

THE USE OF ENGLISH IN CONTEMPORARY MALAYSIAN FEMINIST ACTIVISM

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Abstract:

Feminism and the women's movement in Malaysia are products of specific historical and political contexts. Following this logic, the language used in feminist activism can also be seen as product of similar contexts. The focus of this article is the current state of the feminist movement in Malaysia and its linguistic framework as the effects of changes in language policy. This article then considers the use and relevance of feminist theory in Malaysian feminist activism as linked to the predominance of English in Malaysian feminist discourse. This article also argues that the predominance of English poses challenges to the inclusion of working-class class feminist agendas but offers opportunities in strengthening transnational feminist linkages. Language thus becomes an underlying issue which may explain the successful inroads and setbacks faced by feminist organizations in Malaysia. The issues of language and hegemony of this article couches itself within ongoing debates on Anglophone hegemony in feminist discourse in non-Western nations and how feminist concepts in English are engaged in multilingual contexts.

Keywords: Feminism, Malaysia, feminist theory, activism, language.