A description of Ternate Malay

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ABSTRACT
Ternate Malay is a local variety of Malay in Ternate, a small island in the Maluku Utara province in eastern Indonesia. The majority of speakers live in Ternate town, where it serves as mother tongue as well as a means of communication between people of various ethnic and linguistic backgrounds. In the last few decades there is a growing scholarly interest in local Malay varieties, particularly in the eastern part of Indonesia. This article is a short description of Ternate Malay based on the idea that words in Ternate Malay receive their meaning in the combination with other words and that the linguistic context as well as the non-linguistic situation in which they occur, determine the most suitable interpretation of utterances. It is shown how certain words facilitate the determination of the interpretation.

KEYWORDS
Malay dialects, linguistics, grammar, Ternate, Maluku Utara.

INTRODUCTION

Ternate Malay is a variety of Malay spoken on Ternate, a small island in the eastern Indonesian province of Maluku Utara (see Maps 1-2). Ternate has been famous as an important centre in the spice trade, particularly that of cloves, since in this region cloves originally grow. For centuries traders from all over the world came here to get their share in this profitable trade (see Andaya 1993). Malay was used as a lingua franca between the traders and the local population as well as amongst the traders themselves who had different linguistic backgrounds. In the town, also called Ternate, a local variety of Malay developed and became the mother tongue of the majority of people now

1 This article is based on the PhD thesis Ternate Malay; Grammar and texts, defended on 11 October 2012 at Leiden University (Netherlands). The thesis as well as the contents of the CD rom appended to it are accessible through: http://www.lotpublications.nl/, LOT Dissertation Series, 2012, number 306 or http://lingweb.eva.mpg.de/jakarta/ternate.

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