

## The Main Characteristics of Arabic Borrowed Words in Bahasa Melayu

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### Abstract

Bahasa Melayu (Malaysian Language) like other languages has borrowed a number of words from other languages. This paper presents a study of Arabic borrowed words in Bahasa Melayu. It illustrates the main characteristics of the Arabic borrowed words: nouns of different types, adjectives, astrology, sciences, finance, trade, commerce, religious words and daily expressions. The researcher brought together ten categories of loan words (in three languages, Malay, Arabic and English). In conclusion, the researcher finds out that the main stream of Arabic borrowed words in Bahasa Melayu is due to the large influence of Islam. This study will provide the groundwork for further researches which will lead to enrich the linguistics and Islamic studies.

*Keywords:* Arabic, Bahasa Melayu, borrowed words, Glorious Qur'an, influence of Islam, Malay

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## **Introduction: Historical Background**

### **1.1. Malay and Islam**

There is a debate about the exact date of Islam's appearance in the South East Asia. Some historians and scholars connect it to the first travels by Muslim Arab sailors to the islands of the region around the 8th century; Arab traders arrived in Malacca and brought with them the principles and practices of Islam. On the other hand, Miller (2004) says that "Islam is believed to then have been brought to the port city of Malacca on the west coast of the Malay Peninsula by Muslim Tamil Indian traders around the 14th century".(p.1) Since then the influence of Islam grew in Malaysia and intergrade in the life of Malay people and became an essential part of their identity. Islam is "tied to the issues of Malay nationalism and to the deep and indelible connection between the Malay identity and Islam. Indeed, Islam, along with Bahasa Melayu "the Malay language, has been called the chief component of the Malay identity" ( Miller 2004, p.2) therefore the Islamic symbols play an important role in Malaysian beliefs. Moreover, (Mastor, 2000) explains the influence of Islam on Malay and says that most of the Malays are Muslims, and "Malay who rejects Islam is no longer legally considered a Malay". Since the independence of Malaysia in 1957, Islam has been the official religion of the country, "and the main emphasis of such status is to maintain harmony and cooperation between Malays and the other ethnic people in the country"...Islam permeates every aspect of the Malay's life, especially in the "realm of value and behavior and the Malays rely heavily on the religious sources". Although Islam is the state religion of Malaysia, the freedom of religion guaranteed.

### **1.2. Malay Language and Arabic Language**

The Malay language (Bahasa Melayu) is one of the branches of the Malayo-Polyne-sian language of the Austronesian family languages (Mastor, 2002). For several centuries Bahasa Melayu has been used as the lingua Franca in various forms of many ethnic groups in five countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Brunei, and Thailand and in the nearby areas. Malay spoken languages in these five countries have developed differently, each influenced by different factors resulting in many notable differences. Since it is a geographically wide speared language, many different dialects exist. Earlier Malay language was written using the Indian script. The old Malay was much under the Indian influence. (Ranavio, 2002)

With the advent of Islam, the Malays tried to use Pallava and Kawi to express their new Islamic faith but found it to be unsuitable to pronounce the verses of the Quran and Hadith. They thus experimented and created the Jawi script. Malay was written widely in Jawi, a script based on Arabic and has additional letters. Over time, the Romanized script overtook Jawi as the dominant script. This was largely due to the influence of Dutch and British and their colonial educational system. However, the Latin alphabet was adopted in the 17<sup>th</sup> century to replace the Arabic script so people taught in Romanized writing rather than in Arabic script. (Yee, 2007) The Jawi script has been in used for more than 600 years by now and is synonymous with the Malay language itself". Jawi was the standard script for the Malay language and it has been used intensively for religious and cultural purposes. Yee, (2007) states that "Adapting Arabic into the Jawi script enabled the Malays to record their experience, religious laws and oral literature into a collection

of Malay classical literature. An example is the Malay Annals preserved by the British historian Sir Richard O. Winstedt.”

The Malay language is now written in the 26 letter Roman alphabet due to the influence of British colonization over the Malay Peninsula since 1795. (Mastor, 2000). To the Malays, Bahasa Malayu is the soul of the nation. It became the official language of Malaysia in 1968.

### 1.3. Arabic Language and Islam

Arabic is a central Semitic language. Arabic is the mother tongue of over 225 million people in Africa and Asia. It is the main language in 22 countries. It is one of the oldest living languages in the world. It is considered the spiritual language of Islam. Since the Qur'an is written in Arabic, people in other Muslim countries have from the basic to advanced knowledge of Arabic. Arabic is related directly to the Qur'an, the holy book of the Muslim and *Arabic* is a distinguishing feature of *Islam*. But this is only because it is the language that the *Qur'an* was revealed in. With the spread of Islam, the Arabic alphabet came to be used to write many other languages such as Malay, Persian, Kurdish, Urdu, Turkish, Berber, Pashto, Swahili, Hindustani, Indonesian and Azerbaijani. In fact, the Arabic language has a notable influence in most of the languages in our present time. Maybe, the most obvious contribution of Arabic to humanity is the Arabic numerals (0, 1, 2, 3...) There are numerous words with Arabic origins which are used today in most languages. Arabic is one of the permanent languages in the United Nations.

Muslims in the entire world form one community of believers who believe that Qur'an was sent over 1400 years ago in the Arabic language. Therefore, Arabic serves as a common language among the World Islamic Community. Muslims strive to study Arabic in order to be able understand and comprehend the Qur'an. The Qur'an was revealed in Classical Arabic. The Muslims have strong motivation to keep Classical Arabic alive and well. Arabs consider Classical Arabic as an important component of their culture. Arabic is an efficient language, especially when it comes to the precise statement of laws. “Since the Qur'an is a Statute Book, it was crucial that such laws must be clearly stated. God chose Arabic for His Final Testament because of the obvious reason that it is the most suitable language for that purpose” (Khalifa,2009)

### Methodology

For more than one year, the researcher have spent a great effort to gather, study, and analyze the different resources. Books and documents, in three languages (Malay, Arabic and English) as well as tracking and monitoring educated Malay speakers. The researchers' main guide in this study was the Holly Qur'an. After gathering the borrowed words, the researchers organized, categorized and analyze them according to their types.

### 2. Analysis and discussion.

The Malay language like any other languages has gone through many periods in which large numbers of words from a particular language were borrowed. These periods coincide with the time of major cultural contact between the Malaysian speakers and those speaking Arabic language. The waves of borrowing during periods of especially strong cultural contacts are not sharply delimited, and can overlap

The researchers find out that the main stream of Arabic words in the Malay language is due to the great influence of Islam, and the terms borrowed range from religious terminology, academic, economy, science logic and everyday expression and conjunctions.

### **Categorization of Arabic borrowed words**

2.1. The Malay language borrowed all Arabic names of the months in the Islamic calendar or Hijrah calendar. The Islamic (Hijrah) calendar has twelve lunar months. Years are counted since the Hijrah, which is when the Prophet Muhammad migrated from Mecca to Madinah (approximately July 622 A.D.). The Islamic calendar was first introduced by the second caliph 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab in approximately 638 A.D. The Islamic calendar is the official calendar in some Muslim countries, such as Saudi Arabia. Table No. 1 below illustrates the names of these twelve months.

Table 1 *Names of the Months Names of the Months*

Names of the Months		
Malaysian Language	Arabic Language	English Language
Muharram	محرم	the first month in the Muslim (Hijria) Calendar
Safar	صفر	the second month in the Muslim (Hejira) calendar
Rabiulawal	ربيع الاول	the third month of the Muslim(Hejira) calendar
Rabiulalakher	ربيع الاخر	The fourth month of the Muslim(Hejira) calendar
Jamadilawal	جمادي الاول	The fifth month of the Muslim calendar
Jamadilakhir	جمادي الاخر	The sixth month of the Muslim calendar
Rejab	رجب	the seventh month of the Muslim calendar
Shaban	شعبان	Eight month of the Islamic Calendar
Ramadan	رمضان	Ramadan; ninth month of the Muslim calendar. during daylight hours When Muslims fast
Syawal	شهر شوال	the tenth month in the Muslim (Hejira) calendar
Zulkaedah	ذو القعدة	the eleventh month of the Muslim (Hejira) calendar; the month between Syawal and Zulhijah
Zulhijah	ذوالحجة	the twelve month of Muslim (Hejira) the month for performing theHij

2.2. The Malay language borrowed all Arabic names of the days of the week (table No.2)

Table 2 *Days of the week*

Days of the Week
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No.	Malaysian Language	Arabic Language	English Language
1	sabtu	السبت	Saturday
2	ahad	الاحد	Sunday
3	Isnin	الاثنين	Monday
4	Selasa	الثلاثاء	Tuesday
5	Rabu	الاربعاء	Wednesday
6	Khamis	خميس	Thursday
7	Jumaat	الجمعة	Friday

2.3. The Many Arabic words in the field of trade, commerce and finance. Table No.3 shows some of these words

Table 3 *Words of Trade, Commerce and Finance*

Trade, Commerce and Finance			
No.	Malaysian Language	Arabic Language	English Language
1	Bursa	البورصة	Stock market
2	Daftar	دفتر ، سجل	Register; official list.
3	Dalal	دلال ، سمسار	Agent. Broker. Person who buys and sells on behalf of others; middleman.
4	Dalil	دليل	Proof; evidence, anything that establishes a fact or gives reason for believing something.
5	Dinar	دينار	Unit of money
6	Dirham	درهم	Gold or silver currency used in Arab countries.

7	Faedah	فائدة البنك	Interest on saving
8	Hak cipta	حق ثابت	Copyright, perform
9	Hak milik	حق ملك	Ownership
10	Mahkamah	محكمه	Court ; lawcourt
11	syarikat	شركات	Company
12	tarif	تعريفه	list of fixed charges duty to be paid
13	wakil	وكيل	Agent; one who acts on behalf of another

2.4 Arabic Islamic science flourished under the Abbasid caliphs of Baghdad, gradually spreading its influence over the entire Islamic world. Table No. 4 contains few of them.

Table 4 *Words of sciences*

No.	sciences		
	Malaysian Language	Arabic Language	English Language
1	fikah	فقهه	The study of Islamic law
2	falsafah	فلسفه	Philosophy
3	hisab	حساب	calculation
4	Iktisad	اقتصاد	economy
5	Ilmu hayat	علوم الحياة	biology
6	Kimia	كيمياء	Chemistry
7	Algebra	علم الجبر	algebra

8	Alkimia	علم الكيمياء	Chemistry
9	Syariah`	علم الشريعة	Islamic law
10	Mentiq	علم المنطق	Logic

2.5. Arab astronomers invented scores of names of stars which are still in use; The Malay language borrowed some of them .

Table 5 *Words of Astrology*

Astrology			
No.	Malaysian Language	Arabic Language	English Language
1	Zuhal	زحل	Saturn (the second largest planet and sixth in order from the sun)
2	Utareid	عطارد	Mercury (the planet nearest to the sun)
3	Najam	نجم	A star
4	Marikh	مريخ	Mars
5	Nujum	نجوم	Astrologer
6	Falak	الفاك	Celestial sphere ;universe beyond the earth's atmosphere.
7	Ilmu falak	علم الفلك	Astrology ; study of stars and planets and their movements

2.6. Most of religious nouns and words used by the Malays are direct borrowing from Arabic and there are so many Arabic words describing Arab customs and Islamic practices .

Table 6 *Religious Words and Nouns*

Religious Words and Nouns			
No.	Malaysian Language	Arabic Language	English Language

1	Fitrah	فطره	Tithe, obligatory alms by Muslims made before the end of the fasting month
2	Iqamat	اقامة الصلاة	Arabic verses cited after the muezzin's Muslims last call for prayer to
3	Izin	اذن	Permission
4	Jenazah	جنازه	Corpse, term used for the dead body of royalty
5	Jibril	جبرائيل	Gabriel, the angel that conveyed divine prophets revelation to the
6	Jihad	جهاد	Effort to achieve goodness
7	Khalayak	خلق	Everything created by God
8	Khatam	خاتمه	End
9	Khatib	خطيب	Title for a sermon reader
10	Kiamat	يوم القيامة	Doomsday; day of the Last Judgment
11	Petua	فتوى	Guide; special and useful information or advice
12	Qadar	قدر	God's will; destiny; fate
13	Qari	قارئ	Koran reader
14	Qariah	قارئه	Female Koran reader



15	Rakaat	ركعة	Parts in a Muslim prayer
16	Sadekah	صدقة	Money given to the poor
17	Suhur	سحور	To eat a meal between midnight and dawn to prepare for next day's fast
18	Tarawih	تراويح	A non-obligatory prayer at night in the month of Ramadan
19	Syafaa	شفاعة	Advantages granted by Allah to prophet Muhammad and other prophet to be used to help mankind on Judgment Day

## 2.7. Daily religious expression:

Table 7 *Daily Religious Expression*

Daily Religious Expression			
No.	Malaysian Language	Arabic Language	English Language
1	Alhamdulillah	الحمد لله	Expression all praise to Alla
2	Allahyarham	الله يرحمة	One who is blessed by Alla ; title that Muslim comes before a deceased man's name, the deceased for a Muslim man
3	Allahyarhamah	الله يرحمها	One who is blessed by Allah; for .deceased woman Muslim woman
4	Almarhum	المرحوم	Title; term used for a deceased Muslim man
5	Insyaa-Allah	انشاء الله	Arabic word that means if God wills it
6	Kalam Allah	كلام الله	(Words of God (in the Holy Koran

7	Masya-Allah	ما شاء الله	The will of Allah; a phrase uttered to ,etc ,express surprise, wonder
8	Rahmatullah	رحمة الله بعد الموت	Pass away; to die
9	Takbiratulihram	تكبيرة التحريم	Utterance of the takbar, Allahuakbar at the start of prayers
10	Wallah	والله	An utterance or speech in defence of truth by saying God's name
11	Zikir	ذكر الله	Practice of uttering Allah's name out of devotion to Him and His Oneness

2.8 There are numerous number of nouns and adjectives that are borrowed from Arabic. See Tables No 8 and 9 for details.

Table 8 *Borrowed Nouns*

Nouns			
No.	Malaysian Language	Arabic Language	English Language
1	Takwim	تقويم	A calendar
2	Tamsil	مثال	An example
3	Tarbus	طربوش	Muslim man's high flat-topped red cap
4	Taubat	توبه	Repentance; regret for something bad that one has done
5	Taufan	طوفان	Hurricane; violent storm-wind; typhoon
6	Ufuk	افق	Horizon; line at which earth and sky appear to meet
7	Wadi	وادي	A rocky watercourse, dry except in the rainy season

8	Warkah	ورقه	Epistle; letter
9	Watikah	وثيقه	A letter of commission presented to army officers, police
10	Zaitun	زيتون	Olive; small oval fruit from which an oil (olive oil) is obtained
11	Zakat	زكاة	Obligatory alms made annually under Muslim law
12	Ziarah	زياره	Visit(to a holy or sacred place) ; visit(to see a person or a place)
13	Zirafah	زرافه	Long-necked African animal
14	Syair	شعر	Poetry
15	Takwa	تقوى	Godly; sincerely religious
16	Tahniah	تهاني	Congratulations
17	Tabib	طبيب	Physician; doctor
18	Syurah	شرح	Clarification; explanation
19	Sahabat	صحابه	Friends
20	Sabil	سبيل	Allah's way
21	Rukun	ركن من اركان الدين	Commandment; divine command

22	Rukuk	ركوع	prayers(with To bend the body during hand clasping the knee until the back same level) to bow and head are at the
23	Rebab	ربابه	A violin-like instrument with tow or Played during .three strings only (usu a traditional ceremony or the King's installation) .a
24	Imam	امام	Muslim spiritual leader
25	Nasihah	نصيحه	Advice
26	Nazir	الناظر	Inspector; supervisor
27	Naskhah	نسخه	Copy
28	Nasyid	نشيد	A song with Islamic elements sung in a group
29	Rakaat	ركعه	Parts in a Muslim prayer
30	Rakam	رقم	A mark
31	Rakap	راكب	pedal; a flat bar on a machine such as a bicycle

Table 9. Borrowed Adjectives

Adjectives			
No.	Malaysian Language	Arabic Language	English Language
1	Bakhil	بخيل	Miser , person who hoards money and spend as little as possible . greedy .
2	Munafik	منافق	pretending to believe and have faith in Islam

3	Zalim	ظالم	brutal; very cruel, without mercy; inhuman; not humane
4	Jahil	جاهل	Ignorant, Lacking, knowledge
5	Kufur	كافر	Atheistic; blasphemous
6	Nahas	نحس	Unlucky accident
7	Rahim	رحيم	merciful; ;Gracious; kind and pleasant towards showing mercy
8	Sabar	صابر	patient; showing patience
9	Aswad	اسود	Black
10	Warak	ورع	Devout in religion;
11	Yatim	يتيم	Motherless; without a living mother, orphan
12	Zahir	ظاهر	External; outward; superficial; of or on the surface
13	Rasmi	رسمي	Ceremonial; formal; official

## 2.9. Educational and academic words as illustrated in Table No. 10 :

Table 10 *Educational and Academic Words*

No.	Educational and Academic Words		
	Malaysian Language	Arabic Language	English Language
1	Ijazah	اجازه, شهادة	Diploma, graduation certificate awarded by a university

2	Ikhtisas	اختصاص	Professional of or belonging to a profession
3	Majalah	مجله	Magazine
4	Maklumat	معلومات	Information; explanation
5	makrifat	معرفة	;Knowledge; wisdom
6	Maktub	مكتوب	Formally written or documented
7	Mesyuarat	مشورة اجتماع	Meeting
8	Nazir	الناظر	Inspector; supervisor
9	qari	قارئ	Reader
10	tafakur	تفكير	meditation; think deeply and quietly
11	tafsir	تفسير	interpretation; explain the meaning of
12	tasrif	تصريف الافعال	inflect (a verb)
13	ulama	علماء	body of Muslim scholars or theologians
14	ustaz	استاذ	Teacher
15	usul	اصول	Motion; formal proposal put to a meeting for discussion
	Jadual	جدول	list; timetable; schedule

16	hafaz	حفظ	Memorize, commit to memory
17	kamus	قاموس	Dictionary
18	Khutbah	خطبه	Sermon; talk on a religious or moral subject
19	kitab	كتاب	Book
20	Jawab	جواب	Answer

### Conclusion

Islam has been intimately tied to Malaysian life since the time of the Malacca Sultanate in the 15th century. Islam, as one of the key characteristics of Malay identity, and has served to transfer loan words from Arabic to Malay. The researcher noted that people in Malaysia do not perceive some Arabic words as loan words at all. Generally, the longer a borrowed word has been in the language, and the more frequently it is used, the more it resembles the native words of the language. The Malay language has many words borrowed from Arabic, in particular the religious terms.

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