

Abstract

The lexical sources of Sri Lanka Malay revisited

Cihangir Okuyan, Christine Wingrove and Scott Paauw
(University of Rochester)

An earlier study (Paauw 2004) examined the lexical sources of Sri Lanka Malay, and found the primary source of lexical items in the language to originate in a variety known as Java Malay. Other languages, including Tamil, Sinhala, English, Dutch, Portuguese, Arabic and Urdu, accounted for less than 10% of the total vocabulary.

That study was based upon three small corpora available at the time, and the small size of the resulting wordlist gave rise to certain difficulties in interpretation. In addition, our understanding of the Sri Lanka Malay language has grown considerably since that time, largely through the work of Nordhoff, and in particular Nordhoff 2009, as well as the work of Slomanson. Furthermore, our understanding of Malay varieties and the classification of Malay varieties has also grown in the intervening years (due to, among other works, Paauw 2008 and Gil 2010).

The study presented here is the result of a project conducted at the University of Rochester under a grant from the National Science Foundation of the United States. Since 2011, a team of researchers has worked on an extended corpus of Sri Lanka Malay, and produced the most definitive wordlist to date, and has analyzed this data to ascertain the lexical origins of the language. Our improved knowledge of Malay varieties has also allowed us to pinpoint the origin of lexical items from the Malay world with greater accuracy and the conclusions of Paauw 2004 have been revisited. In this study, the lexical sources of Sri Lanka Malay are presented with greater detail, and the ultimate sources in the Malay world are reinterpreted.

Gil, D. 2010. Malay/Indonesian dialect geography and the sources of Sri Lankan Malay. Presentation at The Workshop on Sri Lanka Malay, November 2010.

Nordhoff, S. 2009. A Grammar of Upcountry Sri Lanka Malay. Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Amsterdam.

Paauw, S. 2004. A Historical Analysis of the Lexicon of Sri Lanka Malay. M.A. Thesis, York University.

_____ 2008. The Malay Contact Varieties of Eastern Indonesia: A Typological Comparison. Ph. D. Dissertation, The State University of New York at Buffalo.