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In Malaysia, Kedayan (ISO code ‘kxd’) speakers are found primarily in the state of Sabah, the state of Sarawak, and the federal territory of Labuan, which is an offshore island near Sabah. Lewis (2009) classifies Kedayan as one of the many Malayic dialects within the Malayo-Polynesian branch of Austronesian languages.

I was unable to reach the current President of the Kedayan Cultural Association in Sabah, Malaysia, for a population estimate of Kedayan speakers in Malaysia. But on 19 July 2013, I was able to reach the former President of the Kedayan Cultural Association in Sabah, Malaysia, Mr Haji Osman. Mr Osman states that there are about 30,000 speakers of Kedayan in Sabah, 30,000 speakers in Sarawak, 15,000 in Labuan, 600 in West Malaysia and between 100,000 and 200,000 speakers in the country of Brunei. In fact, Mr Osman states that as much as 60% of the population of Brunei could be Kedayan speakers. Kedayan is sometimes spelled as ‘Kadayan’, ‘Kedaian’, and ‘Kadyan’.

According to an unpublished lexicostatistic survey done by the present author, Kedayan is between 83–89% lexically similar to Brunei Malay, but only 75–81% lexically similar to Standard Malay (as spoken in Malaysia). This language survey was conducted from 1998 to 2000 and was sponsored by the State Culture Board of Sabah, Malaysia. Another important difference is that the /r/ sound does not occur in Kedayan but does occur in Brunei Malay.

Previous research on Kedayan includes a published wordlist of Kedayan bird names (Maxwell 1969) as well as Moody’s (1984) lexicostatistic comparisons of Kedayan with other Malayic languages. In 1984, Moody stated that the population of Kedayan speakers in Sabah, Malaysia, was only 11,500. Moody also stated that the dialect intelligibility testing among four Brunei and Kedayan villages confirms Smith’s (1984) lexicostatistic analysis which classified these languages as representatives of a single language. Moody stated that lexical similarity between Kedayan and Brunei Malay ranged from 77% to 93% and that Kedayan was 60–80% lexically similar to Standard Malay, as spoken in Sabah, Malaysia. Moody noted, however, that there is no complete mutual intelligibility among speakers of these languages.

The ‘North Wind and the Sun’ text was translated and read by Mr Abdul Kadir Hassan, age 55 at the time of the recording. Mr Hassan was born in Sipitang, Sabah, Malaysia. He speaks both Kedayan and Sabahan Malay fluently.

Consonants

	Bilabial	Dental	Alveolar	Post-alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Plosive and affricate	p b	t̪	d	tʃ dʒ		k g	
Nasal	m		n		ɲ	ŋ	
Fricative			s				h
Approximant	w				j		
Lateral approximant			l				

PHONEME	PHONETIC REPRESENTATION	ORTHOGRAPHIC REPRESENTATION	ENGLISH GLOSS
p	¹ pisɑŋ	pisang	banana
b	¹ buŋa	bunga	flower
m	¹ malɑm	malam	night
w	¹ kawɑn	kawan	friend
t̪	¹ tɑnɑh	tanah	earth
d	¹ daun	daun	leaf
n	¹ naiʔ	naik	to climb
s	¹ sipaʔ	sipak	to kick
l	¹ liʔfaʔ	licak	muddy, slippery
tʃ	¹ tʃium	cium	to kiss
ɕ	¹ ɕalan ¹ baʔis	jalan batis	to walk
ɲ	¹ nasɑh	nyasah	to wash
j	¹ kaju	kayu	wood
k	¹ kilaʔ	kilat	lightning
g	¹ guuh	guuh	thunder
ŋ	¹ aŋin	aŋin	wind
h	¹ huʔɑn	hutan	forest

The voiceless plosives /p t̪ k/ are unaspirated, and unreleased in syllable-final position. The plosive /b/ can occur word-initially, word-medially, and word-finally. But it seems that the plosives /d/ and /g/ do not occur word-finally.

The bilabial approximant, [w], never occurs word-initially.

The palatal nasal, [ɲ], occurs word-initially in [¹nasɑh] ‘to wash’ and word-medially in [ma¹ɲɑnɑm] ‘to weave’. But we have no cases of the palatal nasal occurring in the word-final position. Audio is not available for these examples.

The glottal fricative, [h], occurs in all environments even though in some other Malayic languages it does not occur in all environments (Soderberg 2014).

The glottal stop, [ʔ], occurs as an allophone of /k/ word-finally, e.g. [¹lauk] ~ [¹lauʔ] ‘side dish’, and [¹sirak] ~ [¹siraʔ] ‘salt’. Audio is not available for these examples.

The alveolar flap, [ɾ], is not part of the inventory of indigenous Kedayan phones. It does occasionally occur in Kedayan speech but this is due to the influence of Malay, the national language. When a Kedayan word is pronounced and that word is cognate with a Malay word containing word-final [ɾ], the Kedayan vowel before the deleted [ɾ] will lengthen as the examples indicate in the first part of the following:

/r/-deletion in Kedayan

STANDARD MALAY	KEDAYAN	ENGLISH GLOSS
Word-final		
'ular	u'laa	snake
'bibir	bi'bii	lip
'tidur	ti'duu	to sleep
Word-medial		
maʔa'hari	maʔa'haai	sun
'baraŋ	'baaŋ	thing
Word-initial		
'rumah	'umah	house
'rapaʔ	'apaʔ	close

This finding is consistent with Poedjosoedarmo (1996: 41) and Clynes (2001: 12). This lengthening rule does not apply when the deleted [r] occurs in word-medial and word-initial environments.

Vowels

Unlike Indonesian and Standard Malay, which have six vowel phonemes, /i e ə a o u/ (Soderberg & Olson 2008, Clynes & Deterding 2011), Kedayan is similar to Brunei Malay in that both of these languages have only three vowel phonemes, /i a u/ (Clynes 2001).

	Front	Central	Back
High	i		u
Mid			
Low		a	

PHONEME	PHONETIC REPRESENTATION	ORTHOGRAPHIC REPRESENTATION	ENGLISH GLOSS
i	['binʔaŋ]	bintang	'star'
a	['ʔahun]	tahun	'year'
u	['bukit]	bukit	'hill'

Due to the influence of Malay, the national language, one can occasionally hear the mid back vowel, [o] in Kedayan. Normally, however, in Kedayan this sound is realized as the high back vowel, [u], as we can see in the following examples:

Kedayan back vowel

STANDARD MALAY	KEDAYAN	ENGLISH GLOSS
'oraŋ	'uaŋ	'person'
'ombak	'umbaʔ	'wave'
'oʔak	'uʔak	'brain'

The schwa, [ə], of Standard Malay is generally realized in Kedayan as the low central vowel, [a].

Kedayan low central vowel

STANDARD MALAY	KEDAYAN	ENGLISH GLOSS
lə'suŋ	'lasuŋ	'mortar'
pə'luh	'pəluh	'sweat'
sə'ɟʊk	'səɟuʔ	'cold'

The mid front vowel, [e], which occurs in Malay, is normally realized as [i] in Kedayan:

Kedayan high front vowel

STANDARD MALAY	KEDAYAN	ENGLISH GLOSS
'ekor	'ikuŋ	'tail'
'lebar	li'baa	'wide'
'esok	'isuʔ	'tomorrow'

Stress

Stress in Kedayan is predictable. Unaffixed words in isolation take primary stress on the penultimate syllable, e.g. [du'ii] 'thorn', [a'ŋin] 'wind', [a'kaa] 'root'.

Transcription and glosses of recorded passage

In each segment, free translation follows the gloss. Abbreviations used in glosses:

EMP = emphasis; INT = particle marking what is being questioned in an interrogative sentence; NOM = nominalizer; PASS = passive.

- 'aŋin u'taa 'daŋan maʔa'hahi ba'taŋka si'apa 'kian jaŋ
wind north and sun disputed who INT NOM
'The north wind and the sun were arguing about who'
- dian'taa bi'sia jaŋ 'labih 'gagah ||
among them NOM more strong ||
'among them was the strongest.'
- 'bila ma'lintas sa'uaŋ dʒa'lama ba'dʒubah 'tabal ||
when pass.by one human with.robe thick ||
'When a man with a thick robe passed by'
- bi'sia sa'tudʒu | mun 'aŋin u'taa 'ulah mam'buat dʒa'lama 'aʔu
they agreed if wind north cause do person that
'They agreed if the north wind could cause that person to'
- naŋga'lakan dʒu'bahŋa | 'ia 'tia jaŋ 'gagah ||
remove robe-his he EMP NOM strong ||
'remove his robe, then he is the one who would be considered strong.'
- 'aŋin u'taa pun ba'tiup sakuat'ku'atŋa | 'tapi
wind north also blew as.strong.as.possible but
'The north wind blew as strong as possible, but'
- sa'makin 'apaʔ 'pulaŋ 'dʒubah 'aʔu di'ta'kulŋa ||
increasingly close again robe that PASS.hug.by.him ||
'[implied: the more the wind blew], the closer he hugged the robe to himself'
- 'hudʒuŋhu 'dʒuŋŋa 'aŋin u'taa pun 'aŋkun 'alah ||
eventually wind north also admit defeat ||
'Eventually the north wind acknowledged defeat.'

9. 'lapas 'aʔu | gi'lian maʔa'haai 'pulaŋ basi'naa sahaŋaʔa'haʔa |
 after that turn sun also shine as.hot.as.possible
 'After than was the sun's turn – to shine as hot as possible.'
10. dan 'aai 'aʔu 'dʒua dʒa'lama tu naŋgal'akan dʒu'bahŋa ||
 and time that also human that remove robe-his
 'At that time, the man removed his robe.'
11. ʔaus 'aŋin u'ʔaa pun 'akun jaŋ maʔa'haai tu jaŋ
 immediately wind north also admit that sun that which
 'Immediately the north wind admitted that the sun'
12. 'labih 'gagah 'dai di'ina
 more strong than him
 'was stronger than he was.'

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