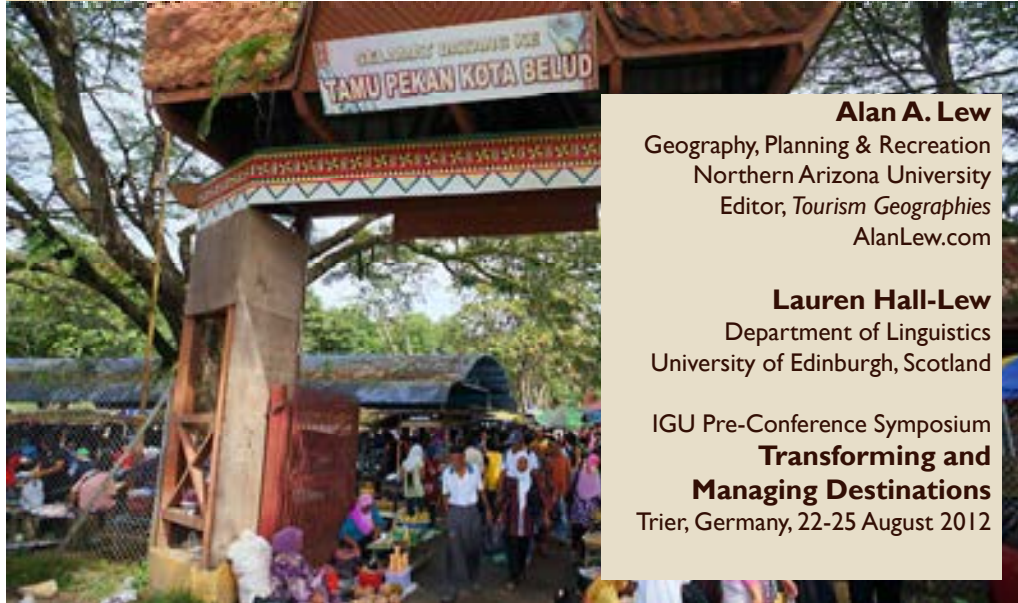


# Language, Identity & Tourism in Sabah, Malaysian Borneo



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Managing Destinations**  
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# Language in Tourism



## • Communication

- Major barrier to cross-cultural tourism
- Ability of service staff to speak the language of the tourist

## • Overlooked as a Commodity Attraction

- Commonplace, Mundane Experience
  - Taken for granted, most of the time
  - Similar to: Sleeping, Walking, Seeing, Hearing, Touching, and our Workaday World

## • Language as Tourism ? ... Heritage Tourism?

# Language as a Heritage Tourism Resource



## 1. LANGUAGE CONTEXT

- Authentic/Historical/Heritage Language
- Minority/Majority Language Vitality

### Tourism Elements

- Linguistic Landscape (Placenames & Signage)
- Language Museumization
- Linguist Distance in Tourism Settings

## 2. LANGUAGE DYNAMICS

- Language in Cultural Change/Culture Drift
- Language as Social or Cultural Capital
- Language as Personal Experience

### Tourism Elements

- Language Learning & Role Transformation
- Language in Reenactments/Performance
- Language Brokers

## 3. LANGUAGE USES

- Language in the Political Economy
- Language in Place Identity

### Tourism Elements

- Language in Place Marketing
- Language in Brand Imaging

# Case Study: Sabah, Malaysia (Ba!)

## Ethnic / Linguistic Diversity

- 32 Major Ethnic Groups
  - Bornean: Kadazan-Dusun (17%), Murut, Paitanic
  - Austronesian: Bajau (Philippines & Indonesia)
  - Bruneis (Malay) & Chinese

## • About 50 Languages

- Over 200 dialects
  - West Coast Bajau = 7 dialect groups
- Many near extinction

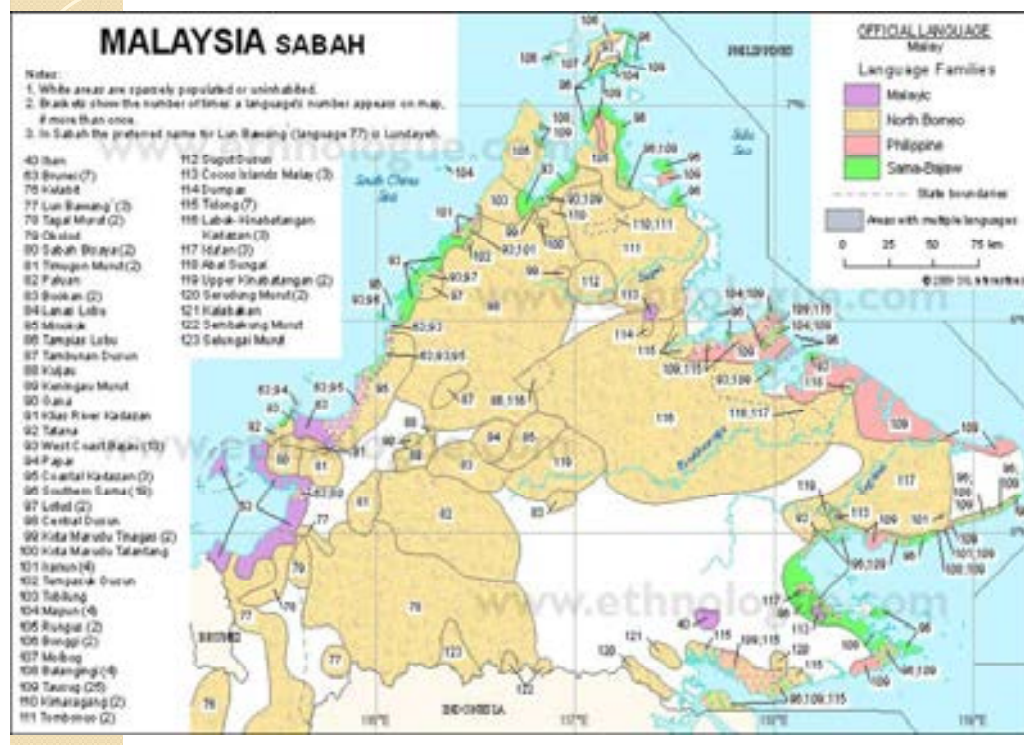
## • Illegal Immigrants:

- ~900,000 (2010)
- 27% (+) of Sabah's total pop.
- Philippines & Indonesia

→ Learn Sabahan

ENGLISH	SABAHAN	DUNGAN
Bicycle	Beskal	B' oskal
Bus	Bas	Bas
Can	Buleh	Buli
Cannot	Ndak Buleh	Amu Buli
Cash	Cash / Tunai	Pirak
Come Again	Datang Lagi	Mongol No Kawagu
Drink	Minum	Moginum
Eat	Makan	Makan
Good Morning	Salamat Pagi	Osonong Kosuabon





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Local Words in the Tourism Landscape



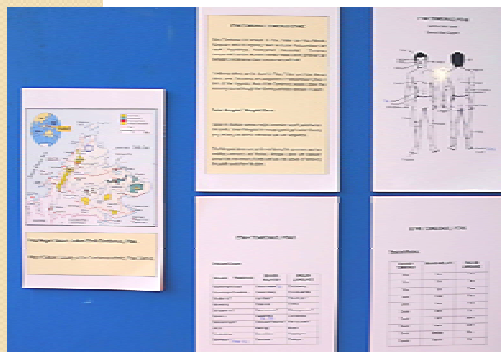




## ETNIK DUSUN GARO, KOTA MARUDU

Pengiraan/Nombor:

BAHASA DUSUN GARO	BAHASA MELAYU	ENGLISH LANGUAGE
Iso	Satu	One
Duwo	Dua	Two
Tolu	Tiga	Three
Apat	Empat	Four
Timo	Lima	Five
Onom	Enam	Six
Tujuh	Tujuh	Seven
Walu	Lapan	Eight
Siam	Sembilan	Nine
Opod	Sepuluh	Ten



## Tourist Talk

### Tourism Places, Sites & Establishments

- Cater to the Tourist's Environmental Bubble
- Hybrid / Fusion between Local Language & Tourist Language
  - Adaptation to the Tourist's Language
  - Diffusion of Tourist's Language
    - Form of Pidginization ("Pidgin English")

### Tourist Talk (TT) -or- Tourist Language (TL)

- = a subset of Foreign-Directed Speech -or- Foreign Talk (FT)
- = a subset (or "register") of the Host Language (HL)

## LET'S LEARN DUSUN

Welcome/ Hello.....	Kepisanangan
Good.....	Osonong
Good Morning.....	Kopisanangan doungosuvabon
Good Night.....	Kopisanangan minosodop
One, two, three.....	Iso, duo, tolu
Happy Harvest Festival.....	Kotobian tadau kaamatan
Sabah Tea is the Best!	Osonong tomod Sabah Tea!
What is your restaurant speciality?.....	Nunu haro tasadap hini?
How much does it cost?.....	Piro gatang tik?
Bottom-up!/Cheers!	Aramaiti
Beautiful Girl.....	Samandek tolumis
I Love You.....	Oopus oia dika
Will You Marry Me?.....	Samangaru ko daho?
Thank You.....	Pounsikou
Good Bye.....	Himo kone
Please Come Again.....	Rumikot karwaga

Teaching  
Dusun to  
Tourists at  
Sabah Tea  
Plantation

## I. Language Context

### Museumization at the Sabah Harvest Festival



## 2. LANGUAGE DYNAMICS

- Language in Cultural Change / Culture Drift
- Language as Social or Cultural Capital
- Language as Personal Experience

### Tourism Elements

- Language in Reenactments
- Language Brokers
- Language Learning  
(Role Transformation)



## Harvest Festival 2012



Harvest Festival Beauty Pageant Contestants in Traditional Dress



## Language Learning

## Living History & Performance

- **Display of Historic Period Costumes, Practices & Language**
  - Immersive role-playing *Simulacra*
  - Increasing use by museums (*museumization*)
- **Historic Reenactments**
  - **History & Biography told in a Regional Dialect**
    - Language as Living History
    - Experiential & Subjective Experience



A Language Broker ("touri guide") at the Mari-Mari Cultural Village, in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah

## Linguistic Commodity / Heritage Commodity

- **Heritage "Badge of Local Authenticity"**
  - = Sign value
  - For entrepreneurial competition
  - Focus on consumers & tourists who will spend
- **Language as a Local Cultural & Heritage Asset**
  - Distinct Language or Dialect
  - Sense of place-identity (Localization)
- **Language as Role Transformation**
  - *Diaspora Tourism*
    - "Roots" and self-identity seekers
  - *Second Language Learners*
    - Business people, Cosmopolitans





### 3. LANGUAGE USES

- a. Language in the Political Economy
- b. Language in Place Identity

#### Tourism Elements

- 1. Language in Place Marketing
- 2. Language in Brand Imaging

## Political Identity Through Words



**BORNEO POST**online  
THE LARGEST ENGLISH NEWS SITE IN BORNEO

HOME NEWS BIZ SPORTS UTUSAN BORNEO thesundaypost COLUMNS

Home - News - Sabah - 'UBA to revive Sabah's nation status if voted'

### 'UBA to revive Sabah's nation status if voted'

Posted on May 4, 2012, Friday

TAMPARULI: United Borneo Alliance (UBA), if voted into power, will mobilise all the legal instruments and means to ensure that Sabah's status as a nation is revived within the Federation of Malaysia.

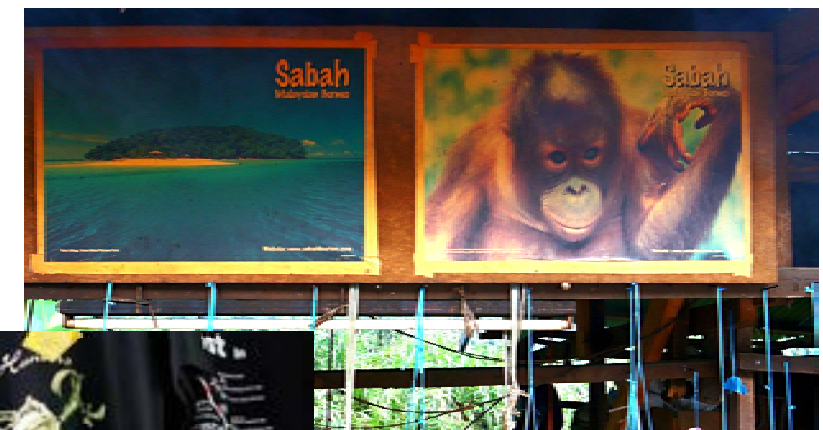
## Place Identity through Food



Roti Cobra Kambing  
(Indian)

and

Wantan Ho  
(Chinese)



## Selling Sabah



## Language Attractions & Destination Marketing

### (1) Living History – as Tourist Attraction

- a) Museumization & Language Learning

### (2) In-Group – Out-Group Identities – as Tourist Attraction

- a) Creates “Back Regions” for tourists to explore
  - Trying to Speak Local Dialects & Languages
  - Learning Local Dialects & Languages – Formal & Informal

### (3) In-Group – Out-Group Identities – as a Marketing Tool

- a) Can Sell a Destinations Unique Selling Proposition
- b) Need to Balance Exotic with Familiar

### (4) Subtle, possibly Covert, Language – as a Marketing Tool

- a) Integrated & Unconscious part of Everyday Life Experience
  - Food, Place names, Festivals, Local Talk ...



## Linguistic Heritage & Tourist Markets

	Local	Domestic	Regional	International
<b>Awareness</b>	High	Moderate	Low	None
<b>Interest</b>	None	Low	Moderate*	High*
<b>Marketing</b>	Low	High	Moderate	None

\*Varies by specific market

### Type of Tourist

**Local** – Sabahan (maybe Sarawak and Brunei)

**Domestic** - Peninsula MY

**Regional** – Philippines & Indonesia

**International** – Rest of the World

### Awareness

- Tourist Familiarity with Sabah's linguistic diversity

### Interest

- Tourist Interest in Sabah's linguistic diversity

### Marketing

- Intentional use of Sabah's linguistic differences in Destination Marketing

## Terimah Kasih, Ba!

### INVITATION

2<sup>nd</sup> Coastal, Island & Tropical Tourism Conference  
and  
6<sup>th</sup> Tourism Outlook Conference

16-18 April 2013 - Kota Kinabalu  
<http://bit.ly/Sabah2013>

