Intensifiers in Bidayuh Bau-Jagoi

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ABSTRACT

This paper describes intensifiers in Bidayuh Bau-Jagoi, a variation of the Bidayuh language, spoken in Sarawak, Malaysia. Data were gathered from 10 informants, aged 50-80, who are native speakers of the Bidayuh Bau-Jagoi. In this language, intensifiers are used to intensify the meaning of expressions, particularly adjectives. Results show that intensifiers are categorised into lexical items and reduplication. Three general lexical items (*sikia, manah* and *bonar*) were identified from the data, and 86 specific lexical intensifiers were found to be paired with specific adjectives with the exception of *posah* and *ngakag*. There is only one full reduplication form where a lexical item is reduplicated (*tok-tok*) and it intensifies the meaning of the adjectives that precede it. As for lexical items, the intensifiers are placed after the adjective with the exception of *sikia*. This study has uncovered rules pertaining to the use of intensifiers in Bidayuh Bau-Jagoi that will lead to a proper and better understanding of the language structure.

Keywords: adjectives, Bidayuh Bau-Jagoi, intensifiers, reduplication

Introduction

Studies on intensifiers have been conducted as early as the 1900, for example, "very", "really", "bloody", "rather" and "somewhat" (Bolinger, 1972; Fries, 1940; Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, & Svartvik, 1985; Stoffle, 1901; Wittouck, 2011). Much of the research has been on English, thereby enabling the structural and functional features of English intensifiers to be better understood. For example, English intensifiers are expressed in one word and is placed before an adjective (Paradis, 2008; Stoffel, 1901). Paradis (2008) has developed a categorisation of intensifiers based on the degree of "boundedness". Intensifiers can be either pre-head or post-head modifier, or combination of both like in the Malay language (Ahmad & Jalaluddin, 2012). Similarly, Papuan Malay also exhibits the same structure. Most of