

Abstract

Typology of Malay Contact Varieties: A Preliminary Study

Historical language contact between Malay speakers and speakers of other languages has given rise to contact varieties of Malay, both within the Indonesian archipelago and outside. These varieties can be classified into four types of contact varieties: (1) languages which have arisen in trade centers of eastern Indonesia which are spoken natively by the local population (Ambon Malay, Manado Malay, Kupang Malay, etc.), (2) languages used in trade centers of eastern Indonesia which have not acquired large numbers of native speakers (although some may be currently in the process of doing so) (Makasar Malay, the Malay of Indonesian Papua, etc.), (3) pidgin languages which have arisen in the traditional Malay homeland for communication with non-Malay groups (one example is the variety known as *Bahasa Melayu Pasar* in peninsular Malaysia), and (4) languages which have arisen in communities of Malay speakers (or communities using Malay as a lingua franca) transplanted outside of the Malay world (Sri Lanka Malay, Nonthaburi Malay, Melayoe Sini, etc.).

Each of these Malay contact varieties shares certain features due to their origins in the varieties of Malay which have been used as lingua francas for centuries. These varieties are all based on typologically similar varieties of colloquial, or “low”, Malay, and similar varieties are still used throughout the area traditionally considered the Malay heartland (Borneo, Sumatra, the Malay peninsula, and Jakarta).

In addition, each of the contact varieties of Malay has features which are unique to a single variety or group of varieties, and which have arisen through the contact between Malay and the substrate and colonial or majority languages in each area.

This study presents a summary of the typological features which are found in Malay contact varieties, both those which are shared by these varieties and those which are found in individual varieties. The historical sources of these features and their implications for a better understanding of the spread of the Malay language are discussed.