Translation and Linguistic Analysis of *The North Wind and the Sun* in Standard Malay: An Instrument for Malaysian Speech Research

(Terjemahan dan Analisis Linguistik *'Angin Utara dan Matahari'* dalam Bahasa Melayu: Satu Instrumen untuk Penyelidikan Pertuturan di Malaysia)

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ABSTRACT

This study presents the systematic development and validation of a Standard Malay (SM) version of the North Wind and the Sun (NWS) passage, a foundational tool for phonetic and clinical research. Grounded in Nida's (1964) Equivalence-based Model, the translation prioritised functional equivalence to ensure semantic and communicative parity with the original English stimulus while maintaining cultural naturalness. Using a qualitative design, the text underwent a rigorous process of forward and backward translation, expert harmonisation, and linguistic metadata analysis. Results indicate that the SM NWS captures 19 out of 23 primary SM phonemes. The absence of the remaining four segments, specifically the fricatives /f, v, z, ʃ/, is explicitly justified by their low functional load and peripheral status as loanword phonemes within the Malay phonological system. Consequently, the stimulus provides robust coverage of high-frequency segments essential for motor speech and prosodic assessment. This research fills a critical methodological gap by providing a linguistically validated, standardised stimulus that replaces structurally incongruent regional variants, thereby enhancing the reliability of clinical speech evaluation and cross-linguistic phonetic research in the Malaysian context.

Keywords: The North Wind and the Sun; Standard Malay; phoneme analysis; translation studies; literary text

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini membentangkan pembangunan sistematik dan pengesahan petikan 'Sang Angin Utara dan Sang Matahari' (NWS) versi Bahasa Melayu (BM), iaitu satu instrumen asas bagi penyelidikan fonetik dan klinikal. Berteraskan Model Kesepadanan Nida (1964), terjemahan ini mengutamakan kesepadanan fungsi bagi memastikan kesamaan semantik dan komunikatif dengan stimulus asal dalam Bahasa Inggeris, di samping mengekalkan kewajaran budaya. Menggunakan reka bentuk kualitatif, teks tersebut telah melalui proses terjemahan ke hadapan dan terjemahan balik yang rapi, pengharmonian pakar, serta analisis metadata linguistik. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa NWS versi BM merangkumi 19 daripada 23 fonem utama BM. Ketiadaan empat bunyi frikatif /f, v, z, ʃ/, adalah berdasarkan beban fungsi yang rendah dan status sebagai fonem-fonem kata pinjaman dalam sistem fonologi Melayu. Kesannya, stimulus ini menyediakan bahan bagi segmen frekuensi tinggi yang penting untuk penilaian pertuturan motor dan prosodi. Penyelidikan ini mengisi jurang metodologi yang kritikal dengan menyediakan stimulus standard yang disahkan secara linguistik untuk penilaian pertuturan klinikal dan penyelidikan fonetik dalam konteks Malaysia

Kata kunci: Sang Angin Utara dan Sang Matahari; Bahasa Melayu; analisis fonem; kajian terjemahan; teks literary

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INTRODUCTION

In Aesop's fable, *The North Wind and the Sun (NWS)*, the two elements compete to see who can force a passing traveller to remove his cloak. However, the harder the North Wind blows, the more tightly the man wraps his garment around himself. When the Sun shines with gentle warmth, the traveller voluntarily takes off his cloak, proving that persuasion is often more effective than brute force. It is a short narrative that has become a standard reference text in phonetic and linguistic research due to its stable structure, moderate length, and suitability for eliciting connected speech. Its narrative simplicity allows researchers to examine speech production without the confounding effects of unfamiliar content or complex syntactic demands. Because of its status as a foundational research tool, *NWS* has been translated into numerous languages and varieties, including German, Hungarian, Japanese, Cocos Malay, and Brunei Malay (Arias-Vergara et al., 2022; Baird et al., 2022; Deterding & Athirah, 2017; Hiki et al., 2011; Soderberg, 2014; Vicsi et al., 2013).

Despite the global ubiquity of *NWS* as a standardised stimulus for phonetic and clinical research, its application within the Malaysian context has been significantly hindered by a lack of a linguistically validated and culturally appropriate translation in Standard Malay (SM). Although the text is prized for its stable structure and panphonic potential, the current research in Malaysia often relies on materials from regional varieties such as Cocos Malay or Brunei Malay which exhibit distinct phonological, morphological, and lexical mismatches compared to SM. This limitation reflects two key gaps. First, a translation gap, whereby no SM version of *NWS* has been systematically developed, restricting its use in Malaysian phonetic and clinical research. Second, a phonemic documentation gap, in which no existing SM adaptation provides a detailed and systematic account of phoneme distribution and grammatical structure required for controlled speech elicitation. Together, these gaps limit the reliability, standardisation, and cross-study comparability of connected speech analysis in Malaysian contexts.

Furthermore, the absence of an SM-specific narrative stimulus presents a critical methodological limitation for Malaysian researchers, particularly when conducting cross-linguistic or clinical assessments. Without a standardised SM version, studies involving connected speech such as those evaluating voice quality, cochlear implant outcomes, or acoustic markers in affective disorders lack a consistent baseline for comparison against international data. Consequently, there is an urgent need to develop a version of the *NWS* that prioritises functional equivalence, ensuring that the stimulus remains natural and accessible to Malay speakers while providing the rigorous phonemic richness required for precise clinical and linguistic analysis. To translate *NWS* for research purposes, careful attention must be given to both linguistic accuracy and cultural appropriateness. The text is not merely a narrative; it functions as a standardised stimulus for phonetic, linguistic, and clinical research (van Brenk et al., 2022).

In response to these gaps, the present study pursues two objectives. First, it aims to translate *NWS* from English into SM using a structured process of forward translation, backward translation, and expert harmonisation. Second, the study aims to analyse the phonemic inventory and grammatical categories of the translated text to provide essential linguistic metadata for future application within Malaysian linguistic and clinical research contexts. Together, these objectives address the need for a standardised and linguistically documented SM version of *NWS*.

The next section evaluates the functional role of *NWS* as a standardised research tool, examining the theoretical concept of panphonicity, its diverse applications within clinical research and the limitations inherent in existing Malay regional variations.

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THE CONCEPT OF PANPHONICITY IN SPEECH STIMULI

In the context of phonetic and linguistic research, the concept of panphonicity refers to the capacity of a specific text to represent every phoneme within a language's inventory at least once. According to Ladefoged and Johnson (2014), such comprehensive phonetic coverage is essential for researchers to observe the full articulatory range of a speaker within a brief, controlled window.

Panphonicity is typically assessed by cross-referencing the phonemes present within a translated narrative against the established phonological inventory of the target language. In the case of SM, this involves identifying the frequency and presence of specific consonants and vowels to determine how closely the text approximates a complete representation of the language's sound system. However, achieving absolute panphonic coverage is often challenging due to the natural constraints of narrative flow and the peripheral nature of certain phonemes. Davenport and Hannahs (2020) note that linguistic stimuli must often balance exhaustive phonemic representation with the phonotactic constraints of the target language.

Crystal (2008) suggests that approximate panphonicity is acceptable. The absent phonemes often carry a low functional load, appearing primarily in loanwords and contributing minimally to core contrastive distinctions within the language. Hockett (1966) defines functional load as a measure of the work a phoneme does in distinguishing between meanings.

This structural reliability allows for the translation of theoretical phonemic coverage into a functional diagnostic tool. Consequently, the *NWS* has transcended its origins in descriptive linguistics to become a cornerstone of the medical and psychological fields, serving as a robust framework for assessing speech production in diverse clinical populations.

NWS IN CLINICAL RESEARCH

NWS text has been used as a cross-linguistic database of phonology since 1949 due to its nature of approaching the ideal of being panphonic (International Phonetic Association [IPA], 2010). It is also because the text is semantically parallel in nature, enabling comparisons of phoneme inventories across languages with consistent genre and length (Baird et al., 2022). In addition, recent evidence suggests that *NWS* may offer methodological advantages over other standardised reading passages. Stasak and Epps (2022) found that, compared to other available read-aloud texts, *NWS* exhibits a higher average phoneme density per sentence despite having fewer sentences overall. This indicates that *NWS* provides a more concentrated phonemic load within shorter syntactic units, thereby increasing the amount of phonetic information captured per sentence. Such increased phoneme density enhances its sensitivity in speech analysis, particularly in studies requiring detailed examination of articulatory and acoustic features, as more phonemic data can be elicited within a controlled, time-efficient reading task.

Beyond phonetic studies, *NWS* has been widely used in clinical and experimental research areas such as aphasia and depression (Kojima et al., 1993; Vicsi et al., 2013). Recordings of subjects reading *NWS* have been used to examine the acoustic-phonetic parameters of speech, to investigate an objective measurement to support evaluation of voice quality, to compare the acoustic-prosodic parameters of adult cochlear implant users versus typical hearing persons and to compare the eye movement of Aphasic patients during silent and voice reading. (Arias-Vergara et al., 2022; Haderlein et al., 2015; Kojima et al., 1993; Vicsi et al., 2013; Vicsi et al., 2012). These applications imply that the translated *NWS* text has made a huge contribution to linguistic,

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phonemic, psycholinguistics, and medical studies around the world. The summary of these studies can be found in Table 1.

TABLE 1. Overview of Selected Clinical Studies Utilising The Translated *NWS* Across Languages

Articles	**Arias-Vergara et al. (2022)**	**Haderlein et al. (2015)**	**Kojima et al (1993)**	**Vicsi et al, (2013)**
Language translated into	German	German	Japanese	Hungarian
Objective	To investigate the speech prosody of post-lingually deaf cochlear implant (CI) users compared with control speakers without hearing or speech impairment.	To establish an objective and automatic method to support the subjective evaluation of voice quality	To investigate the eye movement differences between silent and voice reading for aphasia	This study examines differences in speech production between healthy and depressed individuals by analysing key suprasegmental features.
Data collection	Speech recordings of NWS for 74 CI users and 72 control group.	58 connected speech samples containing NWS were evaluated perceptually by 19 speech and voice therapy students.	The eye movement of aphasic and normal subjects were recorded during silent and voice reading of NWS	21 native Hungarian patients diagnosed with depression (11 women, 10 men) were asked to read NWS.
Areas of study	Prosodic features like speech rate and pause duration	Voice quality	Eye movement	Vocal fold source features, like jitter and shimmer

Despite the well-established utility of standardised read-aloud passages such as *NWS* in speech and language research mentioned earlier, their availability and equivalent use in the Malaysian context remain limited. Speech-language therapists (SLTs) play a central role in the assessment, diagnosis, and management of various speech and language disorders, and speech and language sample analysis is a core component of clinical practice. In Malaysia, such analyses are predominantly based on spontaneous speech samples. While spontaneous speech offers ecological validity, it introduces substantial variability in linguistic content and acoustic characteristics (Lee & Kreiman, 2022). This variability increases cognitive and linguistic load differences across speakers and contexts. In contrast, standardised read-aloud passages provide greater control over these variables, enabling more precise examination of speech characteristics by reducing confounding effects related to task variability (Gabler et al., 2023). Importantly, reducing variability improves the detectability of meaningful acoustic differences, which is particularly relevant in clinical and experimental research designs.

Nonetheless, the availability of comparable standardised speech and language assessment tools and materials in Malaysia remains restricted. Chu et al. (2019) highlighted the scarcity the tools and materials, identifying only the Malay Preschool Language Assessment Tool (MPLAT; Razak et al., 2018) and the Multilingual English–Mandarin–Malay Phonological Test (Lim, 2018). Although there has been slight progress in recent years, existing tools remain largely limited to preschool populations, indicating a persistent gap in resources for adolescents and adults. As a result, Malaysian SLTs predominantly rely on self-developed or informal assessment materials (Smith et al., 2026; Tukiran et al., 2023). This reliance limits standardisation, reliability, and cross-

study comparability, particularly in connected speech analysis. Given the demonstrated reliability and methodological value of *NWS* in analysing speech components, this gap further underscores the need for a standardised Malay adaptation of *NWS* for clinical and research use in Malaysia.

THE MALAY VARIATIONS OF *NWS*

SM as used in Malaysia is characterised by a relatively stable phonological system consisting of approximately 23 consonants and six vowels (Teoh, 1994). Compared to regional Malay varieties, SM demonstrates greater consistency in affixation, clearer vowel realisations, and more standardised pronunciation patterns (Jamil et al., 2019). These properties make SM the appropriate reference variety for the development of standardised linguistic and clinical materials intended for Malaysian populations.

Against this backdrop, it is important to consider whether existing Malay translations of *NWS* adequately reflect the linguistic properties of SM. To date there are two translations of *NWS* into the varieties of Malay namely Cocos (Soderberg, 2014) and Brunei (Deterding & Athirah, 2017). The former is predominantly spoken in Keeling and Christmas Islands, a part of Australian territory meanwhile the latter is used in the country of Brunei Darussalam. Given the geographical differences, these varieties of Malay are culturally and linguistically not the same to those of Malay spoken in Malaysia. In terms of culture, the word *jubah* (cloak) used in the Cocos and Brunei translations has a different interpretation from that of SM. The *jubah* in Malaysian context is often regarded as the long garment worn by Muslim men and women which is associated with the Arab culture. However, the original meaning in the *NWS* does not refer to this connotation (Dewan Bahasa Pustaka [DBP], 2016).

Tables 2 and 3 display the comparison made between *NWS* in English and the translated ones in these varieties. At the same time, the linguistic structures of these translations are compared to those of SM. Based on the available data, the comparison is made between Cocos and SM phonemically, while for Brunei, the comparison is made morphologically and phonemically. For Cocos and SM, some of the contrasts can be seen in the use of glottal stops and diphthongs. In the meantime, for those of Brunei Malay and SM, the variances can be observed in the vowels and the manners of articulation (phonemic). Morphologically, the number of syllables and the prefix structure are also different between these two varieties (Table 3).

TABLE 2. The phonemic differences between Cocos and Standard Malay

English	Cocos	Malay
Disputing (v)	*bəkalaʔi*	*bərkəlahi*
Stronger (adj)	*andal*	*handal*
More (intf.)	*maŋkin*	*makin*
To give up (v)	*akun kala*	*məŋaku kalah*
Until (conj.)	*sampe*	*sampai*

TABLE 3. The morphological and phonemic differences between Cocos and Standard Malay

English	Brunei		Malay	
Disputing (v)	Morphology	*batangkar*	Morphology	*bertengkar*
	Phonemic	*bataŋkar*	Phonetics	bətəŋkar
A person (n)	Morphology	*tia urang*	Morphology	*seorang*
	Phonemic	*tia uraŋ*	Phonetics	səoʔraŋ
To remove (v)	Morphology	*manggalkan*	Morphology	*menanggalkan*
	Phonemic	*maŋgalkan*	Phonetics	mənaŋgalkan
is (aux. v)	Morphology	*iatah*	Morphology	*ialah*
	Phonemic	*iatah*	Phonetics	iəlah
To blow (v)	Morphology	*maniup*	Morphology	*meniup*
	Phonemic	*maniup*	Phonetics	məniup

Following the phonemic and morphological differences of these Malay varieties, the overview of the inventories of the consonants and vowels for both are presented in Table 4. The linguistic properties of Brunei and Cocos Malays translated versions of *NWS* are somewhat different from those of SM. Thus, the two texts are not suitable to represent the linguistic structure of the Malay spoken in Malaysia.

TABLE 4. The morphological and phonemic differences between Cocos and Standard Malay

Varieties	Consonant	Vowels
SM	23	6
Cocos Malay	20	6
Brunei Malay	18	3

THEORETICAL CONSIDERATION IN TRANSLATING *NWS*

The development of a research-appropriate version of the *NWS* necessitates a departure from mere literary translation, moving instead towards the systematic adaptation protocols required for clinical and phonetic instruments. While this study utilises Nida's (1964) model of functional equivalence to ensure communicative effect, it acknowledges that translation theory has evolved significantly, particularly through Vermeer's Skopos theory, which prioritises the specific "purpose" or *skopos* of the target text, in this case, its function as a standardised research stimulus (Munday, 2016; Reiss & Vermeer, 2014).

This functionalist approach is preferred over more recent descriptive or post-colonial frameworks as it aligns with the strict requirements for cross-cultural adaptation of clinical tools, where maintaining semantic and conceptual equivalence is paramount to ensure the instrument's validity in the target population (Beaton et al., 2000; Wild et al., 2005). Furthermore, the phonemic and grammatical analyses are grounded in usage-based phonology and functional load theory (Hockett, 1966), providing a theoretical lens through which the text's ability to represent the core phonological realities of SM is evaluated. By synthesising Nida's principles with modern standards for adapting clinical stimuli, the resulting translation achieves a balance between linguistic fidelity and ecological validity, ensuring that the stimulus elicits naturalistic speech production without the confounding effects of literal calques or cultural incongruities.

From a translation perspective, producing a research-appropriate version of NWS requires careful attention to both linguistic accuracy and cultural naturalness. As the text functions not merely as a narrative but as a standardised research stimulus, the translation must preserve semantic content while remaining idiomatic and accessible to target-language users. Nida's (1964)

equivalence-based translation model, which emphasises functional equivalence, provides a suitable theoretical framework for this purpose. Rather than prioritising formal similarity at the lexical or syntactic level, functional equivalence focuses on achieving a comparable communicative effect and interpretability for the target audience.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a qualitative research design to systematically develop and initially validate an SM version of the *NWS* stimulus. By integrating qualitative translation procedures with quantitative linguistic analysis, the research ensured both the idiomatic naturalness and the phonetic utility of the final text. Ethical approval for the protocol was granted by the IIUM Research Ethics Committee (No: IREC 2025-KAHS/DASLP13).

To achieve the primary objectives, the research applied Nida's (1964) Equivalence-based Model, which prioritises functional equivalence between the source English text and the target SM translation. This theoretical framework focuses on ensuring that the translated language (TL) elicits the same communicative effect as the source language (SL), even when lexical or syntactic structures diverge. The advantage of this model lies in its ability to produce a natural-sounding and culturally appropriate translation that maintains the comprehension levels and communicative functions intended for the original audience.

The procedural framework comprised a multi-stage process involving forward translation (by three bilingual speakers), backward translation (by two independent translators), expert analysis, and harmonisation to resolve linguistic discrepancies. This rigorous method, adapted from Cruchinho et al. (2024), provided a transparent account of the translation process while carefully addressing the cultural and linguistic nuances essential for a standardised research instrument. Subsequently, a linguistic analysis was employed to describe, examine, and contrast the translated text with the original. This ensured that the version remained faithful to the source's semantic intent while documenting the phonemic inventory and grammatical categories to provide essential metadata for future clinical and linguistic research.

THE TRANSLATION PROCESS

FORWARD TRANSLATION

This translation stage involved converting the *NWS* text from English to SM. Three bilingual speakers, fluent in both languages, were selected as translators. The selection criteria required candidates to have achieved at least an A grade in both English and Malay for the *Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia* (SPM), a national examination equivalent to the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE).

The use of SPM results as a benchmark ensures foundational competency; achieving an 'A' in both subjects demonstrates a robust linguistic foundation in the primary languages involved, which is essential for maintaining the semantic accuracy of the *NWS* text. Furthermore, all selected translators held degrees from local universities, where they had successfully completed Malay as a compulsory core university subject, ensuring academic rigour alongside their native-level proficiency.

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After the three independent translations were obtained, a consultative meeting was conducted between the translators and the research team. During this session, the research team utilised comparative tables to moderate a detailed discussion, where any linguistic ambiguities or discrepancies were deliberated until a consensus was reached on the most appropriate translation. Following this rigorous harmonisation, the research team synthesised the findings into a single version of the SM *NWS*, designated as Version One (V1).

BACKWARD TRANSLATION

This phase served as a quality assurance in order to check the accuracy of V1 where it was translated back into English. The purpose of this procedure is to assess whether the original content has been preserved and if there were any unclear wording that need further clarification. The translators selected for this stage were two bilingual speakers. The selection criteria is identical to that of the forward translators. The translators were expected to produce a translation as close as possible to V1. This might mean they may replicate mistakes like unsuitable selection of words or structure found in V1. Several discussions were carried out to reach a consensus on the best version of the backward translation. This version of the English translation of *NWS* was labelled as English One (E1).

HARMONISATION

Upon completion of the backward translation phase, the research team systematically compared the original English *NWS*, V1 and E1. This was followed by a harmonisation meeting between the translators and the research team, which included the participation of three independent linguists. The inclusion of external linguists was crucial to provide an objective audit of the translation; their involvement served to mitigate potential content bias and ensured a high degree of inter-rater reliability during the evaluation of linguistic nuances.

By acting as neutral arbiters, these experts assisted in identifying subtle discrepancies that might otherwise have been overlooked by the primary translation team. Based on these expert deliberations, amendments were made to V1 to address issues of narrative flow and grammatical precision. This refined iteration was designated as Version Two (V2). Following this, the panel conducted a final review to confirm the grammatical and semantic equivalence of the text, ensuring its comprehensibility and cultural appropriateness for the target Malaysian population. This multi-perspective approach ensures that V2 functions as a linguistically valid and methodologically reliable instrument for phonetic and clinical research.

ANALYSIS OF THE MALAY PHONEMES AND THE GRAMMATICAL CLASS IN V2

For the second objective, V2 was analysed to identify the number of Malay phonemes available. Each phoneme was identified based on Malay consonants and vowels; the frequency of these phonemes was also recorded. Other than that, each word in V2 was classified grammatically.

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DATA ANALYSIS

Given the objective of this study, which is to translate and initially document an SM version of *NWS* linguistically, a descriptive-analytical approach was adopted. Frequency-based phonemic and grammatical analyses are commonly used in translation and speech stimulus validation studies to provide baseline linguistic profiling of newly developed materials. Such descriptive statistics enable transparent reporting of phoneme distribution and lexical composition, which are essential for evaluating the text's suitability as a controlled speech elicitation stimulus. For the first research objective, the linguistic comparison and deliberation outcome for all phases of this research were analysed qualitatively and were presented in the Results section below. For the second objective, the total number of V2 was compared to the SL and frequency of the phonemes and grammatical categories were computed using Microsoft excel and tabulated accordingly.

RESULTS

This section begins with the presentation of the outcome of the translation phases (forward, backward and harmonisation) and the linguistic and cultural comparisons between the two texts. Followed by the findings of the phoneme analysis and the grammatical classification of the words in V2.

TRANSLATION PROCESS AND LINGUISTIC AND CULTURAL COMPARISONS

For the first deliberation during the forward translation phase, several discrepancies were noted between the three translators. To consolidate the forward translations, the research panel carefully evaluated each lexical choice based on semantic accuracy and cultural appropriateness. In sentence 1, although only one translator included *sang* (the) in their translation, the research team has reached a consensus to insert this article before the characters *Matahari* (The Sun) and the *Angin Utara* (the North Wind). This adjustment aligns with the narrative conventions for naming characters in SM folklores.

The translation of 'disputing' varied across the team: two translators used *bertengkar,* whereas the third preferred *berbalah*. After further deliberation, the research team reached the consensus to choose *berbalah* (to quarrel) instead to represent the word 'disputing' as it reflects a milder disagreement or dispute compared to *bertengkar* (to argue) which is more intense and has emotional weight which is not depicted in the story.

For the word 'stronger', all translators rendered it differently, namely: *terkuat* (strongest), *lebih kuat* (stronger) and *lebih gagah* (mightier). The comparative adjective *lebih kuat* (stronger; comparative) was selected over the rest to match the English form 'stronger', as the prefix *ter-* in SM typically denotes the superlatives, while *lebih* 'more' indicates comparison. *Kuat* (strong) was preferred over *gagah* (mighty) for it has a more natural association with non-human attributes like wind. For the word 'came along' the research team decided to use the verb *muncul* (to appear). Although none of the translators chose this word- it was used to imply the traveller's appearance, aligning better with the context than *datang* (to come). *Tubuhnya dibaluti* was selected over *memakai* (to wear) instead, to translate 'wrapped in'. The former was chosen because this phrase conveyed the original more accurately. The word *tubuh* (body) was inserted to describe the item being wrapped in this context.

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For the phrase 'warm cloak', it is very interesting to observe that all three translators have rendered different translations:

Translator 1	**Translator 2**	**Translator 3**
jubah yang hangat	*mantel yang hangat*	*jaket labuh*
robe REL warm	cloak REL warm	jacket long
'A warm robe'	'A warm cloak'	'A long jacket'

As noted in the Malay Variations section, the word *jubah* carries specific cultural connotation in Malaysia. While *mantel* is the direct dictionary equivalent of 'cloak' it is rarely used in everyday speech. Consequently. *jaket* was selected because of its familiarity. Similarly, the research team opted for *tebal* (thick) rather than *hangat*, (warm) to describe the garment. Although *hangat*, is the literal translation of 'warm', it typically denotes heat from a fire (DBP, 2016) making *tebal* more contextually appropriate choice. Table 5 indicates the forward translation process for sentence one of *NWS*. Refer to Appendix A for the forward translations of the remaining sentences.

TABLE 5. Results of consolidation of forward translation process for sentence 1

Sentence 1	**Translator 1**	**Translator 2**	**Translator 3**	**V1**
The North Wind and the Sun were disputing which was the stronger when a traveller came along wrapped in a warm cloak	*Sang Angin Utara dan sang Matahari sedang berbalah tentang siapa antara mereka yang terkuat, apabila datang seorang pengembara memakai sehelai jubah yang hangat*	*Angin Utara dan Matahari sedang bertengkar tentang siapa yang lebih kuat. Ketika itu, seorang pengembara datang berjalan dengan tubuhnya dibaluti jaket labuh*	*Ketika Angin Utara dan Matahari sedang bertengkar tentang siapa antara mereka yang lebih gagah, datang seorang pengembara yang memakai sehelai mantel yang hangat*	Sang Angin Utara dan sang Matahari sedang berbalah tentang siapa antara mereka yang lebih kuat, apabila muncul seorang pengembara yang tubuhnya dibaluti jaket yang tebal

The second meeting involved the discussion on backward translation between the translators and the research team. Table 6 shows the translation of sentence one by the translators. The translations were somewhat similar to the original *NWS*. However, there are some morphological differences noted. For the word *berbalah* both translated it as 'arguing' instead of 'disputing' (which is in the original text).

According to the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (OALD, 2020), 'arguing' is defined as speaking angrily to someone due to a disagreement, whereas 'disputing' refers specifically to an argument between two people regarding a particular subject. The research team agreed the word *berbalah* better captured the essence of the story in Malay, thus it is maintained (as discussed in the previous section).

For the word *pengembara*, the two translators opted for different terms namely 'adventurer' and 'traveller' respectively. The former is defined as *a person who enjoys exciting new experiences, especially going to unusual places* while the latter *is referring to a person who is travelling or who often travels* (OALD, 2020). The team decided that the word *pengembara* accurately represents the word 'traveller' as in the original *NWS*. Furthermore, in SM, *pengembara* is defined as a person who travels on a journey (DBP, 2016). The fashion in which the traveller appeared in the story also was interesting to observe. *Muncul* was translated into 'suddenly appeared' and 'appeared' by these translators.

The use of the adverb 'suddenly' by the first translator implies that the traveller emerged unexpectedly, which deviates from the tone of the original story. Interestingly, while the original text used 'came along' to describe the traveller's arrival, this was rendered as 'appeared' during the back-translation process. According to OALD (2020), these terms were semantically similar. Therefore, the research team agreed that 'came along' is best translated as *muncul* in SM. The improved version of sentence one (V2) can also be found in Table 6.

In the harmonisation meeting, the external linguists and the research team analysed V2 further with regards to its meaning equivalence, clarity of structure, appropriateness of language style, and cultural relevance. The panel and the team came to an agreement that V2 (see Appendix B) is suitable for SM speaking population.

TABLE 6. Backward translation for Sentence One

V1	Original text	Translator 1	Translator 2	V2
Sang Angin Utara dan Sang Matahari sedang berbalah tentang siapa antara mereka yang lebih kuat, apabila muncul seorang pengembara yang tubuhnya dibaluti jaket yang tebal.	The North Wind and the Sun were disputing which was the stronger when a traveller came along wrapped in a warm cloak.	The North Wind and The Sun were arguing over who was stronger when an adventurer, wrapped in a thick jacket, suddenly appeared.	The North Wind and the Sun were arguing over who was stronger when a traveller, wrapped in a thick jacket, appeared.	*Sang Angin Utara dan Sang Matahari sedang berbalah tentang siapa antara mereka yang lebih kuat, apabila muncul seorang pengembara yang tubuhnya dibaluti jaket yang tebal.*

PHONEMES AND GRAMMATICAL CATEGORIES OF V2

The final V2 consists of 92 words across five sentences, while the original English version contains 113 words, with sentence lengths ranging from 14 to 36 words. In addition, the average sentence length of V2 is approximately 18.4 words per sentence, which falls within the range observed in the original *NWS* passage. This suggests that the translated version maintains a comparable level of linguistic complexity and processing demand. A comparison between V2 and the original *NWS* is presented in Table 7.

TABLE 7. Comparison of Structural Properties Between Original NWS and SM V2

Feature	Original NWS	SM V2
Total words	113	92
Number of sentences	5	5
Average words per sentence	22.6	18.4
Sentence length range	14-36	13-25

For the phonemic analysis, Figure 1 presents the distribution of both vowels and consonants in the passage, comprising a total of 531 phonemes. For the consonant, /t/ has the highest frequency with n=32 (6.03%), while the lowest frequency was /g/, being the least frequent (n=2, 0.38%). These consonants were absent from V2: they were /f/ and /v/ (labiodental), /z/ (voiced alveolar) and /ʃ/ (postalveolar). As for the SM vowels, the highest frequency was /ɐ/ (n=91, 17.14%) and the least was /o/ (n=3, 0.56%). There was no diphthong (ɐɪ/, /ɐu/, and /oɪ/) recorded in this text. Nevertheless, the passage includes most SM phonemes, supporting its potential use in phonological analysis and speech assessment.

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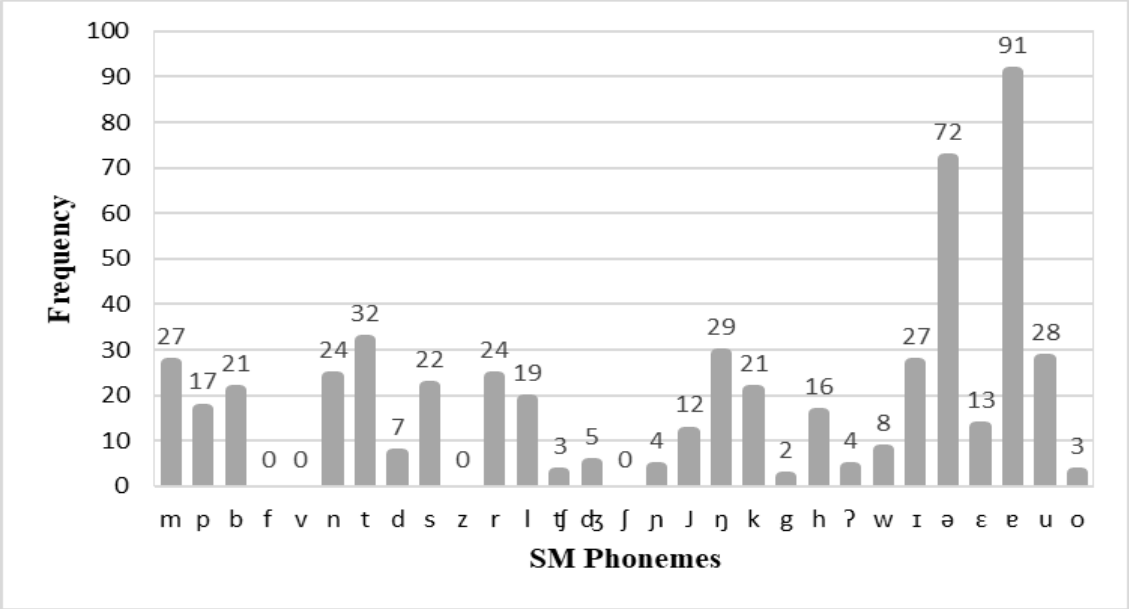

FIGURE 1. The frequency of available SM phonemes in V2

For the grammatical analysis, all the words in V2 were categorised according to its grammatical class. Figure 2 displays the number of words in each grammatical category. There were ten types found in this text, which include, among others, nouns, verbs and adjectives. Nouns, such as *matahari* (sun), *pengembara* (traveller) and *angin* (wind), have the highest number of words (n=22, 24.18%). Meanwhile, WH-question, which comprises words such as *siapa* (who), has the lowest number of words (n=2, 2.2%).

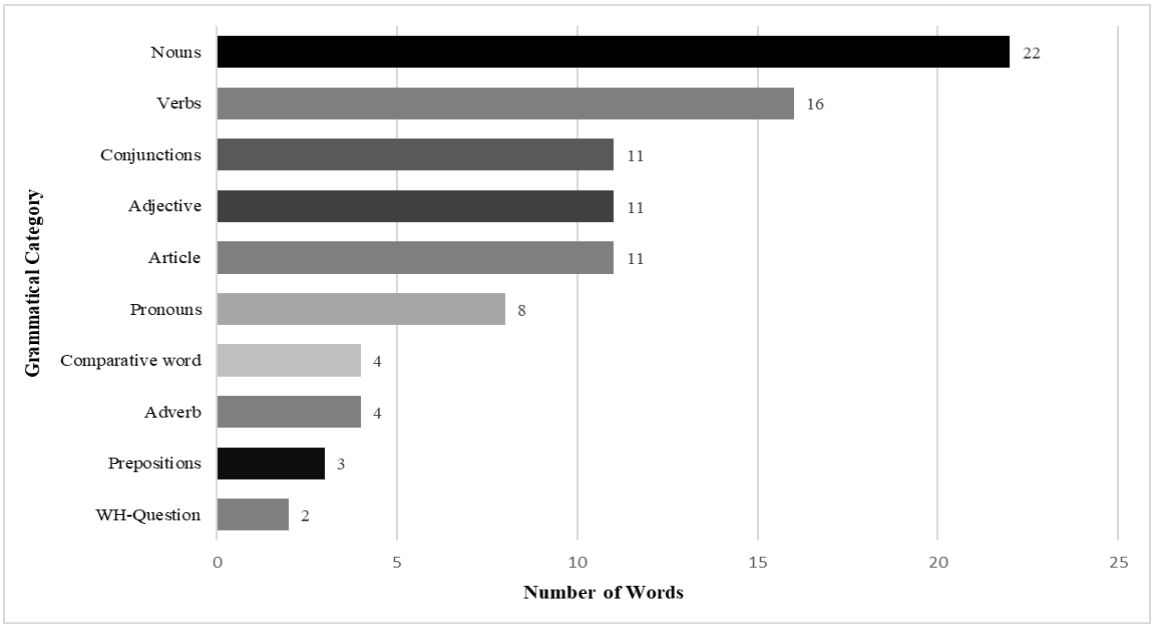

FIGURE 2. Grammatical categories of the words in V2

DISCUSSION

The following discussion evaluates the efficacy of the newly developed stimulus by synthesising the linguistic and phonemic results. It first examines the translation decisions and functional equivalence that ensured semantic and communicative accuracy. The text is then compared with SM and regional variants to justify the need for a national standard. Finally, it explores the relevance for clinical and linguistic research, detailing how this standardised tool provides a robust framework for speech-language assessment and future phonetic investigations in Malaysia.

TRANSLATION DECISIONS AND FUNCTIONAL EQUIVALENCE

The translation process was guided by Nida's (1964) equivalence-based model, particularly the principle of functional equivalence, which prioritises meaning and communicative effect over formal correspondence.

Cultural considerations also played a significant role. The substitution of *jaket yang tebal* for 'warm cloak' illustrates an effort to avoid culturally marked or uncommon lexical items such as *jubah* or *mantel*, which either carry specific religious connotations or are infrequently used in contemporary Malay. These decisions align with Nida's (1964) assertion that an effective translation should sound natural to the target audience while preserving the intended meaning of the source text.

STANDARD MALAY AND REGIONAL VARIANTS

An important consideration in the development of an SM *NWS* is the comparison with existing Malay variants, such as Brunei Malay and Cocos Malay. These regional variants exhibit structural and phonemic mismatches relative to SM, including differences in consonant and vowel inventories, syllable structures, and lexical choices (Deterding & Athirah, 2017; Soderberg, 2014). Such differences, while minor in casual communication, may have significant implications for clinical research, as the phonetic characteristics of connected speech are central to the accurate assessment of articulation and prosody.

By providing a linguistically accurate and culturally neutral SM *NWS*, the present study fills a critical gap in standardised Malay speech materials. This version serves as a necessary standard for research in Malaysia, offering both phonemic and structural alignment with the local language variety. It complements existing IPA-based illustrations, enabling researchers to compare acoustic and phonological patterns across languages while maintaining methodological rigour.

RELEVANCE FOR CLINICAL AND LINGUISTIC RESEARCH

The availability of a SM *NWS* has important implications for both research and clinical practice in Malaysia. *NWS* has long been recognised as a valuable standardised stimulus in speech and voice research, particularly for examining prosodic features, voice quality, and acoustic markers associated with a range of clinical conditions, including cochlear implantation outcomes and affective disorders such as depression (Haderlein et al., 2015; Vicsi et al., 2012, 2013). By providing a linguistically appropriate and culturally neutral SM translation, the present study extends the applicability of this well-established tool to Malay-speaking populations, addressing a

longstanding gap in standardised connected-speech materials for clinical and phonetic research in Malaysia.

From a clinical perspective, the SM *NWS* offers a controlled yet naturalistic connected-speech task that can be readily incorporated into assessment protocols, outcome monitoring, and intervention research in speech-language pathology. Its narrative structure supports the elicitation of speech samples that approximate everyday speech production while minimising the cognitive and linguistic variability associated with spontaneous discourse. This degree of task control is methodologically advantageous, given evidence that lexical characteristics of connected speech are systematically related to cognitive functioning; for example, Ostrand and Gunstad (2020) reported that mean lexical frequency in narrative speech is reliably associated with cognitive health in older adults, suggesting that lexical measures may provide informative indices of underlying neurological processes.

The analysis of grammatical categories in the SM *NWS* supports its functional suitability for both linguistic and clinical analysis. Nouns, verbs, and adjectives emerged as the most frequently occurring word classes, consistent with the narrative nature of the text and with patterns reported for *NWS* versions in other languages. Although grammatical classification was not a primary objective of the study, the resulting metadata provide a valuable reference for future research focusing on lexical distribution, syntactic patterns, and part-of-speech-specific analyses in SM. Such data may be particularly useful for studies examining morphosyntactic development, language impairment, or corpus-based and computational approaches to Malay speech.

The observed dominance of nouns, verbs, and adjectives reflects the narrative-oriented structure of the stimulus set. From a usage-based perspective, these word classes are the most frequent and functionally entrenched categories in natural discourse, forming the backbone of propositional content and event structure. Their prevalence is therefore expected and desirable, as it aligns the stimuli with patterns of grammatical salience that speakers routinely process and produce. In terms of functional load, content words carry the greatest informational weight in conveying meaning and syntactic relations, making them particularly suitable for probing linguistic organisation beyond isolated segmental production (Wedel et al., 2013).

The SM *NWS* demonstrates substantial phonemic richness, and the absence of /f, v, z, ʃ/ is accounted for by their peripheral role in Malay phonology. Framed in terms of functional load, these segments contribute minimally to contrastive distinctions, making them less critical for assessing core speech processing (Challis et al., 2024). Consequently, the stimulus prioritises high-functional-load segments that probe the speech planning and motor execution processes central to Malay.

Importantly, a direct comparison of these grammatical distributions with other *NWS* versions is currently constrained by a gap in the literature. While previous studies (e.g., Baird et al., 2022; Hiki et al., 2011) focus almost exclusively on phonemic inventories, this study is the first to explicitly quantify and analyse the grammatical metadata of the *NWS* stimulus. This original benchmark establishes the SM *NWS* as a more comprehensive instrument than its predecessors, providing the morphosyntactic parameters necessary for multifaceted clinical and linguistic evaluation in the Malaysian context.

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LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

A primary limitation of this study is that the phonological analysis focused on phoneme presence rather than positional distribution. Furthermore, as this research represents an initial validation, the translated text has yet to be empirically tested through speech recordings or clinical implementation. Future investigations must incorporate Type-Token Ratio (TTR) analyses and empirical trials to move beyond this preliminary stage.

A critical next step involves acoustic validation across diverse age groups and clinical profiles. Establishing population-specific norms for fundamental frequency, temporal stability, and spectral features will increase the stimulus's sensitivity to deviations in speech and voice disorders. Anchoring the *NWS* in these benchmarks allows for a more direct examination of how affective states, such as depression, or motor impairments modulate prosodic and voice-quality parameters.

The SM *NWS* holds significant potential for differential diagnosis, particularly in distinguishing between phonological, motor, and voice-based impairments. In multilingual contexts, where lexical knowledge varies, a validated *NWS* provides a controlled framework for examining maturational changes in motor control and prosody without lexical bias.

To support these goals, future research should prioritise the development of annotated IPA corpora by creating detailed phonetic annotations of *NWS* productions; this will facilitate more granular analyses of coarticulation and temporal organisation. Furthermore, researchers should focus on establishing prosodic benchmarks to define normative ranges for rhythm and intonation, thereby better operationalising functional load at the suprasegmental level.

By extending the instrument through acoustic validation and rich phonetic annotation, future work will ensure the SM *NWS* remains a functionally grounded, repeatable, and clinically relevant tool across linguistic and developmental domains.

CONCLUSION

This study developed an SM version of the *NWS* through a systematic process involving forward translation, back-translation, and expert harmonisation. The methodology was guided by equivalence-based translation principles, with a particular focus on functional equivalence.

The phonemic analysis demonstrated that the translated passage contains a broad representation of SM phonemes. Although the text is not fully panphonic, its phonemic coverage is sufficient for use as a connected speech stimulus in phonetic, linguistic, and clinical research. The supplementary analysis of grammatical categories further enhances the utility of the text by providing linguistic metadata that may support future studies involving lexical or syntactic considerations.

Overall, this study addresses a critical gap in Standard Malay linguistic resources by providing a standardised and well-documented version of the *NWS* passage. The translated text has the potential to support a wide range of applications, including cross-linguistic phonetic comparison, speech-language pathology assessment, and clinical research involving Malay-speaking populations. Future research is encouraged to validate the use of this passage empirically through speech recordings and to explore its applicability across different research and clinical contexts.

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APPENDIX A

Column 1	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5
Original text	The North Wind and the Sun were disputing which was the stronger when a traveller came along wrapped in a warm cloak.	They agreed that the one who first succeeded in making the traveller take his cloak off should be considered stronger than the other.	Then the North Wind blew as hard as he could, but the more he blew, the more closely did the traveller fold his cloak around him; and at last the North Wind gave up the attempt.	Then the Sun shone out warmly and immediately the traveller took off his cloak.	And so the North wind was obliged to confess that the Sun was the stronger of the two.
Translator 1	Sang Angin Utara dan sang Matahari sedang berbalah tentang siapa antara mereka yang terkuat, apabila datang seorang pengembara memakai sehelai jubah yang hangat.	Mereka memutuskan bahawa siapa yang paling awal berjaya membuatkan pengembara itu menanggalkan jubahnya, akan dianggap lebih kuat berbanding salah satu dari mereka.	Lalu sang Angin Utara pun meniup sekuat hati, namun, lebih kencang tiupannya, lebih erat balutan si pengembara pada jubahnya ; dan akhirnya sang angin utara pun berputus asa.	Kemudian, sang matahari bersinar dengan lebih hangat dan pengembara menanggalkan jubahnya dengan serta merta.	Kesudahannya, si Angin Utara pun menyerah dan mengaku bahawa si Matahari adalah yang paling kuat diantara keduanya.
Translator 2	Angin Utara dan Matahari sedang bertengkar tentang siapa yang lebih kuat. Ketika itu, seorang pengembara datang berjalan dengan tubuhnya dibaluti jaket labuh.	Mereka bersetuju bahawa sesiapa yang terlebih dahulu berjaya membuat pengembara menanggalkan jaket labuhnya harus dianggap lebih kuat daripada yang lain.	Kemudian, Angin Utara meniup sekuat yang boleh, tetapi semakin kuat tiupannya, semakin ketat pengembara membalut jaket labuhnya di sekeliling tubuhnya. Akhirnya, Angin Utara menyerah dan menghentikan usahanya.	Kemudian, Matahari memancarkan pancaran matahari dengan hangat, dan serta-merta pengembara menanggalkan jaket labuhnya.	Akhirnya, Angin Utara terpaksa mengakui bahawa Matahari lebih kuat antara mereka berdua.
Translator 3	Ketika Angin Utara dan Matahari sedang bertengkar tentang siapa antara mereka yang lebih	Lalu, mereka berdua bersetuju bahawa sesiapa yang berjaya membuatkan pengembara itu menanggalkan mantelnya	Angin Utara pun meniup sekuat hati, tetapi apakan daya, semakin kuat tiupan angin, semakin erat pengembara itu membaluti dirinya dengan mantel.	Selepas itu, Matahari mula memancarkan cahaya teriknya, lalu pengembara itu terus membuka	Jadi, Angin Utara terpaksa mengakui bahawa Mataharilah yang paling gagah antara mereka berdua.

	gagah, datang seorang pengembara yang memakai sehelai mantel yang hangat.	terlebih dahulu akan dianggap sebagai yang paling gagah.	Akhirnya, Angin Utara pun mengaku kalah.	mantelnya.	
Consolidation	Sang Angin Utara dan sang Matahari sedang berbalah tentang siapa antara mereka yang lebih kuat, apabila muncul seorang pengembara yang tubuhnya dibaluti jaket yang tebal.	Lalu, mereka memutuskan bahawa siapa yang berjaya membuatkan si pengembara menanggalkan jaketnya, akan dianggap pemenang.	Kemudian sang Angin Utara pun meniup sekuat hati, namun, lebih kuat tiupannya; lebih erat balutan jaket si pengembara. Akhirnya sang angin utara pun berputus asa.	Selepas itu, Sang Matahari mula memancarkan cahayanya, lalu si pengembara terus membuka jaketnya.	Akhirnya, Sang Angin Utara terpaksa mengakui bahawa Sang Matahari adalah lebih kuat antara mereka.

APPENDIX B

Original text	The North Wind and the Sun were disputing which was the stronger when a traveller came along wrapped in a warm cloak. They agreed that the one who first succeeded in making the traveller take his cloak off should be considered stronger than the other. Then the North Wind blew as hard as he could, but the more he blew, the more closely did the traveller fold his cloak around him; and at last the North Wind gave up the attempt. Then the Sun shone out warmly and immediately the traveller took off his cloak. And so the North Wind was obliged to confess that the Sun was the stronger of the two.
Standard Malay translation text	Sang Angin Utara dan Sang Matahari sedang berbalah tentang siapa antara mereka yang lebih kuat, apabila muncul seorang pengembara yang tubuhnya dibaluti jaket yang tebal. Lalu, mereka memutuskan bahawa siapa yang berjaya membuatkan si pengembara menanggalkan jaketnya, akan dianggap pemenang. Kemudian Sang Angin Utara pun meniup sekuat hati, namun, lebih kuat tiupannya; lebih erat balutan jaket si pengembara. Akhirnya sang angin utara pun berputus asa. Selepas itu, Sang Matahari mula memancarkan cahayanya, lalu si pengembara terus membuka jaketnya. Kesudahannya, Sang Angin Utara terpaksa mengakui bahawa Sang Matahari adalah lebih kuat antara mereka.

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