

## A Typological Study of Argument-Adjunct Asymmetry in *Wh*-Questions: How Kuching Malay Compares

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In this paper, we target argument-adjunct asymmetry in *wh*-questions in Kuching Malay in the context of a typological comparison with Chinese and Japanese as well as regional languages, such as Singaporean Educated Malay (SEM), Standard Indonesian (SI) and Urban Jambi Malay (UJM).

It has been shown in Japanese that the nominal adjunct *wh*-words *doko* ‘where’ and *itu* ‘when’ pattern together with argument *wh*-words *dare* ‘who’ and *nani* ‘what’. In contrast to nominal *wh*-words, adverbial *wh*-words *naze* ‘why’ and *doo* ‘how’ (i) cannot remain in a complex NP island, (ii) cannot generally be used in conjunction with the universal quantifier *-mo*, and (iii) cannot be reduplicated (Nishigauchi, 1991). Similarly, in Chinese, it has been shown that the nominal adjunct *wh*-phrases *zai nali* ‘where’ and *sheme shihou* ‘when’ pattern together with the argument *wh*-phrases *shei* ‘who’ and *sheme* ‘what’. These nominal *wh*-words are exempt from the *wh*-island constraint, whereas the adverbial *wh*-forms *weisheme* ‘why’ and *zeme* ‘how’ are not (Huang, 1982). In SEM, the same distinction lies between the nominal *wh*-words *siapa* ‘who’, *apa* ‘what’, *bila* ‘when’, *di mana* ‘where’ and the adverbial *wh*-words *kenapa* ‘why’ and *bagaimana* ‘how’. The former group can equally stay in-situ or move, whereas the latter group must move (Aman, 1999). We find an identical situation in UJM, where the division also lies between the nominal *wh*-words *siapo* ‘who’, *apo* ‘what’, *kapan* ‘when’, and *di mano* ‘where’ and the adverbial *wh*-words *ngapo* ‘why’ and *kek mano* or *cak mano* ‘how’.<sup>1</sup>

However, in SI, the argument *wh*-words *apa* ‘what’ and *siapa* ‘who’ do not pattern together with the nominal adjunct *wh*-words *bila* ‘when’ and *di mana* ‘where’, as found in the previously discussed languages. *Apa* ‘what’ and *siapa* ‘who’ can remain in-situ, as well as move. In comparison, movement is obligatory for all adjunct *wh*-words *bila* ‘when’, *di mana* ‘where’, *bagaimana* ‘how’ and *mengapa* ‘why’ (Sneddon, 1996).

Kuching Malay is worth a closer review for two reasons: first, it exhibits a behavior in *wh*-argument-adjunct asymmetry that is different from that of Japanese, Chinese, SEM and UJM (nominal vs. adverbial distinction). Second, it behaves like SI in that there is a partition between the argument *wh*-words (eg. *siapa* ‘who’, *apa* ‘what’ and the adjunct *wh*-words *bila* ‘when’, *sine* ‘where’ *kenaq* ‘why’ and *chamne* ‘how’. The former group can optionally stay in-situ or move, whereas the latter group requires movement. The data are given below in (1) and (2).

Argument *wh*-words can stay in-situ in KM, as shown in (1).

- (1) a. Dilot rasa [Dayang makan **apa**]?  
Dilot feel Dayang eat what  
‘What does Dilot think Dayang ate?’  
b. Dilot rasa [Dayang suka **siapa**]?  
Dilot feel Dayang like who  
‘Who does Dilot think that Dayang likes?’

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<sup>1</sup> The data in Urban Jambi Malay was gathered from a native speaker, Yanti.

Conversely, adjunct wh-words cannot remain in-situ in KM, as shown in (2).

- (2) a. \*Anwar paloq Zarina **kEnaq?**  
 Anwar hit Zarina why  
 ‘Why did Anwar hit Zarina?’
- b. \*Anwar paloq Zarina **chamne?**  
 Anwar hit Zarina how  
 ‘How did Anwar hit Zarina?’
- c. \*Anwar mEliq baju baru **sine?**  
 Anwar buy shirt new where  
 ‘Where did Anwar buy a new shirt?’
- d. \*Anwar mEliq baju baru **bila?**  
 Anwar buy shirt new when  
 ‘When did Anwar buy a new shirt?’

The description above is summarized in the chart (3) below:

(3)

	Who	What	Where	When	Why	How
Japanese	○	○	○	○	●	●
Chinese	○	○	○	○	●	●
Singaporean Educated Malay	○	○	○	○	●	●
Urban Jambi Malay	○	○	○	○	●	●
Standard Indonesian	○	○	●	●	●	●
Kuching Malay	○	○	●	●	●	●

Thus, it is clear that current theories of argument-adjunct asymmetry in Chinese and Japanese are not necessarily characteristic of Malay/Indonesian dialects. Since they do not extend to SI and KM, further inspection of *wh*-argument-adjunct asymmetry in different dialects is merited.

## References

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