

MABBIM and the Development of Malay Minimizing Geopolitical Divergences

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Introduction

Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia and Malaysia (BIM) together are generally known as the Malay world. The common denominators underlying them are the speech systems which have become their national language, though with various names, and the common origin of their indigenous peoples better known as the Malay race. Nestled in this widespread archipelago is the small island of Singapore which originally was part of the Malay kingdom of Johor of the Malay Peninsula. All these four regions with varying sizes have become separate geopolitical entities within the last two centuries or so.

Previously there were no well-defined boundaries between the sub-regions concerned, and the peoples were free to move from island to island or between the islands and the Malay Peninsula. Free migration and establishment of settlements of groups of extended families across the narrow straits was the order of the day, and inter-family visits may be said to be a fertile avenue for the spread of the common language, Malay, and cultural practices, and the arts.

Each of the BIM countries has its own history of a mosaic of kingdoms under the rule of sultans, which existed side by side in peace as well as in conflict. People were the subjects of the sultan or the chieftain in the sub-region where they were domiciled. Allegiance was fluid. Changing sides was a matter of social needs and inclination. Even when the Western powers, i.e. the Portuguese, the Dutch and the English, came to trade and occupy various ports and coastal areas in the region starting from the 16th century, this had been the social and the political map of the Malay world.

The 19th century saw a transformation in the political map of the region. The end of the Napoleonic War in Europe had motivated the signing of the Treaty of London in 1820 which became the instrument of the division of the Malay world between the Dutch and the British. In 1824, a line was drawn between the two Western powers defining their regions of domination: the Malay Peninsula with the islands around it (inclusive of Singapore) and the three territories on the island of Borneo, i.e. Brunei, North Borneo (present-day Sabah), and Sarawak went to the British, and the rest of the archipelago to the Dutch. This division of the area according to Western hegemony did not just carve out a new geopolitical map, but was also the beginning of a geolinguistic map which was to develop according to the style of governance of the rulers.

The "map" that is referred to here concerns only the use and development of the main language in the British occupied territories as opposed to those occupied by the Dutch, i.e. Malay. The numerous regional languages, close in genetic relationship to Malay, have not been affected, if at all, in their development by Western rule.

The ever existing divergences

The centre point of this paper is that the division of the Malay world into “British regions” and “Dutch regions” had brought about linguistic divergences in the development of Malay in its traditional area of spread. The question that arises is: Was there ever a uniformity in the use of Malay prior to the division of the Malay world by the powers that be? The answer is a big no. The crux of the matter is in the development of the language as an official language and a medium of education, the latter being one which has its roots in the Western world.

The vast area of the spread of Malay has always been a zone of great diversity which extends throughout the Malay archipelago, and this spread has been a never-ending phenomenon throughout the ages. Within this traditional area, there are varieties of the core areas as well as those of the non-core areas.

I have defined the core area of language spread as one which has a stable speech community, showing a density of communication network, and with a time-depth which has enabled the community to evolve into a civilization using the language concerned as its main speech system. The non-core area, on the other hand, is one which does not have a stable speech community using the language concerned as first language. (Asmah Haji Omar 2003: 344). Looking at Malaysia and Indonesia, the bigger of the BIM regions, there are sub-regions within each one which historically were not core areas, but which have developed to become on par with other core areas within their specific geopolitical set-up. This has been due to the implementation of the national language policies in both Indonesia and Malaysia making the Malay language the common speech system in official use as well as in the pursuit of education. It is this type of situation that has contributed much to the geographical divergences of the Malay language.

Generalizing on the points of systemic divergences along the geographical or the horizontal axis is a painstaking, though not an impossible, task. It is easier to mark the general divisions of Malay language divergences based on sociolinguistic usages. On this axis, one can categorize features of divergences in terms of language use in governance, in social situations be they formal or informal, in the royal court using the *bahasa diraja* or *bahasa istana* as opposed to commoners' language (*bahasa orang biasa*), and so on. However, the bi-directional or multi-directional oppositions, though in existence in the core areas, may not bear a uniform or near-uniform set of features for all the core regions, because each set may still bear features modulated according to the specificity of its geographical region.

Extraneous factors and language divergences

The geographical location of the Malay world makes it readily accessible to people from outside the region with different linguistic and cultural traditions. Its ports were convenient stopovers for travellers plying through between India and China, among them missionaries of the world's great religions, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and Christianity, in that chronological order. The spice trade was a pull factor for traders from east and west. From trade and missionary activities came colonization.

In short, the Malay world experienced three waves of influences from three different civilizations which were to have a great impact on the development of the Malay language: the Indian, the Muslim-Arab and the Western civilizations. The point of departure between one region and the other not only lies in the intensity and the time-depth of the influence, but also in the reaction of each region to those influences.

Given that Indonesia is the largest of the BIM countries, occupying a greater part of the Malay archipelago, the spread of Hinduism and Buddhism seemed to be more extensive there than in Malaysia and Brunei. With many more ethnic groups than in the other two countries, with the Malay group being one of them, the linguistic items of Indian civilization that found their way into Indonesia had more venues to lodge in, than just the one offered by the Malay speaking community. The Javanese and Balinese speech communities became receptors of new religious and cultural concepts with origins in the Sanskrit language. This is a very important factor because these two ethnic languages, and more so Javanese than Balinese, has developed into a reservoir for Sanskrit forms in the formulation of new words, even scientific terms, for the Indonesian language, long after a great majority of the Indonesians have become Muslims. Javanese personal names are mostly derived from the Sanskrit source, and they have become a model for personal names for other ethnic groups in Indonesia even to this day. Nomenclatures of institutions and national honours reflect an influence from Sanskrit which seems to survive the ages. Not only that, as one looks at the Indonesian language one gets the impression that the Sanskritized reservoir gets revitalized through ingenious means of linguistic manipulation in formulating new words.

It is a different scenario in Malaysia and Brunei Darussalam. Compared to Indonesia, the two combined have a smaller area of the spread of linguistic influence from the direction of India. However, the size of the region does not seem to play a significant role in the retention or stoppage of the in-flow of words of Sanskrit origin into the Malay variety spoken in Malaysia and Brunei. It was the acceptance of Islam and the Muslim-Arab cultural traits that seemed to stop this process such that the reservoir of Sanskrit words became stagnant. Also there has not been a semblance of the revitalization of elements already existing in the reservoir. If there are new coinages showing the presence of Sanskrit elements in the general vocabulary of Malay and personal names of Malay men and women in Malaysia and Brunei, they are "imported", as it were, from Indonesia. And this is a result of the close contact between the three BIM countries, forged through the language council, *Majlis Bahasa Indonesia-Malaysia* in (MBIM) 1972, which became *Majlis Bahasa Brunei Darussalam-Indonesia-Malaysia* (MABBIM) in 1985. To all intents and purposes, the Malay language of Malaysia and Brunei appears to show a preference for the Arabic source over its Sanskrit counterpart.

Having an inclination towards the Sanskrit source in creating new words in Indonesian does not mean that the Arabic source is all together neglected. However, the latter resides in the realm of the religious (i.e. Islamic), vocabulary, and they do not seem to be the first source of choice when it comes to looking for neologisms or new expressions in the sciences. In Malay of Malaysia and Brunei, it is the Arabic source that comes to the fore (if native sources fail to give the desired result). The two versions of Malay in Indonesia on the one hand and in Malaysia-Brunei on the other, can be likened to two pieces of cloth with the same background with embroidery of different motifs. Malaysians who have been so used to having the Arabic motif usually get enamoured of the Sanskritized motif they see on the Indonesian fabric, even to the extent of thinking that it is more poetic than the motif they are used to. This explains their ever ready adoption of Sanskritized words coming from Indonesian; and it is not just words conveying definitive concepts but also linguistic routines expressed in particular situations. For example, the Malaysian Prime Minister's expression of condolence on Benazir Bhutto's demise in December 2007, as published in a Malay daily, was couched

in the Indonesian expression *Belasungkawa*, whereas the usual Malaysian expression is *Takziah*.

On the other hand, Indonesians in general have the tendency to think that the Malaysian fabric with the Arabic motif is old-fashioned and represents conservatism in language development. When I was a student in Jakarta in the late 1950s and early 1960s, I always got remarks from friends that my Malay was old-fashioned (*kuno*). This sort of perception from Indonesians listening to Malaysian Malay lived on to the late 1980's when a similar pronouncement was made by an Indonesian professor at a conference in the United States, when he was asked to give a comparison of *bahasa Indonesia* and *bahasa Malaysia*. A perception such as this is not an isolated one; it reflects a general impression people have on comparing the two varieties. Arabic, which has a more extensive geographical spread on the surface of the globe compared to Sanskrit, gives the impression of the old world of Malay civilization with conservative Muslim traditions. Indigenized Sanskrit words and expressions appear to give an aura of modernity; modern not because Sanskrit is more modern than Arabic, but because not many people know the source of the Sanskritized words and expressions; furthermore, the phonotactics of those elements just sound different from Arabic which have become too familiar to the Malay ears. From my observation, such a perception seems to have petered out over the years due to more frequent interactions between linguists and people in general from both sides of the linguistic divide, specifically through MBIM/MABBIM.

Within this linguistic scenery, certain words which originate from Arabic have been given different interpretations in Malaysia-Brunei as from those given in Indonesia. For example, linguists in the days prior to MBIM/MABBIM found that they were talking about different things when they used the Arabic loan *ayat*. In the source language, this word refers to the signs of Allah's presence and greatness. It also means "verse (of the Holy Quran or of a sacred book)". These two meanings have been taken with the word *ayat* itself into both Indonesian and Malay. However, the Malaysians have expanded the second meaning ("verse") to derive a third meaning, and that is "sentence". In the late 1950s and early 1960s (when I was studying in Indonesia), I found the Indonesians really confused when they met with the word *ayat* in publications on language coming from their northern neighbour. I was asked by friends and teachers whether the Malays looked at language as verses of the Quran. This was the time when there was not much contact of an intellectual nature between the two countries.

For "sentence", it is *kalimat* in Indonesian. This word in Arabic has varied but related meanings: word, sentence, discourse. One often hears this word or its morphological variant, *kalimah*, in the phrase *kalimah syahadah*, the obligatory pronouncement of the Muslim that he/she believes in the one and only God, Allah, and that Muhammad is His prophet. The Malays have taken *kalimat/kalimah* only in this holy context and in reference to Allah's word in the Quran. It is not even used to refer to the discourse of the prophet.

Governance and Western style education as a contributor to language divergence

Another point of departure between the British Malay territories and Dutch-ruled Indonesia was the use of the languages of the Western rulers in governance as well as in education. This practice had contributed tremendously in the divergences in the use of "modern" Malay/Indonesian when BIM attained independence and decided to overturn

their national and official language policy, by using their own language, Malay (by its various nomenclatures), instead of the well-established languages of their former rulers.

Although education in English in Malaysia and Brunei, and in Dutch in Indonesia, was not universal in terms of the colonized peoples, it was to have a significant influence in the development of the national language in BIM later on. In the early days of the planned development of scientific terminology in the national language, the people involved in this task in all the BIM countries had been those who had gone through education up to the tertiary level in the language of their colonial masters. Regardless of whether we agree or not with the Sapir-Whorfian hypothesis on language and the world-view, the influences of Dutch and Malay were most apparent in the direction taken by Indonesian and Malay (the latter term will henceforth be used to refer to Malay in Malaysia and Brunei) in the formulation of new concepts especially those belonging to the academic domain.

If we go back to the period much earlier than the language planning era of MBIM/MABBIM, the direction from the once colonial languages can be seen in the spelling systems formulated for the writing of Indonesian on the one hand, and for the writing of Malay on the other. The former is based on the Dutch system of orthography, while the latter on English. Even when the Indonesian spelling system (the one formulated by Van Ophuysen) underwent a revision in 1948 resulting in the Soewandi system, doing away with the Dutch graphemes of *ie* and *oe* and replacing them with *i* and *u*, many other Dutch graphemes especially in the writing of consonants were left intact.

Linguistic differences between Indonesian and Malay arising from the influences of Dutch and English respectively can also be seen in the development of other aspects of the language. The writing of Malay grammar for schools in Malaysia and Brunei was very much based on the tradition of the English grammar, and I have the impression that the writing of grammar for a similar purpose for Indonesian was also very much influenced by the Dutch tradition. Za'ba, the famous Malay grammarian of the 20th century, stated in the preface of his book *Pelita Bahasa Melayu* (in three volumes) that in writing his grammar he used the moulds (*acuan*) of Arabic and English.

Terminology for various subjects taught in the various levels of education, for administration, business, the law courts and the professions was derived from the language of the colonial powers that be: Dutch for Indonesian and English for Malay. This being the case, it was not surprising that for these public sectors the two national varieties of Malay in Indonesia and Malaysia-Brunei give the semblance of developing into separate languages. Malaysians arriving in Jakarta for the first time are lost in the number of new words confronting them, not to mention the numerous acronyms that have become a system in themselves in Indonesian. Likewise, Indonesians coming to Malaysia for the first time, and not being conversant in English, are surprised by the presence of Malayized English and Arabic words, as well as Malay words which are used in a different way from the ones they are used to in their country. At the airport, they are puzzled by *kastam dan eksais*, *bebas cukai*, *barang-barang untuk diisytihar*, *tuntutan bagasi*, not to mention *tandas*.

Divergence was very much obvious in the scientific terms in the BIM national languages. In the early days of the planning of scientific terms in Malaysia, i.e. 1960 –

1972, the Malaysians were giving Malay equivalents to technical terms taken from English, according to rules which were given in a prescribed sequence in the guideline, starting with the first step and moving on to the next and the next should be the one previous to it not give an outcome relevant in meaning to the original scientific term. The three steps in this sequence of rules (though not as clearly worded as given here) are: (i) look for the equivalent in the Malay traditional vocabulary (ii) render a loan-shift (iii) transfer the English word into Malay to suit the Malay tongue. I have not so far been able to get the Indonesian guideline in the coining of scientific terms prior to MBIM/MABBIM, but looking at the list of terms of that era, I am inclined to infer that it consists of a sequence similar to the one depicted in the Malaysian guideline cited above, with a caveat that in (iii) it is Dutch and not English.

An identical set of rules does not necessarily produce results that are also identical. In the first instance, traditional vocabulary in Malaysia may not mean the same thing as it would in Indonesia. In Malaysia, such a vocabulary is one found in the standard and the dialectal varieties spoken within Malaysia as well as in classical and traditional literature written in Malay. and traditional literature in Malaysia Malay incorporates both Sanskrit and Arabic loanwords, with the latter holding the majority. In Indonesia, as reflected in the scientific terms prior to MBIM/MABBIM, traditional vocabulary includes the vocabulary of the ethnic languages, especially those with written literature, and the most dominant being Javanese. And as said earlier in this paper, Javanese terms include those that are Sanskritized.

In the second instance, it is the rendering of loan-shifts in Malay and Indonesian. And this is closely connected with the third instance, and that is the transfer of the English/Dutch word into the Malay/English vocabulary. As proven by lists of terms from both sides, the process may not at all result in a close proximity between Indonesian and Malay terms referring to the same concept. The reasons for this are given below.

Firstly, a concept considered possible to render a loan-shift from Dutch to Indonesian may not appear to be possible from English to Malay. For example, in Malay the concepts underlying the terms *oxygen* and *hydrogen* were rendered as *oksijan* and *haiderojan*, showing a process of directly transferring the lexical items from English but with a modulation in the spelling of the words to suit the Malayized way of pronouncing them. On the other hand, the Indonesians found that it was possible to render native or near-native forms for those concepts, resulting in *zat asam* (for *oxygen*), and *zat air* (for *hydrogen*), which were loan-shifted from Dutch *zuurstof* and *waterstof* respectively. The obverse is the application of loan-shifts in Malay, and direct transfer in Indonesian (with modulation in pronunciation) as in the pairs *pengurusan* (Ml) - *manajemen* (Ind., from English); *pengarah* (Ml.) - *direktur* (Ind.).

Secondly, loan-shifts when applied by the two countries could be mind boggling as they may sound similar, but refer to different things which usually belong to the same semantic field. This may be illustrated by the pair which in English are *geography* and *geology*. In Malay, it was *ilmu alam* for the former, and *kajibumi* for the latter. In Indonesian, it was *ilmu bumi* for geography, *ilmu bumi alam* for geology, and *ilmu alam* for the study of the universe.

Thirdly, loan-shifts may motivate the choice of different grammatical elements of derivation although the element bearing the main semantic meaning is the same in both Indonesian and Malay. For example, *ilmu perhutanan* for Forestry (as an academic discipline) in Malay corresponds with *ilmu kehutanan* in Indonesian. This pair and those similar to it are still comprehensible across the linguistic divide when communication takes place between the two sets of speakers. This may not always be the case when it comes to *pejabat* and *jabatan*. In Malay *pejabat* refers to the place where a job or duty is officially carried out, meaning "office", whereas in Indonesian it means a person officially holding a certain post. As for *jabatan*, in Malay it means "department", i.e. a conglomeration of offices each with its responsibility and job description but related to one another within a larger whole. In Indonesian *jabatan* refers to rank or position occupied by the person in office, whereas the word for this concept in Malay is *jawatan*. Indonesian prefers direct loans *kantor* (for office) and *departemen* from Dutch.

In the third instance, i.e. one of direct transfer, even if both sides opt for this method, divergences still could not be avoided, due to the different sources of the terms. An example can be seen in the case of *doktor* (Ml. from English *doctor*), and *dokter* (Ind. from Dutch *dokter*). In Malay, *doctor* refers to the person who has been trained in medical science as well as to the person who has been conferred with the highest academic degree in an academic discipline, and this is a case of a real outright transfer from English. However, in Indonesian besides *dokter*, there is also *doctor*: the former referring to the medical person, while the latter to the person with the highest academic degree; these examples illustrate two outright transfers from Dutch.

The divergences between Malay and Indonesian as discussed above are systemic in nature, and to a certain extent, they contribute to the way the two sets of speakers understand and react to the world around them while purportedly using the same language. Lack of comprehensibility between them is not because they are using different languages, but because of the divergences in the language systems that set one variety apart from the other. From my own personal assessment and experience in living among each of the two communities of speakers, the differences between the two seem to be more far reaching, cognitively speaking, than the differences between dialects which have existed along geographical dimension.

From the discussion above, it can be seen that there has been a discernible cognitive gap between the two sets of speakers across the linguistic divide of the BIM countries: Indonesia on the one hand, and Malaysia and Brunei on the other. The divide that is of concern here is one at the national level, and this involves the use of language in official situations as well as in education, the media and the professions.

Early overtures in language co-operation

The existence of a variety of Malay which had become *bahasa Indonesia* had been followed closely by the Malayan literati prior to the Indonesian independence. In fact Za'ba went to Jakarta in the early 1930s to visit Balai Pustaka and to see for himself the development of the language there. According to him, *bahasa Indonesia* at that time was still a *bahasa kacukan*; translated literally this term means a mixed language. We can deduce the actual meaning of the term as Creole, based on the state of the art in the categorization of mixed speech systems as given by sociolinguists. At the same time,

Za'ba envisioned that this speech system would turn into a full fledged language in time to come. (Zainal Abidin Ahmad 1934, 2002: *Bab VI, Ceraian* 98).

The Indonesian independence in 1945 which elevated *bahasa Indonesia* as *bahasa negara* from its status as *bahasa persatuan* as stated in the *Sumpah Pemuda* of 1928, had motivated Malay writers and Malay language associations in Malaya to consolidate among themselves in the realization of an ethos which would foreground the Malay language as national language of Malaya. The year 1952 saw the first Malay language congress to the effect held in Singapore, and this was to be followed by two other congresses before the Malayan independence. There was Indonesian representation at each congress, and the third one was attended by Professor Dr. Prijono, the then Minister of Education and Culture of Indonesia. The congresses resounded with aspirations to develop the Malay language to be a language used in all walks of life, just like *bahasa Indonesia*. The decision to sideline the *Jawi/Arabic* script, which was the writing system used for all purposes then, in favour of the Latin or Romanized script, was motivated by the Indonesian model.

Common spelling system as political and cultural instrument

Two years after Malaya attained her independence from the British, the Treaty of Friendship (*Perjanjian Persahabatan*) was signed between the Federation of Malaya and the Republic of Indonesia on 17th April, 1959. Clause 6 of the Treaty states the following in its English version:

The two High Contracting Parties, conscious of the fact that Malay and Indonesian languages have a common origin, shall strive through co-operation, collaboration and consultation to achieve the greatest possible uniformity in their use and development.

This was the first official mention of the need to narrow the gap, as it were, between Indonesian and Malay. In the wake of the treaty, plans were made to develop a common spelling system for both countries. The first official meeting to discuss this item took place in 1959 in Jakarta. As we are well informed from the course of historical events, which were more political rather than cultural in nature, the common spelling system that had been programmed as the first in the agenda of language co-operation between Malaysia and Indonesia, was able to come into being only in 1972, officially on 16th August of that year. The official acceptance of the common spelling by the two countries heralded the establishment of a language council in December 1972, known as the *Majlis Bahasa Indonesia-Malaysia* (MBIM), which in 1985 became *Majlis Bahasa Brunei Darussalam-Indonesia-Malaysia* (MABBIM) with the inclusion of Brunei.

The objective of Clause 6 of the Treaty of Friendship 1959 has a cultural appearance. However, as with any treaty signed by two or more parties the political usefulness overrides all others. The ethos behind a common spelling system served a political purpose even before the common spelling system came into being. It became an instrument in the easing of relationship between Malaysia and Indonesia the moment *Konfrantasi* ended at the close of 1965. In early 1966, a three-member delegation (comprising Syed Nasir Ismail, Hassan Ahmad and Muhammad Yunus Maris) was sent by the Malaysian government to Jakarta to renew discussions on language co-operation between the two countries. According to Dato' Hassan Ahmad (in a personal

communication with me), a great deal of their time there was taken up by the pragmatics of the renewal of friendship and re-starting of communication. The real re-opening of talks took place when the Indonesian team of linguists visited Kuala Lumpur in July 1967. That was the occasion when the basic principles of a common spelling system were agreed on. But as said earlier, it was only five years later that a final agreement was made on the common spelling system as it exists today.

Language, politics and cognition

A common method of spelling the language proved to be an efficient tool for further development of both Malay and Indonesian, specifically in the coining of scientific terms common for the countries concerned. However, agreeing on technical words in disciplines and sub-disciplines of the sciences and the social sciences has appeared to be a much more difficult task than agreeing on a common spelling system.

The main reason lies in the items that form the topics of negotiation. With the spelling, the items consist of graphic symbols which represent phonemes of the language. And graphic symbols are extraneous to the meaning-making part of language as it is this latter part rather than the graphic symbols that reflects the culture and the psyche of language users. We have seen that the Malay language has been rendered in three totally different systems of writing, the Pallava, Arabic, and Romanized scripts, and adaptation of symbols of the different scripts to the sound system of the language has never been a problem. The common spelling system agreed on by Malaysia and Indonesia did not introduce any new symbols but only established new graphemes by giving new values to certain symbols and combination of symbols. There are other points of refinement in the spelling of words for the purpose of a standardization of the spelling traditions of both countries, but they do not in any way affect meaning-making that is central to the language.

The common spelling system has also been an avenue in instilling a forward looking attitude among language planners and users. The most obvious factor moving along this avenue is the inclusion of new features in the systems and structures in the phonological rules of the language, e.g. the acceptance of consonant clusters as coda and onset of syllables, and certain vowel clusters, hitherto deemed to be non-existent in the language. Such clusters feature in technical terms in English which have origins in Latin and Greek. It was a reluctance to accept such clusters that had generated the pre-MBIM Malay terminology, such as *saikoloji* (psikologi), *kelinik* (klinik), *petroliam* (petroleum), etc. A flexibility in the face of innovation has not only facilitated the absorption of new words in the sciences, but has helped in preventing further distancing between Malay and Indonesian.

Having a new spelling system means teaching the communities of language users to be familiar with the rules of putting the graphic symbols together, a training which to some extent involves some aspect of cognition. Besides the cognitive dimension, there is also the political one. With technical terms, cognition of the formulators as well as of the users of those terms goes deeper than the recognition of visual symbols and the pairing of these symbols with the sound system they are familiar with. There is also the political dimension involved in the negotiation. Usually, politics and cognition combine in decisions on linguistic rules. That is to say, in a negotiation between two different countries, it is normal that each side would try to assert its traditions and predilections for adoption by the counterpart. Not to do so would mean submission to the other party.

Cognition has its roots in the ability of the language users in their comprehension of the symbols being introduced. What the parties involved would try to do is to achieve a win-win situation. (For a detailed account of these dimensions as well as of others, refer Asmah Haji Omar, forthcoming).

As alluded to earlier, the political dimension is more complex when it comes to reaching an agreement on technical terms, than when the context is the spelling system. There is always the effort of the players to defend and assert their individual traditions. Changing what has become part of their lexical system means getting used to another set of vocabulary. Besides that, the items debated in the agenda for the terminology are more numerous than those in the spelling system.

Earlier in this paper it has been said that prior to MBIM, Indonesian and Malay had had their own traditions of searching for equivalents for scientific terms, and they had their own preferred sources for the purpose, as well as methods of dealing with alien forms to suit their varieties of the language. And as shown above, the sources had proven to be a major cause of divergence between them. To prevent a derailment in the process of negotiation, an important aspect regarding extraneous sources in the centripetal process agreed on by the two parties was to take the English source over and above the Dutch source. This was to be a rule included in the guideline for the formulation of technical terms for Indonesian and Malay. The formulation of this rule was in no way a disrespect for the Dutch language and the Dutch people. It was just the most practical thing to do. None in the Malaysian team drafting the guideline knew Dutch, and only two or three in the Indonesian team had knowledge of this language. This was in 1972, and members of the Indonesian team in the MBIM/MABBIM committees over the years consist of those born after Indonesian independence, and hence all have gone through the national education system with English as the main foreign language.

Another aspect in language development spearheaded by MBIM/MABBIM where political consideration comes into the fore can be seen in the sequence recommended when choosing the source for equivalents, and the items in the sequence are given in the order of priority: (i) current vocabulary of Malay/Indonesian (ii) vocabulary no longer current in Malay/Indonesian (iii) current vocabulary in related languages (iv) vocabulary no longer current in related languages (v) English vocabulary (vi) vocabulary in other languages. Most of the time, sources (i) – (iv) provide for loan-shifts, as they would not be able to provide equivalents for most of the concepts in the sciences, except for nomenclatures in agriculture, forestry, and such like. For all practical purposes, the English source appeared to be the most favoured by all parties concerned, as shown by the lists of items agreed on by them. And these items have been adapted to suit Malay phonology which in turn has been modified to receive the English lexical items without much difficulty.

At the back of the mind of each of the people involved in drafting the guideline was the question: Why not go to English straight away, if the English source seemed to be the point of agreement? The political atmosphere did not allow that. Such a step was deemed to be insensitive to national aspirations where Malay provided the cultural roots. The guideline was formulated in the early 1970s and was made official in 1975. It was only after about three decades of its implementation that (in 2004) it was given a major revision. In the new guideline, the sequence of sources given in the earlier vision

has been done away with. The new and current version recommends a straight road to the international (i.e. English) source for scientific neologisms. In 2004, one can say that the socio-political sensitivity in the use of the national language vis-à-vis English has changed somewhat with the effect of globalization that echoed throughout the world, and a revision of the guideline has gone unnoticed, as though it had always been there.

Together with the political dimension is the linguistic-cognitive one, which may resonate louder. This arises from the fact that the technical terms, consisting of morphemes, words and phrases which are elements of meaning-making, are more reflective of the level of expert knowledge of the parties involved. At the same time, what is most necessary in this sort of negotiation is a real understanding of concepts and derivation of concepts, and how they can be encapsulated in the linguistic systems of the language. On the whole, it involves expertise in the linguistic rules of the language in question as well as in the concepts used in the sciences under discussion.

In negotiating for a standard spelling system, the players need only to be linguists well-versed in the phonology of the language. With the terminology, specialists in the scientific discipline(s) as well as linguists have equally important roles to play: the former in identifying the concepts and choosing equivalents for Malay and Indonesian, and the latter in advising on and overseeing the formulation of equivalents so that they comply with the relevant linguistic systems. Since specialists from the BIM countries have knowledge of English and familiar with English texts in their disciplines, even if they have not had training in English-speaking countries, their cognition of their subject matter seems to precipitate towards English. This is evident, as said earlier, from the lists of scientific terms in the various sciences, social sciences and professions that have been produced so far, which show that items fully agreed on by the three BIM countries are those taken from English and adapted to suit the phonological and morphological systems of Malay.

Principles in handling differences

The above discussion on planning for spelling and terminology has at the same time touched on ways by which the BIM countries handle their differences, not just for the purpose of achieving the maximum result in the quantity of agreed items, but also in maintaining the bond of friendship between themselves. Two important principles underlie the negotiations: one is respect for traditions that have been long lasting in the communities of the counterparts; the other is compromise.

The principle of mutual respect is seen in the willingness not to coerce the other parties to replace items which have been in use in their communities for as long as those parties feel that those items have served their purpose well, and that replacing them with new ones would cause an unnecessary confusion. At the same time, there may also be neologisms which due to socio-cultural reasons may not be acceptable to all, and the party not accepting them is allowed to have its choice. This principle is couched in the phrase agree to disagree (*bersetuju untuk berbeza*).

The principle of compromise is one in which the parties concerned search for a solution in a neutral location. This is illustrated in the agreement to choose the English source over and above any other Western language. In exercising this principle, English is not identified with the Malaysia-Brunei traditions, but rather with the international corpus

of scientific texts. This principle leads to innovativeness, as seen in the re-invention of systems and structures in the phonology and orthography of the language.

These two principles of mutual respect and compromise give the negotiations a semblance of flexibility, which is very important in the development of the language. In this context, it has to be remembered that language development depends a great deal on its acceptability by its community of speakers. Without this acceptability, the language will lack vitality, and development may stall at some point or other.

After 35 years of terminology planning, MABBIM has been able to produce bilingual English-Malay/Indonesian glossaries of almost all of the academic disciplines taught in the BIM universities and other institutions of higher learning. From glossaries, come dictionaries. These publications prove to be very useful tools for reference by Malay/Indonesian scholars of the region. As glossaries and dictionaries also include alternative versions in cases where the rule "agree to disagree" applies, users in member countries are able to get acquainted with alternative items.

Knowledge development in Malay/Indonesian

The spelling and terminology story in a sense can be called a success story in that it brings the BIM country together, and scholars of the region have an avenue for networking. However, glossaries and dictionaries have their limitations. They provide lexical items which are not part of a text, when to all intents and purposes such items need to be used in a discourse in order to be "alive". This means that they have to be used in texts written on the disciplines where they belong.

MABBIM has realized the significance of the text, and has instituted a journal of its own, the *Rampak Serantau*, which publishes articles of any academic discipline written in Malay/Indonesian. Member countries take turns to be publisher of the journal. But the Council feels that more needs to be done. So, in its meeting in Kuala Lumpur in March 2007, the Council decided that henceforth the time and resources that have been utilized previously for terminology development would be deflected to the development of knowledge (*pembinaan ilmu*) in Malay/Indonesian. Activities on the development of terminology would still continue, but only within the precincts of each member country, and coordination would be executed outside the scheduled meetings of the Council.

A list of activities has been proposed for the program of *pembinaan ilmu*. Among these is training in academic writing for academics in the member countries. If a BIM co-operation is necessary for scientific terms for the purposes of curtailing lexical divergences, a program in training in academic writing is considered useful in minimizing textual incomprehension. The style of academic writing in Malay differs somewhat from that in Indonesian. Divergence here may have its source in the academic writing in English and Dutch, and is most obvious in structure and style. The structure of academic discourse in Malay is a transfer of the structure of academic discourse in English, and so is the style. I may be wrong, but I imagine that the structure and style of academic discourse in Indonesian is very much influenced by academic discourse in Dutch. This phenomenon of transfer and influence is to be expected, as the academic genre in the Malay world came into being with English and Dutch.

Generally speaking, Malaysians, and I think Bruneians as well, do not find reading an academic text written in Indonesian easy going. On the other hand, Indonesians reading Malaysian texts may stumble on words and idioms unfamiliar to them, but on the whole Malaysian texts for them would be easier reading than Indonesian texts are for Malaysians. The training in academic writing does not in any way aim to achieve a rigid standardization of style, but rather to familiarize academic writers with the styles used, and from there a standard style can be evolved. This will contribute to a better flow of communication at the academic level between the BIM countries. If this happens, one can say that MABBIM has really arrived at minimizing the communication gap between the member countries.

Conclusion

The process of minimizing the language gap between the two geopolitical regions of the Malay world represented by BIM began with the simplest, i.e. the spelling system, and through the terminology planning has moved on to academic discourse. This could not have been achieved without a body such as MBIM/MABBIM, initiated by the governments of the respective countries, complementing the aspirations of the populace. Minimizing the language gap undertaken by this body concerns usages defined by officialdom and the academic world.

There is indeed a limitation to what MABBIM can do, the obvious being that language usage in other genres will not fit into the guideline provided for academic usage. At the same time, language has to grow and its exuberance or otherwise depends on the creativity of its users. The Malay world itself is a rich reservoir for this creativity, and users should be able to use it freely.

Further reading on the subject

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