

An analysis of the glottal stop in Belitung Malay

This paper aims to investigate the occurrence of the glottal stop /ʔ/ in Belitung Malay (Miyake et al 2022). It further analyzes the phonetic features of /ʔ/ and compares them with those of the voiceless velar stop /k/.

Belitung Malay is a variety of Malay spoken on Belitung Island, which is located to the southwest of Sumatra Island. It shares many features with Malay varieties in Eastern Sumatra Malay and Western Kalimantan. Nothofer 1997 points out the similarities between Bangka Malay and Belitung Malay, and the presence of /ʔ/ in the base-final position is one of them. The appearance of the glottal stop as a phoneme is assumed to be an innovation that occurred after Proto-Bangka Malay separated from Proto-Malay (Nothofer 1997: 24). In Belitung Malay, /ʔ/ is either simply added at the end of the base or replaced /k/, /h/ or /r/, when compared with Proto-Malay. Examples of bases with the glottal stop include *nasiʔ* (Standard Indonesian “nasi”), *rukuʔ* (SI “rokok”), *kunyaʔ* (SI “kunyah”), and *aiʔ* (SI “air”). This study attempts to find out if there are any conditions for the addition of the glottal stop by consulting Belitung Malay – Indonesian dictionary and a book written in Belitung Malay (Fithrorogi 2011), which perfectly makes clear the occurrence of the glottal stop.

This study also attempts to analyze the phonetic features of the glottal stop. In Belitung Malay, the glottal stop /ʔ/ and the unvoiced velar stop /k/ are attested to be two distinct phonemes, which are in contrast only in the base-final position, such as *ndaʔ* (SI “tidak”) and *ndak* (SI “ingin”). It is reasonably difficult to discern the two phonemes in this position, especially because a velar nasal in Belitung Malay is unreleased, as in many varieties of Malay and standard Indonesian. When analyzed with Praat, a base-final glottal stop shows greater intensity and higher pitch than /k/. They show subtle differences in formants as well.

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