

The Vitality & Revitalisation of a Minority Language: The Case of Dusun in Brunei Darussalam

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Abstract. Language extinction or language death is a sociolinguistic phenomenon which concerns and is often discussed among linguists or members of speaker in general (Aitchison, 2001; Crystal, 2000; Dalby, 2003; Mufwene, 2004; Nelson, 2007; Fishman, 2002; 2007). Due to rapid globalisation, the effect of linguistic "superstratum-substratum" is inevitable (Crystal, 2003), in particular to those languages of ethnic minorities; those in Brunei Darussalam are not the exclusion (Martin, 1995; Noor Azam, 2005; David, Cavallaro & Coluzzi, 2009; Clynes, 2012; Coluzzi, 2012). These minority languages are inclined to endangeredment due to urbanisation, education system, migrations and others, which lead to language shift and consequently, extinction. Brunei Darussalam is a multilingual country that has a diverse population and cultures which generate variations of language and dialect (Nothofer, 1991; Fatimah & Poedjosoedarmo, 1995; Azmi Abdullah, 2001; Jaludin Chuchu, 2005; David, Cavallaro & Coluzzi, 2009). Recognised as one of the seven indigenous in Brunei under the Citizenship Status laws 1961 of the *Constitution of Negari Brunei 1959*, Dusun ethnic is alleged to have and practice its own code of dialect. All dialects and languages spoken by indigenous ethnics are regarded as minority languages, except for the dialect of Brunei Malay. By focusing on Dusun dialect, this paper discusses the current situation of its language use and perceptions among the native speakers. The current study is an extrapolation from recent fieldworks research on the Dusun code-practice by Fatimah Chuchu & Najib Noorashid (2013a; 2013b; 2013c). This paper also reviews the efforts of revitalising the Dusun dialect – facing the globalisation. Result found Dusun dialect is still being practiced as an identity marker among the older generations but declined in use amongst younger generations. Nevertheless, these native speakers are still aware of the importance of their mother-tongue. Efforts to revitalise Dusun are constantly executed, and interest towards it has also increased over time.