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A comparative study between the Perlis and the Kelantan dialect in Malaysia at the phonetic level

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Abstract

Language and dialect persist as separate concepts imply that linguists can make tidy distinctions for speech varieties worldwide. The study aims to compare Perlis and Kelantan dialects in Phonological level, it compares the differences and similarities between both dialects. The study found that the Perlis and Kelantan dialects display unique phonetic characteristics shaped by distinct cultural and historical influences. Their differences in vowel and consonant perception reflect the rich linguistic diversity of Malaysia. The differences, rather than hindering communication, enrich the cultural fabric of the nation and add depth to the study of Malaysian linguistics. This comparative study showed that although they have some similarities, the Perlis and Kelantan dialects are distinct in their phonetic systems, with each contributing to Malaysia's rich linguistic diversity. Understanding these differences can help promote stronger and more accurate.

Keywords: *Dialect, Language, Phonology, Perlis dialect, Kelantan dialect.*

Introduction

The dialects found in Peninsular Malaysia are grouped into five main regions, namely the southwestern group consisting of the Kedah, Perlis and Penang groups covering northern Perak, while the northeastern group is represented by the Kelantan dialect followed by the eastern group comprising Terengganu, in addition to the southern group covering the dialects Spoken in Johor, Melaka, Pahang, Selangor, South Perak and finally the group that

represents the Negeri Sembilan dialect. (Rusidah, Abdul Wahab, 2010)

A language or dialect differs from another language or dialect because of the influence of nature and different environments. According to Rusidah (2010: 1), this difference can be seen through the sound system and lexicon.

Mario Pei defines a dialect as a variation of a particular language spoken by a group of speakers in a linguistic community. Dialects have certain forms that are spoken in certain regions and differ from the standard form of the language, whether in terms of pronunciation, grammar, or use of certain words. The difference is not so great that it can be considered another language. (Mario Pei, Androw 1998). It can be said that a group of people speak a dialect in a region for the purpose of communicating in their daily lives.

The problem of this study is to find out the similarities and differences between the Perlis and the Kelantan dialect in Malaysia at the phonetic level. There we learned the difference between the two dialects (Kelantan and Perlis) at the phonetic level from the mother tongue. But when we talk to Kelantanese and Perlis, there is a lot of difference.

Research aims to discovering the similarity and differences between the Perlis and Kelantan dialect in Malaysia at the phonetic level.

Definition of Dialect

A dialect is a variety of the English language associated with a particular region and/or social class. To state the obvious, speakers from different geographical regions speak English differently: hence we refer to 'Geordie' (Newcastle English), 'New York English' or 'Cornish English'.

In addition to geographical diversity, the social background of the speaker will also affect the variety of English spoken by that person: two children may grow up in the same Yorkshire village, but if one was born into a wealthy family and attended an expensive private school, even if the other was born into a less wealthy family He attended a local public school, and they both likely spoke a variety of English. It is this combination of regional and social differences that I refer to collectively as "dialect". (Hudson, 1996).

Distinctions Between Language and Dialect

"The very fact that 'language' and 'dialect' persist as separate concepts implies that linguists can make tidy distinctions for speech varieties worldwide. But in fact, there is no objective difference between the two: Any attempt you make to impose that kind of order on reality falls apart in the face of real evidence...English tempts one with a tidy dialect-language distinction based on 'intelligibility': If you can understand it without training, it's a dialect of your own language; if you can't, it's a different language". (Hudson, 1990: 116)

But because of [the] quirks of its history, English happens to lack close relatives, and the intelligibility standard does not apply consistently beyond it...In popular usage, a language is written in addition to being spoken, while a dialect is just spoken. But in the scientific sense, the world is buzzing with a cacophony of qualitatively equal 'dialects,' often shading into one another like colours (and often mixing, too), all demonstrating how magnificently complicated human speech can be. If either [of] the terms 'language' or 'dialect' [has] any objective use, the best anyone can do is to say that there is no such thing as a 'language': Dialects are all there is," (McWhorter, 2016).

Distinctions Between Dialect and Accent

An accent is differed from dialects. An accent is a person's distinctive pronunciation. A dialect is a much broader notion: it refers to the distinctive vocabulary and grammar of someone's use

of language. If you say *eether* and I say *iyther*, that's accent. We use the same word but pronounce it differently. But if you say *I've got a new dustbin* and I say *I've gotten a new garbage can*, that's dialect. We are using different word and sentence patterns to talk about the same thing," (Crystal and Crystal, 2014).

Prominence of Dialects

"It is sometimes thought that only a few people speak regional dialects. Many restrict the term to rural forms of speech—as when they say that 'dialects are dying out these days.' But dialects are not dying out. Country dialects are not as widespread as they once were, indeed, but urban dialects are now on the increase, as cities grow and large numbers of immigrants take up residence...Some people think of dialects as sub-standard varieties of a language, spoken only by low-status groups—illustrated by such comments as 'He speaks correct English, without a trace of dialect.'

Comments of this kind fail to recognize that standard English is as much a dialect as any other variety—though a dialect of a rather special kind because it is one to which society has given extra prestige. Everyone speaks a dialect—whether urban or rural, standard or non-standard, upper class or lower class," (Crystal, 2006).

Regional and Social Dialects

The classic example of a dialect is the *regional* dialect: the distinct form of a language spoken in a certain geographical area. For example, we might speak of Ozark dialects or Appalachian dialects, on the grounds that inhabitants of these regions have certain distinct linguistic features that differentiate them from speakers of other forms of English. We can also speak of a social dialect: the distinct form of a language spoken by members of a specific socioeconomic class, such as the working-class dialects in England. (Akmajian 2001)

Prestige Dialects

In the earlier history of New York City, New England influence and New England immigration preceded the influx of Europeans. The prestige dialect which is reflected in the speech of cultivated Atlas informants shows heavy borrowings from eastern New England. There has been a long-standing tendency for New Yorkers to borrow prestige dialects from other regions, rather than develop a prestige dialect of their own. In the current situation, we see that the New England influence has retreated, and in its place, a new prestige dialect has been borrowed from northern and midwestern speech patterns. We have seen that for most of our informants, the effort to escape identification as a New Yorker by one's own speech provides a motivating force for phonological shifts and changes,. (Labov, 2006)

Dialect in Writing

Do not attempt to use dialect [when writing] unless you are a devoted student of the tongue you hope to reproduce. If you use dialect, be consistent...The best dialect writers, by and large, are economical [with] their talents, they use the minimum, not the maximum, of deviation from the norm, thus sparing the reader as well as convincing him. (Strunk, Jr. and White, 1979).

Dialect concept in Arabic Language

Arab scholars did not use the word لهجة "Lahjah" (dialect) and its derivatives as frequently in their writings as they used the word لغة "Lughah" language. Advanced linguists used to express what we

now call (dialect) with the word (language) sometimes, لحن (Linguistic error/) sometimes, and (tongue) sometimes.

The word dialect comes from the Ancient Greek *dialektos* “discourse, language, dialect,” which is derived from *dialogistic* “to discourse, talk.” A dialect is chiefly distinguished from other dialects of the same language by features of linguistic structure—i.e., grammar (specifically morphology and syntax) and vocabulary. While in Greece there are slight differences in the language used by its residents, but to an extent that does not make them feel like they have a different language. (Yqout, Mamoud, 1993)

Baharom (2010: 348) defines a dialect as a form of language used in a region or by a social class that differs from the standard language, dialect, country name, etc.

Nik Safiya Karim defines dialect as a difference in a language that is differentiated according to its users. Each dialect has its own characteristics that distinguish it from other dialects.

While J.K. It believes that a dialect is an inferior form of language, low-status and rural in nature, and on average associated with the agricultural community, the working class, or other low-status groups. He also linked dialects to forms of language spoken by people who do not have a written form. (Karim, Nik Safiah, 1985)

Phonological concept

A closely related field of phonetics and phonology is the study of sound. Abdullah Hassan defines phonology as the study of language elements and sound forms while he studies the phonology of language. According to him, there are three ways used to describe and define the sound of a language, which are through pronunciation (phonation), hearing (auditory) and sound characteristics (acoustic). (Lodge, Ken, 2009)

Through his book Adrian (2001) translates phonology as a subfield of linguistics that studies the systematic structure of sounds and their origin in human language. The term phonology is translated in two ways, namely the phonology of language and the formulas that control the propagation of those sounds and phonology which refers to the theoretical part of human language in general related to the universal nature of natural language sound systems.

Phonology is a branch of linguistics that studies the sound system as well as the arrangement of sounds in forming syllables and words. In short, it can be said that phonology is one of the most important aspects of language in the study of specific sounds. (Sultan 2019)

Perlis dialect

Perlis is the smallest state in Malaysia, with a dialect that has been historically influenced by the neighboring Thai language. It exhibits the Perlis dialect, also referred to as the Kedah-Perlis dialect or the northern dialect. Some phonetic characteristics that distinguish it from Standard Malay and other regional dialects.

Phonetically, the Perlis dialect shows some distinctive characteristics. For example, the /r/ sound in Standard Malay is often pronounced with a French-style "r" sound. The /l/ sound is also distinct, pronounced as [n] at the end of words. Furthermore, the /ə/ sound (schwa) in Standard Malay is often pronounced as [ɛ] or [e], resulting in different pronunciations for many words.

In terms of vowels, the Perlis dialect has a repertoire like Standard Malay, but with a distinct percept. For example, the final /-a/ in Standard Malay is pronounced as [-] in the Perlis dialect. /-i/ and /-u/ are often realized in Standard Malay as [-] and [-] respectively. (Makhtar, 2021)

Kelantan dialect

The Kelantan dialect, also known as Kelantan Pattani or Loghat Kelantan, is spoken in the northeastern state of Kelantan. This dialect is known for its unique phonetic and phonological characteristics that distinguish it from standard Malay and other dialects.

The /r/ sound is usually chanted in the Kelantan dialect, in contrast to the guttural "r" in the Perlis dialect. Kelantans also tend to use a glottal stop to replace final consonants, especially when they are at the end of a word.

The vowel system in the Kelantan dialect is complex with a variety of tonal variations. For example, /-a/ in Standard Malay is pronounced as [-] in a manner similar to the Perlis dialect but can also be pronounced as [-] depending on the preceding consonant. The final consonants /-i/ and /-u/ are usually pronounced as [-e] and [-o] respectively, which differs greatly from the Perlis dialect. (Yusuff, Nur Azuki and Khuzaiton Zakaria, 2018).

Audio comparison

When comparing the dialects of Perlis and Kelantan, several key differences and similarities emerge. Both dialects share similar treatment of the final /-a/ in Standard Malay, pronouncing it as [-]. However, they differ in their realization of final /-i/ and /-u/.

The Perlis dialect tends to preserve the high vowel quality of these sounds, albeit in a slightly lower form such as [-ɪ] and [-]. In contrast, the Kelantan dialect greatly reduces these vowels to [-e] and [-o].

Dealing with consonants also reveals key differences. The Perlis dialect pronunciation of the ring /r/ sound and the replacement of /l/ with [n] at the end of words is not observed in the Kelantan dialect. On the other hand, Kelantan dialect's use of the pitched stop [ʔ] to replace final consonants is a unique feature not seen in the Perlis dialect.

Interestingly, both languages display a phenomenon known as vowel harmony, where the vowels in one word influence the pronunciation of other vowels, although the rules and effects are different in each dialect. In Perlis dialect. Vowel harmony often causes vowels to be raised or lowered to match adjacent vowels, whereas in the Kelantan dialect, it can even affect the rounding of vowels.

Audio effect on communication

These phonetic differences can greatly affect communication between dialects. For example, the Kelantan pronunciation of /-i/, /-u/ [-e] and [-o] can lead to misunderstandings with speakers of the Perlis dialect, who may expect [-] and [-] respectively. Likewise, Perlis's pronunciation of /r/ and /l/ can confuse Kelantan listeners, who are accustomed to the normal /r/ and /l/.

However, due to Malaysia's diverse linguistic landscape, most Malaysians are adept at code-switching, or modifying their speech based on the listener's accent. This allows for effective communication despite these vocal differences.

Perlis and Clinton accent background

The smallest state in Malaysia is located near the border of Thailand and is Perlis. The Perlis dialect is mostly influenced by the Thai language due to its proximity. It is known for its unique phonetic characteristics that distinguish it from other dialects in the country.

Kelantan, located on the east coast of Malaysia, has its own distinct dialect, influenced by the local Malay language. Known for its conservative and traditional values, the Kelantan dialect has several phonetic characteristics that distinguish it from neighboring dialects.

Phonological features between the Kelantan dialect and Perlis

1. Vowels:

The Perlis dialect displays vowel sounds that differ from standard Malay. For example, the vowel /e/ in Standard Malay is often pronounced as /i/ in the Perlis dialect, leading to variations such as "kelate" (Klanten) becoming "kilati" in Perlis. On the other hand, the Kelantan dialect retains the /e/ sound, maintaining its distinction from Burlis and other dialects.

2. Consonants:

In the Perlis dialect, the consonant /r/ is often pronounced as an inflected flap /ɾ/, while in Standard Malay, it is pronounced as an alveolar trill /r/. This difference can be seen in words like "rumah" (house), where it is pronounced as "ɾumah" in the Perlis dialect. In contrast, the Kelantan dialect maintains the standard Malaysian pronunciation of /r/.

3. Tone:

Both Perlis and Kelantan dialects display unique tonal patterns. The Perlis dialect is known for its rising intonation, where the pitch increases during pronunciation, while the Kelantan dialect displays a falling intonation, with the pitch falling throughout the word. These tonal differences contribute to the melodic quality of the dialects, making them distinct from standard Malay.

The similarity between the Kelantan and Perlis dialect on the phonetic level.

No.	Kelantan dialect	Berlis dialect	Malay language	Arabic language
1.	ɾumoh	ɾumah	rumah	بيت Bait
2.	Nasi	Nasi	Nasi	أرز 'Aruz
3.	Lima	Lima	Lima	خمسة Khamsah
4.	Nama	Nama	Nama	اسم Ism
5.	Kata	Kata	Kata	قال Qala
6.	Kaya	Kaya	Kaya	غني Ghaniy
7.	Satu	Satu	Satu	واحد Wahid

The word is the difference between the Kelantan and Perlis dialect

No.	Kelantan dialect	Berlis dialect	Malay language	Arabic language
1.	Air	Ayaq	Air	ماء Maa'

2.	Ike	Ikan	Ikan	سمك Samak
3.	Aye	Ayam	Ayam	دجاجة Dajajah
4.	Duo	Dua	Dua	اثنان Ithnan
5.	Takdok	Takdak	Tiada	لا يوجد La Yujad
6.	Make	Makan	akan	أكل 'Akala
7.	Kena	Kenai	Kenal	عرف 'Arafa

Conclusion

The Perlis and Kelantan dialects, while both varieties of Malay, display unique phonetic characteristics shaped by distinct cultural and historical influences. Their differences in vowel and consonant perception reflect the rich linguistic diversity of Malaysia.

Despite these phonetic differences, communication across these dialects remains strong due to the linguistic flexibility of the Malays. These differences, rather than hindering communication, enrich the cultural fabric of the nation and add depth to the study of Malaysian linguistics.

Future studies could dissect these differences at morphological and syntactic levels or explore the sociolinguistic implications of these dialects. As Malaysia continues to develop, so will its dialects, offering endless opportunities for linguistic exploration and understanding.

This comparative study showed that although they have some similarities, the Perlis and Kelantan dialects are distinct in their phonetic systems, with each contributing to Malaysia's rich linguistic diversity. Understanding these differences can help promote stronger and more accurate intercultural communication within the country, further highlighting the importance of dialect studies in preserving and understanding Malaysia's cultural identity.

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