

# MALAY DIALECTS IN THAILAND

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## ABSTRACT

This study is an attempt to present a general picture of the Malay dialects in Thailand. The data in this study were collected from 16 representative areas using questionnaires and direct interview in the field as well as from an unpublished M.A. thesis.

It was found that there are 9 different dialects of Malay in Thailand. Those 9 varieties form 4 major groups.

The phonological diversity of the Malay dialects in Thailand has been summarized and compared with that of Standard Malay and related dialects in Malaysia.

A new Malay dialect, called "Huataphan" has been discovered.

## 1.0 Introduction

This paper is largely based on my monograph "ภาษามลายูถิ่นในประเทศไทย" which was published in early 1988.

The intention of the paper is to provide a general picture of the Malay dialects in Thailand, and to give some details about their phonological diversity. Since the few publications available on the dialects of Malay in Thailand are studies of the dialect in isolation, the present study is intended to place the Malay dialects in Thailand and the Standard Malay language in relation to one another, not only in terms of their geographical distribution but also in terms of their phonological correspondences.

## 1.1 The Dialects of Malay in Thailand

The language spoken by most Thai Muslims in the provinces of Southern Thailand are known to the Thais by various names e.g. phaasaa jaawii (ภาษายาวี), phaasaa malaayuu (ภาษามลายู), phaasaa maalee (ภาษามาลาย), phaasaa khaeaek (ภาษาแขก), phaasaa isalaam (ภาษาอิสลาม) etc. But from my survey, I found that the most widely used names for the variety under discussion are phaasaa jaawii, phaasaa malaayuu, phaasaa naayuu and phaasaa khaeaek, respectively. The name "naayuu" (น่ายู) is said to be the variant form of the name "malaayuu" and the native speakers in the provinces of Pattani Yala and Narathiwat pronounce this particular term as [n:a:ju:]. Among these three terms the name phaasaa jaawii (ภาษายาวี) is more widely used to refer to the varieties spoken by Thai Muslims. According to my survey the name phaasaa khaeaek which is more often used by Thais is not accepted by native speakers as an appropriate name to refer to their language even though some of them do use it sometimes.

Linguistically speaking, the Malay dialects in Thailand are dialects of Standard Malay. But socially speaking, they are vernaculars of a sizable minority in Thailand. Since dialectal study of the Malay dialects in Malaysia has been done excellently by Dr. Asmah Haji Omar, it might be of interest to have this kind of study done in Thailand where various Malay dialects are used as the means of communication among the Thai Muslims.

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\*The author's interest in the subject of Malay Dialects came about eight years ago when she met Dr. Asmah Haji Omar from the University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, when she came to Thailand during her tenure as visiting professor at the then "South East Asian Language Center", Mahidol University. In other words, the present study was inspired by Dr. Asmah's work on the phonological diversity of Malay dialects in Malaysia. The data in this study were collected by the author from 16 representative areas and one unpublished M.A. thesis (Maneerat 1981).

1. ST variety ( Tambon Baankhuan, Amphur Mueng, Satun )
2. PT variety ( Amphur Mueng, Pattani )
3. NST variety ( Tambon Tha - ngiw, Amphur Mueng, Nakhonsrithammaraat )
4. ULS variety ( Urak Lawoi' language spoken in Adang Island, Amphur Mueng, Satun ).
5. ULP variety ( Urak Lawoi' language spoken in Rawai Beach, Amphur Mueng, Phuket )
6. HTP variety ( Tambon Huataphan, Amphur Thasala,

	Nakhornsri-thammaraat )
7. TS variety	( Tambon Thasak, Amphur Mueng, Nakhornsri- thammaraat )
8. CHL variety	( Tambon Che'bilang, Amphur Mueng, Satun )
9. TML variety	( Tambon Tammalang, Amphur Mueng, Satun )

These nine varieties are representatives of various varieties found in 14 provinces in Thailand, from Non-thaburi down to Yala.

## 2.0 Phonological Comparison of the Malay Dialects in Thailand.

When Standard Malay is placed in a comparative table with the dialects of Malay found in Thailand we notice points of divergence not only between the standard language and the various dialects but also between the dialects themselves.

## CONSONANTS

[illegible]

## 2.1 Phonological Comparison of the Malay Dialects in Thailand.

From Table 1 it can be seen that there are 19 consonants in all varieties of the Malay dialects spoken in Thailand except HTP. In the standard language there is one more phoneme besides those found in Table 1, i.e. phoneme /z/ which is a loan phoneme from Arabic. Besides /z/, the phoneme /r/ (representing a trill) does not belong to the phoneme inventory of any Malay dialect spoken in Thailand.

Certain consonants cannot occur in word - final position, and these consonants are grouped as follows.

plosives : /b,d,g/  
affricates : /c,j/  
nasal : /ŋ/

From Table 2 above we can see that in all nine dialects, none has a trill /r/ in the sound system. The occurrence of this phoneme is restricted only to SM. It is noticeable that the diaphonic variation of

/r/ in the dialects spoken in Thailand is more diverse than that of the Malay spoken in Malaysia. Following are examples.

				TML,	PT,						
	SM	ST	CHL	NST	TS	ULS	ULP	HTP			
prevocalic	ra:sa:	sa:sa:	sa:so:	sa:so:	ya:so:	ra:sa:	ja:sa:	ʔa:so:	"feel, taste"		
	ru:gi:	su:gi:	su:gi:	su:gi:	yu:gi:	ru:gi:	ju:gi:	ʔu:gi:	"lose"		
intervocalic	dʒarɪ:	dʒa:ɪ:	dʒa:ɪ:	dʒa:ɪ:	dʒa:ɣi:	dʒa:ɽi:	dʒa:ɰi:	dʒa:ʔi:	"finger"		
	buɾoŋ	bu:ɾoŋ	bu:ɾokʰ	bu:ɾoŋ	bu:ɣoŋ	bu:ɽokʰ	bu:ɰokʰ	bu:ʔokʰ	"bird"		
	SM	ST	CHL	TML	NST	PT	TS	ULS	ULP	HTP	
postvocalic	lapar	la:pa:k	la:paʔ	la:pæŋ	la:peʔʰ	la:po:	la:paŋ	la:pɾ:	la:pal	la:po:	"hungry"
	ʔekor	ʔe:ko:kʰ	ʔe:koʔ	ʔe:koŋ	ʔe:kok	ʔe:ko:	ʔe:koŋ	ʔi:kv:	ʔi:kol	ʔe:kuə	"tail"

As regards the correspondences of /r/, HTP is considered the most interesting dialect since the glottal stop /ʔ/ occurs in prevocalic and intervocalic positions in a word. In other words, the HTP dialect is characterized by this feature, and this finding leads me to claim that I have discovered a new dialect of Malay spoken in Thailand since this has never been mentioned anywhere else before.

Asmah Haji Omar has suggested a grouping of the Malay dialects by considering the diaphonic variations of /r/ based on the phonetic realization of the initial and the intervocalic /r/ or the allophone of the phoneme in the final position. This could be done with the dialects of Malay in Thailand as well, and the numbers of groups resulting from this process are as follows.

- I. the grouping based on the phonetic realization of /r/ and /-r-/.
  - I.1 ST, NST, CHL, TML
  - I.2 PT, TS
  - I.3 ULS
  - I.4 ULP
  - I.5 HTP
- II. the grouping based on the phonetic realization of the /-r#/.
  - II.1 ST, NST
  - II.2 PT, ULS, HTP
  - II.3 ULP
  - II.4 TML, TS
  - II.5 CHL

From the grouping above there are five subgroups within each main group. However, taking the geographical distribution of the dialects into consideration, it would seem more plausible to have the grouping based on the phonetic realization of /r/ and /-r-/. It can be seen that in subgroup I.1 ST, CHL and TML are all dialects spoken in Satun. And it should be noted here that most NST speakers are old inhabitants from the Malay-speaking community in Satun. As mentioned earlier, in this group, HTP has the most interesting feature that /ʔ/ is used in prevocalic and intervocalic positions when /r/ occurs in these positions in Standard Malay. In considering the allophones of the phoneme that occur in word final position, it seems that the dialects of Malay in Thailand have a more diverse development than those of the dialects of Malay in Malaysia. What is of interest is the presence of final [l] which is the only approximant found in this particular context. Besides the distributional features of the phonemes mentioned above, there are still more features of distribution that should be mentioned here. They are :

Phoneme /s/

In all nine dialects spoken in Thailand this phoneme occurs in initial and intervocalic positions in a word. In ST /s/ does occur in the final position when preceding vowels are back vowels. In other dialects /s/ never occurs word-finally but is realized as [h] with or without diphthongization of the preceding vowel. See examples below for illustration.