker and the ethnic identity of Brunei. However, today, we can see that English has replaced the other languages so, Brunei is not an exception to this. This research is significant to work with the updated knowledge of the role of languages in Brunei, intertwined with the history, identity and social development of Brunei.

Language, education policy and planning are needed to encourage endangered languages; this management will help youngsters to be close to their culture and languages (Mari C. Jones's book will be helpful for more policy details and language planning). Bruneian languages are socially constructed, then politically engaged in promoting or preserving a language. This research can be explored from the side of language planning and policy in Brunei, "the nation's multi-ethnic make-up" (Sercombe, 2014, p. 27) and endangered language status or fill the gap in the knowledge, practice and practical initiative by the government, individual and educational levels.

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