Perceptions about One's Heritage Language: The Case of the Acehnese in Kampung Aceh and Malacca Portuguese-Eurasians in the Portuguese Settlement in Malaysia

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Abstract. This paper looks at perceptions of heritage language in two minority communities in Malaysia: the Aceh community at Kampung Aceh in Kedah; and the Portuguese-Eurasian community at the Portuguese Settlement in Malacca. The heritage languages of these communities—Acehnese and Malacca Portuguese Creole or *Cristang*—continue to be used within the multilingual and multi-ethnic makeup of Malaysia, where Malay is the national language and where English is also widely used, alongside other local languages such as Mandarin, Cantonese and Tamil. Based on interviews with selected respondents from these two locations, it was found that both communities regarded their heritage languages positively, and regarded their languages as an important part of their cultural heritage. The Acehnese community, despite being culturally similar to the Malays, still try to hold on to their heritage language. For the Portuguese Eurasians, their heritage language is one way to distinguish themselves as a cultural group with European and Asian roots.

Keywords and phrases: Acehnese, Malacca Portuguese Creole, *Cristang*, heritage language, perceptions, cultural heritage

Within a multilingual setting such as Malaysia, indigenous and minority languages struggle to survive amidst the use of dominant local languages, such as Malay and Chinese dialects, as well as English. Malay or Bahasa Malaysia is the national language, while English is used widely in business, media and private education. The Malaysian Constitution states that "no person shall be prohibited or prevented from using (otherwise than for official purposes), or from teaching or learning, any other language" (Federal Constitution Malaysia, Article 152). Hence, Mandarin and Tamil medium primary schools continue to exist, and local media continues to broadcast and publish in Chinese (mainly Mandarin) and Tamil apart from in Malay and English. However, as with many other multilingual contexts, a selection process occurs over time, as some languages begin to take precedence over others in various domains such as the family domain. There are a multitude of reasons for this, such as a dwindling number of

speakers, intermarriage, education, social mobility, urbanisation and the economic and social value of a language, and these have been discussed in studies on language shift in different communities in Malaysia (e.g., David 1998; Kijai, Lampadan and Loo 2012; Ting and Sussex 2002).

In this paper, however, the authors are more interested in obtaining insights from two minority communities in Malaysia about the use of their heritage languages (HLs). These communities are the Acehnese in Kampung Aceh (KA) and the Portuguese-Eurasian community at the Portuguese Settlement (PS) in Malacca. More specifically, in this study, the authors examine language perceptions over a range of language-related contexts including language and culture, and language revitalisation.

Heritage language has been defined as "a language that is often used at or inherited from home, and that is different from the language used in mainstream society" (He 2012, 587). Such a term has an identity and cultural orientation, and is in contrast with other terms, such as home language and native language, that might suggest a different orientation as they may foreground associations with one's language proficiency (King and Ennser-Kananen 2013; Kondo-Brown 2003). This term seems more apt in a multilingual context, such as Malaysia, where mixed-unions are common, and thus, there is a host of possible scenarios about what languages children grow up speaking (Pillai 2008). Within the context of Malaysia, it is difficult for some people to state what their native language is, not just because they may have grown up speaking more than one language or variety of the language, but because the language used at home may be neither of the parents' "native language". For example, one may have a parent who is Tamil speaking and another who is a Cantonese speaker but grows up speaking English.

Thus, drawing from Fishman (2001), this study adopts a broader definition of HL and does not link it to proficiency, fluency or even the current use of the HL. Rather, HL is linked to cultural identity, and thus, it is possible that a person may have more than one HL, and it is also possible that the HL is not used at all within the family domain. Nevertheless, the HL has "a family relevance" (Fishman 2001, 81), but in contrast to Fishman (2001), the authors do not narrow HL to languages apart from the dominant language of the country, such as English. In the Malaysian language context, what is dominant is not necessarily based on the national or official language, but rather on what is predominant for a particular person which for example, could be Malay, English and Mandarin. Thus, the authors prefer an even broader definition of HL considering it as a language that is linked to whichever cultural or ancestral affiliations a person identifies with regardless of proficiency and the actual use of the HL.

In the case of the KA and PS, although the communities are similarly contained within a village with strong communal bonds, the two groups are located differently within the Malaysian social patchwork because of their ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds. This in turn influences the extent to which they each hold on to what they perceive to be their cultural roots. Related to these roots is the use of their HLs. One is a language that is still used in its place of origin, Aceh in Indonesia. The other is a Creole which has evolved from language contact with the Portuguese in Malacca from the 16th Century. The two communities and their HLs may seem vastly different but they are both communities enmeshed within the multilingual framework of Malaysia. Insights into one group that is identified with the majority Malay Muslim community by the state, and another, which is pigeonholed into a category called *Others*, can help us understand how minority groups are coping with the use of their HLs and related to this, their cultural identities.

As the authors' study is set against a multi-ethnic background, the paper begins with the background of the two minority communities to understand how they came about. The authors then focus on how both communities perceive their HLs, Acehnese and Malacca Portuguese Creole (MPC), and how these perceptions are related to the use of their HLs.

Acehnese and Malacca Portuguese Creole Communities

KA is located in Kedah, in the northwest of Peninsular Malaysia, while the PS is in the state of Malacca, approximately two hours south of Kuala Lumpur. Both villages are located on the west coast of Peninsular Malaysia. In both cases, the HL is a minority language in Malaysia. In Malaysia, Bahasa Malaysia or Malay is the national language, and is the medium of instruction in national schools. In addition, colloquial Malay, or in the case of Kedah, the local regional dialect tends to be the local spoken lingua franca. English is learnt as a second language from primary school. In the case of the Acehnese in KA, it exists amidst the Kedah Malay dialect (a northern Malay dialect). At the PS, a localised variety of English is fast replacing MPC (Pillai, Soh and Kajita 2014). Thus, both communities have at least three languages in their repertoire, albeit with varying degrees of fluency in each: HL, Malay and English.

The communities in the present study are classified differently: the Malaysians of Acehnese descent are categorised as Malay, and therefore, enjoy *Bumiputra* status. This status is reserved for those categorised as Malay by the Federal Constitution and the indigenous population of Malaysia. The classification of Malay as explained by Goh (2002, 133) is that "one must be a Muslim, be a habitual speaker of Malay and practise Malay customs". The Portuguese

Eurasians, on the other hand, are classified as *Others*, and although they were accorded some privileges reserved for *Bumiputra* citizens, such as the right to invest in certain national unit trusts schemes, they are not classified as *Bumiputra*.[1] While the Acehnese appear to have a clearer sense of their cultural identity, people of Portuguese ancestry seem to be grappling with the whole notion of what is takes to be Portuguese-Eurasian, including whether the ability to speak MPC, popularly known as *Cristang* (also spelt as *Kristang*) is a prerequisite (see Goh 2002). For the Malaysian Acehnese, Malay is a natural replacement for their HL because of their shared Malay roots. However, for the Portuguese Eurasians, the language shift was to English because of, for example, English-medium education, mixed-marriages, urbanisation and social mobility (Baxter 2012; Pillai, Soh and Kajita 2014).

The Malaysians of Acehnese descent in the authors' study came over from the Aceh province in Indonesia. The main migration to Kedah took place in the late 1800s (Azrul Affandi Sobry 2012). KA was then established as one of the first settlements for Acehnese settlers in this area around 1895. There are currently approximately 126 people residing in KA, with 104 among them being of Acehnese descent, all of whom are Malaysian citizens (Yusuf, Pillai and Mohd. Ali 2013).

The Acehnese spoken in KA has developed particular linguistic features which distinguish it from the Acehnese spoken in Indonesia. For example, Pillai and Yusuf (2012) and Yusuf and Pillai (2013) found differences in the way that vowels were realised between the Acehnese spoken in KA and the Aceh province. However, both varieties of Acehnese are mutually intelligible, and there is a connection of people and resources between Aceh and KA because of the close geographical proximity, and cultural and religious ties between Malaysia and Aceh in Indonesia.

The Malacca Portuguese Eurasians in this study are residents of the PS. The village has approximately 800 to 1000 residents who are largely Roman Catholics. The PS was established as a settlement for people of Portuguese descent on the coast of Malacca in the early 1930s by two Catholic priests. The village is, therefore, also known as *Padri sa Chang* or Priests' Land (O'Neill 2008).

The heritage of the Malacca Portuguese Eurasians can be traced back to the arrival of the Portuguese in Malacca in the early sixteenth century as Baxter (2005, 10) explains:

> "… in terms of social cohesion and control, was the creation of a
> *casado* class (European Portuguese officially married to local

women), which produced stable bi- and multi-lingual *mestiço* populations loyal to Portugal".

In such Asian settings, Creole Portuguese arose.

MPC is, as pointed out by Baxter (2012, 115), "the last vital variety of a group of East and Southeast Asian Creole Portuguese languages". It is categorised as one of the endangered languages in Malaysia in the UNESCO Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger (Moseley 2010). The declining number of speakers at the Settlement has been reported, for example, by David and Faridah Noor (1999).

While the Acehnese descendants in KA may be able to trace their ancestry back to the Aceh province, those who claim Portuguese ancestry generally cannot trace their roots back to Portugal. Whilst O'Neill (2008, 63–76) expresses his hesitation at identifying any "original" *Cristang* identity since it is likely to have undergone transformations since the 16th century, the new generation of post-independent Malacca Portuguese Eurasians found a place for themselves by using their cultural identity (Baxter 2012; Sarkissian 2000, 2005).

Previous Research on Acehnese and MPC

This study builds on previous research on Acehnese and MPC, but focuses on perceptions at a more micro level, and examines two minority language communities. In the case of MPC, little representation of the MPC-speaking group is evident in literature. Previous MPC research focused on documentation (e.g., Baxter and De Silva 2004; Pillai, 2013), description of linguistic aspects (e.g., Baxter 1988), language shift or maintenance (e.g., David and Faridah Noor 1999; Sudesh 2000), culture and sociolinguistics, including language and identity and family language policy (e.g., O'Neill 2008; Pillai, Soh and Kajita 2014; Sarkissian 2000), and narrative or historical accounts (e.g., Sta Maria 1982). A micro-level on the use of and perceptions towards MPC is necessary because an update on the linguistic scene among the MPC-speaking group is much needed especially with increasing social changes and rapid development in the PS (Lee 2015).

MPC language perceptions can be seen as the most visible layer as expressed in social discourses, while ideology is the underlying line of reasoning of which MPC speakers may not be aware of and may not express freely (Jourdan and Angeli 2014). Implications from studies on language perceptions can be integrated into language planning and language revitalisation. Further, previous MPC findings have also shown some differences, particularly in younger speakers' language attitudes and preferences. For instance, a larger proportion of

speakers from the age groups of 20–29 and 30–39 were found to prefer and use MPC in the friendship domain (David and Faridah Noor 1999) while the younger speakers in Sudesh's (2000) study preferred English.

Unlike MPC, there is a dearth of published works done on the use and maintenance of Acehnese in KA. A study by Yusuf, Pillai and Mohd. Ali (2013) discusses the identity and language use of Acehnese descendants in KA, who consider themselves as *ureueng Acèh* or *ureueng Acèh Malaysia*. However, it is evident that the use of their HL is decreasing among the youngest generation. Nevertheless, various efforts have been put in place to maintain the use of Acehnese in the village.

Language Perceptions

An assessment of the speakers' perception towards an endangered language is seen as an essential part in planning language revitalisation (e.g., Fishman 1991; Grenoble and Whaley 2006; Hinton and Hale 2001). Hinton (2001, 9) points out that "one important reason many people want to learn their ancestral language is that they want to regain access to traditional cultural practices and traditional value". However, there are often inconsistencies between having positive perceptions towards a language and its actual language use or language transmission (Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer 1998; Schwartz 2008). For instance, some researchers find that with available resources and speakers, "[t]here may be others in the general community who think reviving and teaching a language is a good idea, but they may not be willing to participate in the programme due to shyness or the belief that they do not have enough language knowledge to contribute" (Bell 2013, 402). These perceptions are categorised under passive support by Bell (2013) who proposes that a better understanding of both positive and negative language attitudes and their impacts on the success or failure of language revival efforts in communities is crucial.

The perceptions towards a HL cannot be divorced from perceptions towards ethnicity and/or culture. Although it is commonly assumed that language and ethnicity/culture are interlinked, Bankston III and Henry (1998) point out that there may be two assumptions made by researchers when it comes to the relationship between one's ethnicity and language transmission: a positive one, or a positive but weakening one. There may also be a third possibility where "[i]f an ethnicity is linked to material disadvantages, then group members may be discouraged from passing on characteristic traits, such as a language" (Bankston III and Henry 1998, 1). The understanding of perceptions towards one's HL, ethnicity and culture will add to the understanding of the factors that may or may not contribute to the survival of a HL.

In planning language revitalisation, the involvement of a community is often advised or proposed, such as the need of neighbourhood support advocated by Fishman (1991, 1990). In reality, it is not uncommon to find that "most communities only begin to attempt to revitalise their language when no one speaks it anymore except the oldest generation" (Hinton 2001, 14). Some researchers have also reported about how some communities' claimed ownership towards a language may not be associated with their role in preserving a language. In the case of Southeast Alaska, Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer (1998, 63) find that "those who vote 'Yes!' [to the questions 'Do we really want to preserve the Tlingit, Haida, or Tsimshian language or culture?'] expect someone else to 'save' it for others, with no personal effort, commitment, or involvement of the voter".

Given that perceptions towards one's HL is an important factor in language maintenance, the authors examine the way the KA and PS communities perceive their HLs and the extent to which this appears to be translated into the use of these languages.

Methods

The data of the present study were derived from two larger studies gathered at two research sites, KA and the PS. The choice of respondents was made via purposeful sampling where "researchers intentionally select individuals and sites to learn or understand the central phenomenon" (Creswell 2012, 206). For this study, interviews from 18 KA and PS respondents were examined. The details of the PS and KA respondents are presented in Appendix A and B. All names have been changed to protect the identity of the respondents. It should be noted that although some comparisons are made between the data gathered from the two communities, they are by no means representative of the communities under study.

The KA respondents in this study comprise the third to sixth generations of Malaysian Acehnese aged between 14 to 76 years old. They were chosen based on their Acehnese language use at home and with friends and families outside of their home in and out of KA. The generations are considered from the time the first group of Acehnese came to Kedah. They were interviewed individually or in groups, depending on their preference. The interviews were conducted in the Acehnese language by the third author, who is a native speaker of Indonesian Acehnese. However, when interviewing children from the sixth generation, there were times when Malay was used.

In the case of the PS, a total of 18 people from at least three generations were interviewed whose ages ranged from 14 to 84 at the time of recording. Since the

PS community's ancestry may go back to the 16th century, the generations are based on families currently living at the PS. The choice of interviewees was based on researchers' judgement. Interviewees who speak MPC at home with parents or grandparents were approached. All of them consented in writing to be interviewed and audio-recorded, and they were interviewed one at a time at their or family members' homes. Permission from parents was obtained for minors (18 and below) who were interviewed. The interviews were conducted in English, although some older respondents also used MPC, which is one of the HLs of the first author.

Following Bankston III and Henry (1998, 5) who maintain that "[q]ualitative methods can provide depth of insight into the social conditions underlying and surrounding a relationship", the authors chose interviews as their instrument to collect data as part of larger studies of the two communities conducted by the authors. The interview questions in these studies were designed to collect demographic information, and also information on language use, perceptions towards their HLs and use of their HLs, including inter-generational transmission. The recordings were transcribed orthographically based on transcription conventions adapted from Giampapa (2001) (see Appendix C). The authors then examined the transcripts for broad themes related to the authors' research aims (Flick, 2006). The authors re-read the transcripts several times and agreement was reached among the authors on the identification of the data with the related themes.

The authors are conscious of the fact that interviews often serve as an instrument "used to mine the attitudes, beliefs, and experiences of self-disclosing participants" (Talmy and Richards 2011, 2), and thus, the authors agree with an approach that sees "interviews as sense-making events in which interviewers and interviewees participate with different levels of context being brought to bear" (King and De Fina 2010: 656). However, as interviewers, the authors mainly directed questions to their respondents, and provided positive feedback, agreeing to what they were saying. Otherwise, the authors did not participate actively in the conversations with the respondents as they wanted them to respond to the questions posed to them.

This study approaches language as a means to understand other types of structures. It is informed by the definitions of language as a set of cultural practices and a set of symbolic resources that enter the constitution of social fabric and the individual representation of actual or possible worlds; language speakers are social actors (Duranti 1997). The authors look at how language is used to construct and shape speakers' worlds. Perception can be seen as the most visible layer as expressed in social discourses while ideology is the underlying line of reasoning of which speakers may not be aware of and may not express

freely. Jourdan and Angeli (2014) reason that changing perceptions are the audible outcome of evolving weighting between ideologies while changing perceptions can interact with underlying ideologies and lead to partial reinterpretation of ideologies. This study examines language perception, either directly or indirectly expressed, through accounts on language use and relationship between language and culture. By understanding their perceptions, the authors can understand how they feel about continuing to use their heritage language. Whilst the authors do not ignore issues of language maintenance and shift in the two communities, this study does not focus solely on these issues, and thus, does not employ methods used in studies on language maintenance and language shift (e.g., David 2002).

Heritage Language Use

The use of MPC at home

The PS community that the authors interviewed tended to use the term *Cristang* more than Portuguese to refer to their language, although both terms are also commonly used interchangeably. The term *Cristang* is also used to refer to themselves (e.g., E4). Baxter (2005, 12) explains that the term *Cristang* is "[d]erived from the Portuguese word *Cristão* 'Christian', *Cristang* signifies (Creole) Portuguese, Christian religion and MPC-speaking group members' ethnicity". In academic publications, the terms *Cristang* or *Kristang* (e.g., Baxter 2005, 2012; Hancock 1970; Marbeck 1995; Thurgood and Thurgood 1996), *Papia(h) Cristang* (e.g., Fernandis 2003; Marlyna Maros et al. 2014) and *Malacca(n) Creole Portuguese* (e.g., Baxter 2005) are used interchangeably. Some community members, like PS7, as shown in PS7-E1, feel strongly that since the word *Cristang* refers to Christianity it should not be used to refer to the language, and instead should be called *Portuguese* to reflect its roots. To add more controversy to this issue, there is a move by non-PS residents to use a more "neutral" term, *Serani* as the word *Portuguese* is thought to be too inclusive and ignores the other Eurasians in Malaysia. This is despite the fact that not all other Eurasians are of Portuguese ancestry, and even if they are, are not likely to speak MPC.

> PS7-E1[2]:   *Why the Malays doesn't call us kaum Cristang? Why why the government said kaum Portugis? Because we are Portuguese. They never change because we have the history.*
>
> (=Why don't the Malays refer to us as the *Cristang* race? Why does the government say the Portuguese

race? Because we are Portuguese. They haven't changed [the way they refer to us] because we have a history.)

The need to use the term *Portuguese* to refer to the language and community appears more strongly in Malacca compared to elsewhere. For example, the association in Malacca is called the Malacca Portuguese-Eurasian Association whereas the term *Eurasian* is used in other states, such as the Penang Eurasian Association, the Selangor and Federal Territory Eurasian Association, and the Sarawak Eurasian Association. In relation to the two main dictionaries produced thus far, one uses both the terms *Eurasian* and *Kristang* (Scully and Zuzarte 2004). The other uses *Kristang* and *Creole Portuguese Malacca* (Baxter and de Silva 2004). The term *Creole* is hardly used by community members who tend to interchange *Cristang* and Portuguese, perhaps because of the stigma attached to the term.

The authors' data show that only 33.33 percent or six out of the 18 MPC respondents in PS said that they speak fluent MPC. The actual use of MPC at home, especially among the younger generation, is actually minimal as shown in PS11-E2 and PS10-E3. This is consistent with the findings reported in previous work (e.g., David and Faridah Noor 1999; Sudesh 2000) that the more fluent speakers in the PS tend to belong to the older generation.

PS11-E2:   *My mom and my grandparent, they will always will speak in Cristang but most of the time we answer in English. Because certain words we don't know how to speak in Cristang so we answer in English.*

(=My mom and my grandparents always speak to me in *Cristang* but most of the time we reply in English, because there are certain words that we do not know in *Cristang*, so we answer in English.)

PS10-E3:   *… most of them I mean my children if I speak to them in Cristang they will answer in Cristang if I speak in English they will answer in English.*

(=No, it's up to them but when I speak to my children in *Cristang*, they answer in *Cristang*; when I speak to them in English, they answer in English.)

This is despite the fact that all members of the families interviewed considered MPC to be their mother tongue regardless of their proficiency in the language.

All their parents were or are of Portuguese descent except for PS12 whose father was of Irish heritage. Thus, members of the older generation, such as PS10 (see PS10-E4), express their concern over the survival of MPC.

> PS10-E4: *I don't want our language to die so I will keep on speaking Portuguese until the last day ahh [laughs] and I will pass it on to my grandchildren too… because I don't want it to die… why should it die? It have to be there forever because we are born a Cristang might as well be until the last a Cristang.*
>
> (=I don't want our language to die so I will keep on speaking Portuguese until my last breathe [laughs] and I will pass it on to my grandchildren too… because I don't want it to die… why should it die? It has to be there forever because we are born *Cristangs*, we might as well die as *Cristangs.*)

Almost all PS respondents had parents who were both Portuguese-Eurasians and yet, MPC was not always used as a home language. Although some elderly MPC speakers continue to use MPC at home, they do not insist that their children and grandchildren must always reply in MPC. In fact, only PS7 said he insisted on his children and grandchildren answering in MPC, even if it was to say *yes* or *no*. PS7 is known in PS to be among the last few fluent speakers MPC. He is also a well-known MPC performer and still performs to this day. Thus, he has some amount of standing in the community which explains his strong pronouncements about the use of the term *Cristang* (refer to the previous section) and his insistence on the use of MPC among his children and grandchildren.

However, as mentioned previously, in the case of PS, even when both parents were of Portuguese-Eurasian descent, there was a tendency not to use MPC at home, at least not with the children. Thus, in homes where one parent was not of Portuguese descent, it was unlikely that MPC would be used.

The use of Acehnese at home

In contrast to the PS respondents, the majority of the respondents in KA said they spoke Acehnese as a dominant language at home. In fact, Acehnese was generally recognised to be the language used in the home domain by the respondents as reflected in KA6-E5 and KA8-E6.

KA6-E5:   *H'ana Melayu//biasa marit Acèh sabé//dari ubit kan marit Acèh.*

(=We don't speak Malay at home//we are used to be always speaking Acehnese//since we were little we speak Acehnese.)

KA6-E6:   *Meunyo ureueng Malaysia nyoe marit Melayu/Malaysia lah kan/meunyo sama-sama Acèh h'antom marit Melayu/ h'antom marit basa laén/mandum marit Acèh.*

(=The Malaysian people here speak Malay/Malaysia right/if among Acehnese people we never speak Malay/never speak other languages/everyone speaks Acehnese.)

Fishman (1991) says that, generally, the decision to teach children their HL falls upon the parents. In KA, it was observed that if both parents were of the Acehnese descent, as might be expected, their children were more likely to speak Acehnese at home. This is expressed by KA3 (KA3-E7) whose parents are Acehnese, and who now continues to speak Acehnese with her children and grandchildren. In KA, if both parents were of Acehnese descent, the children were likely to speak Acehnese as their first language.

KA3-E7:   *Ayah ngon mak lôn ureueng Acèh//kamoe sabé marit basa Acèh//ngon aneuk lôn pih lôn marit basa Acèh/h'ana rôh Bahasa//jinoe aneuk lôn marit ngon cuco lôn pih basa Acèh.*

(=My father and mother are Acehnese//we always speak Acehnese//with my children I also speak Acehnese/there is no Malay among us//now my children also speak Acehnese with my grandchildren.)

The Acehnese are more likely to marry Malays who share the same Muslim faith and are culturally similar. In contrast, marriages with other ethnic groups are more common within the Portuguese-Eurasian community (David and Faridah Noor 1999; Pillai and Khan 2011). Unless, the marriage is to a Muslim, most PS mixed households tend to be Catholics. In KA, the tendency is to use both the Kedah Malay dialect and Acehnese in Malay-Acehnese households as explained by KA54 (in KA54-E8) who is married to a Malay.

KA54-E8:   *Memang hinoe marit Acèh lah ngon aneuk/kamoe nyoe pih meujampu-jampu sit... lintô lawèt nyoe i leungo teupeu/ meuphôm/nak su balah nyan nak su balah basa sinoe keuh... tapi ka meuphôm//ngon aneuk marit Acèh lah.*

(=Of course now I speak Acehnese with my child/our language is also mixed… my husband now knows when he hears Acehnese/he understands/but to reply to it he uses the language Malay here… but he understands//with my child I speak Acehnese.)

The existence of other Acehnese speaking elders (e.g., aunts, uncles, grandparents) who live in the same house further motivates those of mixed parentage to use Acehnese with them. KA4 in KA4-E9, for example, talked about the use of Acehnese and Malay in his son's household, while KA9 insisted that she would always speak Acehnese even though her grandchildren replied to her in the Kedah dialect.

MPC and culture

All the members of the MPC-speaking families feel that their HL should be preserved and see it as being linked to their culture, as exemplified by PS11-E9.

PS11-E9:   *...we have to speak so that it won't – the culture of our Cristang won't die in the settlement.*

(=We have to speak *Cristang* so that our culture will not die.)

Similar to the Acehnese respondents, those from the PS feel their language identifies them as an ethnic group (PS9-E10 and PS17-E11).

PS9-E10:   *Because every race also got their own language lah like Chinese like Indian so we all Portuguese also got own language so we use only lah the language rather than leaving the language like that.*

(=Because every race has a native language such as Chinese and Indian, so we Malacca Portuguese Eurasians also have our own language that only we

can use rather than leaving the language like that [to die].)

PS17-E11:   *Yes because we cannot forget our Cristang/we born Cristang so if we don't talk that means later on no more Cristang already... yes of course necessary because we Cristang we have to talk Cristang in our in at home/so we must teach the children also.*

(=Yes, because we cannot forget our *Cristang* language/we were born *Cristang* so if we don't speak it, it means the language is gone… yes, of course it is necessary for us to speak *Cristang* at home because we are *Cristang* people/so we must teach our children too.)

However, most of the MPC respondents said that they do not have access to written materials on MPC, particularly for learning the language. This is despite the fact that several publications targeted at learning MPC have been produced, namely by Joan Marbeck.[3] There is also a dictionary of MPC or *Cristang* by Baxter and de Silva (2004). Yet, most of the respondents said that they did not know of these materials. The ones who have seen or used written materials are: PS7 who has written his own materials; S1 who attended classes conducted by a Portuguese person; M3 who saw MPC materials when she attended MPC class conducted by PS7; and PS16 who had come across "papers" given in MPC.

As a community-based effort, the Malacca Portuguese-Eurasian Association (MPEA) has recently revived MPC classes at the PS. At present, the classes are aimed at children and the lessons cover simple expressions and story-telling. Out of all the Malacca Portuguese-Eurasian children interviewed, only M3 who was 18 years old at the time of interview attended the language class conducted by PS7, and even then, only once. Thus, there is concern that the classes are not taken as seriously as they should be. For example, PS7 used to conduct classes in the past, and when asked about the classes, PS3 thought there was no need to attend these classes since both parents speak MPC at home with children while PS17 let their children decide if they wanted to go (see PS3-E12 and PS17-E13).

PS3-E12:   *Some children go… my son will tell me… I say for what to go we here we speak Cristang…*

(=Some children attended the classes… my son would tell me about the classes… but I didn't think there was any reason to attend the classes since we speak *Cristang* at home…)

PS3-E12: *Ahh then they when got the class that time my uncle came here told my two daughters go and join the class they say they shy lah because I don't know who got they shy to go…*

(=Ahh, when the classes were offered, my uncle came and asked my daughters to go and join the classes but they said they were shy because they did not know who else was in the class so they were shy to attend…)

In fact, in the past, language classes were stopped due to dwindling numbers of respondents. PS7 expressed his concerns about culture being transmitted in the future as he and another senior member of the community are the main people who are transmitting their culture by dance or music to the younger generation. PS7's concern, as shown in PS7-E13, is natural, as the generational loss among Malacca Portuguese Eurasians has been detected in studies such David and Faridah Noor (1999).

PS7-E13: *They're going off they're not going to remain here like myself… but if we go it's not around here who's going to do the culture now okay you have a Portuguese culture dance… when there's no life there's nothing there…*

(=The senior citizens are aging and are not going to be here forever, such as myself… when we are gone, who is going to maintain the cultural practices? Okay, now we have Portuguese cultural dance but when there is no people or festival here, there is nothing here…)

Acehnese and culture

When asked about preserving their HL, both communities thought it was important for them to do so. For instance, all the Acehnese parents who were interviewed stated that they try their best to use Acehnese at home with their children. They were concerned that the language which has survived in KA may be in danger of being lost (e.g., KA11-E14).

KA11-E14: *Mantong kamoe lam-lam rumoh marit… aneuk lôn keudroe pih lôn cuba peureunoe basa Acèh//sayang kan.*

> (=We still speak some Acehnese in the house… I also
> try to teach my Children Acehnese //It is a pity if we
> lose it.)

In KA, when the respondents were asked why Acehnese was important to them, they felt that it was important to maintain the language of their ancestors, which in turn provided them with a sense of cultural dignity. In fact, a strong Acehnese identity prevails in KA, and the respondents feel that knowing how to speak Acehnese defines their ethnicity (e.g., KA55-E15 and KA56-E16).

> KA55-E15: *Basa Acèh bahasa Ibunda//sayang kôn meunyo h'an jeuet.*
>
> (=Acehnese is our mother tongue//it is a pity if they cannot speak it.)

> KA56-E16: *Meunyo ta-marit Acèh sinoe tingat kampông keuh//ta-rasa lah//ta-rasa tanyoe sama lah/sama-sama ureueng Acèh kan.*
>
> (=If I speak Acehnese to them I remember my village//we feel it//we feel that we are the same/we are both Acehnese.)

In relation to community-based efforts, the Acehnese community in KA demonstrate strategised efforts towards keeping their language alive (see Yusuf, Pillai and Mohd. Ali 2013). This is done mainly through the efforts of the Kampung Aceh Management Centre (KAMC). For example, *Narit Geutanyo*, a newsletter written in Malay and Acehnese is published and distributed by KAMC every two months to the villagers. The newsletter comprises news from the Aceh province and KA, information on religion and traditional Acehnese recipes. *Belajar Bahasa Aceh* (Learn Acehnese) is one of the regular sections in the newsletter. The newsletter also includes writings by KA residents who, despite finding the spelling conventions a bit difficult as they were never formally taught the Acehnese language, still attempt to write in Acehnese (see KA55-E17).

> KA55-E17: *Meunyo jeuet ta-marit Acèh/jeuet lah ta-baca nyan… sabab//peu nyan tuléh jih kan lam ABC//ta-baca-baca lheuh nyan meuphôm keuh//sabab ka ta-tu'oh marit kan//sabé marit kan… 'a teumuléh payah bacut//sabab h'ana ta- meureunoe kiban yang betoi keuh.*

(=If we know how to speak Acehnese/we are likely to know how to read it… because//its writing is in ABC//we read and read and then we understand//because we already know how to speak it//always speak it… yes to write is a bit difficult//because we were never taught how to write it correctly.)

Further, the KAMC, which was launched in 2005, has a mini library available for the residents with books and magazines written in Acehnese, Bahasa Indonesia, English and Malay. KAMC also hosts the annual meetings of *Ikatan Masyarakat Aceh Malaysia* (IMAM) or Malaysian Acehnese Association. IMAM was established in 2000 and its goal is to unite people of Acehnese descent in Malaysia. This association promotes the use of Acehnese among its members. During their annual meetings, both Acehnese and Malay are used.

For the KA community, the three main holidays in Islam—*Ramadan*, *Eid Al-Fitri* and *Eid Al-Adha*—are the times when all of the family members residing out of KA return to the village for family gatherings. Many respondents, especially the elders, feel that these were the times where their culture, belief and language use are seen to be more prominent, as exemplified in KA3-E318.

> KA3-E318:   *Watèe uroe raya ramè yang woe u gampông//bak yak meureumpok ureueng syik awak nyan… uroe raya puasa yang ramè woe… meunyo ka meusapat/marit biasa Acèh mandum//keliling basa Acèh mandum.*
>
> (=During [the] holidays many [of us] return to [the] village//for [them to] meet their parents… [the] fasting holidays most [of them] return… when [we] gather/[we] all speak Acehnese//all around us we hear (people speaking) Acehnese.)

This is similar to the situation in PS where regardless of the level of use of their HL respectively, festivals or cultural practices also bring the people together and can be the platform for any possible language revitalisation efforts. One community-based effort that is still going on in PS is the annual Christmas celebration in which a Christmas play would be staged using a script written in MPC. MPC story-telling competitions are usually held in conjunction with these celebrations. Members of the community and Portuguese Eurasians from all over the country come to the PS during festivals like *Festa San Pedro* "Feast of Saint

Peter" and *Intrudu* (held on the last Sunday preceding Ash Wednesday in the Catholic calendar). These festivals usually feature cultural events using MPC.

Discussion

The interviews with the members for KA and the PS indicate that both communities generally perceive their HLs to be carriers or transmitters of cultural heritage, and as an ethnic-group identifier, and thus, both communities acknowledge the importance of keeping their HLs alive. This is consistent with Hinton's (2001) view about such an identifier being one of the motivating factors of learning one's ancestral or heritage languages. For example, as suggested in the previous sections, the Acehnese in KA have kept their variety of Acehnese alive because the elders, especially those from the second to the fifth generations, still held on to their cultural heritage including cultural practices, food and language, which sets them apart from the local Malays. For instance, they still refer to themselves as "Acehnese" or *ureueng Acèh/awak Acèh* "Acehnese people" or *ureueng Acèh dari Malaysia* "Acehnese Malaysians" as opposed to *ureueng Malaya/ureueng Melayu* "Malays" (Yusuf, Pillai and Mohd. Ali 2013). Easier modes of communication and travel to the Aceh province in Indonesia mean that that the identification with Acehnese culture can be more easily cultivated and kept alive.

Similarly, the PS respondents also still regard MPC as an important aspect of their cultural heritage. For a community generally classified as *Others*, and with no distinct ethnic identifier which other groups in Malaysia have, there appears to be a need to identify with an ancestral linkage with Portugal, and one of the ways to do this is through MPC, which is the most "visible" link, apart from the costumes used in the performance of Portuguese folk dances brought in from Portugal which are actually recent additions (see Sarkissian 2000). However, unlike the Acehnese in KA and the Aceh province, there is no direct hereditary contact to Portugal, which is also geographically further removed from Malaysia than Aceh. This need to look for a cultural connection is, therefore, more acute among the PS community than in KA reflective of the term *saudade* in MPC, loosely translated to mean "a melancholic or nostalgic longing for something that has been lost". This is perhaps why there has been an increase in more community-initated efforts to share and revitalise MPC (e.g., through community engagement projects funded by the University of Malaya) and Portuguese-Eurasian performances (e.g., the establishment of the *1511 Maliao Maliao Dance* troupe).

Yet, in PS homes, whilst there are family-initiated efforts as evidenced in Pillai, Soh and Kajita (2014), there appears to be a lower level family-based efforts to use MPC at home, in particular when it comes to insisting on younger family

members using MPC at home. Thus, there is a discrepancy between positive perceptions of MPC and its actual use in homes, a phenomenon that arises in many such language contexts (e.g., Schwartz 2008). This lack of inter-generational transmission may be among the key contributing factors to the decline in the number of fluent speakers at the PS is a worrying trend for an endangered language such as MPC. Outside the home, previous work on language maintenance and shift (e.g. David and Faridah Noor 1999; Sudesh 2000) show that the language of choice is likely to be English and Malay, and if the positive perceptions about MPC are not translated into language use at home, then there is the possibility that English will quickly replace MPC as the first language of the younger PS residents.

One factor that may contribute to the continued use of a language is a large number of absolute speaker number or functional speakers (e.g., Carter and Aulette 2009; Smith 2003). Acehnese and MPC are similar in terms of not having a big number of absolute speakers. However, this seems to be advantageous, at least in the case of KA as the community seems more close-knitted, in contrast to the bigger group of MPC speakers with many of their community members working and living outside the PS on a permanent basis. Acehnese was generally found to be the dominant language used at home in KA. The bigger population size in PS has not helped to maintain the use of MPC at home as it was only the older residents who were confident with their fluency in MPC. Many of the respondents shied away from being interviewed in MPC and said they were not as fluent as other usually older speakers. However, it was not uncommon to find those who said they were not fluent in MPC chatting freely and fluently in MPC with their friends and family when they were playing card games or just chatting with friends and family members in the PS. We will not go into details on speakers' perception of their language fluency (see Grenoble and Whaley [2006, 161–166] for discussion on speakers' evaluation of each other), but it suffices to say that the MPC is still being used at the PS depending on individuals and with whom they socialise in particular contexts.

The general perception of the two groups towards heritage language revolves around the connection between language and culture although this is not the same as saying a group's culture cannot survive without their heritage language, as research shows otherwise (see Pillai and Khan 2011). These findings demonstrate the experiences of two heritage-language-speaking groups, in response to social processes. The overall cultural climate in both communities are showing positive signs as Acehnese is consistently taught, while recent years have seen more interest in reconnecting with MPC among group members, both within and outside the PS, following the grand celebration of the arrival of the Portuguese in Malacca in the 16th century in 2011 and annual celebrations in the PS such as

Intrudu, *Festa San Pedro* and *San Juang*. However, the positive overall cultural climate can only contribute to a certain extent with regards to the continued use of heritage language if one group's rights such as political and social mobility are overlooked.

Conclusion

In this paper, set against a multilingual and multicultural background, the authors have shown that the respondents' attitudes towards their HLs were generally positive although they did not always correspond to the use of their HLs. Both HLs have been losing speakers among the younger generations. In the case of KA, younger speakers are likely to be more fluent in the Kedah dialect and Malay as well as used them more frequently than Acehnese. In PS, younger speakers are likely to use more English and Malay.

However, both minority communities are making efforts to keep their languages alive despite the influences and competition from dominant languages around them, including attempts to teach European Portuguese, in the case of the PS. Whilst the KA community seems to be more concerted in their efforts to create opportunities to use Acehnese, community-based efforts in PS are more sporadic. This does not bode well for the latter.

Recognising the cultural significance and values of one's HL does not always translate into doing something to ensure its survival. This amounts to what Bell (2013) refers to as passive support. This may well be due to a lack of resources or cohesive measures to initiate efforts to revitalise or maintain the HL. However, community-initiated efforts are important steps towards keeping HLs alive and in use. As Hinton (2001, 12) states, "[w]hen a revitalization program results in a large and growing percentage of families using their ancestral language as their home language, so that children are learning it as their first language, then it is time to celebrate and take it off the 'endangered list'".

Acknowledgement

Notes

1. See the website of Amanah Sahan Nasional Berhad http://www.asnb.com.my/english/eligibility.htm.
2. E refers to Excerpts from the interviews. The letter and number in square brackets identifies the speaker .

3. It should be noted that Joan Marbeck has never been a resident in PS. See http://joanmarbeck.com/?Publications for publication list.

Appendices

Appendix A

Table 1. Portuguese Settlement respondents

No	Identifier	Sex	Age	Dominant language at home
1	PS1	F	70	MPC
2	PS2	M	53	MPC
3	PS3	F	51	MPC
4	PS4	F	64	MPC
5	PS5	F	66	MPC
6	PS6	M	14	English/MPC
7	PS7	M	80	MPC
8	PS8	F	48	English/MPC
9	PS9	F	18	English/MPC
10	PS10	F	50	MPC
11	PS11	F	18	English/MPC
12	PS12	M	84	English/MPC
13	PS13	F	52	MPC/English
14	PS14	F	23	English/MPC
15	PS15	M	16	English/MPC
16	PS16	F	69	MPC
17	PS17	F	41	MPC
18	PS18	M	19	English/MPC

Table 2. Kampung Aceh respondents

No	Identifier	Sex	Age	Dominant language at home
1	KA3	F	55	Acehnese
2	KA4	F	57	Acehnese
3	KA5	F	54	Acehnese
4	KA6	F	60	Acehnese
5	KA8	F	60	Acehnese
6	KA9	F	68	Acehnese
7	KA10	F	50	Acehnese
8	KA11	F	45	Acehnese
9	KA16	M	46	Acehnese
10	KA30	F	14	Acehnese/Malay
11	KA45	F	76	Acehnese
12	KA50	F	16	Acehnese/Malay
13	KA51	M	16	Acehnese/Malay
14	KA53	M	55	Acehnese
15	KA54	F	28	Acehnese
16	KA55	F	35	Acehnese
17	KA56	F	28	Acehnese
18	KA57	F	65	Acehnese

Appendix B. Transcription Conventions

Transcription conventions, adapted from Giampapa (2001)

English	*italics*
English Translation/Gloss	(= English translation/Gloss)
Respondents' Code	e.g., [A1]

Non-speech, e.g., laughter or cough, e.g., [laughs]	
(...)	Authors' addition
/	Short pause
//	Long pause of more than 3 seconds
. . .	Continuing talk

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