

# MALAY LEXICALIZED ITEMS IN PENANG PERANAKAN HOKKIEN<sup>1</sup>

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## 1 Introduction

This paper aims to document instances of lexical items in Penang Peranakan Hokkien (henceforth PPH) which are Malay loanwords. There has been some research into Peranakan (Baba) Malay, namely that of Shellabear (1913), Vaughan (1879) and more recently Clammer (1980) and Khoo (1996). However, not surprisingly, most academic work so far on Peranakan Chinese (viz. Baba Malay) has been restricted to that of the Malacca or Singapore varieties because of their similarities to Malay superficially.

PPH on the other hand is, for all intents and purposes, a Chinese dialect. Nevertheless, this dialect in question contains numerous Malay lexical items even though its syntax is underlyingly Hokkien. A brief description offered by Khoo (1996) in differentiating PPH from its other cousins is illuminating.

The Baba Hokkien in Penang is closer to this Tang Min (a type of Min dialect) than is the type of Hokkien spoken by the Sinkhek (recently arrived immigrants), who use the Standard Amoy variety. PPH is even less closely related to Standard Amoy because of the Malay words it has assimilated. It is different from other variations of Hokkien spoken on the Mainland or in Malacca and Singapore. (Khoo 1996:112)

The Malay words assimilated in PPH appear in various linguistic levels, including morphemes, words, phrases and clauses. Evidence of the assimilation of Malay in those linguistic levels is copious, for example, the prolific use of the Malay particles 'lah' and 'pun'. The assimilation in the level of morphemes is, however, less evident but nevertheless present, typically in the prolific use of 'nya' in PPH, which is a contracted form of, and semantically similar to, the original Malay term 'hanya', meaning 'only'.

## 2 Historical Background

This paper does not purport to provide a definitive or authoritative historical overview of the Peranakan Community in Penang; however, we believe that a short introduction to the origins of the Peranakan community in Penang might be helpful. The genesis of the Peranakan community in Penang can be traced back to the establishment of Penang as a

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British colony in 1786. In the early years after it was made a British outpost, trade flourished and there was much commercial activity and regional trade with the North Malaysian states of Kedah, Perak, the Sumatran Kingdoms and Southern Thailand.

Penang as a focal point of commerce in this part of the Malay Archipelago attracted an influx of Chinese businessmen to the colony, particularly from Southern Thailand and North Sumatra. The Peranakan Chinese in Penang were thought to have been "descendants of Chinese males marrying or cohabiting with Malays or Siamese or Burmese; the last mentioned, however, appear to be rather rare" (Khoo 1998:6). It must be stressed that the Peranakans of Penang still have extensive familial ties with both these regions.

PPH is spoken to greater or lesser degree by many of Penang's Hokkien community, but the prevalence of Malay lexicalized items in PPH is found among older members of the erstwhile Straits Chinese community. Typically, this group of speakers is above the age of 50 and many are English-educated. Although their speech is liberally peppered with lexical items of Malay origin, this does not predispose them to understanding standard Malay, which has gained currency among the younger generation. In fact, many PPH speakers above the age of 50 have never had formal instruction in standard Malay; they are hence unable to understand formal Malay even though bazaar Malay is easily understood by all. Most of the respondents in this study were initially unaware that they had been using words of Malay origin in their everyday use of PPH.

### **3 Procedure**

This study was conducted through observation of naturally occurring speech in a PPH family for a period of two months, from May to June 1998. Some samples have been transcribed for ease of presentation. We also collected some taped conversations of spontaneous speech in the said Peranakan family.

The focus of this paper is to analyze the features of Malay lexical items in PPH to see if they are loanwords; exhibit phonological diversity; are different from Malay lexically and semantically; and finally, whether there are loan translations above the level of individual lexicon. We are therefore of the opinion that it is unnecessary to describe longer stretches of speech.

### **4 Framework of Analysis and Discussion of Findings**

As an initial study into PPH, we will discuss the individual occurrences of Malay words in PPH. This paper also hopes to shed light on the patterns of code-switching that occur in PPH which might in turn stimulate further investigation into why certain linguistic categories are code-switched more often than the others.

The current paucity of studies undertaken on PPH is regrettable; nevertheless, studies done on other Peranakan Chinese communities in the region provide an outline for relevant areas of investigation. Among the earliest studies into Baba Malay is that of Shellabear (1913): he provides a description of Baba Malay in terms of its distinctive aspects as compared to "...the spoken language of the pure Malays" (Shellabear 1913:50). These aspects include a description of the evolution of Baba Malay; Baba Malay words of Chinese origin; Malay words which are unknown to the Babas; Malay words which are mispronounced by the Babas; and finally, the claim that the Baba idiom is Chinese rather than Malay.

In terms of language use and identity, we find that this issue is particularly relevant to the Peranakan Chinese. This is due to their ability to express their solidarity with both

the indigenous community and the Chinese by their emphasis of either the Malay or Chinese elements of their language. This was not only prevalent among the Peranakan Communities in Peninsular Malaysia but also amongst the Peranakan Chinese in Java and Sumatra. Tan (1979, 1980) did extensive studies into the Babas of Malacca and remarked that the relation between the Baba Malay language and identity was significant. The Babas could manipulate their use of Baba Malay to associate themselves with the Malays, or conversely emphasize the non-Malay elements of Baba Malay to stress their solidarity with the Chinese (Tan, 1979:125-127). Writing on the Peranakan Chinese in Kelantan, Teo (1996) extends the scope of borrowings from the Malays not only in the domain of language but also other cultural borrowings (e.g. attire) from the Malays by the Peranakan in Kelantan. Teo (1996) suggests that for the urban Peranakan, cultural borrowings of attire and cuisine remain back stage, where their manifestation is restricted to the confines of the household. We concur with this, as the Penang Peranakan who are wholly urbanized have similar tendencies. In the case of the rural Kelantan Peranakan Chinese, cultural borrowings are not only back stage but front stage as well. This is entirely plausible, though an equivalent example in Penang is unobtainable.

In terms of a framework of analysis, Tan (1979) has formulated a framework for the comparison of Baba Malay and Standard Malay. He maintains that there 'are five main patterns of diversity, namely the use of loanwords (including loan-translations), phonological differences, lexical differences, semantic differences and syntactic differences (Tan, 1979:267).

Among the studies elaborated above, we will discuss the observations of Shellabear (1913) and Tan (1979). It must be emphasized that PPH is different from Baba Malay in that it is essentially a Hokkien dialect with a significant number of Malay lexicalized items in use. Some remarks of Shellabear (1913) merit attention. He mentions that the then Baba Malay of the Straits Settlements was different from colloquial Malay in terms of the following:

1. Words introduced which are of Chinese origin; which for PPH is the inverse: where words introduced in the Hokkien dialect are Malay.
2. Babas were unacquainted with a large number of Malay words which are in common use among the Malays. We find that this holds true for speakers of PPH.
3. Babas mispronounce or reconstruct phonologically many Malay words and in some cases have altered the pronunciation so much that the word is almost unrecognizable. This is particularly true of many of the Malay lexicalized items in PPH.
4. To a great extent the Peranakans use the Chinese idiom rather than the Malay in putting their sentences together. This results in the Babas producing Baba Malay at the sentential level which is quite different from the colloquial language of the Malays.

Although Shellabear's observations above are noteworthy, we believe that the framework of analysis provided by Tan (1979) is more productive for the focus of this paper. Hence we discuss how the four main patterns of diversity (i.e. the use of loanwords (including loan-translations), phonological differences, lexical differences and semantic differences (Tan, 1979:267)) between the Malay lexicalized items found in PPH contrast with their original functions and roles in standard Malay. This study, however, excludes the analysis of syntactic differences between Malay in PPH and standard Malay because PPH is basically a Chinese dialect with superimposed Malay lexical items. Nevertheless, this does not preclude the potential analysis of code-mixing and code-switching of Malay in PPH. In this paper, the operational framework of Tan (1979) is used with adaptations to analyze the functions and roles in PPH.

## **5 Loanwords**

The Malay lexicalized items defined as loanwords in PPH are words that have been retained in their entirety in terms of semantic content, phonology (excepting the superimposition of tones to the words pronounced) and formal classes. Examples of these words generally include nouns like the names of certain flora and fauna (e.g. Bunga Melor, Katak Puru, Pacat, etc.). Some loanwords are restricted in their functions as grammatical categories. For example, 'tarik' in PPH is used to describe actions related to one afflicted with convulsions, which has the imagery of one's muscle pulling and jerking. Although this is also used by the Malays in a similar situation, it does not have the significance of the commonly used meaning by the Malays, which is 'pull', except in a limited sense of one inhaling cigarette smoke. The above peculiarity of loanwords not functioning in the whole spectrum of classes as they would in the source language is common among Creole languages. This tendency is not restricted to verbs and nouns alone but is also common among the other formal classes, such as adverbs and adjectives.

Sometimes loanwords borrowed from Malay function in the whole spectrum of classes as they would in Malay. For example, the root word 'buah', which as a noun means 'fruit', with proper affixation it also functions as an adjective. This is the same in PPH, although the use of the proper affixes is dispensed with. Another word which undergoes the same class shifts without any use of affixation is 'kerabu', which as a noun means 'salad' and as a verb means 'to make something into salad'.

Tan (1979) included another category of loanwords which he labeled loan-translations. These are direct translations into Baba Malay from Chinese: for example, 'hari satu' which corresponds to the Chinese 'Day One' instead of the Malay equivalent of 'Isnin' (Tan, 1979:275). For this study, loan-translations would be Malay concepts directly translated into PPH. The speech samples collected for this study do support the presence of loan-translation from Malay into Hokkien. However, we are unable to produce a comprehensive elaboration of these manifestations, primarily because this study is not aimed solely at such an objective. Secondly and more importantly, it is only through a comprehensive comparative study of PPH with the other Min dialects that one could ascertain if loan translation from Malay has taken place.

Possible candidates for loan translations would be culturally loaded terms describing actions that are common among the Malays that have been borrowed by the Peranakans in Penang. For example, the expression 'I'll stuff your mouth with chilies for uttering obscenities', which when used in PPH has the verb 'cabai' which means 'to put or stuff chilies into...', a common form of punishment for Malay children due to the same

form of indiscipline. We have found that there is use of Malay above the level of the lexicon which, we believe, represents some form of loan translation. We will provide a cursory discussion of this manifestation below, which we describe as the use of Malay above the level of individual lexicon.

## 6 Phonological Diversity

In this paper, we define phonological diversity as the different phonological manifestation of Malay words in PPH. Generally this phonological diversity involves the use of tones in PPH, which is a common characteristic of the Chinese Min dialect. Thus for example, the Malay borrowings 'kawan' meaning friend and 'kahwin' 'to marry' are rendered respectively as [kawan] and [kawen]. Here we witness the superimposition of a hi-lo or falling tone onto the disyllabic loanwords of Malay. Due to the influence of the Min dialect, which usually uses monosyllabic words, we also find that Malay, being an agglutinative language, often has words that have more than three syllables. These words when borrowed in PPH are often truncated or clipped for ease of pronunciation. A case in point is the pronunciation of the word 'bangkali', a four syllable word, as [bangkali] a three syllable word; compound words like 'buah guli' simplify to [bakguli]. The exception is the word 'horomat', a disyllabic word which is rendered as [horomat] in PPH. An explanation for this seeming counterexample would be that the contiguity of the alveolar trill and the bilabial nasal presents difficulty in pronouncing the word for PPH speakers and s/he reconstructs it as [horomat], with an epenthetic vowel insertion to break up the consonant cluster as it were.

It is understandable that PPH, being a type of creole, often displays syllable reduction: 'satu' > [sau] 'hari' > [ari], 'apa macam' > [amcam], 'bawa pergi' > [buat pi], and 'buat apa' > [buat pa] (Gwee 1993). The examples from PPH make our analysis even more exciting; not only do the borrowings conform to certain phonological constraints of Hokkien in terms of tone and syllabic simplification, but also because PPH is spoken in the northern region of Peninsula Malaysia, it conforms to the phonological characteristic of the north-west Malay dialect of Penang and Kedah. In general, there is the rule of high vowel lowering in final closed syllables in Malay, and indeed we have them as [sireh], [abo?], etc. In the Penang and Kedah Malay dialects, there are the phonological rules of *l* > Ø (*l* deletion) followed by diphthongization. Indeed, borrowings from Malay are then remolded as such in conformity to the phonological structuring; 'bisul' rendered as [bisoi], 'sanggul' as [sanggoi]. First, we have high vowels in final closed syllables lowered, and then the diphthongization is followed by the *l* deletion. We also note that not all high vowels in final closed syllables lower: for example 'tumis' > [tumis]. Indeed, this is what Pakir (1986) discovered in Peranakan Malay in Singapore. She went a step further in offering an explanation: namely, that the affrication of the final /s/ phoneme somewhat preempted the vowel lowering, which applies across the board in other instances. Words with diphthongs which monothongize are also evident in 'hairan', which is pronounced as [heran] in PPH. We notice also that words like 'binatang' are rendered as [manatang]. This is not surprising since the bilabial voiced stop is substituted with a nasal, but with the place of articulation is retained in the PPH form; Chinese speakers often have this negative transfer where Malay words like 'banyak' are rendered as [manya?], with the palatal nasal presenting a problem because it is non-existent in Chinese.

## 7 Lexical and Semantic Diversity

Lexical and semantic diversity between Malay lexical items in PPH and Standard Malay takes the form of the different meanings attached to the same lexical item in PPH and Malay. For example, the word 'hangat' in PPH is used to describe anger or express that one is angry, rather than the common Malay meaning that one is hot. The rather restricted meaning of words is common among Creole speakers, and in fact, most speakers of PPH do not know the other multifarious meanings of a Malay word. In other words, this relates to the broadening of semantic values in a lexical item. The lexical item 'senduk' refers to a ladle in Malay, and spoons are 'sudu'; however, for PPH speakers, 'senduk' refers to both spoon and ladle and it is other factors, such as the situation and shared knowledge of speakers, that disambiguate the referent of 'senduk' to the PPH speaker. In fact, this issue was brought up by Tan (1979) who states that the Baba Malay speaker used the adjectives 'big' or 'small' to indicate if s/he was referring to a ladle or a spoon (Tan, 1979: 274-282). Interestingly, here the PPH speaker employs similar devices by using the Hokkien adjectives which are the equivalent of 'big' and 'small' to refer to a ladle in the former (tua senduk) and a spoon (se senduk) in the latter. Another example of semantic broadening in the Malay lexicon adopted in PPH is the use of 'longkang' for drains, just as it is done in Malay. However, bigger drains are also referred to as longkang, with the Hokkien adjective 'big' modifying it. The appropriate Malay term would be 'parit'. However, this term does not exist in PPH.

We found that lexical and semantic differences between Malay and PPH can also be found in the semantic narrowing of certain borrowed Malay lexicon in PPH. We are aware that some of the lexical items cited in this analysis might have had wider semantic significance in the past and might not be regarded as instances of semantic narrowing if a diachronic study of PPH is undertaken. However, as this is a synchronic study of PPH, we will consider the issue of semantic narrowing and other features of lexical and semantic narrowing in light of the current PPH usage. The occurrence of semantic narrowing is found in all classes of words and also in all the six categories in which we have grouped the words. For example, the use of 'balai' in PPH means 'police station' as it does in Malay. However, there are no other uses of 'balai' in PPH, unlike in Malay, which has terms such as 'balai bomba' for 'fire station' or 'balai rakyat' for 'community hall'. Likewise, the root word 'amok' in Malay can function as a noun or a verb; but in PPH, it only functions as a verb where 'to (a)mok a person' is to beat a person without restraint characteristic of one running amok. In the same manner, the word 'racun' is used to describe someone who is a bane or one who disrupts other people's plans, and is not used to describe poisonous substances. Semantic narrowing also takes place in what we classify as actions-verbal and physical. For example, 'bicala' is only used for a trial and not used in its other sense, which is 'to speak'. The adjective 'haram' also undergoes semantic narrowing as it describes 'bearing a grudge against someone' or 'disliking someone'. It does not have the religious connotations of being 'forbidden' as it does in Malay. On the other hand, the word 'asap' in PPH has a strong religious connotation of burning incense for religious practices but does not function as an adjective as it does in Malay.

The speakers of PPH have also innovated on the meaning of certain Malay lexical items that they have borrowed. For example, the use of the lexical item 'buta' which means 'all for nothing' is not known among the Malays. Similarly, the term 'lumak' is used to describe a person as being flirtatious but is not used among the Malays.

## 8 Use of Malay above the level of individual lexicon

Under this category, we have found that the use of Malay at the sentential level is also present in PPH. We found that the use of Malay at this level seems to be fossilized and the terms used represent some form of formulaic expression. For example, the use of the saying 'pasang kuat' means dressing to impress. While 'pasang kaki' refers to the act of tripping someone by intent. Further examples of these are similar in use to colloquial Malay: for example, the term 'gatal' for 'itchy'/'itch' is also used in Malay and PPH as an adjective to describe an amorous person. Other formulaic expressions function as adjectives with a preponderance for describing the negative nature of humans: examples are 'kepala angin' for 'temperamental', 'naik angin' for 'to lose one's temper', 'tiga suku' for 'crazy', 'ketam batu' for 'a stingy person', 'kurang ajar' for 'ill mannered' and 'muka binci' for 'hateable face'. Anybody who talks too much is referred to as 'cakap banyak' for 'talkative', while those adjectives that describe the positive in humans are few and far between, for example, 'muka sayang' for 'lovable face'.

We believe that at this level of language use, the speakers' creativity is shown, and there is more than just borrowings of singular lexical items necessitated by the lack of such concepts in the natal language of the speaker. We suggest that some form of loan translation takes place when the PPH speaker uses the saying 'The Batak is masquerading as a Nonya' or 'You sit like the worm when it has struck ash'. The former has the Malay equivalent of 'Batak menyamar Nonya' and the latter 'Cacing kena abu'. The above sayings are Malay sayings, and the fact that these sayings have found their way unaltered into PPH testify to the fact that there are loan translations.

Another use of Malay above the level of individual lexicon involves sayings which are essentially Malay although their meanings might be altered. For example, the saying that one is a 'tali barut' in PPH means 'to be insensitive to other people's desire for privacy'. However, in Malay the meaning is completely different; it means that one is a 'hated collaborator of the enemy'. While the saying 'naik jaki (cf. Malay 'dengki')' means to get angry with someone.

## 9 Conclusion

There is no evidence that points to the fact that the Peranakans in Penang never developed a language that was as heavily influenced by Malay as did the Malacca and Singapore Peranakans. In fact, early Peranakans in Penang were described as speakers of Baba Malay, although they were also said to be more fluent in Hokkien as compared to their southern cousins. Khoo states that the Penang Peranakans 'did not forget their native tongue (in general Hokkien) although all of them, like their Melaka counterparts, spoke Baba Malay' (Khoo, 1998:6). In fact, there are books printed in Baba Malay by Baba writers residing in Penang in the early twentieth century. However, there are very few Baba Malay speakers among the Penang Peranakans now; instead, there is a predominance of PPH speakers among the Penang Peranakans, and as proven by this study, PPH is essentially a Hokkien dialect with some Malay elements.

It is our belief that there are two possible scenarios leading to the situation where PPH could have gained currency among the Penang Peranakans to the extent that it supplants Baba Malay, although certain key Malay lexical items were maintained and introduced into PPH. This situation of language attrition (which in this case results in Baba Malay being subjected to the influences of Hokkien) was commented on by Clammer (1980) who cited Freedman (1962) that '...in 1870 it is estimated that only 20 per cent of

the Malacca and Singapore Babas could speak Chinese. But by 1975 the number was approximately 42 per cent in Malacca *and higher in Penang*, and rising in both cases (Clammer 1980:134, italics added).' This presupposes that there are Penang Peranakans who speak Baba Malay and that their numbers are decreasing. We will not speculate if there are still Penang Peranakans who still speak Baba Malay, but we are certain that their numbers are negligible if any.

This situation could have resulted from the different situation in which the Penang Peranakans found themselves, in contrast to their southern cousins. Clammer (1980) suggests that this difference (i.e. the use of Hokkien by the Peranakans in Penang as compared to the use of Baba Malay by the Peranakans in Singapore and Malacca) between the Penang Peranakans and their southern cousins could be that Penang had no significantly large native population before the British acquired it. Therefore, the Peranakan community was much less influenced by the Malays but much more influenced by the influx of Chinese immigrants who came to or passed through Penang since the early nineteenth century (Clammer 1980:8). Clammer (1980) suggests that Baba Malay evolved through the situation and circumstances of the early Chinese presence in Malacca since the late fourteenth century (Clammer 1980:8), and as Penang did not share many of the conditions prevailing in Malacca, the Penang Peranakans developed differently from those in Malacca.

Conversely, it could be that Baba Malay, like the other components of Baba culture in Penang might have absorbed increasingly significant Hokkien elements over time due to assimilation and integration into mainstream Chinese Culture after the Peranakan heyday. As Clammer (1980) observed and questioned '...are they (the Babas) in fact a perpetually marginal group because they are always being assimilated to someone else -- the Malays, the mainstream Chinese culture, or anglicized Chinese culture? (Clammer 1980:130)' This situation is entirely credible as the Peranakan community in Penang shifts from their initial association with the Malays in favor of the mainstream Chinese culture, as the initial predominance of the Malays in the former Straits Settlements was replaced by that of the Chinese. This shift towards the mainstream Chinese culture or anglicised Chinese culture could have been further facilitated by the fact that the Babas tend to look to Chinese culture as the main tradition with which they can identify (Clammer 1980:132). This is further compounded by the increasing pressures of westernization aggravated by the Babas' anglophilic persuasions. This would then account for the Baba Malay of Penang taking on more Chinese (Hokkien) and English lexicon, hence resulting in the birth and currency of present day PPH.

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## Appendix: (Malay Lexicalised Items in Penang Peranakan Hokkien)

### 1 Trinkets

- anting -- 'ear studs'
- berlian -- 'diamonds'
- bintang -- 'a star broach'
- cincin -- 'ring'
- gelang kaki -- 'anklet'
- gelang -- 'bracelet'
- gigi -- 'holder of gems/things and teeth of keys'
- intan -- 'low grade diamond'
- kelip -- 'sparkle'
- kerosang -- 'broach' cf. kerongsang in Malay
- liante -- 'chain', cf. rantai in Malay.
- satu -- 'solitaire'
- suasa -- 'low grade (9-carat) gold'
- subang -- 'earrings'
- tapak sireh -- 'sireh box'

### 2 Animals

- babi -- 'pigs'
- belalang -- 'grasshopper'
- buaya -- 'crocodile'
- burong kuku -- 'pigeons'
- burong -- 'birds'
- cacing -- 'worm'
- cangkerik -- 'cricket'
- cicak -- 'lizards'
- katak puru -- 'frogs', cf. katak in Malay.

kongkiak -- 'big black ants'  
 kutu -- 'lice'.  
 manatang -- binatang 'animal'.  
 mosang 'bobcat' cf.-musang in Malay.  
 pacat -- 'leach'  
 sipot -- 'cockles'  
 sotong -- 'octopus'

### 3 Things

(h)abok -- 'dust'  
 abu -- 'ash'  
 adek~alek -- 'younger siblings'  
 bakuli (buah guli) -- 'marbles'  
 bangsa -- 'race' / 'ethnic origin'  
 bangsat -- 'a derogatory term for a disliked person'  
 balai -- 'police station'  
 baleh -- 'bench'  
 bangku -- 'stool'  
 barang-barang -- 'things'  
 batang -- 'a stem or stemlike thing'  
 batu -- 'stone'  
 bayang-bayang -- 'shadows'  
 bedak -- 'powder'  
 bedak sujuk -- 'rice powder'  
 bidan -- 'midwife'  
 biji -- 'seed'  
 botoi - 'botol' in Malay (a borrowing from the English 'bottle')  
 buah -- 'fruit'  
 buai-buai -- cf. buian in Malay -- 'swing'  
 bunga melor -- 'jasmine flower'  
 butut -- 'cork'  
 cawat -- 'loin cloth'  
 curut -- 'cigar'  
 gaji -- 'pay/wages'  
 gambit -- 'gambir'  
 geling rumpah -- 'stone used to grind spices'  
 getah -- 'sap of fruits' / 'rubber band'  
 hamba -- 'slave'  
 jamban -- 'toilet'  
 kapok -- 'cotton', cf. kapas in Malay.  
 kapok -- 'lime'  
 kasut manek -- 'beaded shoes'  
 kasut kodok -- 'a type of beaded shoes'  
 kawan (noun/verb) kawan (where there is a superimposition of hi-lo or falling tones)  
 ketam batu -- 'a stingy person'  
 kole -- 'a big steel mug'  
 lalang -- 'wild grass'

lampeng -- 'diapers' cf. lampin in Malay  
 lili -- cf. lidi in Malay  
 longkang -- 'drain'  
 mata -- 'police' cf. mata-mata in Malay, where 'mata' in its base form means 'eyes'  
 mesegate -- 'mosque' cf. mesjid in Malay  
 orang gaji -- 'servant, maid'  
 orang jaga -- 'a maid who specializes in looking after mothers in confinement'  
 pagar -- 'fence'  
 piring -- 'plates, saucers'  
 puluk 'bolster'  
 racun -- 'a baneful person'  
 rokok (chau [Hokkien] -- grass) -- 'tobacco'  
 sabun -- 'soap'  
 sampah -- 'rubbish'  
 sanggoi -- 'bun of hair of a lady', cf. sanggul in Malay  
 sarong  
 sepatu -- 'shoes'  
 senduk -- 'spoon/ladle'  
 sireh -- 'betel nut leaf'  
 sulam -- 'embroidery'  
 tali -- 'string/rope'  
 tangkai -- 'amulet'  
 tanjong -- 'cape'  
 tembok -- 'wall'  
 timba -- 'pail'  
 tuala -- 'towel'  
 tumbuk -- 'pestle'

#### 4 Methods of cooking/food

acat -- cf. acar in Malay -- 'chutney'  
 air-mawar -- 'essence'  
 apom-bakuah -- cf. apom berkuah in Malay -- 'pancake with sauce'  
 apom -- balek -- 'a pancake'  
 asam pedai 'asam pedas' in Malay -- 'a dish'  
 asam -- 'tamarind'  
 bangkuang -- 'turnips', cf. mengkuang in Malay  
 bawang -- 'onion'  
 bayam -- 'spinach'  
 belacan -- 'shrimp cake'  
 buah betai 'buah petai' in Malay -- 'a type of vegetable'  
 buah kerai -- 'buah keras' in Malay  
 bunga-kantan -- 'blue ginger'  
 bunga telang -- 'a type of flower'  
 cabai -- 'chili'  
 cabai burung -- 'small chili'  
 cincalo -- 'preserved shrimps'  
 daun kaduk -- 'a type of herb'

goreng pisang -- 'a dessert'  
 goreng -- 'to fry'  
 gulai -- 'curry'  
 jambu-air -- 'guava (soft)'  
 jintan-manis -- 'coriander'  
 kacang-botoi -- 'a type of vegetable'  
 kacang nyenyak -- 'ladies finger'  
 kerabu -- 'salad' (this could also function as a verb, i.e., 'to make something into salad')  
 kueh-bangkek -- 'a type of cake'  
 kueh -- bengkah (bengkang) -- 'a type of cake'  
 kueh-kapek -- 'a type of cake, 'love letters'  
 kueh koci -- 'a type of cake'  
 kueh kodok -- 'a type of cake'  
 kueh-lapis -- 'layered cake'  
 kunyet -- 'tumeric'  
 lengkuas -- 'a type of plant' cf. lengkuas in Malay  
 lobak -- 'white carrots'  
 lumak -- 'creamy'  
 lumpa -- 'rempah' in Malay  
 lun-pandan ~ daun pandan in Malay -- 'pandanus leaves'  
 nasik-kunyet -- 'yellow ginger rice'  
 nasi ulam -- 'a dish'  
 nona -- 'custard apple'  
 otak-otak -- 'steamed fish wrapped in banana leaf'  
 panggan -- 'to grill' cf. panggang in Malay  
 pulut ikan -- 'fish maw curry' cf. perut ikan in Malay.  
 pulut -- 'glutinous rice'  
 pulut inti -- 'glutinous rice cake'  
 roti -- 'bread'  
 roti jala -- 'a dish'  
 sambai-belacan/udang -- 'a type of chili paste' or sambal udang in Malay  
 santan -- 'coconut milk'  
 timun -- 'cucumber', cf. mentimun in Malay  
 tumis~tumi -- 'to saute', cf. tumis in Malay  
 ubi-kayu -- 'sweet potato'  
 unde-unde -- 'a type of cake'  
 ulam -- 'salad'

## **5 Body terms**

bak ketiak -- 'arm pits'  
 batang -- 'penis'  
 bisoi -- 'wart' cf. bisul in Malay  
 buah peliak -- 'scrotum'  
 daki -- 'dirt'  
 gigi -- 'teeth'  
 jantan -- 'male'  
 jari -- 'finger'

liba -- 'lap'  
lutut -- 'knee'  
mata sepek -- 'squint eyed'  
nanah -- 'puss'  
paha -- 'lap'  
pinggan -- 'waist'  
puki -- 'female genital'  
tetek -- 'breasts'

## **6 Actions-verbal + physical**

agak -- 'almost' / 'to estimate'  
antak -- 'to send', cf. hantar in Malay  
asap -- 'to light incense'  
batuk -- 'to cough'  
bangkai -- 'carcass or bad-smelling'  
bangkali (barangkali) -- 'possible'  
bantai -- 'to thrash'  
bantang -- 'superstition', cf. pantang in Malay  
baru -- 'new, just'  
belang-belang -- 'stripes'  
bengkok -- 'bent'  
betui-betui -- 'really', cf. betul-betul in Malay  
bicala -- (noun) 'court proceedings', cf. bicara in Malay  
bilai (bilas) -- 'to rinse'  
bising -- 'noisy'  
botak -- 'bald'  
bukumbak -- 'twins' cf. berkembar in Malay  
bukumang (berkembang) -- 'wearing the sarung at the armpits'.  
bunting -- 'pregnant'  
burok (adj) -- 'bad'  
busuk -- 'foul smelling'  
buta -- 'all for nothing'  
cabai -- 'to punish one with the application of chili'  
cakap banyak -- 'talkative'  
campur -- 'to mingle'  
celaka -- 'a curse'  
cicit -- 'great grandchildren'  
comek -- 'cute', cf. comely in Malay  
comot -- 'all crumpled'  
cubit -- 'to pinch'  
cucuk -- 'to instigate'  
dan-dan -- 'immediately'  
gaji -- 'to employ'  
galek -- 'scratch, lacerations'  
galoh -- 'to quarrel', cf. gaduh in Malay  
ganggu -- 'to disturb'  
gasak -- 'to deride'

gatai -- 'amorous' cf. gatal in Malay  
 gatai -- 'itch'  
 gayat -- 'frightened'  
 geram -- feelings of 'hate'(negative) / feeling of fondness (positive)  
 gili -- 'tickle', cf. geli -- 'disgusting'  
 gomoï -- 'wrestle', cf. gumol in Malay  
 gugur -- 'abortion'  
 gulong -- 'to roll up'  
 had -- 'limit'  
 hangat -- 'angry'  
 haram -- 'bear a grudge'  
 harap -- 'depend'  
 hentam -- 'to hit'  
 heran -- 'curiously', cf. hairan in Malay  
 hitam manis -- 'dark and sweet'  
 horomat -- 'respect', cf. hormat in Malay  
 ikat -- 'a bunch of fruit tied together'  
 jadi bo -- 'successful, did it turn out right?'; bo=a question particle in Hokkien  
 jalan-jalan -- 'to stroll'  
 janji -- 'to promise'  
 jarang-jarang -- 'sparse, but not hardly'  
 jelak -- 'nauseated from overeating a type of food'  
 jijik -- 'nauseating'  
 jilat -- 'to lick'  
 juling -- 'to stare'  
 kacau -- 'to disturb'  
 kaku -- 'awkward'  
 kangkang -- 'astride'  
 karut -- 'nonsense'  
 kawen -- 'to marry', cf. 'kahwin' in Malay  
 kejaap -- 'sarong worn tightly and neatly'  
 keliling (kiah=walk) 'around'  
 kepala -- 'supervisor'  
 kepala angin -- 'temperamental'  
 kepala pusing -- 'headache'  
 kerakot -- 'crooked'  
 kesian -- 'pity', cf. kasihan in Malay  
 kedukut -- 'stingy'  
 ketak-ketak -- 'frightened out of one's wits'  
 kilat -- 'shinny'  
 kuat -- 'strong'  
 kuasa -- 'control / authority'  
 kunduri -- 'a party held by the Malays' cf. kenduri in Malay  
 kurang ajar -- 'ill-mannered'  
 laju -- 'withered'  
 laku -- 'saleable'  
 lalai -- 'forgetful'

lalu -- 'appetite'  
 lama-lama -- 'eventually'  
 langkah -- 'stride-over'  
 langsung -- 'absolutely'  
 lapat -- 'to obtain' cf. dapat in Malay  
 lapek -- 'to cushion'  
 latah -- 'to curse uncontrollably'  
 lelong -- 'to auction off'  
 lembek -- 'flaccid'  
 lembut -- 'soft spoken/petite'  
 lengan-lengan -- 'to stroll'  
 letak -- 'to put'  
 lumak -- 'flirtatious'  
 lumpang -- 'to hitch a ride' cf. tumpang in Malay  
 luput -- 'rot' cf. reput in Malay  
 mabok -- 'drunk, intoxicated'  
 macam-macam -- 'all sorts'  
 makan gaji -- 'wage earner'  
 mana -- 'where'  
 manja -- 'to pamper'  
 masak-masak -- 'a child's game'  
 merepek -- 'talk nonsense'  
 muka binci ~ muka penyala -- 'hateable face'  
 muka sayang -- 'loveable face'  
 (a)mok -- 'to hit another without restrain' (characteristic of running amok)  
 naik angin -- 'to lose one's temper'  
 naik jaki -- cf. naik dengki in Malay -- 'to get angry with'  
 naiya -- 'to be victimized', cf. aniayai in Malay  
 (ha)nya -- 'only'  
 nyanyok -- 'senile'  
 padan -- 'serves one right'  
 pakat -- 'to collaborate'  
 pandai -- 'smart in a pejorative sense'  
 pasai -- 'because', cf. pasal in Malay  
 penyek -- 'squashed' / 'flat'  
 pereksa -- 'to examine'  
 puas -- 'satisfied'  
 pun -- 'also'  
 pula -- 'also'  
 rajin -- 'hardworking'  
 rasa -- 'taste/feeling'  
 rindu -- 'miss'  
 salah-(adj) -- 'wrong'  
 sambai -- 'until' cf. sampai in Malay  
 sangkot -- 'entangled'  
 satu macam -- 'eccentric'  
 sayang -- 'to love'

sayang -- 'what a pity'  
 sedap -- 'tasty'  
 sekali -- 'one shot, at one go'  
 selongkah -- 'to search', cf. selongkar in Malay  
 semak -- 'a mess'  
 sembang -- 'to chit-chat'  
 sembunyi -- 'to hide'  
 sendak -- 'lean' cf. sandar in Malay  
 sengek -- 'crooked lopsided'  
 senja -- 'dusk'  
 senyom -- 'to smile'  
 senyom manis -- 'a sweet smile'  
 sepak -- 'to slap'  
 silap -- 'a mistake'  
 som-som -- 'lukewarm' cf. suam-suam in Malay  
 suka -- 'to like'  
 suku -- 'a quarter'  
 sunyi -- 'quiet'  
 tabik -- 'salute'  
 tahan -- 'to withstand'  
 tak tentu -- 'uncertain'  
 tali barut -- 'to be insensitive to other people's need for privacy'  
 tambah -- 'to add'  
 tapi -- 'but', cf. tetapi or tapi in Malay  
 tapis -- 'filter' cf. tapis in Malay  
 tarik -- 'convulsion'  
 tekejut -- 'shocked'  
 te(r)keliat -- 'sprained/twisted'  
 tenggelam -- 'to sink'  
 tepelanting -- 'to collapse from being slapped'  
 terbalik -- 'to overturn/overtaken' or 'to make a u turn'  
 tehrap -- 'to lie on the stomach' cf. tiarap in Malay  
 tiga suku -- 'three quarters, or crazy'  
 tolong -- 'help'  
 ulu -- 'being provincial'  
 ulut -- 'massage' cf. urut in Malay

## **7 Interjections**

adoi  
 alah  
 alamak  
 amboi  
 ceh  
 lah



