Ethnic Language Use and Ethnic Identity for Sarawak Indigenous Groups in Malaysia

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This paper examines the link between strength of ethnic identity and extent of ethnic language use for some indigenous speech communities in Sarawak, Malaysia. The domains of language use examined are mass media, education, transactions, friendship, religion, and family. A total of 568 indigenous adolescents in six secondary schools in Sarawak from both urban and rural localities participated in a survey. The results show that ethnic language use is the most extensive among the Penan, followed by the Iban, Saban, and Kelabit. Ethnic language use is relatively low for the Kenyah, Melanau, Murut, and Bidayuh. The findings suggest that ethnic language use is more extensive in groups that are numerically dominant, who live in their ancestral home area, and whose language has less regional variation. However, participants from various Sarawak indigenous groups were similar in their positive attitudes toward their ethnic identity, and the range of variation is narrow. The results indicate that strength of ethnic identity and extent of ethnic language use are not directly linked for the Sarawak indigenous speech communities examined. In such contexts, language maintenance may not be the main reason for cultural maintenance, even though it is still relevant for the preservation of cultural knowledge.

1. INTRODUCTION.[1] Malaysia is a plural society in the process of assimilation (Lim 2000). For example, the Bumiputera culture forms the core of the Malaysian national identity, while other ethnic cultures are peripheral (Shamsul 1996:483, as cited in Ngeow n.d.). In Malaysia, Bumiputera (literally translated as 'prince of the earth' or 'son of the land') refers to the Malay and other indigenous people. Alatas (1997:193) stated that Bumiputera also includes "all those in Malaysia who are not of Malay stock, such as Arabs, but who are culturally Malay. It therefore excludes Chinese, Indians, Eurasians and Europeans." In Malaysia, indigenous peoples are also categorized as Bumiputera, but within this category there is a perceived distinction between the Malays and the other indigenous peoples. The indigenous speech communities in Peninsular Malaysia are collectively termed Orang Asli (literally translated as 'original people'). In Sabah, the main indigenous groups are the Kadazandusun, Bajau, Malay, Murut, Ilanun, Lotud, Rungus, Tambunuo, Dumpas, Margang, Paitan, Idahan, Minokok, Ramanau, Sulu, Orang Sungai, Brunei, Kedayan,

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Bisaya, and Tidong (Sabah Tourist Association 2014); whereas in Sarawak, the main groups are the Iban, Bidayuh, Melanau, Kenyah, Kayan, Lun Bawang/Murut, Penan, Kajang, Kelabit, and Punan (Malaysia Department of Statistics, Sarawak 2012).

Malays are the largest ethnic group in Malaysia. Out of a population of 28.6 million in 2010, the Malays account for 50.1 percent, whereas the other Bumiputera constitute 11.7 percent of the Malaysian population (Malaysia Department of Statistics 2010). The ethnic breakdown of the 2.47 million people living in Sarawak is as follows: 22.99 percent Malay; 28.87 percent Iban; 8.03 percent Bidayuh; 4.99 percent Melanau; 6.33 percent other indigenous peoples; 23.38 percent Chinese; 0.30 percent Indian; and 5.11 percent others (2010 population census as reported in Department of Statistics Malaysia, Sarawak 2012). No further breakdown for the "other indigenous peoples" was provided, unlike the 2000 population census that provided a more detailed ethnic breakdown with percentages as follows: Iban (29.18), Bidayuh (8.05), Melanau (5.47), Kayan (1.27), Kenyah (1.24), Lun Bawang/Murut (0.75), Penan (0.61), Kajang (0.22), Kelabit (0.24) and Punan (0.01) (Malaysia Department of Statistics, Sarawak 2012). See table 1 for the population breakdown by ethnic group in Sarawak.

The Bumiputera in general enjoy special privileges as part of the affirmative action for advancement of the community, and these include priority in university entry, scholarships, and government jobs, special finance schemes, and political positions. Mason and Jawan (2003:117) state that "the Dayak see themselves as second-class *vis-à-vis* the Malay-Muslim *bumiputera*," particularly in the commercial and political areas. The Malay have stronger political power, which is enshrined in the Malaysian constitution, due to their numerical dominance. The Malays were also more active in the fight for

TABLE 1. POPULATION BREAKDOWN BY ETHNIC GROUP IN SARAWAK BY PERCENTAGE†

Ethnic groups		2000 census	2010 census
Malay		22.71	22.99
Chinese		22.50	23.38
Iban		29.18	28.87
Bidayuh		8.05	8.03
Melanau		5.47	4.99
Other indigenous	Kayan	1.27	6.33
	Kenyah	1.24	
	Lun Bawang/ Murut	0.75	
	Penan	0.61	
	Kajang	0.22	
	Kelabit	0.24	
	Punan	0.01	
Other indigenous and Bumiputera		4.34	
Indian		0.19	0.30
Other nationalities		0.19	0.37
Non-Malaysian citizens		3.03	4.74
Total percentage (Total Sarawak population)		**100.00 (2,009,893)**	**100.00 (2,471,140)**

† Malaysia Department of Statistics, Sarawak 2012.

independence from the British, although the communist insurgency, which was dominated by the Chinese, had an important role in the fight for independence. As for political position, constitutionally the prime minister of Malaysia must be a Muslim Malay, and the top positions in government departments tend to be occupied by Malays. The ethnic delineation in government policies is heightening ethnic consciousness.

In addition, the language of the Malays permeates all realms of Malaysian life, with the indigenous languages being mainly used within the community of their speakers. Malay is the national and official language of Malaysia, and has been referred to as Bahasa Malaysia. However, between 1986 and 2007, it was referred to as Bahasa Melayu. Malaysia has since reverted to the use of Bahasa Malaysia, after the issue of Bahasa Melayu being a language of the Malays was raised. "The Malay language belongs to Malaysians of all races and not just the Malays," the Information Minister Zainuddin Maidin was quoted as saying in a press statement (Wong and Edwards 2007). Bahasa Malaysia, which is the standardized Malay language, needs to be distinguished from regional varieties of Malay, which are the ethnic languages of the Malay community, for example, Sarawak Malay, also referred to as Sarawak Malay dialect (cf. Abdul Wahab, Meor Osman, and Hossin 2009; Ting and Campbell 2007). The status of Bahasa Malaysia in Malaysia reflects the model of a modernist state where "a standardised 'national' language is [imposed] on the totality of public social life, i.e., across the whole spectrum of social arenas that structure an individual citizen's life, starting from a monolingual education system and stretching into public administration, the press and economic life" (Blommaert 2011:244). However, Chinese and Tamil primary schools in Malaysia are permitted and even financed by the State.

Among the Sarawak indigenous peoples, the Iban are the only group whose language is taught as a subject in school: "The teaching of the Iban language began in 1968 for primary education but it was only formalised as part of the national curriculum in 1988 (Dayak Cultural Foundation 1995). In the same year, the Iban language was included in the lower secondary syllabus. However, it was only in 2008 when [sic] the Iban language was offered as a new elective subject in the Malaysian Certificate of Education (*Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia*)" (Ting and Tensing 2010).

Based on information provided by the Sarawak State Education department in 2010, Iban is offered as a subject in 367 primary schools and 55 secondary schools, mainly in the Sri Aman, Sibu, Sarikei, and Kapit Divisions, where the Iban population is larger (Ting and Ling 2012). However, among the Bidayuh, efforts to introduce Bidayuh in preschool have been made in a number of preschools in the so-called Bidayuh belt southwest of Kuching, but one of the major problems is that the diversity of the Bidayuh isolects, particularly Bau and Bukar-Sadong, is too great for one version of the Bidayuh language to be used for written materials (Joyik et al. 2010). Although the Malaysian education system provides for the teaching of the pupil's own language at the request of at least 15 parents (Smith 2003), the unavailability of an orthography and rudimentary developments in the standardization of indigenous languages make the implementation of this provision virtually impossible. Without standardization and a writing system, the use of indigenous languages for formal purposes of communication is limited, even though there is no restriction on their use in other domains.

Research has indicated that the domains of ethnic language use for the Sarawak indigenous peoples are diminishing, which gives rise to the concern that the ethnic languages may no longer be transmitted to the younger generation. For example, Ting and Campbell (2007) reported that in Bidayuh families with exogamous marriages, Bidayuh is often not used with the children, particularly if they live in urban centers away from the Bidayuh *kampongs* or villages, and the tendency is to speak Sarawak Malay. Ting and Ling's (2012) survey of language use by Sarawak indigenous adolescents showed that the ethnic language is still strong in the family and religious domains, and their preference is for Sarawak Malay over English in mass media, education, transactions, and friendship domains. In the family domain, the expected decrease in ethnic language use from the grandparents' generation to their generation was seen, but a more insightful finding from this study is the inverse relationship between the use of the ethnic language and Bahasa Malaysia, showing that "the main competition with ethnic languages is Malay varieties" (Ting and Ling 2012:9). Similar findings were obtained by Coluzzi, Riget, and Wang (2013) on Malay encroaching into the friendship, transactions, employment, and government domains, particularly for the younger Bidayuh. Based on their comparison of the language use of older and younger Bidayuh, they conclude that "Bidayuh is vital (but not safe) only in the Bidayuh belt, but endangered in urban settings far from the heartland villages (2013:389).

The concern over the lack of intergenerational transmission of Sarawak indigenous languages stems from the view that linguistic assimilation is conducive to overall assimilation (see Stevens and Swicegood 1987). Concomitant with this is the concern that the cultural knowledge and heritage of the indigenous peoples would be lost along with the language.

The interrelationship between language and ethnic identity has been acknowledged; that is, "language usage influences the formation of ethnic identity, but ethnic identity also influences language attitudes and language usage" (Gudykunst and Schmidt 1987:157). The influence of language and ethnic identity on each other can be seen as bidirectional. There are views that support the influence of ethnic identity on language: a strong ethnic identity results in active use of the ethnic language. This is the patrimony dimension of Fishman's (1977) view of the language and ethnicity link, where language is considered learned behavior for expressing ethnic group membership. In this view, strong identification with the ethnic group is the independent variable, and ethnic language use is the covarying variable. On the other hand, there is also the view that active use of the ethnic language may induce a stronger ethnic identity. An indication of this assumption is found in Marshall's (1994:20) writing on language maintenance and revival, where he states that "[a] sense of being endangered as a self-identified nationality will lead to calls for preserving the language." The call for language preservation arises from threats to the identity, showing that ethnic language use can be a means to instill ethnic identity. These views are based on the assumption that language and ethnic identity are interrelated.

In this paper, we show that ethnic language and ethnic identity may not be so closely interrelated, in that a strong sense of ethnic identification and extensive ethnic language use may not cooccur. Although this stance goes against the literature on the close link between ethnic language and ethnic identity, some researchers have noted the absence of a direct association, particularly those studying heritage languages. In other words, active

ethnic language use would not necessarily bring about a stronger ethnic identity. For instance, Kang's (2004) study of the Chinese and Korean immigrants in New Jersey showed that there is no correlation between Chinese/Korean lexicon scores and language use, lifestyle, and identity. Kang (2004:59) says that language and culture exist independently. and argues that "the extent of language loss does not necessarily mean losing one's identity." The possible nonexistent relationship between language and culture could be attributed to the Chinese view that "being Chinese" is inherently due to having "Chinese blood" (Mah 2005) and not the result of having a lifestyle that reflects Chinese practices or beliefs (see also Bond 1985; Clammer 1982; Verdery 1978). Thus far, findings have concurred on the importance of having Chinese parentage rather than speaking Chinese languages to claim membership in the Chinese community (see also Ting and Mahadhir 2009), but research is lacking on other speech communities, particularly the Sarawak indigenous peoples. Using a larger database of ethnic groups is important for *establishing* whether or not there is a link between ethnic language use and strength of ethnic identity, instead of *assuming* that there is a link based on generalizations from other ethnic groups who may hold different views. A context-dependent theoretical understanding of the language and ethnicity link would also inform language maintenance and cultural preservation efforts.

2. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY. This paper examines the link between the strength of ethnic identity and the extent of ethnic language use for the indigenous speech communities in Sarawak, Malaysia. In this paper, the term "ethnic language" is used to refer to the languages of the indigenous peoples in Sarawak. For example, the ethnic language for the Iban people is the Iban language, whereas the ethnic language for the Saban people is the Saban language. "Bahasa Malaysia" is the national/official language of Malaysia and its regional varieties are Sarawak Malay, Kelantan Malay, and so on. Bahasa Malaysia is taught in school and used as the medium of education, whereas the regional Malay varieties are learned at home or from social contacts. The term "Sarawak indigenous groups" is used to refer to the groups indigenous to Sarawak, which include Iban, Bidayuh, Melanau, Bisayah, Berawan, Kayan, Kelabit, Kenyah, Kiput, Murut, Penan, and Saban, some members of which are participants in the study.

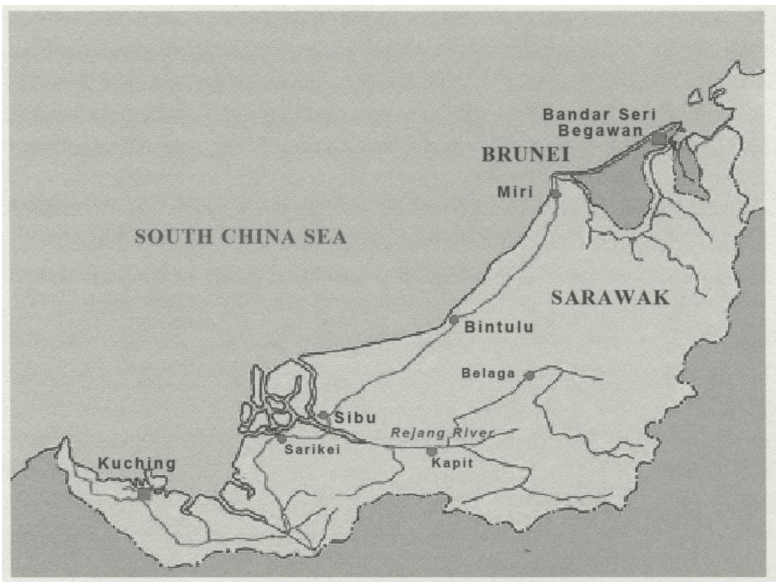
3. METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS. The study was conducted in Sarawak, a Malaysian state located on Borneo Island. In the southern part of Borneo lies Kalimantan (Indonesia), and in the northern part lie Brunei Darussalam and Sabah, another Malaysian state. Data were collected in six research sites: three of these were cities, while the other three were located in the hinterlands of each city. The cities were Kuching, Sibu, and Miri; the three rural sites were Semariang, Durin, and Bario (marked by arrows on map 1). In each of the six research sites, one school was chosen for data collection.

The data for this study came from 568 indigenous students from six schools in Sarawak. The 568 participants in this study were in Form 1, Form 2, or Form 4 at the time of the study. Students from examination classes (Forms 3 and 5) were excluded, following the policy of the Ministry of Education. The participants' age range was from 13 to 17,

with an average age of 15. The gender distribution was balanced (51.76 percent male and 48.24 percent female).

The largest ethnic group among the participants is the Iban (323 or 56.87 percent), while fewer than two percent of the participants were from the Murut, Berawan, Bisayah, and Kiput groups (see table 2). This was expected, because the Iban are the largest indigenous group in Sarawak. The Iban and Melanau participants were mainly

MAP 1. MAP OF SARAWAK SHOWING THE LOCALITY OF THE SIX RESEARCH SITES†



† Source: http://go2travelmalaysia.com/tour_malaysia/swak_places_ll.htm

TABLE 2. PARTICIPANTS BY INDIGENOUS GROUP AND LOCATION

	Kuching: urban	Kuching: rural	Sibu: urban	Sibu: rural	Miri: urban	Miri: rural	Total
Iban	7	21	64	174	52	5	323
Kelabit	0	0	0	0	1	68	69
Penan	0	0	0	0	0	59	59
Melanau	0	1	24	3	12	0	40
Kenyah	0	0	2	0	8	10	20
Kayan	0	0	2	2	10	5	19
Bidayuh	3	3	1	1	5	1	14
Saban	0	0	0	0	1	12	13
Murut	1	0	1	0	0	5	7
Berawan	0	0	0	0	1	1	2
Bisayah	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Kiput	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Total	**11**	**25**	**94**	**180**	**92**	**166**	**568**

from Sibu, whereas the Kelabit, Penan, and Saban participants were mainly from the Miri hinterland.

The participants were mostly from lower socioeconomic strata. In Malaysia, educational background, income, and occupation provide a good indication of the socioeconomic status of an individual. Based on educational background, about 80 percent of the parents had the equivalent of "O" level (public examination in secondary year 12) or lower. The participants' fathers had a slightly higher level of education than their mothers (see table 3 for the participants' parents' educational backgrounds). Most of the participants' fathers were farmers and laborers, whereas their mothers were not in paid employment.

The combined family income of the participants' parents confirmed their lower socioeconomic status. Out of 568 participants, 78.88 percent lived in households with an income of less than RM2000 (that is, 2000 Malaysian ringgit) per month (equivalent to $US 602 at an exchange rate of RM1 = $US 0.30). The other monthly family income levels are as follows: 12.15 percent had an income of RM2000–RM3999; for 4.76 percent, it was RM4000–RM5999; for 2.12 percent, it was RM6000–RM7999; while 2.12 percent earned more than RM8000. Based on the present poverty line for tax exemption in Malaysia, it can be concluded that most of the participants come from families with low income.

The questionnaire used to collect data for the study was a 61-item Language Use and Ethnic Identity questionnaire, which covered participants' demographic characteristics, language use in various domains in their daily life, and a measure of their ethnic identity. The legal, employment, and government domains, which are identified as important domains of language use in Malaysia (Platt and Weber 1980), were not included because the participants were not working adults and these domains are less relevant. For language use, six domains were covered by 17 questions. For friendship, education, transaction, and religion, only one question each was asked. For mass media, four questions were included (listening to the radio, watching television, watching movies, and communicating on-line). Nine questions were designed to elicit information about the language use in the family domain: with maternal and paternal grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins, including the language used with the housemaid. However, for this paper, the language(s) used with the housemaid were eliminated from the data set in order to concentrate on the language(s) used in the family domain. Thus, the data for computing the percentage of ethnic language use is derived from responses to 16 situations in six selected domains.

TABLE 3. PARTICIPANTS' PARENTS' EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

Educational level	Father		Mother	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
University	44	7.75	29	5.11
Form 6	50	8.80	40	7.04
Form 5	184	32.39	167	29.40
Form 3	124	21.83	135	23.77
Primary 6	133	23.42	143	25.18
None	33	5.81	54	9.51
Total	**568**	**100.00**	**568**	**100.01†**

† Total percentage exceeds 100 due to rounding.

The questions on ethnic identity were adapted from Phinney's (1992) questionnaire on multigroup ethnic identity measure. The questionnaire was translated into Bahasa Malaysia, and four questions were added for ethnic behavior. Phinney's questionnaire had seven questions on ethnic identity achievement, two questions on ethnic behavior, six questions on other-group orientation, and five questions on affirmation and belonging. The Cronbach Alpha value for the 24-item adapted questionnaire is 0.765, showing the reliability of the Bahasa Malaysia version of Phinney's (1992) multigroup ethnic identity measure.

The questionnaires were distributed from January through March 2011, in six selected schools in Sarawak, after permission was sought from both the state and federal education departments. Help from the teachers and principals was sought, to identify the classes of students who would participate in the study. Since each class had about 40 students, the data collection usually involved about five classes.

In each school, about 200 questionnaires were distributed after school hours. In most cases, the research assistants stayed in the class to give instructions and to provide clarification when necessary. The questionnaires were collected immediately. Participants were given a token of appreciation for their participation in the study amounting to RM5. Altogether, 600 questionnaires were distributed and 568 were returned.

For the data analysis, the percentage of ethnic language use was calculated based on the participants' reports of the languages used for six selected domains (table 4). Sometimes participants wrote down more than one language and the data were taken as they were. For example, a Penan participant may have written down Bahasa Malaysia and Penan as the languages spoken with his friends. One of the languages may be used for interaction with Penan friends and the other language may be used with non-Penan friends. Since the participants were from a multilingual speech community, it is inevitable that they reported using a number of languages in a particular domain or even with a particular person. This study did not require the participants to report the relative frequency of use. Nevertheless, the number of languages reported for a particular domain shows the sharing of that domain by those languages.

To calculate the percentage of ethnic language use, the number of times the participants reported the use of their "own ethnic language" was divided by the total number of languages reported and multiplied by 100. This is different from the use of the language of other ethnic groups. In the case of a Penan participant, their own ethnic language is Penan, but if a participant also reported speaking Saban and Kelabit, these were put under "Other Ethnic Languages" in table 4. In the Excel spreadsheet used for compiling and analyzing the results, the percentage of own ethnic language use was calculated for each participant; but in table 4, an average is shown for the ethnic group to facilitate comparison of group patterns. Although the percentage of ethnic language use does not take into account the relative frequency of use, it provides a good indication of the monopoly of a particular domain by the ethnic language—and in this paper, attention is on the ethnic language in the interest of language maintenance.

To provide a clearer picture of the sharing of domains by different languages, the average number of languages used per participant per situation of language use was also computed (column 9 in table 4). The number of languages reported by all the participants was divided by 16 situations, and further divided by the number of participants in the eth-

nic group. The results of the computation can give an idea of the diversity of language use. For example, an ethnic group with an average of 1 uses fewer languages for communication than an ethnic group with an average of 2.

The results from the multigroup ethnic identity measure were computed item by item, on a scale of 1 (weak presence of the variable) through 4 (strong presence of the variable). The midpoint of 2.5 represents the middle ground. The results were grouped according to four aspects of ethnic identity: ethnic identity achievement, ethnic behavior, other-group orientation, and affirmation and belonging (table 5). The means for the overall multigroup ethnic identity measure and the four aspects of ethnic identity were calculated by dividing the total of the scores for each ethnic group by the total number of participants for that group. Then the score of the multigroup ethnic identity measure was correlated with the percentage of active language use for individual participants to find out whether there was an association between these two variables. In table 5, an average is given by ethnic group for purposes of group comparison.

TABLE 4. ETHNIC LANGUAGE USE FOR SARAWAK INDIGENOUS PARTICIPANTS†

Indigenous groups	Own ethnic lg	Other ethnic lgs	BM	SM	Eng	M&C	Total no. of lgs reported	Average no. of lgs per participant per situation	Own ethnic lg use (%)
Penan (n=59)	535	562	337	0	27	1	927	0.9	57.71
Iban (n=323)	3556	3707	2244	569	1221	197	7938	1.5	44.80
Saban (n=13)	97	115	102	0	22	1	240	1.1	40.42
Kelabit (n=69)	545	649	504	12	213	6	1384	1.2	39.38
Kenyah (n=20)	136	172	172	27	83	9	463	1.4	29.37
Melanau (n=40)	284	339	320	295	188	20	1162	1.7	24.44
Kayan (n=19)	97	160	154	21	77	3	415	1.3	23.37
Murut (n=7)	35	66	50	0	30	10	156	1.3	22.44
Bidayuh (n=14)	65	116	98	38	71	17	340	1.4	19.12
Kiput (n=1)	6	11	14	4	3	0	32	1.9	18.75
Berawan (n=2)	4	23	22	11	5	0	61	1.8	6.56
Bisayah (n=1)	0	0	12	0	15	4	30	1.8	0
	5363	**5923**	**4037**	**977**	**1955**	**268**	**13160**		

† lg(s) = language(s); BM = Bahasa Malaysia; SM = Sarawak Malay; Eng = English; M&C = Mandarin and Chinese dialects.

TABLE 5. MEANS FOR STRENGTH OF ETHNIC IDENTITY FOR SARAWAK INDIGENOUS ADOLESCENTS

Indigenous group	Ethnic identity achievement	Ethnic behavior	Other-group orientation	Affirmation & belonging	Average MEIM
Berawan (n=2)	3.15	3.09	3.67	3.60	3.36
Iban (n=323)	3.08	3.28	3.31	3.65	3.30
Kenyah (n=20)	2.98	3.20	3.35	3.49	3.24
Melanau (n=40)	2.91	3.07	3.35	3.44	3.17
Kiput (n=1)	2.86	2.84	3.34	3.80	3.17
Bidayuh (n=14)	2.95	3.04	3.21	3.50	3.16
Saban (n=13)	2.84	3.07	3.21	3.53	3.13
Kayan (n=19)	3.00	2.98	3.16	3.38	3.12
Kelabit (n=69)	2.77	3.06	3.09	3.54	3.08
Penan (n=59)	2.95	3.03	2.99	3.49	3.08
Bisayah (n=1)	2.43	2.67	3.34	3.80	3.00
Murut (n=7)	2.62	2.81	3.17	3.32	2.95
Mean (±SD)	**2.99±0.87**	**3.18±0.91**	**3.24±0.88**	**3.58±0.73**	**3.22±0.76**

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 EXTENT OF ETHNIC LANGUAGE USE FOR SARAWAK INDIGENOUS PARTICIPANTS. Table 4 shows that the Penan participants reported the highest percentage of own ethnic language use (57.71 percent), followed by the Iban (44.80 percent), Saban (40.42 percent), and Kelabit participants (39.38 percent). This category of Sarawak indigenous groups can be subdivided into two: the Iban, who are numerically dominant in Sarawak, and the other indigenous groups, who live in smaller ethnically homogeneous communities. The average number of languages per participant per situation for the Iban (1.5) is higher than that for the Penan, Saban, and Kelabit (between 1.0 and 1.2), showing less diverse language use for ethnically homogeneous communities.

Despite using more languages for daily communication (1.5), the use of their own ethnic language is high among the Iban participants for a number of reasons. First, the active use of the ethnic language by the Iban participants in this study could be aided by the fact that the language has a standard orthography and is taught in school. This makes written materials in Iban, such as magazines, accessible. The availability of an orthography also makes it more possible for Iban to be used in written on-line communication in the social media or even for formal purposes in Christian religious settings, as Bibles in Iban are available, although these are not as commonly used as Bibles in Bahasa Malaysia. Out of 323 Iban participants, 33 reported using Iban for on-line communication, and 286 used Iban in religious settings. As a comparison, out of 14 Bidayuh participants, only one reported using Bidayuh in on-line communication and four used Bidayuh in religious settings. Bidayuh for buy-and-sell interactions was only relevant for one participant. Second, there is less regional variation for the Iban language compared to Bidayuh, which makes it possible for Iban speakers from different subgroups to understand one another (Vasudevan, Fathihah, and Patimah 2011).Third, the Iban are the largest ethnic group in Sarawak, with a population even larger than that of the Chinese or the Malay. They are spread throughout the state of Sarawak, and in this study the Iban participants were from all six locations, although the largest proportion was from a school in the rural

hinterland of Sibu. However, there are a number of Iban from Miri and Sibu urban schools (see table 6). The geographical distribution of the Iban throughout Sarawak is likely linked to the vitality of the language.

For Penan, Saban, and Kelabit participants, the relatively active use of their own ethnic language is due to their being ethnically homogeneous communities, as shown by the average number of languages per participant per situation (between 1.0 and 1.2; table 4). Almost all of these participants were from Bario in the rural hinterland of Miri. There was only one Kelabit participant from the same town and another Saban participant from Miri. Since the Penan, Saban, and Kelabit participants are surrounded by people of their own ethnic group, they can speak their ethnic language with family and friends, use it to buy things, or even use it in the education and religious domains. There is no question of their language not being understood within their own ethnic community. However, table 4 shows that the use of "other ethnic languages" is slightly more frequent, indicating that the participants also communicate frequently with people from other Sarawak indigenous groups. The rural hinterland of Miri is the ancestral home ground of the Penan, Saban, and Kelabit, as shown by the population statistics (Pustaka Negeri Sarawak 2009). In the 2010 population census for Sarawak, these groups are classified under "Other Indigenous," and comprise 40.97 percent of the population in the Miri hinterland (table 6). They are not geographically isolated from one another, but the strong presence

TABLE 6. POPULATION DISTRIBUTION OF ETHNIC GROUPS IN SARAWAK IN THE SIX LOCALITIES OF DATA COLLECTION (Malaysia Department of Statistics, Sarawak 2012)†

Ethnic group	Kuching city	Kuching hinterland (Asajaya)	Sibu city	Sibu hinterland (Durin)	Miri city	Miri hinterland (Bario)
Malay	220,333 (35.66%)	26,632 (83.55%)	24,937 (10.06%)	1,147 (3.96%)	54,688 (18.20%)	31,047 (20.62%)
Iban	67,367 (10.90%)	2,625 (8.24%)	69,711 (28.11%)	24,036 (83.01%)	88,385 (29.41%)	33,588 (22.30%)
Bidayuh	76,403 (12.36%)	182 (0.57%)	1,813 (0.73%)	86 (0.30%)	3,865 (1.29%)	866 (0.57%)
Melanau	3,932 (0.63%)	65 (0.20%)	14,612 (5.89%)	259 (0.89%)	9,277 (3.09%)	728 (0.48%)
Other indigenous	8,473 (1.37%)	50 (0.16%)	3,453 (1.39%)	241 (0.83%)	32,553 (10.83%)	61,698 (40.97%)
Chinese	225,998 (36.58%)	2,076 (6.51%)	116,958 (47.16%)	2,800 (9.67%)	80,945 (26.93%)	14,178 (9.42%)
Indian	3,184 (0.52%)	18 (0.06%)	749 (0.30%)	46 (0.16%)	1,217 (0.40%)	222 (0.15%)
Others	2,147 (0.35%)	17 (0.05%)	1,213 (0.49%)	87 (0.30%)	1,687 (0.56%)	748 (0.50%)
Non-Malaysian	10,050 (1.63%)	209 (0.66%)	14,540 (5.87%)	252 (0.87%)	27,926 (9.29%)	7,514 (4.99%)
Total	**617,887 (100%)**	**31,874 (100%)**	**247,995 (100%)**	**28,954 (99.99%)**	**300,543 (100%)**	**150,589 (100%)**

† Note that the population for Sibu hinterland (Durin) was taken from the population given for Kanowit, while the population for Miri hinterland (Bario) was computed from the combined populations of Marudi, Limbang, and Lawas in Malaysia as provided by the Department of Statistics, Sarawak (2012), because the information was not available for the specific locality where the data were collected.

of their own ethnic group, from the old to the young, allows their ethnic language to be functionally relevant for most purposes. Geographical isolation has consistently been found to be a factor that allows the prevalent use of the ethnic language (for example, Fase, Jaspaert, and Kroon 1992). However, with the seeking of educational opportunities at higher levels—colleges and universities are usually found in cities—and with better job opportunities in urban areas, the Penan, Saban, and Kelabit participants who move out of their ethnic home ground may end up using their ethnic language less and less. But because they have spent one and a half decades of their lives speaking their ethnic language on a daily basis, they are unlikely to lose their language. The question is whether they would speak their language to their offspring in cases of exogamous marriages and when they are not living on their home ground. Martin and Yen's (1994) study of the Kelabit working in the towns along the coast of Sarawak revealed that in exogamous marriages, Kelabit is not the main means of communication; English and, to some extent, Malay are used for family communication. Code-switching among the Kelabit is also common, particularly in semiformal and informal situations. Martin and Yen (1994:156) view the occurrence of code-switching as "linguistic evidence of a change in role or identity." They identified urbanization, increased mobility, intermarriage, and education as macrolevel factors that hasten language shift among the Kelabit community.

The next category of participants includes those whose percentage of ethnic language use averages 24. In this category are the Kenyah (29.37 percent), Melanau (24.44 percent), Kayan (23.37 percent), Murut (22.44 percent), and Bidayuh (19.12 percent). Again, this category of participants can be subdivided into two groups: the Melanau, who have undergone a certain degree of assimilation; and the others, who have not. This is reflected by the average number of languages per participant per situation: Melanau (1.8) versus Kenyah (1.4), Kayan (1.4), Murut (1.4), and Bidayuh (1.5); see table 4.

The Melanau's inclination for living in urban areas—as shown by the larger population in Sibu and Miri (table 6)— also puts them in situations where they need to use more languages for daily communication. An additional factor is the close affiliation of the Melanau with the Malay community—due probably to their being mostly Muslim—so much so that after several generations of intermarriage with Malays, the descendants may identify themselves as Malay rather than Melanau. The chief minister of Sarawak is Melanau and, because of this, the social status of Melanau is also higher. Sociopolitically, it is advantageous for ethnic groups to be affiliated with the Malays because of political gains, business, and other employment opportunities—bearing in mind that ethnic Malays are often in positions of power in the public sector, and are the main and most powerful group in Sarawak.

As for the other subgroups whose percentage of ethnic language use averages 24%, the Kenyah, Kayan, and Murut were from both urban and rural localities in Miri, and their population in Sarawak is relatively small to favor extensive use of their ethnic languages, unless they are communicating with members of the same indigenous community. However, the Bidayuh participants, whose percentage of ethnic language use is 19.12, were spread out across the six locations of data collection (table 4). The statistics from the 2010 Population and Housing Census of Malaysia in table 6 show that the Bidayuh are concentrated in the Kuching hinterland: 38.49 percent in Kuching, 27.31 percent in Serian, 18.8

percent in Bau, and 6.06 percent in Lundu, while the remaining 10 percent are spread throughout the state of Sarawak (Department of Statistics Malaysia, Sarawak 2012).

Because of their generally smaller population in Sarawak, when speakers from these indigenous groups are in the midst of other ethnic groups, they have to speak languages other than their own. It is generally only in the family and religious domains and within-group friendships that their ethnic language can be used. If they buy things from shops that are not run by people from their own ethnic group, they cannot speak their own language. When the adolescents are in school, they are in contact with classmates, schoolmates, and teachers from various ethnic groups, and in the education domain generally it is expected that Bahasa Malaysia is the common language. This explains the relatively infrequent use of their ethnic languages, and this applies to all Sarawak communities, not just to the Bidayuh.

In addition to this, Bidayuh has extensive language variation, which is conducive to an infrequent use of the shared language of communication even within the Bidayuh community at large. Dealwis (2008) found that Bidayuh university students seldom used Bidayuh in interactions with other Bidayuh across isolect boundaries. The five isolects of Bidayuh are Salako and Rara (Lundu District), Bau-Jagoi (Bau District), Biatah (Kuching area, for example, Siburan and Penrissen) and Bukar-Sadung (Serian District) (Rensch et al. 2006:6). Unlike Iban, which has been standardized and taught in school, a similar development for Bidayuh is unlikely because the similarity between the Bidayuh isolects is not sufficient for one standard Bidayuh to be developed (Joyik et al. 2010).

Finally, there are three ethnic groups represented by the participants in this study whose percentage of ethnic language use is close to nil (Kiput, Berawan, and Bisayah), but the number of participants totaling four does not allow inferences to be made for the group. The average number of languages per participant per situation stands out (1.9–2.0; table 4), because it shows that they have to use more languages in their daily life, and usually not their own ethnic language because of the small number of speakers in the community.

To sum up, the results show that ethnic language use is more extensive when the ethnic group is numerically dominant, if there is less regional variation in the language, or if the ethnic group is living in its ancestral home ground. The main conditions for decreased ethnic language use are small total population, great regional variation in language, and assimilation into larger ethnic groups, all of which encourage the ethnic groups to use languages of wider communication. Thus far, the results have been described based on the assumption that all the indigenous languages exist in isolation as distinct linguistic systems or sets of systems. In modern-day Sarawak, however, no ethnic community lives in isolation: they are all influenced by contact with neighboring communities and with the locally and regionally powerful languages, Sarawak Malay and Bahasa Malaysia, respectively. The results on the average number of languages per participant per situation (column 9 of table 4) provide evidence of mixed language use in that indigenous communities in Sarawak use an average of one to two languages in most interactions.

4.2 STRENGTH OF ETHNIC IDENTITY. The strength of ethnic identity has been measured using Phinney's (1992) multigroup ethnic identity measure, which was designed for applicability across ethnic groups. Table 5 (last row) shows that the average

ethnic identity score for the group of 568 indigenous participants is 3.22 on a scale of 1 to 4, indicating a positive ethnic identity. As for the components of the ethnic identity, the participants scored the highest on affirmation and belonging (3.58), followed by other-group orientation (3.24) and ethnic behavior (3.18). The lowest was ethnic identity achievement, with a mean of 2.99. The meanings of the scores for ethnic identity will be explained below.

Generally, the 12 indigenous groups represented by the participants in this study had a very positive affective behavior towards their own ethnic group (affirmation and belonging), with a range of 3.32 to 3.80 (x=3.58, SD=0.73). They were happy to belong to their own ethnic group. They also had a strong sense of belonging, and took pride in their ethnic group and its achievements. They also felt good about their cultural and/or ethnic background.

It might be expected that if the participants have a very positive attitude and a strong sense of belonging to their own ethnic group, their other-group orientation may be negative. However, the overall results showed that the participants were also positive towards other ethnic groups (x=3.24, SD=0.88). For other-group orientation, the mean ranged from 3.09 to 3.67, with the exception of the Penan who have a slightly lower mean of 2.99 compared to the other indigenous groups. This could be due to the isolation of the Penan community from the other groups, as it is only in recent years that there has been more intermingling with other groups. The participants liked meeting and getting to know people from other ethnic groups. They were also often involved in activities with people from other ethnic groups and enjoyed being in their presence. They disagreed that it would be better if different ethnic groups did not mix much. Living in an ethnically diverse Malaysian community is a way of life for the adolescent participants in this study.

For ethnic behaviors, the range of means is wider (x=3.18, SD=0.91). Table 6 shows that the ethnic groups can be divided into a group with a mean above 3 (Bidayuh, Iban, Kelabit, Kenyah, Melanau, Penan, Berawan, and Saban) and another group with a mean of below 3 (Bisayah, Kayan, Murut, and Kiput). The latter are smaller groups living in the Baram River area in the Miri hinterland. However, as the number of participants from these ethnic groups is also less than 20 students for each group, with one or two for most groups, the implications of these differences cannot be taken too far. Generally speaking, the indigenous participants are active in organizations or social groups that include mostly members of their own ethnic group. The use of the shared ethnic language in this context for in-group communication show that they belong to the same ethnic group. They participated in cultural practices of their own ethnic group, and also talked with older family members during family events such as weddings and festivals. Their ethnic behaviors reflect in-group cohesiveness, but they are equally comfortable when in the company of other ethnic group members.

Finally, for ethnic identity achievement, the mean of 2.99 (SD=0.87) shows that the adolescent participants are still on an identity search. They were still in a state of flux, but with positive feelings towards their own ethnic group. Some have spent time trying to find out more about their own ethnic group, including talking with other people about their ethnic group and background. Most have a clear sense of their ethnic background and what it means for them, although some reported that they were not clear about the role of ethnicity in their life. While some reported that they think a lot about how their life

is affected by belonging to their ethnic group, others do not really think about it. Nevertheless, generally the participants know how to relate to their own and other ethnic groups. This is an understanding that comes from growing up in an ethnically diverse community, and the tacit knowledge includes knowing appropriateness of topics of conversation, food preferences, and other cultural practices so as not to jeopardize relationships within their own ethnic group and with other ethnic groups.

To sum up, the indigenous participants in this study had a strong sense of ethnic identity and are at the same time tolerant of other ethnic groups. The strength of ethnic group identity of the Sarawak indigenous participants is not unusual. The Malay and Chinese adolescents in the study from the same six localities had multi-ethnic identity measure means of 3.04 and 2.90 respectively (Ting and Ling 2011). Ting and Ling reported the mean of the indigenous adolescents as 3.15, whereas in the present study it is 3.22. In Ting and Ling's analysis, the seven participants who identified themselves as belonging to Sabah indigenous groups (for example, Bajau) were eliminated from that data set, but for the present study, these seven were classified according to the Sarawak indigenous group membership of one of their parents. In either case, the Sarawak indigenous adolescents' strength of ethnic identification with their own ethnic group is slightly higher than that of their Malay or Chinese counterparts.

4.3 LINK BETWEEN ETHNIC LANGUAGE USE AND STRENGTH OF ETHNIC IDENTITY. The Pearson correlation test shows that there is no correlation between percentage of ethnic language use and strength of ethnic identity ($r = 0.2592$, $p < .05$). The strength of ethnic identification does not translate to greater use of the ethnic language, and vice versa (table 7).

Ting and Ling (2012) showed that the extent of ethnic language use is dependent on other demographic variables. As reported by Ting and Ling (2012:14), "locality has the highest *t* value indicating that it is the strongest predictor of ethnic language use and mother's ethnic group is a stronger predictor than father's ethnic group." Ting and Ling's

TABLE 7. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EXTENT OF ETHNIC LANGUAGE USE AND STRENGTH OF ETHNIC IDENTITY

Indigenous group	Percentage of ethnic language use	Multigroup ethnic identity measure (mean score of1 to 4)
Bisayah (n=1)	0	3.36
Penan (n=59)	57.71	3.30
Kayan (n=19)	23.37	3.24
Saban (n=13)	40.42	3.17
Berawan (n=2)	6.56	3.17
Iban (n=323)	44.80	3.16
Kiput (n=1)	18.75	3.13
Melanau (n=40)	24.44	3.12
Kenyah (n=20)	29.37	3.08
Murut (n=7)	22.44	3.08
Kelabit (n=69)	39.38	3.00
Bidayuh (n=14)	19.12	2.95
Average	**27.16**	**3.22**

findings are based on the same data set for the indigenous participants as ours (minus the seven who originally identified themselves as belonging to Sabah indigenous groups), but the focus there was on predictor variables for ethnic language use. If the ethnic group resides in an area where their ethnic group is dominant (for example, the Iban in Sibu), or if they live largely in isolation from other ethnic groups (for example, the Penan, Kelabit, Saban, and Murut in the Baram River hinterland), the propensity for the ethnic language to be frequently used on a daily basis is higher. Locality and parents' ethnic group are structural ascriptive characteristics (race, class, generation, and geography) used to delineate ethnic boundaries, as opposed to cultural ascriptive characteristics that are the subjective characteristics of the group (Chai 2005). Given these findings, language maintenance may not be the most important means to achieve cultural maintenance. Yet the role of language as an identity marker cannot be ignored. Ting and Campbell's (2013) survey of Bidayuh teenagers, university students, and working adults, for example, shows that the Bidayuh language is one of the three top identity markers, the other two being Bidayuh parentage and their ethnic festival, the Gawai Dayak (harvest festival) celebration.

5. CONCLUSION. This study on the Sarawak indigenous adolescents shows that they have a strong sense of identification with their ethnic group, but the extent of ethnic language use varies across ethnic groups. Groups with relatively active use of their ethnic language are Penan, Saban, Iban, and Kelabit, but the Kenyah, Melanau, Murut, Kayan, and Bidayuh rely more on other languages such as Bahasa Malaysia, Sarawak Malay, and the ethnic languages of other indigenous groups. There is no clear relationship between the extent of ethnic language use and strength of ethnic identity, suggesting that attempts at language maintenance may not be the main means to instill ethnic identity in the younger generation of the Sarawak indigenous groups. Given that the findings are based on self-reported data in questionnaires, and given the likelihood for social desirability bias in responses, it would be well to search for or try to develop an indirect method of studying ethnic identity in order to reach a better understanding of the link between ethnic language use and ethnic identity, as in whether active ethnic language use is an essential criterion for membership in the ethnic community.

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