CHAPTER 5

SOCIAL AND STYLISTIC VARIATIONS OF VARIABLE (α)

5.1   INTRODUCTION

One of the variables that are clearly present in the Malay language is the phoneme /α/, particularly in word-final position. In most varieties of Malay, the word-final /α/ is variable as sometimes it is realised as low back unrounded vowel [α] and other times as mid central unrounded vowel [↔]. In most sub dialects of the '↔-variety', the word-final /α/ is realised as [↔].   However, in other dialects such as Negeri Sembilan and Kelantan, the word-final /a/ corresponds with lax-mid back rounded vowel [□] and lax-mid back unrounded vowel [□_] respectively. In all the sub dialects of the 'a-variety', the word-final /a/ is always realised as [α] (Asmah Haji Omar, 1991). However, in the Standard Malay the phoneme /a/ has two allophones, low back unrounded vowel [α] and mid central unrounded vowel [↔] with the phonemic realisations as follows:

$$
\text{/α/ :}\quad \rightarrow \quad
\begin{cases}
[\alpha] \ /\underline{\quad} \ \text{all environments}\\[2ex]
[\leftrightarrow] \ / \underline{\quad} \ \#
\end{cases}
$$

Examples:

ada	'have'	:	[αδα] ~ [αδ↔]
apa	'what'	:	[απα] ~ [απ↔]
kepala	'head'	:	[κ↔παλα] ~ [κ↔παλ↔]
σαψα	'I/me'	:	[σαφα] ~ [σαφ↔]
kita	'we'	:	[κιτα] ~ [κιτ↔]
muka	'face'	:	[μυκα] ~ [μυκ↔]

In this study, the researcher only investigates the word-final /α/. Hence the researcher encloses the sounds of the word final /α/ in parentheses and name it as 'variable (α)' instead of using the term 'phoneme /α/'. Hence the variable (α) is only equivalent to word-final /α/ as in *ketua* 'leader', *muka* 'face', *kita* 'we' and *tiga* 'three'. Variable (a) does not represent word-initial /α/ as in *adik* 'younger sibling' and *api* 'fire' or the word-medial /α/ as in *patah* 'break' and in the place name of *Kinabalu*. Hence, the discussion in this chapter is focused on the variable (a) which represents the word-final /a/ in SMD per se.

This study shows that the variable (α) has two variants, namely the low back unrounded vowel [α] and the mid central unrounded vowel [↔]. Hence, the word-final /a/ is variably realised as either [↔] or [a]. This can be written as follows:

$$(\alpha) = \text{word-final } /\alpha/ \quad : \rightarrow \quad \begin{cases} (\alpha)\text{-}1 = [\leftrightarrow] \\ \\ (\alpha)\text{-}2 = [\alpha] \end{cases}$$

These symbols representing the first variant of variable (a) is the mid central unrounded vowel [↔] and the second variant is the low back unrounded vowel [α]. The variable (a) alternates in SMD as follows:

Examples:

ada	'have'	:	[αδα] ~ [αδ↔]
apa	'what'	:	[απα] ~ [απ↔]
kepala	'head'	:	[κ↔παλα] ~ [κ↔παλ↔]
σαψα	'I/me'	:	[σαφα] ~ [σαφ↔]

Both the [α] variant, which is equivalent to the Northern Peninsular style of pronunciation, and the [↔] variant, which is equivalent to the Southern Peninsular style are accepted as "the norms for good language usage" (Asmah Haji Omar 1991:2). However, for the purpose of this study, the researcher classifies the [↔] variant as the standard form and the [α] variant as the non-standard.   This is because the [↔] variant is identified as "the language of Radio and Television Malaysia"(Ibid: 3).

As variable (a) is a common feature in the Malay language, it is presented in the speech or stylistic variations of the 90 informants who were involved in Word-list Style (WLS) and Reading Passage Style (RPS), and also the speech or stylistic variations of all 108 informants who were involved in Formal Speech (FS) and Casual Speech (CS).

Table 5.1 shows the word-final /a/ is variably realised either as [↔] or [a] based on stylistic variation. The percentage mean of word-final /a/ realised as [↔] and [α] are 1.53 and 98.47% in WLS; 0.85 and 99.15% in RPS; 1.62 and 98.38% in FS; and 1.34 and 98.66% in CS. This shows that the word-final /a/ is realised highly as [a] (98.38-98.66%) and very seldom as [↔] (0.85-1.62%).

Table 5.1: Descriptive Statistics of Variable (α) Word-Final

Stylistic Variation	Variant	N	Min	Max	Mean	Standard Deviation
WLS	(α)-$_1$ = [↔]	90	0.00	58.62	1.53	7.46
	(α)-$_2$ = [α]	90	41.38	100.00	98.47	7.46
RPS	(α)-$_1$ = [↔]	90	0.00	31.82	0.85	4.16
	(α)-$_2$ = [α]	90	68.18	100.00	99.15	4.16
FS	(α)-$_1$ = [↔]	108	0.00	35.86	1.62	5.76
	(α)-$_2$ = [α]	108	64.14	100.00	98.38	5.76
CS	(α)-$_1$ = [↔]	108	0.00	38.25	1.34	5.52

$(\alpha)-_2 = [\alpha]$	108	61.75	100.00	98.66	5.52

5.2   VARIABLE (a) AND GENDER

This study finds that the variable (a) is realised more as [a] than [↔] by both genders in all four different stylistic variations as shown in Table 5.2. Males use [a] between 96.69 and 98.34%, and [↔] only between 1.66 and 3.31%. Similarly, females use [a] between 98.83 and 99.86%, and [↔] only between 0.14 and 1.17%, in different stylistic variations as shown in Table 5.2:

Table 5.2: Percentage Means of Variable (α) Word-Final
by Gender and Stylistic Variation

Stylistic Variation	Variant	Male	Female
WLS	$(\alpha)-_1 = [↔]$	1.98	1.17
	$(\alpha)-_2 = [\alpha]$	98.02	98.83
RPS	$(\alpha)-_1 = [↔]$	1.66	0.20
	$(\alpha)-_2 = [\alpha]$	98.34	99.80
FS	$(\alpha)-_1 = [↔]$	3.31	0.32
	$(\alpha)-_2 = [\alpha]$	96.69	99.68
CS	$(\alpha)-_1 = [↔]$	2.89	0.14
	$(\alpha)-_2 = [\alpha]$	97.11	99.86

Between these two genders, males use a higher percentage of [↔] and lower percentage of [a], while females use a higher percentage of [a] and lower percentage of [↔] in all the four stylistic variations.

The indices for variable (a) by gender and stylistic variation lie between the scores of 196.69 and 199.86 as shown in Figure 5.1. These index scores of variable (a) are almost consistent with the use of the [α] variant.
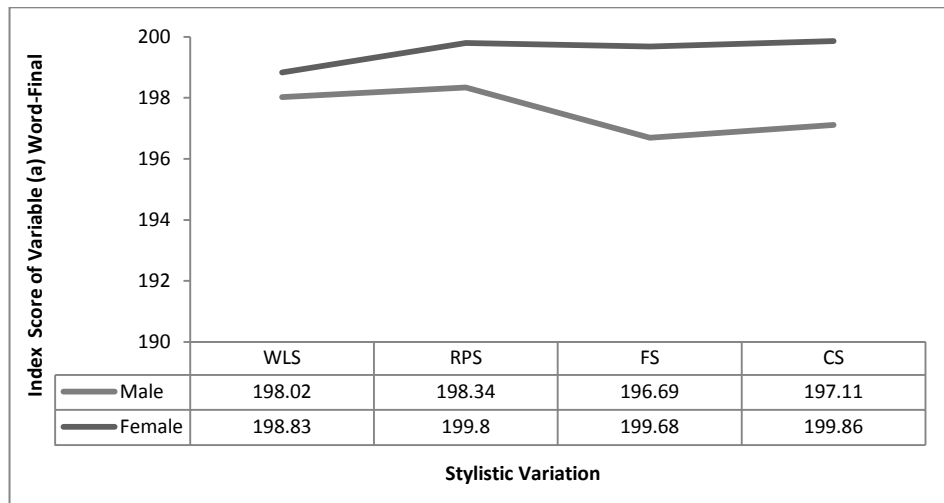
Figure 5.1: Index Score of Variable (α) Word-Final by Gender and Stylistic Variation

The variable (α) is correlated with gender variation, as shown by the space separating male and female lines. However, the space between these genders is more widespread in FS and CS. In contrast, the gender lines in WLS and RPS are closer to each other. This is supported by the significant percentage differences at the 5% level ($p<0.05$) of variable (a) realised as [↔] and [α] word-finally, between one gender group and another, in FS and CS, as tested by the Independent-Samples T-Test (see Appendix Ci).

The variable (a) does not correlate with stylistic variation as the gender lines are almost level instead of rising or dropping in the less formal style. This is in line with the Paired-Samples T-Test that shows the percentage differences of the variable (a) realised as [↔] and [α] word-finally by gender are too small, and insignificant at the 5% level ($p>0.05$) between one stylistic variations and another, i.e. WLS-RPS, RPS-FS and FS-CS for both gender groups (see Appendix Cii).

Although the variable (a) is subject to gender differentiation, it is however not involved in a systematic stylistic variation. Thus, the variable (a) is not a marker but an indicator in the speech community of SMD as it has a modest role in the marking of

gender differences, at least in formal stylistic variation. In the less formal style, there is no significant difference between the speech of males and females with regard to the use of variable (a) in SMD.

5.3 VARIABLE (a) AND AGE

This study finds that variable (a) or word-final/a/ is realised more as [a] than [↔] by all age groups at all four different stylistic variations as shown in Table 5.3. All the age groups use 95.30% at the least and 100% at the most of [a], and zero% at the least and 4.70% at the most of [↔] at different stylistic variations.

Table 5.3: Percentage Means of Variable (α) Word-Final
by Age and Stylistic Variations

Stylistic Variation	Variant	15-24 yrs	25-34 yrs	35-44 yrs	45-54 yrs	55-64 yrs
WLS	$(\alpha)\text{-}_1 =$ [↔]	0.19	0.74	4.70	1.73	.
	$(\alpha)\text{-}_2 =$ [a]	99.81	99.26	95.30	98.28	.
RPS	$(\alpha)\text{-}_1 =$ [↔]	0.05	0.71	2.49	0.00	.
	$(\alpha)\text{-}_2 =$ [a]	99.95	99.29	97.51	100.00	.
FS	$(\alpha)\text{-}_1 =$ [↔]	0.42	2.44	2.23	0.97	2.04
	$(\alpha)\text{-}_2 =$ [a]	99.58	97.56	97.77	99.03	97.96
CS	$(\alpha)\text{-}_1 =$ [↔]	0.22	2.10	2.37	0.00	1.03
	$(\alpha)\text{-}_2 =$ [a]	99.78	97.90	97.63	100.00	98.97

The youngest age group uses the highest percentage of [α] and the lowest percentage of [↔] among all the age groups in the case of WLS, RPS and FS. The second youngest age group uses the highest percentage of [α] and the lowest percentage of [↔] among all of the age groups in the case of CS. This age group also uses the lowest percentage of [α] and the highest percentage of [↔] among all of the age groups in FS. The age group of 35-44 year olds uses the lowest percentage of

[α] and the highest percentage of [↔] among all the age groups in the case of WLS, RPS and CS.

The indices for variable (a) by age and stylistic variation lie between the scores of 195.3 to 200 as shown in Figure 5.2. These index scores of variable (α) are almost consistent with the use of the [α] variant.

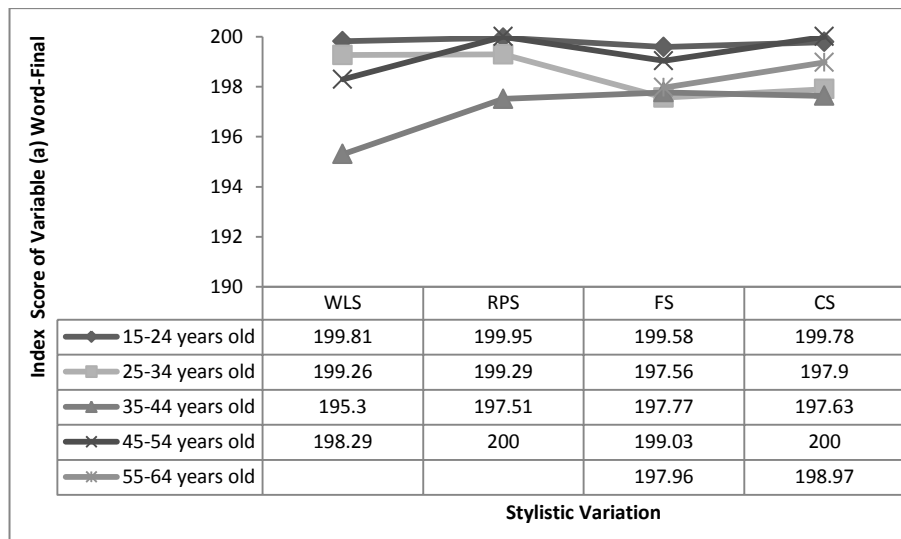|	WLS	RPS	FS	CS
15-24 years old	199.81	199.95	199.58	199.78
25-34 years old	199.26	199.29	197.56	197.9
35-44 years old	195.3	197.51	197.77	197.63
45-54 years old	198.29	200	199.03	200
55-64 years old			197.96	198.97

Figure 5.2: Index Score of Variable (α) Word-Final by Age and Stylistic Variation

The variable (α) is not correlated with age variation as each of the age lines entangle with others. There is no clear space separating the groups, as the gap between the lines is too narrow. This is supported by the insignificant percentage differences at the 5% level ($p > 0.05$) of variable (a) realised as [↔] and [α] word-finally between one age group and another as confirmed by the One-Way ANOVA Test (see Appendix Ciii).

The graph also shows that there is no stylistic variation as the lines are relatively level instead of rising or dropping in the less formal style. Hence, the variable (α) is not correlated with stylistic variation. This is proven by the

insignificant percentage differences at the 5% level (p>0.05) of variable (a) realised as [↔] and [α] word-finally by age between one stylistic variation and another, i.e. WLS-RPS, RPS-FS and FS-CS, as revealed in Paired-Samples T-Test (see Appendix Civ).

As the variable (a) is not associated to age variation or stylistic variation, it is neither a marker nor an indicator in the speech community of SMD as it has no consequential role in the marking of age differences. Thus, there is no significant difference among all the age groups when come to the use of variable (a) in SMD.

5.4   VARIABLE (α) AND ETHNIC MEMBERSHIP

Table 5.4 shows that, variable (a) or word-final /a/ is realised more as [a] than [↔] by all ethnic group at all four different stylistic variations. All ethnic groups use [a] at a minimum of 93.95% and a maximum of 100%, and [↔] at a minimum of zero and a maximum of 6.05%, in different stylistic variations.

Table 5.4: Percentage Means of Variable (α) Word-Final
by Ethnic Membership and Stylistic Variation

Stylistic Variation	Variant	MLY	KDZ	BJU	BGS	BMP	CHN	ONB
WLS	(α)-1 = [↔]	4.41	0.22	0.35	4.74	1.15	0.00	.
	(α)-2 = [a]	95.59	99.78	99.66	95.26	98.85	100.00	.
RPS	(α)-1 = [↔]	2.94	0.03	0.09	0.34	2.10	0.77	.
	(α)-2 = [a]	97.06	99.97	99.91	99.67	97.90	99.23	.

Table 5.4, cont.

Stylistic Variation	Variant	MLY	KDZ	BJU	BGS	BMP	CHN	ONB
FS	(α)-1 = [↔]	4.14	1.12	0.20	0.79	6.05	0.23	1.85
	(α)-2 = [a]	95.86	98.88	99.80	99.21	93.95	99.77	98.15
CS	(α)-1 = [↔]	4.66	0.48	0.20	0.39	5.76	0.09	1.12
	(α)-2 = [a]	95.34	99.52	99.80	99.61	94.25	99.91	98.88

KDZ use the highest percentage of [α] and the lowest percentage of [↔] among all ethnic groups in the case of RPS. CHN use the highest percentage of

[α] and the lowest percentage of [↔] among all ethnic groups in the cases of WLS, FS and CS.

The indices of variable (α) by ethnic group and stylistic variation lie between the scores of 193.95 and 200 as shown in Figure 5.3. These index scores are almost consistent with the use of the [α] variant.

Figure 5.3 shows that the variable (α) is not correlated with ethnic group variation, as each of these groups entangles with one other, the gap between the lines is narrow and there is no defining line separating the majority of these groups. This is supported by insignificant percentage differences at the 5% level ($p>0.05$) of variable (a) realised as [↔] and [α] word-finally, between one age group and another as indicated in the One-Way ANOVA Test (see Appendix Cv).

Similarly, the variable (a) has no stylistic variation as the graph illustrates that the lines are either relatively level or inconsistently dropping or rising in the less formal style. This is in line with the insignificant percentage differences at the 5% level ($p>0.05$) of variable (a) realised as [↔] and [α] word-finally by ethnic membership between one stylistic variation and another, i.e. WLS-RPS, RPS-FS and FS-CS as proven in the Paired-Samples T-Test (see Appendix Cvi).
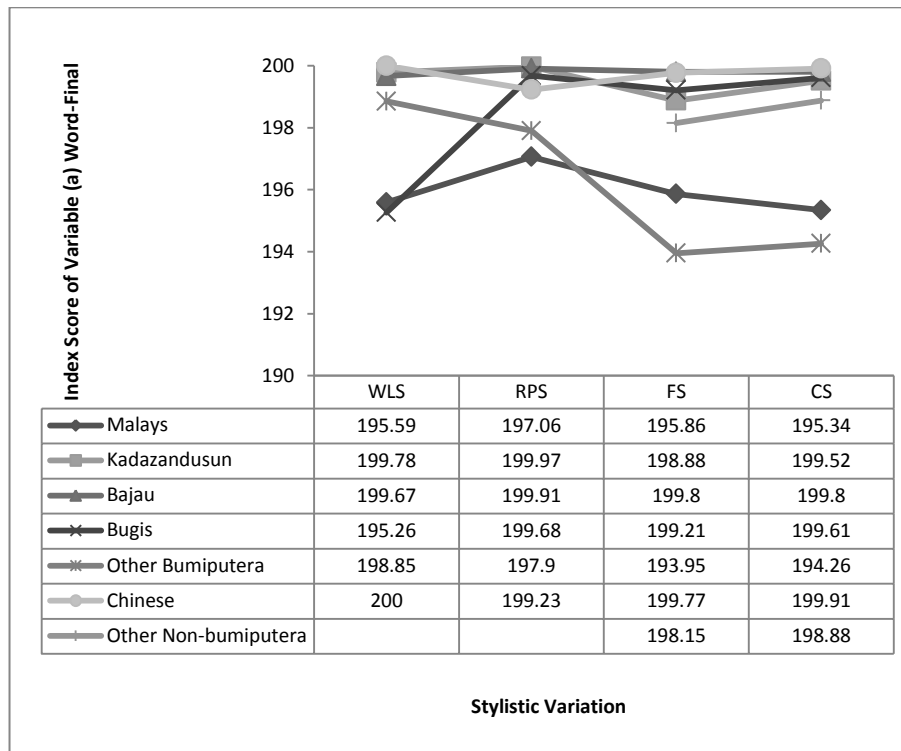
	WLS	RPS	FS	CS
Malays	195.59	197.06	195.86	195.34
Kadazandusun	199.78	199.97	198.88	199.52
Bajau	199.67	199.91	199.8	199.8
Bugis	195.26	199.68	199.21	199.61
Other Bumiputera	198.85	197.9	193.95	194.26
Chinese	200	199.23	199.77	199.91
Other Non-bumiputera			198.15	198.88

Stylistic Variation

Figure 5.3: Index Score of Variable (α) Word-Final by Ethnic Membership
and Stylistic Variation

The variable (a) is neither correlated with ethnic group variation nor stylistic variation, it can be said that variable (a) is neither a marker nor an indicator in the speech community of SMD as it has no important role in the marking of ethnic differences. In other words, there is no significant difference among the ethnic groups in relation to the use of variable (a) in SMD.

5.5 VARIABLE (α) AND SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

This study finds that variable (a) or word-final /a/ is realised more as [a] than [$\leftrightarrow$] by all social strata in all four different stylistic variations as shown in Table 5.5. All social strata use between 91.78% and 100% of [a], and between zero and 8.22% of [$\leftrightarrow$] in word-final /a/ for all four stylistic variations.

Table 5.5: Percentage Means of Variable (α) Word-Final
by Social Stratification and Stylistic Variation

Stylistic Variation	Variant	LWC	MWC	UWC	LMC	MMC
WLS	$(\alpha)\text{-}_1 = [\leftrightarrow]$	0.00	0.27	0.60	0.47	8.22
	$(\alpha)\text{-}_2 = [a]$	100.00	99.73	99.40	99.53	91.78

RPS	$(\alpha)\text{-}_1 = [\leftrightarrow]$	0.15	0.00	0.00	1.86	2.65
	$(\alpha)\text{-}_2 = [a]$	99.85	100.00	100.00	98.14	97.35
FS	$(\alpha)\text{-}_1 = [\leftrightarrow]$	0.40	0.33	0.31	3.84	4.35
	$(\alpha)\text{-}_2 = [a]$	99.60	99.67	99.69	96.16	95.65
CS	$(\alpha)\text{-}_1 = [\leftrightarrow]$	0.00	0.21	0.14	3.60	3.78
	$(\alpha)\text{-}_2 = [a]$	100.00	99.79	99.86	96.40	96.22

The LWC use the highest percentage of [α] and the lowest percentage of [↔] among all social strata in all four different stylistic variations. MMC uses [α] the least in all stylistic variations, which is the lowest amongst all the social strata. In contrast, they use [↔] the most, which is the highest among all the social strata.

The indices for variable (a) by social stratification and stylistic variation lie between the scores of 191.78 to 200 as shown in Figure 5.4. These index scores of variable (α) are almost consistent with the use of the [α] variant.

Figure 5.4 shows that the variable (α) is correlated with social stratification variation, especially for working and middle classes, as there is a clear space separating the two middle classes in WLS, FS and CS. Furthermore, the percentage differences of variable (a) realised as [↔] and [α] word-finally between one social stratum and another, especially between working classes and middle classes, and between the two working classes of LWC and MWC are significant at the 5% level ($p<0.05$) in almost all stylistic variation except RPS, as tested by the One-Way ANOVA Test (see Appendix Cvii).
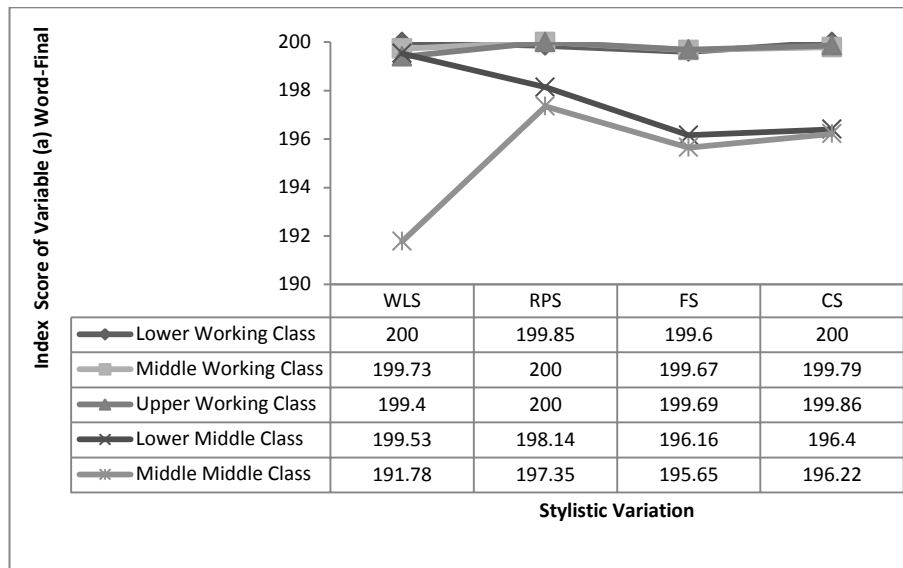
	WLS	RPS	FS	CS
Lower Working Class	200	199.85	199.6	200
Middle Working Class	199.73	200	199.67	199.79
Upper Working Class	199.4	200	199.69	199.86
Lower Middle Class	199.53	198.14	196.16	196.4
Middle Middle Class	191.78	197.35	195.65	196.22

Stylistic Variation

Figure 5.4: Index Score of Variable (α) Word-Final by Social Stratification
and Stylistic Variation

The graph, however, illustrates that there is no stylistic variation as the lines are relatively level for the three working classes and shifted up and down quite drastically for the two middle classes. This is supported by the Paired-Samples T-Test that neither the variable (a) realised as [α] nor [↔] by social stratification has any correlation with stylistic variation. The percentage differences of variable (a) realised as [↔] and [α] word-finally by social stratification between one stylistic variation and another i.e. WLS-RPS, RPS-FS and FS-CS are too small and insignificant at the 5% level ($p > 0.05$) (see Appendix Cviii).

The variable (a) is correlated with social strata variation but not stylistic variation. Therefore, variable (a) is an indicator in the speech community of SMD as it plays little significant role in the marking of social stratifications, especially in distinguishing the working classes (LWC, MWC and UWC) from the middle classes (LMC and MMC). There is no significant difference within the working classes or middle classes as regards to the use of variable (a) in SMD.

5.6   CONCLUSION

In conclusion, variable (a) is realised more as [α] ranging from 41.38 to 100%, and less as [↔] ranging from zero to 58.62%. The indices for the variable (α) range between the score of 191.78 to 200, which is almost consistent with the use of the [α] variant. This also means the word-final /a/ is realised very high percentage as [α] and a very low percentage as [↔] by the speech community of SMD.

In most cases, the speech community of SMD would use [κ↔παλα] instead of [κ↔παλ↔] for *kepala* 'head'; [ματα] instead of [ματ↔] for *mata* 'eyes'; [κατα] instead of [κατ↔] for *kata* 'say' and [απα] instead of [απ↔] for *apa* 'what'. As the variable (a) is only subject to gender and social strata differentiation, females and the working classes of LWC, MWC and UWC tend to use [k↔παλα], [απα], [κατα] more often than the other social groups. This is in contrast with most studies (Wong Khek Seng, 1987; Labov, 1966; Trudgill, 1974, among others), which state that females use more of the standard variety. However, this study finds that females use more of the non-standard variant [α] as compared to males. Males, on the other hand, use more of [↔], which is supposedly the 'standard' variant. For example, males will be more likely to use [απ↔] instead of [απα] than females. For social stratification, the higher the social class, the higher the use of the standard variant [↔].

Although, variable (a) is correlated with gender and social strata variations, there is no correlation between stylistic variations for all the social variations of gender, age, ethnic membership, and social stratification for variable (a) in SMD.