Forging and negating diasporic linguistic citizenship in ethnocratic Malaysia

Albury, N.J.

Forging and negating diasporic linguistic citizenship in ethnocratic Malaysia

Abstract

This paper analyzes contradictory tensions in the linguistic citizenship of Chinese- and Indian-Malaysian youths. Malay ethnonationalism describes the languages of the local Chinese and Indian minorities as immigrant. A sociological perspective, however, tells us it is difficult to see these communities as diasporic. They hold Malaysian state citizenship, they may have no contact with China and India, and in some cases their ancestors settled in Malaysia centuries ago. This paper analyzes how, in that sociopolitical context, a cohort of Chinese- and Indian-Malaysian youths constructed their linguistic citizenship within a series of 16 semi-structured folk linguistic group discussions about multilingualism in contemporary Malaysia. The paper reveals two parallel discourses. Malay ethnonationalism has prompted discourses of linguistic allegiance to China and India as prescribed, if not impractical, homelands. However, the youths also divorced their languages and communities from India and China to instead forge a non-diasporic linguistic citizenship. In doing so, they negated Malaysia's linguistic hierarchy, despite Malay ethnonationalist discourses, by describing their unique interethnic language practices as quintessentially Malaysian and as an interethnic leveller. Malaysia showcases how linguistic citizenship in the diaspora can be both vexed by historical sociopolitical processes as well as empowered by sociopolitical resistance, resulting in contradictory discourses.

Highlights

- Ethnic Chinese and Indians in Malaysia are deemed perpetual diasporas.

- Malay hegemony sees the linguistic citizenship of non-Malays as foreign.

- However, non-Malays claimed their language behaviours prove their *Malaysianness*.

- Their discourses revealed contradictions in their perceived linguistic citizenship.

Key words

Malaysia, diaspora, linguistic citizenship, identity, multilingualism

1. Introduction

In Malaysia, what may appear from the outside as egalitarian multilingualism may be better described as an ethnocratic system of linguistic pluralism. Malaysian society became especially diverse in ethnic and linguistic terms through historic waves of labour migration from China and India, and when the Indigenous peoples of northern Borneo were folded into the then Federation of Malaya in 1963. The local ethnic Malays – born as Muslims by law - have therefore long shared their homeland with ethnic, religious and linguistic others. Today, the Chinese and Indian communities make up about a third of the national population of 32 million and their many heritage languages are still used parallel to Bahasa Malaysia (Malay language). The official Malaysian response to this diversity, however, has not been to encourage a Western style multilingual and multicultural melting pot familiar to the West, nor an epistemology of interethnic egalitarianism that such a melting pot might presuppose. To the contrary, Malaysian life has become hierarchically structured from the top down, headed by the ethnic Malay majority (Goh, Gabrielpillai, Holden, & Khoo, 2009). The result is that ethnicity, religion and language are not just salient personal identities, but definitive categories that structure Malaysian politics, rights and broader society.

This hierarchy is a product of Malay ethnonationalism (Andaya & Andaya, 2016; Barr & Govindasamy, 2010). Entrenched within the perceived moral authority of Islam – plus assertions

that the ethnic Malays are the true owners of the land - Malaysia has pursued statutory laws and policies that codify as superior the social position, language and culture of the ethnic Malays. Malay ethnonationalist discourses have traditionally defined the ethnic Chinese and Indians as disloyal 'pendatang' (visitors) to 'Tanah Melayu' (Malay land). This is despite their Malaysian citizenship and their forebearers possibly having resided in Malaysia for centuries. What is more, the Malays have been afforded preferential treatment in economic policy by way of special quotas to public education and employment, and they have also held political power. Rather than fading as the new Malaysian state matures and develops, this discourse is still reproduced – sometimes vehemently - not in the least in Malay politics and literature. As Dr Joseph Chinyong Liow (2015), Professor in International Studies at Nanyang Technology University, has publicly explained:

> Non-Malays are frequently described in Malay books as anak dagang, golongan pendatang, pendatang asing, or imigran, implying that they are sojourners with no loyalty to the land, foreigners, aliens, or immigrants as opposed to penduduk tempatan, or local inhabitants. For non-Malay Malaysians, the implications that follow are self-evident. Their position in relation to Malay rights whenever the issue of citizenship of non-Malays is discussed (if not questioned), as it unfortunately still is 57 years after independence, is delegitimized.

This hierarchization of ethnicities, including the resulting pedestalization of Bahasa Malaysia, is therefore attributable to an ongoing discursive dichotomy between being Bumiputra (sons of the soil, whereby most Bumiputra are Malays) or being non-Bumiputra; that is to say, with being native or being foreign. From a sociological perspective, this ideology classifies the Chinese and Indians to be perpetual immigrants deemed to necessarily hold an intergenerational diasporic view of China and India as perceived homelands (Kalra, Kaur, & Hutnyk, 2005), regardless of citizenship. It holds them at arm's length, such that Chinese- and Indian-Malaysian cultures, languages and indeed identity are not authenticated as characteristically or authentically Malaysian, nor qualified to help define the new nation built upon Tanah Melayu.

This paper examines how this hegemony affected constructions of linguistic citizenship, as they were imbedded within folk linguistic discussions about diversity in Malaysia, among Chinese- and Indian-Malaysian university students. These youths are the focus of this paper because they are tagged to be the new leaders in Malaysia's 'Vision 2020' age: the government's goal for Malaysia to not only have attained developed country status by 2020, but for Malaysia to have become united, strong in its diversity, and politically stable (Nagarajan, 2008). A focus on youths offers an insight into the possible social psychology of tomorrow's leaders vis-à-vis language and citizenship in Malaysia. The paper shows that the folk linguistic talk of these youths included notions of sociolinguistic belonging that were dialectically informed by broader Malaysian politics and discourses on ethnicity and indigeneity. In particular, the paper shows that, on the one hand, these youths seemed forced by Malay ethnonationalist ideology to understand their language and sociolinguistic selves as diasporic to China and India. On the other hand, the youths also resisted this diasporic prescription by describing and narrating an inherently interethnic Malaysian sociolinguistic citizenship that they share with their Malay peers. They did this by way of reporting on interethnic language behaviours that have manifested through language contact in contemporary Malaysia, and using this as evidence to authenticate their contemporary Malaysian citizenship. This had the effect of discursively challenging Malaysia's ethnic hierarchy through matters of sociolinguistics.

## 2.	Ethnic relations in Malaysia

Fatal race riots in 1969, predominantly between ethnic Malays and ethnic Chinese, are still a key reference in discourses about ethnic relations and diversity in Malaysia. The origins of the riots are found in British rule – that began with the acquisition of Penang in 1786 and lasted until 1957 - and the fragmentation of Malaysian society along ethnic and socioeconomic lines that this rule comprised. The British had pushed local Islamic Malay rulers "to the periphery" (Ooi, 2003, p.

216) such that Malay sovereignty over Malay land had eroded. Added to this, the British also welcomed labour migration from China and India.

The Chinese immigrants urbanized and quickly thrived. As Andaya and Andaya (2016) explain, "the Chinese who came to the Malay world were intent on one thing: to escape the life of grinding poverty they had known at home" (p. 146). The Chinese arrived mostly from southern China, such as Guangdong, Fujian and Guangxi (ibid.). Initially relying on their expertise in mining and organization, the Chinese quickly became Malaysia's economic engine and their community came to enjoy greater socioeconomic mobility than the Malays. The British prized Chinese acumen and entrepreneurship, and their associations led to widespread English language proficiency in the Chinese community. The Malays, on the other hand, remained relatively impoverished. Bearing the brunt of a British disposition that the Malays were "lazy, unwilling to work for wages and therefore could not be considered a potential pool of labour for the colonial economy" (Andaya & Andaya, 2016, p. 182), ethnic Malays became socioeconomically marginalized, were afforded minimal education, and in turn largely remained monolingual (Noor, 2009).

The British colonizers of India permitted migration to the Malay region, but only from southern India. This expanded the existing Indian diaspora in what is now known as western Malaysia. Having ruled India and what was then Ceylon, the British saw Tamil migration as especially practical, believing the Tamils to be "more accustomed to British rule, more amendable to discipline than the Chinese, and more willing to work for wages than Malays" (Andaya & Andaya, 2016, p. 186). The Indians were typically placed to work in the rubber plantations – oftentimes indentured to colonial powers – and were therefore mostly confined to the estates along the western plains of the peninsula (Sandhu, 1993). In essence, the British had succeeded in establishing a new society structured definitively on labour lines that correlated with ethnic divisions, whereby the Malays, Chinese and Indians were largely isolated from each other.

This segregated ethnic pluralism allowed linguistic diversity to flourish in that local social networks were, in general, ethnically homogenous. The Chinese community retained its plethora of heritage languages, including Cantonese and Hokkien as its most predominant, but also Hakka, Foochow, Teochew, Hainanese and others. The heritage language of the Indian community is still mostly Tamil, however smaller Indian minorities include Malayalam, Telugu and Punjabi (Gill, 2013a). English had an important lingua franca role under British rule, and served as the language of prestige, administration and, as a result, of education among local elites. When the states of Sarawak and Sabah in northern Borneo were folded into the Malaysian federation, so too were hundreds of indigenous languages including Iban, Kadazan and Bidayuh. Across Malaysia, the sociolinguistic milieu of the local Malays had transformed from one of relative homogeneity to one of extensive linguistic diversity, mirroring a new ethnic, religious and cultural heterogeneity. Malaysia was no longer only for the Malays.

Building the new nation after 1957 would mean not just transitioning from colonization to independence, but also pursuing a definition of modern Malaysia amid this new diversity. This process has not been smooth. Chinese domination in economic affairs fueled Malay anxieties that their sovereignty as Bumiputra was under threat. On the other hand, Malay domination of political affairs fueled Chinese and Indian anxieties that their cultures and identities were equally under threat (Noor & Leong, 2013). The result was, as it is described in popular discourse, the 1957 social contract between the Bumiputra and the Chinese and Indian pendatang. These pendatang would be granted Malaysian citizenship in return for, and acceptance of, the 'Ketuanan Melayu' ideology. This is broadly understood as Malay supremacy, Malay political primacy, or Malay sovereignty (H. Ting, 2009). While non-Malays may be the economic engine of the new nation, the country would ultimately fall under Malay political rule because ethnic Malays are Bumiputra and the rightful owners of Tanah Melayu (Malay land). The Malaysian nation would be defined in Malay terms, it was agreed, by way of "the major symbols of their nation, that is, their sultans, their special position, their language (as the official language), and Islam as their

religion" (Noor, 2009, p. 162). That is to say, in exchange for citizenship, the Chinese and Indians signed up to an ideology that Malay language and culture will be central to the new Malaysian character. The system is unashamedly an ethnic hierarchy whereby not all Malaysians are equal, and non-Malays are presumed to retain diasporic loyalties beyond Malaysia. For example, during his previous prime ministership, Dr Mohamad Mahathir (1970) argued:

> The Malays are the original or indigenous people of Malaya and the only people who can claim Malaya as their one and only country. In accordance with practice all over the world, this confers on the Malays certain inalienable rights over the forms and obligations of citizenship which can be imposed on citizens of non-indigenous origin (p. 133).

However, inherent to the 1957 agreement was an inevitable "ethnic plurality, economic dualism and inequality" (ibid. p. 163) which sparked the 1969 riots, largely between the Chinese and Malays (Freedman, 2001). In response, the government sought to instill racial harmony by seeking to elevate the socioeconomic performance of the ethnic Malays, such that they could play 'catch-up' with the Chinese. This was especially pursued by way of the New Economic Policy. On the basis of ethnicity alone, Malays became eligible for special quotas in education and public sector employment that were unavailable to the Chinese- and Indian-Malaysians (Crouch, 2001). In turn, the United Malays National Organization (UMNO) secured long-term rule from Malaysia's independence until the seismic shift in Malaysia politics in May 2018 with the reelection of former UMNO prime minister, Dr Mohamad Mahathir, but this time under the Pakatan Harapan alliance.

This preference for ethnocracy over meritocracy has remained an uncomfortable elephant in the room, and debate about it has been severely curtailed. Questioning Ketuanan Melayu, or the elevated position of Bahasa Malaysia and Islam, is seen not only to disrupt racial harmony, but as potentially seditious under Malaysian law (Government of Malaysia, 1948). Tensions do boil over on occasion and are covertly imbedded within predominantly Chinese protests against corruption scandals that have plagued governments, such as recent allegations of embezzlement against former prime minister Najib Razak (Case, 2017). On the face of it, these predominantly

non-Malay protestors have demanded transparency, political integrity, and greater socioeconomic opportunity and representation in the case of Indian-Malaysians (Bendeich & Fernandez, 2007), however mainstream Malay responses have typically been racialized. This has especially meant framing the non-Malays as questioning ethnic Malays, their culture, and their special position. The political crisis concerning Najib Razak, it is argued, may have only further fueled Malay chauvinism. Today, Malay discourses include arguments that non-Malays should be grateful that they are citizens of Malaysia, that they should know their de-hierarchized place in Malaysian society, and that Malay dignity must be defended (The Economist, 2015).

However, Dr Mohamad Mahathir's stunning defeat of Najib Razak in 2018 was aided by the support from non-Malay minorities, and it remains to be seen how the new political environment might (re)shape ethnic affairs from the top down. Historically, attempts to popularize manufactured ideologies of national unity have been largely unsuccessful and have not eradicated discourses of the Chinese and Indians as disloyal diasporic communities. Under UMNO, Dr Mohamad Mahathir proposed an ideology of 'Bangsa Malaysia' (Malaysian Race) that would encourage affiliation to Malaysian citizenship above and beyond individual ethnic identities. Later, former prime minister Najib Razak's 1Malaysia policy - although primarily an economic development program – promoted Malaysian unity through its diversity under the guise of national integration and economic development. The impetus was for Malaysians to identify with their different ethnicities, but to position this diversity as contributing to and representing a unified and cohesive Malaysia. However, in the absence of policy changes to remove or redefine Ketuanan Melayu - such that the citizenship of the Chinese and Indians is somewhat authenticated and attracts equal rights –1Malaysia was sooner rhetoric, and a unified egalitarian Malaysia is still difficult to envisage. The lack of policy change may be explained by a renewed Islamized ethnonationalism in Malaysian politics and society that is less tolerant of religious, ethnic and linguistic diversity than was traditional Malay ethnonationalism, as Barr and Govindasamy (2010) explain. Malay politicians, especially those affiliated with Islamic parties but also with UMNO, are

known to appeal to Malay moral sensibilities by invoking Islamic principles in speeches and in policy design. The former government even began renovating Malaysian policy-making processes with "Islamic standards", despite the multifaith society, whereby it committed to "fighting for Islamic principles" (Rahim, 2016). Corporations too are reportedly turning to Sharia principles in their financial operations (Sloane-White, 2011), and non-Malay schools have been prohibited from teaching content that is seen to strain Islamic beliefs, such as evolution (Joseph, 2005) albeit unclear if this is still in force. Social chasms between the ethnic groups seem only to be widening, now with a resurging discursive orientation in the supremacy and primacy of Islam as the founding morality of pluralist Malaysia. So pronounced are these chasms that Christian churches have been attacked, and the Malaysian High Court has ruled that the word *Allah* must not be spoken by non-Muslims in order to protect the sanctity of Islam (Campbell, 2013).

3.   Multilingualism in Malaysia

In the context of Malaysia's ethnic relations, it is unsurprising that the languages of those deemed to be diasporic pendatang enjoy little to no legislative support. This is despite Malaysia's ongoing and seemingly permanent societal multilingualism. The language rights of the Indians and Chinese are confined to Mandarin- and Tamil-medium education, but only at the primary school level, and to Mandarin being taught as an elective in some public schools. Children who attend a heritage language–medium primary school are then expected to assimilate into Malay-medium instruction at the secondary level. Those who instead opt for a private, non-Malay secondary education – such as the Chinese who might attend private Mandarin-medium education - are disqualified from admission to Malaysia's public universities. Bahasa Malaysia is also the medium of communication with Malaysian authorities and courts. In practice, however, English plays a prominent role in Malaysia, including in political speeches that presuppose an interethnic audience, in Malaysia's open-market economy, in tertiary education, and in interethnic relations parallel to Bahasa Malaysia (Gill, 2006, 2013b).

The plethora of heritage languages spoken by non-Malays enjoy varying degrees of vitality. The Chinese community has instituted Mandarin rather than Bahasa Malaysia as its lingua franca. This works to foster political cohesion between the different Chinese groups but also, as this paper will later elucidate, forges a common cultural and linguistic identity in the face of oppression. This means that shift from a heritage language, such as Cantonese or Hokkien, to Mandarin is not uncommon (David, 2017; S.-H. Ting & Mahadhir, 2011). Similarly, the largest heritage language of the Indian minority is Tamil, but overwhelming prestige is afforded to English. Language shift to English in Indian families and communities is therefore commonplace, but it is also the case that non-Tamils may acquire Tamil as a second language given that it is the most common Indian heritage language. In any case, the point for Malaysian society - and indeed a thorn in the side of Malay ethnonationalists - is that the Chinese- and Indian-Malaysian communities have not typically acculturated to Malay culture, nor adopted Bahasa Malaysia as the language of common use within their communities or with other ethnicities (Coluzzi, 2017).

Added to this, Manglish and Bahasa Rojak are mixed languages used pervasively in informal contexts by Malaysians of all ethnicities. Manglish falls under the auspices of Malaysian English as a variety of World Englishes. Its characteristics include, for example, the levelling of verb tenses and aspect such as the phrase 'he eat here yesterday', and an absence of agreement between subject and verb. It also includes dropping pronouns, pluralizing uncountable nouns or not pluralizing countable nouns, using the present perfect tense in place of the simple past, and using invariant tags such as *'isn't it?'* that do not agree with the main clause (for more detail see, for example, Alsagoff, 2001; Pillai, 2012). However, Manglish is also especially characterized by code-switching between Bahasa Malaysia and English at the lexical or sentential level, and often times in predictable ways (Hashim & Tan, 2012; Pillai, 2008). For illustration, Shafie and Nayan (2013) offer the following examples of Manglish as it has appeared on Facebook posts:

Aku nk **share** dgn korg...nnti aku cri blik **playlist** aku.
(I want to share with you...I will find my playlist)

Thanks for being honest…hang kawan terbaik pernah aku ada…**swear**!
(Thanks for being honest. I swear that you are the best friend I've ever had)

Bahasa Rojak, on the other hand, draws on two or more languages. The term *Rojak* denotes a local dish of mixed fruits and vegetables, and therefore serves as a metaphor for the mixing of various languages. However, a positivist perspective of languages is not helpful in describing Bahasa Rojak in theoretical terms, because in practice it sooner aligns with the poststructuralist view of languaging as linguistic behaviour that transcends language forms (Jørgensen, 2008; Pennycook, 2014). That is to say, rather than adhering to the essentialized and socio-politically-oriented definitions of any specific language and its prescribed lexica and grammar, Bahasa Rojak manifests in different ways depending on location, speaker and resources. Speakers are oriented around meaning-making and achieving communicative goals with the linguistic resources available to them and their conversation partners. This epistemological view even orients how Bahasa Rojak is described in metalinguistic terms by its users (author).

Amidst this nation-building and its vexed and hierarchized ethnic relations - but with persistent linguistic diversity and the apparent failure of hegemonic language policy - how might Chinese- and Indian-Malaysian youths construct their own linguistic citizenship? This paper now shows that Chinese- and Indian-Malaysian linguistic citizenship is complex and at times contradictory, given Malaysia encourages linguistic assimilation under the supremacy of Bahasa Malaysia, but simultaneously prescribes pendatang to be a perpetual non-Malaysian diaspora. The result to be discussed is that, on the one hand, hegemonic Malay ethnonationalism results in non-Malay youths self-identifying linguistically as diasporas with a homeland to which they have little or no connection. On the other hand, the result is also that youths creatively resist this impractical and prescribed linguistic identity. They do this by constructing a new pan-Malaysian, inter-ethnic, contemporary linguistic citizenship that breaks down this diasporic perspective and the racial grid it presupposes by emphasizing the unique Malaysianness of their complex linguistic behaviours.

4. Discovering linguistic self-conceptualizations

The paper takes as its starting point that language is a matter of citizenship, broadly conceived, in as far as the very notion of citizenship is no longer confined to the nation-state institution. Instead, as Williams and Stroud (2015) explain, "much of what people find themselves caught up with on an everyday basis involves getting on with neighbors, handling diversity or difference, and finding a good fit for themselves in what is happening around them" (p. 407). For this paper, finding a good fit amounts to linguistic citizenship in that it encompasses understandings and constructions of one's own sense of sociolinguistic belonging, in this case amongst youth in multilingual Malaysia. This approach does, however, depart from Stroud's (2001) original conception of linguistic citizenship. As an alternative to linguistic rights, Stroud sees linguistic citizenship as the enactment and reclamation of power and legitimacy through linguistic interactions and performances. This paper, however, focuses not on interactions or performances but on discursive constructions of self. This focus on linguistic citizenship, in this way, also means this paper also departs somewhat from theories of language and identity. Whereas linguistic identity looks at a broad and complex range of individual identity constructions vis-à-vis, for example, membership by class, gender, religion, community and location (cf. Bucholtz & Hall, 2004; Fuller, 2007), this paper focuses only on linguistic citizenship as it concerns, or does not concern, ideas of diaspora. This allows for an investigation of how Chinese- and Indian-Malaysian youths forge a sense of collective belonging as marginalized and notionally diasporic communities.

However, can these youths actually be considered part of a Chinese and Indian diaspora, such that their constructions of linguistic citizenship contribute to knowledge about diasporic experiences? This warrants critical deliberation as a theoretical starting point. From an ethnonationalist Malay ideological and political perspective, Chinese- and Indian-Malaysians are indeed diasporic, as this paper has already discussed. However, given this paper resides in the sociology of language, it must also look to sociology for guidance on what counts as *diaspora*. In

this respect, I will argue that the linguistic citizenships of the participating youths are as much diasporic as they are not, mirroring theoretical understandings of diaspora that have undergone evolutionary changes. Whereas *diaspora* once referred solely to forced dispersal and displacement, such as of Jews and Palestinians, the term has acquired new connotations. These include a longing to a real or imagined home land (Safran, 1991) and immigration without assimilation (Kalra et al., 2005). These conceptualizations especially imply transnational mobility, or at least communicative and cultural practices that cross borders such that these practices can be seen as groups retaining – to some degree - an anchor in a homeland (Faist, 2010). In this light, it is difficult to perceive young Chinese- and Indian-Malaysians as diasporic because "there is little space left to talk about those groups who, for whatever reasons, are compelled to leave one place for another, subsequently settle and then have no formal relationship with their place of 'origin'" (Kalra et al., 2005, p. 12). Indeed, young Indian- and Chinese-Malaysians typically are not immigrants. They are likely to only hold Malaysian citizenship, and they may have never visited India or China. They may no longer have relatives there, and therefore they may have no *longing* to go there, let alone *return* there. They are Malaysian citizens by legal definition, even if this contradicts Malay ethnonationalist discourse. As such, I draw on Vertovec's (1999) view of diaspora as relative and socially-constructed. He sees diaspora as a social form, as a consciousness, and as a mode of cultural production. In that respect, the maintenance of Indian and Chinese cultures, languages and religions in Malaysia – plus the workings of Malay hegemony – can render Chinese- and Indian-Malaysian youths members of a diasporic community, at least in practice and in discourse. A point of this paper, however, is that a prescription of diaspora as immigrant and oriented towards a homeland has been politically imposed upon Chinese- and Indian-Malaysians from the hegemonic centre. Today their ethnic self-awareness - linguistic or otherwise – is forged in that context. This warrants investigation of whether or not these groups see themselves as (linguistically) diasporic, rather than whether the Malaysian state or academia view them as diasporic.

Insights into how Chinese- and Indian-Malaysian youths might conceptualize their linguistic citizenship came from a series of folk linguistic group discussions with Chinese- and Indian-Malaysian students at universities across Malaysia. A folk linguistic approach was pursued firstly because this provides an emphasis on the social construction and expression of knowledge - akin to the social construction of diaspora as a social category - and the application of this knowledge to create and perpetuate local facts (Foucault, 1980). These claimed facts - like knowledge more broadly - are powerful in that they reflect, reproduce and negotiate what is deemed to be *true* about the sociolinguistic world, irrespective of the empirical accuracy of such claims. The notion here is that folk linguistic knowledge - and discovering it through folk linguistic methodology - is an ally to critical sociolinguistics and its concern for interethnic power relations, asymmetries and linguistic identities (author). Ultimately, this helps to bring the folk back into sociolinguistic inquiry (Wilton & Stegu, 2011) by recognizing and legitimizing the voices and perspectives of language users themselves. Secondly, the focus on knowledge means analyzing how the youths evidenced their linguistic citizenship by way of epistemic claims about Malaysian sociolinguistics. In this sense, the paper goes beyond the "complaint discourse" (Toolan, 1997, p. 86) that is inherent to critical inquiry, and instead offers a focus on what the youths constructed to be facts and commonsense about their linguistic selves, including where these constructions are emancipatory within an otherwise suppressive broader social framework.

It was hypothesized that the students' discourses may comprise meta-commentary about dominant epistemologies and ideologies of language in Malaysia. On this point, a central theoretical premise is that discourses in Malaysia about ethnicity are so oriented in an intersubjective understanding of Malay ideology perceiving the Chinese and Indian communities as diasporic pendatang that this would contextualize Chinese and Indian constructions of linguistic citizenship. That is to say, regardless of whether they have appropriated or resist the pendatang status, the ubiquity of the pendatang discourse means it would likely background their constructions of linguistic citizenship to at least some degree. The paper therefore takes lead from

an historical approach to the students' discourses (Wodak & Meyer, 2009) whereby constructions of linguistic citizenship are seen as discourses to be contextualized by ethnic memories, politics, narratives and other influences that make up the broad gamut of collective Chinese-Malaysian and Indian-Malaysian experiences.

A total of 16 group discussions were held, comprising 11 with Chinese-Malaysian students and 5 with Indian-Malaysian students who voluntarily self-identified as such.   In total, this paper involves research with 55 Chinese-Malaysian youths and 24 Indian-Malaysian youths. The students were recruited with the assistance of local staff who advertised the research in their classes in return for a guest lecture. The youths were all undergraduate students pursuing various degrees, including in Malay literature, forensic science, accounting, law, business, engineering, computing and English. Students were not eligible to participate if they had ever studied linguistics. This would help shape the folk linguistic orientation of the research by excluding those who may have attained, in a formal capacity, perceivably expert knowledge about sociolinguistics in Malaysia. The universities where the discussions took place are in Kuala Lumpur, Penang, Kota Bharu, Kuala Terengganu, Kuching and Miri. Each group comprised between three and five students, and discussions lasted around 45 minutes to an hour. It should be noted that the research is limited to higher-educated youths whose perspectives may be influenced by their own socioeconomic backgrounds, their engagement with diversity in the university system, and indeed their own critical thinking. Nonetheless, it is pertinent that the group discussions were held at both public and private universities, meaning some students were attending predominantly non-Malay institutions while others were part of an ethnic minority at Malay-dominant universities.

Arranging the youths into groups defined by ethnicity allowed the discussions to focus explicitly and more robustly on language matters in their own ethnic community. It also allowed intersubjectivities to orient talk without the need for students of different ethnicities to explain any presuppositions or community experiences to each other. This was also prudent in the context of the broader fieldwork, which included ethnic Malays, in order to circumvent the risk of Malays

perceiving any non-Malay comments as seditiously challenging Ketuanan Melayu. For this paper, however, with a focus on notionally diasporic experiences of language, only data from the Chinese-Malaysian and Indian-Malaysian discussions are included.

The group discussions were held on campus, and comprised open-ended interviews in English that solicited the folk linguistic perspectives (Preston, 2005; Wilton & Stegu, 2011) of these youths about societal and individual multilingualism in Malaysia. This meant that the discussions were only semi-structured but were guided to solicit talk within each group about the students' own multilingual practices, their personal experiences of language policy, and the vitality and status of their own heritage languages. That is to say, no predetermined leading questions were used, but the emphasis was placed – as is the epistemological starting point of folk linguistics – on how the participants themselves addressed, constructed and debated the discussion themes. For the purposes of this paper, the students were never asked explicitly how they self-identify with their languages or self-conceptualize their sociolinguistic selves. Instead, discourses that revealed linguistic citizenship were embedded within broader epistemic constructions and explanations of the many local sociolinguistic phenomena concerning individual and societal multilingualism that the group discussions traversed. That is to say, the explicit focus of the discussion was not to solicit constructions of linguistic citizenship per se, but that linguistic citizenship was nonetheless constructed within the context of broader but related talk, such that it warrants analysis.

After verbatim transcription of all the interviews, all the data from the group discussions underwent folk linguistic content analysis (Preston, 1994, 2011) through a discourse-historical lens (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). This aims to identify knowledge that is stated overtly and therefore features explicitly in metalinguistic awareness, as well as knowledge that is intersubjectively assumed or which otherwise orients folk linguistic talk. Importantly, these will both have historical context and contribute to the construction of epistemology, ideology and experiences that anchor discourses (van Dijk, 2003). To give form to this and following previous qualitative approaches in

folk linguistic research, metalanguage was extracted from the transcripts and treated as folk linguistic discourse. In this case, metalanguage amounted to comments or exchanges that explicitly and implicitly harboured matters of linguistic citizenship or identity. Relevant data could include assertions of fact, presuppositions and intersubjectivities, and evaluative dispositions about linguistic belonging broadly conceived. This was identified relying on van Dijk's (2003) discourse-knowledge interface and on the identification of epistemic and dispositional stances in the context of these specific discussions that would explicitly or implicitly align speakers towards or away from a linguistic citizenship (Jaffe, 2009). Naturally, linguistic citizenship – akin to identity- is matter of social construction whereby belonging is relational and discursive (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004). The emphasis in this paper is, therefore, not on quantifying linguistic belonging but on the notions of linguistic citizenship that were constructed by these youths. Drawing on Wodak (1999), these constructions were then examined vis-à-vis the Malaysian social, political and historical context with the view that talk – and especially about social matters – "is not isolated phenomenon" but is "deeply social, intertwined with social processes and interaction" (p. 186). This means that discourse is necessarily with reliance on the researcher's own knowledge and understanding of the social, historical, political and in this case sociolinguistic context of the participants. For Malaysia, this especially includes ethnic relations and inequalities, discourses and policies of national building, social laws, and the position of Bumiputra and their culture, as they were traversed earlier in this paper. Triangulating the folk linguistic talk of groups against the broader Malaysian context ensured that folk linguistic constructions of linguistic citizenship would contribute to the research findings if they were grounded in a broader emic experience of being a (notional) diaspora. In the excerpts given to aid analysis, students are not named but are given a code denoting their ethnicity (C for Chinese, I for Indian) and their number in their broader ethnic group.

5.   Forging diasporic linguistic citizenship

On the one hand, Indian and Chinese discourses reproduced the ubiquitous Malay ethnonationalist ideology that their communities are indeed diasporic. These discourses can be seen as the youths having internalized Malaysian politics that view the Chinese- and Indian-Malaysians as inauthentic citizens and as better described as pendatang to Malaysia. To begin, the groups almost unanimously explained that the policy of Bahasa Malaysia as the sole official language, and the absence of comprehensive language rights for non-Malays, originates from their own unshakable pendatang status. For these students, it has been decided as historical fact that they and their communities are visitors to Malay soil, and that their communities have appropriated this status as a fait accompli. For example, the Chinese groups explained that Malays "were, like, born here, originate from here", and

C-22:	I think this is because of the historical problem, because the place is *Tanah Melayu* which means it is Malay.
C-23:	For the Malays only.
C-22:	And the Chinese and the Indian people came after that, after the Tanah Melayu was formed.
C-19:	It's a very long time ago.
C-24:	But it's still in the constitution here, the mentality, everything is still here, in this era.
Researcher:	How do you feel about that?
C-22:	Well, we can't really talk about it.
C-23:	It's a very sensitive issue.
C-24:	It's very sensitive.

Indian groups reiterated this position, with one group especially lamenting that their community's pendatang status is not open to renegotiation given the steadfastness of the Tanah Melayu ideology and the hegemony of Malay politics. They explained, for example:

I-6:	We can't change it, I don't think so. Because they are like that.
Researcher:	The Malays are like that?
I-6:	Yes, the main people are like that.
Researcher:	Ok, so they don't want change?
I-5:	They won't change.

Interestingly, Indian students also added that they remain pendatang because they are not (predominantly) Muslim, such that authentic Malaysian citizenship is dependent on following Islam. This meant that their languages will not be reflected in the Malaysian constitution, nor be seen as contributing to any contemporary Malaysian identity, on the basis of religion. They explained, for

example, that "they said Malaysia is an Islamic country, so priority will be given to Bahasa" because "that's the law".

Societal discourses about pendatang and Tanah Melayu seem to have led these youths to orient themselves linguistically to China and India, as homelands prescribed to them by others. This allowed them to harness some linguistic sense of self in the context of seeing Malaysia as discursively denying them authentic citizenship. That is to say, when asked about their language repertoires, the students generally constructed their linguistic citizenship with a diasporic orientation by explaining their linguistic proficiencies in respect to China or India, rather than in respect to their linguistic behaviours in Malaysia. This is illustrated in the following Indian exchange where Indian youths positioned India as the *original* country that they are from:

I:23:	In the Indian community we also have a few languages like Telugu, Malayalam. So it, like, depends on the state.
Researcher:	Oh, can you explain that?
I-23:	Basically I'm originally from Kerala in India, so they usually speak in Malayalam. So, when you go to South India, they speak in Tamil. So, it depends on where are you from.

Furthermore, the youths explained that Mandarin and Tamil are in fact their mother tongues, even if they do not hold first language proficiency in these languages. The Chinese case is intriguing in that Mandarin is not a heritage language that was brought to Malaysia through migration. Mandarin has nonetheless been appointed as the Chinese community's lingua franca and the medium of Chinese schooling, rather than Bahasa Malaysia or one of the widely-spoken Chinese heritage languages such as Cantonese or Hokkien. On the face of it, this choice might be seen as political or instrumental in that it reflects the linguistic capital associated with Mandarin in the region and can support political assembly across the language groups. This, however, was not the explanation given by Chinese-Malaysian students when asked why their community has pedestalized Mandarin, which for the vast majority of Chinese-Malaysians is a second language. Instead, they explained that Mandarin is actually the mother tongue of all ethnic Chinese people, diasporic or not and regardless of language proficiency. The mother tongue was therefore seen

as something that ethnic Chinese may need to acquire outside the home in the interests of Chinese pendatang cohesion and identity. For example, they explained that "we should not forget our origin" and:

Researcher:	Why is it Mandarin in school? That seems to me the language of China, not the language of Malaysia.
C-49:	Because we are Chinese, so we must learn our mother tongue.
	….
C-35:	Yeah, and one of the reason is, Chinese, Mandarin is our mother language. So, we cannot refuse to learn it, yeah.
Researcher:	Yeah?
C-35:	We have to respect it because we brought it down from 5000 years and we cannot just leave it to die here.

The point here is that Mandarin was constructed to be the single pan-Chinese mother tongue on the basis of ancestry and the diasporic experience, not on language proficiency or behaviour. Articulating a homogenous linguistic citizenship oriented towards China, instead of the actual heterogeneity of the Chinese-Malaysian community, served to legitimize a Chinese-Malaysian linguistic citizenship within the broader Chinese-speaking world, rather than within Malaysia where they and their languages are deemed foreign.

However, it seems that under this local Chinese epistemology of language, linguistic heterogeneity within the Chinese community was seen as jeopardizing community cohesion, and therefore unable to assist with the pursuit and validation of a unified Chinese-Malaysian identity. So strong was this epistemology that it led to the students arguing that their Chinese heritage languages are all simply dialects of Mandarin, rather than bona fide languages in their own right. The very notion of 'Chinese' was synonymous with - and only with - Mandarin. Claims of Chinese ethnicity were therefore strategically validated by Chinese-Malaysian youths describing their non-Mandarin languages to be Mandarin dialects, such that all local Chinese – regardless of their linguistic heritage – can be afforded a bona fide Chinese identity. This contextualized exchanges, such as the following, that manifested across the group discussions:

C-7:	You know there is many dialects in Chinese right? Like, let's say, Hokkien is one of the dialects.
Researcher:	Yeah?

C-7 :   So that is one thing that is very interesting. Dialect changes according to the people.

C-6:   And like for my case, I'm clearly a Chinese, but like my father, he migrated here like 50 years ago from Hong Kong. So, he only speaks Cantonese and English. He has no idea what is Chinese. Even when I speak Chinese to him, he doesn't understand.

Ultimately, it appears that in order to construct a common Chinese identity as a pendatang minority, the community has not only instrumentally designated Mandarin to be its lingua franca. Rather, their diasporic identity as it has been imposed from above in the context of Malaysia's racial grid appears to have even encouraged the youths to herald Mandarin – as the linguistic index of their diasporic homeland - as a core criterion to their being Chinese.

Indian discourses also revealed that according to local epistemology, the mother tongue has less to do with proficiency and more to do with ancestry.   For the Indian-Malaysian students, the mother tongue was explained as an ethnic attribute that is transmitted intergenerationally as an identity, rather than as any linguistic proficiency per se.   For example, in the case of a student explaining why he wants to embark upon learning Tamil as a second language, he explained "this is my mother tongue. I feel like if I don't learn it, my generation after this won't know what Tamil is. It's just gonna die". Others differentiated more explicitly between the ancestral mother tongue and the practical first language, and the consequences of this on language vitality.   They explained for example:

Sometimes the parents might not teach them Tamil. So, English might be their first language. So, they start to speak in English, which means slowly they forget their mother tongue….you can see that they are Indians, their mother tongue is Tamil, but not necessarily.

The point here is that many Indian-Malaysians may have acquired English or even Malay as a first language, but still view their Indian heritage language as their mother tongue. The notion is that as a linguistic identity, the mother tongue was seen by these students as genetic and ought to manifest into language proficiency, even if through second language study. To this end, it appears that the Indian linguistic citizenship of these youths depends on ancestral identification with Indian languages, which can be achieved through an orientation towards India as the linguistic homeland. This carries with it a perceived obligation to acquire the mother language in

order to uphold the Indian pendatang identity. What is more, this diasporic identity was oftentimes homogenized implicitly within Indian-Malaysian discourses. Rather than heralding the diversity of Indian languages spoken within the community, the youths seemed to have appropriated the hegemonic Malay essentialization of ethnicity and identity that more broadly structures the pendatang and Bumiputra divide. The students equated the Indian community synonymously with Tamil, explaining for example "Tamil will be our main language to represent the Indian community", "the main thing is that, like, Indians all can understand Tamil. Tamil is the main thing" and "currently the dominant language is Malay; Malay is the official language. But we do talk Tamil, English as well and Chinese". These discourses were largely silent on other Indian heritage languages in Malaysia. One might argue that this essentialization results from Tamil speakers forming the local Indian majority. Alternatively, one might argue that it is useful political fodder in representing a cohesive and mobilized minority with unified demands for linguistic rights. It may even be the case that essentializing the Indian community as Tamil-speaking is inspired by the Chinese-Malaysian situation and that community's successful pedestalization of Mandarin to foster Chinese cohesion. Indeed, two groups implied this connection when commenting that "Tamil is pretty much left behind compared to Mandarin" and that Tamil is "like Mandarin. Mandarin is used as the communicating within Chinese community in Malaysia". In any case, the discourses narrated linguistic citizenship not only as a local minority, but also with concerns about the diminishing vitality of Tamil that was seen to contravene ancestral obligations. These obligations were constructed vis-à-vis a collective memory of migration to Malaysia such that Indian mother tongues informed a diasporic linguistic citizenship, separate to matters of actual language proficiency and practice.

6.   Negating diasporic linguistic citizenship

On the other hand, the youths also offered metadiscourses that resisted their *pendatang* status, and rebuked hegemonic Malay Bumiputra and Tanah Melayu ideology, in the interests of

promoting egalitarian Malaysian citizenship. This was especially the case in Indian-Malaysian discussions, whereby the youths problematized the veracity of the Bumiputra narrative. They argued, for example:

I-19:   They *claim* that they are the *Bumiputra*. What do we call that?
I-20:   Citizens.
I-19:   Citizens, the first, the natives. But there is a lot of conflicts lah, actually.
I-18:   Yea, actually there are a lot of conflicts about that, about *who* is *Bumiputra*.

Other Indian students explicitly sought to delegitimize the Bumiputra narrative with the epistemic argument that Malays claiming indigeneity, and obtaining privileges on that basis, is empirically flawed. For example, one group - in this case students pursuing a degree in English language - explained that the Malays cannot be considered indigenous to Malaysia because lexica from Sanskrit can be found in modern Bahasa Malaysia:

I-8:   Because even the Malays they are not the origin of the country. The Orang Asli are the origin.
I-10:   Yeah, and even in Bahasa Melayu in Malaysia, there are a lot of Sanskrit words in it.

In essence, comments such as these sought to debunk the epistemological regime used to justify the hierarchization of ethnic Malays above the non-Malays. By discrediting the concepts of pendatang and Bumiputra that deny Chinese- and Indian-Malaysians full citizenship, the students created an epistemological space that defined their linguistic selves not necessarily as diasporic, but as indeed very Malaysian.

In doing this, the students oftentimes continued to essentialize their ethnolinguistic communities as either Mandarin and Tamil speaking, and they tended to uphold a presupposition that Bahasa Malaysia is the Malaysian linguistic norm. However, they asserted that Mandarin and Tamil nonetheless contribute to the new cultural fabric of Malaysia in equal measure with Bahasa Malaysia, even if they once had diasporic roots. Indian groups especially demanded that Tamil now be afforded equal status to reflect the permanence of the Indian community and its Malaysian citizenship. For example, they called for "equal chance, equal opportunities" and

I-2:   What we are trying to say here is that, we don't mind Bahasa Melayu as our *bahasa rasmi* [national language], but we also want our language in the constitution.

I-3:   Yeah.

I-2:   Like, make it official. Then it's fair.

Others Indian groups explained that their peers – including Malays – accept Tamil as part of contemporary Malaysian linguistic citizenship and would even support Tamil acquiring a more preeminent place in the Malaysian linguistic ecology. For example, arguments ensued such as "even a few friends of mine ask me…*why don't you talk in Tamil?*" and "they [Malays and Chinese] are actually showing some interest. Not that your language is what you speak, and my language is what I speak. That it's our language. That's for all of us to learn". Chinese groups also explained that Mandarin is so integral to the make-up of contemporary Malaysia that its position inspires interest rather than disdain from the Malay majority. They narrated, for example, that non-Chinese are eager to learn Mandarin to "show a sign of respect to our culture" and that Mandarin "is getting popular" to learn among Malays simply because "they are living in Malaysia". More commonly, however, Chinese-Malaysians suggested that Malay and Indian enthusiasm for Mandarin has a genesis in economic development. They explained, for example, "Economy: That's why a lot of people now want to learn Mandarin". Accordingly, Indian and Malay parents "want their child to learn Chinese" because "there is a need for their child to master this language not only as a Malaysian himself, but also for international [purposes]". While arguably keeping one foot in a diasporic construction of the Chinese-Malaysian community, these youths also claimed that Mandarin is now intrinsic to contemporary interethnic Malaysia. Their linguistic citizenship was, in effect, dialectically and strategically related to the linguistic capital associated with Mandarin proficiency.

On the other hand, the youths creatively negated diasporic orientations to their linguistic citizenship by instead describing their language repertories as uniquely Malaysian and as indexing their contemporary Malaysian citizenship. Indian-Malaysian discourses across the groups were poignant in that they presupposed the discursive prescription of their community as

linguistically diasporic, but sought to address and transcend that prescription and instead legitimize their Malaysian identity. To do this, they especially explained that the Tamil they speak is not the same as Tamil spoken in India or Sri Lanka, and is instead purer, more refined, and generally better. This distanced their community from India and forged a specific sociolinguistic identity rooted in being Malaysian rather than Indian. For example, they explained "we speak the better version of formal Tamil compared to the Indians in India", and

I-9:	Yeah, but if compared to India, we're better.
I-8:	Much better, yeah.
I-10:	They mixed only with English, but with a lot of English. But here we talk more Tamil. It's pure, more pure than in India.
I-11:	Even some speakers from India, they came down here, and when they heard us talk they said, "you guys here are far better than there!"
Researcher:	Wow.
I-10:	Malaysian Indians talk better Tamil.
I-11:	The pronunciation is very clear compared to them.

The Indian groups also argued that it is uncommon for Indian-Malaysians to have acquired Tamil literacy. This proclamation might also be seen as implicitly rebuking perceptions of them primarily being an Indian diaspora rather than Malaysian citizens. They explained that being Indian-Malaysian means potentially having verbal proficiency in Tamil, but it does not require Tamil literacy as is the case in India. Instead, literacy is a matter for English and Bahasa.   For example, they explained that "my mother tongue is Tamil of course. I can speak in Tamil, I understand Tamil, but to be honest, I can't read and write in Tamil" and "how many of us can actually read Tamil?". Chinese students framed their heritage languages to be a distinctly Malaysian resource when discussing the historical, social and economic dynamics of the country's transition into a multilingual society. They especially narrated that, contrary to ethnonationalist Malay ideology seeing pendatang languages as an impediment to national cohesion, individual multilingualism is a direct and advantageous result of societal multilingualism. This, they felt, is inherent to their contemporary Malaysian citizenship. Indeed, it is not uncommon for Chinese-Malaysian youths to be quadrilingual in their heritage language, Mandarin, Bahasa, and English. This, they believed, made them culturally agile and socially mobile both within Malaysian society

and in the wider Asian region. It also means they viewed themselves as uniquely Malaysian, and therefore categorically different to the Chinese of China.   The students argued, for example, "we not only know how to speak Malay, but also Chinese, English, Hokkien, all that. Like, other countries don't really know other languages. But we do. The culture is very special compared to other countries" such that suppressing these heritage languages "defeats the purpose of our multiracial country in the first place" and

C-51:	Yeah, I mean, at least now if we go to…
C-53:	China.
C-52:	Other countries.
C-53:	Taiwan. We don't have to face the communication problem. At least we know how to find our way and everything.

More preeminently, however, Chinese- and Indian Malaysian groups all explained that their actual linguistic behaviours – especially in informal settings - are proof that their linguistic citizenship is quintessentially Malaysian rather than diasporic. Their day-to-day Malaysian lives, they explained, are not characterized by using Bahasa Malaysia nor any pendatang language alone, but by routinely using Manglish and Bahasa Rojak as mixed languages that have manifested locally in Malaysia's context of interethnic contact. The students relied on these mixed languages to substantiate their uniquely interethnic Malaysian identity, instead of orienting their linguistic selves towards any perceived homeland. Chinese-Malaysian students explained, for example, that all ethnicities use Manglish, as this "is the way Malaysian people speak" and "the Malaysian style".   Positioning Manglish as intrinsically Malaysian also led some groups to delineate it from Singlish in Singapore, claiming that "Malaysian people speak English in a different style. Then Singapore is a different style, that's why they called it Singlish".   Indian-Malaysian groups produced similar discourses, claiming "you also can see we actually speak a combination of English and Malay mostly" and:

C-22:	Yeah, it's like we have just created a whole new language, which is called Manglish.
C-23:	Just like there is Singlish, Singapore English.

Bahasa Rojak was especially framed as a resistance to the ethnic fragmentation and hierarchization of Malaysian life and as a linguistic means to build bridges and meaningful

communication between the ethnic groups. They claimed that rather than Malaysia's many languages necessarily being separated, young Malaysians "are multilingual. Most of us actually speak what we called as Bahasa Rojak. Have you heard of it?". Most poignantly, they described Bahasa Rojak as an interethnic leveler that forges harmonious and productive interethnic relationships with a focus on inclusion rather than stratification. For example, Chinese-Malaysian students drew on the *rojak* metaphor to explain that "because rojak, there is a lot of fruits, mixed, and we eat [them] together. So, it's like the food represents the language itself. Like, the races and all" and that Bahasa Rojak is used to "build up many cultures". Indian-Malaysian groups agreed, claiming that "Malaysians use that term [Bahasa Rojak] to define 'our' language", and

Researcher:	What is this rojak?
I-18:	It's mix of different languages, like you can mix Mandarin with English with Malay and then sometimes Tamil. You know, you just make it into one sentence.
1-16:	Which everyone can understand.
I-18:	Yeah, which everyone can understand. Doesn't matter from which race you are.
I-17:	Rojak is actually a type of food actually, it's mix everything, so the language also they call it rojak.
I-19:	Yeah, same like the food, like he said. We have Chinese, Indians and Malays staying in one 'kampung' [village], so we are able to interact with each other.
I-16:	Like he just said 'kampung'.
I-17:	Yeah!

The notion is that these epistemic constructions of Bahasa Rojak and Manglish harboured a specifically Malaysian linguistic citizenship. This linguistic citizenship embraces diversity and is squarely premised in recognizing and celebrating linguistic practices that have manifested as a direct result of history and contact between languages and cultures. That is to say, the youths described their linguistic citizenship not as diasporic, but in fact as quintessentially Malaysian and shared by Malay-, Chinese- and Indian-Malaysians alike.

7.   Conclusion

How individuals and communities perceive their linguistic selves is as relative and complex as the social psychology of identity more broadly. This is only amplified in the case of Malaysia's supposed pendatang minorities. Their place in Malaysia has been discursively constructed from

the top down through Ketuanan Melayu as perpetually diasporic, inauthentically Malaysian, and therefore subordinate to the Malay majority. Despite their legal citizenship in the Malaysian state where their roots are firmly planted, the Malay ethnonationalist view is that the local Chinese and Indians are disloyal foreigners who remain oriented towards China and India as perceived, albeit usually impractical, homelands. These non-Indigenous pendatang are reminded that they cannot be considered as authentic residents on Tanah Melayu. This discourse was, however, implicitly resisted when the Chinese- and Indian-Malaysian youths who participated in this research described their linguistic behaviours and explained their own sociolinguistic world. As this paper has shown, Chinese- and Indian-Malaysian youths positioned Manglish – a mixed language resulting from language contact - as linguistic proof that Malaysians of all ethnicities have begun to speak a unique variety of English, and that this new language carries a uniquely Malaysian linguistic identity for Malaysians of all ethnicities. Bahasa Rojak served a similar purpose. It was described as a local linguistic phenomenon that emphasizes interethnic communication and national cohesion, and this in turn diminishes the ideological boundary between being Bumiputra or being pendatang on Bumiputra soil. Like Manglish, this was also narrated as typically Malaysian, challenged ethnic divides, and gave the students a non-diasporic linguistic identity. That is to say, rather than describing themselves as Chinese or Indian per se, these students constructed a contemporary Malaysian linguistic citizenship available to all and absent of the ethnic hierarchy that structures Malay ethnonationalist ideology.

This is not to say that Chinese- and Indian-Malaysian constructions of linguistic citizenship were absent of any diasporic orientation. To the contrary, the magnitude and impact of omnipresent ethnonationalist discourses – in large part sustained by the previous ruling UMNO party - that tell the Chinese and Indians they are pendatang should not be underestimated. These have in essence forced Chinese- and Indian-Malaysians to adopt a diasporic view of themselves - in terms of language but also much more broadly - to navigate Malaysian life and to understand why Malaysian law and policy differentiates them from the Bumiputra. By taking a contextualized

discourse-historical (Wodak & Meyer, 2009) approach to the group conversations, this made sense of the youths describing themselves as coming from India and China - as places they may have never visited nor have contact with – in epistemological rather than practical terms. To this end, they affiliated their languages with offshore language communities, not in the least to somehow authenticate their heritage languages as having a rich cultural tradition and ancestry that is valued there if not locally in Malaysia. However, it may be the case that the recent change of government, whereby Dr Mohamad Mahathir's was the first to defeat the Barisan Nasional collation that held power since Malaysia's independence, will redirect ethnic relations. The now ruling Pakatan Harapan party has enjoyed wide support among non-Bumiputra, and even includes non-Bumiputra representation. In as much as Malay UMNO supporters might fear that the new government "is not able to protect Malay rights, Islam, the Malay language and the Malay rulers" (Al Arabiya, 2018), the party's policy platform signals that non-Malays may have reason to hope for a more inclusive and egalitarian Malaysia. To rebuild the nation, Mahathir promises to redesign social policy based on need rather than ethnicity, to promote neighbourliness between religions and races, and to abolish suppressive laws such as the Sedition Act which has been an important silencer of dissent against Malay ethnonationalism (Pakatan Harapan, 2018).

In any case, Malaysia shows us that the relationship between language, citizenship and diaspora can become especially vexed by broader historical sociopolitical processes and can result in contradictory discourses. Malay ethnonationalist discourses may have led the youths to construct themselves and their languages as diasporic to India and China, but may have also led them to resist that hegemonic hierarchy by asserting their language practices to be quintessentially Malaysian. It seems that, as pendatang, the youths in the research felt compelled to hold open a diasporic door to their perceived linguistic homelands, but they also felt compelled to prove that their linguistic practices render them contemporary and bona fide Malaysian citizens. In the context of ethnic relations in Malaysia today, the linguistic citizenship of these youths remains between a rock and hard place.

References

Al Arabiya. (2018). Post-poll tension in Malaysia as King calls for unity and Mahathir finds excuses. *Al Arabiya English*. Retrieved from http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/world/2018/07/19/Tensions-in-Malaysia-after-elections-as-King-calls-for-unity-while-Mahathir-finds-excuses.html

Alsagoff, L. (2001). Tense and aspect in Singapore English. In B. Y. V. Ooi (Ed.), *Evolving Identities: The English Language in Singapore and Malaysia* (pp. 79–88). Singapore: Times Academic Press.

Andaya, B. W., & Andaya, L. Y. (2016). *A history of Malaysia*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Barr, M. D., & Govindasamy, A. R. (2010). The Islamisation of Malaysia: Religious nationalism in the service of ethnonationalism. *Australian Journal of International Affairs, 64*(3), 293-311.

Bendeich, M., & Fernandez, C. (2007, 25 November). Indian protest rocks Malaysia ahead of polls. *Reuters*. Retrieved from https://www.reuters.com/article/us-malaysia-protest/indian-protest-rocks-malaysia-ahead-of-polls-idUSKLR16504820071125

Bucholtz, M., & Hall, K. (2004). Language and identity. In A. Duranti (Ed.), *A Companion to Linguistic Anthropology* (Vol. 1, pp. 369-394). Malden: Blackwell.

Campbell, C. (2013, 15 October). Allah means God, unless you're a Christian in Malaysia. *Time*.

Case, W. (2017). Stress testing leadership in Malaysia: the 1MDB scandal and Najib Tun Razak. *The Pacific Review, 30*(5), 633-654. doi:10.1080/09512748.2017.1282538

Chinyong Liow, J. (2015, January 5). Ketuanan Melayu: What's in a name? *The Straits Times*. Retrieved from http://www.straitstimes.com/opinion/ketuanan-melayu-whats-in-a-name

Coluzzi, P. (2017). Language planning for Malay in Malaysia: A case of failure or success? *International Journal of the Sociology of Language, 2017*(244), 17-38. doi:10.1515/ijsl-2016-0055

Crouch, H. (2001). Managing ethnic tensions through affirmative action: The Malaysian experience. In N. J. Colletta, T. G. Lim, & A. Kelles-Viitanen (Eds.), *Social cohesion and conflict prevention in Asia: Managing diversity through development* (pp. 225-262). Washington DC: The World Bank.

David, M. K. (2017). Reasons for language shift in Peninsular Malaysia. *Journal of Modern Languages, 15*(1), 1-11.

Faist, T. (2010). Diaspora and transnationalism: What kind of dance partners? In R. Bauböck & T. Faist (Eds.), *Diaspora and transnationalism: Concepts, theories and methods* (pp. 9-34). Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

Foucault, M. (1980). *Power/knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings, 1972-1977*. Brighton: Pantheon.

Freedman, A. L. (2001). The effect of government policy and institutions on Chinese overseas acculturation: The case of Malaysia. *Modern Asian Studies, 35*(2), 411-440.

Fuller, J. M. (2007). Language choice as a means of shaping identity. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology, 17*(1), 105-129.

Gill, S. K. (2006). Change in language policy in Malaysia: The reality of implementation in public universities. *Current Issues in Language Planning, 7*(1), 82-94.

Gill, S. K. (2013a). *Language Policy Challenges in Multi-ethnic Malaysia* (Vol. 8). Dordrecht: Springer

Gill, S. K. (2013b). *Language Policy Challenges in Multi-Ethnic Malaysia*. Dordrecht: Springer.

Goh, D. P., Gabrielpillai, M., Holden, P., & Khoo, G. C. (2009). *Race and multiculturalism in Malaysia and Singapore*: Routledge.

Sedition Act, (1948).

Hashim, A., & Tan, R. (2012). Malaysian English. In A. Hashim & E.-L. Low (Eds.), *English in Southeast Asia: Features, Policy and Language in Use* (pp. 55-74). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Jaffe, A. (2009). Introduction: The sociolinguistics of stance. In A. Jaffe (Ed.), *Stance: Sociolinguistic perspectives* (pp. 3-28). New York: Oxford University Press.

Jørgensen, J. N. (2008). Polylingual languaging around and among children and adolescents. *International Journal of Multilingualism, 5*(3), 161-176.

Joseph, C. (2005). Discourses of schooling in contemporary Malaysia: Pedagogical practices and ethnic politics. *Australian Journal of Education, 49*(1), 28-45.

Kalra, V., Kaur, R., & Hutnyk, J. (2005). *Diaspora and Hybridity*. London: Sage.

Mahatir, M. (1970). *The Malay Dilemma*. Singapore: Asia Pacific Press.

Nagarajan, S. (2008). Indians in Malaysia: Towards vision 2020. In K. Kesavapany, A. Mani, & P. Ramasamy (Eds.), *Rising India and Indian communities in East Asia* (pp. 375-398). Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

Noor, N. M. (2009). The future of Malay–Chinese relations in Malaysia. In C. J. N. Montiel, Noraini M. (Ed.), *Peace psychology in Asia* (pp. 161-172). Dordrecht: Springer.

Noor, N. M., & Leong, C.-H. (2013). Multiculturalism in Malaysia and Singapore: Contesting models. *International journal of intercultural relations, 37*(6), 714-726.

Ooi, K. B. (2003). From migrants to citizens: Shifts in poltiical expression among the Chinese in Malaysia. In C. M. Ding & K. B. Ooi (Eds.), *Chinese Studies of the Malay World. A Comparative Approach* (pp. 205-238). Singapore: Eastern Universities Press.

Pakatan Harapan. (2018). *Buku Harapan: Rebuilding our nation, fulfilling our hopes*. Retrieved from http://kempen.s3.amazonaws.com/manifesto/Manifesto_text/Manifesto_PH_EN.pdf.

Pennycook, A. (2014). Principled polycentrism and resourceful speakers. *Journal of Asia TEFL, 11*(4), 1-19.

Pillai, S. (2008). Speaking English the Malaysian way – correct or not? *English Today, 24*(4), 42-45. doi:10.1017/S0266078408000382

Pillai, S. (2012). Colloquial Malaysian English. In B. Kortmann & K. Lunkenheimer (Eds.), *The Mouton world atlas of variation in English* (pp. 573-581). Boston/Berlin: de Gruyter.

Preston, D. (1994). Content-oriented discourse analysis and folk linguistics. *Language Sciences, 16*(2), 285-331.

Preston, D. (2005). What is folk linguistics? Why should you care? *Lingua Posnaniensis: Czasopismo Poświecone Językoznawstwu Porównawczemu i Ogólnemu, 47*, 143-162.

Preston, D. (2011). Methods in (applied) folk linguistics: Getting into the minds of the folk. *AILA Review, 24*(1), 15-39.

Rahim, R. (2016, April 28, 2016). Sarawak polls: Malaysia known for upholding Islamic principles, says Najib. *The Star Online*. Retrieved from http://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2016/04/28/sarawak-polls-najib-islamic-principles/

Safran, W. (1991). Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return. *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies, 1*(1), 83-99.

Sandhu, K. S. (1993). The coming of the Indians to Malaysia. In K. S. Sandhu & A. Mani (Eds.), *Indian Communities in Southeast Asia* (pp. 151-189). Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

Shafie, L. A. N., Surina. (2013). Languages, code-switching practice and primary functions of Facebook among university students. *Studies in English Language Teaching, 1*(1), 187-199.

Sloane-White, P. (2011). Working in the Islamic Economy: Sharia-ization and the Malaysian workplace. *Sojourn: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia, 26*(2), 304-334.

Stroud, C. (2001). African Mother-tongue Programmes and the Politics of Language: Linguistic Citizenship Versus Linguistic Human Rights. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development, 22*(4), 339-355. doi:10.1080/01434630108666440

The Economist. (2015, 26 September). Race in Malaysia. Playing with fire. Retrieved from https://www.economist.com/news/asia/21667969-floundering-government-risks-igniting-ethnic-tensions-playing-fire

Ting, H. (2009). Malaysian history textbooks and the discourse of Ketuanan Melayu. In D. P. S. Goh, M. Gabrielpillai, P. Holden, & G. C. Khoo (Eds.), *Race and multiculturalism in Malaysia and Singapore*. London, New York: Routledge.

Ting, S.-H., & Mahadhir, M. (2011). Towards homogeneity in home languages: Malay, Chinese Foochow and Indian Tamil families in Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia. *Australian Review of Applied Linguistics, 32*(2).

Toolan, M. (1997). What is critical discourse analysis and why are people saying such terrible things about it? *Language and literature, 6*(2), 83-103.

van Dijk, T. (2003). The discourse-knowledge interface. In G. Weiss & R. Wodak (Eds.), *Critical Discourse Analysis.Theory and Interdisciplinarity* (pp. 85-109). London: Macmillan.

Vertovec, S. (1999). Three meanings of "diaspora", exemplified by South Asian religions. *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies, 6*(3), 277-300.

Williams, Q. E., & Stroud, C. (2015). Linguistic citizenship: Language and politics in postnational modernities. *Journal of Language and Politics, 14*(3), 406-430.

Wilton, A., & Stegu, M. (2011). Bringing the "folk" into applied linguistics: An introduction. *AILA Review, 24*(1), 1-14.

Wodak, R. (1999). Critical Discourse Analysis at the End of the 20th Century. *Research on Language and Social Interaction, 32*(1-2), 185-193. doi:10.1080/08351813.1999.9683622

Wodak, R., & Meyer, M. (2009). *Methods for Critical Discourse Analysis*. London: Sage.