

SUSTAINING COASTAL TERENGGANU MALAY DIALECT: AN ANALYSIS ON THE LINGUISTIC FEATURES

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Abstract: This study involved linguistic documentation of Terengganu Malay dialect. It is undertaken with the aim of documenting the dialect of the people of Terengganu in order to provide a more accurate and systematic linguistic data of the dialect and consequently sustain it. Besides, the documentation of the linguistic data on the coastal Terengganu Malay Dialect is crucial to comprehend the dialect precisely and its meaning to avoid misunderstandings as well as being the reference for researchers, academicians, students, tourists and the local community. This research focused primarily on linguistic documentation involving phonology and lexis of the dialect. The linguistic documentation and analysis of the dialect is based on qualitative method employing 200 Swadesh word list of the target dialect as well as questionnaires and interview questions to establish the various linguistic features involved in the research. The documentation will help to sustain the Terengganu Malay identity and avoid the depreciating of the local dialect. The findings yielded various interesting linguistic features that distinguished its uniqueness from other dialects in Malaysia. It is hoped that the findings from the study will initiate the interest of researchers to expand the research on Terengganu Malay dialect in future.

KEYWORDS: Dialect, coastal, linguistic features, documentation, phonology

Introduction

Dialect is used by a particular group of speakers and it can be distinguished by its vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation. Adi Yasran Abdul Aziz (2011) mentioned that dialect is important in the communication system of a community. This was supported by Zainal Abiddin Masleh & Mohd Sharifudin Yusop (2010) who stated that each community or society has their own dialect to strengthen the identity of their ethnicity.

Terengganu Malay Dialect is spoken by speakers of Malay in the north eastern part of Peninsular Malaysia i.e. the state of Terengganu. According to Nawī Ismail (1995), the state has the total size of 5002 square miles, with the length of 140 miles stretching from north to south and the width of 55 miles stretching from east to west. It is divided into seven districts namely Kuala Terengganu, Hulu Terengganu, Marang, Dungun, Kemaman, Setiu and Besut. Due to its size and geographical factor, the state

has many sub-dialects (Asmah Hj Omar, 1988). Some of the major ones include the sub-dialects of Kuala Terengganu, Ulu Terengganu, Setiu and Besut and these sub-dialects demonstrate some noticeable variations across various linguistic levels e.g. phonology, lexical etc.

The differences between Terengganu Malay Dialect and Standard Malay Dialect can be observed at all linguistic levels. The most observed one is the neutralization of nasal in word final position where it is neutralized as velar nasal /N/. According to Abdul Hamid Mahmood (1990), Terengganu Malay Dialect is very unique and it differs from Standard Malay Dialect (SMD) in terms of phonology, syntax, morphology and lexis. This is supported by other researchers of the dialect including Collins J T (1983), Asmah Hj Omar (1985), Ismail Hussein (1973), Abdullah Junus (1977) and Naseh Hassan (1981). Further, Hamid Mahmood stated that the Terengganu Malay Dialect is well

known not only amongst the Terengganu people but also amongst the people in Kelantan and Pahang who reside at the border of Terengganu state.

The uniqueness of Terengganu Malay Dialect was particularly noted by Munsyi Abdullah when he visited Terengganu in 1883 by stating its phonological and lexical differences from the Malay dialect spoken by him e.g. '*jangan*' for '*jangan*', '*bulan*' for '*bulan*'. C.C. Brown (1935) noted that the Ulu Terengganu dialect is different from the coastal areas specifically its phonological level but Abdullah (1977) mentioned that the language differences amongst villages are very minimal and does not reveal vast differences. In the district of Kuala Terengganu, the dialect spoken by the people is known as the standard Terengganu dialect and the differences amongst the subarea can be detected (Asmah Hj Omar, 1988). Nevertheless, the dialect spoken by the people in the district of Besut and Northern Setiu clearly revealed the differences of the dialect spoken by the people in other parts of Terengganu namely in Kuala Terengganu, Marang, Dungun, Kemaman and Southern Setiu (Zalina Mohd. Zalzali, 2003).

Since language of the people is invaluable and irreplaceable part of our national heritage, it will be a great loss to our nation if it is not documented. In response to this scenario, it is critical that adequate records and documentation of the linguistic features of the coastal areas of Terengganu dialect is made so as to preserve them from permanent loss. It is undertaken with the aim of documenting various linguistic features of the dialect of the people of Terengganu across various linguistic levels mainly focusing on the phonology and lexicology. The documentation of the linguistic data on the coastal Terengganu Malay Dialect is crucial to comprehend the dialect precisely and its meaning to avoid misunderstandings as well as being the reference for researchers, academicians, students, tourists and the local community. The documentation will help to preserve the Terengganu Malay identity and avoid the depreciating of the local dialect.

Methodology

This study focuses on the various aspects of linguistic features of the community in the coastal areas of Terengganu. The linguistic documentation and analysis of the language is based on qualitative method employing 200 Swadesh word list of the target dialect as well as questionnaires and interview questions to establish the various linguistic features involved in the research. Three sets of questionnaires and interview questions were prepared for three different targeted groups which involved the respondents from the government sector, community of the village and community of the coffee shops in the coastal areas. The speech data were recorded and then transcribed phonetically to establish the phonemic inventory of each of the languages as well as establishing the phonological system of the languages under investigation. In addition, the folk narratives of the target groups were recorded and for this purpose, assistants from each of the target groups were employed as interpreters. They acted as kind of an insider to the community thereby ensuring better communication between the researcher and the target community.

Results and Discussion

The differences between Terengganu Malay Dialect and Standard Malay Dialect can be observed at all linguistic levels namely phonology, syntax, morphology and lexis. At phonological level particularly in the area of pronunciation, there are many notable linguistic features that exist in Terengganu Malay Dialect. The most observed one is the neutralization of all nasals to velar nasal especially the bilabial 'm' and dental 'n' as shown in the examples below:

makan	–	makang
malam	–	malang
akaun	–	akaung
aliran	–	alirang
badan	–	badang

Apparently many scholars conclude that word final nasals undergo the most changes in the Terengganu Malay dialect.

Further, Terengganu and Kelantan also share the same linguistic features in certain words. For example, words ending with 's' in the standard Malay are parallel to words ending with 'h' in both dialects. /s/ at the end of syllables changes to /h/. The words are as below:

putus	–	putuh
habis	–	abih
kalis	–	kalih
jenis	–	jenih
ratus	–	ratuh

Another common features of the dialect is the changing of voiceless stops /p/ to glottal stop, which is a type of consonantal sound used in many spoken languages. For example in English, the feature is represented by the hyphen in *uh-oh!* In Terengganu dialect, the /p/ sound is replaced with the /k/ sound as in the examples below:

acap	–	acak
cakap	–	cakak
cukup	–	cukuk
kejap	–	kejak
kerap	–	kerek

Another feature of Terengganu Malay Dialect is the phonological process of vocal replacing. Words ending with vocal /a/ is replaced with the vocal /e/. It is common in other dialects in the districts of Terengganu.

ada	–	ade
baca	–	bace
bangsa	–	bangse
biasa	–	bese

Compressing of syllables in words with three syllables which are left with only two syllables occurred in the dialect of the coastal areas in Terengganu. In some words, the silence of the vocal sound occurred and in some other words the combination of the first and the second syllable appeared.

belaka	–	blake
bahasa	–	base
hospital	–	spita
kereta	–	kete
kerusi	–	kusi

There are words in the Terengganu dialect that do not exist in the *bahasa Melayu* (Malay language) but having the same meanings. These words are very well known amongst the native speakers of the dialect, for example:

duit	–	pitih
sementara	–	tekoh-tekoh
selalu	–	sokmo
habis/siap	–	bereh
keluar	–	tubit
tidak mahu	–	tok se

The coastal area people are used with the pronunciation of words /ok/ at the end of certain words ending with 'a' and 'ak' such as the words listed below. The spelling of the words also changed in the second syllable to 'ok':

juga	–	jugok
awak	–	awok
bawa	–	bawok
buka	–	bukok
banyak	–	banyok

Compressing of words with two syllables also occur in the coastal area of Terengganu dialect which forces the spelling of the words changed totally. The words are left with only one syllable as listed in examples below:

darjah	–	joh
satu	–	se
bapa	–	pok
pergi	–	gi
duduk	–	dok

Another distinguished feature detected is the pronunciation and the spelling of words in the first syllable starting with 'o' does not sound the same as it is changed to 'u' as shown in the words below:

motor	–	muto
boleh	–	buleh
tolong	–	tulung
sotong	–	sutong

Diphthongs in the Terengganu dialect are dropped and to get the hang of it, you must speak as if you have a big toffee in your mouth. The diphthong 'au' is replaced with vocal 'a'.

gurau – gura
 pulau – pula
 kalau – kala

Words starting with ‘kh’ do not take the same pronunciation as it should be and it is simplified as ‘ka’:

khabar – kabo

Another obvious phonological level of linguistic features in Terengganu dialect is the soundless of the vocal ‘e’ in words as chosen below:

seribu – sribu
 sekolah – skoloh
 sedikit – sikik

Another notable feature of Terengganu Malay Dialect is the phonological process of consonant lengthening, which provides an interesting and revealing data on the dialect. For example, a doubled consonant in a word significantly affects pronunciation. In other dialects, the effect of the doubled consonant is to shorten the preceding vowel and lengthen the consonant itself. In Terengganu dialect, words are distinguished between lengthened initial consonant which makes the difference in pronunciation of the words as shown below:

bahasa – bbase
 jual – jjua
 jumpa – jjupa

As for words ending with ‘r’, there is a loss-phenomenon in the final position word as listed below:

sabar – saba
 lapar – lapa

Conclusion

In conclusion, Terengganu Malay Dialect is obviously seen as a dialect with various linguistic features that distinguished its uniqueness from other dialects in Malaysia. The linguistic features of the dialect spoken by the people in the coastal areas of Terengganu is clearly identified at its phonological and lexicological levels. It involved various features

such as consonant lengthening, neutralization of all nasals to velar nasal, shortening of syllables, loss phenomenon of diphthongs and final position of words, changing of voiceless stops to glottal stop, soundless of the vocal ‘e’ and compressing of words with two syllables. Overall, the data from this study has its own interest which could supplement existing knowledge and it is hoped that the findings from the study will initiate the interest of researchers to expand the research on Terengganu Malay dialect in future.

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