

Preserving the Use of Arabic Words in the Malay Language

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Abstract: The use of Arabic words in the Malay language is a tradition that has been around decades ago signifying the growth of knowledge in the Malay civilization. The language is very widely spoken then that the Malay community has grown accustomed to it. History shows that when Islam started expanding, it brought radical changes in the use of language among the Malays. Arabic language serves as an important tool especially in the daily worshipping acts such as prayers and zikr, among others. Of late however, Arabic began to be used in different forms as compared to before. This study will first discuss on the regressing usage of certain Arabic words by the Malay community, followed by a study on words that are more commonly used today. This shift is seen in a positive light proving that Arabic language has managed to place itself in the Malay community's daily social affairs rather than being merely used in religious matters. The research conducted for this study is also dedicated to expose the importance as well as future of Arabic language in the Malay community as preparations to face the enormity and openness of globalization.

Key words: Arabic word, Malay, social, religious, globalization

INTRODUCTION

The arrival of Islam had the Malays leaving their ancient beliefs and starting a tradition of a new speech wherein Arabic words are integrated into their daily conversation creating further expansion of the Malay lingo. Specific Arabic words are taken from its extensive vocabulary to be used within context and circumstances. The use of Arabic/Malay had started and met its expansion through the religious education system either from mosques or traditional religious school. Islamic studies is absolutely inseparable with the language as the main source of Islam is the Al-Qur'an Al-Karim as well as Hadeeth of the Prophet SAW which are both all in Arabic. The Arabic language brought a whole new dimension of education development in the Malay community particularly in religious studies with the emergence of translated books related to Islam.

This study comprises of the principles in sociolinguistic where two languages collide, namely, mother tongue of the locals and the foreign language that were brought in via trading, politics, religion and so on. The need to communicate between human beings makes it inevitable to affect and influence one another. In this context, language being an essential role in human relations is something that cannot be denied. In fact, each person has different speech patterns even when speaking in their mother tongue. And obviously a language with a higher aptitude will dominate.

This study will discuss the correlation between Arabic language and the Malay community in Malaysia. The most important aspect to be highlighted is the scenario where Arabic words are not merely used in religious matters but in other subjects as well. This study aims to:

- Analyze how the Arabic language from a historical aspect influences the Malays
- Evaluate the current scenario where Arabic words are being assimilated into the Malay language among the Malays

METHODOLOGY

This study is qualitative in nature. It has determined a primary data from an interview whereby a secondary data such as books, studies and other reading materials to support the discussion. Descriptive analysis is applied to elaborate and to interpret the data of the study.

Definition: In order to further discuss the topic, proper definition of each concept has to be clarified. These include Arabic, the Malay community and sociolinguistic. These three terms are considered as a key to absorb the following discussion.

Arabic: The Arabic language is a Semitic language originated from the Afro-Asiatic group. It is widely used

in the central region of Africa and the Middle East up until the Soviet Union and all the way to Indonesia. Meanwhile, Concise Encyclopedia of Islam defines Arabic as the language of Al-Qur'an and the Arabs. Wherein the definition of Arabic in this study is of the language acquired by the Malays in Malaysia for the purposes of education, religion, culture, politics, economics and everything else. Generally speaking, the learned Arabic in Malaysia can be considered as the standard Arabic or Fusha Arabic.

Malay community: Ensiklopedia Sejarah and Kebudayaan Melayu stated that Malay is a specific name given to a group of people living in the Malay Archipelago. Malay is also a race with ancestral lineage originated from the Malay Archipelago. In the context of this study, the Malay community consists of those staying around peninsular Malaysia who is also Muslims. Malay use Malay language for their communication. According to Karim *et al.* (2008) Malay language is having a good future as an official language and used widely in education system. Historically speaking, Malay language had gone through phases since the Sultanate of Malacca until independence. However as it can be seen, Malay community use Malay language in their interaction.

Sociolinguistic: Sociolinguistic is a branch of applied linguistic that studies the influence of communal factors towards language phenomenon and dialect occurrences. It emphasizes on the connection between a language and societal stimuli. According to Hudson (Noriah, 1998), sociolinguistic is a joined study that does research on the relation between a community (and its organizations) who uses a particular language and the language itself. Whereas Ramli (1997) mentions of sociolinguistic being a branch of linguistic that studies on every aspect linking a language with a community.

Based on the definitions above, this study will discuss the correlation between Arabic language and the Malay community in Malaysia. The most important aspect to be highlighted is the scenario where Arabic words are not merely used in religious matters but in other subjects as well. This study aims to:

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THE ARABIC LANGUAGE AND MALAY COMMUNITY

The connection between Arabic language and the Malay community can be seen in several aspects.

The history: History of the Malays and its association with the Arab language dated way back during the spread of Islam. Similar to the way Arabic language evolves in its own community, it is believed that the influence had developed and enriched the vocabulary of the Malay language. When Islam was spreading among the Malays, it created a clash of languages between Arabic and the local mother tongue. This further confirms the hypothesis of sociolinguistic in which the language with a higher aptitude will dominate. In this case, the Malay language was dominated and the locals were assimilating many Arabic words, vocabulary and even grammar in daily conversations. Until today, the Malay language still retains the use of loaned Arabic words that has become synonymous with the culture and mindset of the people. In fact, some might not even realize the words originated from Arabic. Even so, there are several loaned Arabic words that seem to have lost its use, probably due to modernization. Few examples are seen as: these above words were obtained from face-to-face communication with elders in state of Terengganu.

The given Table 1 has shown six examples of vanishing word loan from Malay dictionary. Based on observation, several words were not used in daily speaking among young generation. Old folks up to 50 years old will recognize these words even they are not using them anymore. It was believed that certain loan words are not listed in current Malay dictionary because of their uses were limited. Educated people from Islamic background may be familiar with these words because they are closely related to Arabic text in their lesson. By that way, in their speaking habit they will unconsciously do code switching as many of foreign language did. Language coding for Malay was taken by responsibility institution to ensure Malay language meets its national language policy. In this regards spelling system has considered the most suitable and standard variation of among Malay dialects to be categorized as standard Malay. These above words were obtained from

Table 1: Vanishing (loaned) Arab/Malay words

Original word(s)	Loaned word(s)	Current Malay	English
Qahwah	Kawo	Kopi	Coffee
Tuffaah	Topah	Epal	Apple
Qato'	Katok	Potong	Cut
Ghab	Rok	Sernak	Bush
Zabib	Zabik	Kismis	Raisin

Table 2: Maintained (loaned) Arab/Malay words

Original word(s)	Loaned word(s)	English
Akl	Akal	Mind
Akhir	Akhir	Last
Ulama-plural	Ulamak-singular	Scholar/s
Atiq	Antik	Antique
Qamus	Kamus	Dictionary

Table 3: Loaned Arabic/Malay words in the Islamic Banking

Original word(s)	Loaned word(s)	English
Mudhaarabah	Mudharabah	Profit sharing
Mu'amalah	Muamalah	Commercial dealings
Rahn	Rahnu	Pledge/Mortgage
Wadi'ah	Wadiah	Safe keeping/Safe custody
Qardh	Qard	Loan

These above words with asterisk (*) were retrieved from banks' website and brochures provided by respective banks confirmed by expert. *Interview with Dr. Wan Noor Hazlina Wan Jusoh, senior lecturer in Islamic Banking, UiTM Terengganu

Nasir and Mohd (1997), the authoritative Malay dictionary by Iskandar and Baharuddin (2005) (Table 2).

Arabic terminologies in the banking industry: Now a days Islamic banking is rapidly growing worldwide that several reforms in the banking system have started in Malaysia. Most conventional banks are seen opening their own Islamic banking channels in their respective outlets as a way to further expand the Islamic banking system in Malaysia. Similar to when Islam first came, the use of borrowed Arabic words is used within context. The Islamic banking system is based on the guidelines by the sharia law. Therefore, term borrowing is much needed since they have specific meanings that can get lost in translation if they were changed. In this context, these sharia compliant services have been named accordingly.

To further improve the systems and services, many local universities are now offering diploma and degree courses in Islamic banking. Thus, students who choose to pursue their studies in this field should be exposed themselves with proper knowledge of the Arabic language so that they would not feel awkward when they come across the terminologies. These above word were retrieved from banks' website and brochures provided by respective banks confirmed by expert (Table 3) (Interview with Dr. Wan Noor Hazlina Wan Jusoh, senior lecturer in Islamic Banking, UiTM Terengganu). Jabar and Azidan (2010) have mentioned several terms from Arabic in banking services products. They also proposed that certain terms must be reconstructed accordingly to local

language pronunciation in order to facilitate customer and client in the industry. In this regard, Yusoff *et al.* (2013) believe that Arabic terms in Islamic bank industry will assimilate into Malay language as what historically happened between Arabic language and Malay language.

CONCLUSION

Although, we are now living in the new millennia and the modernized world with all the latest technologies, lest we forget to care for these borrowed words from Arabic that has impacted the expansion of the Malay language extensively. The existing Arabic words in the Malay vocabulary should be retained in order to preserve our heritage and facilitate the Malay community to understand Arabic/Malay translated scriptures or books with convenience. Pedagogically speaking, knowing the originality of Arabic loan words will assist teachers of Arabic to present their duties effectively. As suggested by Yusoff *et al.* (2013), one of the misconceptions of teacher of Arabic is that students can reach and obtain listening skills indirectly. However, by identifying several loan words of Arabic may equip teachers to facilitate listening skill among Malays students to achieve their objective of learning.

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