



Malay and English Language Contact in Social Media Texts in Brunei Darussalam and Malaysia

James McLellan*

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Universiti Brunei Darussalam, Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei

This paper focuses on aspects of language contact, specifically Malay and English in the domain of social media. Key components of the theoretical framework are world Englishes being by definition code-mixed varieties, and the complementary notions of nativization (of English) and englishization (of Malay, in this case). Texts examined and analyzed are from Whatsapp chats and groups, with the consent of all participants, and from public social media sites in the Malay world, mostly Negara Brunei Darussalam (henceforth Brunei) but also Malaysia. Brunei is known for having a very high percentage of social media use per head of population, with especially high levels of use of Instagram and Facebook, as well as discussion forums such as Reddit. In their social media interactions Bruneians and Malaysians have a range of language choices, from monolingual English to monolingual Malay, and varying degrees of code-mixing or translanguaging. Many Bruneians and Malaysians are multilingual, and thus may have more than two languages as resources to draw on. Analysis of threads of discussion forum postings on the same topic demonstrate the multilingual repertoire of participants, for whom any of the available language choices are unmarked. This is in part owing to the use of English as one medium of education alongside Malay: consistently in Brunei since 1985, inconsistently in Malaysia since 1963. The conclusion of the paper raises two questions: whether it is valid to posit the language of social media as a new variety comprising both local and global influences and inputs, and whether social media is a driver of change in varieties of English in Southeast Asia.

Keywords: contact, Malay-English, nativization, englishization, social media, translanguaging

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*Correspondence:

James McLellan
james.mclellan@ubd.edu.bn

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INTRODUCTION

Bearing in mind the title and the importance of this research topic, “Englishes in a Globalized World: Exploring Contact Effects on Other Languages,” it is necessary at the outset to state that this article is not just about Englishes. It attempts to highlight the salience of the “other languages.” World Englishes are by definition code-mixed or translanguaging varieties (McLellan, 2020), and this article draws on the *kueh lapis* (Malay, “layer cake”) analogy used by Haji-Othman and McLellan (2014) with reference to Brunei. This was developed as a means of showing that English, in Brunei and Malaysia, as elsewhere in multilingual societies, is just one language among many, akin to the many layers of a layer cake, a delicacy in Borneo. Haji-Othman (2012, p. 175–190) sums up the issue succinctly in the Brunei context in his chapter entitled “Is it always English? Dueling aunties in Brunei Darussalam,” which aptly envisages English and Malay as

two dueling aunties competing for influence. The complementary notions of nativization (of English) and englishization (of local languages), developed by Kachru (2005, p. 113–117) are adopted as a basis for discussion of features of Malay/English language contact phenomena. The interconnected notions of code switching, code mixing, language alternation and translanguaging are outlined below.

The Context: Brunei

Negara Brunei Darussalam (henceforth Brunei) is a small Malay Islamic Sultanate located on the north-western coast of the island of Borneo, with a coastline of about 160 km on the South China Sea. It is surrounded on the other three sides by the East Malaysian state of Sarawak, which also divides the Temburong District from the other three Brunei administrative districts, Brunei-Muara, Tutong and Belait. The total land area is 5,675 km². The population of about 453,600 (<http://www.deps.gov.bn/SitePages/Population.aspx>) is concentrated along a narrow coastal strip and consists of Brunei Malays (66%), Chinese (11%), other indigenous groups (3%), with the remainder (20%) comprising other Borneo-indigenous groups such as Iban, and a still substantial number of expatriate workers who are temporary residents. Brunei's core national philosophy and ideology is *Melayu Islam Beraja* (Malay Islamic Monarchy). The Malay component refers to the official language, *Bahasa Melayu* (standard Malay), as designated in the 1959 Constitution, although the main lingua franca and the default language for everyday communication is the distinctive Brunei variety of Malay. Since 1985, 1 year after the resumption of full independence, Brunei has had a bilingual Malay and English language-in-education policy, with some subjects taught through the medium of (standard) Malay, and others, including Science and Mathematics, taught in English-medium. Under the current *Sistem Pendidikan Abad ke-21* ("Education System for the twenty-first century") English-medium operates right from pre-school through all levels (Haji-Othman et al., 2019). Hence most Bruneians under 35 years of age and educated to secondary-level or beyond are proficient in both standard and Brunei Malay, and in English (Goode, 2020).

The Context: Malaysia

Malaysia comprises the Malay Peninsula, bordering Thailand on the north and Singapore in the south, and two states on the island of Borneo, Sabah, and Sarawak. Based on the 2010 census, the total population of Malaysia was 28.3 million, with 20% of the population living in Sabah and Sarawak (dosm.gov.my). The ethnic breakdown in Malaysia is 67% Malays and indigenous groups, 25% Chinese, 7% Indians (7.3%), and 1% classified as others (e.g., Malaysians with Portuguese or Dutch ancestry). In Peninsular Malaysia, Malays make up 63% of the population (dosm.gov.my) while the indigenous groups, known as Orang Asli, comprise ~0.7% of the population (<https://www.jakoa.gov.my/data-terbuka-sektor-awam/>). In East Malaysia, the Kadazan make up 26% of Sabah's population, while the Iban comprise 30.3% of the total population in Sarawak (dosm.gov.my). The language landscape in the public sector, including education, began to shift upon independence, which was first granted to the Malay Peninsula, Malaya, in 1957. Malay (*Bahasa*

Malaysia) was declared as the national language (Article 152 of the Federal Constitution of Malaysia, 1963) as a means of promoting and creating a common national identity for the new nation which then comprised the Malay Peninsula, Sabah and Sarawak, and Singapore. Singapore left the Federation in 1965. At independence, there were schools with different mediums of instruction and curricula. Following independence, Malay began to replace English in government administration and public education. This process continued until the 1990s, when Science and Technology degree programmes, including Medicine, reverted to being taught in English-medium. In 2001 Malaysia reverted to English-medium for Science and Mathematics, then in 2009 this decision was reversed yet again, on mainly political, not educational grounds, and Malay-medium was reintroduced. Currently a "Dual Language Programme" is in place, allowing some schools a measure of choice as to medium of education for Science and Mathematics, including for public examinations. The changes in policy have done little to redress the rural-urban imbalance: in cities and large towns English functions as a second language; in rural areas English is effectively a foreign language, little used outside school classrooms.

Along with neighboring Southeast Asian nations Singapore and the Philippines, Brunei and Malaysia are categorized as "outer-circle" in Kachru's (2005) Three Circles model of world Englishes, since English has many intranational functions and both have distinct and well-described varieties of English, which are used between Bruneians and between Malaysians at varying levels of formality. It is beyond the limited scope of this article to give full descriptions of the linguistic and discursive features of Brunei and Malaysian Englishes: for these, readers may refer to Deterding and Salbrina (2013) for Brunei English, and to Azirah and Tan (2012), among many other studies, for Malaysian English.

SOCIAL MEDIA IN BRUNEI AND MALAYSIA

Brunei is among the nations with the highest proportion of internet connection to its population with 95%. Of these 99% are active social media users (Kemp, 2021a). Among the most popular platforms are WhatsApp, Instagram and the Brunei Subreddit discussion forum. Wood (2016) highlights the importance of social media platforms for the development of Brunei English, owing to their popularity among younger bi- and multilingual Bruneians. This trend has become more pronounced since early 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic first reached Brunei, necessitating lockdowns, restrictions on travel, and working and studying from home. This has led, in Brunei and Malaysia as elsewhere, to even greater reliance on social media. As "unregulated spaces" (Sebba, 2009), publicly available social media platforms offer an opportunity to examine emerging and shifting patterns of language choice and use.

Social media penetration and use in Malaysia is also high: there are 84.2% internet users and 86% social media users in the nation's population of 32.57 million (Kemp, 2021b). WhatsApp, Facebook and Instagram are among the most popular social media platforms in both countries.

THEORETICAL AND ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORKS ADOPTED

In the field of World Englishes (WEs), Kachru's (2005) interrelated notions of "nativization" of English and "englishization" of local languages are highly relevant to Brunei and to Malaysia. Kachru regards these as "two Janus-like faces of language contact situations involving English" (p. 135). These form the basis for discussion of Malay-English language contact in social media texts. Language contact affects the phonology, syntax, discourse and lexis of the languages concerned, both historically and even more so in the present time with the expanding affordances of social media. The insights of Makoni and Pennycook (2007, 2012) on disinventing and reconstituting languages, of Schneider (2014), on the evolutionary dynamics of WEs, and Schneider (2016) on hybrid Englishes, have influenced my views about WEs being by definition mixed codes (McLellan, 2020). Saraceni (2020, p. 716–717), notes that monolingual views of language and communication are challenged and lack relevance in Asian contexts, where boundaries between languages are fluid: fixed and bounded ideas of "native" languages, first, second and foreign languages are less applicable. According to Heryanto (2007, p. 43), the term "language" itself is not readily applicable in Southeast Asia, as it is not equivalent to the Malay term *bahasa*, which derives from the Sanskrit *bhāṣā* and has a broader connotational range comprising culture, politeness, upbringing and education.

With reference to the study of language use in social media, especially in multilingual contexts, Seargeant and Tagg (2014, p. 2) observe that "online social media are having a profound effect on the linguistic and communicative practices in which people engage, as well as the social groupings and networks they create."

Code Switching/Code Mixing/Language Alternation/Translanguaging?

Terminology in this field is a fraught and contentious area. It would be a fallacious oversimplification to claim that the terms are interchangeable, and arguing the merits and limitations of each would detract and distract from the main purpose of this article. Having used the term "language alternation" (henceforth LA) in McLellan (2005), I continue using it here, but am aware that translanguaging has gained credence in recent years and has outgrown its original domain, the analysis of teacher and student interaction in multilingual classroom contexts (Garcia and Li, 2014; Li, 2018, 2019).

With specific reference to multilingual online discussion forums such as Kytölä (2012) offers valuable insights on methods of both text selection and analysis, including the importance of going beyond the surface features of discussion forum texts such as LA and covering "naming (one's screen persona), heading (discussion topics), bracketing, . . . , slogans aphorisms, signatures" (Kytölä, 2012, p. 122).

As an analytical framework, the classification of social media texts into five categories, used by McLellan (2005), and

TABLE 1 | Language choice in two Brunei online discussion forums.

Posting text classification	McLellan (2005)		Deterding and Salbrina (2013)	
English-only (E-)	83	39%	41	40%
Main-language English (MLE)	36	17%	9	9%
Equal language alternation (=LA)	12	6%	5	5%
Main-language Malay (MLM)	57	27%	27	26%
Malay-only (M-)	23	11%	20	20%
Total	211		102	

subsequently by others (Deterding and Salbrina, 2013; 'Aqilah, 2020) is adopted for initial quantitative analysis. This aims to establish the frequency of LA as against monolingual English and monolingual Malay social media texts:

- monolingual English (E-)
- main language-English with some Malay (ML-E)
- equal language alternation of Malay and English (=LA)
- main language-Malay with some English (ML-M)
- monolingual Malay (M-).

It is axiomatic that monolingual texts are of equal interest and importance to texts which show a measure of LA. The temptation to label either monolingual texts or texts showing LA as "marked" or "unmarked" is therefore resisted, since the Bruneian and Malaysian text producers may choose any of these five, confident in the knowledge that they will be intelligible to their readers or interlocutors. **Table 1** shows the percentage of texts in the five categories in the corpus analyzed by McLellan (2005), and in a comparable corpus analyzed by Deterding and Salbrina, 2013, both corpora being collected from Brunei public discussion forums.

From the figures in Table 1, from McLellan (2005), there is a slight predominance of English over Malay as the choice for the main language, 56.4–37.9%. In terms of monolingual against mixed-language postings there is a near even split, 106 E- and M-, as against 105 showing some measure of alternation between languages. On the basis of the findings outlined in **Table 1**, the presence of some degree of LA is the norm for ML-Malay postings, whereas monolingual English is the norm for ML-English postings (McLellan, 2009). The figures obtained in the later study by Deterding and Salbrina (2013) demonstrate largely similar patterns.

Whilst lexical features of LA are perhaps the most evident surface feature for analysis using this framework, grammatical congruence and non-congruence between English and Sebba (1998) are also key aspects of any analysis of LA patterns. As discussed by McLellan (2009, p. 6), there are three major areas of morphosyntactic non-congruence:

- Noun phrase structure
- Pluralization of nouns
- Verb inflections.

Brunei: The Brunei Subreddit

The Brunei Subreddit (<https://www.reddit.com/r/Brunei/>) is a public discussion forum. It is available for all to read, but requires a username and password for those posting messages. As of 3 June 2022 it has 43,000 members, 8% of the nation's total population. Formerly the community (site managers) expected postings to be in English in the “random” discussion threads opened three times per week, but there has been an observable move toward higher frequency of use of Brunei Malay and of Malay-English LA in the past year, although the majority of postings are still in English-only. Every Monday, though, a thread “*Lakastah bekurapak dalam Bahasa Melayu pada hari Isnin*” (‘Let’s talk in Malay on Mondays’) is opened. The use of Malay is strictly observed in this thread, in line with the warning (in English), “This is a thread to practice your Malay language, and posts not following this format will be removed/downvoted.”

In code-mixed Brunei social media texts, the predominant pattern is standardized English alternating with Brunei Malay, as demonstrated in this example (6) from a posting in the Brunei Subreddit from 2019.

- (6) *Old habits die hard* nya urang, tapi *it gets worse* kalau
 3POSS person but if
 dorang ani merasa in da di terima lagi.
 3P DEM feel NEG PASS accept again
 (‘Old habits die hard for these people, but it gets worse if they feel they are not accepted’)

Text (6) is mainly Malay (ten words), with seven words of English. It is classified as equal language alternation (=LA), since both languages contribute to both the grammar and the lexical content.

Thus, although Bruneians predominantly choose to use English in social media, this is not to the exclusion of Brunei Malay. Hayani Nazurah (2021) finds that, in contrast to her corpus of Brunei Subreddit postings where English-only predominates, her corpus of 59 postings from the Brunei FM Facebook forum are 59% main-language Malay (ML-M) and 23% monolingual Malay (M-).

Table 2 shows an analysis of the thread from which example text (2) is taken, a discussion on the topic of employment of former prisoners.

The thread consists of eight postings, with four of the five language categories represented. Postings 4 and 7 are in monolingual English (E-) with no Malay, and posting 8 is in monolingual Malay (M-). The other five are in main-language Malay (M+) with some English insertions. The eight postings are from six different posters, as is evident from their Reddit nicknames (not given here for ethical reasons). One of those who posted twice used the same language choice, M+, for postings 1 and 5; the other used M+ in posting 3 and M- in posting 8. However, the English lexemes in posting 3, as noted in Table 2, are questionable: “program” is frequently used in Malay; “bebisnes” can be viewed as a case of intra-word mixing, a bicodal word, as it has the Malay actor-focus prefix “be-” with the English-derived root word “bisnes” (business), showing modification to comply with Malay orthography, which

is phonemic. The issue of words crossing from one language to another is discussed below in the section on englishization.

The analysis of threaded discussion forum postings, in which the participants use different language choices, demonstrates that they are not constrained in the choices they make, as they are aware that any of the five shown in Tables 1, 2 are fully intelligible. But the postings with LA will not be intelligible to anyone not proficient in Brunei Malay, hence although the Brunei Subreddit is open-access and free for anyone worldwide to read, few if any non-Bruneians are part of the online community who read this Subreddit, and even fewer non-Bruneians post messages on it.

Examples (7) and (8) are taken from Brunei Subreddit postings in Brunei English showing LA. (7) is classified as main-language English, E+:

- (7) *Read more BM* story books and try to include
 ABBR-language Malay
 peribahasa in your karangan. The examiner
 proverbs essay
 would go “Wow this kid included peribahasa in
 his karangan?!”
 (‘Read more Malay language story books and try to include
 proverbs in your essay. The examiner would go “Wow this
 kid included proverbs in his essay?!’)
- (8) *so sometimes* ada vendors cari siapa mau
 have look for who want
share yr booth.
 (‘so sometimes there are vendors who look for whoever
 wants to share your booth’)

Example (7) here demonstrates LA in single Malay nouns within an English grammatical frame, whereas in (8), as in example (6), both Malay and English contribute to both the grammar and to the lexis, and this text is therefore =LA.

In example (9), from Hayani Nazurah (2021), the English phrasal verb ‘give up’ is written as “gibap”:

- (9) Kan *gibap* jualan mula2, tp
 DM give up also-DM RDP-start, ABBR-but
 apa boleh buat.
 what can do
 Those hardships pays later for sure.
 (“you can give up also at the start, but what can you do?...”)

Pronunciation spellings such as “gibap” here, and also “bisnes,” discussed above and in section analysis and discussion of examples below, occur often, and demonstrate the affinity of social media text with spoken interaction, in which such forms also occur.

Brunei: Instagram

According to Kemp (2021a), Instagram (IG) is the fifth most used social media platform globally, and the platform’s potential advertising audience is 70.5% of the total population of Brunei aged 13 or over. Studies have been conducted of language use on IG by government ministries: Muhammad Nabil (2021) analyzed IG use by three Brunei government ministries, Education

TABLE 2 | Language choice across one Brunei subreddit thread; topic: employment of ex-prisoners.

Posting no.	Word-count	Language category	Malay words	English words	Notes
1	167	M+	149	18	Extract in example (2) above
2	59	M+	59	9	<i>uncle</i> ku...jangan kan <i>rely</i> arah <i>program</i> saja
3	14	M+	14	1	<i>program</i> "bebisnes" (= Malay? Mixed = Bicolal?)
4	78	E-	0	78	Std. E: <i>To be fair</i> when a person has been jailed...
5	70	M+	65	5	<i>Yeap</i> , banar tu cakap kita. <i>and etc.</i> x2
6	18	M+	17	1	Ada jua <i>program</i> utk dorg
7	27	E-	0	27	Std. E: <i>maybe the family can start up a business for him</i>
8	12	M-	12	0	...sama ada ya banar banar atau inda

(Islamic), Religious Affairs and Health, in terms of their language use, including responses by the Brunei public. For Religious Affairs all the IG communications are announcements in Malay or Arabic, and there are no responses. The Education and Health Ministries use both Malay and English for announcements and media releases, and both languages are found in responses, reactions and queries to these. Since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic the Ministry of Health’s IG communications have taken on greatly increased importance, with daily briefings and media conferences chaired by the Minister of Health along with other ministers, at which both Malay and English are used, often with LA.

In a study of commercial advertising and customer responses on IG in Brunei, Diyanah Maimunah (2021) found that English was the preferred language by advertisers, although some included LA or were in Malay only. In an online survey she conducted, young Bruneian IG users aged 18–26 reported a preference for mixed Malay and English when responding to IG advertisements, assuming that any of the five code choices would be acceptable and effective. She gives an example of an E+ advertisement with only one word of Malay by Stack, a local burger restaurant, which generated a higher number of responses in Brunei Malay than in English. This is an exception to the more frequent pattern of customers responding use the same code choice among the five as in the initial advertisement.

Brunei: Facebook Status Updates

Nurdiyana and McLellan (2016) analyzed a corpus of 239 Facebook status updates by Bruneians, with their informed consent. 8.8% of these were in Malay only, 60.3% were in English only, and 25.5% had some mixing of English and Malay. The figures do not add up to 100% because Arabic, frequently mixed with Malay by Bruneians, was also part of the analysis. Some examples from this corpus follow:

- (10) (intrasentential, switch at phrase boundary)
Black out n aku kepanasannnn!!!!!!!!
 ISG hotnesssss
 (“Black out n I’m hot!”)
- (11) (intersentential, switch at phrase boundary)
mentally & physically tired... malas ku malas!!
 lazy ISG lazy
 (“I am mentally and physically tired! Lazy I am lazy”)

Both these major syntactic LA strategies signal high levels of bilingual Malay-English proficiency, including the ability to alternate without breaking the syntactic constraints of either language (Muysken, 2000, p. 122). Example (12) shows rich intrasentential mixing, whilst (13) is a trilingual posting:

- (12) just finished one class dan dua lagi coming ohhh
 and two more
 letihnya
 tired-POSS
 (“I’ve just finished one class and two more to come, ohhh I’m tired”)
- (13) Assalamualaikum pasal replacement intro to
 Peace be upon you (Ar.) about
 teaching, if on monday okay kh?
 DM
 If okay, what tym bisai?
 time good
 (“Peace be upon you... about the replacement Intro to Teaching (class), if it’s on Monday is that okay? If okay, what time is good?”)

This trilingual example (13) begins with the Arabic greeting, followed by the Malay conjunction “*pasal*” governing an English noun phrase. The first sentence ends with the Malay question tag “*kh*” (short for “*kah?*”). The second sentence reverts to English prior to a further switch to Malay for the adjective “*bisai*.” In line with the grammar of Malay there is no copular verb in either sentence: as shown in the free translation, this would be required in standard English.

These examples from Facebook status updates provide further evidence of the diverse patterns of LA in this social media, again demonstrating that all the five code choices, monolingual or mixed, are acceptable and used.

Malaysia: Online News Media Reader Responses

This section is adapted from McLellan (2016). The print media in West Malaysia publishes monolingual Bahasa Malaysia, English, Chinese and Tamil newspapers, but the Malaysian Borneo states of Sabah and Sarawak have newspapers which are bilingual such as the *Utusan Borneo*, published in Sarawak in Bahasa Malaysia and in the indigenous Iban language (once weekly). In Sabah the trilingual *New Sabah Times* has sections in English, Bahasa

Malaysia, and in the indigenous Kadazandusun language. All are available online as well as in print versions.

One major affordance of online editions of newspapers is reader response, where readers are invited to post their responses to the reports, editorials and feature texts. These have the same interactional features as threaded online discussion forums, and one report can provoke a series of responses akin to a face-to-face conversation. They are moderated by the newspaper staff, and responses deemed inappropriate, offensive or potentially libelous are deleted.

A small corpus of 18 texts with 58 reader responses was collected from the *Utusan Borneo* and the *Borneo Post* newspapers between September 2013 and June 2014. These were analyzed in terms of markedness, defined in this context as instances where the language choice of the reader response differs from that of the original posting. An unmarked response is one which uses the same language as the newspaper report. **Table 3** gives basic information about this corpus.

Almost one-third of the reader responses show a language choice which differs from the news report. Text (14) is an example where the response text is code-mixed Malay and English, whilst the original *Borneo Post* report was in English.

(14) Headline of English news report: Include Dayaks in MEB – Masing
Date: 16 September 2013
Reader response text 1 (of 1)
YB...macam mana mau buat “road show” kalau “road” nya tiada. Buat “boat show” lah tauke...sambil2 tu buat “miring” sekali...untuk menyejukan hati antu yang selalu halang org buat jalan ke kapit
(Free translation: Yang Behormat (“The Honorable” - honorific for elected representatives), how can you do a “road show” if there is no road? Why not do a “boat show,” boss?... and then a “miring” (“Iban traditional ceremony”) as well, to freeze the souls of the ghosts which have always prevented people from making a road to Kapit.)

This reader response is in main-language Malay, with three English noun-phrase insertions, all flagged with inverted commas, and one in Iban, “miring” (Iban blessing ceremony).

Example (15) shows a response in English to a report of a road accident in the Iban-language section of *Utusan Borneo*.

(15) Headline of news report: Lelaki parai dalam kes bebadi jalai alun
(Iban: “Man injured in road accident case”)
Date: 21 September 2013
Reader response text
There are hundreds of fatal accident ramped against planted trees along Kidurong road since some decades ago. It would be safer for the road without big trees all along it even if the road is hot without shade. Yes there is a beauty of the scene but people’s life is more important than that. Bintulu town planner should look seriously into this matter. I recommend flowers and small species type plant may be planted to beautify the road side. Do not blame the road users alone for careless driving. No one is expecting an accident.

TABLE 3 | Language choice in 58 reader response texts in the *Borneo Post* and *Utusan Borneo*, Sarawak, Malaysia.

	Number of responses	%
Unmarked	39	67.2
Marked	19	32.8

This example shows a higher level of syntactic complexity and lexical density than the response text (14) above, hence it is more formal. Reader response texts can have variable levels of formality, because the asynchronous format of this online genre permits readers to take time in planning their texts before posting them.

As with the Brunei Subreddit discussion forum, Instagram and Facebook texts, some of the reader response texts demonstrate LA between Malay and English, with Iban as a further possible language choice. Example (16) below is one of nineteen responses to a *Borneo Post* report. Of these, three show Malay/English LA and another is in monolingual Malay.

(16) Headline of English-language news report: See says difficult for Taib to retire
Date: 10 September 2013
Reader response text 4 (of 19) – extract
*And one thing that irks me most was when the teachers from the Peninsular Malaysia promotes us about the KLIA airport and all those modern infrastructure stuffs. Perghh! Apa diaorang ingat kita Sarawakian masih tinggal kat hutan kah? Please lah beb, Sarawak dah jauh maju dah dari pemikiran diaorg. And actually, we Sarawakians has a lot of young people who has tons of great potential on becoming a great teacher. But *shrugs* apa boleh buat, orang mahu hantar banyak cikgu Semenanjung ke Sarawak. (Free translation of Malay in this text: Do they think we Sarawakians still live in the jungle? Please, friend, Sarawak is far more developed than people think. ...what can we do, they want to send many teachers from Peninsular Malaysia to Sarawak.)*

The pattern of LA in example (16) is intersentential E>M>E>M.

The style is less formal than the monolingual English response text in example (15), and is closer to the conversational discourse found in example (14). The language alternation is a contributing factor to the informality.

In instances where there is LA, or where the reader responses are in a different language to that of the original online news report, there is an assumption that readers share the same multilingual competences as the text producers, and that they will have no problem understanding the response texts. The texts which show a measure of LA thus demonstrate how English coexists and functions as a resource, alongside the other available languages, for the online text producers. These examples from Malaysian online media texts show similar patterns to those from the Brunei social media platforms: all the five possible choices in **Table 1** are available, and those responding to postings feel under no constraint to retain the same language choice as the original

TABLE 4 | Pronunciation spellings and other translingual forms.

Ice box = Isbuk	Confuse = Konpius
Action (lying) = Eksen	Low batt = Lubit
Sound = Saun	Facebook = Pisbuk
Round (walking in circle) = Raun	Local = Lokal
Motor car = Matuka	Support = Sapot
Mobile = Mubail	Parking = Paking
Charlie Chaplin (funny) = Cali	Go Start/Go Astern
Worry = Uri	(reverse) = Gustan
Current (electricity) = Karan	Television = Tilibisin
Time = Taim	Queueing = Bekiu
Drive = Driba	Fashion = Pisin
Driving = Dribin	Guarantee = Gerenti
Cute = Kiut	Challenge = Celen
Engine = Injin	Driveshaft = drepsap
Boring = Buring	Balance = Bilin
Style = Stail	F Off = Pakop
Confirm = Kompom	Colgate = kulgit
Company = Kompani	

Source: *The Brunei subreddit*, posted on 9 October 2018.

media report or forum posting, as they know that their responses will be intelligible to readers.

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE COIN: ENGLISHIZATION OF MALAY

As noted in the introduction, language contact works bidirectionally, and there is ample evidence in Malay texts on social media of the influence of English, leading to englishized or anglicized Malay as an area of investigation. In addition to examples discussed above, Hayani Nazurah (2021) notes the of “tym” or “tyme,” deriving from English “time,” but used as a conjunction to mean “when” in past-tense narratives in a Brunei Subreddit text. Hence this is a shift of word-class. She also notes examples of pronunciation spellings “sinsas” (census) and “mudipait” (modified). A Brunei Subreddit posting from 2018 gives a longer list of mostly pronunciation spellings and other translingual forms used creatively by Bruneians when speaking or interacting in social media in Brunei Malay in **Table 4**.

One morphosyntactic feature of englishization involves Malay affixes attached to English root words in ML-M texts, as is the case for “berbisnes” mentioned in section analysis and discussion of examples. Example (17), from the Brunei Subreddit (25 April 2022) shows the Malay prefix “be”- affixed to the originally English “disiplin”:

(17) ...untuk menolong orang yang inda *bedisiplin*
 dari to help person REL NEG disciplined
 from segi kewangan
 sector financial
 (“to help people who are undisciplined from a financial perspective”)

Example (18), also from the Brunei Subreddit (25 April 2022), shows the Malay possessive suffix “-ku” affixed to the originally English noun “boss.”

(18) atu na pandai abis utang tu
 DEM NEG can finish debt DEM
bossku
 boss-1POSS
 (“they cannot clear their debts owed to the boss”).

These demonstrate integration of originally English words into Brunei Malay, and can be seen as reshaping and repossession of the English words, as well as a blurring of boundaries between the two languages, a consequence of extended language contact.

CONCLUSION

There are two core questions arising from this investigation which can be addressed here, although perhaps not fully answered:

- Is it valid to posit the language of social media as a new variety comprising both local and global influences and inputs?

It is evident that the increased availability and popularity of social media is bringing about changes in patterns of language use. “LoL” (laugh out loud), for example, is now used as a finite verb taking -s, -ing and -ed suffixes. But from the examples presented and discussed here it is also evident that social media platforms are not pushing users toward the use of monolingual English. Patterns of mixing are found, many of which reflect those found in everyday informal conversation. The subsections under 4 and 5 above, when compared and contrasted, show varying patterns of lexical and morphosyntactic LA, and varying patterns of intra- and intersentential mixing. So it may be more reasonable to posit a range of new varieties, not just a single social media variety, which are developing within the diverse social media platforms in Brunei and Malaysia.

- Is social media driving changes in varieties of World Englishes in Southeast Asia?

The evidence assembled here suggests that this question could be answered in the affirmative, provided that there is acceptance of the premiss of World Englishes being by definition code-mixed varieties demonstrating features of the other languages in the multilingual ecologies of nations such as Brunei and Malaysia where distinct varieties of English have developed. Even in monolingual English texts, variable features such as countability of nouns (“an advice,” “equipments,” “furnitures”) may occur, caused in part by the influence of Malay (McLellan, 2020, p. 428–430). However, in spite of the evidence of the wide spread and increasing importance of social media in both Brunei and Malaysia, discussed above, the answer to this major question must remain tentative, owing to the synchronic nature of the data collected and discussed in this paper. Further research into social media language choice and contact patterns could be conducted using longitudinal data collection methods and more extensive textual corpora.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

ETHICS STATEMENT

Ethical review and approval was not required for the study on human participants in accordance with the

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local legislation and institutional requirements. Written informed consent for participation was not required for this study in accordance with the national legislation and the institutional requirements.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The author confirms being the sole contributor of this work and has approved it for publication.

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