# Translation in Brunei Darussalam

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Brunei Darussalam is a small and wealthy Malay Islamic sultanate on the North West coast of Borneo. Once, the dominant power of the Borneo coast as far north as the Philippines Brunei saw its power and territory reduced in the 19th century, when external pressures forced the loss of Sarawak to Rajah Brooke and Sabah to the British North Borneo Company. In the late 19th century a steady deterioration in economic and political stability led the British Government to impose a resident in 1906 with authority to reorganize the administration and revenue systems and to provide a measure of stable government. The discovery of oil in the late 1920s resulted in great prosperity, though only slow national development. After the Japanese occupation, which passed relatively calmly for the local population, economic development gradually gathered pace. Internal independence came in 1959 and full independence in 1984.

National wealth consists mainly of oil revenues, though there are slow, but determined efforts to diversify into commerce and industry so as to counteract the exhaustion of oil resources expected in the next century. Recent national development plans have placed emphasis on the development of human resources through education and training to support diversification.

The most striking factor in Brunei's development has been the transition from absolute poverty at the turn of the century, through a period of gradual increase in prosperity until the 1950s, when there were still few roads, little education and only basic infrastructure, to a takeoff in the 1960s when Brunei rapidly became a modern society with a high standard of living for the majority of the population. Today Brunei has all the facilities of a 20th century welfare

state-free, comprehensive education (including technical colleges and a university), a new airline and a first-class airport, motorways, a national TV service, an attractive and well laid out capital city —and a growing role in ASEAN affairs. The development of Brunei literature must be considered in the light of the rapidity of these changes and the social and economic problems which recent innovations have entailed.

## 2. INDEPENDENCE AND THE SPUR TO MALAY

Since English was the language of administration throughout the British protectorate (1906-59), few British advisers had need to acquire a good working knowledge of Malay. Moreover, there had been little occasion to develop the use of Malay since there was no Malay-educated intellectual elite. Internal independence in 1959 gave a fresh impetus to the use of the national language, when a new Constitution decreed Malay as the official language, though permitting the use of English for official purposes for a further five years. By the 1980s Malay had become the normal language of official communication in Brunei, though circulars had to be issued from time to time to remind government servants of the requirement to use Malay.[1] Themovement to increase the use of Malay rapidly gained momentum. The Education Department was asked to run courses in Malay for civil service promotion purposes; applicants for overseas education were required to have a GCE pass in Malay and adult Malay literacy classes were introduced. Section 5(5) of the 1961 Brunei Nationality Enactment made eligibility for registration or naturalization as a Brunei citizen subject to a Language Board examination in Malay. State Secretariat Circular 36 (1962) asked government departments to study ways of increasing the status of Malay and a 1962 National Language Campaign gave further publicity to the role of Malay in society. A language oath was proclaimed throughout the country and strenuous efforts were made to encourage the use of Malay by other races, e.g., the Chinese Chamber of Commerce. The Chinese minority acquiesced in the policy but it still prefers to use English (or Mandarin or a Chinese dialect), despite the speeches by the Sultan encouraging them to use Malay.

## 3. LANGUAGE IN EDUCATION

The first Malay school was opened in 1912, but until World War II Malay education did not go beyond primary level. English-medium secondary schools established by the Christian missions in the 1920s were intended to provide educated Chinese or Indian manpower for the oil fields and

commerce. The early post war years were devoted to rebuilding and repairing the destruction of the Japanese period and it was not until the late 1950s that substantial change in the economy and society began to become evident.

The first Educational Commission, appointed in the year of internal independence, 1959, was asked to make recommendations for a free and compulsory education system that would educate children of all races using the national language, Malay, as the medium of instruction. The intention was to follow the Malaysian model and ensure the primacy of Malay in all areas of national life. A subsequent report in 1962 by two Malaysian educational experts, Aminuddin Baki and Paul Chang, recommended an integrated Malay-medium education system based on the system introduced by the 1956 Razak Committee Report in Malaysia, but a serious rebellion in Brunei in the same year and a continuing shortage of Malay native-speaker teachers prevented implementation.[2] A further report by the Education Committee in 1972 reiterated the recommendation that a Malay-medium system of primary and secondary schools should be developed but also proposed a policy of raising standards of English in these schools. Implementation of the 1972 Report was slow. A Malaysian curriculum and examinations were introduced, but a cooling in official relations in 1974 led to the recall of Brunei students studying in Malaysia and thus a block on higher education in Malay.

## 4. THE NEW BILINGUALISM

In the years following internal independence it had seemed that Brunei would follow the path taken by Malaysia and work towards the introduction of Malay throughout education and government. However, a radical and unexpected change in educational policy occurred in 1985, following full independence, with the decision to introduce a bilingual system of education at all levels.[3] The reasoning behind the introduction of the system was both political and economic. There was an overriding imperative to achieve national solidarity by means of a single system of education, and a strong feeling, particularly among parents, that English was essential for success in employment. In Malaysia, it was necessary to lay emphasis on Malay as a language of national unity, given the multiracial mix, and in Indonesia Indonesian faced strong competition from vernaculars with long literary and cultural traditions, e.g., Javanese and Sundanese. Brunei citizens, however, shared a standard offic language reinforced by religious, cultural and dialectal unity. Thus English was not perceived either as a political instrument or a major threat to Bruneian identity, though occasional voices have recently been heard criticizing the negative cultural influence of English-medium education.

The bilingual system of education established separate language use for separate subject domains in state schools. Mathematics, science and geography are taught in English; history[4] and Islamic studies in Malay. Malay and English are taught to all students. In the lower primary school, 22% of the time allotment is now given over to English-medium subjects; in the upper primary school, 60%; in the lower secondary school, 65% and in the upper secondary school, 75%. Before the implementation of the bilingual education system Brunei had English, Malay, Chinese and Arabic-medium schools, but only the English and Malay-medium schools came under the Education Department. Malay and English schools are now amalgamated in the bilingual system, while Arabic and Islamic primary and secondary schools, though remaining under the control of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, offer the normal school curriculum with instruction in Arabic, Malay and English. Before the opening of a teacher training college in 1956, teachers were trained in small numbers in Malaya and Sarawak. The Brunei Teacher Training Center became the Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah Teachers' College in 1966 and the Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah Institute of Education in January 1985. In October 1985 the Institute was incorporated into the new University of Brunei Darussalam as the Faculty of Education. The Faculty trains both Malay-medium and English-medium teachers, but it is pertinent to note that there seems to have been at no time any conscious link between teacher training and national language policy. The University of Brunei Darussalam was established in 1985 and offers first degrees in Education (in English and Malay), and in Public Policy and Management Studies (in English). Graduates from the Malay stream find it difficult to find employment outside education, though the language of official business is Malay. Students who wish to take degrees in other subjects, e.g., law and certain technological subjects, are sent to overseas institutions. At the outset the University offered degrees in History, Geography (English-medium), and Malay language and literature, but decided to phase these programs out for fear of creating a group of graduates with unmarketable skills.

## 5. OTHER LANGUAGES IN USE

The language situation in Brunei is complex. Malays make up 68,8% of an estimated population of approximately 249.000, Chinese 17,8%, other indigenous groups 5.3%, and others(undefined) 8,1%.[5] Seven local vernaculars are recognized by law: Brunei Malay, Kedayan, Tutong, Belait, Dusun, Murut and Bisaya. The Brunei Malays and the Kedayan are Malay-speaking Muslims; Brunei Malay is 84% and Kedayan 80% cognate with Standard Malay. The other five groups have languages which are between 25% and 40% cognate

with Standard Malay. These languages are still widely used for informal communication, though Brunei Malay has the highest status and speakers of the other vernaculars may also use Brunei Malay in certain circumstances. Brunei Malay speakers are in the majority (85.000), followed by Kedayan (30.000) and Kampong Ayer (25.000). Brunei Malay also continues to have somelexical and syntactical influence on the Standard Malay (Bahasa Melayu) used in Brunei as the official language and Brunei Malay is preferred by the majority of Brunei citizens over Standard Malay for everyday oral communication.

Brunei Malay differs from Standard Malay in phonology, morphology, and vocabulary, but is syntactically close to Standard Malay. Written texts of any length are not easily available for extensive syntactic analysis (Simanjuntak: 12) but the following examples (Simantunjak: 13) give an idea of the differences:

1.a. Pancuri atu sudah tatangkap (Brunei Malay).
1.b. Pencuri itu sudah tertangkap (Standard Malay)
1.c. The thief had been caught.

2.a. Kadia manampik buah paisau atu (Brunei Malay).
2.b. Dia membelah buah kelapa itu (Standard Malay).
2.c. He split the coconut open.

The 81 page Brunei Malay Dictionary published in 1991 witnesses the rich differences in vocabulary.

The large Chinese population[6] also makes use of Mandarin and Chinese dialects for business transactions in-country and with overseas Chinese companies.

## 6. THE NATIONAL LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE BUREAU (NLLB)

A Council of State sitting on 19 April 1960 proposed the creation of a body to develop Malay as the official language and a further meeting on 16 September 1961 decreed the establishment of a Language Institute (Lembaga Bahasa). Shortly afterwards it was decided to change this name to Language and Literature Section (Bahagian Bahasa dan Pustaka) under the Department of Education. On 1 January 1965 the Section became the National Language and Literature Bureau (Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka) with the following objectives:

a. to endeavor to develop and raise the level of Malay;
b. to harmonize the use of Malay as the official language in accordance with the wishes and spirit of par. 82(i) of the 1959 Constitution;

c. to publish or arrange the publication of books;
d. to standardize spelling and pronunciation and develop Malay technical vocabulary;
e. to encourage those capable of learning Malay.

The Bureau is now part of the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport. Of its ten sections only one, the Section for Literature Cultivation and Development (Bahagian Pembinaan dan Pengembangan Bahasa), is directly concerned with literature development. This Section has five units: Classical Literature, Creative Literature, Documentation, Magazines (which publishes a quarterly literary magazine *Bahana,* and organises creative literature competitions, forums, discussions and writing workshops),[7] and Activities. Another section, Publications, has units for Literature Planning and Copyright and Royalties. By the time of the Bureau's Silver Jubilee in 1986 it had published 319 books, 7 of which were works of fiction. From 1987-93 the NLLB has printed an average of three novels and two collections of short stories a year. The Bureau also has a Translation Section but its task is limited to translating government and commercial texts from English to Malay.[8]

## 7. SOCIETY AND CHANGE

Brunei Malays have been exposed to rapid social change in the last 30 years. The vast oil wealth has brought considerable prosperity but all decisions on national finance are ultimately in the hands of an autocracy underpinned by a national philosophy (MIB)[9] which emphasises "Malayness", Islam and the Monarchy. Increasing importance is being attached to fundamental Islamic values and way of life, which do not fit easily with the pressures of modernisation and Western influence.

## 8. ATTITUDES TO LANGUAGE

The Malay language has a special meaning for Brunei Malays:

> Brunei uses 'Malay' to encompass the whole meaning of 'Malay'. 'Malay' is a native Malay word which means 'nation' i.e. the 'Malay nation', which has lived with its identity in its language, i.e. the Malay language, lifestyle, style of dress and food, Malay courtesy, and Malay politics and government. (Yusof: 42).

It is a view of language which differs considerably from the modern Western view. Brunei has a complex, hierarchical social structure, enshrined

in rules and practices labelled *adat.* The relation between adat and language is expressed in the formula *Adat mengulum bahasa, bahasa menunjukkan bangsa,* which may be translated approximately "Custom sucks on language, language reveals the nation." (Yusof: 32).

English is widely viewed in Brunei as a passport to economic success and, indeed, the value of this passport was the principal reason for parental pressure to introduce the bilingual system of education in 1985.[10] However, Bruneians are rarely fluent in spoken or written English, despite the English-oriented education system (personal experience), since, outside the classroom or lecture theatre there is little contact with native speakers. The language of the home is Brunei Malay, the language of religion is Standard Malay (or Arabic), and the language of hierarchical ritual (e.g. communication with the nobility) is Court Malay. English is the language of study and leisure (e.g. TV, films on video cassette, music) and employment will depend rather on qualifications obtained through the medium of English than actual need for a high level of English. In practice a mixed English/Brunei Malay/Standard Malay code is common among students and other members of theEnglish-educated elite (see, e.g., Ozog), though a few elite familiesuse English for status reasons. There is only one local weekly newspaper, the Brunei Bulletin, which uses both English and Standard Malay, and newspapers from Malaysia and Singapore in Malay, Chinese and English are easily available and quite widely read. Brunei television is in both English and Malay, and Malaysian television channels in English, Malay and Chinese are received in Brunei. Brunei Radio broadcasts in Malay, English and Chinese. Book shops have a limited stock of books in any language and Brunei is not a readingculture (see, e.g., Daud). Educated Bruneians thus have access to a wide variety of models, a situation that is compounded by the rapidly increasing influx of expatriate workers, technicians and teachers[11] from the Philippines, the sub-continent and Singapore, each using a distinct variety of English. As in Malaysia the educational model of English has been the British model, but this is nowhere laid down formally by the Ministry of Education.

It has not been fully researched how far there is a distinct Brunei variety of English (as opposed to a variety of English common to Singapore, Malaysia and Brunei), but personal experience suggests that Brunei English has a good deal in common with Singapore English (see 9.1 below) apart from a few markers, such as the use of the Brunei Malay particle *bah* (Ozog: 27) and occasional influences from the mother tongue. As the bilingual educational system takes root, it can be expected that English will begin to assume the same role in Brunei that it assumed in Singapore some thirty years earlier.

## 9. ENGLISH IN THE REGION

### 9.1. *Singapore*

Secondary and higher education in Singapore are overwhelmingly English-medium and government and business use English as its standard medium of communication. The choice of English over Chinese (or even Malay, the national language) was deliberated to make Singapore a viable competitor in Southeast Asian and world business and commerce. The registers of education, business, government and the printed media are essentially Modern Standard English; however, there is a distinct variety of Singapore English used for informal and personal communication and national empathy.[12] Platt and Weber (see bibliography) describe this variety in detail. Notable features (often influenced by local languages) are the non-marking of verb forms, e.g., "I see him last week"; non-marking of plurals, e.g., "two brother"; absence of the copula 'is', e.g., "My brother in America"; the omission of subject pronoun, e.g., "Can", "Speak French also"; the only two question tags "is" and "isn't it", e.g., "You want ticket, is it?"; the use of expressive *la* (lah) (very common), e.g., "Not actually, *la"*, "So it depend, *la"*; the omission of the conjunction "if", e.g., "Stay here, they throw ou"t. The lexical stock also contains many local words, e.g., *makan* for food, meal, *rojak* for salad (but also for 'in a mess'), *ulu* = outer suburb; translations from Malay or Chinese words, e.g., "I follow him" = "I go with him" (from Malay *ikut);* and colonial remainders, e.g., *missus* = wife, *outstation* = away. English words have also acquired new meanings, e.g., *send* = take (c.f. Mandarin *na),* "I'll send you home"; *drop* = get out, "I'll drop here"; *side* = in direction of, "I live Sentosa-side".

Examples of Singapore English can be found in English and American fiction:

> "Cigarette?" asked Mr Sim, briskly offering a can of them. "Tea? Beer? Wireless?" He flicked on the radio, tuned it to the English station and got waltz music. "I buy that wireless set —two week. Fifty-over dollar. Too much-*lah.* But!" He clapped his hands and laughed, becoming hospitable.(Paul Theroux. *Saint Jack,* p. 115).

### 9.2. *Malaysia*

Secondary and tertiary education in colonial Malaya were English-medium. Today both levels are Malay-medium. However, the Chinese minority (40%+) of the Malaysian community has tended to send its children overseas to English-speaking countries for higher education and English is also valued generally for economic reasons. There are two perceived varieties of Malaysian English —that of the Malay-educated and that of the English-educated (Platt and Weber: 167). The English of Malay and Chinese

Malaysians also differs somewhat in the choice of vocabulary. However, the fundamental difference between Malaysian English and Singapore English is that the former is overwhelmingly a second language, while the latter is commonly a first language. Malaysian English has similar features to Singapore English, e.g., use of Malay words, omission of relative pronouns, tense-markers, etc.

## 10. BRUNEI LITERATURE

Bruneian writers of the twentieth century have chosen to write in Standard Malay rather than in English or Brunei Malay. Standard Malay is the form of Malay used in education and there has been no tradition of writing in Brunei Malay, except, e.g., for communication within the family. This is perhaps to be regretted since Brunei Malay has a richer vocabulary than Standard Malay.[13]

Brunei literature in Malay is usually divided into two periods —old and new. The old period consists of traditional stories and poems; the new one is said to have begun in 1840[14] with the appearance of modern attitudes, e.g., the *Syair Rakis* of Mohammad Salleh which presented new ideas in traditional poetic form. However, the first group of writers of modern fiction were Bruneian graduates from the Sultan Idris Teacher Training College in Tanjung Malim, Malaya, in the 1930s. Between 1932-42 these teachers wrote short stories which were published in the College journal *Cenderamata SITC* and in newspapers and magazines,[15] mostly under pseudonyms. These works were not republished and are not now easily accessible.[16] As internal independence came in 1959, new weeklies appeared *—Malaysia, Suara Rakyat, Berita Brunei.* Radio Brunei also began to broadcast short stories. Unfortunately the new magazines and journals had only a brief life, since they could neither attract an adequate local readership nor compete with imported magazines and journals, and short story writers were left with only the radio outlet. In the 1960s a new paper, *Suara Bakti,* briefly (6 months) provided another forum and some of the more successful writers were also able to place their stories in foreign (e.g., Sabah) magazines and papers. Another publication, *Bintang Harian* (1966-71) gave further openings. An anthology of women's short stories *Awan Putih Berarak Damai (White Clouds in Peaceful Procession)* was published by the National Bureau for Language and Literature in 1988.

The best short story writer in Brunei today, and often considered Brunei's foremost writer, is Mussidi (Bin Kadi, 1992: ii)). His philosophy is profound, his symbolisation sharp, and he describes the lives of ordinary Bruneians in clear, effective and well-chosen language, while highlighting universal human themes.

The Brunei novel proper dates from 1951 with Yura Halim's objective historical work *Bendahara Menjadi Sultan (The Treasurer Becomes Sultan).* In all there are only about 20 novels, published mainly by the National Bureau for Language or Literature. H. M. Salleh's *Tunangan Pemimpin Bangsa (The Betrothed Leads the Nation),* published in 1952, tells a love story in the framework of the longing of Bruneians to be free from the colonising effect of the British protectorate. The next novel to appear, sixteen years on, was *Garis Cerah Di Ufuk Senja (The Bright Line on the Evening Horizon),* a short idealistic and romantic work by Salleh Abdul Latiff. Thirteen years later, Salleh Abdul Latiff wrote a further novel, *Gegaran Semusim (The Season's Vibration),* describing the poverty of a group of Bruneians living in a rich oil state. The book centres on the story of a poor uneducated Bruneian, Pak Talip, who is pressurised to join a political party and subsequently dies an innocent victim of a revolt staged by that party. In 1982 another novel by Salleh Abdul Latiff, *Meniti Hasrat (Bridging Desire),* tells the story of a young Bruneian born out of wedlock who, after a series of setbacks, is helped by a Canadian engineer to further his education in North America. Two interesting social features of this novel are the portrayal of a Muslim girl as the mistress of an English employee of the Shell oil company and the help given to the boy by the Canadian and local Chinese. It seems that Muslim Burmat, perhaps Brunei's best-known writer, was influenced by this work to write his first major novel *Lari Bersama Musim (Running with the Seasons). Lari Bersama Musim* (1982) describes the hardships of a poor Bruneian fishing family whose members become farmers. The emphasis is again on the contrast between the poverty of many ordinary Bruneians and the surrounding oil riches.

In 1981 the NLLB established a literary competition to select the best novel and four novels chosen were printed between 1983 and 1985. The competition in the year of independence, 1985, established the reputation of Muslim Burmat as Brunei's best writer.[17] His *Hadiah Sebuah Impian (The Reward of a Dream)* is the well-constructed story, told in simple language, of a religious official who gives up a comfortable life to help in the economic and spiritual development of his isolated village in the under developed hinterlands of the neglected half of Brunei, Temburong, in the face of strong resistance from rich and powerful opponents. Another competition winner was *Orang Asing (The Stranger),* published in 1985. The first novel by a non-Muslim local Chinese, Chong Ah Fok, is the story of an uneducated Bruneian workman who succeeds in propagating Islamic teaching to his wife's Dusun family. Two further novels were published in 1985: *Menyerah (Surrender)* by Leman Ahmad and *Langit Makin Cerah (The Sky Becomes Brighter)* by Mahmud Pengarah Digadong Haji Abu Bakar. *Menyerah* describes the 1962 uprising and, though the hero, Johan, is not altogether clear of the

reasons for his involvement, the novel takes a positive attitude to the rebellion, largely a forbidden topic today. *Langit Makin Cerah* describes the friendship of a commoner and a noble in a prison camp following the rebellion and shows that all human beings are fundamentally similar. They later set up adjacent homes and their children marry. The latter novel also emphasis the value of knowledge in strengthening a person's resolve in life. Another novel by Latiff, published in 1986, *Titian Semusim (The Drop of a Season),* returns to the themes of knowledge and education when the hero goes abroad to study and obtain a degree. The first prize in the Bureau's 1983 competition was won by a woman writer, Norsiah Abd. Gapar, with *Pengabdian* (published in 1987), leaving Muslim Burmat's *Puncak Pertama* (published in 1988) in second place. *Pengabdian (Dedication)* is a conventional novel portraying the life of a determined young Bruneian woman doctor, Siti Nur, from a poor background, who, despite several bitter experiences, is able to succeed by sacrifice and commitment in establishing a clinic for the needy before she dies from overwork. *Puncak Pertama (The First Peak)* records the history of a small group of Bruneians who move from place to place in the not always successful hope of bettering their existence. *Mangsa (Victim)* by Ampuan Hj Brahim Ampuan Hj Tenggah (1990), which won the third prize for in the Bureau's Silver Jubilee competition in 1986, describes day-to-day events in the life of a Brunei farmer.[18] There is little action, but the recursive rhythm of style and language is effective and original. *Matahari Petang (The Afternoon Sun)* (1990) by Ak Metussin Pg Haji Md Daud, which won the second prize for its attractively handled plot, is the story of a young teacher who is a victim of authority.

The Brunei novels described so far deal with local issues and are conventional in plot and language. *Mangsa* is regarded by Brunei critics as perhaps the most original in terms of style and language, but, as a local critic points out, the weakness of Latiff and most Brunei writers is their inability to match register to character (Hakim: 8) —characters speak in standard Malay, whatever their age, tribal origin or social position. Nevertheless, local colour is well handled and descriptions of places, people and behaviour are realistic and recognisable. Within the limitations of the local situation, Bruneian writers have up till now also shown considerable social conscience and awareness and have attempted to deal honestly and openly with problems of prosperity and independence.

The bilingual system of education came into existence in 1985 and its effects are obviously not yet apparent in Bruneian fiction. A question mark must therefore hang over the future of writing in Malay. Personal experience suggests that the current cohorts of university students have mastery of neither English nor Malay, a condition described by Dodson as *semi-lingual*. As will be seen below (para. 11), they also lack reading motivation. Even the

National Bureau for Language and Literature must soon face problems in recruiting staff with an educated command of Malay, since the University of Brunei Darussalam does not offer degrees in Malay, and Bruneian students are not given financial support to study Malay elsewhere.

## 11. READING HABITS

Quite who reads Brunei writers is hard to assess. Malay literature taught in secondary schools includes works from Indonesia and Malaysia, and it is only students training to become teachers of Malay in the secondary schools who have the opportunity to follow a course specifically in the Malay literature of Brunei. Apart from this group, few other students appear to read much Malay.

The only full degree offered by the University of Brunei Darussalam (UBD) is an English-medium BA in Management or Administrative Studies. In a small piece of research in 1990, 32 first-year students from the Faculty of Management and Administrative Studies were asked to complete a questionnaire detailing their reading habits in English and Malay. Before answering the questionnaire the respondents were told that reading habits covered both light and serious reading.

Q1 asked how often the respondents read books in English. 10/32 read regularly (1 book a week), 18/32 often (1 book a month), 4/32 seldom (1 book a year). Q2 asked how often the respondents read books in Malay. 7/32 read regularly (1 book a week), 9/32 often (1 book a month), 11/32 seldom (1 book a year) and 5/32 never. Q3 asked how many English books the respondents bought a year. 2/32 bought none, 1/32 bought one, 22/32 bought two-five, 1/32 bought five-ten, and 6/32 bought more than ten. Q4 asked how many Malay books respondents bought a year. 10/32 bought none, 4/32 bought 1, 10/32 bought two-five, 1/32 bought five-ten, and 6/32 bought more than ten.

Q5 asked how often respondents read magazines in English. 12/32 read regularly, 14/32 often, and 6/32 seldom. Q6 asked how often respondents read magazines in Malay. 9/32 read regularly, 15/32 often, 8/32 seldom. Q7 asked how often respondents read newspapers in English. 10/32 read regularly, 14/32 often, 5/32 seldom; 3/32 gave no answer. Q8 asked respondents for the name of their favourite English language newspaper (if any). 17/32 cited the *Borneo Bulletin* (at the time a weekly, though it has since become a daily). 7/32 favoured the Malaysian *New Straits Times,* and 5/32 the Singapore *Straits Times*. 1/32 gave the *Tribune*. 2/32 gave no answer. Q9 asked how often respondents read newspapers in Malay. 11/32 read regularly, 12/32 often, 7/32 seldom, and 1/32 never; 1/32 did not answer the question. Q10 asked for the author and title of an English book read and enjoyed during the past year. 13/32 did not answer this question. 4/32 chose Sidney Sheldon *(Windmills of*

*God, Tomorrow Comes, Sands of Time, Millionaires, The Other Side of Midnight, Bloodline).* 2/32 chose Joanna Lindsay *(Thunder).* Other authors mentioned by individual respondents were: Jeffrey Archer *(Not a Penny More, Not a Penny Less),* Edward de Bono *(I am Right, You are Wrong),* David Eddings *(Belgariad),* Virginia Andrews *(Heaven),* Rene Floriot *(When Justice Falters),* Segaller *(Terrorism into the Nineties),* Conan Doyle *(Sherlock Holmes),* Jude Devereux *(River Lady),* Stephen King *(Misery),* John Gardner *(Licence to Kill)* and Danielle Steele *(To Love Again).* Q11 asked for the title of any Malay (Bruneian, Malaysian, Indonesian) book read and enjoyed during the past year. Only 8/32 respondents answered this question positively. 2/32 gave one title *Sepi itu Indah,* each of the other 6 gave a different author/title. Only one Bruneian author/title was mentioned —Muslim Burmat *(Lari Bersama Musim).* Q12 asked for the name of a favourite English author (if any). 7/32 favoured Sidney Sheldon, 2/32 Penny Jordan and Carole Mortimer, and 1/32 —Danielle Stack, David Eddings, Edward de Bono, Georgette Heyer, Jude Devereux, M.M. Kaye, Edgar Allan Poe, Johanna Lindsay, and Barbara Cartland. Q13 asked for the name of a favourite Malay author (if any). 9/32 respondents answered this question positively. 5/32 chose Khadijah Hashim (Malaysian), 2/32 Freddy S. (Indonesian), and 1/32 —Dr. Osman Awang, Professor Ungku Aziz.

Q14 asked for reading preferences. 18/32 put contemporary novels at the top of the list, 7/32 short stories, 3/32 historical novels, and 1/32 novels about big business (34 choices are explained by shared first choices in some cases). Q15 asked about preferred settings. 22/32 preferred a novel with a European or American setting, 7/32 with an Asian setting and 3/32 with a mid-Eastern setting. Q16 asked how many books respondents read to prepare themselves for their university studies after finishing school examinations. 13/32 read no books, 8/32 read 2-5 books, 5/32 read 1 book, 2/32 read more than 10 books, and 1/32 read 5-10 books. 3/32 gave no answer.

These results speak for themselves, but the following points are significant in the light of the fact that the respondents were almost certainly destined to join the higher echelons of the managerial/administrative class on graduation. The responses suggest that:

a. Brunei students are not great readers.
b. Brunei students do not read widely.
c. Brunei students read comparatively little in Malay.
d. English reading is at the level of the ‘airport bookstall’ novel.

It seems clear that, increasingly, by the time a Brunei student graduates either in Brunei or overseas s/he will generally have lost the habit of reading in Malay, and leisure reading and other activities will be dominated by English. Indeed it is not unfair to assume that graduates have become so

distanced from educated Malay usage, that they will find it difficult to read modern literary Malay.

## 12. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS IN TRANSLATING BRUNEI LITERATURE

The translator contemplating translating Brunei Malay literature, as any translator of literature, must identify or at least have a vision of his target reader. Is that reader an 'ideal reader', an 'addressee' or an 'overhearer', to use Coulthard's terms?

> Using the analogy of 'overhearer' and addressee' we can see that a translator has two options: he may set out to put his own ideal reader in the position of a linguistically competent overhearer of the original text, in which case his task will merely consist of taking away all the *linguistic* barriers in order to give a new group of real readers access to a message originally textualised for others; or, more daringly, he may attempt to put his ideal reader in the position of being an addressee, in other words he may retextualise the message in the way (he thinks) it would have been textualised had his ideal reader been that of the original author. (Coulthard: 11).

Gatekeepers governing access to the reader in the translation process are, of course, the publisher, the agency or individual commissioning the translation and, in many cases the intermediary who first promotes the desirability of translating a particular literary work. This can be a haphazard process (see, e.g., Philipson). There are many variables in considering the translation of Brunei Malay literature. Malay literature (including Indonesian) is not widely known and the opinions and estimates of Bruneian, Malaysian and Indonesian literary critics are not widely publicised. What is the international rating of Malaysia's most highly rated author, Shahnon Ahmad,[19] or Indonesia's Budi Darma? Indonesia's Pramoedya Ananta Toer has had some publicity for political reasons, but the few translations of his works are not widely known.

The recent initiative of the Brunei National Bureau of Language and Literature to translate Brunei fiction into English seems to be motivated by an official belief that Brunei literature should be more widely known, but there do not seem to be any plans to market the translations outside Brunei. Understandably perhaps, since Brunei Malay literature is concerned with the issues of a small and inward-looking society, and there has been no call for commercial translations into English for the outside world. Brunei Malay literature in translation could be of interest to local expatriates or Southeast Asian experts, but a more likely readership could be other Southeast Asians, especially those with a good command of English. Singapore now has an English mother tongue intellectual elite and there is a growing body of

Singapore literature in English, which is quite widely read. Filipinos and Thais, who now work in Brunei in increasing numbers, could be another potential readership group.

Another phenomenon is of some importance. As language choices and priorities change, Brunei Malay literature faces a crisis of identity. Novels continue to be written in Malay but the potential Malay-educated target audience is rapidly decreasing. This means that a future readership could well be educated Bruneians whose knowledge of Standard Written Malay is no longer adequate to cope with local Malay literature. It is pertinent to ask whether translations targeted at both this group and Singaporeans should make use of Brunei English or Standard English. Bruneians and Singaporeans may be happier with local varieties of English which fit their concept of characters in Brunei fiction. However, there is a problem of mismatch, since almost all Brunei authors write both narrative and dialogue in Standard Malay, with only occasional lexis or idioms which give a Brunei flavour. Should the translator translate from Standard Malay to Standard English, producing target text in which the dialogue, in particular, seems out of character, or should s/he settle for the Brunei variety of English, which gives a specific flavour instantly accepted by Bruneians, but a little unusual for native speakers. It is, of course, a paradox faced in translating, e.g., dialogue in D H Lawrence's or Thomas Hardy's works, into Malay. There is no past model to draw upon. Very few Indonesian or Malaysian works of fiction have been translated into English, the most well-known of the former being Mochtar Lubis' *Twilight in Jakarta (Senja di Jakarta),* a vivid description of the later years of the Soekarno period, and Pramoedya Ananta Toer's historical series, perhaps because he has quite recently been promoted as a contender for the Nobel prize. Such translations are generally intended for North American, Australian, New Zealand or British (i.e., native-speaker) readers. Critics with a mastery of both languages are few, and it is only rarely that such translations are analysed or discussed in terms of suitability, quality and fidelity (see, though, Sudjiman). However, they will, in any case, be judged less on their accuracy than by their readability in the target language, and here translator/reader assumptions and expectations will almost certainly apply. Thus, if an international audience were intended, it is probably safer to translate Malay dialogue into Standard English and reduce the likelihood of hitches in reader comprehension.

## 13. SPECIFICS IN TRANSLATING BRUNEI LITERATURE

### 13.1. *Narrative*

There is a temptation in translating Eastern literature to embellish the target text with exotica that meet perceived reader expectations.[20] This temptation is

also there for the translator of Brunei Malay fiction. On the other hand such exotica may be an unacceptable load for the non-specialist Western reader. Smith recounts how he was asked to recommend translations of Thai novels which would provide an insight into Thai culture. Starting from the criteria of popularity in the original and accurate translation, he discovered that reactions were based on the attraction of style and subject matter to the reader. In other words, Western target reader expectations of the texts differed from those of Thai readers (Smith: 113-120). Thus basic choices like reader-oriented versus-text-oriented translation (Rose: 32) may be more crucial where the gap between the cultures is greater. The load of cultural information in a Southeast Asian narrative may read like an anthropological text when translated, requiring extensive footnotes for reader acceptance.[21] Brunei fiction presents its own difficulties, since the Western image of Brunei culture is something of a mixture of remembered Conradian gloom (e.g., *Lord Jim)* and the current media obsession with oil riches.

Take, for example, the following passage from Muslim Burmat's *Hadiah Sebuah Impian* (p. 2):

> The old man, a younger brother of the deceased Ghafor's dead father, was sixty-two. He held office as village head of Red Earth Village, a village far up the Temburong River, and he was much esteemed and respected by his subordinates. The villagers respected his position —a position which his dead father had also held. At his age he should have already retired but the villagers still wanted his services and the Temburong District Officer had extended his contract.

The Brunei reader knows that:

1. Village heads are chosen and paid by government after consultation with villagers. Their responsibilities are extensive but essentially submissive in an autocratic society. Respect for position and authority is far greater in Brunei's hierarchical society than in the West.
2. The Temburong River is in the more isolated half of Brunei and an upstream village is only accessible by motorboat up a river impassable in the rainy season. Although the State is wealthy, the village would have far fewer facilities than villages close to the capital.
3. Brunei has retained the title of District Officer, but the title no longer has colonial associations.

### 13.2. *Direct Speech*

Speech in fiction raises other problems. Take, for instance, the following passage from Anthony Burgess' *The Long Day Wanes,* about a British teacher in colonial Malaya in the 1950s:

> The citizens of Kuala Hantu watched him go by. Workless Malays in worn white trousers quatted on the low wall of the public fountain and discussed him.
> "He walks to the school. He has no car. Yet he is rich."
> "He saves money to be richer still. He will go back to England with full pockets and do no more work."
> "That is wise enough. He is no banana-eating child."
> The two old hajis who sat near the door of the coffee shop spoke together.
> "The horn-bill pairs with his own kind, and so does the sparrow. The white man will say it is not seemly for him to walk to work like a labourer"
> "His heart is not swollen. Enter a goat's pen bleating, enter a buffalo's stall bellowing. He believes so. He would be like the ordinary people."(p. 37)

This could be a literal translation from Malay, but the English dialogue has a quaintness which, it is suggested, does not quite fit the speakers. 'White man' is for instance a straight translation of *'orang putih'*, which does not have the same overtones in Malay as in English e.g. 'white man's burden', etc., and the full forms of the auxiliary verbs seem stilted —conversational Malay uses reduced forms.

Carter and Nash suggest that, while dialogue in English fiction is constructed by the rules of naturally occurring conversation, it also has a literary aesthetic, related to the following functions:

1. To interrupt the flow of general narration, slow down the movement of the story, and concentrate attention on a particular event, relationship, etc.
2. To bring out character, and relationships between characters; personalities being revealed by what they say, what others say to or about them, and how they respond to
3. To create a sense of background by supplying impressions —conveyed through personal interactions— of a society, its manners, its concerns, its material objects. (Carter and Nash: 90).

Translated dialogue therefore carries a heavy burden, particularly when Free Direct Speech (Simpson: 25) is liberated from narratorial control and overt authorial interference. Characters 'speaking for themselves' must convey credibility in the way that I do not think Burgess' Malays are able to. Take another example. How should one translate the speech of a local Chinese trader who figures in Chapter 3 of *Mangsa,* which is marked both by the replacement of Malay *r* with *l* and the use of Chinese pronouns from the Jakarta dialect, without using an English which, like Burgess', is redolent of a colonial past, e.g.:

> "Itulah gua mau cali orang, jaga gua punya balang." (p. 45)[22]
> "Telima kasi manyak." (p. 48)
> "Lu punya kelabau olang culi jugakah?" (p. 44)

Or how to translate the Brunei Malay used by Ampuan Hj Brahim's Malay characters, e.g., the particles *bah* or *au bah,* which show phatic agreement?

> Lelaki bertopi putih melihat jam.
> "Bah! Berjalan dulu ku liau, kan ke opisku."
> "Bah." (p. 143)
>
> "Kerbau kita 'Si Gani' atu bah ji?" kata Leman.
> "Au bah."(p. 44)

One option is to translate dialogue into the local variety of English. While, as has been pointed out above, the speech of characters in most Brunei Malay novels does not reflect age, character or social position, the translator will be conscious that a target text could carry more local flavour if characters spoke English as they might in real life, as, e.g., they are portrayed in a number of English and American novels situated in the region.[23] Moreover, much will depend on the target audience. The realities of publishing mean that only rarely will a translation of a Brunei Malay novel find any market outside the region unless it is heavily subsidized. However, cultural cooperation is resulting in a growing regional encouragement of local literatures and the growth of English-medium fiction in Singapore could lead to an interest in Brunei novels in English that matched regional expectations of language use and usage.[24]

## 14. CONCLUSION

Contemporary Brunei writers have so far avoided ideological or political debate and have been content to provide a realistic and valid portrayal of a Bruneian society in flux and change. How far the recent emphasis on the national philosophy will push them to a less balanced output is hard to estimate. But such preoccupations are perhaps less urgent than the problem of ensuring adequate readership in the wake of the fundamental shift to English that has occurred in education. This change may result in a new class of Brunei English-medium writers, but could also mean that knowledge of Malay fiction before the 1980s could only be preserved if novels and short stories were translated into English. Such translations might not be welcomed, since English is perceived by some Bruneians as a Trojan horse for negative and unwelcomed Western influences.[25] Their attitude is well reflected in a poem by the father of the present Sultan, Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddien, in which he described the language of his Western 'advisers' as:

| | |
|---|---|
| "Perkataan kasar tiada bersopan | "Rough and impolite words |
| seperti juga cara syaitan | in the manner of Satan |
| mengeluarkan madah bertekan-tekan | expressing praise with persistent force |
| seperti bunyi ombak lautan." | like the sound of ocean waves." |
| (Syair Rajang Jenaka) | |

## NOTES

1. Eg. State Secretariat Circular No. 22/1981 which noted that some Departments were still using official forms in English without their Malay version. The Director of the National Language and Literature Bureau has also commented adversely on the continued use of English for interdepartmental communication ("Masih ada guna bahasa asing." (Foreign languages still used.). (*Borneo Bulletin*. C 24 January 1991).
2. Malaysia had begun to supply Malay native speaker teachers and in 1958 11 teachers arrived on 5-year contracts *(Penyata Pembangunan 1953-58)*. The souring of relationships following the December 1962 rebellion seems to have cut off this supply.
3. A 1987 government document, *The Education System,* states:
   "The concept of a bilingual system is a means of ensuring the sovereignty of the Malay Language, while at the same time recognising the importance of the English Language. By means of the Education System of Negara Brunei Darussalam a high degree of proficiency in both languages should be achieved."
4. Until recently history was taught in English, as there was a dearth of suitable Malay texts. The first Malay-medium primary history textbook was published in August 1991 and has just been introduced into schools.
5. "Since 1971 official figures have included Dusuns, Muruts, Kedayans and Bisayas in the Malay figure. The others figure includes Indians and 'not stated'" *(Brunei Statistical Yearbook 1989: 32).*
6. Estimated 1989 population 44,400 (17.8%) *(Brunei Statistical Yearbook 1989).*
7. *Asterawani,* a local literary organisation, is also a prime motivator of literary activity.
8. Three of the translators have Diplomas in Translation from the University of Malaya; the others GCE 'A' Level in English.
9. "The principle of MIB is based on Malay philosophy and to establish identity of Bruneian who are known for their friendliness, cooperation, politeness and many other noble characteristics. Bruneian are also notable for their absolute Islamic faith and undivided loyalty to the Sultan.

   However, the Bruneian cultural heritage and way of life have been influenced by outside element, which affect the practice of MIB in Brunei Darussalam. The social and cultural impact on the values are greatly influenced by the economic growth, development and social changes in the country. The educational system introduced in the country has also changed the mentality of Bruneian.

   All these changes can lead to the misconception of Islamic belief among the younge generation in their attitudes, behaviour and mentality" *(sic.* Introduction to MIB Course Syllabus for Year 1 undergraduates, University of Brunei Darussalam 1990).
10. A small study of business language needs carried out in 1990 (Smith) under the auspices of the Brunei Malay Chamber of Commerce found that English and Malay were regarded as of equal importance by Malay businessmen.
11. As native English speakers find the working conditions less attractive, they are being replaced by non-native speakers from a variety of developing countries and the quality and accuracy of English in schools and university is diminishing.

12. There is also a variety of Singapore English used by the minority Chiunese-educated group, but: "Speakers of English in Singapore share certain linguistic features, which serve as effective cues to their national identity. This suggests that, as with the development of any language variety, there is an increasing similarity of varieties of Singapore English as spoken by people of different linguistic and ethnic backgrounds." (Goh: 276).
13. We may compare the situation in Indonesia, where, despite the far richer vocabulary of Javanese, the Javanese novel has well nigh vanished and published fiction is almost entirely in Indonesian.
14. Latiff: 90.
15. Interestingly, one of these, the weekly *Salam,* was published by the Shell Oil Company in the early post-W.W.II years.
16. Latiff: 37.
17. Muslim Burmat's writing on oilfield workers may be compared to *"Cities of Salt"*, an excellent translation of an Arabic novel by Abdul Rahman Munif dealing with the impact of oil wealth in Saudi Arabia. Read only by Middle East experts, diplomats or oilmen, it is doubtful whether *"Cities of Salt"* will ever receive the ultimate accolade of popular success —a paperback edition.
18. Referred to throughout the book as "The old man with ringworm in his elbow and a thick moustache."
19. Malaysia's 'Victor Hugo', according to a former Prime Minister (Hasan: 39).
20. E.g. Middle Eastern and Islamic works. "A final question of some importance is the kind of English one should use in translating from Arabic. The cause of cultural communication has suffered some damage from a sort of Anglo-Arabese favored by many, particularly Victorian, translators —a pseudo-biblical, neo-gothic, mock-Elizabethan, bogus Oriental style which finds its ultimate form in Burton's translation of the *Thousand and One Nights* and still seems to contaminate some other translators, recent and even contemporary. There really is no need to create a special form of English in order to translate Arabic. The English language which we have is adequate to the purpose and should allow the translator todischarge his or her duty —to present the text in clear and accurate English, free fromintrusive concepts and images, preserved within the context of the world from which it came." (Lewis: 71).
21. Translations of modern Chinese literature or Japanese literature are a case in point. "Translating vernacular Chinese fiction involves not merely linguistic and lexical problems, but generic difficulties as well. The "pleasures of the text" in the original are in the verve and vitality of the idiomatic expressions, rather than in character analysis, subtle psychologising or impressive interior dialogue." (Eugene Eoyang, reviewing a translation of *The Scholars Translation Review* 42/43 1993: 55).
22. Confusion can arise, since cali (correctly *cari* = look for) is also Brunei dialect for 'funny'.
23. Muhammad, who has written the only Malaysian textbook on translation, says that translated dialogue should express feelings in the way a speaker in the source language would express those feelings (Muhammad: 92).

24. But there remains a risk: "The disruptive effect of a translation is not on the original, but on the receptor's response to the original: having read an appropriative translation the receptor may come to feel differently about the original." (Robinson: 20).
25. "Furthermore, if English continues to be used as the medium of instruction in schools, this will not merely result in the demise of the Malay language but will also create the impression that learning can only be through the use of the English language. The threat will be more evident if the people of the nation achieve success through the medium of English, for this will create a feeling of dislike or disdain for their own language which they may regard as of little value or little use, especially by those in positions of power and responsibility who chart the course of the nation." (Al-Sufri (1992): 7).

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