

INTERPLAY OF STRUCTURAL AND SOCIO-CULTURAL FACTORS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MALAY LANGUAGES

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WHEN PEOPLE IN GENERAL SPEAK OF THE DEVELOPMENT of a language, what they usually mean is the enrichment of its vocabulary, whereas structural factors which are as important are not taken into consideration.

What is meant by structural factors are those which stem from the organization of linguistic forms into a definite system, different for every language and to a considerable degree independent of extralinguistic experience and behaviour. These structural factors consist of phonological, morphological and syntactical features. The phonological features concern the sounds, their functions and arrangements; the morphological features comprise of the affixes, whether they be prefixes, infixes or suffixes and their function in word-composition, while the syntactical features are those dealing with the relationship between words in the formation of phrases and sentences.

The development of a language is to a certain extent influenced by extra-linguistic factors such as social and cultural factors. As society undergoes changes, so moves language with it.

With the introduction of new culture items and the emergence of new ideologies, either from within the society itself or from contact with other cultures, new forms of expression are required to meet the needs of the society, and this requirement is fulfilled either by coining new terms or by borrowing from other languages.

As regards the Malay language both the alternatives mentioned above are made use of. The first alternative, that is the coining of new words, has given rise among others to such words as *jejambat* (viaduct), *rerambut* (capillary) and *sesendi* (rheumatism), which I think are praiseworthy, because these words bring about the revival of a morphological characteristic of the Malay language which was almost sinking into disuse, and that is the reduplication of the first syllable of a word. Before the coining of these new terms this characteristic was only found in a handful of words such as *lelaki* (male), *kekura* (tortoise) etc. which are more often than not replaced by *laki-laki*, *kura-kura*, etc.

Another method of word-coining which I think deserves notice is the blending of two words together in which the last phoneme of the

first is similar to the first phoneme of the second, so that those two similar phonemes are fused into one. *Examples* of this are *wujudahulu* (antediluvial), from *wujud* (exist) and *dahulu* (before); *gambarajah* (diagram), from *gambar* (picture) and *rajah* (figure); *keretapi* (train) from *kereta* (car) and *api* (fire), and so on.

The popular practice of borrowing words from other languages is proved by the great number of loanwords drifting into the Malay language ever since the early centuries of the Christian era, with the Hinduization of South-East Asia. Words borrowed from Sanskrit mostly come from the domains of religion and kinship, such as *shorga* (heaven) *neraka* (hell), *dosa* (sin), *pahala* (reward), *raja* (king), *permaisuri* (queen), *singahsana* (throne), *istana* (palace) and so on.

The Hindus from the Brahmin and Kshatria castes played their roles in the development of the Malay language via religion and government, while others like the traders gave their contribution in the form of vocabulary items belonging to the domain of commerce and goods of commerce. Since a majority of these traders were from South India and most of them were of the Tamil speaking community, words borrowed from them were Tamil words, e.g. *modal* (capital), *perchuma* (free of charge), *katil* (bed), *talam* (tray), *manikam* (gem) etc.

The Islamization of South-East Asia introduced a new set of vocabulary items concerning religion, literature, science and knowledge, names of common objects found in the everyday life, names of days and months. Arabic loanwords are numerous in Malay. The few examples here are, *nabi* (prophet), *kitab* (religious book), *ilmu* (knowledge, science) *tadbir* (administer), *wakil* (representative), *hakim* (judge), *kertas* (paper), *surat* (letter) and so on.

Although the Chinese have for a long time settled in southeast Asia, the influence of Chinese on the Malay language is inconsiderable when compared to the influence exercised by other languages previously mentioned. The Chinese were no missionaries and their main interest lay in their trade, and the means to become successful in it. They realized that they had to be easily understood by others in order to achieve their purpose. Hence they learned to use the language of the local people, and thus there emerged a particular medium of communication which we now know as the bazaar Malay and which for a long time has been the medium of communication among the non-English educated portion of the society. Contact with the Chinese culture introduced new items into the vocabulary of the Malay language, such as *taukeh* (towkey), *tajin* (starch) *teh* (tea), *teko* (teapot), *chawan* (cup), *taugeh* (beansprout), *mi* (noodles) and so on.

Successive waves from the West brought about words from Portuguese such as *gereja* (church), *lelong* (to sell wholesale), *garpu* (fork), *almari*

(cupboard), *meja* (table), *sepatu* (shoes), *kemeja* (shirt) etc., from Dutch such as *senapang* (gun), *lachi* (drawer), *pelekat* (gum), *bunchis* (french bean) etc., and from English, such as *motokar*, *basikal*, *polis*, *pos*, *letrik* and many, many others. In connection with this we must not forget words borrowed from languages of the same family as the Malay language, especially Javanese. Among Javanese words found in Malay are: *basmi* (abolish), *sarapan* (breakfast), *waja* (when), *chataat* (to note down) etc.

Borrowing of words does not only enrich the vocabulary but also introduces new linguistic features. As such new affixes are borrowed from other languages. The most productive ones are the prefixes *pro-* and *anti-* from English and the suffix *-wan* from Sanskrit. Before the coming of the influence of other languages, the Malay language had never recognized gender in its grammatical set-up. A male or a female is indicated by juxtaposing the word *jantan* or *betina* after the words indicating plants, animals, and things, and the words *laki-laki* and *perempuan* are used to indicate the sex of human beings, male and female respectively. The concept of gender arose only from contact with other cultures. The new examples like *pemuda* — *pemudi*, *mahasiswa* — *mahasiswi*, *putra* — *puteri*, *dewa* — *dewi*, and *saudara* — *saudari* are all *loanwords*, and the opposition *a* — *i* denoting the masculine — feminine genders are never applied to other words be they borrowed or autochthonous.

Although at times we are confronted with the suffix — *wati* as *seni-wati* (female artist) (where — *wati* is the feminine of the fossilized suffix *-man*, as in *seniman*) and in *angkasawati* (female astronaut), (where *wati* is the feminine of *-wan*) the suffix *-wati* does not seem to be productive at all.

Although words like *dermawan*, (one who gives generously) *jutawan* (millionaire) and *hartawan* (wealthy man) can theoretically be paired off with *dermawati*, *jutawati* and *hartawati*, the Malay language does not seem to favour the forms above which will include gender as a grammatical category. Hence instead of *dermawati* etc. we come across such forms as *dermawan wanita*, *jutawen wanita* and *hartawan wanita*.

Recently, a new suffix has made its entry into the Malay language, and that is the suffix *-is* which is undoubtedly from English, *-ist* as found in *artist*, *linguist* and so on. In Malay, this *-is* affix is so far found in *sasterawanis* which is the feminine of *sasterawan* (literary artist) and in *cherpenis*, meaning the writer of *cherpen* (short story). In these two examples alone the suffix *-is* performs two functions, one is to indicate the feminine gender and the other to indicate the doer of the action. This is most confusing and the unpopularity of *-is* is crystal clear to all.

Just as Arabic had greatly influenced the syntax of classical Malay, so does English with modern Malay. Nowadays the word *dimana* (where) is used as a relative pronoun just as the English *where*.

A complex sentence in English with the participial clause preceding the main clause is often reflected in Malay syntax.

Note the following sentence:

Beruchap dalam upacara membuka dengan rasmi Pesta Buku2 Bahasa Kebangsaan di-Dewan Bahasa & Pustaka, Tun Razak menyeru kaum cherdek pandai dari berbagai keturunan kaum supaya memberi "sumbangan2 kongerit." (Berita Minggu, Sunday 21st. August 1966, p. 1., col. 6).

The underlined is the participial clause which never existed in Malay before.

The use of punctuation marks came with the adoption of the Roman alphabet from the West. Previous to this, written Malay made use of certain words to guide the reader in punctuating as he read. These words, to mention a few, are *maka*, *shahadan*, *hatta*, *arakan* and *alkesah*, and they have been traditionally known as punctuation words. The constant use of punctuation marks played a great part in depopularizing these punctuation words, so much so that the only such word still in current usage is *maka*, whose function now is more of conveying an emphatic tone than that of punctuating. The disappearance of the punctuation words has made written Malay less "heavy" than it used to be.

In the field of phonology, many foreign sounds have drifted into the Malay language, such as "z," "sh," "f," "kh," "th," "q," and "v." These foreign sounds have not so far acquired a phonemic status in the Malay language, with the exception of "sh" which justifies its status in the opposition shown between *sharat* and *sarat*. Furthermore, the word *masharakat*, *temasha*, *shak*, *mushkil* and so on are never pronounced as *masarakat*, *temasa*, *sak* and *muskil*.

All the other sounds only seem to be free variations of phonemes which are already in the Malay phonemic inventory, e.g.

fikir	—	pikir,	think
zaman	—	jaman,	epoch, era
qalam	—	kalam,	pen, pencil
khabar	—	kabar,	news
thalatha	—	selasa,	Tuesday
'alim	—	alim,	religious (of person)
novel	—	nobel,	novel

The acceptance of foreign phonemes in the Malay language no doubt helps to confuse the phonemic system of the language, but on the other hand, these foreign phonemes can be an asset to the borrower language, if by acquiring a phonemic status in the language they can fulfill the needs of the language.

Value judgment if not controlled, will bring about a negative effect in the development of the language. Every language community has the misfortune of having such elements known as the purists. These purists purposely close their eyes to the fact that a language has to meet the needs of its speakers and has to catch up with time. Forgetting that a very high percentage of their daily vocabulary consists of loanwords, they wish to preserve the purity of the language. Unlike their ancestors who were more broad-minded than they in accepting new vocabulary items to meet new concepts, these purists become skeptical to anything new being introduced.

At one time there was a phobia — the Indonesia-phobia. This began long before the Confrontation. At that time, a word or a phrase borrowed from Bahasa Indonesia was not acceptable because it was Indonesian and not Malay. This was most ridiculous as Malay and Bahasa Indonesia are varieties of one language. Differences between them are only dialectal. Furthermore, it is a fact that most of the Indonesians speak good Malay plus the proper use of the prefixes and the suffixes, whereas spoken Malay as found in Malay and Eastern Malaysia tends to drop the affixes, so much so that a linguist writing Malay grammar basing himself only on the spoken language, will in the end realize that anyone learning Malay from his grammar book, will face great difficulties when confronted with written Malay. The Indonesia-phobia persisted not without opposition from those who realize the foolishness of it all. The phobia was geared up at the outbreak of the Confrontation when any trait that was Indonesian or happened to follow the Indonesian pattern, was quickly replaced with non-Indonesian ones. Thus *talibisi* which was the term for television before the Confrontation was dropped off like a hot brick in favor of *talivishen* which is foreign to the Malay phonological system.

Despite the phobia, Confrontation has added two new and popular words in the Malay vocabulary, and they are *konferantasi* and *ganyang* (to crush; lit. to eat raw).

Socio-linguistic purism is not only confined to the rejection of foreign items but also of those of the Malay dialects themselves. But recently writers are found to use expressions from their own dialects and this is another means by which we can enrich the Malay language. Previously, the term for yesterday used by Radio Malaysia, Television Malaysia and the newspapers was “semalam,” following the southern dialect. In the dialects of north and east Malaya, and even those of Eastern Malaysia and Indonesia, the word for yesterday is “kemarin,” whereas “semalam” in these dialects means “last night.” “Kemarin” in the dialect of South Malaya means “sometime ago.” This situation was really confusing and today we find that the mass-media mentioned above have decided to

erase this confusion by using the term "kemarin" to mean "yesterday." Small as it is when compared to other language issues, this step has its significance in paving the way towards the codification of the Malay language.

The development of a language must not be taken to mean only the addition of new elements to the language but also the subtracting of those which might hinder its progress.

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