

Nasal substitution in non-standard Malay dialects

Sharifah Raihan Syed Jaafar

Lancaster University

It has widely been observed (e.g. Hassan, 1974; Omar, 1986; Ahmad, 2005; Teoh, 1994 and many others) that voiceless obstruents following nasal segments at prefix-root junctures are disfavoured in Malay compared to voiced obstruents. The earlier therefore have to undergo a repair strategy called nasal substitution. The nasal segment in the prefix assimilates to the voiceless obstruent while the voiceless obstruent is deleted for example, /məŋ+pilih/ → [mə-milih] ‘to choose’. Contrast to voiceless obstruent, voiced obstruent remains undeleted. Only the nasal segment that precedes the voiced obstruent has to assimilate to the place of articulation of the voiced obstruent, as in /məŋ+basuh/ → [məm-basuh] ‘to wash’.

In this study, those phonological requirements imposed on the clusters will be put forward to non-standard Malay dialects by focusing on three selected dialects i.e. Perak, Kelantan and Negeri Sembilan. These non-standard dialects of Malay present some differences in treating the clusters. In Perak for example, as well as voiceless obstruent, voiced obstruent following a nasal segment is disfavoured in the dialect, too. The clusters thus undergo nasal substitution as shown in the words like /ŋ-taŋkap/ → [n-aŋkap] ‘to catch’ and /mŋ+bagi/ → [m-magi] ‘to give’ (Ahmad, 1991). This poses a question on how this phonological process can be resolved. Can *NÇ constraint which is regularly used to eliminate nasal and voiceless obstruent sequences be used to account for the nasal and voiced obstruent sequences as well? In this OT analysis, I will show that *NÇ has limited role in explaining such process occurs in Malay dialects. To deal with this, IDENT[PHAREXP] (Trigo, 1991. Steriade, 1995 and Pater, 2001) is seen as more appropriate constraint to account for both voiced and voiceless obstruents nasal substitution in those non-standard Malay dialects.