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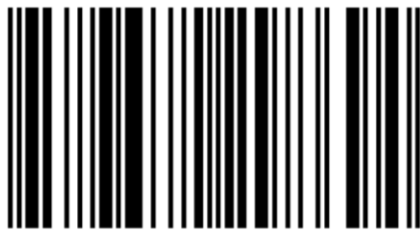
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LANGUAGE USE OF THE IBAN PEOPLE IN IBAN DOMINANT AND NON-IBAN DOMINANT AREAS IN SARAWAK

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the language use of the Iban people in Iban dominant and non-Iban dominant areas in Sarawak. Questionnaire data were obtained from 84 Iban respondents on their language use in nine domains. The findings showed that regardless of the numerical dominance of Iban in the area, almost all the Iban respondents spoke Iban with their family, but they mostly used Sarawak Malay Dialect in public places and the market. In Iban dominant areas, Iban is the main language of communication with neighbours, friends, classmates, and for prayers, while Sarawak Malay Dialect is mostly used with workmates. However, in the non-Iban dominant areas, Iban is mostly used only with neighbours but English is used mostly with classmates, workmates, and for prayers. The participants also used Sarawak Malay Dialect when interacting with their friends. As for social media communication, respondents from both Iban dominant and non-Iban dominant areas used mainly English. The exception is on writing SMS messages, where respondents from Iban dominant areas used mostly Iban. The study showed that in non-Iban dominant areas, the ethnic language is losing ground in communication with friends and classmates, and for praying, indicating that these are the domains that will see potential shift in future.

Keywords: Iban, language use, domains, intergenerational language use, social media

Introduction

The Iban people are also known as the “Sea Dayaks”, a designation given by James Brooke to the ethnic group in the late 19th century due to their close connection with the sea. The Iban people speak the Iban language, which has less regional variation than the Bidayuh. According to Omar (1981), the Iban language is rather homogeneous, in which dialect words are few and differences between areas of settlement are mostly in the accent and details in custom and rituals. With regards to Iban language education, Iban has been included in the school curriculum in some primary schools since 1968,