

BAHASA ALAY ON THE PERIPHERY: FACEBOOK AND MANADO MALAY

Communicating via Facebook status has become extremely popular in Indonesia as it has elsewhere in the world. In recent years it has become fashionable to deform the text of status updates with substitutions and abbreviations, the result being a style which has been termed *Bahasa Alay*. This style has broad similarities to *l33t* in English, *gyaru-moji* in Japanese, and *jejemon* in the Philippines. In general Bahasa Alay appears to be based on Colloquial Jakartan Indonesian (CJI), however this paper will concentrate on the variety used in the city of Manado and its hinterland in North Sulawesi, which show consistent use of the vernacular Manado Malay (MM) in apparent rejection of CJI norms, though with many alay features as can be seen in 3 brief examples:

- (1) Smo bizz btrei qt p'hp.. Mlz mw ba carzz.. Nnti jw stu klie bsok jw yahhh,,,
- (2) f0r 4p l3 nn m0 in94" p4 ich4 d3n9 ipin,,z0e t4u,,hahahahaha... zy9 cm4 qdin9
- (3) klo m tnggu 9í mǎñâ p Q†^a,mar Ng^aη₅́₅η₅đ.ä bls2 doe,,,

Numerous difficulties arise when coding and analysing this type of text. MM is not itself standardised and allows significant latitude in spelling and word boundaries. Further, there is input from Colloquial Indonesian, as well as the use of English or other foreign words, often spelled in creative ways such as (1) *carzz* 'charge', or (2) *qdin9* 'kidding'. There is occasional mixture with indigenous Minahasan languages, which are themselves not standardised. And finally, texters often use creative misspellings or substitute letters with numbers or unusual symbols, such as (2) *in94*" for *ingat* 'remember' or (3) *Ng^aη₅́₅η₅đ.ä* for *ngana* 'you') in ways which arguably make it harder both to produce and interpret these texts. This paper will examine the conventions (and creativity) of alay in MM, contrasting it with more mainstream conventions, and discussing the challenges of working with this type of data.