

Abstract for ISMIL 14

Unity in Diversity: Extreme Variation in Eastern Indonesian Malay Pronouns and Negators

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The Malay contact varieties of eastern Indonesia show remarkable uniformity in their grammars. All the varieties share similar phonology, word orders, preposition sets, morphology and aspect marking, to name just a few key features. However, there are two areas in which these varieties exhibit unusual diversity. These are the pronominal sets and the negators.

This study presents the diverse forms found in these two features in seven contact varieties of Malay spoken in eastern Indonesia and examines the origins of the forms and how they developed.

While varieties of Malay throughout the Malay world are known for their wealth of pronominal forms (and avoidance of certain forms), encoding various degrees of formality, the eastern Indonesian Malay contact varieties show far more diversity than other Malay varieties, a fact which is particularly notable given the many features that they share. The varieties of Malay, collectively known as Vehicular Malay, which gave rise to the eastern Indonesian varieties did not exhibit such diversity. As an example of the diversity in the eastern Indonesian varieties, the table below presents the second person (singular) informal pronoun in the seven varieties:

Manado Malay:	<i>ngana</i>
North Moluccan Malay:	<i>ngana</i>
Ambon Malay:	<i>ose/ale</i>
Banda Malay:	<i>pane</i>
Kupang Malay:	<i>lu</i>
Larantuka Malay:	<i>əNko</i> (N represents nasalization on the preceding vowel)
Papua Malay:	<i>ko</i>

Possible explanations for the development of such diversity are explored, with the most likely explanation being that the pronominal systems and negators serve as highly visible markers of group identity, and that distinctions in these forms is a desirable characteristic for speakers of these varieties, as they do not impede mutual intelligibility between varieties, while their frequency makes them stand out as markers of social identity.