This dissertation is a descriptive study of a linguistic phenomenon known as phrasal alternation, focusing on the endangered Pondok Tinggi (PT) dialect of Kerinci, spoken in Indonesia. In essence, almost every Kerinci word displays two forms, labeled absolute and oblique. These forms differ in the shape of their final-syllable rime (for instance kurus ABS, kurus OBL 'chair').

Phrasal alternation, as the term indicates, occurs on the level of the phrase. The absolute form denotes genericity and neutrality, whereas the oblique form is used with a restricting specification (i.e. a patient in active constructions, an agent in passive constructions, a possessor in noun phrases, etc.). This specification can be overt or covert. General rules determine the patterns of phrasal alternation, but a variety of details and exceptions across grammatical categories make this process less predictable.

An additional mechanism is the so-called K/G-word alternation. G-words are defined as words containing a non-prenasalized voiced obstruent, whereas K-words do not. Like phrasal alternation, this mechanism also affects the vowel quality of the final rime. G-words trigger higher phonological realizations than K-words.

Therefore, the shape of most of PT lexicon depends on two oppositions: absolute vs. oblique and K-word vs. G-word. This four-way distinction is at the core of Kerinci word formation.