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Family Addressing System in Malay and Arab Languages: An Analysis of Sociolinguistic Clash

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Abstract

This study is a first attempt to comparatively study the addressing system in Malay and Arabic societies, which is an important element in communicating and interacting. This analysis uses lexicological and sociolinguistic approaches. The study found that the family addressing system in Arabic is viewed as more complicated and complex than the address forms used within the Malay society. This will cause difficulty and confusion in determining the appropriate meaning match for the terms. As a result, translators and anyone else involved in the process of moving the meaning of a word between Malay and Arabic should be cautious and always refer to the term's meaning before assigning a match so that the receiver or reader of the translation do not become confused.

Keywords: family addressing system, sociolinguistic clash, Malay and Arabic languages

Introduction

Every word has a meaning, and that meaning must be clear and comprehensive in order for individuals who do not speak the same language as the term to understand it. Hence, the meaning, and determining the match of the meaning, are elemental in measuring the efficacy of communication relationship of a language speaker with another.

Some linguists have asserted that every lexical in one language has an equivalent meaning in another. Nonetheless, they recognise that, while there are certain parallels in the classification of lexical according to specific categories of meaning, identifying the meaning of a lexical for a language in another language remains challenging. Finding the exact meaning match for a term is challenging, but not impossible; the question is whether the translation of a language presents the meaning match that is closest to the meaning of the source language.

This could be attributed to a variety of circumstances. Cultural distinctions across languages are one of them, with terminology that only exist in the cultural framework of one society and not in the culture of another. This linguistic phenomenon has piqued the interest of experts who want to learn more about why this phenomenon arises and what elements contribute to it. The properties found on the lexical items implicated in this phenomenon are listed as below.

Objectives

Describe the lexical traits that make it difficult for users of both languages to identify the right meaning match for the lexical items. Review the factors influencing the difference of meaning match in the Arabic and Malay family addressing terms.

Limitations Of Study

This research focuses solely on the phenomena of meaning matching as viewed in the context of family addressing terms in both languages. In doing the study on the equivalence of meanings, the meaning of the equivalence match in Arabic and Malay, the meaning of the equivalence match among linguistics scholars and their arguments about it will be discussed. This research will also look at how far linguistic experts have looked into the issue of meaning matching.

Research Methodology

This study is limited to library research due to the subject chosen. This study was limited to library research due to the subject chosen. To meet the study's requirements, data from the first edition of the Kamus Besar Arab-Melayu Dewan (KBAMD) will be used as the primary source in the data collection. To obtain essential data from the monolingual Arabic dictionary, the researcher used the al-Munjid dictionary as a reference. Both dictionaries have been adopted since the KBAMD dictionary is the most recent and viewed to contain the most entry among Arabic-Malay dictionaries. Al-Munjid, on the other hand, has both traditional and contemporary features. In addition, for research purposes, books on Arabic and Malay linguistics will also be used as references.

Data Analysis

The data processing in this research is contrastive. Consequently, the data will be analysed using a comparison technique. The goal of this procedure is to collect data that is complete, parallel, and accurate. Conclusions for the entire study were drawn from observations of the obtained data as well as the analysis performed.

Malay-Arab Family Terminology Equivalence

Here are some examples of family terminology equivalence that researchers would like to explore:

i. Lexical Of الأَخُّ

According to the Kamus Besar Arab-Melayu Dewan (KBAMD, 2006:22), the term الأَخُّ carries four meanings, which are 1- biological relatives, half-relatives; 2- friends; 3- milk-relatives (الأَخُّ مِنَ الرِّضَاعِ), 4- partners, equals, and; 5- team members. The question arises because in the Malay culture, people who have family links but are not siblings are referred to as 'relatives'. Some are called 'close relatives' while some are called 'distant relatives'. Are these groups can also be categorised as الأَخُّ? In this regard, the researcher would like to quote an Arabic proverb that goes:

Indeed, your relatives are those who sympathise with you (al-Mayda:niyy 512H:72)

In this proverb, Arabs are also seen identifying 'relatives' as everyone who is sympathetic and does not harm us. As a result, it encourages us to value everyone we consider a relative. Another proverb that more clearly demonstrates the range of meaning associated with the use of الأَخُّ is:

It might just be that your relative is the one who was not born by your mother (al-Mayda:niyy 512H:291)

Therefore, the term **الأخ** has a broader definition that includes anybody who is liked and is not restricted to those with biological links. Regardless, the plural form of **أخ** that is **إخوة** is translated to 'relatives' that connotes 'siblings' (Abu Abdul, 1996:3). Meanwhile, the term **الأقرباء** is defined as 'close siblings'. At the same time, the term **الأدثون** is used and carries the same meaning (Zaidan, 2021). The same goes to the feminine lexical for **أخ** that is **الأخت**. From the pool of meanings assigned above on the term **أخ**, it can be concluded that the 'biological relatives' are only denoted to only the half-relatives or half-siblings. How about the full-relatives or full-siblings (sharing the same parents)? The terms **الشقيق** and **الشقيقة** seemingly carry a closer meaning with the terms 'full-male-relatives' and 'full-female-relatives'. Besides, there are other terms used in referring to 'full-relatives' which are **القطعة** (KBAMD, 2006:1898) and **الصنؤ** (KBAMD, 2006:1371).

From the conducted analysis, it can be concluded that the term **أخ** matches with the meaning of 'relatives' in Malay. However, considering the context of 'relatives' that carry a broader sense of meaning, the term **أخ** is not necessarily representing the term 'siblings' in the context of Malay language, despite the term 'siblings' might as well comprised in the 'relatives' scope. To put it another way, all relatives are like siblings, but not all siblings are like relatives. A more appropriate term to be used in referring to 'siblings' is **الشقيق**. The table below may help to understand the previous conclusions.

ii. Lexical Of **الأب**

This lexical provides the meaning of 'father' or 'dad for the word (KBAMD, 2006: 8). Yet it is also used to mean 'grandfather', 'uncle' (not specified maternal uncle or paternal uncle) and 'owner' as quoted from Mu'jam al-Wasit.

While the term **الأبوان** carries the meaning of 'father and mother' (al-Wasit:4).

It also denotes 'father' and 'uncle' (KBAMD, 2006:8).

The table below specifies the pool of meanings for lexical **الأب** and **الأبوان** :

Table 1: Pool of meanings for terms **الأب** and **الأبوان**

	Father	Grand-father	Grand-parents	Father & Mother	Father & Uncle	Father & Grand-father
الأب	√	√	√		√	
الأبوان				√	√	√

From the classification conducted on the term **الأب**, it can be summarised that this term essentially matches the meaning of 'father' in the Malay, with the expanded usage to the meanings of 'father', 'grandfather', 'grandparents', 'uncle' and 'parents'.

iii. Lexical Of **الحمى**

The combination of the term **حمى** with terms **المرأة** and **الرجل** is considered to have a rather paradoxical sense. The term **حمى المرأة** denotes 'son-in-law and male relatives from the husband's side'. Meanwhile, the term **حمى الرجل** denotes 'son-in-law and male relatives from the wife's side'. Its plural form is **أحماء**. While the term **الحماء** denotes 'close family' (KBAMD, 2006:529).

From what has been presented thus far, it can be deduced that the term **الحمى** has the meanings of 'son-in-law' and 'male relatives'. Apart from **الحمى**, other terms commonly used for son-in-law and daughter-in-law are **زوجة الابن** and **زوجة البنت**. Besides the above terminologies, the researcher had discovered a couple of lexical that are considered more accurate to define 'in-laws', which is **الختن** for son-in-law and **الختنة** for daughter-in-law (KBAMD, 2006:574).

iv. Lexical Of الرِّبِّيَّةُ And الرِّبِّيُّ

These lexical terms denote 'female stepdaughter' and 'male stepdaughter', respectively. The meaning matching, without a doubt, is correct. However, there is another term that is more closely associated with the term 'male stepson', which is **الْمَوْلُ** (wife's son of the first husband) (al-Munjid:863). While the comparable meanings of the terms 'stepfather' and 'stepmother' in the al-Marbawi Dictionary are translated as **رَوْحَةُ الْأَبِ** and **رَوْحَةُ الْأُمِّ**. The researcher deems the match as reasonable, but when translated, it appears to favour the explanations of 'husband to mother' and 'wife to father'. It would be preferable if we could use the terms **الرَّابُّ** for 'stepfather' and **الرَّابَّةُ** for 'stepmother' (KBAMD, 2006: 841) since it is considered to be more brief and compact.

v. Lexical Of الْخَالُ And الْعَمُّ

In most cases, a language lacks a term that accurately expresses the true meaning of a term in another language. It occurred in the Malay language when there is no specific phrase matching the terms **الْخَالُ** and **الْعَمُّ**.

These two terms are merely translated as 'maternal uncle' and 'paternal uncle', respectively. Likewise, the terms **الْخَالَةُ** and **الْعَمَّةُ** are 'maternal aunt' and 'paternal aunt', respectively (Mohd Sukki, 2008). These two terms are merely translated as 'maternal uncle' and 'paternal uncle,' respectively. Similarly, the terms 'maternal aunt' and 'paternal aunt' are 'maternal aunt' and 'paternal aunt,' respectively (Mohd Sukki Othman : 2008). A similar situation happened with the term 'cousin,' where the Malay language lacks a term to distinguish between male maternal cousin, male paternal cousin, female maternal cousin and female paternal cousin, whereas in Arabic, we get to distinguish these callings through the terms:

الْعَمُّ	: male paternal cousin
ابْنُ الْخَالِ	: male maternal cousin
بِنْتُ الْعَمِّ	: female paternal cousin
بِنْتُ الْخَالِ	: female maternal cousin

Malay-Arab Family Terminology Equivalence

The Malay language is known for its courtesy and politeness in discourse. It represents the Malay culture's emphasis on decent and orderly behaviour as well as attitude. As a result, in family connections, the terminology used in conversation should be appropriate for the respondent. The researcher aims to introduce some terminology within the Malay family addressing system, which is perceived to be more unique and complex than Arabic.

After explaining the addressing terms, the researcher moves on to family calling names, where the Malay language has a system of family calls that is unique from Arabic and other languages. In the Malay language, there are numerous family calls; in fact, Kalthum and Sabariah (2016) documented the Malay family addressing system in dialects from various states in a study. The family calls such as *pak* (father), *mak* (mother), *akak* (elder sister) dan *adik* (little brother/sister) are used not only in blood or marriage-related family relationships, but also outside the family connections, particularly in informal interactions with friends, relatives of friends, villagers, and so on (Marlyna, Aslinda, Mohd Baharim, 2010.). The use of family nicknames symbolises harmony, closeness and courtesy. Family nicknames basically consist of: *abang/bang* (elder brother), *kakak/kak* (older sister), *adik* (little brother/sister), *anak* (son/daughter), *bapa/pak/ayah* (father), *ibu/emak/mak* (mother), *cucu* (grandson/granddaughter), *cicit* (great-grandson), *datuk/tok* (grandfather), *nenek/wan* (grandmother) dan *moyang* (ancestor). All of these basic family calls can be prefixed by the name of the person, such as *Bang Mad*, *Pak Ali*, *Mak Yah* and so on (Kalthum & Sabariah, 2016).

Only the lexical *pak* and *mak*, respectively, have an appropriate match in the Arabic call system, which are **أَبُو** and **أُمُّ**, for instance in **أَبُو أُسَامَةَ**, **أُمُّ عَائِشَةَ** and so on.

The Malay language specifies distinct names for an older and younger male relative, which are *abang* and *adik lelaki*, respectively. Thus, when the lexical *abang* is used, it conjures up images of the elder brother, whereas when the lexical *adik lelaki* is used, it conjures up images of the little brother. In Arabic context, only the term أَخ (male relative) exists and should bear the adjectives الْكَبِيرُ and الصَّغِيرُ to derive the word أَخ الْكَبِيرُ for elder brother and أَخ الصَّغِيرُ for little brother. A similar situation is applied for elder sister, الْأَخْتُ الْكَبِيرَةُ, and little sister, الْأَخْتُ الصَّغِيرَةُ.

Summary

The researcher has drawn certain summaries and conclusions upon discussing and analysing all of the data and information gathered during the development of this study. Among them are the following:

Determining the meaning of a phrase is challenging. It is required to look at the context of usage in the sentence to comprehend the meaning of a word, term, or expression. The relationship of meaning between words in a sentence can aid in the comprehension of a term's meaning. Furthermore, finding a true meaning match necessitates a high level of observation, experience, and linguistic sensibility.

Linguistic experts are of differing opinions about whether each word has a meaning match. However, based on the conducted study, the researcher argues as a word has so many diverse meanings, there is no truly accurate meaning match for almost every word. However, this can be dismissed since what matters is the message that a speaker wishes to transmit through the words can be understood by the listener.

When translating something lexical, it is vital to try as much as possible to get the closest and simplest meaning match possible so that individuals who are not native speakers may understand the meaning to be transmitted through the translation language.

The effect of diverse cultures and the environment among speakers of both languages is one of the elements that led to the inaccuracy of meaning equivalence between Arabic and Malay and vice versa. It is perceived that the Malay's terms of family and society callings are more odd and complex than the family callings in the Arab society. This will make identifying the suitable meaning match for the phrases difficult and confusing.

Although determining the meaning match of certain lexical items in both languages can be difficult, the phenomenon of diversity of meaning characteristics from other angles can help users of both languages obtain various information - gender, position in family and society, status, and so on - all from a single lexical item.

Strictly speaking, finding a compatible and accurate match for a word in regards to all perspectives is impossible. Therefore, translators and anyone else involved in shifting the meaning of a word in Malay and Arabic, including language teachers, must be cautious and always refer to a term before assigning the match, ensuring the receiver or reader of the translation of the words are not confused.

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