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# KULTURNA RAZLIČITOST, ETNIČNOST I IDENTITET

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CAESAR DEALWIS

*UiTM Samarahan**cjerdealwis@yahoo.com*

MAYA KHEMLANI DAVID

*University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur**mayadavid@yahoo.com*

## Shy Speakers: Hearing Their Voices

### SUMMARY

When a speech community is noted for its inhibitions and reservations with outsiders, researchers, who are not members of that speech community, will find difficulty in making inroads and obtaining information. This research of the Bidayuh community in Kuching will firstly discuss the general attitudes and characteristics of the community. The foregrounding of the community is based on descriptions both by European writers of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and modern day Bidayuh writers. This paper documents the range of strategies which can be used by researchers, who are outsiders, to obtain information from this speech community. One major strategy which will be discussed is language choice. The Theory of Accommodation contends that rapport and solidarity are more easily established if a speaker shifts to the preferred language of the recipient or subject. Researchers have to determine which language to switch to: Malay, English or Bidayuh? If Bidayuh, then which dialect? The attendant problems associated with code choice will also be discussed.

KEY WORDS: Bidayuh, research methodology, language choice, East Malaysia, Bidayuh Belt, accommodation

### Introduction

This paper will provide insights into the strategies used by researchers, who were outsiders, to obtain information from the Dayak Bidayuh speech community in the Bidayuh Belt. Dundon (1989) coined the term Bidayuh Belt, referring to four districts in the First Division of the State of Sarawak in East Malaysia where the ancestral homes of the Bidayuhs in Sarawak are located. The four districts include Lundu, Bau, Serian and Padawan where the majority of the Dayak Bidayuh are found. The rural Bidayuh community has been described as shy, reserved and unwelcoming to strangers (Minos, 2000: 17). The researchers, who were not Bidayuh, had to resort to a variety of tactics to “hear their voices”.

## Background to the community

The Dayak Bidayuh community in the Bidayuh Belt of Sarawak has been selected for the research because they are a small ethnic minority, which is struggling to get recognition from the big and powerful groups in Malaysia such as the Malays, Chinese and Indians. There is the fear among them “that, despite being Bumiputeras (sons of soil), they will be treated very lightly or not considered at all when it comes to obtaining opportunities from the government” (Minos, 2000: 174). Although the urban Bidayuh communities are becoming more modern due to better educational and job opportunities, the rural Bidayuhs are still consumed by fear of being neglected. This has affected their attitude towards other ethnic groups which Minos (2000: 19) finds “very unpredictable and not very easy to decipher”.

The latest official figures provided by the monthly *Statistical Bulletin of Sarawak* for June 2005, states that there are 167,756 Dayak Bidayuhs in Sarawak. Ninety percent of the Bidayuhs are still living in the Bidayuh Belt, which comprises four districts in Kuching Division namely Lundu, Bau, Serian and Kuching. Only a handful of Bidayuhs who are working for the government and private sectors can be found in other parts of Sarawak and Malaysia. The rest of the community is firmly entrenched in the Kuching Division, where their ancestral homes and villages are located. The community is closely-knit and outsiders who seek to penetrate into the community require patience and a willingness to communicate in the speakers’ choice of language. Not much research has been conducted to explore the sociolinguistic aspects of the Dayak Bidayuhs. Studies on the Bidayuhs in Sarawak were first conducted by the Europeans during the era of the Brooke dynasty, which began in 1841. The studies were mostly on the history of Sarawak and discussed the various dialectal groups, their culture and practices. Later, writers such as Minos (2000) focused on the political and socio-economic development of the community. Asmah Haji Omar (1987), Nais (1989) and Dundon (1989) investigated the different linguistic and cultural aspects of the Bidayuh dialects, while McLellan (2001) was of the view that the rise of e-mail among users of the Bau-Jagoi dialect served as an important indicator of language maintenance among members of the Bau-Jagoi Bidayuh community.

The word “Dayaks” as used by Chang (2002: 9) is the collective name for around 405 ethnolinguistic groups of the Borneo Island. Among the bigger Dayak groups existing in Sarawak are the Iban, Bidayuh, Kayan, Kenyah, Kelabit, Melanau, which co-exist with other smaller ethnic groups such as the Penan, Punan, Kedayan, Berawan, Kanayan, Maayan, Ngajuk, Danum, Simpang and Pompang. According to anthropology, ethnography and linguistic experts, their identity is based on similarities in physical appearance, customary laws and death rituals. However, they differ in language, culture, art forms, clothing, housing architecture and social organization.

Despite the aforementioned differences, all Dayak groups in Sarawak have some fundamental common characteristics; they live along the rivers and mountain-tops and in the highlands. They practice paddy shifting cultivation and collect jungle produce. This common economic base combined with a broadly uniform ecosystem, help to explain the similarities in religious beliefs and world view of the Dayak people. However,

with the onslaught of Christian and Islamic proselytizing the ancient and traditional religion has receded.

### **Classification of the Dayak Bidayuhs**

Before the coming in 1841 of Sir James Brooke, the first White Rajah of Sarawak, the focus of the *Daya*- in the then Sarawak Proper was where a person came from. According to Rensch et al. (2006: 7) *Daya* is a Bidayuh word for person or human. Thus, *Daya' Bijagoi* means “people of Jagoi” (Jagoi being the name of a mountain in the Bau District), *Daya' Bibukar* means “people of Bukar” (the name Bukar derives from the word for river mud – this refers to a river in the Serian district), and so on. This is the usual mechanism that has given rise to the various dialect names of the Bidayuhs.

After the arrival of the Brookes, this method of classification was observed and recorded by some Western writers. For example, Reijffert (1956: 50–51) notes that Land Dayaks on the Samarahan River and its tributaries are the Bisopug, Pinyawan (Serin tributary) and Bibukar (Bukar tributary). Those groups whose villages are on the southern branch of the Sarawak River are the Biparuch, Bibanuk, Sikog, Biotah, Bikuab, Bibonguh, Brang, Bionah, Pidiah and Biman (Sumban). Some of the groups Reijffert listed for the western branch of Sarawak River are the Seringos (Tringgus), Bigumang, Biratak, Bijagoi, Bisinngai and Sikaruch Birais. The sub-ethnic Bidayuh groups in the Sadong are the Taup, Riih, Semahang, Anharu, Sumpas, Mentu and Sambat (Roberts, 1949).

In 1912, Hose classified the Land Dayaks as Klemantan. The term also included Sepang, Tanjong, Kanowit, Bekatan, Lugat, Melanau, Narum, Miri, the Berawan subgroup, the Baram subgroup and Maloh (Leach, 1950: 49). The classification was based on the characteristic of the Klemantans – that they were then sago eaters. The present-day languages of “Klemantan stock” do give indication of a common origin. The ceremonies for healing the sick using the swing were also common, especially among the Melanau and the Bidayuhs.

In 1945, R. Kennedy classified the Land Dayak together with Ayon, Desa, Lundu, Manyukei and Mualong Sidin (Leach, 1950: 49). In 1950, Leach himself defined the Land Dayak as “those communities of the First Division of Sarawak, whatever their dialect, which possess, or recently possessed a ‘head-house’ (*baloi, panggah*) as a feature of their village organisation” (Leach, 1950: 54). Leach’s definition, which explicitly ignores language as a criterion, became the basis for the identification of the present-day Bidayuh people.

During the Brooke and British era (1841–1963), the Dayak Bidayuh in Sarawak was known as “Land Dayak” meaning “the Dayak of the hill country” (Brooke, 1841). However, following the passing of the Interpretation (Amendment) Bill 2002 at the State Legislative Assembly in Kuching, Sarawak on 6<sup>th</sup> May 2002, it was deemed that the Bidayuh community was not to be referred to as “Land Dayak” – the terminology given by the Brooke and Colonial administration. Today they are called the Dayak Bidayuhs or just Bidayuhs, representing the 29 Bidayuh sub-dialectal groups in Sarawak.

Although they are the fourth largest ethnic group in Sarawak after the Malays, Ibans and Chinese, the Bidayuh are not as united as these groups linguistically. The Bidayuh have four main dialects and 29 sub-dialects but no common language. Some Bidayuh leaders had commented that because the Bidayuhs speak many different dialects and because they do not have one truly common language, they find difficulty in becoming socially united. Language is one of the denominators that can certainly unite a racial group, just like religion and culture. Although the different sub-dialectal groups may differ in speech, yet there are many similarities in their socio-cultural norms and, therefore, the different groups are considered one ethno-linguistic community. For example they have similar dishes, almost similar traditional music, costumes and cultural dances. One unique characteristic of the various Bidayuh groups in the early days was their traditional icon, the rounded community house (called the *baruk*, *balu* or *panggih*, depending on the dialect), where visitors and village bachelors slept, major ritualistic ceremonies were held, and important matters were settled. Early Western writers called the baruk the “head house” because the skulls of chieftains and warriors taken during the headhunting days were kept in the community house, as they were also considered “guests” of the community. Today the majority of the Bidayuhs are also united through religion as the majority are Christians and the community is considered a “Christian race” (Minos, 2000: 118) and have abandoned their pagan practices.

In the four districts of the Bidayuh Belt districts, at least 29 Bidayuh sub-dialects are spoken. These are grouped under 4 main dialectal groups based on the 4 main areas in the Bidayuh Belt, namely the Bau-Jagoi dialect for Bidayuhs found in Bau District; Salako Larra dialect for Bidayuhs from Lundu District; Bisadong dialect for Bidayuh in Serian; and the Biatah dialect spoken by Bidayuhs in the Kuching District.

Compared to any other ethnic group in Malaysia, the Bidayuh group is a very diverse community because of the various sub-dialects spoken. Asmah Haji Omar (1984: 148) found that even among the four major dialectal groups, there are dialects spoken by subgroups. Among the Biatah dialects, the subgroups are the Penyua, Binah, Bipuruh, Tebia and the Bebengo dialects. The Bau-Jagoi dialects, too, have their own subgroups which are the Bisinghai, Biroh, Krokong and the Bijagoi dialects. The same sub-dialects are also found among the Serian Bukar-Sadong group. Moreover, the Bidayuhs residing in the upper tributaries of the Sadong River speak a slightly different dialect from those residing in the lower reaches of the river, and Bidayuhs residing closer to the Sarawak/Kalimantan border also speak a different dialect as compared to those living along the Kuching Serian Road.

### **Efforts to develop a common Bidayuh language**

Modernization and rapid social changes bring about social adaptation. This poses new challenges to the Bidayuhs and their many dialects. Since independence in 1963, Sarawakians have had to master the national language, Malay. This is very important for education, job opportunities, harmonious relations with other ethnic groups and political stability. However, this has had a negative impact on the Bidayuh dialects.

Today the number of young urban Bidayuhs who do not speak the ancestral dialects is on the rise. They prefer to use Bahasa Melayu, Sarawak Malay dialect and Eng-

lish in school, at work and at home. They feel that their dialects lack the industrial and scientific concepts necessary to express complex thoughts in the scientific and industrial society of today.

Intermarriage, urbanization, language contact, prestige and formal education system are some of the many reasons for the decline in use of the language among urban Bidayuhs. The Bidayuh Language Development project was formed in 2001 to preserve and promote the Bidayuh dialects. A unified Bidayuh orthography was proposed in November 2001.

### **Attitudes and characteristics of the Bidayuhs**

Eliciting information from the Bidayuh can be quite daunting, especially if one is not a member of the community. Generally speaking, they are quite reserved and do not open up to strangers very easily. This is true of the Bidayuhs residing in the rural areas, where they exist as close-knit families who are not too keen to move out of their ancestral homes, which are in the interior parts of the Districts of Lundu, Bau, Serian and Kuching. They are a stark contrast to the urban Bidayuhs in the city of Kuching, who are better educated and are very welcoming to outsiders. In fact, the Dayak Bidayuh National Association or DBNA's meetings organized in the city of Kuching often see not only Bidayuhs in attendance, but also other ethnic groups who are invited as both speakers and participants. However, the urban Bidayuhs are just a minority and the majority of the Bidayuhs still remain in the rural areas. Minos (2000: 114) argues that with more education and exposure to other ethnic groups and to new ideas and ways, more and more Bidayuhs desire better income and a better standard of living, and have become just like the Bidayuhs in Kuching.

The descriptions by the European writers in the 19<sup>th</sup> century portray the Bidayuhs as people who suffered oppression before the arrival of Rajah James Brooke in 1841. Some of the European writers present a favourable picture of the Bidayuhs while others were fairly condescending. Hugh Low (1848: 240) for instance said that the Bidayuhs had a:

*...grave and quiet expression of countenance, which gives to their features a melancholy and thoughtful air. It is very probable that their many miseries may have much increased this appearance. Their countenance is an index to the character of their mind, for they are of peculiarly quiet and mild dispositions, not easily aroused to anger, or the exhibition of any other passion or emotion, and rarely excited to noisy mirth, unless during their periodical festivals morality is of higher standard (than others), their gratitude is undoubted, and their hospitality to strangers well ascertained.*

Implied in Hugh Low's words was that behind the Bidayuhs solemn and quiet exterior, there were some fine qualities.

Odoardo Beccari (1904: 62) shared a similar view. He said:

*The Dayaks (Bidayuhs) have not the bold and arrogant look which distinguishes the Sea Dayaks (Ibans). They are quiet and milder in their habits, and more modest in their dress. ...the honesty of the Land Dayaks is remarkable, and they are at the same time*

*noted for their simplicity. ...very superstitious people and that they fancy seeing spirits everywhere, floating in the air, and wandering in the forest, or on the summits of the mountains.*

St. John Spenser (1862: 150) spent much time in the Bidayuh areas. Like other 19<sup>th</sup> century Europeans, he too saw the singular mildness and quietness in the Bidayuh character. This was what he said of them, “the expression of all classes and of both sexes of these people is that of subdued melancholy”. He attributed this to their past experience of oppression and suppression during the Brunei Sultanate.

Recent researchers also have some interesting comments on the Bidayuh character and attitudes. Yong Leng Lee (1970: 91), for instance, said that the Bidayuhs had a “conservative nature”, that they were a “timid and retiring people, suspicious of change and progress” and that they “seem less progressive” than other Dayak groups. B. G. Grijpstra (1976) also acknowledged that the Bidayuhs were a rather conservative and less energetic people, but felt that there were some modern-day reasons for the Bidayuhs behaving as they did. He said that the:

*Land Dayaks did not get much attention and encouragement from the Administration (Government) for many years. This neglect was mainly due to competition by other, more numerous and sometimes more troublesome ethnic groups. The Land Dayaks, used to being treated badly by outsiders, tacitly accepted this inferior position, which in turn contributed to the still popular idea that they are a conservative and less energetic people (Grijpstra, 1976: 53).*

Minos (2000: 18) himself a Bidayuh, says this of his community:

*A bit too cautious and a little too conservative in outlook and trying very hard to avoid risks and whatever is new and strange. The Bidayuhs can also be extremely and unnecessarily wary and suspicious of strangers and first time visitors to their villages. They may take years in accepting ideas and applications which are new and alien. Why they are so, it is difficult to tell. It is perhaps due, as said, to their traumatic experience in the past and how others have mistreated them. Being extra cautious could be, to them, a form of mental protection and a kind of defense to guard themselves of dangers and others' wiles.*

Minos, a modern and highly educated Bidayuh businessman says the Bidayuhs tend to be very cautious in whatever they do or try to do, so much so that they spend a lot of time theorizing, thinking and talking about all matters and issues affecting their lives or livelihood. As a result, a lot of what they want to do and wish to achieve in life ends up in theories and at the conceptual stage. Thus, in the modern business world where calculated risk-taking and some boldness and decisiveness are needed, the Bidayuhs find themselves quite at a loss. He said they:

*... avoid risk-takings, not wanting to take initiatives and always steering away from any controversy or complications are characteristics that are inimical and definitely not conducive to those desiring to enter the modern business and political world (Minos, 2000: 7).*

The Bidayuhs generally tend to be very cautious in everything they do and say and regard talking too loudly in public, airing one's views too openly, pushing oneself and trying to order others around as marks of rudeness and arrogance. To be regarded or even perceived to be rude and arrogant in the Bidayuh society is undesirable and demeaning. To the Bidayuhs, a good and respected person is one who talks the least, who does not push himself/herself forward and who does not annoy or disturb anyone. Being natural adherents of extreme personal freedom and independence, the Bidayuhs tend to avoid those who order them around or who control too much of their lives, or who tell them what to do or what not to do. The Bidayuhs are so independently minded in politics, for instance, that they believe in a political party of their own choice rather than one which could hold a better promise and offer a better future to the community as a whole. While they are definitely proud to be Bidayuhs they do not quite relish the idea of being told, advised and reminded to act collectively as one united racial group. To them, personal freedom and personal choice take precedence over any other thing, including the overall interests of the community. Thus, it is very difficult for any Bidayuh to become a common leader of the whole community, to be respected and obeyed by all, for deep in the mind of every Bidayuh, he/she desires complete freedom of right and action (Minos, 2000: 17).

Minos (2000) added that the Bidayuh character is not very easy to fathom and it is difficult to understand what exactly is on their minds. At times they can be very silent. What they say to others may not be the complete picture of what they have in their minds. They tend to hide issues that affect their lives or their livelihood. Many non-Bidayuhs find this quite baffling and exasperating, especially non-Bidayuh teachers and government staff who deal with them. It takes a lot of time and effort really to understand the Bidayuhs and to find out their likes and dislikes. Being quiet and silent and vague at times is perhaps a form of a mental defense mechanism for the Bidayuhs.

In short then, the picture that emerges of the community is that the Bidayuhs in the rural areas are a very self-conscious group of people. Living in a close-knit and dense community, especially in the rural areas, where they still depend on each other a great deal, they take seriously the opinion of others about them. In fact, they are always careful with their words when talking to outsiders so as not to be regarded as being impolite. Thus, it is not surprising that silence is quite a norm during meal times and it is even more so in the presence of strangers.

With such characteristics it is indeed difficult for an outsider to reach out to the Bidayuh in the rural areas.

### **Statement of the problem**

Given this scenario of the community, the research question that emerges is how do researchers, who are outsiders, elicit information from such a rural community? The other problem is the question of code choice. The issue is – which is the correct language to use – Malay (Bahasa Melayu), Sarawak Malay, English or Bidayuh? If the latter, then which dialect, since there are 29 Bidayuh sub-dialects to choose from? It is also

impossible for the researchers to know all the sub-dialects. This paper will provide insights on the problems of appropriate language/code choice when researchers came into contact with the Dayak Bidayuh speech community (in the rural areas), which is noted for its inhibition and reservation with outsiders.

### Theoretical construct

One of the strategies used to obtain as much information as possible from this mild and shy group of speakers is Giles, Taylor and Bourhis (1973) Theory of Speech Accommodation, which contends that rapport and solidarity are more easily established if a speaker shifts to the preferred language choice of the recipient or subject.

### Choice of dialect

Since there are 29 sub-dialects or 4 main dialects, which dialect should the speakers/researchers then use? This is a major problem for researchers who are trying to accommodate to the code choice of the Bidayuhs. Even among the Bidayuh speakers themselves, such a problem exists. Solidarity and rapport between different dialectal groups exist not so much because they have a common Bidayuh language, but due to the fact that they belong to the same ethnic group and because the majority of them are Christians. They are also united by their Bidayuh culture and the festival which Dayak Bidayuhs and Dayak Ibans celebrate, i.e. Gawai Dayak (1<sup>st</sup> June) to mark the end of the rice-harvesting season. When addressing a group of Bidayuh subjects from different dialects in the Bidayuh Belt, researchers should be able to select the right dialect to elicit the information required. The Bidayuhs are proud of their own dialects and choosing the wrong Bidayuh dialect could create immediate barriers. In addition, researchers should also be sensitive to those who are not fluent in English, Malay or even the Bidayuh dialect, as some urban Bidayuhs are no longer fluent in their ancestral dialects.

Since there are many similarities in the sub-dialects in the 4 districts, it is highly recommended that outsiders who seek to obtain information from the rural Bidayuhs should be able to speak Bau-jagoi, Biatah, Bukar, and Salako. Only by speaking these dialects, will the outsiders be able to accommodate to the rural Bidayuhs, who for the large part are uneducated and monodialectal.

*Table 1: Number of villagers and dialects spoken by the Bidayuh according to district*

<i>Name of district</i>	<i>Number of villages</i>	<i>Dialect spoken</i>
Serian	126	Bukar-Sadong
Kuching	84	Biatah/ Penyua/ Bipuruh
Bau	43	Bau-Jagoi
Lundu	41	Salako Lara

Source: Nais (1989)



Nais (1989) found that there were 302 Bidayuh villages found in the various districts in the Bidayuh Belt (see Table 1) where the majority of the Bidayuh population in Sarawak live. To enable the researchers to accommodate to the Bidayuhs in these Districts, some knowledge of the differences between the four main dialects is necessary.

Within each dialectal group there are variations. Take the Bidayuh in Kuching District, for example; they speak Biatah, but the subgroups mentioned earlier, namely, Penyua, Binah, Bipuruh, Bisitang, Tebia, and Bebengoh, have their own intonation and pronunciation. And so have the Bau-Jagoi groups and the Serian Bukar Sadong subgroups. In Bau alone, for instance; rubber is called “jotu” in the Jagoi dialect, “daduo” in the Singgai and “potok” in the Biroih and the Krokong dialect (Dundon, 1989). Some words in one dialect means different things in other dialects. For example “bisaki” in the Biatah dialect means “how” and in the Bukar-Sadong it means “making love”; a shirt is “jipo” in the Siburan and the Binah dialect, “skinang” in the Bisitang, Bipuruh and the Penyua dialects; and “jopua” in the Bau-Jagoi dialect means blanket or a lady’s sarong. Every village within a dialectal group has its own distinctive style and way of talking and pronunciation. For example, “I want to eat rice” is:

- Aku an man tubi (Biatah dialect)
- Oku raan man tubi (Bau-Jagoi)
- Aku era maan sungkoi (Bukar Sadong)

Table 2 shows some words selected to illustrate the similarity and differences between these dialects.

Table 2

<i>English</i>	<i>Bau-jagoi area</i>	<i>Penrissen Padawan area</i>	<i>Tebekang/Bukar Sadong areas</i>
Eat	man	Man	ma'an
Drink	nuok	mo-ok	nyihup
Die	kobos	Kebus	kabus
Stand	mujog	Mijog	mijok
Father	sama	Sama	amang
Mother	sino	Sindo	anduh
Rise	mokat	Mekat	makat
Sleep	bo'os	be'us	bu'us
One	oni	Ni	indi
Rice	tubi	Tubi	sungkoi

Source: Dundon (1989: 412)

Knowledge of the various dialects helps the outsiders to elicit as much information as possible from this reserved group of people.

### **Strategies used by researchers who are outsiders**

One major strategy that will be discussed is the theory of accommodation, which contends that rapport and solidarity will be more established if a speaker shifts to the preferred language choice of the recipient. When interacting with the Bidayuhs, the researchers were aware that they had to adjust their language, depending on a wide range of variables such as:

- setting
- topic of discourse
- interlocutor
- purpose of the interaction.

For instance, the researchers had to speak slowly when speaking Malay (Bahasa Melayu) or preferably to use the Bidayuh dialect when speaking with the elders of the rural community. In other words, the researchers had to accommodate to others by adjusting their linguistic behaviour to suit their respondents' speech.

In short, the researchers had to use accommodative strategies when they wanted to obtain information from their Bidayuh respondents. The researchers sought solidarity and rapport with the Bidayuh participants through the choice of the correct language, by allowing the Bidayuh speakers to use the language with which they were most comfortable when addressing the researchers. Since there are 4 main Bidayuh dialects and 29 sub-dialects; which dialect should be used was a problem for the researchers, who were outsiders and non-Bidayuhs. In any case, it is impossible to know all the dialects. The researchers therefore used a common neutral code i.e. Malay (Bahasa Melayu) when addressing the Bidayuh elders and the less educated group in the community.

It is true that converging on the preferred language choice of the speech community that is being studied yields good results. It should also be mentioned that the command of Malay (Bahasa Melayu) and English among Bidayuh children and women in the villages was limited. So the researchers had to use a Bidayuh translator when communicating with such respondents. The children and women were less inhibited when they used their mother tongue. In fact, speaking to the children in Bidayuh, even though it was a simple and broken variety of Bidayuh, resulted in friendships being formed and data being obtained. Such accommodation managed to win friendship, solidarity and goodwill towards researchers who are outsiders.

It should be pointed out that the use of pidgin Bidayuh is not always the best choice with educated Bidayuhs. They speak good English and are looked upon by other Bidayuhs in the community as generally well-to-do. Thus, when the educated Bidayuhs spoke to the researchers, they would very often speak in good English. Accommodation in this case would mean that the researchers had to use English. It should be explained at this juncture that many educated Bidayuhs have a strong tendency to use English, even among themselves. The fact that there is no common Bidayuh dialect explains the use of a common code, that is, English understood by all educated Bidayuhs. In such a setting and with such respondents, a researcher could be perceived as being condescending if he were to use fragmented Bidayuh or even Bazaar Malay. The correct language of accommodation with such Bidayuh interlocutors would be standard English.

Despite this general rule of using standard English with urban educated Bidayuhs, it must be emphasised that the setting and the speech event play an important role in the preferred language choice of the educated Bidayuh community. According to Giles, Taylor and Bourhis (1973), the use of appropriate codes in specific settings helps to make inroads into the community. Educated Bidayuhs are quick to maintain their dialect and show their pride in speaking their dialect when special Bidayuh events are celebrated in the community and when outsiders are present. They want to show everyone that they still speak their dialect, even though they are highly educated. During the Bung Bratak festival on 1<sup>st</sup> May 2005, one of the writers joined a group of urban Bau jagoi Bidayuh friends climbing Mount Bratak, the ancestral home of the Bidayuhs. The Bau-Jagoi dialect was used among these generally English-speaking urban Bidayuhs, as they were in the midst of other Bidayuhs and outsiders who had come to celebrate the festival. The researcher knowing some Bau-jagoi used the same dialect. The result was that his presence was acknowledged during the gathering.

It is therefore vital that researchers bear in mind both the setting and the interlocutor. For instance, English was used when talking to an ESL teacher in a village school, but Bidayuh was used when greeting “Dingan, paguh?” (Friend, fine?) the school gardener. The gardener responded in Bidayuh with “Paguh” (Fine) and a conversation resulted. Moreover, when the Bidayuh ESL teacher pronounced English words with a strong Bidayuh interference, for example, “sai” instead of “shy”, one of the researchers tried to decode the word without embarrassing the speaker and did not correct him or ask him to repeat. Before starting fieldwork, researchers who are outsiders should learn the Bidayuh pronunciation system and understand the effect of Bidayuh negative transfer on English. Just as in any community that puts a premium on politeness, it would be considered rude for one adult to correct another. In order to maintain solidarity and rapport, and to elicit information, it would be a strategic move to understand the local languages and cultural norms.

In short, researchers should converse using the language that suits the different types of Bidayuh subjects and settings. Let us provide a specific example. When Bidayuhs come into contact in Kuching, such as during the DBNA seminars, there is a tendency for them to compare themselves on the grounds of accomplishments. In one such seminar held in a leading hotel in 2005, the use of English in private conversations was a norm to indicate social status and barrier, because there was no common dialect. However, when another Bau-Jagoi Bidayuh who was not proficient in English joined in the conversation, the Bau-jagoi Bidayuh speaker instantly switched to Bau-jagoi dialect and then back to English again to show his solidarity with both the researcher and his Bidayuh friend. This act of politeness and accommodation is a common characteristic of the mild Bidayuh character.

It should however be emphasized that speech convergence towards the Bidayuh language may not always be well received when the researchers’ intentions are not favourably perceived. For example, when a Bidayuh adult attributed one of the researcher’s shifts to the Bidayuh dialect to his desire to achieve solidarity, he was judged favourably. However, when his act of speaking Bidayuh was attributed to pressures for-

cing him to converge in order to obtain information, less positive feelings were felt by the Bidayuh participants. Such feelings were also reported in Giles and Clair (1979: 50), where an experiment shows that when French Canadian listeners attributed an English Canadian's shift to French to his desire to achieve solidarity, they judged him favourably. However, when his act was attributed to pressures forcing him to converge, less positive feelings were evoked. In short, researchers have to be not only selective but careful when accommodating and code-shifting.

### Summary and conclusion

The strategies employed by researchers to elicit information from shy speakers by using the Theory of Speech Accommodation can help researchers who are outsiders to maintain solidarity and elicit information. Such linguistic accommodation helps to create new friendships and feelings of solidarity between outsiders and members of a close-knit community, who are shy and do not welcome outsiders easily. The voices of the mild and reserved Bidayuh children and adults were heard when researchers did not control the language choice in the conversation, but merely accommodated to the codes used by the Bidayuh speakers. Yet we must state as a caveat that such accommodation was fraught with dangers as the researchers also had to bear in mind the subject and the setting. The code selected to indicate accommodation was not always the same and varied with the subject (even though they could have been members of the same speech community) and the setting. The second caveat was that such accommodation might not always be favourably received.

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Caesar Dealwis, Maya Khemlani David

## SRAMEŽLJIVI GOVORNICI: SLUŠANJE NJIHOVIH GLASOVA

### SAŽETAK

Kada neku govornu zajednicu karakteriziraju inhibicije i rezerviranost prema strancima, istraživačima koji ne pripadaju toj zajednici bit će teško prodrijeti u nju i prikupiti informacije. U ovom istraživanju zajednice Bidajuha u Kuchingu najprije se raspravlja o općenitim stavovima i karakteristikama te zajednice. Njezino isticanje temelji se na opisima europskih pisaca 19. stoljeća i suvremenih pisaca iz te zajednice. U radu se, na osnovi iznesenih dokaza, predstavlja niz strategija koje mogu upotrijebiti istraživači, nečlanovi zajednice, za prikupljanje informacija o njoj. Glavna strategija o kojoj se raspravlja jest izbor jezika. Prema teoriji prilagodbe, bliski odnosi i solidarnost lakše se uspostavljaju ako se govornik služi jezikom koji primatelj ili ispitanik više voli. Istraživači moraju odlučiti na koji će jezik prijeći: malajski, engleski ili bidajuški, te ako izaberu bidajuški, kojim će se dijalektom poslužiti. U radu se govori i o problemima povezanim s izborom koda.

KLJUČNE RIJEČI: narod Bidajuha, metodologija istraživanja, izbor jezika, Istočna Malezija, bidajuški pojas, prilagodba

Caesar Dealwis, Maya Khemlani David

## LOCUTEURS TIMIDES: ÉCOUTER LEURS VOIX

### RÉSUMÉ

Lorsqu'une communauté linguistique est caractérisée par ses inhibitions et sa réserve vis-à-vis des personnes étrangères à elle, il est difficile de la pénétrer et de rassembler des informations à son sujet. La présente recherche porte sur la communauté Bidayuh de Kuching et porte dans un premier temps sur ses attitudes et caractéristiques générales. L'intérêt particulier porté à cette communauté vient des descriptions qu'en ont fait les écrivains du 19<sup>ème</sup> siècle et à ses écrivains contemporains. Cet article présente les différentes stratégies mises en œuvre par les chercheurs, étrangers à la communauté, pour obtenir des informations la concernant. La stratégie principale traitée ici est le choix de la langue. Selon la théorie de l'adaptation, des rapports amicaux et solidaires s'établissent plus facilement lorsque le locuteur choisit de s'exprimer dans la langue que son interlocuteur ou la personne enquêtée préfère. Les chercheurs doivent choisir une langue: le malaisien, l'anglais ou le bidayuh, et s'ils optent pour cette dernière, choisir le dialecte qu'ils utiliseront. L'article traite aussi des problèmes liés au choix de code.

MOTS CLÉS : Bidayuh, méthodologie de recherche, choix de langue, Malaisie orientale, ceinture bidayuh, adaptation