

## Teaching and Learning an Ethnic Minority Language at University Level: The Case of Dusun in Brunei

Najib Noorashid

[njb-on9@hotmail.com](mailto:njb-on9@hotmail.com)

Universiti Brunei Darussalam

James McLellan (Corresponding author)

[james.mclellan@ubd.edu.bn](mailto:james.mclellan@ubd.edu.bn)

Universiti Brunei Darussalam

### ABSTRACT

This article investigates the teaching and learning of an ethnic minority language at tertiary level as a strategy for language maintenance and revitalisation. We offer a case study of the Dusun language, which is taught as a breadth/elective course at the Language Centre in Universiti Brunei Darussalam. Although the initial purpose of introducing ethnic language courses was to encourage students to be familiar with the practices and the cultural knowledge associated with the community of users, their role in language maintenance is also worthy of investigation. The research methods include classroom observations, a questionnaire survey and analysis of examination results. The observation and the survey assist in the understanding of students' reactions to the curriculum. We find that offering Dusun as a credit-bearing language module (course) has generated interest among both students and the wider Brunei community. Those from Dusun family backgrounds taking the module are a minority: most students have no family connections with Dusun. The implementation of the curriculum remains problematic, and there are issues resulting from the need to meet the formal requirements and academic expectations of the university administration in terms of coursework and examinations. The absence of dictionaries, grammars and other pedagogical materials means that Dusun language teachers are obliged to develop their own materials and resources. We argue that offering Borneo minority indigenous languages at tertiary level may not in itself maintain or revive the language in question, but is one strategy, along with several others, which may help towards maintenance and revitalisation.

**Keywords:** Dusun; ethnic minority; language curriculum; language maintenance; Brunei

### INTRODUCTION

As more communities evolve towards using major languages all over the world, concern on the loss of indigenous languages has been evident in the field of linguistic studies. Krauss (1992) has predicted that 90% of the world's languages face extinction within a century, if efforts to maintain them are not made. Meanwhile, *Ethnologue* has estimated the number of world languages at 6,909, showing a rapid decline (Lewis, 2009).

The major concern about language death is cultural devastation, including the loss of identity and heritage (Crystal, 2000). Continuous efforts have been made by language experts and by concerned communities to prevent language loss (Fishman, 1991; Sallabank, 2010). One way to maintain the use of a language is through the implementation of a language learning and teaching curriculum (Laoire, 2006; McCarty, Romero & Zepeda, 2006) in both formal and informal education. This is one of the strategies for language revitalisation (Grenoble and Whaley, 2006, pp. 160-204).

The issue of language loss is a concern on the island of Borneo, including Brunei Darussalam (henceforth Brunei). Discussion on language shift and the silencing of indigenous languages in Brunei can be found in Martin (1995, 1996), Noor Azam (2005), Coluzzi (2010), McLellan (2014), Fatimah Chuchu and Najib Noorashid (2015), and McLellan and Jones (2015). Aside from the dominant vernacular Brunei Malay, the other six indigenous languages in Brunei are threatened and pressured by the predominant use of Malay and English (Martin, 1996; McLellan, Noor Azam & Deterding, 2016; Noor Azam & Siti Ajeerah, 2016). Community members and language experts have taken up the challenge of maintaining the use and vitality of indigenous ethnic minority languages in the Sultanate. This includes the recent establishment of indigenous languages as credit-bearing courses in a higher learning institution in Brunei.

This study thus aims (a) to elicit learners' attitudes towards the formal teaching and learning of Dusun; (b) to find out whether the teaching and learning could assist in maintaining the use of Dusun language; (c) to discover the potential and challenges of implementing an ethnic minority language curriculum as a revitalisation effort for the Dusun language.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY AND THE DUSUN LANGUAGE IN BRUNEI

Brunei is a small Malay Islamic Sultanate located in the north-west of Borneo Island. The country has a population of about 429,000 with Malays being the majority, alongside a number of ethnic minority groups: Kedayan, Dusun, Murut (Lun Bawang), Bisaya, Tutong and Belait, which make up the seven '*Puak Jati*' (indigenous groups) of Brunei. Brunei is also home to other minority groups such as Iban and Penan, and to expatriates from the neighbouring countries such as Malaysia and Indonesia, as well as those from more distant countries such as the UK and USA (McLellan et al., 2016, pp. 9).

It is claimed that every '*Puak Jati*' has its own specific language and cultural practices, although Brunei Malay is the default intercultural code of communication in daily interaction in public domains (Gunn, 1997). Standard Malay, which is similar to Bahasa Malaysia, the national and official language of Malaysia, is the official language of Brunei, while English has instrumental value in education and in workplaces (David, Cavallaro & Coluzzi, 2009, pp. 169-170). No institutional support is given to the other ethnic minority languages, neither by the Ministry of Education nor by national media (Noor Azam, 2005).

Studies by Mariam Haji Koya (1992) and by Kershaw (1994) claim that the Dusun speakers have shifted to using Brunei Malay, regardless of religion and setting. Kershaw further suggests that the language shift occurred due to the interruption of intergenerational transmission of Dusun by the older generation to their offspring, and to the absence of an agreed written form for the language. Dusun is an unwritten language with a number of varieties, mainly found in the Tutong district. More recent studies by Fatimah Chuchu and Najib Noorashid (2014, 2015) have shown that Brunei Malay is the most popular language amongst the Dusun community. Martin (1995) categorises Dusun as 2.0, which is low on his 0-6 ethnolinguistic vitality scale (a sociolinguistic parameter for evaluating language vitality), and this is expected to decrease over time (Noor Azam, 2014, pp. 15). Fatimah Chuchu and Najib Noorashid (2015, pp. 40) claim that the Dusun language is experiencing 'gradual extinction' as the new generation of Dusun are considered as "semi-speakers" who often have poor competence in the language.

In response, the Language Centre in Universiti Brunei Darussalam has introduced credit-bearing modules (courses) teaching indigenous Borneo languages, particularly Tutong,

Dusun and Iban, to undergraduate students. The indigenous language modules are offered as breadth and elective modules to students across the faculties. This has generated great interest among students, but the initiative has experienced difficulties and challenges (Noor Azam, 2014; Norazmie, 2016).

Internationally, several previous studies have investigated learners' attitudes towards language loss and maintenance (e.g. McCarty et al., 2006). These studies consider the effectiveness of ethnic minority and indigenous language curriculum development as a language and cultural heritage maintenance effort. Studies by Noriah Mohamed and Nor Hashimah Hashim (2012), How, Chan and Ain Nadzimah (2015), and Coluzzi (2017) evaluate language vitality and maintenance of ethnic languages in Malaysia.

In the specific context of education, Alias Abdul Ghani (2015) reviews the pedagogy of endangered *Orang Asli* languages in peninsular Malaysia, whilst McLellan and Campbell (2015) focus on the significance of early education for maintaining Bidayuh varieties in Sarawak. ('Varieties' here is used as a neutral term, to avoid the language vs dialect issue.) Some of these studies include investigation of speakers' attitudes into ethnic and minority languages maintenance. However, there are as yet no studies into the potential of formal language teaching and learning (henceforth T&L) of the Dusun language in Brunei for Dusun maintenance and revitalisation. The present study attempts to fill this research gap.

## THEORY AND METHODOLOGY

The conceptual framework of 'Attitudes and Language' developed by Baker (1992, pp. 13) is used to elicit the three attitudinal components, cognitive, affective and conative from the respondents. This framework was chosen, as our study aims to elicit the respondents' attitudes on the T&L of Dusun, and the cognitive (mind), affective (emotion) and conative (behavioural response) attitudes of the respondents are crucial to understand their perceptions towards the Dusun curriculum and the potential of it as a language revitalisation strategy.

Six sessions of observation were made during lectures and tutorials of both the LY-1433 Dusun I and LY-2431 Dusun II modules at the Language Centre in 2015 and 2016, with the consent of the facilitator. Both LY-1433 Dusun I and LY-2431 Dusun II are offered by the Language Centre as breadth modules, to provide the students with basic skills and knowledge of Dusun as one of Borneo languages, if not also an endangered language in Brunei. Both are integrated modules which enhance the students' skills in reading, writing, speaking and listening. Whilst LY-1433 is offered as an elementary module which covers basic knowledge and practice of Dusun, the LY-2431 is an intermediate course which allows the students to use Dusun more creatively in everyday conversation, and the assessment for the latter is more demanding.

Using participant observation methods, where the researchers joined and observed the T&L, and took note of the process in the classroom. The observations were undertaken to understand the processes and methods of formal teaching of the Dusun language in practice, and also provided insights into the curriculum used in both modules. The observations also allowed the researchers to examine the students' reactions towards the T&L of Dusun.

Developed from the Baker's (1992) 'Attitudes and Language' framework – which is applied to the T&L of Dusun curriculum, a bilingual questionnaire in Standard Malay and English was distributed to the students towards the end of the teaching semester. The 14 open-ended questions (see Appendix A) in the questionnaire aimed to discover: the respondents' opinions on the current status and vitality of ethnic minority languages including Dusun; the respondents' motivations for their enrolment in the modules; their perceptions about the formal language teaching of Dusun language; their initial expectations and conative responses about their participation in the modules; and their overall judgment on

the formal teaching of Dusun language. The responses were later tabulated and analysed based on the highlighted themes, as shown in the following analysis and discussion sections, in accordance to the research questions of this study, which predominantly enquired the students' attitudes towards T&L of Dusun.

Subsequent to the observations, a semi-structured interview in Standard Malay of approximately 30 minutes was conducted with the facilitator of both the LY-1433 and LY2431 courses, in order to obtain more details on the formal curriculum of the Dusun language modules. A total of 10 questions (see Appendix B) were developed enquiring into the facilitator's methods of teaching, his own observations on students' progress and participation, and also his expectations and further planning for the curriculum. The interview data were analysed using a qualitative approach, in order to understand the attitudinal responses of the students towards the T&L of Dusun from the teacher's standpoint, while finding out the challenges of the T&L of an endangered language in Brunei.

A descriptive analysis was also made, summarising the examination results for six academic semesters, which were provided by the facilitator and the Language Centre. The students' examination results were analysed to assess the students' academic performance over the years, which could signal the participants' general attitudes towards the curriculum. Thus we adopt a triangulation approach, using the students' responses and their academic performance, and also the facilitator's and the researchers' observations.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS T&L OF DUSUN

A total of 46 (74%) students from LY-1433 Dusun I and 16 (26%) students from LY2431 Dusun II, between the ages of 18 and 40, both pre-service and in-service students, participated in the survey. The majority of them, 52 (84%) identify themselves as Bruneian Malay, whilst 5 (8%) of the respondents are Dusun, two each are of Kedayan (3%) and Chinese (3%) descent, and one respondent (2%) is Iban. The respondents identify their ethnic identity patrilineally (through the father's side), though some also identify themselves as Dusun through their mothers. The majority of respondents, 41 (66%) study at the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, whilst 11 (18%) respondents are from the School of Business and Economics, 9 (15%) from the Faculty of Science, with a single (1%) respondent from the Academy of Brunei Studies. 43 (69%) of the respondents are enrolled in English-medium major programmes, with 14 (23%) respondents in Malay-medium programmes, whilst the remaining 5 (8%) are from bilingual programmes taking both Malay- and English-medium courses across different faculties.

The Dusun modules do not exclusively attract students of Dusun ethnicity, but also those from other ethnic backgrounds. Norazmie's (2016) study found that most of the Brunei Malays and other non-Dusun students in the classes had no prior knowledge of Dusun, and the Dusun students only had low to average knowledge of their 'mother-tongue'. In addition to being a native speaker of Dusun, Norazmie as the only facilitator of the Dusun language at the Language Centre, has taught Dusun in both Level 1 and Level 2 (based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages CEFR A1 and A1+ respectively) at the Language Centre since 2014.

Table 1 shows the number of students taking the elementary (LY-1433) and the intermediate (LY-2431) modules. It clearly shows that the interest of students remains healthy. The lesser number of students enrolled at the intermediate level is due to the fact that after the elementary course they have decided to explore other ethnic language modules offered by the Language Centre, as reported in the questionnaire.

TABLE 1. Student enrolment in Dusun modules.

Module	Year	Semester	Quota	No. of students enrolled
LY-1433	2014	2	60	60
	2015	1	60	58
	2015	2	48	52
	2016	1	72	67
	2016	2	48	48
	2017	1	48	not available
	2014	2		not offered
LY-2431	2015	1	30	16
	2015	2	24	17
	2016	1		not offered
	2016	2	24	31

On their general knowledge of linguistic diversity in Brunei prior to enrolment in the modules, 24 (39%) of the respondents stated that they were aware of the ethnic minority languages, and some stated that the use of these languages is now decreasing, showing their awareness of the state of endangerment of indigenous languages in Brunei. On the other hand, the other 38 (61%) respondents said that they do not know the real language situation or are not sure. Specifically on Dusun, only 14 (23%) claimed that this language is on the brink of extinction due to it being used less by the younger Dusuns and mostly used by the older generation. There were also claims that lack of research on the Dusun language had caused it to be less popular in comparison to other major languages such as Malay and English.

When asked about their reasons for taking the Dusun language module, the majority of respondents were motivated to register for both the Dusun language modules due to their interest in learning about the indigenous language. They also wanted to enhance their proficiency in the language: one respondent stated that such a module could not be found elsewhere in the university, making it a unique choice. These responses are not just from those of Dusun descent, but also non-Dusun speakers. Table 2 shows the students' motivations for enrolment (answers to open-ended survey questions in which they were able to give more than one answer).

TABLE 2. Motivations behind student enrolment in Dusun modules

Motivations	No. of responses (out of 62)	Percentage (%)
To know more about the Dusun language	45	73
To be able to speak in more than one language	8	13
To study more on the Dusun language and cultural practices as they are less practised at home (among the Dusuns; including maternal side)	10	16
The knowledge of Dusun language is interesting	6	10
To ease communication with extended Dusun family and friends	3	5
To study more on the knowledge of Dusun language and cultural practices (among the non-Dusuns)	2	3
To ensure the Dusun language will not become extinct	2	3
Because the Dusun language is easy in	2	3



comparison to other languages offered by Language Centre		
To study about the Dusun language as it has never been offered elsewhere	1	2
To meet the requirements for credit bearing modules	10	16

As shown in Table 2, the general attitude of these respondents is positive: their motivations for choosing the Dusun modules are either to study further about the language, or to practise it in their daily communication within Dusun communities. 10 (16%) non-Dusun speakers also reported that their enrolment was to maintain the use of Dusun as one of the indigenous languages and thus part of the heritage of Brunei. Further positive attitudes are also found, as 52 (84%) of the respondents stated they have learned a lot about the Dusun language, particularly the use of numerous Dusun lexical items that they can practise on a daily basis, and about the cultural practices of the Dusun. However, there were 10 (16%) students who stated that they only take the modules as there is no better option, showing a more neutral attitude towards the subject.

General positive attitudes are also detected from the respondents' perceptions on the use of T&L materials and resources in both modules, as shown in Tables 2 and 3. The majority of respondents, 52 (84%), believe that the resources used in both levels are sufficient. 26 (42%) respondents state that there is "nothing to improve", signalling their high rate of satisfaction towards the modules. But 10 (16%) respondents stated that both modules still have inadequate reading materials, including dictionary resources, and inadequate allocated hours per week. Some Dusun folktales and traditional stories have been collected and published, but these have yet to be exploited in the T&L context. These issues were raised as ways of improving the T&L for both modules. Most respondents called for a more hands-on learning process incorporating more Dusun cultural elements, provided by community elders and by language experts. This could include the use of interactive social media to enhance their learning experience. The respondents' suggestions for improving the T&L are shown in Table 3.

TABLE 3. Further incentives to improve Dusun T&L

Suggestions to enhance T&L for both modules	No. of responses (out of 62)	Percentage (%)
To introduce a field trip to a Dusun village for hands-on learning with Dusun elders	12	19
To do more hands-on learning experience and practical tasks (such as drama, etc)	5	8
To increase more allocation time per week	5	8
To involve more Dusun speakers/community/teachers/language experts	4	6
To incorporate the T&L with the cultural and life practices of Dusun	3	5
To utilise more effective reading materials	3	5
To integrate the use of social media (webpage, blog, communicative media, etc) in the T&L of Dusun	2	3
To incorporate the proper articulation of Dusun vocabularies	1	2
To separate Dusun and non-Dusun students for fair learning experience and grading system	1	2
Nothing to improve	26	42

Of the respondents taking the introductory LY-1433 module, 39 (63%) stated that they will pursue the Dusun language to the next level in the following semester. Most of these respondents also seek to study further and enhance their proficiency in the Dusun language. 19 (31%) respondents state that they are planning to explore other languages offered by the Language Centre, whilst the other 4 (6%) were not sure.

The survey of students' attitudes can be supported by analysis of the examination results they obtained for Dusun. Table 4 shows that most students scored average to good marks, with only one failure grade (<50%) recorded. This may be a sign of the positive attitudes towards the Dusun language modules.

TABLE 4. Examination results of students for Dusun modules

Module	Year	Semester	Total no. of students enrolled	No. of students scoring	
				>60 <80%	>80 <91%
LY-1433	2014	2	60	18 (30%)	42 (70%)
	2015	1	58	40 (69%)	15 (26%)
	2015	2	52	38 (73%)	9 (17%)
	2016	1	67	53 (79%)	14 (21%)
LY-2431	2015	1	16	13 (81%)	3 (19%)
	2015	2	17	11 (64%)	6 (36%)

Even though the examination results in Table 4 do not show a fixed trend over the years, they still show that more students are able to pass despite not having in-depth prior knowledge of Dusun. The positive responses from the students have also been highlighted by the facilitator who claims that most of them enjoyed studying Dusun (Norazmie, personal communication, 2 March 2017). This is further confirmed by the lively participation and the excitement projected by students in classroom that the researchers could observe. This can also be detected from the willingness of the students to perform drama in Dusun as part of the curriculum assessment, as shown in Figure 1.



FIGURE 1. Dusun drama performance by the students (photo credit: 1<sup>st</sup> author)

Based on the underlying attitudinal principles of Baker's (1992) model, the attitudes towards the T&L of Dusun among these respondents have been found strongly positive, as can be seen from their affirmative cognitive and affective responses towards the T&L process. The respondents also show support in terms of their conative responses, as they are also aspire to pursue the study to the next level in the Dusun curriculum, whilst achieving good academic results, and further stating that they would practise their Dusun to maintain the language as part of Brunei's heritage.

### LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE AND REVITALISATION THROUGH THE T&L OF DUSUN

Table 5 shows details of responses on the use of Dusun language in real-life situations (based on 57 (92%) respondents who clarify they will practise the Dusun they learned). 23 (37%) out of 62 respondents, believe that the T&L could help maintain and preserve the use, the identity, and the status of the Dusun language alongside other languages in Brunei. Some also claim that the T&L will help in promoting intergenerational transmission of the ethnic minority language among the Dusun speakers and other interested non-Dusun. This shows their positive responses to the availability of Dusun language in the Language Centre curriculum.

TABLE 5. Further potential usage of Dusun

Practice of Dusun in real life	No. of responses (out of 57)	Percentage (%)
To converse with Dusun family/friends/business vendors	25	44
To utilise new acquired knowledge in outside practice	10	18
To use Dusun language if necessary	7	12
To pass on to younger generation	6	11
To maintain the use and status of Dusun language	4	7
For academic purposes and research study	2	4

Almost all respondents, 60 (97%), claim that they would consider practising the Dusun language on a daily basis. 25 (40%) of the respondents say that they would use the Dusun language to communicate with family members, friends or business vendors who are Dusun speakers. 6 respondents (10%) noted that Dusun should be passed on to the younger generation to maintain the use of the language, and this came not just from the ethnic Dusun but also from non-Dusun students.

Table 6 shows the percentage of acceptance to implement a Dusun language curriculum in early education. In response to a question asked on their views of the necessity to implement such language modules, 52 (84%) of the respondents support the possibility of introducing the T&L of ethnic minorities' languages, including Dusun language as a subject, from an early stage in primary and also in secondary schools. 34 (65%) out of these 52 respondents claim that the implementation in primary school would help maintain the status and preserve the use of ethnic minority languages in Brunei. They also believe in early exposure and in instilling ethnic languages as part of Bruneian identity and heritage among the younger generation. 4 (8%) suggested that the curriculum could be introduced as an optional subject or additional co-curriculum activity in schools. However, a small number of respondents, 3 (5%) out of the total 62, highlighted the challenges of implementing the formal T&L, stating that primary and secondary school students should focus on learning Standard Malay and English instead.

TABLE 6. The implementation of Dusun T&L in early education

Dusun as a subject in early education	Percentage of responses (%)
Agree	84
Disagree	10
Not sure	6



Norazmie (2 March 2017) supports revitalisation of the language by introducing it in early education. However, he also claims that a major effort would be needed to get institutional support from the government and other important stakeholders to get the language included in early formal education, which is more focused on English and Standard Malay.

*“...mendapatkan sokongan dari pihak kerajaan juga sangat sukar untuk mengimplementasikan di pendidikan awal dan ia memerlukan usaha yang sangat besar. Namun, pada masa kini, ia merupakan perkara yang bagus di peringkat universiti sahaja, sebab keutamaan dunia pada masa ini lebih kepada bahasa supra iaitu bahasa Inggeris.”*

<Norazmie/UBD/0203/16:47>

(It is **difficult to get support from the government to implement Dusun in early education** and it would need a very huge effort. However, at the moment, it is a good thing to introduce it at the university level, as **the world has more interest in the supranational language, which is English.**)

This view also echoes findings by Noor Azam (2005) and by McLellan and Campbell (2015, pp. 147-148).

The T&L of Dusun at the university level has helped in disseminating not just knowledge about the language, but also the status of the language in the country. Students who were previously unaware of the diversity of Brunei's indigenous languages now have greater consciousness of multilingualism in Brunei society. The majority of them now believe that formal education can help reduce the danger of language death and extinction of the Dusun language, as suggested by Fatimah Chuchu and Najib Noorashid (2015), Kershaw (1994) and Martin (1995).

The majority of respondents, 58 (94%), agree that the Dusun modules offered in the Language Centre can be a part of Dusun language maintenance and revitalisation efforts. They feel that the Dusun modules give the opportunity to Bruneians and international students to use the language. The T&L of Dusun also offers the opportunity for the younger generation of Dusun to learn the language formally, as the majority of them claim that they do not acquire it through their family. Thus the T&L of Dusun could help maintain intergenerational transmission of Dusun.

#### PRIDE IN DUSUN AS A DRIVER OF LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE

Language pride represents positive attitudes towards a language. The majority of survey respondents report that they are proud to be learning and practising the Dusun language in their everyday lives. 6 (10%) non-Dusun speakers, specifically Bruneian Malays, also claim to feel pride in being able to converse in Dusun even though it is not their mother-tongue. They feel it is distinctive and could not be learned elsewhere, as shown in the following responses by students taking the Dusun modules:

*“...saya rasa bangga sebab dapat gunakan banyak bahasa sekarang, bukan saja bahasa Brunei, sedikit Inggeris tapi juga Bahasa Dusun.”*

(...I feel proud of being able to use many languages, not just Brunei Malay, a little bit of English but also Dusun language.)

(27 year old Bruneian Malay female undergraduate)

*“Ya, kerana saya sendiri merasa bangga kerana dapat memahami dan menggunakan bahasa ini, walaupun ia bukan bahasa saya sendiri.”*

(Yes, because I feel proud to be able to understand and use this (Dusun) language, even though it is not my own language)

(24 year old Bruneian Malay female undergraduate)

*“Ya, kerana tidak semua orang tahu akan berbahasa Dusun dan kita mestilah bangga kerana kita tahu berbahasa Dusun yang merupakan salah satu puak yang berada di Brunei.”*

(Yes, because **not everyone knows how to speak the Dusun language, and we ought to be proud because we know how to speak Dusun** as one of the indigenous languages in Brunei.

(19 year old Bruneian Malay male undergraduate)

Several studies including Schmidt (1990) and Weyers (2014), claim that language pride towards a language could assist in maintaining the status, stability and vitality of minoritised languages and in slowing down the rate of language shift. This might also be the case for the Dusun language in Brunei. Although pride in this language is expressed by non-Dusun learners, it is still significant that these new learners speak and maintain the use of Dusun as one of the heritage languages in Brunei. This is further confirmed by Norazmie (2 March 2017) who suggests that Bruneians are now more aware of the need to maintain ethnic minority languages including Dusun.

*“..kepada pelajar-pelajar yang baru mahir dengan bahasa Dusun, selalunya dalam kalangan orang Melayu, memanglah ia dilihat sebagai satu kejayaan bagi mereka dan bagi saya memang tidak dapat dinafikan mereka berbangga kerana dapat mengekalkan perkara-perkara sedemikian kerana mereka telah melihat dan mendengar daripada kawan-kawan mereka yang berbangsa Dusun, ada sebahagian daripada ibubapa Dusun ini tidak membenarkan untuk berbahasa Dusun atas bermacam-macam alasan. Jadi ia tidak menghairankan kalau ada para pelajar mengatakan yang mereka membuat pemuliharaan bahasa ini lebih baik daripada bangsa Dusun sendiri. Menurut pemerhatian saya, ini kerana orang-orang Melayu kitani cuba untuk memelihara bahasa ini dengan mempelajarinya.”* <Norazmie/UBD/0203/28:15>

(Those who have recently become proficient in Dusun language, especially among the Malays, see **it as an achievement**. I won't deny that **they are proud to maintain the Dusun language** because they know that some Dusun parents for some reason do not allow their children to speak Dusun. So **it's not an unusual phenomenon to have these non-Dusun students to say that they're better at maintaining the use of Dusun** than the Dusun people. **From my own observation, Malays have striven to maintain the use of this language by learning it.**)

As shown in Table 7, the majority of respondents, 46 (74%) agree that the Dusun language has its own linguistic value amid the diversity of languages in Brunei. 6 (13%) out of these 46 respondents claim that Dusun has its own significance depending on the situation and settings, whilst for the other 5 (11%), they believe the Dusun will continue to be a vernacular language for the community of speakers, aside from being significant for academic research and study purposes. One respondent notes that “if other languages could become global languages, the Dusun language could, too”. Nevertheless, 5 (8%) respondents (out of 62) were more sceptical, claiming that Dusun had already been ‘dissolved’ by major languages such as Malay and English, and it is being used among a few Dusun speakers only.

TABLE 7. Dusun having linguistic value

Acceptance of Dusun as having linguistic value	Percentage of responses (%)
Agree	74
Disagree	16
Not sure	10

## CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AND LEARNING OF DUSUN LANGUAGE

Norazmie (2 March 2017) claims that the T&L of Dusun has faced some challenges since its inception. The major issue is the lack of available pedagogical resources, forcing the facilitator to develop his own materials. As Dusun is an unwritten language, there is a scarcity of written materials, such as reference books, dictionaries and reading materials. This is a challenge for the T&L of Dusun. The shortage of suitably qualified Dusun teachers willing to teach Dusun is another challenge: there is no provision for the training of indigenous or ethnic minority language teachers in Brunei.

*“..limitasi memang nampak dari segi material. Material yang dimaksudkan di sini ialah material bertulis, artikel-artikel dalam bahasa Dusun memang tidak- mungkin sedikit atau tidak ada dihasilkan, atau audio dalam bahasa Dusun, jadinya dalam membuat kajian, pelajar memang bermasalah untuk mendapatkan material ini dan bagaimana untuk belajar. Selain daripada itu juga ialah tenaga pengajar sebab bagi saya sendiri kapasiti saya seorang untuk mengajar bahasa Dusun ini sangat sukar.”*

<Norazmie/UBD/0203/14:04>

**(The limitation can be seen in the availability of written materials such as articles or audios in Dusun language. Little or nothing has been written and recorded in Dusun. So it has become a problem for the students to refer or study on such materials. Aside from that, the lack of teachers for the modules is also a problem, as my own capacity to teach Dusun is limited.)**

Noor Azam (2014, pp. 17-18) highlights the inconsistency of grammar standardisation of the Tutong language and the variations within Tutong. The same issues are also valid for Dusun. Norazmie (2 March 2017) finds similar issues with an unwritten language causing confusion and false ideas of standardisation among the students. He also expresses concerns about picking one variety to be taught and ruling out other varieties of Dusun in class.

*“..perkara yang sangat sukar ialah masalah standardisation, terdapat beberapa konteks-konteks yang sangat sukar untuk diterangkan dalam bahasa Dusun, contohnya penjumlah bilangan. Kalau dalam bahasa Melayu, penjumlah bilangan adalah sangat formal dan mengikut kategori-kategorinya. Tetapi tidak dalam bahasa Dusun, dari segi preposisi ia akan memberikan kekeliruan kepada para pelajar. Ini kadang-kadang akan mengakibatkan false standardisation. Ini juga menjadi masalah bagi pemilihan kata nama yang berlainan dari komuniti Dusun yang berlainan di Brunei. Dusun yang dekat pantai ada kata nama berbeza dengan yang pedalaman. Dan ini akan menjadi masalah jika terdapat pelajar yang berbangsa Dusun di dalam kelas yang hanya mengetahui bahasa Dusun dari kawasannya. Ini kerana mereka ini juga bukan merupakan pengguna yang mahir, cuma asas sahaja.”*

<Norazmie/UBD/0203/22:26>

**(The issue of standardisation is very challenging. There are several contexts in Dusun that are complicated to explain, for instance, the classifiers. Classifiers in the Malay language are more formal and have their own established categories. But these do not exist in Dusun, so this could trigger confusion and occasionally cause false ideas of standardisation among the students. Another issue is on the standardisation of nouns from different Dusun communities across Brunei. The coastal Dusun community has different nouns referring the same entity from the inland Dusun. It is problematic when there is a student who only knows the variety of Dusun from their specific area or community. The students are not skilled users but only familiar with the basics of Dusun.)**

The T&L of Dusun has been largely limited to lecture methods and theatrical role playing. This could be the result of earlier suggestions by students who desired a more hands-on learning experience. As there is a lack of Dusun pedagogical materials, the T&L is also limited to studying the language in everyday contexts, whereas it could also be improved by

including Dusun cultural aspects of beliefs, diet, dances, practices and traditions. The T&L has yet to incorporate the use of internet or social media for a better learning experience, another revitalisation strategy suggested by McLellan and Jones (2015, pp. 26-27).

Lack of recognition from the government and other important stakeholders to support this initiative has become an issue for the T&L of Dusun, and this also applies to the T&L of Tutong (Noor Azam, 2014, pp. 16). Dusun teachers and facilitators are eager to establish a standardised grammar of Dusun and to produce more Dusun books to promote the formal T&L, but their approach could still run the risk of losing the language's essential spirit if it is codified in curriculum documents and textbooks.

## CONCLUSION

Previous studies have highlighted the need for language maintenance and revitalisation in both local and global perspectives (Grenoble & Whaley, 2006; McCarty et al., 2006; Sallabank, 2010). In the context of Brunei and its neighbouring countries, incorporating ethnic and minority languages into formal education can support language survival (McLellan, 2014; McLellan & Jones, 2015; Alias Abdul Ghani, 2015). Here, the case of Dusun is no exception.

As of now, the T&L of Dusun in the Language Centre of Universiti Brunei Darussalam has succeeded in raising awareness of the status of the Dusun language and other indigenous languages in Brunei. Even though Dusun Language modules were established only recently, they have attracted interest among the students. They have also given the opportunity to non-ethnic Dusun students to acquire an ethnic minority language through a formal curriculum, a pioneering initiative on the part of the institution.

The overall attitudes towards the formal curriculum have been remarkably positive and it has been well received by the majority of students. These positive attitudes can be found across the students' answers and reflected in their examination results as well as in observations. Aside from the initial purpose to encourage students to be familiar with the ethnic language and cultural knowledge of Dusun, the module has been found to have potential as a conduit for language maintenance. However, there are still a few key issues that need to be looked at in order to work towards more comprehensive and effective T&L of the Dusun language. The intervention of national government and relevant stakeholders in acknowledging and supporting T&L of these indigenous languages could provide more of a push towards language maintenance.

There are good reasons to believe that the T&L of Dusun and other Borneo minority indigenous languages at tertiary level can help in assisting language maintenance. This may not in itself maintain or revive the languages, but it can be one strategy, along with several others, which may help towards maintenance and revitalisation (Alias Abdul Ghani, 2015; McLellan & Campbell, 2015; Rajan, 2014).

This study also opens up possibilities for further investigation into the involvement of the Dusun community and relevant stakeholders such as the government in the curriculum itself. Another avenue of further investigation could be the use of modern technology, including social media, to promote language revitalization, not just for Dusun but for other indigenous languages in Brunei as well.

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## APPENDIX A

### **KAJIAN SIKAP BAHASA TERHADAP SESI PENGAJARAN DAN PEMBELAJARAN BAHASA ETNIK DUSUN DI NEGARA BRUNEI DARUSSALAM (2015).**

#### **A STUDY ON LANGUAGE ATTITUDES TOWARDS TEACHING AND LEARNING OF ETHNIC DUSUN IN BRUNEI DARUSSALAM (2015).**

Jantina/gender :  *Lelaki/male*                       *Perempuan/female*  
Umur/age : \_\_\_\_\_ .  
Pendidikan/education : \_\_\_\_\_ .  
Tahun Pengajian/year of study : \_\_\_\_\_ .  
Fakulti/faculty : \_\_\_\_\_ .  
Medium Pengajian/medium of instruction :  *Bahasa Melayu/Malay*  *Bahasa Inggeris/English*

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*ARAHAN: Sila jawab soalan-soalan yang diberikan di ruang yang disediakan*  
INSTRUCTION: Please answer all the questions in the provided space.

1. *Secara amnya, adakah awda mengetahui akan situasi semasa bahasa-bahasa etnik minoriti di Negara Brunei Darussalam (NBD)?*

In general, do you know the current situation of ethnic minority languages in Brunei Darussalam (NBD)?

\_\_\_\_\_

2. *Kenapa awda memilih bahasa etnik minoriti Dusun ini sebagai kursus pilihan awda?*

Why do you choose to enrol in this ethnic minority Dusun language course?

\_\_\_\_\_

3. *Apa yang awda jangkakan melalui kursus Bahasa Dusun sebelum awda memulakan sesi pembelajaran pada awal semester pengajian?*

What were your expectations prior to studying the Dusun language course?

\_\_\_\_\_

4. *Secara dasarnya, apa yang kamu pelajari dari kursus Bahasa Dusun yang ditawarkan di peringkat universiti ini?*

Fundamentally, what have you learned from the Dusun language course offered by the university?

\_\_\_\_\_

5. *Menurut pendapat kamu, adakah sumber dan bahan pengajaran dan pembelajaran bagi kursus Bahasa Dusun ini memadai atau tidak mencukupi? Mengapa?*

In your opinion, do you think that the Dusun language course has sufficient teaching resources and materials? Why?

\_\_\_\_\_

6. *Boleh kamu nyatakan limitasi yang kamu dapati melalui kursus Bahasa Dusun ini?*

Can you state the limitation(s) of this Dusun language course?

\_\_\_\_\_

7. *Apa yang boleh ditambah atau diperbaiki bagi sesi pengajaran dan pembelajaran bagi kursus Bahasa Dusun ini?*

What can be added to enhance the teaching and learning experience of the Dusun language course?

\_\_\_\_\_

8. *Tahukah kamu bagaimana status vitaliti (ketahanan) Bahasa Dusun dalam situasi multilingual di NBD?*  
Do you know the status of language vitality of Dusun in the multilingual NBD?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. *Bagaimanakah tanggapan kamu terhadap bahasa-bahasa etnik minoriti, seperti Bahasa Dusun di NBD?*  
What is your impression of the ethnic minority languages such as Dusun in NBD?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. *Adakah bahasa-bahasa etnik minoriti seperti Bahasa Dusun ini mempunyai nilai dalam pasaran linguistik (nilai dalam penggunaan seharian, akademik, perdagangan dan sebagainya)?*  
Do you think that the ethnic languages such as Dusun have their own linguistic value (usage value as everyday language, in academia or businesses, and etc.)?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
11. *Menurut pendapat kamu, adakah dengan wujudnya kursus bahasa etnik seperti Bahasa Dusun ini, ia boleh mengangkat status dan ketahanan bahasa-bahasa etnik ini? Mengapa?*  
In your opinion, would formal courses in ethnic languages such as Dusun, increase the status and the vitality of these ethnic languages? Why?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
12. *Setelah mempelajari kursus Bahasa Dusun ini, adakah kamu akan mempraktikkan penggunaan Bahasa Dusun ini jika ia diperlukan pada masa akan datang? Mengapa?*  
As you have completed the course, would you practise the Dusun language if you needed to do so? Why?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
13. *Dalam situasi bagaimanakah kamu akan menggunakan Bahasa Dusun ini?*  
In what situations that you would use the Dusun language?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
14. *Menurut pendapat kamu, adakah wajar sesi pengajaran dan pembelajaran bahasa-bahasa etnik minoriti (bukan saja Bahasa Dusun malah bahasa-bahasa puak etnik yang lain) diperkenalkan pada peringkat sekolah menengah dan sekolah rendah. Mengapa?*  
Do you think it is necessary to introduce the teaching and learning of ethnic minority languages (not restricted to the Dusun language but also the other ethnic languages in Brunei) in secondary and primary schools in Brunei? Why?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX B

Soalan untuk tenaga pengajar bagi kursus Bahasa Dusun:

Questions for the facilitator of the Dusun Language course:

1. *Bolehkah awda rumuskan secara keseluruhan apa yang diajar melalui kursus bahasa etnik minoriti Dusun ini? Bagaimana teknik pengajaran dan proses pembelajaran dijalankan?*  
Could you summarise what you have taught in the Dusun language course, and how the teaching and learning process is undertaken?
2. *Apakah kepentingan yang boleh diperolehi dari sesi pengajaran formal bahasa-bahasa etnik minoriti seperti Bahasa Dusun ini?*  
What can be gained from the teaching and learning of ethnic languages such as the Dusun language?
3. *Apa yang cuba dicapai melalui pengajaran bahasa Dusun secara formal ini?*  
What are you trying to accomplish through the formal teaching and learning of Dusun?
4. *Menurut pendapat kamu, bagaimanakah sesi pengajaran Bahasa Dusun secara formal ini boleh membantu kepada revitalisasi bahasa-bahasa etnik minoriti?*  
In your opinion, how do you think that the formal teaching and learning of Dusun Language can help into revitalising of ethnic minority languages?
5. *Menurut pengamatan awda sebagai tenaga pengajar, bagaimana keseluruhan minat dan potensi pelajar yang mengikuti kursus ini dalam mengimplementasikan isi pelajaran ke dalam pergaulan seharian?*  
According to your own observation, how do you think the overall interest and potential of your students on your courses, and how do you think they will apply it in their everyday lives?
6. *Bagaimanakah sambutan kursus bahasa etnik minoriti seperti Dusun ini di UBD? Bagaimana pula jika dibandingkan dengan modul-modul bahasa yang lain?*  
How is the overall response of the ethnic language courses including the Dusun Language in UBD? How is it in comparison to other language modules?
7. *Apakah limitasi yang terdapat dalam sesi pengajaran Bahasa Dusun ini?*  
What kind of limitations do you encounter in the teaching and learning process of Dusun?
8. *Apakah perancangan untuk masa hadapan dalam menaikkan status bahasa-bahasa etnik minoriti seperti Dusun ini?*  
What are the future planning to increase the status of ethnic languages, including the Dusun language?
9. *Adakah wajar sesi pengajaran formal bagi mempromosikan bahasa-bahasa etnik minoriti ini wajar diimplementasi bagi peringkat-peringkat sekolah rendah dan menengah?*  
Do you think it is necessary to introduce the teaching and learning of ethnic minority languages (not restricted to the Dusun language but also the other ethnic languages in Brunei) in secondary and primary schools in Brunei?
10. *Menurut awda, apa usaha-usaha yang wajar diadakan untuk meningkatkan status dan penggunaan bahasa-bahasa etnik minoriti seperti Bahasa Dusun ini?*  
In your opinion, what are the relevant efforts should be established to increase the status and use of ethnic languages such as the Dusun language?

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Najib Noorashid is a PhD candidate in the Applied Linguistics programme at Universiti Brunei Darussalam. His PhD research focuses on issues of major languages in contact in the context of the Malay World. His research interests include sociolinguistic investigation on linguistic diversity, language maintenance and revitalization, and multilingualism.

James McLellan is a senior assistant professor at Universiti Brunei Darussalam. He has previously taught at secondary and tertiary levels in Brunei, the UK, France, Malaysia, Australia and New Zealand. His research interests include language alternation online, Southeast Asian Englishes, Borneo indigenous languages, and classroom discourse in multilingual contexts.