

## **MARKERS AND INDICATORS OF SABAH MALAY**

**JANEWONG KON LING, PhD**  
**Universiti Malaysia Sabah**  
[jane@ums.edu.my](mailto:jane@ums.edu.my)

### **ABSTRACT**

Malay language has always been an important language of interaction between multi-ethnic groups in Sabah. It has also become the home language and the first language to many Sabahans. With the broad sociolinguistic setting comprising of the multi-ethnic groups among the indigenous as well as immigrants, there emerges a new variety of Malay in Sabah with distinctive characteristics, called Sabah Malay. Due to the vast variations caused by the diverse speech communities with different socio-linguistic, socio-cultural and socio-economic background, Sabah Malay is often considered as a deviation from 'proper Malay'. This study uses the urban dialectology approach to investigate factors influencing the language variation whereby eight linguistic variations (Eight variables: (a), (ə), (e), (o), (u), (h), (k) (r) and (tS)) were examined, while taking into consideration, the social context (Four variables: Gender, Age, Ethnic Membership and Social Stratification) and the stylistic differentiation (Four variables: Word-List Style, Reading-Passage Style, Formal Style and Casual Style) as determiners of language variations. This study will be able to determine which linguistic variables are the markers and which are merely indicators of Sabah Malay.