

The Phonemic – Syllabic Comparisons of Standard Malay and Palembang Malay Using a Historical Linguistic Perspective

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ABSTRACT

This study is a *historical linguistic* investigation entitled *The Phonemic – Syllabic Comparisons of Standard Malay and Palembang Malay Using a Historical Linguistic Perspective* which aims to explore the types of sound changes found in *Palembang Malay*. The investigation uses a *historical linguistic comparative method* to compare the *phonemic and syllabic* changes between an ancestral language *Standard Malay* and its decent language *Palembang Malay*. *Standard Malay* refers to the *Wilkinson* dictionary in 1904. The participants of this study are seven native speakers of *Palembang Malay* whose ages range from 20 to 40 years old. The data were collected from the voices of the participants that were recorded along group conversations and interviews. This study applies the theoretical framework of sound changes which proposed by Terry Crowley in 1997 and Lily Campbell in 1999. The findings show that there are nine types of sound changes that were found as the results, namely *assimilation* (42.35%), *lenition* (20%), *sound addition* (3.53%), *metathesis* (1.18%), *dissimilation* (1.76%), *abnormal sound changes* (3.53%), *split* (13.53%), *vowel rising* (10.59%), and *monophthongisation* (3.53%).

Keywords: *Historical linguistics, standard Malay, Palembang Malay, comparative method, sound change, phoneme, syllable.*

INTRODUCTION

This study classifies into the field of *historical linguistics* that examines language change and relationship among languages. Campbell (1999) states that *historical linguistics* is sometimes called *diachronic linguistics*, which means that linguists are basically concerned with change in languages over periods of time. In this study, the *historical linguistics*' main approach is the *comparative method* which specifically compares the sound changes between an ancestral language *Standard Malay* and its descent language *Palembang Malay*. The participants consist of seven native speakers refer to those whose age ranges from 20 to 40 years old must have regularly spoken at least ten years of *Palembang Malay*. The data were then collected from the voices of the participants using *Palembang Malay* that were recorded along group conversations and interviews.

Wilkinson Dictionary in 1904 is used to be the source of *Standard Malay*

spelling system in this study since it is considered to be the first *Malay* spelling system that is used widely in *Malaya, Singapore, and Brunei* (Omar, 1989). Lewis (2009) through his research called *Ethnologue: Language of the World* has demonstrated that the historical classification of Palembang Malayis started from its *protolanguage Austronesian* → *Malayo-Polynesian* → *Malayo-Sumbawan* → *North and East* → *Malayic* → *Malay* → and finally *Palembang Malay*. Therefore, *Standard Malay* and then *Palembang Malay* are believed to be a branch of languages that include in the *Austronesian* language family.

The study aims to explore the types of sound changes found in *Palembang Malay* used by the participants. It investigates *phonemic and syllabic* changes in the context of comparing *Standard Malay* and *Palembang Malay*. The comparisons are limited by the number of isolated words that were obtained from data collection, which implies that the level of linguistic truth is limited to the analyzed data at the researcher's disposal. The literature review contains some related theories including types of sound changes which

proposed by Terry Crowley in 1997 and Lily Campbell in 1999, such as *lenition* and *fortition*, *sound addition*, *metathesis*, *fusion*, *unpacking*, *vowel breaking*, *assimilation*, *dissimilation*, *abnormal sound changes*, *monophthongisation*, *vowel rising* and *vowel lowering*.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The findings show that there are nine types of sounds changes, namely *assimilation*, *lenition*, *sound addition*, *metathesis*, *dissimilation*, *abnormal sound changes*, *split*, *vowel rising*, and *monophthongisation*. Those changes are in line with what have been proposed by Crowley (1997) and Campbell (1999). The sound changes are classified in the table 1.1 below.

Table 1.1 Distributions of Sound Changes

No.	Types of Sound Changes	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
1.	<i>Assimilation</i>	72	42.35
2.	<i>Lenition</i>	34	20
3.	<i>Split</i>	23	13.53
4.	<i>Vowel Rising</i>	18	10.59
5.	<i>Sound Addition</i>	6	3.53
6.	<i>Abnormal Sound Changes</i>	6	3.53
7.	<i>Monophthongisation</i>	6	3.53
8.	<i>Dissimilation</i>	3	1.76
9.	<i>Metathesis</i>	2	1.18
Total		170	100

1. Assimilation

Assimilation outcomes are likely the most frequent type of sound changes used by

participants. Hereby, the results of the sub-types of *assimilation* are shown in table 1.2 below.

Table 1.2 Distributions of Sub-types of Assimilation

No.	Sub-types of Assimilation	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
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1.	<i>Partial Assimilation</i>	54	75
2.	<i>Total Assimilation</i>	18	25
Total		72	100

Both *partial assimilation* and *total assimilation* that have just provided by the table 1.2 is also called *regressive assimilation*. *Regressive assimilation* means that the change of the *phonetic* feature occurs when the preceding sound is exerted by the influence of the sound that follows it, for instance the change from the right syllable to the left syllable in a word. Crowley (1997) asserts that the *partial assimilation* happens because the changed sound always keeps at least one of the original features by which it is distinguished from the unchanged sound. This sound change is discovered in *Palembang Malay*. There are three sounds changes phenomenon that are considered as *partial assimilations*, namely ($_{-}/*i/ \rightarrow$ $_{-}$ [e]), ($_{-}/*u/ \rightarrow$ $_{-}$ [ʊ]), and ($_{-}/*o/ \rightarrow$ $_{-}$ [ɔ]).

On the other hand, Crowley (1997) confirms that the *total assimilation* happens if all of the features in the word change to match those of another sound, then the two sounds end up being identical and produce geminate (*phonetically double*) sound. There are three sounds changes phenomenon that are considered as *total assimilations* in *Palembang Malay*, namely ($/*i/- *i/ \rightarrow$ [e] - [e]), ($/*u/- *u/ \rightarrow$ [ʊ] - [ʊ]), and ($/*o/- *o/ \rightarrow$ [ɔ] - [ɔ]). Thus, the changes are called *regressive assimilation* if the *phonemes* *Standard Malay* $/*i/$, $/*u/$ and $/*o/$ have lowered and have altered into *phonemes* [e], [ʊ], and [ɔ] in *Palembang Malay*. This kind of sound change is illustrated by the following forms of *Palembang Malay*:

Table 1.3 Examples of Regressive Assimilation

No	<i>Standard Malay</i>	→	<i>Palembang Malay</i>	Gloss
1	*bukit	→	[bʊ ket]	Hills
2	*tutup	→	[tʊ tʊ p]	Closing up
3	*tudʒ oh	→	[tʊ dʒɔ]	Seven

The changes in table 1.3 can be described as *regressive assimilation* because the *Standard Malay* features of *vowels* sounds [i], [u] and [o] in the back closed syllable *Standard Malay* *bukit, *tutup, and *tuḍ ʒ oh have changed into lower features of *vowels* sounds in *Palembang Malay* [e], [ʊ], and [ɔ] become [bʊ ket], [tʊ tʊ p], and [tʊ ḍ ʒɔ]. The table illustrates that the *regressive assimilation* then have influenced *vowel* sounds in the preceding sounds, so that *Standard Malay* *[u], *[u],

*[u] in the front closed syllable in the *Standard Malay* *bukit, *tutup, and *tuḍ ʒ oh have replaced by [ʊ], [ʊ], [ʊ] in *Palembang Malay* [bʊ ket], [tʊ tʊ p], and [tʊ ḍ ʒɔ] under influence of the *regressive assimilation* process in the first.

2. Lenition

As Crowley (1997) states that *lenition* or weakening generally refers to the sound change from stronger sound to weaker sound. The distribution of *lenition* is assigned in table 1.6 below.

Table 1.6 Distribution of Lenition

No.	Types of <i>Lenition</i>	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
1.	<i>Aphaeresis</i>	14	41.18
2.	<i>Apocope</i>	13	38.23
3.	<i>Syncope</i>	7	20.59
Total		34	100

Aphaeresis is a kind of sound loss where the initial segments in the word are dropped (Crowley, 1997). The results demonstrate that the pronunciation of *Standard Malay* features are **hiris*, **hantar* and **hitam*, in *Palembang Malay* people simply say [eres], [antər] and [itəm] with dropping out the initial *consonant* [h]. This *aphaeresis* even emerges in phrase, for example in the

Standard Malay phrase **tida? apa-apa*. People in *Palembang Malay* simply pronounce [da? papɔ] with dropping each initial word in the phrase.

A term that refers to the loss of segments in the middle of words is called *syncope* (Crowley, 1997). In *Palembang Malay*, it is found that this sort of change is common used, mainly in the dropping of medial *consonants* *Standard Malay* (-

/n/-), (-/h/-) and (-/r/-). These changes can be viewed as simplification where it is found that the pronunciation of *Standard Malay* features are **muntah*, **lihat* and **pərgi*, in *Palembang Malay* people simply say [*muta*], [*liat*] and [*pəgi*] with dropping out the *consonants* in the middle of each word.

The next term is called *Apocope* or the term for loss of word final segments (Crowley, 1997). This is a very regular change in language and examples are easy

to find. In *Palembang Malay*, the loss of final *consonant Standard Malay* (_/h/) is a very common change, such as in the words **ləbeh* and **darah* that have to be lost at the ends of the words so become [*ləbe*] and [*dara*].

3. Sound Addition

Crowley (1997) states that sounds are sometimes added rather than dropped. In table 1.7, the distribution of *sound addition* is given.

Table 1.7 Distribution of Sound Addition

No.	Sound Addition	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
1.	Phoneme Insertion /ʔ/	5	83.33
2.	Prothesis	1	16.67
Total		6	100

Phoneme insertion /ʔ/ often takes place at word final position (Mohamed, 2006). In *Palembang Malay*, it was found that the *phoneme consonant(/ʔ/)* is inserted at word final position especially in *Standard Malay* words which end with *phoneme; vowel* (/ *a/_), (/ *u/_) and (/ *i/_). The alternation would be

illustrated by the *Standard Malay* words **mintā*, **bau* and **pakai* that change into [*mintāʔ*] , [*bauʔ*] and [*pakeʔ*] in *Palembang Malay*.

Meanwhile, the addition of a sound at the beginning of a word is generally called *prothesis* (Crowley, 1997). The only *Palembang Malay* word used by the participant that is

discovered as *prothesis* is that [əlap] which is originally pronounced as *lap. Thus, when a vowel schwa ([ə]_) is added before the *Standard Malay* word *lap which appears to have no sound ([Ø]_), the phenomenon then is identified as *prothesis*.

4. Metathesis

A change that is sometimes called speech error in the order of the sounds is defined as metathesis by Crowley (1997). There are two *metathesis* phenomena that were found in *Palembang Malay*. Firstly, the word [d̃ ʒiŋɔʔ] in *Palembang Malay* was originally pronounced as *d̃ ʒəŋuʔ by *metathesis*. Secondly, when *Standard Malay* word *adoʔ-adoʔ alters into [udəʔ-udəʔ].

5. Dissimilation

This process is precisely the opposite of *assimilation*. There are three *dissimilation* phenomena that were found in *Palembang Malay*. Those *dissimilation* was found in the words [aer], [asek] and [aker] in *Palembang Malay*, descended from *Standard Malay* *ajer, *afik and *axir. They

have undergone an innovation whereby *Standard Malay phonemes* /*j/, *ʃ, and *x dissimilated into *Palembang Malay phonemes* [e], [s], and [k].

6. Abnormal Sound Changes

In this phenomenon of sound changes, the sound appears to change in an unusual way. It is probably because the changes have undergone through the following series of steps over a very long period of time (Crowley, 1997). There have been abnormal sound changes of the *phonemes* */r/, */l /and*/m/ in *Standard Malay* to the *phoneme* [ʔ] in *Palembang Malay*. The examples of the alternations are presented by *tidur and *besar become [tedʊʔ] and [bəsəʔ]; *kətʃil and *ambil become [kətʃiʔ] and [əmbeʔ]; and then *matʃam-matʃam becomes [matʃaʔ-matʃaʔ]. In addition, it was found one phenomenon of *maka → [maŋka] and *maŋka → [maŋkɔ] which demonstrate that there is an unusual insertion of the *velar nasal* [ŋ] in the middle of the word. Then, the

Palembang Malay typical *split* which is the change of vowel **/a/* into [ɔ] undergone change afterward.

7. Split

In *splits*, Campbell (1999) states the alternation occurs if phonetically one sound *splits* into two or more different sounds, for instance in the following way (A > B, C). The alternations would be illustrated by the *Standard Malay* words **bisa*, **mana* and **katfa* that change into [bisɔ], [manɔ] and [katfɔ] in *Palembang Malay*. The changes show that the front low phoneme **/a/* in the original form changes to the back mid phoneme [ɔ] in the *Palembang Malay*. Therefore, the vowel phoneme **/a/* here does not only stand for a phoneme **/a/* itself but also *split* into vowel phoneme [ɔ].

8. Vowel Rising (**/a/* → [ɔ])

Vowel rising happens if there is a regular process that indicates low vowels change into mid (or high) vowels or mid vowels move up into high vowels Campbell (1999). There are three words [tad̃ ʒəm], [təbəl] and [tʃəpət] which originally come

from **tad̃ ʒəm*, **təbəl* and **tʃəpət* in *Standard Malay*. The alternation of **/a/* sound into *schwa* [ə] is known as *vowel rising* whereby the pronunciation of the low vowel **/a/* changes to a low mid vowel [ə].

9. Monophthongisation

Monophthongisation is the process to identify the change of *diphthongs* **/ai/* and **/au/* which is replaced by phonemes **/e/* and **/ʊ/*, especially at the word final position (Mohamed, 2006). This change is presented by the original words **sampaɪ* and **pisau* that change into [sampe] and [pisʊ]. Hence, the *monophthongisation* process has caused the alternation of the high vowels in *Standard Malay* the *diphthongs* **/ai/* and **/au/* to be lowered and articulated as the vowels **/e/* and **/ʊ/* in *Palembang Malay*.

CONCLUSION

This study has investigated *phonemic and syllabic* changes in the context of comparing *Standard Malay* and *Palembang Malay*. By using a *historical linguistic comparative*

method, this study has delivered nine types of sound changes found in *Palembang Malay*, namely *assimilation, lenition, sound addition, metathesis, dissimilation, abnormal sound changes, split, vowel rising, and monophthongisation*. The writer suggests that the topic of sound changes in *Palembang Malay* should be addressed more extensively in further research.

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