

Chapter 15

English-Medium Education in a University in Brunei Darussalam: Code-switching and Intelligibility

Ishamina Athirah, Universiti Brunei Darussalam

ishamina.athirah@gmail.com

David Deterding, Universiti Brunei Darussalam

david.deterding@ubd.edu.bn

Abstract

Although Malay is the official language of Brunei Darussalam, English is also widely used, especially in formal domains such as education, as it is the medium of instruction for most classes in secondary school and at the main university, Universiti Brunei Darussalam (UBD). This chapter traces the historical background for adopting English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) in Brunei, and it then discusses recent developments at UBD, particularly for the new undergraduate programme, called GenNEXT, adopted in 2009, and the number of students graduating from English-medium and Malay-medium programs is analysed. Finally, the use of code-switching among university undergraduates is discussed, particularly the incidence of misunderstandings arising from the use of Malay that occurred when UBD students were talking in English to people from elsewhere, and it is shown that, out of a total of 152 tokens of misunderstanding that have been identified in three and a half hours of conversation, 12 involved the use of Malay.

Keywords English Medium Instruction (EMI) · Bilingual education · English in Brunei · Intelligibility · Code-switching · Intercultural Communication

1 Introduction

Malay is specified as the official language of Brunei Darussalam and it is regarded as the language of national culture and spiritual identity. However, English is learned as a second language and is generally seen as providing access to the outside world, so it

has a high status and is linked to educational success (Ozóg 1996a). Indeed, most Bruneians can be considered bilingual in Malay and English, and many can also speak a minority language such as Dusun or Chinese (Martin & Poedjosoedarmo 1996). Saxena (2006) further states that Bruneians frequently view those who are fluent in English as being modern, educated and westernised.

Since 1985, a bilingual system of education has been in place in primary, secondary and tertiary education. The oldest and largest tertiary institution in Brunei, *Universiti Brunei Darussalam* (UBD), was originally intended to be a bilingual institute, but although there continue to be some Malay-medium programmes, particularly in Malay Language and Malay Literature, the overwhelming majority of courses are now taught in English. However, even though English predominates as the medium of instruction at UBD, Malay is also widely used, and furthermore code-switching between English and Malay is common, especially among students in informal situations. This raises a question about the intelligibility of the students when they are speaking English to non-Bruneians: how often are they misunderstood, and to what extent does code-switching interfere with the intelligibility of their speech?

This chapter provides an overview of the adoption of the bilingual system of education in Brunei, including the historical rationale and the current status of English-medium instruction at all levels of education. It then discusses the situation at UBD, including the status of English-medium education after a new curriculum called GenNEXT was introduced for undergraduate degrees in 2009. Next, it examines the use of code-switching by students in UBD and the effect that this has on the intelligibility of their speech. This is investigated by means of the analysis of misunderstandings that occurred in recordings of ten conversations between Bruneians and speakers from other countries. The chapter finally discusses the impact of English-medium education in Brunei on language use and language proficiency, and it suggests future pedagogical directions.

2 The bilingual education system

There have been substantial shifts over the years in the use of English as a medium of instruction in the education system in Brunei. This section provides a brief overview of the changes that have taken place in the schools in the country, before we consider in the next section the languages that are used in the main university in Brunei, *Universiti Brunei Darussalam* (UBD). Although the medium of instruction in schools is distinct from that adopted at the tertiary level, the policies promoted in the school system have a direct influence on the use of language in the university as they shape the linguistic background of local undergraduates in Brunei.

Until 1984, most schools in Brunei were either Malay-medium or English-medium, and a few Chinese schools taught mainly in Mandarin. However, following independence in January 1984, there was a call for the integration of all schools into a single education system (Gunn 1997, p. 155). The bilingual system of education or

dwibahasa ('dual languages') was introduced in 1985, aiming both to maintain Malay and also facilitate the acquisition of English (Jones 2007, p. 246). The new system was adopted by all schools except for an international school and two religious schools (Jones 1996, p. 123; Martin 2008, p. 213).

Under the *dwibahasa* system, at lower primary level all subjects except English Language were taught in Malay, and then from the fourth year of primary school onwards, English was used as the medium of instruction in most subjects such as mathematics, science, history and geography, while a few subjects like Malay Language, physical education, art, civics and Islamic religious knowledge were taught in Malay (Martin & Poedjosoedarmo 1996, p. 4; Jones 1996, p. 125).

Even when English is specified as the medium of instruction, the reality of classroom practice varies. Many pupils struggle with English as they have little exposure to the language outside the classroom (Jones 1996, p. 130), and many local teachers claim that they often have to speak Malay to explain concepts properly (Wood, Henry, Malai Ayla & Clynes 2011, p. 62) and to build rapport with their pupils. On the other hand, Saxena (2009) reports that some teachers insist on using only English in English-medium classes even though their pupils speak Malay both with their classmates and to their teachers.

One major current concern is the educational divide between those with a privileged background and those without (Jones 2007, p. 256). Jones (2002, p. 131) reports that the last decade of the twentieth century saw a large increase in the number of elite private schools, and Deterding and Salbrina (2013, p. 19) suggest that the existence of these private schools exacerbates the educational divide, as those who attend the best schools have an advantage in developing a good ability in English. Nicol (2004) reports that, for secondary school children, in the five years up till 2003, an average of only 12.8% of pupils taking the 'O' level exam in English Language obtained a credit pass, so the overwhelming majority of students were failing in English, and she argues, on the basis of a survey of teachers, that the exam is not appropriate for most of the pupils who take it. Finally, also for secondary schools, Wood et al. (2011) illustrate the educational divide in their investigation of the use of the past tense in narrative compositions by pupils in four different schools in Brunei, showing that those from a good school in the capital city had the best English and improved substantially over the years, while pupils from a rural public school had poorer results and showed no improvement over two years.

Aside from this educational divide, Jones (2007, p. 253) reports that, twenty years after the implementation of the bilingual education system, many of the original concerns about it were unfounded, particularly that it would result in Malay being marginalised and Western culture dominating. In fact, Poedjosoedarmo (2004, p. 363) suggests that the system appears to be quite successful because Bruneians who become proficient in speaking, reading and writing Standard English do not lose their Malay identity, and Kirkpatrick (2010, p. 35) notes that the bilingual education policy in Brunei is probably the most successful in all the member states of ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) in developing good competence in English while at the same time maintaining use of the first language. Furthermore, the outcome of bilingual

education is consistent with the government's insistence when the policy was implemented that, as a small country, Brunei could not afford to isolate itself from the world by failing to encourage its citizens to have a good knowledge of English (Asmah 2007, p. 358). Indeed, this widespread encouragement of English has been reported to be true throughout ASEAN, including even those countries that were never colonised by Britain or the USA (Kirkpatrick, 2012).

January 2009 saw the introduction of a new system of education for primary and secondary schools called SPN21 (*Sistem Pendidikan Negara Abad Ke-21*, 'The National Education System for the 21st Century'), aiming to prepare pupils to face the social and economic challenges in the modern world. One of its central objectives is to encourage pupils to take part in classroom discussions and activities (Ministry of Education 2009, p. 26), so a student-centred pedagogical approach is promoted in the new system rather than the traditional teacher-centred practice under which teachers held an authoritative role while their pupils were more passive.

A major change under the new system is that mathematics and science are now taught in English from the first year of lower primary school (Jones 2012). One advantage of this change is that there is no longer a sudden switch in the medium of instruction for these two subjects in the fourth year of primary school, which means that Bruneian children now learn words for concepts in mathematics and science in English at an early age and therefore do not have to learn a new set of technical terms when they reach the fourth year of primary school.

The shift in the medium of instruction in some subjects from Malay to English at the start of their primary education highlights the country's emphasis on the importance of English. Indeed, the new system seems increasingly to favour English-medium education. This presents a stark contrast to Malaysia, where at almost the same time that Brunei adopted the new education system, a similar policy was rescinded, and the medium of instruction for mathematics and science in Malaysia has now reverted from English to Malay (Kirkpatrick 2010, p. 27; Jones 2015).

Having outlined the linguistic environment that students experience as they progress through primary and secondary school, we will now discuss the medium of instruction in tertiary-level education, focusing on the situation in UBD.

3 Bilingual Education at Universiti Brunei Darussalam (UBD)

There are currently four universities in Brunei: apart from UBD, *Universiti Teknologi Brunei* (UTB) has recently been upgraded from a technical college to become a university; and there are also two Islamic universities, *Universiti Islam Sultan Sharif Ali* (UNISSA), and *Kolej Universiti Perguruan Ugama Seri Begawan* (KUPU-SB),

both of which have also recently seen their status upgraded. The main medium of instruction at UTB is English, while the two Islamic universities mainly use Malay and Arabic. There is no explicit policy on the medium of instruction for universities set by the Ministry of Education, so each institute determines its own system. Here, we will focus on the medium of instruction in classes at UBD, the most prestigious university in Brunei (ranked 118 in Asia in the 2015 QS rankings, while the other three universities currently have no QS ranking).

UBD was set up in 1985 as a bilingual university that offered both Malay- and English-medium programmes. The establishment of the university was in line with the need for national development, and formal academic links were made with several universities in the UK and Malaysia to help in devising the first degree programmes (Jones 1997, p. 16). The University of Leeds and University College, Cardiff supervised the development of English-medium programmes, while *Universiti Sains Malaysia* and *Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia* assisted with the introduction of Malay-medium programmes.

The expansion of UBD in 1994, including moving to a larger campus, saw an increasing number of local and overseas students. Though the majority of programmes and courses offered at UBD were English-medium, there continued to be many Malay-medium programmes, including Malay Language, Malay Literature, some courses in history, and programmes offered by the Academy of Brunei Studies (ABS). In addition, there was a compulsory course for all Bruneian students on the national ideology MIB (*Melayu Islam Beraja*, ‘Malay Islamic Monarchy’) which was conducted in Malay.

In 2009, UBD introduced a revised undergraduate degree termed GenNEXT, which saw the expansion of programmes offered, including revised bachelor degrees in Arts, Business, Health Sciences, and Science. The GenNEXT curriculum aims to provide students with a broad knowledge of different disciplines so they can pursue a flexible choice of careers (UBD 2016), and therefore students have to take courses from different faculties as part of their undergraduate programmes. One other major change in 2009 was that the training of teachers was subsequently undertaken at the masters level, so the bachelor’s degree offered by the Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah Institute of Education (SHBIE) was discontinued.

In two respects, the GenNEXT programme appears to favour English as the medium of instruction. First, one of the entry requirements to the GenNEXT degree is a minimum of grade C in English ‘O’ Level or an IELTS grade of 6.0, and this now applies to all students, including those who are taking Malay-medium programmes, whereas in the previous system, the pre-GenNEXT degree, this entry requirement for English only applied to those who wished to take English-medium programmes. Secondly, Malay-medium students are now required to take modules offered by other faculties, and these modules are all taught in English.

There are now substantially more undergraduates in English-medium than in Malay-medium programmes, and this seems to be increasing. Table 1 presents a comparison between the total number of English- and Malay-medium graduating students in 2006 (pre-GenNEXT) and 2014 (GenNEXT), listing the faculties as follows: Academy of Brunei Studies (ABS), Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

Table 1 Number of students graduating with a bachelor's degree in 2006 and 2014

Faculty	2006		2014	
	English	Malay	English	Malay
ABS		21		28
FASS	9	25	186	70
FOS	19		108	
IHS			28	
SBE	72		137	
SHBIE	235	123		
Total	335 (66.5%)	169 (33.5%)	459 (82.4%)	98 (17.6%)

(FASS), Faculty of Science (FOS), Institute of Health Sciences (IHS), School of Business and Economics (SBE), and Sultan Hassanah Bolkuah Institute of Education (SHBIE). The statistics show that there was an increase in the proportion of English-medium graduates from 66.5% in 2006 to 82.4% in 2014, while the proportion of Malay-medium graduates has fallen correspondingly.

The greatest change is that most of those who previously might have obtained a teaching degree from SHBIE now study for a BA (in FASS) or BSc (in FOS). However, while the number of students taking a Malay-medium degree in FASS has increased from 25 to 70, this is hugely overshadowed by those taking an English-medium degree in either FASS or FOS. It seems that most students now recognise that proficiency in English is important in order to be more employable (though statistics on the employability of graduates have not been published), and given that they are all entitled to take English-medium degrees as they all now have the English-language entry requirements, most of them are choosing to do so.

Although English seems to be becoming increasingly important in Brunei, it still has no official status outside the domains of education and also law, where English is used in the courts even though many of the defendants do not speak the language, so everything has to be translated for them (Masmahirah 2016). Elsewhere, Malay is still promoted as the official language (Saxena 2006). Indeed, all Bruneian undergraduates at UBD have to pass the module in MIB (*Melayu Islam Beraja*, 'Malay Islamic Monarchy'), which is taught in Malay, as a requirement for completing their degrees, so the education policy still stresses the importance of the national language and bilingualism for local students. Nonetheless, the new education policies of SPN21 at primary and secondary level and the GenNEXT programme at university level reflect an increasing role for EMI education.

4 Code-switching in Brunei

Code-switching is a means of negotiating meaning in a multilingual society, and it is extremely common throughout East and Southeast Asia (McLellan 2010). The various chapters of the volume edited by Barnard and McLellan (2014) document widespread code-switching in English-medium classes in Bhutan, Brunei, China, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand and Vietnam, and Ozóg (1996b, p. 176) reported that code-switching is common at all levels of society in Brunei. McLellan (2005) investigated two online Brunei discussion forums and suggested that sometimes the writers switch from English to Malay deliberately in order to emphasise the Malay phrases. There seems to be a higher proportion of English insertions in Malay-based texts than Malay insertions in English-based texts (McLellan & David 2007, p. 76), and Faahirah (2016) found that there were 238 instances of switching into English during ten conversations by female UBD undergraduates engaged in a map task in Malay, while there were only 43 instances of switching into Malay in the comparable English conversations. However, both kinds of switching are common.

Switching between English and Malay is the norm in Brunei (McLellan, 2010), and using only one language when one knows that the other person can speak both languages may make one sound rather strange or even rude. Possible reasons for switching include: inability to think of a word in one language; using religious terms and items of food, for which there may be no straightforward equivalent in English; explaining something which may be easier in another language; giving direct quotations; and for stylistic reasons (Deterding & Salbrina 2013, pp. 111–115). One may also surmise that use of indigenous terms for local things is probably the most effective way of referring to them within the country, though at the same time this may result in visitors to Brunei being confused.

It is no surprise, then, that Bruneian students at UBD tend to code-switch even in the classroom. As Noor Azam, Zurinah, Liyana, Suciwati and Saidai (2014) report, students often code-switch when talking among themselves and also when they are speaking with their local tutors. Mixed feelings are expressed by the tutors about their students code-switching in the classroom, and many themselves try to avoid code-switching, but it seems inevitable among students who share two languages. However, Deterding and Salbrina (2013, p. 107) report that code-switching almost never occurs when students at UBD are conversing with English-speaking academic staff, because the students are accustomed to talking to their expatriate lecturers in English.

Even though students are adept at using English when talking to their lecturers, use of Malay terms does sometimes occur when Bruneians are interacting with non-Bruneians, and here we investigate what happens when Malay terms are used with foreign students at UBD. English is generally the *lingua franca* between Bruneian and foreign students who do not speak Malay, but because Bruneians are so used to mixing English and Malay, especially in informal contexts, they occasionally code-switch when speaking with foreign students. The current study investigates cases in which this causes misunderstandings to occur.

According to Kaur (2010), there is a difference between ‘misunderstandings’ and ‘non-understandings’: a ‘misunderstanding’ occurs when the listener interprets a word or utterance with a meaning that is not intended by the speaker; whereas there is a ‘non-understanding’ when the listener is unable to make sense of a word or utterance.

However, Deterding (2013, p. 13) notes that, in reality, it is often difficult to classify instances as misunderstandings or non-understandings, as listeners may make a guess about the meaning of words or utterances but not be certain, so no attempt will be made here to differentiate the two concepts.

We acknowledge that conversations are two-way interactions involving the negotiation of meaning, and the role of both the speaker and the listener should be considered when analysing breakdowns in communication (Smith & Nelson 1985; Lindemann 2010). In the context of code-switching in Brunei, in many cases listeners from other countries are familiar with the Malay terms, so there is no problem; but sometimes code-switching does lead to misunderstandings occurring, and here we will analyse some examples of this.

5 Misunderstandings caused by code-switching at UBD: A case study

This section analyses some instances in which code-switching interferes with intelligibility and causes misunderstandings to occur.

5.1 *Research methodology*

The corpus analysed in this study consists of ten audio recordings collected at UBD over a period of six months in late 2013 and early 2014. UBD now has a substantial body of international students from a wide range of different countries, so it is of interest to see how well Bruneians cope when talking to their international classmates in English.

Each recording consists of a conversation in English between two participants, a Bruneian and a non-Bruneian. Seventeen participants took part, eight Bruneians and nine non-Bruneians, and they are identified by their gender (F or M), followed by a two-letter code representing their country of origin. The Bruneians are identified as FBr1, FBr2, FBr3, FBr4, FBr5, MBr1, MBr2, and MBr3. Of the non-Bruneian participants, four were from China (FCh1, FCh2, FCh3, FCh4), and there was one each from Korea (MKo), France (MFr), the Maldives (FMd), Oman (FOm), and Vietnam (FVn). Sixteen of the participants were students at UBD and one, MFr, was a visiting researcher. All of them listed English as either their second or foreign language. Convenience sampling was used in the selection of these participants. One essential criterion was that they were all able and willing to meet the researchers after the recordings to help with the analysis. They were aware that the purpose of the research was to investigate patterns of interaction in English between Bruneians and non-Bruneians in a relatively informal context (though of course the fact that they were being recorded and that the conversations took place in a lecturer's office on the university campus means that the interactions were not truly informal). The participants were not aware that code-switching might be one of the factors that we would investigate as giving rise to misunderstandings. (Indeed, at the time of the recordings, the researchers did not expect it to be a contributory factor.)

In the recordings, the Bruneian participants were being interviewed by the non-Bruneians, who were encouraged to ask questions about the culture and history of Brunei, though this was not fixed, and the participants were allowed to talk freely to enable us to obtain some data involving Bruneians interacting with non-Bruneians. The researchers were not present when the recordings took place. While the informal setting is distinct from the more formal classroom setting of most research into EMI, these recordings enable us to determine the extent to which Bruneian speakers are able to converse intelligibly with people from elsewhere, and the current study provides an insight into the occurrence of code-switching and how often it gives rise to misunderstandings.

Altogether, as shown in Table 15.2, the ten recordings are just over 3 hours and 39 minutes long, with each recording lasting an average of about 22 minutes. The identifying code for each recording consists of the codes of the two participants, the first being the interviewee (a Bruneian) and the second being the interviewer.

The recordings were conducted in a quiet room at UBD using a Handy H4n recorder. When transcribing the conversations, any problems involving unclear speech were resolved by asking the participants for clarification. Deterding (2013, p. 25) notes that it is important to obtain this kind of feedback from participants, because it allows researchers to correct the transcription of speech that is not clear, and it also facilitates the identification of occurrences of misunderstandings that are not signalled in the recordings. In fact, the interactions generally proceeded smoothly with few breakdowns in communication, as even when speakers did not understand something, they had a tendency to adopt a 'let-it-pass' strategy in the hope that failure to understand a few words would not matter in the long run (Firth 1996; Mortensen 2013, p. 35).

We are only concerned here with instances where the non-Bruneian participants did not understand the Bruneians. Although there are a few instances where a misunderstanding was

Table 2 The recording codes and duration

Recording code	Duration (min:sec)
MBr2 + FCh1	20:48
FBr3 + FCh2	22:46
FBr4 + FCh3	20:56
FBr5 + FCh4	20:27
MBr3 + MFr	22:28
MBr3 + MKo	21:04
FBr1 + FMd	21:45
MBr1 + FMd	21:31
MBr1 + FOm	22:29
FBr2 + FVn	25:12
Total: 3:39:26	

signalled in the recordings, the majority of tokens only became apparent from subsequent feedback from the non-Bruneians. In obtaining this feedback, instances were identified where misunderstandings might have occurred, and these instances were extracted from the recordings. The non-Bruneians were then asked to listen to them, transcribe what they heard, and discuss their understanding of the Bruneian speech. We must admit that we cannot be sure on the basis of this kind of feedback that a misunderstanding actually occurred in all instances in which the subsequent transcription by the non-Bruneians is inaccurate or where they claimed they did not understand something, but we believe that most of the tokens do represent genuine instances of loss of intelligibility.

Following Deterding (2013), the term ‘token’ is used to refer to a word or phrase that has been identified as misunderstood by the non-Bruneians. Altogether, a total of 152 tokens of misunderstanding were identified from the corpus.

5.2 Results

Of the 152 tokens of misunderstandings, 12 involved code-switching. Five of these tokens, involving discussion of local things such as food and clothing, are listed in Table 3. (In these tables, the location of the extract from the start of the recording is shown in seconds. In cases where some words are omitted from what is shown in the table, this is indicated with three dots ‘...’. More details about the transcription conventions are provided in the Appendix.) Tokens 1, 2 and 5 involve words for which there is no easy English equivalent.

In Token 1, FBr3 was talking about Bruneian traditional activities, and she used the Malay word *gasing* (‘spinning top’). The wider context is shown in Extract 1. FCh2 indicated that she did not understand *gasing*, and FBr3 then used the English equivalent ‘spinning top’ and further elaborated on it. FCh2 subsequently told the researchers that she still did not know what *gasing* was, as she did not know the meaning of ‘spinning top’ either, but she did realise that it was something to play with.

Table 3 Tokens of misunderstanding involving local things

No	Location	Context
1	FBr3+FCh2:457	traditional games like do you know about <i>gasing</i> ?
2	FBr3+FCh2:766	have you tried <i>ambuyat</i> ? ... yeah the food
3	FBr4+FCh3:690	it's just straight like that ... yeah if this one <i>cani</i> ? and then
4	FBr4+FCh3:692	like that ... yeah if this one <i>cani</i> ? and then <i>ada</i> buttons?
5	FBr4+FCh3:844	it's not tiny yeah it's not as what you call <i>sepet</i> in english

Extract 1 FBr3 + FCh2 : 457 (Token 1)

Context: FBr3 is talking about the customs of Brunei.

FBr3: it's quite nice k- from cuisine ah traditional games like do you know about *gasing*?

FCh2: *gasing* no

FBr3: yeah it's like ah a spinning top something like that like you throw that thing and then it just spins like that

FCh2: is this fun

FBr3: well ah not really but it's fun to learn like something like it

In the same recording, in Token 2 shown in Extract 2, FBr3 used a Malay term *ambuyat* (a Bruneian delicacy, consisting of sticky paste made from sago). FCh2 indicated that she did not know the word by repeating it and asking for clarification. One reason why FBr3 used the Malay word is that there is no English equivalent, but because it is a popular dish in Brunei, she probably expected that FCh2 would have heard of it. In fact, Deterding and Salbrina (2013, p. 95) report that even in the local English-language newspapers, traditional food in Brunei such as *ambuyat* is often referred to using the Malay term. In this case, although FBr3 did not understand *ambuyat*, there was no breakdown in communication, because she knew it was a kind of food, or maybe she deduced that from the context.

Extract 2 FBr3 + FCh2 : 766 (Token 2)

Context: FBr3 is talking about food in Brunei.

FCh2: hey can you tell me anything interesting about brunei

FBr3: ah there's a lot of things have you tried *ambuyat*?

FCh2: *ambuyat* is it

FBr3: yeah the food

FCh2: food

FBr3: yeah

FCh2: maybe i tried before but i can't remember the name

Tokens 3 and 4, both shown in Extract 3, are a little different. FBr4 was talking to FCh3 about different styles of Malay dresses, including *baju kurung* (a long tight-fitting Malay dress), *baju kebaya* (a traditional blouse-dress combination), and *tudong* (Islamic headscarf). FCh3 subsequently said that, having been in Brunei for at least six months when the recording took place, she was familiar with terms such as these. However, in addition, in Extract 3 FBr4 used the Malay words *cani* ('like this') and *ada* ('have'), possibly triggered by the use of the Malay terms for types of clothing. In fact, FCh3 did not understand these function words, and in the subsequent feedback, she was unable to make out the word *cani*, and she heard *ada* as 'the'. While there is no evidence of any breakdown in communication, it is also true that FCh3 did not understand either of these words in Extract 3.

Extract 3 FBr4 + FCh3 : 690 (Tokens 3 and 4)

Context: FBr4 is describing local Malay clothes.

FCh3: i cannot tell the difference

FBr4: if it's *baju kurung* just there's no button here? and it's just straight like that

FCh3: ah

FBr4: yeah if this one *cani*? and then *ada* buttons? it's *baju kurung*

FCh3: ah

FBr4: i mean *baju kebaya*

In the same recording, in Token 5 shown in Extract 4, FBr3 used another Malay term *sepet* ('slant-eyed') because she did not know an English equivalent. FCh4 told FBr3 that at times she is mistaken for a Malay and FBr3 tried to explain that it may be because of her unconventional eye shape. FCh3 signalled that she did not know the meaning of the word by repeating it. Perhaps because FBr4 mentioned 'eyes', FCh3 understood that FBr4 was referring to her eye shape, and so eventually the conversation progressed smoothly.

Extract 4 FBr4 + FCh3 : 844 (Token 5)

Context: FBr4 is telling FCh3 why she might be mistaken for a Malay.

FBr4: yeah you look less chinese now that yeah cause your eyes is not erm <tsk> tiny as it's not tiny yeah it's not as what you call *sepet* in english

FCh3: *sepet*

FBr4: *sepet* it's *sepet* is

FCh3: it's a malay right it's a malay word

FBr4: yeah that's a malay word cause

FCh3: ah you mean long?

FBr4: yeah l- long like that yes

FCh3: ah

FBr4: that's chinese japanese koreans

FCh3: ah <1> yeah yeah yeah yeah </1>

FBr4: <1> yeah they have that kind of </1> yeah and you have like (.) ah the single lid eye single lid

FCh3: ah

FBr4: one eyelid and you have two eyelids <2> like malay </2>

FCh3: <2> ah i understand </2> you this this point two eyelids

The next four tokens all involve aspects of education. They are shown in Table 4.

Table 4 Tokens of misunderstanding involving education

No	Location	Context
6	FBr1+FMd:54	been teaching in <i>sekolah rendah mata-mata</i> ... in gadong?
7	FBr1+FMd:729	for the ah religious school yeah in <i>ugama</i> school?
8	FBr1+FMd:930	i think it's ah ... <i>penilaian menengah bawah</i>
9	FBr2+FVn:694	i also teach at (.) kindergarten school the <i>pra</i> ? school?

The wider context for Token 6 is shown in Extract 5. FBr1 told FMd where she previously taught and she used Malay for the name of the school *Sekolah Rendah Mata-Mata* (Mata-Mata Primary School). FMd asked for clarification, and it seems that FBr1 did not understand the request, thinking that FMd had not understood *Gadong*, the name of an area in Brunei with a wide range of supermarkets and shops. In fact, FMd was familiar with *Gadong*, having already been in Brunei for several months when the recording was made. We might say that there is some evidence of a breakdown in communication here, as FBr1 explained the wrong word.

Extract 5 FBr1 + FMd : 54 (Token 6)

Context: FBr1 is talking about her job as a primary school teacher.

- FBr1: since then i've been teaching in *sekolah rendah mata-mata* in
it's it's in *gadong*? erm and
FMd: sorry it's
FBr1: in *gadong*
FMd: the school's name
FBr1: the school name is *sekolah rendah kampong mata-mata*
FMd: uh-huh

In Token 7, shown in Extract 6, FBr1 explained to FMd how Muslim children in Brunei are required to attend a separate religious school. She first referred to it as 'religious school', but she then used the Malay term *ugama*. FMd was not familiar with this word, and instead she heard 'government'. It seems that FBr1 was not aware that this misunderstanding had occurred, as she then talked about government schools. We might note that *ugama* was redundant here, but it being a common term in Brunei, FBr1 assumed that FMd would be familiar with it. Deterding and Salbrina (2013, p. 92) note that many non-English words, especially words from Arabic, are used in Brunei English when referring to Islamic rituals and customs.

Extract 6 FBr1 + FMd : 729 (Token 7)

Context: FBr1 is talking about religious schools in Brunei.

- FBr1: for a religious school yeah
FMd: so what are what are the subjects ah they study <1> in the yeah
yeah </1>
FBr1: <1> in *ugama* school? </1> erm ah they
FMd: you mean government?
FBr1: in the government will be like how you say ah?

Token 8 is shown in Extract 7. In this case, FBr1 used the Malay name of an exam *penilaian menengah bawah* ('lower secondary exam'), perhaps because she could not think of an English equivalent. FMd did not understand, and she therefore asked for confirmation that it refers to a local exam.

Extract 7 FBr1 + FMd : 930 (Token 8)

Context: FBr1 is talking about the exams pupils take at different levels.

FMd: which exam do they do <1> the students </1>

FBr1: <1> erm </1> form ah form three they ah if they sit until form three they will be (.) i think it's ah (.) <spel> p p m b </spel> is ah *penilaian menengah bawah* it's i think yeah

FMd: a local exam?

FBr1: yeah no i think it's ah yeah that's will be local exam

Finally in this category involving education, in Token 9, FBr2 repeated herself by saying the Malay term *pra* (lit. 'pre' = 'kindergarten') right after saying 'kindergarten school'. In her subsequent feedback, FVn said that she heard 'prass' and did not know that *pra* is the Malay term for 'kindergarten'. Once again, *pra* is a common term in Brunei, and FBr2 did not realise that FVn was not familiar with it.

In the miscellaneous category, there are three tokens in which the speaker seemed to slip into Malay for no particular reason, perhaps forgetting that the listener might not understand. They are shown in Table 5.

Table 5 Miscellaneous tokens of misunderstanding involving code-switching

No	Location	Context
10	FBr5+FCh4:49	i don't know (.) <tsk> <i>entah</i> when i was little? i guess
11	FBr5+FCh4:137	but it's so cute i mean like (.) y- the star <i>apakan</i> but yeah
12	MBr3+MKo:836	erm the others part is the <i>sungai</i> ? i mean the ri:ver

In Token 10, FBr5 used the Malay word *entah* ('perhaps', 'don't know') immediately after the English equivalent, and in the same conversation, in Token 11 she used the expression *apakan* ('what the heck') when talking about something excitedly. It seems that she sometimes forgot that she was speaking with a non-Bruneian who did not understand Malay. But we might note that, although FCh4 did not understand these words, there is no evidence of a breakdown in communication. Finally, in Token 12, MBr3 said *sungai* ('river') but then realised that MKo did not know Malay and so he straightaway explained it in English 'i mean the river'.

To conclude, although it is clear that the misunderstandings in the 12 tokens discussed above occurred because of code-switching, only a few tokens involved a breakdown in communication. In Token 1 FCh2 failed to understand *gasing*, in Token 5 FCh3 took a while to understand the meaning of *sepet*, in Token 6 FMd did not realise that *Sekolah Rendah Mata-Mata* is the name of a school, in Token 7 she misheard *ugama* as 'government', and in Token 8 she asked for clarification that *penilaian menengah bawah* is a kind of exam. In the other tokens, although there may be one or two words that were not understood, they did not interfere with the successful continuation of the conversation.

While it seems that Bruneians sometimes unknowingly or habitually slip into Malay when talking to people from elsewhere, this only occasionally causes misunderstandings to occur, and even when there are misunderstandings, it is rare for a breakdown in communication to occur, though obviously it is hard to generalise based on just 12 tokens, and further research is needed to establish how often Bruneians code-switch when talking to non-Bruneians and how often this causes a problem for intelligibility. Furthermore, the current study only considers informal settings, and from the perspective of EMI at university, it would be valuable to determine how intelligible Bruneian speakers are in more formal settings, how often they switch into Malay in the classroom, and the degree to which code-switching causes problems for intelligibility when international students are present.

6 Conclusion and the future of English Medium Instruction in Brunei

We have shown that English Medium Instruction (EMI) is well-established throughout the education system in Brunei, especially in the largest national university. However, even within EMI, code-switching into Malay is common, and it sometimes extends to conversations with people from elsewhere.

One would expect code-switching to be more common in informal conversations among students, and when it occurs with foreign students who do not speak Malay, it occasionally leads to misunderstandings. Nevertheless, it rarely results in serious breakdowns in communication, because Bruneian tertiary students are adept at using English. Furthermore, the English that they use is generally well understood by people from elsewhere, as the total of 152 tokens of misunderstanding in over three and a half hours of conversation is not very many. (It is about one every one and a half minutes.)

It seems likely that EMI will continue its dominant position in tertiary education in Brunei into the foreseeable future, as indeed is common in universities in the region, especially in Singapore, the Philippines and Malaysia. However, there is little evidence that it will undermine the continued use of Malay. Students still regularly use Malay among themselves while at the same time they are quite proficient in English. Furthermore, the practice of code-switching between English and Malay is also likely to continue, but it only occasionally undermines the intelligibility of speech when it occurs with people from elsewhere. Bruneians generally know when to avoid code-switching into Malay, and they are (usually) successful at avoiding it.

In conclusion, though English is the medium of instruction for most courses at UBD, it seems inevitable that code-switching into Malay will continue to occur regularly among UBD students, even sometimes in the presence of non-Bruneians, but it rarely causes a problem or interferes with the successful implementation of English as the medium of instruction at tertiary level. Finally, English as the medium of instruction is likely to continue its dominant position at UBD, and indeed throughout the education system in Brunei, but it seems unlikely to undermine the continued use of Malay in most domains of Bruneian society. While academics teaching on the Malay Language and Malay Literature programs sometimes express concern about the future of Malay in academic contexts, particularly because of the threat of the increasingly widespread use of English, there seems to be little danger of Malay losing its dominant overall role in Brunei society.

Appendix: Transcription conventions

The transcription conventions are based on those outlined in VOICE (2007), with the addition of italicised/bold font to indicate Malay words that were misunderstood and italics for Malay words that are understood.

?	rising intonation
(.)	short pause
ri:ver	lengthened vowel
@	laughter
<tsk>	speaker noise
<1> , </1>	overlapping speech
<spel> , </spel>	individual letters spelled out
<i>italics and bold</i>	Malay words or phrases that are misunderstood
<i>italics</i>	Malay words or phrases that are not misunderstood
...	omitted speech

References

- Asmah Hj. Omar (2007). Malaysia and Brunei. In A. Simpson (Ed.), *Language and national identity in Asia* (pp. 337–359). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Barnard, R., & McLellan, J. (Eds.) (2014). *Codeswitching in university English-medium classes: Asian perspectives*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Deterding, D. (2013). *Misunderstandings in English as a lingua franca: An analysis of ELF interactions in South-East Asia*. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Deterding, D., & Salbrina, S. (2013). *Brunei English: A new variety in a multilingual society*. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Faahirah, R. (2016). Code-switching in Brunei: Evidence from the map task. *Southeast Asia: A Multidisciplinary Journal*, 16, 65–77.
- Firth, A. (1996). The discursive accomplishment of normality: On ‘lingua franca’ English and conversation analysis. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 26, 237–259.
- Gunn, G. C. (1997). *Language, power, & ideology in Brunei Darussalam*. Athens, OH: Ohio University Center for International Studies.
- Jones, G. M. (1996). The bilingual education policy in Brunei Darussalam. In P. W. Martin, C. Ožóg & G. Poedjosoedarmo (Eds.), *Language use & language change in Brunei Darussalam* (pp. 123–132). Athens, OH: Ohio University Center for International Studies.
- Jones, G. M. (1997). *Towards the next millennium*. Bandar Seri Begawan: Universiti Brunei Darussalam.
- Jones, G. M. (2002). Bilingual education equals a bilingual population? The case of Brunei Darussalam. In D. W. C. So & G. M. Jones (Eds.), *Education and society in plurilingual hubs* (pp. 128–142). Brussels: Brussels University Press.

- Jones, G. M. (2007). 20 Years of bilingual education: Then and now. In D. Prescott (Ed.), *English in Southeast Asia: Varieties, literacies and literatures* (pp. 246–258). Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Jones, G. M. (2012). Language planning in its historical context in Brunei Darussalam. In E. L. Low & A. Hashim (Eds.), *English in Southeast Asia: Features, policy and language use* (pp. 175–187). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Jones, G. M. (2015). Bilingual and multilingual education in Brunei and Malaysia: Policies and practices. In W. E. Wright, S. Boun & O. Garcia (Eds.), *The handbook of bilingual and multilingual education* (pp. 531–541). New York: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Kaur, J. (2010). Achieving mutual understanding in World Englishes. *World Englishes*, 29(2), 192–208.
- Kirkpatrick, A. (2010). *English as a lingua franca in ASEAN: A multilingual model*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.
- Kirkpatrick, A. (2012). English in ASEAN: Implications for regional multilingualism. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 33(4), 331–344.
- Lindemann, S. (2010). Who's "unintelligible"? The perceiver's role. *Issues in Applied Linguistics*, 18(2), 223–232.
- Martin, P. (2008). Educational discourses and literacy in Brunei Darussalam. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 11(2), 206–225.
- Martin, P., & Poedjosoedarmo, G. (1996). Introduction: An overview of the language situation in Brunei Darussalam. In P. W. Martin, C. Ozóg & G. Poedjosoedarmo (Eds.), *Language use & language change in Brunei Darussalam* (pp. 1–23). Athens, OH: Ohio University Center for International Studies.
- Masmahirah Hj. Mohd Tali (2016). Courtroom discourse: A case study of the linguistic strategies in Brunei courtrooms. In Noor Azam Haji-Othman, J. McLellan & D. Deterding (Eds.), *The use and status of language in Brunei Darussalam: A kingdom of unexpected linguistic diversity* (pp. 135–163). Dordrecht: Springer.
- McLellan, J. (2005). *Malay-English language alternation in two Brunei Darussalam online discussion forums*. PhD Dissertation. Curtin University of Technology.
- McLellan, J. (2010). Mixed codes or varieties of English? In A. Kirkpatrick (Ed.), *The Routledge handbook of World Englishes* (pp. 425–441). London: Routledge.
- McLellan, J., & David, M. K. (2007). A review of code switching research in Malaysia and Brunei Darussalam. In D. Prescott (Ed.), *English in Southeast Asia: Varieties, literacies and literatures* (pp. 69–92). Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Ministry of Education (2009). *The National Education System for the 21st century: SPN21*. Bandar Seri Begawan: Ministry of Education.
- Mortensen, J. (2013). Notes on English used as a lingua franca as an object of study. *Journal of English as a Lingua Franca*, 2(1), 25–46.
- Nicol, M. F. (2004). Some problems experienced by Bruneian students with the Cambridge O Level English Language reading comprehension paper. *Southeast Asia: A Multidisciplinary Journal*, 5, 47–70.

- Noor Azam H. O., Hjh. Zurinah Hj. Yaakub, Dk. Liyana Putri Pg. Abdul Ghani, Hjh. Suciwati Hj. Sulaiman, & Saidai Hj. Hitam. (2014). Codeswitching in universities in Brunei Darussalam and Malaysia. In R. Barnard & J. McLellan (Eds.), *Codeswitching in university English-medium classes: Asian perspectives* (pp. 144–162). Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters.
- Ozóg, C. (1996a). The unplanned use of English: The case of Brunei Darussalam. In P. W. Martin, C. Ozóg & G. Poedjosoedarmo (Eds.), *Language use & language change in Brunei Darussalam* (pp. 156–172). Athens, OH: Ohio University Center for International Studies.
- Ozóg, C. (1996b). Codeswitching in Peninsular Malaysia and Brunei Darussalam: A study in contrasting linguistic strategies. In P. W. Martin, C. Ozóg & G. Poedjosoedarmo (Eds.), *Language use & language change in Brunei Darussalam* (pp. 173–188). Athens, OH: Ohio University Center for International Studies.
- Poedjosoedarmo, G. (2004). English in Brunei Darussalam: Portrait of a vital language with an elusive role. *RELC Journal*, 35(3), 359–370.
- Saxena, M. (2006). Multilingual and multicultural identities in Brunei Darussalam. In A. B. M. Sui & J. W. Tollefson (Eds.), *Language, policy, culture, and identity in Asian contexts* (pp. 143–162). New York: Routledge.
- Saxena, M. (2009). Construction & deconstruction of linguistic otherness: Conflict & cooperative code-switching in (English/) bilingual classrooms. *English Teaching: Practice and Critique*, 8, 167–187.
- Smith, L. E., & Nelson, C. L. (1985). International intelligibility of English: Directions and resources. *World Englishes*, 4(3), 333–342
- UBD (2016). Undergraduate programmes. <http://www.ubd.edu.bn/undergraduates/>. Accessed 17 October 2016.
- Wood, A., Henry, A., Malai Ayla Surya Malai Hj. Abdullah, & Clynes, A. (2011). English in Brunei: ‘She speaks excellent English’ – ‘No, he doesn’t’. In L. J. Zhang, R. Rubdy & L. Alsagoff (Eds.), *Asian Englishes: Changing perspectives in a globalized world* (pp. 49–63). Singapore: Pearson Longman.