

Attitude, Understanding and Identity of Negeri Sembilan Malay Dialect Speakers

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ABSTRACT

National education system has always emphasized on the standard variety of a language which inadvertently causes an impact to the 'local' variety or dialect. Therefore, a study was undertaken on one of the local dialects in Malaysia, specifically the Negeri Sembilan dialect. The study looked at the attitudes of the Negeri Sembilan dialect speakers towards the dialect and their understanding of that dialect. This paper aims to present the findings on the attitudes and understanding and their relation to the identity of the dialect speakers. By utilizing sociological urban dialectology approach, the study utilized the interview and questionnaires methods. The study was conducted in the district of Rembau in Negeri Sembilan. The interviews were conducted with 7 old informants in order to build a word list of archaic or words of Negeri Sembilan origin. This wordlist then formed a part of the questionnaire which was distributed to 373 respondents. The selection of the respondents was based on four social variables, namely; gender, age, social economic status and location. However, this paper only concentrates on age variable. Generally, the findings of the study show that the respondents in the higher age group have a more positive attitude towards the dialect and they also have a higher level of understanding of the dialect.

Keywords: Attitude, identity, understanding, Negeri Sembilan dialect, sociological urban dialectology

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received: 13 September 2012

Accepted: 15 March 2013

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INTRODUCTION

The state of Negeri Sembilan is one of the states in Malaysia and it is famously known as the only state that practises the *perpatih* customs which is based on matrilineal system (Khoo Kay Kim, 1994). As a community that holds strongly to its customs and culture, the *perpatih*

custom has become part of their life. In Negeri Sembilan, it is not just the customs practised that are different from those in the other states in Peninsula Malaysia, but the dialect used is also different. The Negeri Sembilan dialect has become part of the identity of the communities in Negeri Sembilan. The interrelationship between language and society and culture is an accepted fact. Kramsch (1998) points out that language serves as the link in our social life. We use words, phrases and sentences to communicate and to relay information or ideas that can be shared. In addition, words used will also reflect a person's attitude, beliefs and opinion. In other words, the language used mirrors a person's identity. Similarly, a dialect is also able to reflect a person's attitude and identity as dialect is a variety of language. However, the national education system, which promotes the standard variety (standard Malay), inadvertently marginalizes the dialectal varieties. Therefore, the objective of this study was to identify the level of understanding and the attitudes of Negeri Sembilan dialect speakers towards their dialect and subsequently their identity.

THE NEGERI SEMBILAN DIALECT

Negeri Sembilan is one of the seven main Malay dialects in Malaysia (Asmah Haji Omar, 1988). The categorization of the dialects is based on phonological differences. For example, *mata* 'eye' is pronounced as [matə] in the Negeri Sembilan dialect but is pronounced as [mata] in the Kedah dialect. The seven dialects identified are:

- i. Northern/Kedah dialect (which covers Perlis, Kedah, Penang and northern Perak)
- ii. Perak dialect
- iii. southern dialect (which covers Selangor, Malacca and Johor)
- iv. Kelantan dialect
- v. Terengganu dialect
- vi. Pahang dialect
- vii. Negeri Sembilan dialect

The earliest known study on the Negeri Sembilan dialect is a study on its phonological and morphological aspects by Hendon (1966). Hendon's study was conducted in the Ulu Muar area, which is in the district of Kuala Pilah. Similarly, Arbak Othman (1994) also looked at the phonological aspect of the Negeri Sembilan dialect but most of his data are secondary data, derived mostly from the theses of previous researchers. These studies on dialects tended to focus on the traditional dimension of the dialect such as the phonological and morphological aspects. This paper then presents a new paradigm in dialect study by focusing on the speakers' understanding and attitudes towards the Negeri Sembilan dialect and showing how it has affected the identity of the speakers by utilizing the wordlist on old or archaic words that was built and the distributed questionnaires.

METHODOLOGY

This study utilized informal interviews and questionnaires to gather the relevant data.

The informal interviews were conducted with seven informants who were between 50 years to 77 years old. All the interviews were recorded and later transcribed. Based on the interviews, a list of the lexical items of verbs, nouns and adjectives were compiled. The list of lexical items was later used in the questionnaires to test the understanding of the respondents on the Negeri Sembilan Malay dialect.

Research Area

Negeri Sembilan dialect is divided into two sub-areas, namely, south and north. The north sub-area covers the districts of Jelebu and Lenggeng and the south sub-area covers the districts of Kuala Pilah, Seremban, Rembau, Port Dickson and Tampin. Asmah Haji Omar (2008) states that the south sub-area, specifically the Kuala Pilah sub-dialect, represents the most typical Negeri Sembilan dialect. Since the Kuala Pilah sub-dialect has been studied by Hendon (1966), the focus of this study is the Rembau subdialect should be the source for the data. The decision to choose Rembau sub-dialect as the source data concurs with Asmah Haji Omar (2008) who contends that the sub-dialect spoken in south sub-area can be taken to represent the Negeri Sembilan dialect more accurately.

Research Informants

The selection of the informants for this study was based on the general criteria set by dialect researchers. Basically, the criteria was based on the concept NORM introduced by Chambers and Trudgill

(1990). NORM is an acronym that stands for *nonmobile, older, rural males*. Nonmobile here refers to speakers who have resided and remained in a particular place for a long time, whereas older speakers are the speakers who are at least 55 years or older. Next, rural refers to the speakers who are residing in the rural areas as they are believed to speak the untainted or pure version of the dialect because they have no regular contact with the speakers from other dialects and finally, males are thought as the better informants in a dialect study. Hence, *nonmobile, older, rural male* respondents were chosen as they were thought to be better informants as they had remained in the same area for a long period of time and would therefore exhibit language usage that could be considered as classic or even archaic. Chamber and Trudgill (1990) also added that data collection in rural areas would ensure that the dialect remained pure with no instances of borrowing from other dialects or languages.

Based on the criteria mentioned above, this study selected informants who are 45 years old and above and have been residing in the research area for a long period of time. However, the informants for this study are not only males but a female respondent was included as well. The female respondent was very helpful as she could supply us with words that are no longer used or are seldom used by the Negeri Sembilan dialect speakers. This concurs with Ajid Che Kob's findings (1993) which state that in Malaysia, female informants are more informative in studies on dialectology.

The data collection process was conducted in two phases. For the first phase, four informants (three males and one female) from Kampung Rendah in Rembau were interviewed. All the informants aged between 45 – 75 year old. The 45 year-old informant who works as a reporter with the national news agency, BERNAMA, served as our *liaison*. The other two male informants were very informative as they are very well versed in the *perpatih* customs and the female informant supplied information pertaining to family and daily activities.

For the second phase, the research was conducted at Kampung Semerbok, another village in the Rembau district with four informants. All the four informants are males aged between 55 – 89 year old. The second phase of data gathering was more productive as the informants were able to give additional information on the Negeri Sembilan dialect. Having a rather big number of informants benefited the current study as the informants were able to verify the authenticity of the words listed as archaic.

Interview

The interviews were obtained individually and as a group. Individually, the informants were requested to name a particular aspect/thing/event in the Negeri Sembilan dialect. As a group, the informants were asked to relate their experiences, for instance, the 89 year old informant was asked about his life experiences before, during and post World War II (WWII). This is a quasi-interview method. For example, the informants

we asked to explain the action of hitting someone. They gave a few choices such as *puko* ‘hit’ [pukul], and *boda* ‘hit’ [bedal], in a way that is normally spoken in the Negeri Sembilan dialect. The informants would then explain the difference between the two words before proceeding to giving sentences to demonstrate the differences in the meaning. Below are some examples taken from the interview:

1. *Den puko budak ni kang.*
I will hit this kid.
2. *Den boda budak ni kang.*
I will hit the kid.

The informants explained that although the words *puko* and *boda* both mean the same, which is ‘to hit’, the word *boda* is an original Negeri Sembilan dialect word. They added that the word *puko* does not reflect the features of the Negeri Sembilan dialect and is only pronounced in the Negeri Sembilan dialect accent.

In addition, since the older informants are well versed in the Negeri Sembilan culture and customs, they were asked to relate the process of certain events such as the engagement rituals and customs. In relating the events, conversations with the informants were more relaxed and more words of the Negeri Sembilan origin were also used. It was discovered that this particular approach is effective as the informants were not hesitant to participate in the interview.

Questionnaires

In general, the questionnaire is divided into 3 sections. Section A provides the background information of the respondents, Section B elicits information pertaining to attitudes of the respondents, and Section C consists of multiple choice questions. The multiple choice questions sought to find the level of understanding of the respondents towards the list of words compiled.

Section A was designed to provide background information of the respondents such as age, gender, level of education and social economic status (occupation and income). This section has sub-sections; one section for adult respondents and the other for teenagers. For teenagers, their social economic status information was gathered from the information on the level of education, occupation and income of their parents.

Section B aimed to seek information on the level of usage and the respondents' attitudes towards the Negeri Sembilan dialect. The questions asked are Yes/No questions and are divided into 4 aspects: usage (4 questions), encouragement (1 question), understanding (1 question) and perception (3 questions). The questions on usage are marked by the word *menggunakan*/used, encouragement is marked by the word *menggalakkan*/encouraged, understanding is marked by the word *faham*/understand, perception is marked by *suka*/like, *banggal*/proud and *tidak malu*/not embarrassed.

Section C tests the respondents' level of understanding of the Negeri Sembilan dialect. This section is the foundation of

the research as it contains questions on the list of words that were collected from the informants. The meanings of the selected words were then compared with the ones found in the dictionary *Kamus Dewan Edisi Keempat* (2005). The words can be divided into three categories, as follows:

- i. Words with the same meanings as in the dictionary:
 - roman* – face
 - remah* – crumbs, left-over
- ii. Words with different meanings from the dictionary:
 - toboh* – a group (Negeri Sembilan dialect meaning – area)
 - bega* – surrounding (Negeri Sembilan dialect meaning – would not listen to advice)
- iii. Words with no reference in the dictionary:
 - kodin* – (family) related
 - ontok* – quiet

In category (i) above, the meanings given in *Kamus Dewan Edisi Keempat* were chosen, while category (ii) shows that there are differences in the meanings stated in the dictionary and the meanings understood by speakers of the Negeri Sembilan dialect. Finally, the words in category (iii) are not listed in *Kamus Dewan Edisi Keempat* (2005) and therefore, can be considered as belonging to the Negeri Sembilan dialect. After reviewing all the words, 80 words were selected to be included in Section C of the questionnaires. All the selected words were taken from all the three categories. In

answering the questions, the respondents were required to select the right dialect meanings for all the words (please see Appendix 1). All 80 words were given appropriate vowel sound to suit the typical pronunciation in the Negeri Sembilan dialect; for example, vowel /e/ in the first syllable is changed to /o/ in the word *bersotai-sotai* ‘torn to pieces’ [bersetai-setai].

All 80 words were then put in the corresponding word class, namely, noun, adjective and verb. The reason for the classification of the words based on word class is to identify the word class with the highest level of understanding among the respondents. In total, there were 37 verbs, 32 adjectives and 11 nouns. Each word class was then further classified based on the functions of the words. Nouns were subdivided into five – tools, place, instrument, family and possession; adjectives were divided into six categories – situation, measurement, emotions, method, senses and temperature and finally, verbs were divided into two categories – directive and reflexive. Directive verbs are actions that involve other persons or other things and reflexive verbs are actions that are performed on oneself.

Respondents

There were a total 373 respondents in this study and the classifications of the respondents were based on three variables, namely, age, social economic status and gender. However, the analysis and discussion in this paper focuses only on the age variable. Meanwhile, the grouping of the

respondents in this study was based on four age groups, namely, 13-24 years old, 25-40 years old, 41-55 years old and 56 years old and above. For the adolescents in the 13-24 age group, majority of the respondents are from 1 urban school and 1 rural school. The adolescents/students were selected based on whether their parents were born and residing in Negeri Sembilan. As for the other age groups, the respondents were gathered from various places, such as government offices, business premises and recreational places. By approaching the respondents at these different places, the researchers were able to get the respondents from different social economic backgrounds (detailed figures on the total number of the respondents in each group are presented in the Findings and Discussions section).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings and discussions of this paper focus on the respondents’ scores on their attitude and understanding of the dialect and on only one social variable – age. These two aspects would enable us to identify the identity of these Negeri Sembilan dialect speakers. Generally, the attitudes of the respondents towards the Negeri Sembilan dialect are positive. The attitudes of the respondents were measured through three aspects – their usage of the dialect, the encouragement they get to use the dialect and their perceptions towards the dialect. Meanwhile, information on the perception of the respondents towards the Negeri Sembilan dialect were obtained from the questions that asked whether they are

embarrassed to use the dialect, whether they like to use the dialect and whether they are proud to use the dialect.

The information on the respondents' understanding of the dialect was based on the answers given on the meanings of the words listed in Section C of the questionnaire. In general, the older respondents achieved higher scores, indicating that the older respondents are still using the dialect and therefore, understand the meaning of the words as opposed to younger respondents who scored lower. Detailed findings are given in the next section.

Attitude and Age

This section presents the findings on attitude across all the four age groups. As mentioned earlier, information on the respondents' attitudes was obtained from the questions

that asked for information on usage, encouragement received and perception. Further details are presented in Table 1.

For usage, most respondents are not embarrassed to use the Negeri Sembilan dialect, with lowest percentage for usage recorded for the youngest age category at 58%. It was observed that the older the respondents, the higher the percentage; the respondents who are in the 56 year old and older category recorded the highest percentage at 86.7%. The younger respondents (13-24 years old) recorded the lowest percentage at 58.5%. This could be attributed to the fact that most of the respondents in this category were still in school and under the guardianship of their parents and through informal interviews, the researchers were informed that they were not encouraged to use the Negeri Sembilan

TABLE 1
Attitude and Age

| SOCIAL VAR. | | ATTITUDE VAR. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------|-------|---------------|----|------|-----------|----|------|------|-----|-----------------|------|------|------|-------|------|
| | | USE | | | ENCOURAGE | | | | | PERCEPTION | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | Not embarrassed | | Like | | Proud | |
| N | f | Yes | No | 0 | Yes | No | 0 | Yes | No | Yes | No | Yes | No | | |
| Age | 13-24 | 207 | f | 121 | 86 | 0 | 49 | 158 | 0 | 145 | 62 | 153 | 54 | 169 | 38 |
| | | 55.6 | % | 58.5 | 41.5 | 0 | 23.7 | 76.3 | 0 | 70 | 30 | 73.9 | 26.1 | 81.6 | 18.4 |
| | 25-40 | 80 | f | 47 | 29 | 4 | 36 | 36 | 8 | 71 | 9 | 77 | 3 | 76 | 4 |
| | | 21.4 | % | 58.8 | 36.2 | 5 | 45 | 45 | 10 | 88.8 | 11.2 | 96.3 | 3.7 | 95 | 5 |
| | 41-55 | 71 | f | 50 | 21 | 0 | 45 | 26 | 0 | 64 | 7 | 67 | 4 | 67 | 4 |
| | | 19 | % | 70.4 | 29.6 | 0 | 63.4 | 36.6 | 0 | 90.1 | 9.9 | 94.4 | 5.6 | 94.4 | 5.6 |
| | 56+ | 15 | f | 13 | 2 | 0 | 9 | 6 | 0 | 14 | 1 | 15 | 0 | 15 | 0 |
| | | 4 | % | 86.7 | 13.3 | 0 | 60 | 40 | 0 | 93.3 | 6.7 | 100 | 0 | 100 | 0 |
| Total | | 373 | f | 231 | 138 | 4 | 139 | 226 | 8 | 294 | 79 | 312 | 61 | 327 | 46 |
| | | | % | 62 | 37 | 1 | 37.3 | 60.6 | 2.1 | 78.8 | 21.2 | 83.6 | 16.4 | 87.7 | 12.3 |

dialect as it might interfere with the learning of the standard variety at school.

Next, the researchers looked at encouragement and discovered that those in the 13-24 years old category were getting less encouragement from their parents. In an informal interview, a substantial number of the respondents in this category informed that their parents feared that using the dialect would interfere the learning of the standard variety in school. However, those who were above 41 years old stated that they supported and encouraged the use of the Negeri Sembilan dialect among their children. This indicates that there is an opposing attitude towards the Negeri Sembilan dialect among the respondents of different age groups.

In terms of perception, the respondents were found to be generally not embarrassed to use the dialect with a score of 70% and above. The higher the respondents on the age scale, the higher the score recorded. This indicates that the older they are, the stronger the attachment they have towards the Negeri Sembilan dialect.

Next, in the question that asked whether they like to use the dialect, it was observed that the respondents in all the age categories recorded scores above 73%. A similar pattern was also observed for the question that asked whether they were proud to use the Negeri Sembilan dialect. In fact, an overwhelmingly majority of the respondents indicated that they are very proud to use the Negeri Sembilan dialect, with the lowest score recorded at 81.6% for the 13-24 year old category. The other age categories recorded higher scores, whereby the 25-40

year old scored 95%, followed by 41-55 year old (94.4%) and above 56 years old recorded a 100% score.

Based on the high scores recorded in most age categories, the respondents were observed to have strong attachments towards the dialect. This observation indicates that they have a strong affinity towards the dialect and accepts it as a part of their identity. They are proud, like to use the dialect and are also not embarrassed to use it.

Lexical Understanding and Age

Lexical understanding in this context refers to the level of understanding that the respondents have of the words given in Section C of the questionnaire. The respondents were required to give the correct meanings of the words listed in Section C. Generally, it was discovered that the older the residents are, the higher their level of understanding and conversely, the younger they are, the lower their level of understanding. This was proven from the overall scores for each category. The 13-24 year old group scored 68.6%, followed by the 25-40 year old group, with a score of 91.3%, while the 41-55 year old group scored 95% and the highest score was 96% by the respondents aged 56 years and older. The findings from each word category are discussed in the next sub-section.

Lexical Understanding – Nouns

There are 11 nouns listed in Section C of the questionnaires. The nouns were further sub-categorized as the nouns for tools, location,

things, family and possession. Table 2 presents the detailed findings.

For the age variable, the higher the age scales, the higher the level of understanding of these nouns. The current discussion looks at the scores of each age group against the noun sub-categories. In the 13-24 age group, the highest score was obtained for the nouns that refer to things (79.2%), whereas the lowest was for tools (52.5%). For the 25-40 age group, the highest score was 95% for the nouns categorized as things and the lowest score was 81.3% for the nouns categorized as tools. In the 41-55 age group, the highest score was 98.6% for the nouns categorized as things and the lowest score was for the nouns categorized as tools (81.7%). In the 56 year group and older, two noun sub-categories (namely, things and family) scored a perfect 100% and the other three sub-categories had identical scores at 93.3% each.

In terms of each specific category of nouns, the score for nouns that are categorized as things was the highest at 87.1%. This was followed by possession nouns (77.2%) and the nouns that signified locations (71%) and the nouns that were categorized as tools (65.4%). The last category was the nouns that refer to family. Meanwhile, the nouns labelled as tools scored rather low because these tools are no longer in use and therefore, most of the respondents do not have the reference for them. An example of the nouns (tool) that is no longer in use is *boko*. *Boko* is a container that is used to put stuff such as rice, sugar or eggs when one attends a wedding ceremony. It is the equivalent of the modern day wedding present. These practices, however, are no longer carried out in the community as wedding presents available in stores are more convenient choices. This is also the same with the nouns that are labelled as

TABLE 2
Lexical Understanding – Nouns

| LINGUISTIC VAR. | | SOCIAL VAR. – age group | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------|-----------|-------------------------|------|-----------|------|-----------|------|----------|------|-------|------|
| Lexical | | 13-24 yrs | | 25-40 yrs | | 41-55 yrs | | 56 + yrs | | Total | |
| Noun (11) | | F | % | f | % | f | % | F | % | f | % |
| Tools | Correct | 107 | 52.5 | 65 | 81.3 | 58 | 81.7 | 14 | 93.3 | 244 | 65.4 |
| | Incorrect | 100 | 47.5 | 15 | 18.5 | 13 | 18.3 | 1 | 6.7 | 129 | 34.6 |
| Locations | Correct | 115 | 55.6 | 70 | 87.5 | 66 | 93 | 14 | 93.3 | 265 | 71 |
| | Incorrect | 92 | 44.4 | 10 | 12.5 | 5 | 7 | 1 | 6.7 | 108 | 29 |
| Things | Correct | 164 | 79.2 | 76 | 95 | 70 | 98.6 | 15 | 100 | 325 | 87.1 |
| | Incorrect | 43 | 20.8 | 4 | 5 | 1 | 0.4 | 0 | 0 | 48 | 12.9 |
| Family | Correct | 47 | 22.7 | 74 | 92.5 | 68 | 95.8 | 15 | 100 | 204 | 54.7 |
| | Incorrect | 160 | 77.3 | 6 | 7.5 | 3 | 4.2 | 0 | 0 | 169 | 45.3 |
| Possession | Correct | 138 | 66.7 | 71 | 88.8 | 65 | 91.5 | 14 | 93.3 | 288 | 77.2 |
| | Incorrect | 69 | 33.3 | 9 | 11.2 | 6 | 8.5 | 1 | 6.7 | 85 | 22.8 |
| Mean | Correct | 114 | 55.1 | 71 | 88.8 | 65 | 91.5 | 14 | 93.3 | 264 | 70.8 |
| | Incorrect | 93 | 44.9 | 9 | 11.2 | 6 | 8.5 | 1 | 6.7 | 109 | 29.2 |

family because these are mostly nouns that pertain to culture and customs such as *kodin* ‘family members’ which are not widely used in the community anymore.

Lexical Understanding – Adjectives

There are 37 adjectives listed in Section C which were further subcategorized as the adjectives of situations, measurements, emotions, methods, senses and temperature. Table 3 below presents the detailed findings on the respondents’ understanding of the adjectives categorized according to the different age groups.

Generally, the pattern exhibited by the respondents is similar to the one found in the noun category. The older the respondents’ age, the higher the scores that they obtained. In more specific, the respondents in the 41-55 age group recorded the highest score

for their understanding, i.e. 97.1% . This is followed by those in the 56 years and older category at 93.3%. The 25-40 year old category came in third with 92.5%, and finally, those in the 13-24 year old category scored 73.4% for their lexical understanding.

In terms of the specific adjective categories, the adjectives showing emotions and senses came in top at 90.3% and 90.6%, respectively, because they are basic human emotions and senses that everybody experiences. On the other hand, the adjectives that scored low in the understanding scale are the words used for temperature and method at 77.5% and 76.4%, respectively. The rather high score recorded for the adjectives is due to their functions. Asmah (1980) mentions that adjectives serve to explain the features or

TABLE 3
Lexical Understanding - Adjectives

| LINGUISTIC VAR. | | SOCIAL VAR. – age group | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------|-----------|-------------------------|------|-----------|------|-----------|------|----------|------|-------|------|
| | | 13-24 yrs | | 25-40 yrs | | 41-55 yrs | | 56 + yrs | | Total | |
| Adjective (37) | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Situations | Correct | 151 | 72.9 | 74 | 92.5 | 69 | 97.2 | 15 | 100 | 309 | 82.8 |
| | Incorrect | 56 | 27.1 | 6 | 7.5 | 2 | 2.8 | 0 | 0 | 64 | 17.2 |
| Measurements | Correct | 135 | 65.2 | 75 | 93.8 | 69 | 97.2 | 15 | 100 | 294 | 79 |
| | Incorrect | 72 | 34.8 | 5 | 6.2 | 2 | 2.8 | 0 | 0 | 78.8 | 21.2 |
| Emotions | Correct | 174 | 84.1 | 78 | 97.5 | 70 | 98.6 | 15 | 100 | 337 | 90.3 |
| | Incorrect | 33 | 15.9 | 2 | 2.5 | 1 | 1.4 | 0 | 0 | 36 | 9.7 |
| Methods | Correct | 132 | 63.8 | 72 | 90 | 67 | 94.4 | 14 | 93.3 | 285 | 76.4 |
| | Incorrect | 75 | 36.2 | 8 | 10 | 4 | 5.6 | 1 | 6.7 | 88 | 23.6 |
| Senses | Correct | 179 | 86.5 | 75 | 93.8 | 69 | 97.2 | 15 | 100 | 338 | 90.6 |
| | Incorrect | 28 | 13.5 | 5 | 6.2 | 2 | 2.8 | 0 | 0 | 35 | 9.4 |
| Temperature | Correct | 138 | 66.7 | 72 | 90 | 67 | 94.4 | 12 | 80 | 289 | 77.5 |
| | Incorrect | 69 | 33.3 | 80 | 10 | 4 | 5.6 | 3 | 20 | 84 | 22.5 |
| Mean | Correct | 152 | 73.4 | 74 | 92.5 | 69 | 97.1 | 14 | 93.3 | 309 | 82.8 |
| | Incorrect | 55 | 26.6 | 6 | 7.5 | 2 | 2.9 | 1 | 6.7 | 64 | 17.2 |

the nature of something or someone and therefore, are not marginalized as we always need adjectives to explain things, events or persons.

Lexical Understanding – Verbs

The total number of verbs listed in Section C is 32 and these were further subcategorized as directive verbs and reflexive verbs. Table 4 presents the detailed findings.

Based on the information presented in the table, similar trend can be observed in the verb category because the higher the respondents are on the age scale, the higher the score they received on understanding. The respondents in the 56 years and older category recorded a 100% understanding for both the directive and reflexive verbs.

Generally, the respondents' level of understanding of verbs is much higher compared to that of adjectives and nouns. The high level of understanding of verbs can be attributed to the fact that verbs are frequently used by speakers. This is in accordance with Halliday's (1994) contention that verbs are processes that

inform us about our experiences – of what has happened and of what is happening. Therefore, verbs are familiar aspect with the respondents unlike nouns that may describe objects that are no longer in use, and hence, the unfamiliarity with the nouns.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussions on the respondents' attitude and understanding, without any doubt, the older generations are more loyal or attached to the Negeri Sembilan dialect. It can also be deduced that they are very proud and attached to their identity as the Negeri Sembilan dialect speakers. Specifically, the high scores obtained in both the attitude and understanding proved their strong attachment to their identity as the Negeri Sembilan dialect speakers. Similar findings have also been recorded by Idris *et al.* (2010) who reported that older respondents in their study are more attached to their accent and would not accommodate to the standard accent.

However, the reverse is postulated among the young respondents. A

TABLE 4
Lexical Understanding: Verbs

| Lexical | | 13-24 yrs | | 25-40 yrs | | 41-55 yrs | | 56 + yrs | | Total | |
|--------------|-----------|-----------|------|-----------|------|-----------|------|----------|-----|-------|------|
| Verb (32) | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Directive | Correct | 161 | 77.8 | 75 | 93.8 | 68 | 95.8 | 15 | 100 | 319 | 85.5 |
| | Incorrect | 46 | 22.2 | 5 | 6.2 | 3 | 4.2 | 0 | 0 | 54 | 14.5 |
| Reflexive | Correct | 158 | 76.3 | 75 | 93.8 | 70 | 98.6 | 15 | 100 | 318 | 85.3 |
| | Incorrect | 49 | 23.7 | 5 | 6.2 | 1 | 1.4 | 0 | 0 | 55 | 14.7 |
| Mean | Correct | 160 | 77.3 | 75 | 93.8 | 69 | 97.1 | 15 | 100 | 319 | 85.5 |
| | Incorrect | 47 | 22.7 | 5 | 6.2 | 2 | 2.9 | 0 | 0 | 54 | 14.5 |
| Overall Mean | Correct | 142 | 68.6 | 73 | 91.3 | 68 | 95.8 | 15 | 100 | 297 | 79.6 |
| | Incorrect | 65 | 31.4 | 7 | 8.7 | 3 | 4.2 | 0 | 0 | 76 | 20.4 |

transformation or a change in terms of the identity of the younger respondents may emerge. This particular group of respondents may have reported a positive perception towards the Negeri Sembilan dialect but this is not reflected in the scores they obtained for understanding of the dialect. They have consistently scored lowest in all the three word categories, namely, nouns, adjectives and verbs. The positive perception must be matched with strong encouragement and frequent usage, which will then lead to the high level of understanding of the dialect. Nonetheless, this is not the case with the young respondents in the present study. With less usage and low understanding, the Negeri Sembilan dialect could be marginalized, and this would then change the strong sense of attachment of these young respondents and inevitably change their sense of identity towards the dialect.

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5. Saya memahami dialek Negeri Sembilan yang digunakan oleh datuk dan nenek saya.
Ya Tidak
6. Semua orang Negeri Sembilan mesti menggunakan dialek Negeri Sembilan.
Ya Tidak
7. Dialek Negeri Sembilan harus terus digunakan.
Ya Tidak
8. Saya tidak malu menggunakan dialek Negeri Sembilan.
Ya Tidak
9. Saya suka menggunakan dialek Negeri Sembilan.
Ya Tidak
10. Saya bangga menggunakan dialek Negeri Sembilan.
Ya Tidak

C. Bulatkan makna yang betul bagi perkataan berikut.

1. Angka (bukan nombor)
A. suhu badan yang panas B. alat menulis
2. Baeh
A. baling B. kuih
3. Bega
A. degil B. gelas
4. Belolah
A. berkawan B. berlari
5. Bejombik
A. ramai B. marah
6. Bekuak
A. menari beramai-ramai B. mengarahkan orang supaya ke tepi
7. Betandak
A. menyolek orang B. berjoget
8. Bergolek
A. kenduri kahwin B. kenduri syukur
9. Bokotuntang (berketentang)
A. memasak B. lari lintang-pukang

10. Bersotai-sotai
A. tercarik-carik B. tersadai-sadai
11. Bertating
A. berhidang B. bersukan
12. Bo'jooH
A. membeli-belah B. untung yang tidak disangka-sangka
13. Boleng
A. tidak berpakaian B. main bola
14. Bonda
A. saudara B. anak sungai
15. Bongak
A. penipu B. nenek kebayan
16. Boko
A. bekas penyembahan B. bekal
17. Biak
A. burung B. lecak
18. Celungap
A. buruk makan B. sangat haus
19. Cokau
A. berjalan-jalan B. tangkap
20. Cekuih (cekus)
A. curi-curi makan B. main-main sahaja
21. Cemat
A. rotan B. Jimat
22. Ceneke
A. main tipu B. alat memngkas
23. Ceghoh (ceruh)
A. tumbuk padi sampai bersih B. menyapu halaman
24. Eleh
A. tidak suka B. manja
25. Gahar
A. menyental B. hantaran
26. Gewai
A. hayun B. tali pinggang

44. Lonco
A. putus tunang B. makanan
45. Mada
A. baik B. degil
46. Maja
A. tumpul B. runcing
47. Melaha
A. pedas B. manis
48. Melangok
A. menulis B. melepak
49. Membeser
A. kerap makan B. kerap buang air kencing
50. Memburan
A. buang air besar B. minum
51. Menebeng
A. terancang sahaja B. mengambil
52. Mencangut
A. sempit B. cepat
53. Mentibang
A. menghilangkan diri B. membaca
54. Mengelintau
A. mencari sesuatu dengan panik B. tidur
55. Mengendeng
A. buruk makan B. berbuat baik kerana ada makna
56. Mengicak
A. meminta-minta B. haiwan
57. Mengoca
A. cermin B. menangkap ikan guna tangan
58. Mengonye
A. sentiasa mengunyah sesuatu B. merepek
59. Menonong
A. berjalan pantas tanpa toleh kiri kanan B. berlari
60. Menureh
A. memukul B. menggedik seumpama anak dara berjumpa lelaki

- | | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| 61. Ngonyam | A. makan | B. gatal |
| 62. Nunuk-nanak | A. melilau | B. nenek |
| 63. Ompok | A. kepunyaan | B. pintu |
| 64. Ompong | A. kuih | B. rongak |
| 65. Ontok | A. meja | B. diam |
| 66. Pengolan | A. pantai | B. galah |
| 67. Pengkar | A. kaki yang bengkok | B. kerusi |
| 68. Polak | A. sayur | B. panas |
| 69. Porak | A. kosong | B. kebun kecil |
| 70. Posok | A. bocor (pada bekas) | B. bau busuk |
| 71. Pihuh | A. cubit dengan memilin | B. Buah |
| 72. Roman | A. buku | B. iras wajah |
| 73. Sede | A. lalai meletakkan sesuatu | B. Garpu |
| 74. Sitap | A. mata sepet | B. atap |
| 75. Teyan | A. kutipan duit | B. emak |
| 76. Terjongkeh-jongkeh | A. jatuh | B. ketawa terkekeh-kekeh |
| 77. Terkinyam | A. berkehendak sesuatu | B. menyapu |

