

issue of identity and the existential threat to the Patani Malay language and culture are among the main causes underlying current political unrest in the Deep South (National Reconciliation Commission, 2006). At the same time, the ethnic language and culture are declining at a rapid rate in urban areas where code mixing and language shift are rampant (Masor 2018). Even in rural areas the younger generation is using Patani Malay more infrequently while Thai is increasingly used as a result of education policies and the mass media (Premsrirat et.al. 2008). This puts the Patani Malay language under considerable threat, leading to “ethno-linguistic angst” (Joll 2013:1) and a collective lack of self-confidence within the language community.

The purpose of this study therefore is to examine how the use of each language and script reflects Patani Malay social identity. After describing the background situation of language and script usage for the Patani Malay community in southern Thailand, a brief overview on previous studies on the relationship of language and script to identity will be given. Qualitative research is carried out through oral interviews, participant observation, and documentation. The results from the analysis of the interviews show how the different languages and scripts reflect the multiple components of the Patani Malay identity. The final discussion concludes that the Patani Malay community possess a layered identity, as reflected by the languages and scripts used in the area. Patani Malay and spoken and written Standard Thai reflect their Patani Malay ethnic identity and Thai national identity, respectively, written Classical Malay rendered in the Arabic-based Jawi script reflects both their Islamic and ethnic identity, while Standard Malay using a Roman-based orthography called Rumi script reflects their general *Nusantara* ‘Malay world’ identity.

2. Languages and scripts used in Thailand’s Deep South

Five languages (Patani Malay, Standard Thai, Classical Malay, Standard Malay, Arabic) and three scripts (Thai, Arabic-based Jawi, Roman-based) are in active use by a large number of people in Thailand’s Deep South. *Patani Malay* is the mother tongue of most people, encompassing 83% of the overall population, and in active oral use (Premsrirat 2010). It is widely used in various contexts, such as in conversation with family and friends, and among Patani Malay speakers in schools, mosques, markets, coffee/tea shops, offices, etc. Patani Malay phonology and syntax as found in Islamic documents differ from both Classical Malay written in the Arabic-based Jawi script, and from Standard Malay, the national language of Malaysia, using the Roman-based Rumi orthography (Premsrirat & Samoh 2012), see section 2.2.

Standard Thai as the national language is a second language for most people in the area. It is the medium of instruction as well as the language of textbooks in schools and universities. It is widely and almost exclusively used in radio, television, newspapers, etc. and is very important in the work domain. Areas of daily use include markets and government offices (including provincial halls, district offices, police stations and hospitals). Thai has a growing impact on Patani Malay in that a “mixed language” integrating components of Thai and Patani Malay is becoming more commonly used in daily life, especially among people who live in urban areas and those who have regular contact with government agencies, educational institutions and the mass media (Premsrirat et al. 2008). Some young urban Patani Malay people now use more Thai than Patani Malay.

The majority of the population in this area are Muslims, which is why Arabic as the language of the Qur’an is used in religious domains and for some classes at local universities. In addition, Arabic is used for writing mosque names, school names, etc. The oral and written use of Patani Malay, Classical Malay and Standard Malay is described in the following three sections.

2.1 Use of Patani Malay

Patani Malay has no traditional writing system but is often found written in informal Thai-based or Roman-based scripts. It is also used as an oral medium of instruction in a variety of Islamic educational institutions. The oldest of these institutions are the *Pondok* schools, where the teaching is based on textbooks (*kitab*) authored by Islamic scholars². *Pondok* students usually are teenagers or adults, and only religious subjects are taught. Most villages have a *Tadika* (shortened from *Taman Didikan Kanak-Kanak*) school, which provides basic Islamic learning in the evenings and weekends for children aged 5 to 12. Teaching materials and textbooks mainly come from the *Pustaka*, the local organization that is responsible for *Tadika* schools, although some are provided by the Thai Ministry of Education. In recent years, private Islamic schools have grown in popularity. There, Patani Malay children study both an Islamic track and a secular academic track

² Such as Sheikh Daud Al-Fathoni and Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fathoni.

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