CHAPTER 14

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

The Malay language has a long historical use as a language of trade within the Brunei kingdom. Thus, Malay has been a lingua franca in Sabah long before the formation of the state of Sabah within Malaysia. After the formation of Malaysia, Malay has became the national language and official language of Malaysia; it has continued its function as an important language of interaction between multi-ethnic groups in Sabah. As the function of Malay has extended, its use has become more important and more frequent in day to day living.

With the broad sociolinguistic setting consisting of the multi-ethnic groups which are indigenous as well as immigrants from Indonesia and the Philippines, there emerged a new variety of Malay in Sabah with distinctive characteristic. Due to diverse socio-cultural and socio-economic settings of Sabah, the new variety of Malay spoken in Sabah has begun to show variations especially in its phonological features. As this variety is spoken around Sabah, it is now known as Sabah Malay Dialect (SMD).

As SMD is not spoken only by the Malay ethnic groups but almost everyone in Sabah, language variability is somehow considered a deviation from 'proper Malay' such as Brunei Malay, Kedayan Malay and especially Standard Malay. It is often referred to as *bahasa pasar* or the bazaar variety. To some extent, Sabahans themselves avoid speaking it in formal situations and are embarrassed to hear it on the

radio or television. It often raises embarrassment among listeners with the remark 'pekatnya' or strong accent, which indirectly insinuates that there is such a thing as a 'typical' or 'genuine' speech among Sabahans (Wong, 2000).

Although a number of studies have been done in the quest of answering the ultimate question of "What is the Sabah Malay Dialect or *Cakap Sabah*?", it was difficult to identify the 'typical' or 'genuine' speech of Sabahans. The complexity of doing so is attributable to the vast linguistic variations in SMD especially the phonological differentiation.

The adaptation of Urban Dialectology in this study has highlighted the phonological distinctiveness of SMD. This methodology has captured the real scenario of the speech community of SMD by taking into consideration the social context causing the linguistic variations. The findings show that all nine of the most prominent phonological differentiations occur neither in free variation nor as a result of a coincidence. They are, in one way or another, subjected to social factors such as gender, age, ethnicity and social stratification of the heterogeneous speakers, as well as speech context.

The findings of this study can be summarised as in Figure 14.1. The linguistic variations of SMD, namely the nine phonological variations are represented by the top circle. The study has shown that phonological variations are significantly correlated with social contexts, specifically the social variations which is represented by the left bottom circle and stylistic variations by the right bottom circle. These significant correlations are represented by the overlapping of the circles. These correlations were used in the study to determine the social functions of the linguistic variations in the

speech community. Some of the linguistic variables are significantly influenced by social variations such as a speaker's age, gender, ethnic membership and social strata as well as stylistic variation. In such cases, these linguistic variations are the markers in the speech community, which is represented by the shaded area in the center by the overlapping circles of all the three linguistics, social and stylistic variations. However, some linguistic variations were only influenced by social variations and not stylistic variations thus confirming that these linguistic variables are only indicators in the speech community. The indicators are represented by the shaded area on the left overlapping by the two circles of linguistic and social variations.
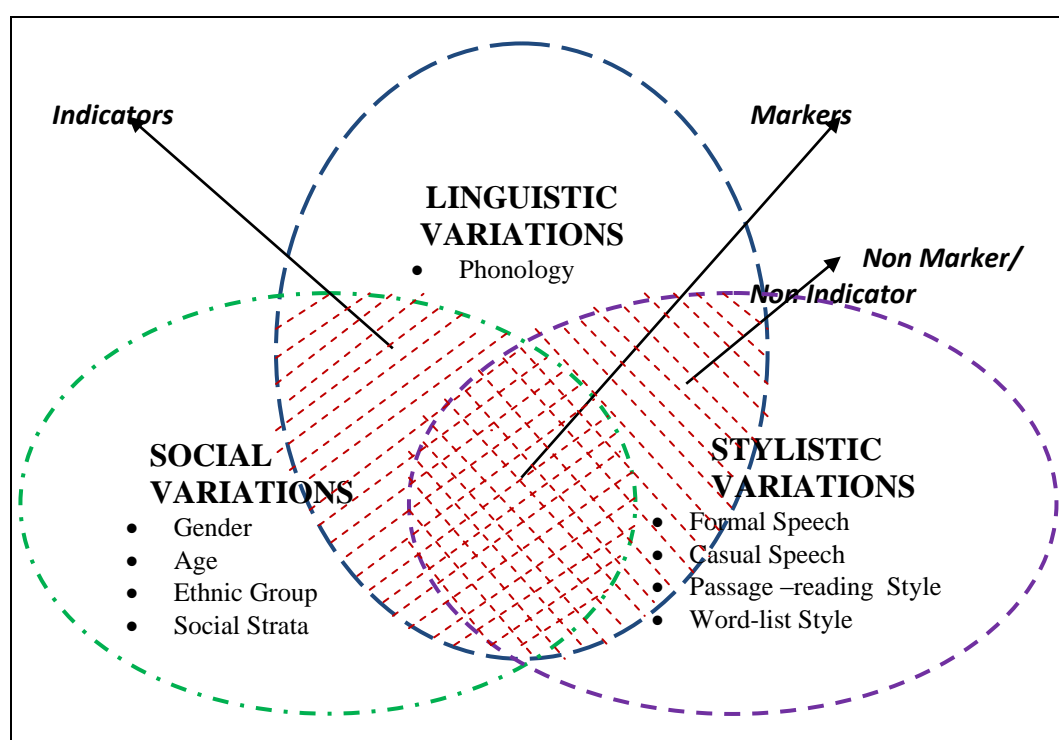

Figure 14.1: Correlation between Linguistic Variation
and Both Social and Stylistic Variations

SMD is distinct from, albeit in close relation with, Standard Malay and other Malay varieties such as Brunei Malay and Kedayan. With much retention from Brunei Malay and influences from indigenous languages of Sabah and languages from neighbouring countries, SMD displays distinctive phonological characteristics. This

study has identified the distinctiveness of SMD phonological characteristics based on different linguistic choices and social variations obtained from the samples. This approach answers the research question in 1.3: (i) To what extent are the phonological characteristics of SMD distinct from the Standard Malay?

This study has shown that similar to the Standard Malay (STM) sound inventory, SMD also has 6 vowels : /α/, /ε/, /↔/, /ι/, /o/ and /υ/ (see Figure 14.2) and 18 consonants: stops /π/, /β/, /τ/, /δ/, /κ/ and /γ/; nasals /ν/, /μ/, /N/ and /)/; fricatives /σ/ and /η/; affricates /τΣ/ and /δZ/; λατεραλ /λ/; trill /ρ/ and semi vowels /ω/ and /φ/ (see Table 14.1).   The phonological rules of SMD are also quite similar as to those of STM.
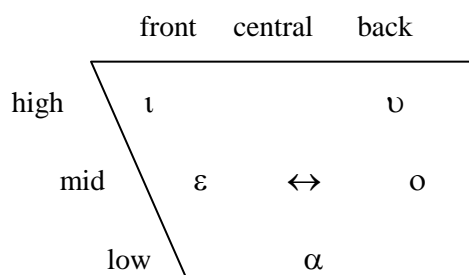

Figure 14.2: Vowel Inventory of the Sabah Malay Dialect

Table 14.1: Consonant Inventory of the Sabah Malay Dialect

P.O.A / M.O.A	Bilabial	Alveolar	Palato-Alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Labio-Velar	Glottal
Stop	π β	τ δ			κ γ		
Nasal	μ	ν		)	N		
Fricative							η
Sibilant		σ					
Affricate			τΣ δZ				
Lateral		λ					
Trill		ρ					
Glide				φ		ω	

The phonological characteristics of SMD differ not only in the number of variants but also in the place of distribution. The number for variants in SMD that

were involved in the linguistic variable is larger than in STM (as discussed in Chapter 5-12) and the insertion of glottal in word-final open syllables differed from those of STM (as discussed in Chapter 13). The differences of the complimentary distribution between SMD and STM can be summarised as shown in Table 14.2:

Table 14.2: Complimentary Distribution of the Sabah Malay Dialect
in Comparison to the Standard Malay

	Word-initial		Word-medial		Word-final	
	STM	SMD	STM	SMD	STM	SMD
/a/					[a],[↔]	[a],[↔]
/↔/	[↔]	[↔],[O], [e],[u], [i],[a]	[↔],[O]	[↔],[O],[e] [o],[u], [i],[a]		
/e/	[e]	[e],[↔], [a],[i]	[e]	[e],[↔], [a],[i]		
/o/	[o]	[o],[u]	[o]	[o],[u]		
/h/	[h]	[h],[O]	[h]	[h],[?],[O]	[h]	[h],[?],[O]
/k/					[?]	[?],[O],[k]
/r/					[O],[r]	[O],[l],[r]
/tΣ/	[tΣ]	[tΣ],[s]	[tΣ]	[tΣ],[s]		
(?)					[O]	[O],[h],[?]

The study has shown that the distinctive phonological features of SMD through the nine linguistic variables (a), (↔), (e), (o), (h), (k), (r), (tΣ), and (?). Of the many phonological variables in SMD, there are some which are commonly shared by Sabahans. This study has established that there are extensive realisations of word-final /a/ as low back unrounded vowel [α] (98.4-99.2% of the time) and exhaustive realisation of word-final /r/ as trill alveolar retroflex [r] (92.0-97.9%). The preferable realisation of word-final /k/ as velar stop [k] (55.2-67.2%), and the productive insertion of glottal stop [?] and glottal fricative [η] (20.4-56.2%) in word-final open syllables are also the other main characteristics of SMD.

Another significant attribute of SMD is the h-deletion [O] especially more often in /h/ word-medially (1.3-48.3%), followed by /h/ word-initially (2.1-24.4%) and the least in /h/ word-finally (2.4-4.8%). The other commonly shared phonological variations in SMD are the realisation of /↔/ as low back unrounded vowel [a] in word-initially (1.7-31.7%) and word-medially (0.4-4.9%); the realisation of /e/ as high front unrounded vowel [i] word-initially (3.5-16.2%) and word-medially (3.5-27.3%); the realisation of /o/ as high back rounded vowel [ʊ] and word-initially (1.9-16.8%) and word-medially (1.4-17.5%); and the realisation of /tΣ/ as alveolar fricative [s] word-initially (0.4-5.7%) and word-medially (0.4-6.2%).

SMD displays language variations due to the diversity of its speech community. It is the socio-cultural and socioeconomic factors of the speakers that have brought the language variations as discussed in this thesis. This study has demonstrated that there is a significant relationship between linguistic variations and social variations when answering the research question in item 1.3: (ii) To what extent is the phonological differentiation of SMD determined by social variation?

Among the four social factors of this study, age and social stratification play significant roles in influencing the linguistic variability, and this is followed by ethnic membership and gender.

Most linguistic phonological variables have strong correlation with age differentiation, except for variable (a) word-finally. The significant breakdown of age differences is between the age group of 15-44 and 45-64 year olds. The younger age groups use more of the standard variants, while the older age groups use more of the non-standard variants (as discussed in Chapter 6.3-13.3). This is due to the fact that

50% of the older age groups have not gone through formal education, and that only about 18.2% of them have primary education, 22.7% have secondary education, and less than 1% has a degree. This also means that only a small group of the older generation are exposed to Standard Malay or STM through proper education system (as discussed in Chapter 3.3.2.2).

Similarly, most linguistic variables of SMD have significant correlation with social strata differentiation, except for variable (↔) word-medial and variable (e) word-medial. A correlation between phonological variables and social stratifications is seen appearing in the speech of the Lower Working Class (LWC) as opposed to the upper classes, and those of the Middle Middle Class (MMC) as opposed to the lower classes. For most linguistic variables, the higher the social class, the more the standard variants are used. In other words, the lower the social class, the more the non-standard variants are preferred, as higher classes are always associated with the standard variants (as evidenced in Chapters 5.5, 8.5-13.5). This is due to the fact that only 59.5% of the working classes have gone through secondary education, where as 11.4% have only primary education and another 15% have never gone through any formal education.

The study has also found that some of the linguistic variables have strong correlation with ethnic differentiation. The ethnic groups of Bugis (BGS) and other bumiputera (BMP) use more of the standard variants as compared to other ethnic groups in the above variables (as evidenced in Chapters 6.4(A), 6.4(B), 7.4(B), 9.4(C), 10.4, 11.4 and 13.4). On the contrary, other ethnic groups use more of the non-standard variants. This could be due to the fact that 100% of BGS and BMP used their mother tongues alongside with SMD or STM as their first language and 93.7% used

them as home language. Furthermore, the mother tongue of BGS and BMP are of the Malay subgroups and these languages are very similar to SMD.

Another finding is that linguistic variables, which have correlation with gender differentiation, are minimal. In accordance with most studies, females are prone to use more of the standard variants and males use more of non-standard variants as in variable (e) word-initial (in RPS) and variable (h) word-medial (in FS) (as evidenced in Chapters 7.2(A) and 9.2(B)). The reason for this could be due to females being associated more with standard variants than males. Interestingly in this research, beyond the norm, males use more of the standard variants and less of the non-standard variants than females in variable (a) word-final and variable ($\leftrightarrow$) word-medial (both in less formal stylistic variation of FS and CS) (as evidenced in Chapters 5.2 and 8.2(B)). This could be due to the fact that more than 51.9% of the male informants have at least a university education as compared to females with only 32.4%. Furthermore, there are only about 3.8% of males that have not gone through formal education compared to 14.7% of females that have not had the same opportunity. In addition, most males in this study are professionals and are in contact with people using STM. Another factor could also be due to the mainstream notion that most males listen to RTM, TV3 or TV7 information channels as compared to females. Females, on the other hand, prefer watching entertainment channels.

Stylistic variations also play an important role in the phonological characteristic of a language. With the basic function of SMD as lingua franca extending to more formal setting such as in schools, government offices and mass media, the speech context of SMD has also moved from the informal to the formal. This study has demonstrated that there is a strong relationship between linguistic

variations and stylistic variations and therefore answers the research question in item 1.3: (iii) To what extent is phonological differentiation of SMD determined by stylistic variation?

There is significant correlation between stylistic variations and linguistic variations in SMD. Most linguistic variables in this study are correlated with stylistic variations, except for variable (a), (e) word-initial, (r) and (τΣ) (as in chapter 5, 7, 11 and 12. Like most studies, this study shows that the more formal the stylistic context, the more the standard variants are used, or vice-versa. This is particularly true for the variable (↔) word-medial, (e) word-medial, (o) word-medial, (h) word-medial and (?) (as evidenced in Chapters 6, 7, 8, 9 and 13).

Contrary to the above, for variable (k), the more formal the stylistic context, the less the standard variant is used, or the less formal stylistic context, the more the standard variants is used (as evidenced in Chapter 10). This is due to the reason that the realisation of word-final /k/ as the non-standard variants [k] is the typical characteristics of SMD. The more formal the speech context, the more the non-standard variants are emphasised by speakers.

Regardless of whether or not, social factors, stylistic factors or the combination of both plays a significant role in linguistic choice and use, they mark the social grouping of the speech community. A great number of the linguistic variables of SMD are markers which play significant roles in marking the social differences in the speech community while others are indicators which play less significant roles in marking the speech community. This study has determined the social functions of the linguistic

variations in the speech community by answering the research question in item 1.3:
(iv) To what extent is speech community of SMD marked by the linguistic variables?

The definite marker in SMD is variable ($\leftrightarrow$) word-medial (as evidenced in Chapter 6). It plays a significant role in marking all four social contexts, namely gender, age, ethnic membership and social stratification differences in the speech community. Both genders, all age groups, different ethnic groups and different social strata make significant differences in the variant they use in variable ($\leftrightarrow$) word-medial. The choice of the standard variant [$\leftrightarrow$] or the non-standard [a] variant by a speaker in different speech contexts indicates which gender, age group, ethnic group and social strata the speaker belongs to.

The variable ($\leftrightarrow$) word-medial, (e), (o), (h), (k) and (?) are markers which have significant role in determining age differences in SMD (as evidenced in Chapter 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 13). The oldest age group mark significant differences in the variant they use as compared to the youngest age group. However, variable ($\leftrightarrow$), word-initial (r) and (tΣ) are indicators which play less significant roles in marking age differences (as evidenced in Chapter 6,11 and 12)

The markers of ethnic membership differences are variable ($\leftrightarrow$) word-medial, (e) word-medial (h), (k) and (?) (as discussed in Chapter 6, 7, 9, 10 and 13). The choices and use among the variants indicate that the speakers are of the Malay ethnic groups or not. On the other hand, the variable ($\leftrightarrow$) word-initial and (r) are indicators which play less significant roles in marking ethnic differences (as discussed in Chapter 6 and 11).

The two markers of gender differences are the variable (↔) word-medial and (h) word-medial (as evidenced in Chapter 6 and 9). Males and females use significant differences of these two variables. Consequently, this is evident in marking the speech of the males from the females. However, variable (a) and (e) word-initial are indicators which play less significant roles in marking gender differences (as evidenced in Chapter 5 and 7).

The markers of social strata differences are variable (↔) word-medial, (e) word-medial, (o) word-medial, (h), (k) and (?) (as evidenced in Chapter 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 13). The more the standard variants of the above variables used by the speakers, the higher the social strata they belong to. The variable (a), (o) word-initial, (r) and (τΣ) are among the indicators of SMD, which play less significant roles in marking social strata differences in the speech community (as evidenced in Chapter 5,8,11 and 12).

This Urban Dialectology study has shown that the SMD in the city of Kota Kinabalu has a distinctive presence. It has also shown that the linguistic variations, specifically the phonological features of SMD are much influenced by the social factors, namely gender, age, ethnicity and social stratification as well as the speech contexts with a range of formality.

From the data, it is clear that there is a speech system that is consistently used by the Sabahans of various socio-cultural and socio-economical backgrounds in their interaction with one another. Today, SMD is not merely a variety of the market place or lingua franca of intra-ethnic and inter-ethnic interaction but the home language to many Sabahans. Consequently, it has become the first language to many children.

Everyone in Sabah, regardless of gender, people of all age groups, people of all ethnic groups and people of all social strata speak SMD, in both non-formal and formal settings. SMD has become the bond among the people of Sabah. It has become part of the identity of the people. The attitude of the speech community is slowly changing from being embarrassed to being proud of the increase of usage at home to outside the home in the state of Sabah. It is indeed 'the speech of Sabah' as its name suggests.

This study has shown that although it is difficult to prescribe a standard phonological feature of the Sabah Malay Dialect as it has a great number of phonological variables which are very much dependent upon social and stylistic variations, the Sabah Malay Dialect is indeed a dialect in its own right.