Construction & deconstruction of linguistic otherness: Conflict & cooperative code-switching in (English/) bilingual classrooms

MUKUL SAXENA
University of Warwick, UK

ABSTRACT: *The socio-cultural settings of English-language and English-medium classrooms are intrinsically bi/multilingual and bi/multicultural as both learners and teachers bring their multiple identities and home-community languages and sociolinguistic practices into the classroom. However, more often than not in such contexts, monolingual ideologies are the guiding principle for the top-down language education policies of "one-language only" which often create conflict and tension. In a postcolonial context, this paper looks at how monolingual ideologies and policies construct L1 as "the linguistic other" in face-to-face interaction in English classrooms which are defined as "English-only". It also shows how the essentialisation of the English classroom's socio-cultural spaces as non-local is met with resistance through the use of L1 which is informed by the local/national ideologies and constructs English as "the other". Against such a conflict scenario, it finds that code-switching is employed by the participants in some classrooms to achieve pedagogical goals and to resolve the tension which also deconstructs the positioning of both English and L1 as "the linguistic other". The paper employs multilayered analyses and draws on data from ethnographic research based in the classroom and community contexts. The data includes, amongst other, transcripts of classroom interactions and opinions of teachers and students about their language choices in such interactions. The findings of the paper suggest that an appreciation of the potential of the positive power, the constructive resistance and the resource argument of L1 use in English classrooms can lead to deconstructing the essentialist meanings of "the linguistic other".*

KEYWORDS: *English classrooms, monolingual ideology, linguistic other, classroom conflict, bilingual discourse, classroom code-switching.*

In contrast to the norm, the normal and the dominant, the "other" (as "the negative", "the lesser", "the outsider", "the stranger", "the non-legitimate" and "the problem") has been conceptualised in different forms in different periods. As Scott (2003, pp. 103-104) points out, through Christianity, the "non-European Other" was created in the Renaissance era. During the Enlightenment period, a European Reason and non-European Ignorance distinction was created to construct "Otherness", and in the 19th Century, it was race that was used to categorise the normal and "the Other". Most recently, the category of Culture is homogenised and essentialised to construct "the Other" in the form of national, ethnic and/or linguistic boundaries (Kymlicka, 1995). In Applied Linguistics, such a distinction between L1 & English has led to the L1 being categorised as the "non-legitimate" language and, therefore, positioned as "the problem Other". The notion of "legitimate" language or discourse is proposed and described by Bourdieu as:

> [W]e can state the characteristics which legitimate discourse must fulfil, the tacit presupposition of its efficacy: it is uttered by a legitimate speaker, i.e. by the appropriate person, as opposed to the imposter (religious language/priest, poetry/poet, etc.); it is uttered in a legitimate situation, i.e. in the appropriate market (as opposed to insane discourse, e.g. a surrealist poem read in a Stock Exchange) and addressed to legitimate receivers; it is formulated in the legitimate phonological and syntactic forms (which linguists call grammaticalness), except when transgressing these norms is part of the legitimate definition of the legitimate producer (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 65).

While Bourdieu considers the structural (phonological and syntactic) dimensions of legitimate language, Heller (2001) emphasises the functional (language choice) dimension. Heller does so to study the notion of legitimate language (or discourse) in the educational setting of bi-/multilingual contexts.

The socio-cultural settings of English-language and English-medium classrooms are intrinsically bi/multilingual and bi/multicultural as both learners and teachers bring their multiple identities and home-community sociolinguistic practices into the classroom. In countries where policy-makers and other stakeholders have realised and accepted this fact and legitimised the use of L1, these identities and practices are exploited (or expected to be used) as "resources" (in the case of Britain, for example, see Martin-Jones & Saxena, 2003 and Creese, Bhatt, & Martin, 2006; and for China, see Zhou 2003). In countries where this is not the case, they are positioned as "problems".

In such contexts, more often than not, monolingual ideologies are the guiding principle for the top-down language education policies (Phillipson, 1992; Lin & Martin, 2005; Li Wei & Martin, 2009). Consequently, many teachers associate the use of L1 in the classroom with underachievement and enforce "L2/English-only" policies. This is despite the fact that there is no evidence to support it (Eldridge, 1996; Grima, 2001; Baetens Beardsmore, 2003). On the contrary, there is ample empirical evidence (cf., for example, Martin-Jones, 1995; Macaro, 2001) that code-switching is employed strategically by teachers and students as a resource (see, for examples, from diverse contexts, the edited volumes by Heller & Martin-Jones, 2001 and by Creese & Martin, 2003) for "constructing and transmitting knowledge", "classroom management", and "interpersonal relations" (Ferguson, 2003)[1]. The merits of instruction in the first language for the educational and socio-psychological development of bilingual children are widely attested (for example, Fishman, 1989,

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[1] Ferguson (2009, pp. 231-232) describes the three broad functional categories of code-switching (CS) as follows:

> "(1) CS for constructing and transmitting knowledge (this would cover pedagogic scaffolding, annotation of key L2 technical terms, and the mediation of L2 textbook meanings);
> (2) CS for classroom management (this would cover CS to signal a shift of footing, to use a Goffmanian term, from say, lesson content to management of pupil behaviour); and,
> (3) CS for interpersonal relations (this would cover CS to index and negotiate different teacher identities (for example, teacher as didact, teacher as authority figure, teacher as community member), and CS to humanise the classroom climate."

1991; Trueba, 1991; Baker, 1993, 2000; Cummins, 1991, 2000; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000).

The top-down policy of "one-language only" often creates conflict and tension in bilingual classrooms, as demonstrated by a recent edited volume on this topic by Li Wei and Martin (2009). Contributors to this special volume presented findings from diverse geographical settings around the world, which point to "tensions and conflicts between the dominant language ideologies and policies in the so-called bilingual education programmes on the one hand and the actual practices of teachers and pupils on the other" (Li Wei & Wu, 2009, p. 208). It has been shown that in such bilingual classrooms, the "L2/English-only" policies and institutional ideologies are contested by the code-switching/L1, which are employed as symbolic resources (see, for details, Heller & Martin-Jones, 2001). In postcolonial multilingual countries (for example, Lin, 1996; Arthur, 2001; Canagarajah, 2001; Hornberger & Chick, 2001; Lin & Martin, 2005) the local dominant ideologies are often pitted against the "English-only" ideology which is considered to have its origins in "the English Language Teaching (ELT) institutions of the centre that influence language education policy making around the world" (Canagarajah, 2001, p. 194). The sanctity of the English classrooms and linguistic purism are often challenged by bilingual teachers and students in order to accomplish the task of teaching-learning. Therefore, rather than passively submitting to the "English-only" ideology, they actively negotiate the opposing ideologies in their code-switching practices. This paper will focus on one such postcolonial country, Brunei Darussalam (henceforth Brunei), as an example, in order to explore this conflict.

In this paper I will show how, at the policy and practice level, the institutionalisation/ ideologisation of discourse in the classroom positions, not just L1, but even English as "the other" and how in their code-switching practices the participants resolve this conflict. At a theoretical level, the paper will demonstrate the interplay between macro-level and micro-level interactions in the production of "the linguistic other", as shaped by the views of the participants and the broader ideologies. It will also explore how and why such an essentialisation is resisted in the code-switching practices and views expressed by the participants. It will explore these processes of essentialisation and resistance through the lenses of "negative and positive power" (Foucault, 1995; Couzens Hoy, 2005), "non-cooperative and constrictive resistance" (Heller, 2001; Rampton, 1995, 2001; Vinthagen, 2007), and "the language as problem, resource and right" arguments (Ruiz, 1984; Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson, 1994; Baker, 1993).

The paper will employ, what Black (2007) calls, a "multi-layered analysis". At micro-level, it will focus on monolingual and bilingual interactional practices constructed in the moment in classrooms. At the second level, it will try to understand these practices in the light of the attitudes of the participants towards the languages involved and their role in teaching and learning. At the macro-level, it will explore how the discourses reflected in participants' attitudes are shaped by the broader policy level and ideological factors. In order to contextualise the classroom practices and their interactions within the dominant ideologies of tradition/nationalism, on the one hand, and modernisation/internationalisation on the other, I start off by providing a brief background of Brunei.

The national ideology of Brunei, called MIB (*Melayu Islam Beraja*), was officially proclaimed by the current Sultan in 1984 on the day of Brunei's independence from Britain. Since then it has been the nation's system of ruling, its way of life and form of Government. MIB is used to construct an inextricable link between Malay ethnic identity, Malay culture, Malay language (the official/national language), Islam and the nation. By doing so, it has raised the status of the Malay culture and the Malay language in a multicultural and multilingual country (Martin, Ozog & Poedjosoedarmo, 1996; Saxena, 2007) to that of a national culture and national language, constructing them as essential elements of a Bruneian identity. Moreover, legitimised by the Malay Muslim monarchy, MIB consolidates the cultural and linguistic capitals (Bourdieu, 1977) of the historically dominant group, *Brunei Malays*, which continues to be disproportionately represented in the elites and ruling classes of Brunei. And as a consequence of MIB-driven policies and the hegemony of Malay, the ethnicity, language, culture and identity of the other minority ethnolinguistic groups have been subjected to the homogenization forces of Malayanization/Bruneization.

In the case of English, the situation is no different. These forces position English as "the other" whenever English is perceived as a threat to Malay and/or the Malay Muslim way of life. However, such forces are countered fiercely by the English-educated elite lobby in the country, which also commands a strong sociolinguistic vitality. Such a conflict over the promotion of Malay vis-a-vis English manifests itself in the sociolinguistic practices and attitudes of Bruneians. The struggle over Malay and English and the associated ideologies is the struggle for power between Malay-educated elites and the Religious elites on the one hand and the English-educated elites on the other (Saxena, 2007). Since independence from British rule in 1984, (until last year[2]), therefore, the language education policy of Bilingual System of Education (*Sistem Pendidikan Dwibahasa*; introduced in 1985) has been a political endeavour to incorporate the sentiments of these opposing elite power groups. In this bilingual system, Malay has been valued as the "local/ national language" and English as "the global/ international language" and they have been taught and employed as media of instruction. For all subjects in the first three years of education (the Lower Primary), except for English as a subject, Malay has been used as the medium of instruction. From the fourth year (the Upper Primary) onwards there is a switch to English for Mathematics, Science, Geography and History (although, subsequently, the language medium for History changed to Malay in 1995). The "abrupt" language medium switch in the fourth year of schooling has attracted considerable research interest (Ahmad, 1992; Murni Abdullah, 1996; Zulkarnain Edham, 1997; Martin, 1999, 2008) because it has been seen as associated with students' poor performance and the use of code-switching in English language and English-medium subject classrooms. These research studies (except Martin, 1999; 2008), have positioned the L1 in English classrooms as "the problem" and "the linguistic other".

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[2] Just last year, under the leadership of the current Education Minister, who is considered to be a modernist (an English-educated Elite) the Ministry of Education introduced SPN 21, an acronym for *Sistem Pendidikan Negara Abad Ke-21* (The National Education System for the 21st Century). It has been implemented in stages: Interim (transitional) stage in 2008 for Year 7; at the primary level, for Year 1 and Year 4, it will be implemented in 2009; and full implementation at primary level in 2011. This new system supports the sentiments of the English-educated elites and promotes English which is to be introduced from Year 1, rather than Year 4, as it has been policy since 1985.

The postcolonial dilemma that policy-makers and teachers in Brunei face is that, on the one hand, they accept that the main aim of Brunei's education policy is to produce citizens who can uphold the principles of the "national ideology" which promotes the Malay language. On the other hand, they cannot escape "the monolingual fallacy" (Phillipson, 1992) of the "English-only" ideology. To study the actualisation of this dilemma and conflict at the classroom practice level, I will look at two contrasting literacy events from two English classrooms. In one classroom, I will show how students challenge the institutionalised "English-only" ideology or the "Othering" of L1/Malay through the use of "illegitimate" L1, thereby positioning English itself as "the other". In the other classroom, I will look at the code-switching as a "legitimate" discourse practice, within the socio-cultural norms of the classroom, which might be seen as the positioning of the institutionally "legitimate" English as "the Other" or a resolution of the ideological conflict between what is sometime positioned as the static divide between the global forces of English and the local forces of national language.

The two literacy events chosen to explore the aims of the paper are fairly representative of the wider practices in the Bruneian classrooms, as shown by my long-term, ethnographic research. During my ten years stay in Brunei (1999-2009), I studied language use and related issues in different multilingual contexts at school, work and community levels, which I draw on while interpreting the data presented in this paper. This research involved ethnographic observations, audio-recordings of communicative events, semi-structured interviews and focus-group discussions, as well as discussions during chance encounters. My focus in this paper will be on the transcripts of actual, teaching-learning events in the classrooms, teachers' and students' opinions, and the sociolinguistic environment in which Bruneians, particularly children, were socialised in their families and the communities. The classroom interactional data selected for this paper was collected during 2006-07 as part of my university funded project[3]. During this period, four schools were chosen, based on previous ethnographic research. One of the main criteria of selection was whether the teachers allowed the use of L1 in the classroom or not. Two of each type was chosen and regular, whole-day visits on alternate weeks were made for six months, three at the beginning and three at the end of the school year. In total, I made 135 hours of audio recordings of teaching-learning events and 28 hours of interviews with the teachers and students[4].

CODE-SWITCHING PRACTICES: L1 AS THE "LINGUISTIC OTHER" IN THE CLASSROOM

In this section, I will present an example of how the use of L1 is problematised by the teachers and how it is resisted by the students in the interactive space of English classrooms in Brunei. Such studies of interactional resistance by the students are

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[3] University Approved Research Project (UBD/PNC2/RG/1(45)): "Globalisation and Language-in-Education Policy and Practice in Southeast Asian Societies", University of Brunei Darussalam, Brunei Darussalam.
[4] At different times during this project, ten students were engaged as part-time research assistants to help transcribe the data and translate the Malay utterances.

under-represented in the bilingual classroom literature (the most recent exception being Li Wei and Wu {2009}).

I will start off by providing an analysis of talk in a literacy event in one classroom (Classroom 1). First, I will focus on the production of dominance by the teacher and resistance from the students in carrying out the task of teaching and learning. Their actions then will be interpreted in light of their views about the use of L1 in the classroom and how they, in turn, are shaped by the broader national ideology and the ideology of the English pedagogy establishments. I have repeated this "multi-layered analysis" (Black, 2007) in the following section in which I have presented the management of meaning-making, both pedagogical and symbolic, through the use of L1 by the teacher and students in their interactive practices in another classroom (Classroom 2). I will also compare and contrast the interactive meanings at play in the two classrooms with each other and contextualise them in the broader practices of language choices and attitudes in other classrooms in Brunei.

The teacher, Ms Azlinah (a pseudonym) in Classroom 1, is a local, female Brunei teacher who is in her mid-30s. She is currently the Head of the Department of English in a local government school. She is in her second year of teaching Form 3 students. She is known to be very strict with her students, as she is one of the teachers responsible for maintaining discipline in the school. The students in the school and in Classroom 1 had marked her as "strict" and "a slave driver". Ms Azlinah is a Brunei Malay Muslim and knows Malay and English. She uses both languages outside the classroom.

There are 28 students in this class, 12 male and 16 female. The majority of the students are Malay, only 1 is Chinese, 2 are half-Chinese half-Malays, 2 are Indians, 1 is Eurasian (half Anglo-British and half Malay). Apart from the non-Malay students, they speak mostly Malay and sometimes English among themselves, both inside and outside the classrooms.

Literacy event 1: "A history of travel"

The literacy event used as an example to show the "Othering" of L1 is a comprehension exercise from a past, O-level English examination paper. Ms Azlinah, the teacher, begins the event by asking students to read a passage on the history of travel. What follows the reading are comprehension questions asked by her, as evident in the following Extract.

Extract 1
[T: teacher, S(S): student(s), <E> English utterance, <M> Malay utterance, { } translation other comments, for more transcription conventions, see Appendix A.]

1	T:	I want you to tell ME... what is it about^ the first reading you should be aware of WHAT it is about.. it's NOT about Martians it's not about something else...what is it about^...the second reading. You start to read to UNDERSTAND it.. so let's read it ONCE and you've got 10 minutes and
5		I'll time you for reading then I'll ask the questions so START reading now {students reading for 10 minutes}
	T:	Alright..stop..what is it about^.. what's this passage about^
	SS:	travel

	T:	TRAVEL..okay..now – is the travel about animals^
10	SS:	No
	T:	So..the travel is about what^
	S?	Man
	T:	MAN..man meaning people yeah^
	SS:	{silence}
15	T:	now is this travel about something SPECIFIC^ exact^ Or is it about lots of travel^
	SS:	lots of travel
	T:	alright...would you say that the travel starts from the beginning and coming down to modern time^..is it going from behind..the past days
20		the olden days to modern days^
	SS:	yes
	T:	so would you say it's about the History of travel^
	SS:	{some mumbling}
	T:	yeah^
25	S?:	yes
	T:	if it's a HISTORY..is it also given a logical order of progression..man just walking..man using trains..man then doing something else..so is it like a timeline of travels^

The IRE (Initiation-Response-Evaluation) pattern of interaction (as labelled and called the *unmarked* or *default* pattern of discourse structure by Cazden, 1986) in the above Extract 1 (for example, lines 6-13) is typical of the rest of the interaction in this literacy event. In this teacher-dominated interaction, students respond with single words, short phrases and with silence. Such responses were constructed by the nature of the questions asked by the teacher: simple question with either/or choices (lines 15-17), or leading questions (lines 19-25).

Beside the comprehension questions on the content of the passage, Ms Azlinah also checks students' understanding of certain vocabulary items (called "label quest" by Heath, 1983). The following is one such episode.

Extract 2

45	T:	...very modern.. up-to-date..now okay^ so this is a good example of how they have shown the HISTORY of something in a logical time frame..alright.on the board I've put some of the words that might be confusing the first line – sorry the SECOND line of the first paragraph..it says travel today has turn COUNTRIES into a series of villages.. now this
50		is something you should understand with ( ) of the passage..what do they mean by a series of villages^
	SS:	{silence}
	T:	what's a VILLAGE^
	SS:	{some mumbling}
55	T:	what is a village^
	S1:	( ) <M> **kampung** ( ) {*village*} {laughs}
	LL:	{laughter}
	CT:	<E> umm in English please this is not a Malay lesson
	S2:	people live
60	T:	RIGHT where many people live okay..and in olden days …

In the above interactional episode, Ms Azlinah asks what a village is (lines 50-51, 53, & 55). Her first attempt is met with a "silence" (line 52) from the students and the

second with "some mumbling" (line 54) among the students. To her third repeated elicitation move, a student provides the correct translation of the word "village" in Malay. Ms Azlinah rejects the answer on the grounds that it is not in English. Instead, she accepts a partial definition of the word "village" given by another student in English, and without expanding on it moves on to a related topic.

The interactional behaviour of the participants in the above episode can be explained, at one level, by what Ms Azlinah had pointed out in an interview when the observations had just started in this classroom. She had informed me that she had established the "no Malay rule" since she met the class the previous year. She said that when students responded in Malay she either reminded them of the rules of interaction explicitly (a case in point is the above episode), or sometimes said "excuse me", or at other times simply ignored and refused to acknowledge such responses. In fact, she had established a system whereby students would be fined 10 cents for every word uttered in Malay in the classroom.

In her own words, Ms Azlinah gave the reason for discouraging the use of Malay in the classroom, as follows:

> ### Quotation 1
> I know that preserving a culture such as one so ingrained like <u>MIB</u> will demand that Malay be given uppermost hand, but it will not do to create hybrid of languages or dialects. The <u>originality then will disappear</u> and students <u>will not have the opportunity to use either language to its fullest</u>. <u>Code-switching,</u> although inevitable, <u>should be discouraged</u> from schools, especially language teachers and bilingual, L2-based subject teachers.

In her statement, "students <u>will not have the opportunity to use either language to its fullest</u>" and "<u>Code-switching</u> … <u>should be discouraged</u>," one may notice a reflection of the broader discourses of the "English-only" ideology. She evokes this ideology to problematise the Brunei national ideology of <u>MIB</u> and positions it as "the other".

At a more macro level, the above represents not the view of an isolated teacher, but one which has been constructed by the broader ideological processes of (embedded in) the policies of the Ministry of Education in Brunei. The Ministry actively discourages the use of Malay in English classrooms by reproducing the broader "English-only" ideology discourse in various ways: during the training of pre- & in-service teacher training; through visits by school inspectors to English classrooms and schools; and in conferences and seminars organised by the Brunei English Teachers Associations. This information is based on my observations and interviews with many teachers during my long-term ethnographic research in Brunei. For instance, one of these teachers during one of my interviews said:

> ### Quotation 2
> <u>Officers from the MoE highly discourage the use of code-switching</u> in the classroom. This is usually emphasised when teachers attend seminars or conferences. The teachers are to use English and only resort to Malay in extreme cases. Teachers are not to be lenient to students by giving them the benefit of Malay words instead of English.

In order to further emphasise the point, I present below another quote from my interviews with other teachers. Here, a young English teacher is recounting the views of her own English teacher from her school days.

> ### *Quotation 3*
> …recently, I met <u>my former English teacher</u> during Hari Raya [*the festive period following the Islamic month of fasting*] and we were talking about code-switching in classroom, especially English. And she <u>strongly disagrees with the use of code-switching</u> because she said we should not spoil the students and <u>no matter how hard the students are coping with English</u>. We as teachers have to push the students in order for them to reach the level proficiency in the target language. At times I do support, at times I don't. Listening to what my former teacher was saying, what she said is true but <u>I don't agree with forcing the students</u>. From my opinion, <u>I would like my students to have a wonderful experience learning English</u> and not seeing it as a torturing experience.) [my addition in italics]

The view of the teacher in this quotation also shows that the practices and the views of Ms Azlinah from Classroom 1 in this paper are not isolated instances, but suggest a broader trend. The role of the MoE and its policies, and therefore, that of the broader "English-only" ideology, is pervasive in the rather small population of English teachers in Brunei.

Returning our attention to Extract 2 above, it is obvious that in this classroom Malay is positioned quite explicitly as "the linguistic other". The "otherness" in this interactional space is not just about the Malay language, but it is also about the socio-cultural and ideological dimensions of Malay. This is clear from Ms Azlinah's reference to MIB in Quotation 1 given earlier.

The discourses of "English-only" ideology position the teacher in this classroom as an "English teacher", the identity she projects to execute her power in the interactional space of the classroom and construct Malay and the students' act of using it as "the other". But is this power all negative? Not quite so, as according to Foucault:

> we must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it "excludes", it "represses", it "censors", it "abstracts", it "masks", it "conceals". In fact, power produces: it produces reality, it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth (Foucault, 1995, p. 194).

The "power" is only negative when it is manifested as "domination" (Couzens Hoy, 2005, p. 82). This can be seen in the way in which the teacher manages the talk through IRE episodes and defines the rules of interaction and the choice of language. But the power is positive and productive in the broader sense (Couzens Hoy, 2005) in that in its dominating and subjection form it triggers resistance (Heller, 2001; Rampton, 1995, 2001; Vinthagen, 2007; Li Wei & Wu, 2009). Evidence of this can be seen in action in Extract 2.

In line 56, after uttering the Malay word, the student "laughs" and along with him the rest of the students in the class laugh too (line 57). As a consequence of the classroom management talk established by Ms Azlinah since the previous year, the students are

aware of and constantly reminded about the "no Malay rule" by the teacher. Following Ms Azlinah's departure from the class, when I had an informal chat with the students after the event, they told me that they knew the Malay equivalent (line 56, "some mumbling") of the word "village" but did not know how to define the word in English. They knew they were not supposed to reply in Malay, but the one who did, did it anyway, as he said, "to annoy the teacher".

These students and others, as revealed by my ethnographic research in English classrooms (Saxena, 2008), find the marginalisation of their national language, Malay, in English classrooms very confusing. This confusion derives from the fact that Malay as the national language is venerated in different forms and practices symbolic of their Brunei Malay cultural and traditional identity. The MIB-driven cultural socialisation of children at home, in the community, mosques and schools (Saxena, 2008), also leads them to challenge the "policing English" policy (sometimes through levying fines) which they see as marginalizing their home/community and national language. It is this MIB socialisation that the class teacher is alluding to in her quotation above. In a way that parallels this teacher's "no Malay rule" and students' resistance displayed by the use of Malay in such micro-level interactional encounters, many Bruneian English classrooms reproduce the conflict between the "English only" ideology and the MIB ideology and, therefore, the postcolonial dilemma of internationalisation and localisation.

However, there are many other English classrooms in Brunei that negotiate this ideological conflict in their code-switching practices in the classroom. At the same time, in doing so, they can be seen as resisting the "othering" of Malay, and redefining English as "the linguistic other" and or questioning the notion of "linguistic otherness".

CODE-SWITCHING PRACTICES: "ENGLISH" AS THE "LINGUISTIC OTHER" IN THE CLASSROOM

What I have shown so far is how Malay L1, is used in the classroom against the norms for interaction set by the teacher Ms Azlinah, which in turn are shaped by broader policy and ideological drivers. Now I look at how Malay is used in the classroom as part of the norm and in defiance of policy instructions.

The teacher, Ms Irenawati (a pseudonym) in this class (Classroom 2) in another school, is a 25-year-old Malay Bruneian who speaks both Malay and English well. Like most other Bruneians, she code-switches between these languages depending on the context she finds herself in (see Ozog, 1996; Saxena & Sercombe, 2002; McLellan, 2005). She brings this practice to the classroom and uses it as a resource and encourages students to do likewise. In addition to employing her knowledge of students' language practices, she draws into her teaching their socio-cultural background as "funds of knowledge" (Moll, 1992; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992; Martin-Jones & Saxena, 2003).

Ms Irenawati knows many of the students personally because of the smallness of the Bruneian population. They often come across each other at social functions, which are an essential part of traditional, Brunei Malay lifestyle encouraged by the MIB national

ideology. These social occasions allow the classroom participants to develop, maintain, reproduce and use, as teaching-learning resources, various socio-cultural identities they share, for example, as kin, neighbours, family friends, Malays and/or Bruneians, and so on. This is in contrast with the scenario in Classroom 1 where, although the teacher, Ms Azlinah, and the students share similar sociolinguistic spaces outside the classrooms, neither such practices nor identities are used as resources in the classroom's teaching-learning process. Instead they are essentialised by the teacher as "English-only", "teachers", and "students" and, therefore, face a degree of resistance from the students.

In Classroom 2, there are 25 students, 10 male and 15 female. Of these, the majority are Malay, 2 Chinese, 1 Indian and 2 Eurasians (Anglo British-Malay). The socio-linguistic background of these students is very similar to that of the students in Classroom 1. They are also in the lowest ability of the O-level classes due to their low achievement in the Form 3 public exams. They come from a working-class catchment area of the school where kinship and socially oriented *close-knit* and *dense networks* (Milroy, 1980) are maintained. The main language of interaction in this area is Malay, with some code-switching in English.

Literacy event 2: "Dogs"

The literacy event described here is a comprehension exercise in Classroom 2. The text used is about the history behind the domestication of dogs: how they were tamed from being wild wandering packs of animals. The teacher, Ms Irenawati, starts off by reading the first paragraph of the text, and the remainder are later read out by individual students nominated by her.

Extract 3

15	T:	<E> Alright… As you can see…right^ This here is a another variety of example…introduction. How to introduce…composition .. So what does, what does it <M> **anu ia cerita**^ {*mmm, talks about* } <E> It talks about how...the background of the^...the dogs' <M> **punya** {own} <E> family^ ...one thing and then how it is a common household pets...ok Maybe it's not in Brunei
20		though...but in some other countries right^
	S?:	uh...
	T:	so .. it seems that umm ... the origin of the species <M> **nda tau**… {not known} <E> from <u>where</u> it came from.
	S?:	Mm
	T:	<E> They are..thought to be descendants <u>from</u> <u>wolf</u>, a wolf-like creature like
25		tomarctus. Roam <M> **apalagi nya** {*what else*} <E> what did it say with roam^
	SS:	<E> Roam
	T:	What's...the meaning of "roam"...
	S?:	( )
30	T:	<M> <u>Nooo</u>
	S?:	<M> **Apakan**^ {*What ^*}
	S?:	<M>...**Apakan**^ {*What ^*}
	T:	<E> <u>Roam</u>, what does "roam" means
	S?:	<E>...Roam <M> **kah mcm** ... {*like what...*}
35	S?:	Rarrrr...
	T:	<E> No that's "<u>Roa</u>..red"

	S?:	<E> "Roam around" <M> **bah**... {*It's "roam around"* }
	T1:	<E> <u>Roaming</u> **bah**... *It's roaming…*
	S?:	<M> **Ah…chatu bah**... {*Aaa like that...*}
40	T:	<M>...**mcm kalau telipun**..... {*it's like if a phone*} <E> it would, you know, roaming, right^
	S?:	<E> "Roaming" <M> **kah** ^ {*Do you mean "roaming"^*}
	S?:	Mm
	S?:	<M> **Ah...bulih**... {*Aaa...is that so...*}
45	S?:	<E> **Buleh kan tu** ^ {*Can it so ^*}
	T:	<M> ...**kalau binatang** ... {*if animals*} <E> they roam around^ <M> **Macam bejalan-jalan**. {*Like going around*} <E> You know^
	S?:	<M> **Cari <u>makan</u> bah 'cher**... {*They're simply looking for food...*}
	T:	<E> ...ya, so another thing they say is, dogs are the oldest...of <u>all</u>
50		domesticated animals...to date. To date is a...um, a kind of phrase, trying to say… from <u>then</u> to <u>now</u>. Until <u>then</u> to now <M> **nada pernah**... {*never been...*}
	S?:	<M>...**Sampai sekarang kah**^ {*you mean until now ^*}
	T:	<E> ...Yes, <M> **sampai sekarang**. {*until now*} <E> So…that means <u>cats</u> are not…the oldest thing

In contrast to the interaction in Classroom 1, two characteristics of talk in this classroom become clear straightaway. One, the students are more active and the use of Malay-English code-switching is allowed. Two, the talk is relatively more locally managed.

In lines 16 & 17 (what does it <M> **anu ia cerita**^ {*mmm, talks about* } <E> It talks about how), Ms Irenawati first code-switches into Malay in the form of a rhetorical question and then provides the translation in English in the form of a statement. This signals to the students that the use of Malay is legitimate in this English classroom. However, the code-switching in this event is not an isolated instance, as long-term observations in this classroom showed that the participants regularly engaged in this practice.

Ms Irenawati begins by directing students' attention to the nature and content of the composition, which is about the history of the domestication of dogs. Just like Ms Azlinah in Classroom 1, she also engages in eliciting the meaning of the vocabulary items that she thinks might be difficult for the students to understand. However, the nature of the talk involved is different during these interactive episodes. In Classroom 1, the talk is dominated by the teacher in IRE (Initiation-Response-Evaluation) sequences whereas, in Classroom 2, the teacher also engages in IRF (Initiation-Response-Feedback) sequences (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1974; Pontecorvo, 1997). The IRF structure of the talk supports active and strategic learning (Goldenberg, 1996) and the use of CS encourages more active participation from the students. In the third-part utterance, Feedback, the teacher engages in what Lemke (1990) calls "retroactively contextualizing", and builds on students' responses in order to narrow their focus to the answer expected without providing the answer (as tends to happen in the Evaluation move of IRE). Conversely, one can say that Ms Irenawati's decision to allow CS in the classroom invites more participation from the students, which occasions the IRF sequences. In fact, the use of L1 at a strategic juncture in the discourse serves as retroactive contextualization, as I will show below.

In Classroom 1, Ms Azlinah's initiations are met by silence or one-word answers from the students which she regards unsatisfactory. Her frustration, which is caused by students' lack of proficiency in English, leads her to simply provide the answers. In contrast, in Classroom 2, Ms Irenawati and the students jointly unpack the meaning of the text. In Extract 3 above, we can see how the participants negotiate the meaning of the word "roam" with the help of CS. When Ms Irenawati realises (lines 25-39) that the students are having difficulty in understanding the meaning of the word, she switches strategically to Malay and uses the students' experience with mobile phones and the associated register, that is, "roaming", to orient their understanding towards the meaning of "roam". As soon as the teacher makes reference to "roaming" in this context, the penny drops for the students (lines 43-45). This is a telling example of how teachers are able to exploit the linguistic and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1977, 1991) as funds of knowledge when L1 is not positioned as the "linguistic other" in the classroom.

The use of Malay allows fluidity in the conversation and achieves "reciprocity of perspective or meaning" (Edwards & Furlong, 1987) between Ms Irenawati and the students. It also allows the students to make initiations, a good example of which can be seen in line 52. Here, a student uses Malay strategically to confirm with Ms Irenawati what she has just said in English. We don't see such initiations by the students in Classroom 1.

From my observation and interviews with the students in both the classrooms, I found that the bond between the students in Classroom 2 and their teacher was stronger than the bond between the teacher and students in Classroom 1. They shared a lot of information, such as leisure, hobbies and movies, which sometimes they drew on in learning situations (for example, the topic of mobile phones evoked in Extract 3 to unpack the meaning of "roaming"). Their dynamic relationship was not just founded upon how Ms Irenawati was as a person, but how she as a teacher taught and interacted with the students and approached the subject content. The students said that they got to speak in Malay and share their ideas and opinions in class more openly and freely. In contrast, in Classroom 1, many students claimed that they did not like their English lessons and found them boring. When asked if that was because of the way the teacher taught them or because of any other reason, they replied that it was because of the fact that they did not really understand English well. They also felt that Ms Azlinah was "very strict" and forced them to speak English, to which they responded, as I pointed out earlier, at times by rebelling against her and annoying her.

The "resistance" shown by the students in their discourse in Classroom 1 can be termed "non-cooperation" (Vinthagen, 2007) and aligned with the "language right" argument (Ruiz, 1984; Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson, 1994). A variation of this type of resistance is "constructive resistance", which Vinthagen (2007) defines as: "Resistance may also sometimes transcend the whole phenomenon of being-against-something, turning into the *proactive* form of constructing 'alternative' or 'prefigurative' social institutions which facilitate resistance, i.e. *'confrontative alternatives' or 'constructive resistance'...*" (pp. 12-13). The resistance in this "constructive" sense can related to the "language as a resource" argument (Ruiz, 1984; Martin-Jones & Saxena, 2003) where the use of L1 in English classrooms is exploited positively in teaching-learning processes. Hornberger (2003, 2008) has developed a framework, called the "Continua of Biliteracy". The framework deals

comprehensively and constructively about drawing on bilingual linguistic resources in "literacy events", which are the focus of the two examples taken for analysis in this paper.

I consider the strategic and productive use of CS in English classrooms as a "constructive resistance". This form of resistance, in my view, attempts to negotiate the conflicting polarisation of the ideologies of tradition vs. modernity, local vs. global and national vs. international, or "hyperglobalist" vs. "sceptic" positions (Held, McGrew, Goldblatt, & Perraton, 1999) in the World Englishes and globalisation debate (Saxena & Omoniyi, forthcoming). It questions the essentialism of "the linguistic other" that positions L1 and English in many English/ bilingual classrooms in opposition.

In comparison with Classroom 1, the use of Malay in Classroom 2 can be considered as "constructive resistance" to Ministry of Education's insistence on the use of "English only" in classrooms, without any regard for the kind of linguistic and socio-cultural environment in which teachers work. Quotation 4 is from my interview with the teacher Ms Irenawati in Classroom 2. It shows why she chooses to use CS in the classroom against the MoE's ruling.

> ### Quotation 4
> Officers from the MoE highly discourage the use of code-switching in the classroom. This is usually emphasised when teachers attend seminars or conferences. The teachers are to use English and only resort to Malay in extreme cases. Teachers are not to be lenient to students by giving them the benefit of Malay words instead of English. However, in some cases, teachers have no choice but to use Malay. This is especially important when dealing with students who are well below average. From personal experience, these students, called level 2 students, have very limited English proficiency and teachers have to explain in Malay 70% of the time.

While appearing to be speaking on behalf of the English teachers in Brunei, Ms Irenawati highlights the lack of appreciation the bureaucrats in the MoE have for the challenges the teachers face in many of the classrooms. The use of L1 as a resource in her classroom is a reflection of a wider practice in Brunei's primary and secondary English classrooms. The following two quotations from other teachers in my long-term ethnographic research reinforce the views expressed by Ms Irenawati.

> ### Quotation 5
> Teachers who want to follow the syllabus closely will tend to code-switch so that students will get the ideas faster without the teacher having to spend time on explanations in the L2; this is due to the fact that students lack competence in the L2 and if new ideas are to be explained in a language which is still new to them, time will be wasted and teacher will fall behind schedule.

> ### Quotation 6
> Code-switching helps to maintain a continuous flow of students' responses. By switching to the students' mother tongue, the interest of the students is raised and their participation increased. This is a positive development because students learn better if they are interested in what they are doing.

In drawing on the sociolinguistic practices and identities with which the participants are associated, teachers and students problematise the "English-only" rule and, therefore, the associated ideology and world view. I elaborate this further with the help of the following quote from Ms Irenawati of Classroom 2.

> ***Quotation 7***
> Students in <u>Brunei are used to hearing many languages being spoken together. Mixing Malay and English is part of daily conversation in life outside the school</u>. It is something that students are so used to and in fact is part of the culture. My point is that teachers should look at this as one of the teaching resources which will facilitate learning. Nothing is lost. <u>Good rapport can be built because students feel like they are playing a house game, something which they are so familiar with.</u>

Elaborating on the lack of competence in English being a problem, the teacher from Classroom 2 directs our understanding to the sociolinguistic environment in which students are socialised and live. She is of the opinion that students' sociolinguistic practices should be drawn on as a "resource" as part of the teaching-learning process, the way she herself practises in her classroom. Her metaphorical use of "playing a house game" in this context appears to position the "English-only rule" as abnormal and inappropriate.

Saxena and Sercombe (2002) have elsewhere argued this point differently, but with the same intent. In discussing the diglossic nature of the functional distribution of English and Malay, they have shown how many Bruneians find the use of English as "inappropriate" in contexts constructed as Malay spaces. The redefinition of the diglossic situation through the use of Brunei English (English with the linguistic and discoursal features of Malay) in such contexts, instead of Standard English, by the Bruneians, is called by Saxena and Sercombe (2002) as the *recontextualization* process. This means, for example, that whereas the use of Standard English at home or with elders might be construed as inappropriate, it may be tolerated in the form of nativised Brunei English. This process is partly a response to the Malayanization process which positions English as "foreign" (that is, external), the "linguistic other" and inappropriate in informal domains (Saxena, 2007). Therefore, the "English-only" ideology and English as the (or only) "legitimate" language in the classroom is put into question.

Ms Irenawati in Classroom 2 can engage in what she calls "playing a house game" in drawing on students' socio-cultural backgrounds and sociolinguistic practices as "funds of knowledge". This is made possible, as pointed out earlier, by their similar, and sometimes shared, lifestyle shaped by the religious and socio-cultural functions in which they regularly participate. Their multiple identities help them to redefine the classroom socio-cultural space in their interaction and to overcome their institutional and ideological positioning as simply "teachers" (the holders of known information) and "learners" (the passive and the spongers).

In contrast, in Classroom 1, the teacher Ms Azlinah has become a conduit for the "English-only" ideology and, consequently, essentialises the "nature of language", the "nature of use" (in a bi-/multi-lingual context), and "participants' identities". In

"Othering" L1, that is, Malay, she has defined language, its use and users' identities as "closed", "static" and "autonomous" rather than "open", "dynamic" and "fluid" as facilitated by the teacher Ms Irenawati in Classroom 2.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, through examples of postcolonial classrooms in a Southeast Asian country, I have attempted to show how L1 is constructed and reproduced as "the linguistic other" in face-to-face interaction in English classrooms which are defined as "English-only". I have also shown how such essentialisation of the English classrooms' socio-cultural spaces as non-local are met with resistance in the interactive processes. This resistance is manifested in the form of sociolinguistic practices of L1 use (brought in from outside the classroom) for pedagogic and symbolic functions. The symbolic function of L1 use, particularly as "non-cooperative" resistance, also serves to highlight the fact that teachers, whose views are shaped by the "English-only" ideology, problematise English and, therefore, unwittingly position it as "the linguistic other" in many postcolonial contexts.

The analysis of such interactive sites of meaning-making presents an opportunity for demonstrating the interaction between ideologically based social standpoints and subjective standpoints. In such interactional spaces, as in English classrooms, the simultaneity of domination and resistance highlights the simultaneity of insider and outsider identities that teachers and students produce on a moment-to-moment basis. Such an analysis of meaning-making should allow us to deconstruct and move away from the essentialist meanings of "the linguistic other". It helps us to appreciate the potential of the *positive* (rather than the negative) power, the *constructive* (rather than the non-cooperative) resistance and the *resource* (rather than the right) argument of L1 use in English classrooms that we observe in the skilful negotiation of conflicting ideologies seen as embedded in code-switching practices.

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APPENDIX A: TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS

Character format

NORMAL	transcription for English utterances
BOLD	**transcription for Malay utterances**
{ITALICS}	translation of Malay into English, given inside curly brackets
UPPER CASE	indicates louder speech than usual

Symbols

< >   marks the beginning of an utterance in a different language, i.e. a code-switch, e.g.
         <M> marks the beginning of an utterance in Malay
         <E> marks the beginning of an utterance in English
( )   indicates unclear item; empty brackets indicate completely unintelligible stretches and their approximate length.
{ }   curly brackets in the line of speech represent, beside translation of Malay utterances, additional information, such as non-verbal actions, or comments about the utterance transcribed.
[ ]   marks phonetic transcription

Representation of simultaneous speech/ overlap

        T: next we are going to do reading
       S?:   reading

Representation of other features

...   pause: the number of dots indicates the relative length of each pause.
{2 min. pause}longer pauses identified
bo::wl   one or more colons indicate marked lengthening of the preceding sound.
^   rising intonation: e.g. S?: this is right^
underline   emphasis; marked prominence through pitch or increase in volume, e.g. T: the
              monkeys lived …

Participants

T:	teacher
S?:	unidentified student
SS:	more than one student