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A grammar of Mualang : an Ibanic language of Western Kalimantan, Indonesia

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Citation

Tjia, J. (2007, April 25). *A grammar of Mualang : an Ibanic language of Western Kalimantan, Indonesia*. LOT dissertation series. LOT, Utrecht. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/11862>

Version: Not Applicable (or Unknown)

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Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

1 GENERAL INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents some general information regarding the Mualang language and its speakers. Details about the speakers and where they live will be given in section (1.1). Section (1.2) briefly sketches their daily activities and products of their culture, followed by a section on the genetic affiliation of Mualang (1.3). Dialectal variation and language use are discussed in (1.4). Then section (1.5) will describe previous linguistic studies on Mualang. While section (1.6) touches upon the aim of this study and its general theoretical framework, the final section (1.7) describes the method of collecting the data corpus and its analysis.

1.1 The speakers and their country

Mualang is a term that the people use to refer to themselves, the language they speak, and the land they dwell on. It is also used as an exonym. According to a legend (Paternus 2001:3), the name Mualang originates from the name of a person who died on the river which was then named after him, when the people of Mualang fled from *tem'away/tem'awang* 'the settlement' of *Tampun Juah*. The story of Tampun Juah¹ is a myth of origin well known among the people and shared also by surrounding ethnic groups. *Tampun Juah* was the place from where various related ethnic groups began to spread out, according to the story (see also Dunselman 1955:279). Dunselman mentioned that the location might be in the region of the Sai and Sekayam rivers, a bit further on the western side of the Mualang area.²

Although Mualang is also the name of a small river on the northern part of *kecamatan* Belitang Hulu, the people do not reside on it or even nearby. In fact, the people mainly dwell along the basin of the Ayak and Belitang rivers, tributaries of the Kapuas River. Administratively, the whole present Mualang-speaking area covers three different subdistricts (*kecamatan*s): Belitang Hilir, Belitang, and Belitang Hulu, which since 2003 belong to the newly-formed district (*kabupaten*) Sekadau of the province of West Kalimantan.³ Traditionally, the Mualang people have been associated with two general areas, namely Mualang *ili* 'downstream' and *ulu* 'upstream'. *Kecamatan* Belitang was an administrative subdivision of the

¹ According to one version of the story that I recorded, the *tem'away* Tampun Juah was named after Juah, a man, who was transfix – *tampun* means 'to transfix' in Mualang – with Lemay, his wife, for having committed incest. Both were cousins, and marriage between cousins (and siblings) was (and still is) taboo (*mali*). As the story goes, they were punished to death for that.

² See also Drake (1996) and Ngiuk (2003) for an overview of the history of the Mualang people.

³ Formerly the three *kecamatan* were under the administration of *kabupaten* Sanggau.

upstream area. In the year 2000, the number of inhabitants in these three *kecamatan*, according to *Biro Pusat Statistik Kabupaten Sanggau* (cited in *Institut Dayakologi* 2004) was 19,878 persons in Belitang Hilir, 11,711 in Belitang, and 17,184 in Belitang Hulu. These figures probably include people with another ethnic background who live in the areas, such as the *Senganan* or Malay people, Chinese, Javanese, and groups who are ethnically Dayak.⁴

The exact number of Mualang speakers is therefore hard to give. However, if a rough 10% (as an average percentage for non-Mualang) is subtracted from the total number of the three *kecamatan*, the approximate number of Mualang speakers might reach 40,000 people.⁵ This number may include a few thousand speakers (on the average not more than 5,000 in each location) in other areas of West Kalimantan, notably in the old Sekadau area, the city of Pontianak, Kecamatan Sepauk, Kecamatan Sintang. Some have moved there permanently while others only temporarily.

The Mualang area is located about 300 km upstream on the Kapuas River from Pontianak, the capital of West Kalimantan province. It can be reached by land and/or water. However, during the rainy season villages become inaccessible or hard to reach. Also in the dry season they are isolated and lack modern facilities and infrastructure. Much of the area is hilly with clay roads or trails that become flooded and slippery when it rains. People have to walk for hours between places and because transportation is expensive, many hardly ever travel out of their area. Many people even have never been in the capital city of the province. Electricity is only available in the capital towns of the *kecamatan*s, and even there only from evening till morning. A few people own a generator running a few hours in the evening to watch television. Only a few places have an elementary school, whereas higher education is found only in the capital towns of the *kecamatan*s. Balai Sepuak has a theological school at senior high school level, founded by missionaries. Some Mualang people have acquired higher education⁶ and obtained various prominent positions in society (as teachers, university lecturers, medical doctors, priests, etc. – even, the present bishop of the Catholic Church of West Kalimantan is from downstream Mualang). A majority of the Mualang people have become Christians since the 1930's, with Catholics mostly in the Downstream area and members of the protestant *Gereja Kemah Injil Indonesia*, in the Upstream region.

⁴ In fact there are no exact figures. For example, in June 2002 I obtained the information that Kecamatan Belitang Hulu had 17,519 inhabitants (report on the population of the *kecamatan* to Kabupaten Sanggau in June 2002). This number had gone down to around 13,000 in June 2005 (pers. com. with the head of Kecamatan Belitang Hulu); whereas in the same year Kecamatan Belitang Hilir had about 11,000 inhabitants (pers. com. with the head of Kecamatan Belitang Hilir).

⁵ This number matched my prediction after consultation with several reliable sources such as local teachers, church pastors, heads of *kecamatan*s and villages. Other estimates are Dunselman (1955) with 8,000 speakers, Wurm and Hattori (1981) with 10,000, whereas Pungak (1976:5) recorded 30,000 people. Pungak's figure was based on a census in 1975, but outsiders may have been included in this figure.

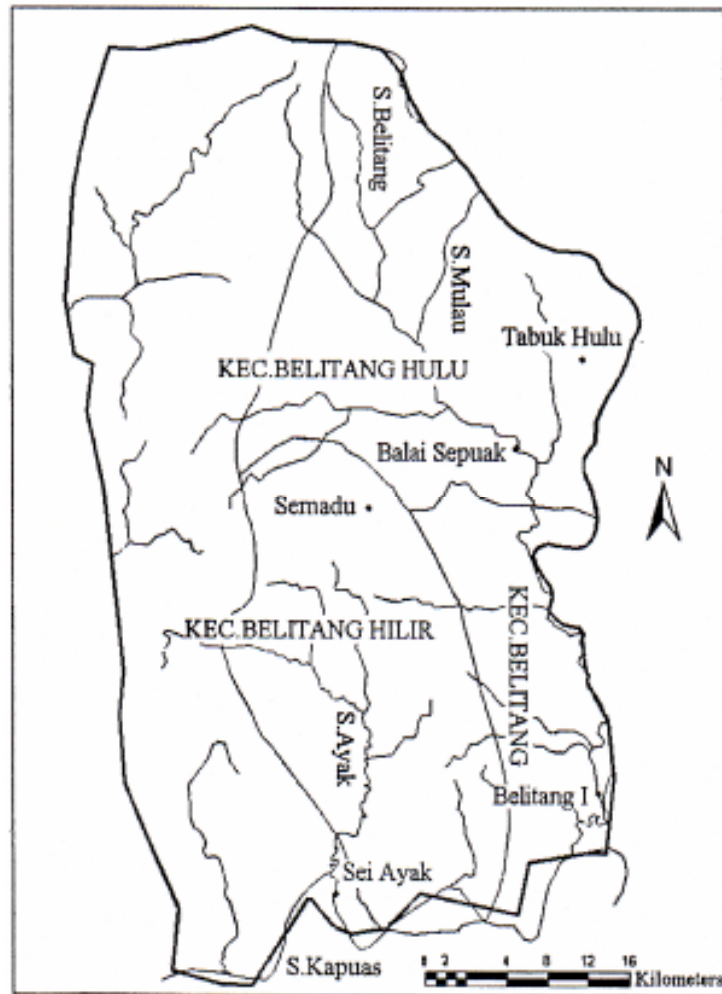
⁶ At the moment of writing one of them is pursuing a Ph.D. degree as I happen to know.

Map 1: West Kalimantan Province and Indonesia (inset)⁷



⁷ I am very grateful to, especially, Donald Holl and Jim Meyers for having provided me with the maps.

Map 2: Main Mualang-speaking Area



Note: Kab. = *kabupaten* (district); Kec. = *kecamatan* (subdistrict); S = *sungai* = river.

1.2 Daily life and culture

Most Mualang people still maintain a cyclic lifestyle focused on the forest, although its intensity has begun to decline due to various factors. They practise swidden cultivation and engage in other traditional activities in the forest and river, such as hunting and gathering. To some extent traditional customs and rites still accompany their activities, although with some adjustment to modern times and accommodation to their Christian religion. Approximately in July people start *nebas-nebang* ‘clearing bushes and cut down trees’, then *nunu* ‘burning’ a month later. Normally such activities cannot be done alone, and that makes people *baduruk* ‘carrying on mutual-cooperation in a group with others’. Within the next three months, around September through December, people make holes for seeds and do planting (*nugal* and *nam’ak*). As a rule the *uma* ‘dry rice field’ is planted with rice, corn, cassava and vegetables.⁸ Additional food is obtained from fishing in the river and hunting in the forest. Pigs are the main livestock. Additional sources of livelihood are primarily *mutung* ‘getting rubber saps’ and planting pepper. In some places people work at a palm oil plantation.

After harvest time, from May until June people celebrate the big *gaway* ‘feast, festival’ to thank God⁹ for the harvest, thus, completing the yearly cultivation cycle. Food (pork and chicken cooked in bamboo and delicacies made of rice) is provided for guests who go from house to house. The harvest period is also a perfect time for *gaway balaki-bini* ‘feast for marriage’, during which several traditional ceremonies are still performed, such as *nuntung* (or *b(a)any’ung* as it is called in the Downstream area) ‘picking up the bride by the groom at her place’ and *b(a)ajar* ‘giving advice (to the couple)’.

Most of the oral tradition is on the brink of disappearance. Various chanted stories, such as *kana*, *ladin*, *janih*, *mayin pancung*,¹⁰ are now often only known to older generations. This also includes the tradition of *tunsun purih* ‘tracing the family’s descendants’. Only a few elder people still memorize the chains of descendants of families. Wickerwork is still practised by some for the production of various kinds of household utensils, fishing traps, etc. which are made from bamboo, rattan and *seng’ang* ‘k.o. bushes’,¹¹ such as *biday* ‘big rattan mat’, *terany’ang* ‘tall paddy basket (carried on the back)’, *kemansay* ‘rattan fish scoop’, *tampi* ‘winnow’.

Although nowadays the Mualang area is administratively divided according to regulations of the national government, people still have their *temeng’ung* ‘the elder expert on traditional adat (customs)’ and they still attempt to maintain traditional law including its fines in particular situations.

⁸ For further information on cultivation, see Drake (1982).

⁹ Before Christianity replaced the traditional beliefs, the feast was dedicated to the god *Petara* and to other gods, such as *Puyang Gana* ‘god of the land’.

¹⁰ See Dunselman (1954, 1955, 1959a, b) for more details.

¹¹ Paternus (2001) documents traditional wickerwork and other artefacts. Drake (1988) describes textile weaving among the Mualang people in former times. I have not seen nor heard whether people are still practicing these handicrafts, but I did see traditional ornamented containers and hats being used.

1.3 Genetic affiliation

Mualang has been classified as an Ibanic language together with Iban, Sebuyau, Kantu', Air Tabun, Seberuang (Hudson 1970, 1978). Besides these variants, the names of Desa and Ketungau are also mentioned (e.g. in Collins 2004:18). The members of this Ibanic group have been subclassified by various linguists as belonging to the Malayic group under the Western Malayo-Polynesian branch of the Austronesian language family (Hudson 1970, Blust 1981, Adelaar 1985, Nothofer 1988). However, an exact internal classification of the so-called Malayic subgroup (hence the validity of the term Malayic) has not yet been well established, and disputes continue as is apparent from the works just cited.¹²

The close relationship between these Ibanic varieties with those of Malay has long been noted, but the first observer who was explicit about it was Hudson (Hudson 1970), while Adelaar (1985) was the first important attempt to reconstruct their common ancestor, coined Proto Malayic. The languages of these two groups are structurally very similar. They also share a similar voice marking system, with variations in the inventory of voice operators. Major differences lie in the lexicon (cf. Adelaar, *op.cit.*). A well-known phenomenon that distinguishes the two groups is that words in Ibanic languages end with an offglide or an approximant, whereas their cognates in Malay mostly end with a stop. Furthermore, Ibanic languages generally lack suffixes, while these are quite productive in (standard) Malay.

Within the Ibanic group very little comparative information is available. The following preliminary differences are observed between Mualang and Ketungau Sajat of the Sekadau area on the one hand, and Iban of Sarawak on the other hand (the latter based on information in Asmah (1981)). Phonologically, rather than displaying nasal pre- and postplosion as in Mualang, Ketungau Sajat tends to have lenition word-finally, in which the counterpart obstruent sounds in Mualang are realized as an offglide consisting of a corresponding vowel and obstruent (cf. *bagas* 'good looking' vs. *baqaeh* 'good'). The corresponding final *ŋ* in Mualang is manifested as an offglide of a nasalized vowel (cf. *gunūŋ* vs. *gunūã* 'mountain'). Also, the final mid rounded *o* corresponds to low vowel *a* in Mualang (cf. *umo* vs. *uma* 'rice field').¹³

Compared to Malay/Indonesian, Mualang is much more similar to Iban in lexicon and structure. Some striking differences between the latter two are phonological. In Iban mid vowels have a full status as phonemes, whereas in Mualang they are phonetic variants of high vowels. In contrast to Mualang, phenomena of nasal pre- and postplosion are absent in Iban. Morphologically, Iban has developed a transitivity suffix, *-ka*, whose function in Mualang is partially covered by the use of the preposition *ka*. Sociolinguistically, Iban is much better known throughout the region and hence is relatively familiar to speakers of Mualang. This may result in one-way intelligibility from Mualang to Iban.

¹² Cf. also an overview account on the use of nomenclature in Adelaar (2004; 2005c) and Collins (2004). A more recent account on the internal subgrouping is proposed in Ross (2004).

¹³ The data for Ketungau Sajat was obtained from an informant originating from Natai Ucong during a short field trip in 2000. Dialectal variation is quite common between Ketungau Sajat villages.

A more systematic comparison with Standard Malay/Indonesian and other Malayic languages would be interesting, also in view of the current discussions on the Malayic homeland and the subgrouping hypotheses of the Malayic language group, but that lies outside the scope of this synchronic descriptive thesis and has to be postponed to another occasion. At various places in this book, however, some comparisons have been made whenever considered interesting.

1.4 Sociolinguistic situation

1.4.1 Dialects

Generally Mualang people make a distinction between *Mualang ili* 'downstream Mualang territory' and *Mualang ulu* 'upstream Mualang territory'. They also realize that there is a distinction in the way the speakers of the other area speak. Structural differences, however, are restricted. There are some differences in pronunciation:

- a) the downstream speakers have a relatively flat intonation, whereas speech in the upstream regions has more intonational "ups and downs";
- b) high vowels in final open syllables are optionally lowered among the Upstream speakers (e.g. *kate* 'how'), whereas among Downstream speakers, they tend to remain high (e.g. *kati* 'how'). Other examples: *mate* vs. *mati* 'die', *bine* vs. *bini* 'wife'. It appears that speech style determines pronunciation in the Upstream variety;
- c) postploded nasals and nasal prepllosion are in general less audible or "lighter" in the downstream speech compared to those in the upstream pronunciation.

Lexical differences are minor and the words in question are known to speakers of both areas. The differences include:

- a) a slight variation in pronunciation in a few words, e.g.:

<u>Downstream</u>	<u>Upstream</u>	<u>Meaning</u>
<i>jat</i>	<i>jay</i> (also: <i>jat</i>)	'bad'
<i>apay/mpay</i>	<i>apay</i>	'father'
<i>naday</i>	<i>naday/nday</i>	'no, not'
<i>tem'awang</i>	<i>tem'away</i>	'former, old settlement'
<i>ugan</i>	<i>ugal</i>	'nangka fruit'

- b) different forms for the same meaning, e.g.:

<u>Meaning</u>	<u>Downstream</u>	<u>Upstream</u>
'coconut scraper'	<i>bingkung</i>	<i>kelingkung</i>
'big pig'	<i>lang'u</i>	<i>kelimpay</i>

that refers to older forms, have been replaced by equivalents from Malay/Indonesian, notably among the younger generations. Many words in traditional songs, such as *kana*, are not known anymore, except by a few older people who on the average are above 50 years of age, which is caused by, and reflects, the decline in the tradition of reciting or chanting stories. Besides by the socio-cultural factors mentioned above, the maintenance of the everyday language has been conditioned also by the relative isolation of the area. The landscape, clay or swampy roads in disrepair, expensive transportation, no electricity in the villages (only in the major towns of the *kecamatan*s in the evening) and economic conditions force most people to spend their life in their home villages. This situation causes the language to be relatively protected. As indicated above, non-Mualang outsiders form about 10% of the total population of each *kecamatan*; most of them reside in the capitals of the *kecamatan*. Transmigrants, who live close to the villages, are able to communicate well in the language, in any case in basic conversations. The language is relatively easy to learn for those who speak Malay/Indonesian. Non-Mualang outsiders in the capital towns of the *kecamatan*s speak Malay in inter-ethnic communication, mixed with a few basic Mualang expressions.

Recently conscious efforts have been made by the Mualang people to maintain their culture and language: in the provincial capital Pontianak an association of the *Ayung Mualang* ‘family of Mualang’ was formed; songs and chanted stories (*kana*) (on cassette and CD), books on culture (some were written by native people in Indonesian and Mualang (!)) were released by several organizations (e.g. *Yayasan Pancur Kasih* and *Institut Dayakologi* in Pontianak). Some cultural and linguistic studies have also been carried out by native speakers, e.g. Pungak (1976a, b) and Ngiuk (2003).

1.5 Previous studies

Thus far to my knowledge only Pungak (1976a) has dealt exclusively with the linguistic aspects of Mualang. Pungak provides an overview of the segmental phonology and a preliminary analysis of some morphological and syntactic features. Her being aware of the existence of the so-called postploded nasals and phonological alternation of high versus mid vowels in the language is particularly noted, since native people are usually not aware of these features. She must also be credited for her attempts to produce a lexicon of Mualang (Pungak 1976b).

Although not intended as grammatical studies, Dunselman’s works (1954, 1955, 1959a and b) present linguistic data which appeared helpful for my understanding of the language. They provide texts that are very accurately transcribed, despite some inconsistencies regarding high-mid vowel alternations. Especially his footnotes present much valuable information on various aspects (e.g. meaning, word-borrowing, pronunciation, etc.) regarding particular words or expressions. He was also aware of the contrast between words with “postploded nasals” versus those with plain ones. With those published later in Paternus (2001) Dunselman’s annotated texts are the only texts of Mualang’s oral tradition that have thus far been written down; they are the most extensive documentation of Mualang cultural heritage. Unfortunately, Dunselman’s works are available only in Dutch.

Some information on Mualang can also be found in Collins (2004). This preliminary work is helpful in providing a general picture on the current linguistic situation of the members of the Ibanic subgroup.¹⁵

1.6 Aims and theoretical framework

This grammar is an attempt to provide a comprehensive description of the structure of Mualang. It presents the major features of the phonology and morphosyntax of the language. Applying insights from the functional-typological approach to language, I have tried to be as neutral as possible with regard to theoretical orientation. As far as possible the terminology used is generally known, or is otherwise explained by definition or by reference to a particular quoted source. In particular I have benefited from discussions in Payne (1997) and Givón (2001a, b).

This grammar has been written with a deep concern for the need to document the languages in West Kalimantan, Indonesia. Linguistic research has been neglected in the region (Collins 1999, 2004; cf. also Cense and Uhlenbeck 1958). The region has been hypothesized by some as a candidate for the original homeland of Malay or Malayic languages/dialects (e.g. Adelaar 1995, Collins 1995). At the time of writing there has been no comprehensive grammatical study on any language in the area,¹⁶ even though languages of the area have been claimed to be significant for Malayic studies (see Adelaar 2004). Thus far within Malayic studies, it is Malay and its varieties that have gained fuller treatment. Within the Ibanic group, it is Iban of Sarawak that has been well studied, as can be seen in, among others, Asmah (1981) and Richards (1981). Other varieties are practically “forgotten”. In the meantime, however, we are facing an endangered language situation as reported in Collins (1995 and elsewhere), since globalization and the spread of Malay/Indonesian threatens to kill languages throughout Borneo. Various Ibanic languages are now experiencing a process of accelerated development. With the emergence of new *kabupatens* and *kecamatan*s, development in economy and infrastructure cause more openness and exposure to outside influence. Linguistically, Ibanic varieties in the

¹⁵ In Collins (2004:18), Rahim (1997) is also cited as a study on Mualang in comparison with Iban and Kantuk. Unfortunately, I did not have access to Rahim’s work.

¹⁶ Since I wrote this chapter, the situation has begun to change: in 2005 Adelaar’s study on Salako of Sambas regency was published (Adelaar 2005b). Salako, a Kendayan dialect, displays many cognates with Mualang in its lexicon. Their structure is also similar, their voice system comparable. However, Salako is richer in terms of morphology, with suffixes and circumfixes. One striking difference is related with what I label here as passive and inverse constructions. The passive-like construction in Salako seems to have not fully developed as it has in Mualang or Malay/Indonesian. The Salako form *di* is still used as an agent marker besides being procliticized to the verb. Salako also seems to have some constructions closer to the one I have labeled inverse for Mualang, which not only highlight the “undergoer” but also emphasize the “actor”. However, the verb is marked differently than in Mualang. Phonologically, Salako lost schwa and *l* which do appear in the corresponding Mualang words. In contrast to Mualang, Salako has developed preploded nasals and mid vowels as full phonemes.

interior, including Mualang, are as yet less influenced by Malay than Iban (see also Nothofer 1988:50).¹⁷

I hope that this Mualang grammar will contribute to filling some of the gaps in our knowledge of the Ibanic linguistic scene.

1.7 Field methods and data base

In March 2002 I made a visit to Pontianak (the capital of the province of West Kalimantan), the Sekadau area (at that time still a part of *Kabupaten* Sanggau), and Sungai Ayak of Belitang Hilir to build contacts with local people and gather some preliminary linguistic information. Then, after moving with my family to Pontianak, in May 2002 to January 2003 I started to make a series of frequent fieldtrips to Mualang villages. During the first month I started learning to speak the language and collected preliminary data in the villages of Tapang Pulau and Merbang in Belitang Hilir, the Downstream area. Then, I moved to Belitang Hulu, the Upstream area, staying with the family of the village head (*kepala desa*) in the village of Tabuk Hulu as my base. One practical reason for choosing the Upstream speech as the basis for writing this grammar was phonological: the various nasal sounds and the lowering of high vowels are more prominent among the Upstream speakers (see Chapter 2). It was easier to observe the matters from the Upstream's point of view and then making a comparison with the Downstream speech, instead of doing it the other way around. *Kecamatan* Belitang Hulu has 12 main villages and many small settlements (*dusuns*). Tabuk Hulu is located downstream with regard to most of the other villages and is very close to Balai Sepuak, the capital of the *kecamatan*. Consequently, many people from the more upstream villages going to the capital would pass by the village on their way, which gave me good opportunities to meet speakers of various origins. From Tabuk I also made excursions to other villages (on the average 2 or 3 hours by motorcycle; a few places were also accessible by river) in order to ascertain their linguistic homogeneity. Data were also obtained in Pontianak from Mualang speakers who traveled frequently to the provincial capital. After I had left the Mualang area in January 2003, contacts in and on the language were continued with at least two speakers through regular mail, email and phone calls.

This grammar is based on a corpus of data that was gained by various means. First, I recorded texts and got them transcribed with the help of several native speakers. Some texts were also obtained by asking people to write down their stories. In this way I acquired 41 texts (about 100 typed pages) in total. Besides these texts, I also studied, with the help of several informants, some hundred pages of published materials in Mualang, namely Dunselman's works (1954, 1955) and Paternus (2001). These texts of Dunselman and Paternus were from the speech of the Downstream area. Field notes and participant observation while living in the area as well as elicitation were also used in getting data. Grammatical features were examined in these materials and checked with several informants. These features

¹⁷ This may be the reason why one Mualang speaker of the Upstream area who was going back and forth from his village to Sarawak for work could understand the Iban people whereas it was hard for them to understand him.

were furthermore studied through examining their usage from text to text. As indicated above I have also benefited from Pungak's work (1976a, b).

My research did not focus on dialectal or sociolectal variation, but as far as any information on such variation was available to me, it will be mentioned in the appropriate sections of the description. In general, I have limited myself to comparing the Upstream speech with the Downstream speech of some speakers of the villages of Tapang Pulau and Semadu. Also, some text materials were collected from speakers of the Downstream area. In addition, texts in Paternus (2001; from the Downstream area) were studied and compared.

The last trip made to the Mualang area was in June 2004, during which I gathered more materials, did elicitation for clarification and for filling in gaps revealed during the process of writing the initial drafts of this thesis. This return trip was really helpful as I was able to see the language as a whole after having analyzed it in parts.