

The Kedah Malay Dialects Spoken Among Thai Speakers in Langkawi and Satun: A Preliminary Study

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Historically Kedah and Southern Thai region has been in each kingdom alternately. In the 19th century, the border of each kingdom has become clearer politically. Nevertheless, the use of the Malay dialect has never been restricted based on the region. The southern Thai people speak two types of Malay dialect, namely Pattani Malay and Kedah Malay. It is evident that the Pattani Malay is widely spoken by the eastern region people bordered with Kelantan whereas the Kedah dialect is spoken by the western region people bordered with Perlis and Kedah. The use of Kedah dialect has become more prominent among Thais that migrate to Langkawi and among regular Thai commuters that doing businesses in Langkawi. The Thais that resided in Ayer Hangat and Ulu Melaka in Langkawi use Kedah dialect with a Thai accent. Apart from the language, their food, outfits and artefacts display the Thais culture significantly. Likewise, people in Satun are using the Kedah dialect extensively especially among the old generations. The research carried in Che Bilang, Tammalang and Bankhuan show an interesting findings. People in Che Bilang maintain the Kedah dialect, whereas in Tammalang, a mixture of Kedah and Kuala Perlis dialect are detected. More interestingly, Bankhuan, an interior village maintain the Kedah dialect but with a strong Thai accent. The variants of Kedah dialect is clearly indicated in their pronunciation. Phonologically - the tones (high-low, low-high, low – [↘↗, ajiá, aja^p]), aspirated phonemes [k_a^w], the monosyllabic words (lepat changed to pat), are distinctively found in this dialect. Apparently, the non linguistics factors such as topography and socio-cultural have become the main contributing factors to the dialects. This study examines the linguistics and non-linguistics factors that formed an identity of Thai speaking Malay community in Langkawi and Satun adequately.