

THE SABAH MALAY DIALECT

Phonological Structures And Social Functions



Jane Wong Kon Ling

PUSAT PENATARAN ILMU & BAHASA
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH



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Gambar Kulit
Martubat Jamlan

THE SABAH
MALAY DIALECT

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PREFACE

Borneo's linguistic diversity, like its biodiversity, is rich in the extreme. And yet, at the beginning of the 21st century, our knowledge of this diversity remains sketchy. In the early part of the last century, travellers, anthropologists, missionaries and administrators were largely responsible for documenting facts about the languages in northern Borneo and, for some languages, this early documentation is all that remains. Studies have been carried out on other languages. Notable among this work are the studies of Asmah Hj. Omar, James T. Collins, and the Summer Institute of Linguistics in Sabah, and the Universiti Brunei Darussalam.

The present study is a welcome addition to the works on language issues in northern Borneo. Although the Malay dialects of Borneo, and beyond, have received some attention, the Sabah Malay dialect has not received as much attention as it probably deserves. At first glance, a reader might be surprised to see a title for a book on the Sabah Malay dialect that purports to consider both the phonological structure of the dialect, as well as the social functions of the dialect. The study of phonology, after all, is not usually linked to the social side of language, and the whole area of sociolinguistics has developed as a separate sub-field of linguistics.

Despite the seminal work of Asmah Hj. Omar and James T. Collins, there are few important resources on Sabah Malay. For this reason alone, this book is a useful contribution to the field. An issue of very real importance, which this book touches on, is the position of Sabah Malay to Brunei Malay and, indeed, to Kedayan. A phonological analysis should allow, in the first instance, a very detailed comparison between these varieties of Malay. By not divorcing one aspect of the structure of Sabah Malay, that is, its phonology, from its social context, the author of this book provides an interesting glimpse of the relationship between a linguistic description and a sociolinguistic one. Clearly, the latter is preliminary, but it is hoped that this study will spawn other studies. Of particular significance in a fast-changing world with ever improving global communication systems, is how speakers of languages are being influenced by languages of wider communication, such as Bahasa Malaysia and English. In fact, one of the most interesting issues which emerges from the present study is the influence of the official language on Sabah Malay. The relationship between these two varieties of Malay is potentially of great interest, just as is the relationship between Brunei Malay and Bahasa Melayu in Sabah's close

neighbour, Brunei Darussalam. Further studies of the clear links between these two important varieties of Malay, Sabah Malay and Brunei Malay, both linguistic and sociolinguistic, offer a fruitful avenue for further research.

**Peter W. Martin
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August 2000**

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Malaysia
August 2000**

CONTENTS

	Page
FOREWORD	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	iii
CONTENTS	v
LIST OF TABLES	xiii
LIST OF FIGURES	x
LIST OF SYMBOLS	xi
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xiii
INTRODUCTION	xv
 CHAPTER I REVIEW OF LITERATURE	
1.1 Studies of Dialectology	1
1.2 Studies of Malay Dialects in Malaysia	2
1.3 Studies on the Sabah Malay Dialect	7
1.4 Conclusion	12
 CHAPTER II METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN	
2.1 Setting and Running Pilot Test	14
2.2 Selecting Focal Area and Speakers	15
2.2.1 Focal Area	15
2.2.2 Informants/Speakers	16
2.3 Filling in Questionnaire and Wordlist	20
2.3.1 Questionnaire	20
2.3.2 200-Wordlist	21
2.4 Interviewing and Recording	21
2.5 Transcribing and Analysing Data	22

2.6	Grouping and Generalising	22
2.6.1	Language Uses	24
2.6.2	Language Choice	24
2.6.3	Language Attitude	25
2.7	Conclusion	25

CHAPTER III PHONOLOGICAL STRUCTURES OF THE SABAH MALAY DIALECT IN COMPARISON TO STANDARD MALAY

3.1	The phonological Inventory of STM and SMD	27
3.1.1	Vowel Inventory of STM	27
3.1.2	Vowel Inventory of SMD	29
3.2	Vowel Differences	31
3.2.1	STM [a] and [ə] : SMD [a]	31
3.2.2	STM [ə] : SMD [a], [i] and [u]	33
3.2.3	STM [e] : SMD [i]	35
3.2.4	STM [i] and [ɪ] : SMD [i]	35
3.2.5	STM [o] : SMD [u]	37
3.2.6	STM [u] and [ʊ] : SMD [u]	38
3.2.7	Vowel Insertion in SMD	40
3.3	Consonant Differences	41
3.3.1	Consonant Addition in SMD	41
3.3.2	STM [?] and [k] : SMD [k]	44
3.3.3	STM [ɣ], [ə] and [:] : SMD [r]	46
3.3.4	STM [h] : SMD [h], [ø] and [?]	48
3.3.5	Other Consonant Changes	50
3.4	Conclusion	50

CHAPTER IV SOCIAL FUNCTIONS OF THE SABAH MALAY DIALECT

4.1	Language Uses	52
4.1.1	Lingua Franca Amongst the Sabahans	53
4.1.2	Language Used Between Sabahans and Outsiders	54

4.1.3	Language Used in the Market Places	54
4.1.4	Language Used in Government Offices	55
4.2	Language Choice	57
4.2.1	Parentage	58
4.2.2	Ethnicity	59
4.2.3	Age Group	60
4.2.4	Gender	61
4.2.5	Religion	61
4.2.6	Language Attitude of Parents	62
4.3	Language Attitude	64
4.3.1	Language Attitudes Towards Oneself Using SMD	64
4.3.2	Language Attitudes Towards Others Using SMD	66
4.4	Conclusion	68

CHAPTER V CONCLUSION

5.1	Summary of Findings	69
5.2	Recommendations for Further Studies	70
5.3	Conclusion	72

REFERENCES	73
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APPENDICES

A	Survey Section A (i) & (ii): Questionnaire	78
B	Survey Section B: 200-Basic Wordlist	83
C	Form A (200-Wordlist and 12-Speaker Transcription)	89
D	Form B (STM and SMD 200-Wordlist)	109
E	Conversations	115

INDEX

Author Index	121
Subject Index	122

LIST OF TABLES

Table No.		Page
2.1	The Population of Kota Kinabalu City	15
2.2	Geographical Distribution of the Informants	16
2.3	The Gender of the Informants	18
2.4	Age of the Informants	18
2.5	Social Background of the Informants	18
2.6	Ethnic Background of the Informants	18
2.7	The Religion of the Informants	19
2.8	Education Background of the Informants	19
3.1	Examples of STM [a] : SMD [a]	32
3.2	Examples of STM [ə] : SMD [a]	33
3.3	Examples of STM [ə] : SMD [a]	34
3.4	Examples of STM [ə] : SMD [i]	34
3.5	Examples of STM [ə] : SMD [u]	35
3.6	Examples of STM / e / : SMD / i /	35
3.7	Examples of STM [i] : SMD [i]	36
3.8	Examples of STM [i] : SMD [i]	37
3.9	Examples of STM / o / : SMD / u /	38
3.10	Examples of STM [u] : SMD [u]	39
3.11	Examples of STM [u] : SMD [u]	40
3.12	Examples of Vowel Insertion [a] in SMD	41
3.13	Examples of Consonant Addition [?] in SMD	42
3.14	Examples of Consonant Insertion [h] ~ [?] in SMD Question Words	43
3.15	Examples of STM [k] : SMD [k]	44
3.16	Examples of STM [?] : SMD [k]	45
3.17	Examples of SMD [?] ~ [k] in Some Kinship Terms	46
3.18	Examples of STM [ɣ] : SMD [r]	47
3.19	Examples of STM [:] : SMD [r]	48
3.20	Examples of STM [ə] : SMD [r]	48
3.21	Examples of STM [h] : SMD [ø]	49
3.22	Examples of STM [h] : SMD [h] ~ [ø]	49
3.23	Examples of STM [h] : SMD [h] ~ [?] ~ [ø]	50
4.1	Lingua Franca amongst the Sabahans	53
4.2	Language Used between Sabahans and Outsiders	54

4.3	Language Used of the Market Places	55
4.4	Language Used in Government Offices between Officers and Clients	55
4.5	Language Used in Government Offices amongst Officers	56
4.6	Language Choice of the Informants	57
4.7	SMD as First language and Second Language	58
4.8	Language Choice According to Parentage (First Language)	59
4.9	Language Choice According to Ethnicity (First Language)	60
4.10	Language Choice According to Age Group (First Language)	60
4.11	Language Choice According to Gender (First Language)	61
4.12	Language Choice According to Religion (First Language)	62
4.13	Language Choice According to Parents' Language Attitude (Home Language)	62
4.14	Informants' Language Attitudes Toward Using SMD	64
4.15	Informants' Language Attitudes Toward Outsiders Using SMD	66

A → B / V ___ A

**'becomes' by phonological rule B in
intervocalic position**

(04-27-F)

**Informant's Reference: 'the number
of the informant' – 'age of the
informant' – 'sex of the informant'
(e.g. fourth informant, 27 years
old, female)**

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

SMD	The Sabah Malay Dialect
STM	Standard Malay
Lg.	Language
L1	First Language
L2	Second Language
Kdz.	Kadazan
Kdy.	Kedayan
BC	Chinese (<i>Bahasa Cina</i>)
BI	English (<i>Bahasa Inggeris</i>)
A/G	Age and Gender
M/t	Mother Tongue
non-M	Non-Muslim
M	Male
F	Female
P.O.A	Place of Articulation
M.O.A	Manner of Articulation
kpn	Intensifying Particle (<i>Kata Penegas</i>)