

## **Malay Dialects in the Riverfront of Perak River: A Revisited**

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Dialect geography is a study of dialect variations with regard to their geographic distribution, as well as their distributions which may be affected by geographical factors such as a mountain range, river basin, forest belt, etc. The dissemination of these regional variations is subsequently displayed in the form of linguistic map, and each dialect is demarcated by a linguistic boundary known as an isogloss. Previous geographical dialect studies in Malaysia utilized a traditional manually drawn map in demarcating the isoglosses (Asmah 1985, 1993, 2008) that dissecting the Malay dialects spoken in Peninsular Malaysia. She has also written a brief description about the Perak dialect. She claims that Kedah dialect spreads in the north west of Perak, Pattani dialect stretches from the north and north eastern Perak and Selangor dialect in the southern part of Perak. She has also identified that Kuala Kangsar is a transition area of numerous dialects, while Parit is the area representing the original Perak dialect. This study tries to prove that the linguistic boundaries of the original Perak dialect are situated along the riverfront of the Perak river, and the maps illustrating dialect variations are produced by a Geographical Information System (GIS) analytical tool. Based on 48 villages along the riverfront, data on pronouns were collected. For instance, the word /saya/ 'I', /kamu/ 'you' and /mereka/ 'they' have many variants such as [sAjE], [kumE] [Awʔ/] and [t«mAn] for 'I', [hAN], [kamu] for 'you' and [dem«], [demE]. [demʔ], [depA] for 'they'. These variants represent Kedah Malay, Pattani Malay, Perak Malay and standard Malay. Obviously, the upper river which originates from Hulu Perak has all the three dialects, whereas Kuala Kangsar, in addition to these three, the Perak dialect is more dominant here. Interestingly, except for the north part and the south part of Perak Tengah, other villages retain their original Perak dialect, while variants in Perak Hilir is closely similar to Kuala Kangsar even though it is bordered by Perak Tengah. This study has successfully identified the exact linguistic boundaries of dialect distribution in Perak, and simultaneously discards the claim made by the previous dialectologists. Apparently, the geographical factors play a crucial role in determining the distribution of Malay dialects spoken in Perak.

**Keywords:** dialect, GIS, riverfront, dialect geography, linguistic boundaries