

## Issues in the Translation of English Affixes into Malay

Chiew Kin Quah

Volume 44, numéro 4, décembre 1999

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/003881ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/003881ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal

ISSN

0026-0452 (imprimé)

1492-1421 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer cet article

Quah, C. K. (1999). Issues in the Translation of English Affixes into Malay. *Meta*, 44(4), 604–616. <https://doi.org/10.7202/003881ar>

Résumé de l'article

La traduction en Malaisie n'a jamais joué un rôle important en matière de planification de la langue malaise : la traduction ne faisant pas partie de la planification des langues, on ne s'y intéresserait pas du tout. La commission de terminologie qui a été créée pour traiter des mots étrangers s'est toujours concentrée davantage sur les termes scientifiques et technologiques. En conséquence, nous avons trouvé de nombreux problèmes de traduction, surtout d'anglais en malais. Une des questions les plus persistantes depuis 1973 a été celle de la traduction des affixes anglais en malais. Nous cherchons à éclairer quelques questions en matière de traduction d'affixes anglais en malais.

# ÉTUDES TERMINOLOGIQUES ET LINGUISTIQUES

---

## Issues in the Translation of English Affixes Into Malay<sup>1</sup>

CHIEW KIN QUAH

*Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia,  
Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia*

### RÉSUMÉ

La traduction en Malaisie n'a jamais joué un rôle important en matière de planification de la langue malaise: la traduction ne faisant pas partie de la planification des langues, on ne s'y intéresserait pas du tout. La commission de terminologie qui a été créée pour traiter des mots étrangers s'est toujours concentrée davantage sur les termes scientifiques et technologiques. En conséquence, nous avons trouvé de nombreux problèmes de traduction, surtout d'anglais en malais. Une des questions les plus persistantes depuis 1973 a été celle de la traduction des affixes anglais en malais. Nous cherchons à éclairer quelques questions en matière de traduction d'affixes anglais en malais.

### ABSTRACT

In Malaysia, concerns about translation have never been an important part of the planning of the modern Malay language. The Terminology Committee set up to deal with the introduction of foreign words into Malay has always focused on scientific and technological terms, and many problems have been encountered in translation, particularly from English into Malay. Since 1973, one persistent problem has been the translation of English affixes. This paper highlights some of the issues surrounding the translation of English affixes into Malay.

### INTRODUCTION

This paper is concerned with the linguistic problems of Malay translations, which are more complicated than was initially assumed. Problems manifested in translations from English into Malay actually began in the early 1960s with the advent of Malay language planning.

English is the third most important influence on Malay after Sanskrit and Arabic. This influence has helped to develop the Malay vocabulary of scientific and technical terms, as well as structural elements such as new phonemes, new arrangements of phonemes and affixes (Asmah Hj Omar 1984: 12), and the spelling of words adopted from English. The great majority of scientific and technical terms is governed by rules of Malay phonology and graphology. In order to ensure that scientific and technical terms in Malay would be close to the original source language terms, priority was given to the orthographic spellings of the terms borrowed. Scientific and technical terms taken from English mainly originated from Greek and Latin (Asmah Hj Omar 1975: 111-4).

## BACKGROUND

Prior to the independence of Malaysia (1957), there was no language planning for the Malay language as the medium of instruction was the language of the colonial power, English. The need for language planning arose when Malay became the language of instruction in schools and institutes of higher education after independence. The policy of changing the medium of instruction from English into Malay has forced translation (mainly from English into Malay) to the forefront as it is crucial that science and technological information be made available in Malay. However, the early post-independence period focused on introducing and implementing Malay as the national language and medium of instruction in schools. Other important areas such as translation were not part of the planning agenda and not given any attention. Consequently, many problems have risen with respect to translation.

As a result of language planning, the Malay language had to be quickly equipped with scientific and technical vocabulary. The standardisation and modernisation of the language began with the setting up of *Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka* (Language and Literary Agency, DBP) in 1956. The expansion of the Malay vocabulary was given the most attention by the language planning committee, and the new lexicon borrowed heavily from English and Greco-Latin via English. Its results can be seen from the scientific and technical terms compiled according to subject, e.g. *Istilah Biologi Bahasa Inggeris-Bahasa Malaysia* (English-Malay Biological Lists) and the latest edition (1992) of the English-Malay dictionary, *Kamus Dewan Inggeris-Melayu*, with 40,000 lexical entries as guides for translators. From 1960 until September 1992 about 120 terminology lists of various subjects were published by the DBP (*Berita Peristilahan*, 1992: 8).

Malay discourse based its development on the English language especially in the scientific and technical fields. The medium of instruction from primary up to tertiary level in the Malay language had to be fully established if the language was to be capable of functioning as a medium for teaching. Therefore, it needed to be modernised in order to create a scientific and technical discourse for the Malay language. Its vocabulary had to be widened so that new ideas in various specialised fields could be expressed by borrowing or adjusting English phonemes, morphemes, phrases or sentences to insert within the Malay language (Asmah Hj Omar 1984: 15). It is only logical to assume from this that the translation of academic books into Malay from English is rather less complicated than one would expect because of the strong influence of English on Malay. This paper attempts to show that even with the strong English influence there are still problems in translation, especially in the area of morphology.

## ISSUES

In the past 40 years since independence in 1957, the Malay language has undergone monumental changes in its development. It became the national language, then the language of instruction in education, and is now being promoted as a language of wider communication beyond the Southeast Asia region (c.f. Kongress Bahasa Melayu Sedunia, 1995). At the same time, the knowledge and information exchange from English into Malay has grown dramatically in the last 25 years.

It is only in the last ten years that translation has been seen as an important area of study in Malaysia. This is due to the move from an agricultural to a technology-based economy, which has resulted in the mass import of English loan words, particularly in the areas of science and industry. Set up in June 22, 1956, the DBP was given the task of coining scientific and technical terms for use in the Malay language. A special committee was set up to undertake this task. Today, tens of thousands of scientific and technical terms have been coined and terms continue to enter the Malay language at a rapid rate. It was originally assumed that with this ever increasing flow of terms, translation into Malay from English would become simpler. However, most of the terms were incorporated into Malay without any consideration of how these terms are used in various contexts (Abdullah Hassan 1989: 97).

### Standardisation and modernisation

The standardisation of the Malay language has focused on two areas: the spelling system and scientific and technical terminology. In order to standardise the use of borrowed scientific and technical terms, the Malay spelling system needed to be standardised first. However, both processes of standardisation have been carried out concurrently since the setting up of the Terminology Division of the DBP in 1957. At the same time, foreign words poured into the Malay language in huge numbers (c.f. Heah, 1989). The standardisation of the spelling system took far too long (1957 to 1975), due to the fact that the system introduced had to be agreed upon by the joint language council of Malaysia and Indonesia. Work was also interrupted as the result of political relations between Indonesia and Malaysia from 1963 to 1965 (Alisjahbana 1971: 1105), and the emergence of universities in Malaysia with their own spelling systems. The result was a haphazard method of adopting and adapting borrowed words.

The problems of standardising scientific and technical terms are mainly due to Malay attitudes concerning "language purity" and the many different spelling systems introduced over time. Only with the 1975 publication of *Pedoman Umum Pembentukan Istilah Bahasa Malaysia* (General Guidelines for the Formation of Malay Language Terminology, PUIBM75) was some consistency reached in adapting borrowed words to the Malay language. This booklet is now used as a basic guide for adapting foreign words by various subject-based terminology committees. In 1986, the *Majlis Bahasa Indonesia-Malaysia-Brunei Darussalam* (Indonesia-Malaysia-Brunei Darussalam Language Council, MABBIM) standardised 47,000 scientific and technical terms borrowed from English (Berita Peristilahan 1992: 39). Although terminology lists in various subject areas have been published they are not widely used by translators. The publication of MABBIM's Terminology Manual in 1987 (MABBIM87) also marked the beginning of inconsistencies between MABBIM87 and PUIBM75 in the borrowing of terms from foreign languages.

These inconsistencies can be seen in variations found in vocabulary and grammar, most notably in the use of affixes (Alisjahbana 1971: 1104). The original collaborative effort between Malaysia and Indonesia in standardising the language only complicated matters because of the influence of English on Malay and Dutch on Indonesian, although the Malay and Indonesian languages both originated from Johor-Riau Malay.

The most difficult problem is the standardisation of scientific and technical terminology. A suggestion was made by Alisjahbana (1968) at the *Conference on Modernisation of Languages in Asia* to accept international terms of Greco-Latin origin rather than Sanskrit and Arabic. Greco-Latin is preferred to Sanskrit and Arabic for the following reasons:

- a) to make the reading of modern scientific and technical works in other languages easier
- b) Sanskrit and Arabic terms would make translation into Malay more difficult
- c) adapting Greco-Latin terms into Malay would be simpler than b) above for translation purposes
- d) use of Greco-Latin terms would mean universality of these terms with many other languages (Alisjahbana 1976: 64).

This suggestion has since been taken up in the terminology lists published by the DBP. Asmah Hj Omar (1975: 59) states that standardisation of scientific and technical terms can be achieved for the following reasons:

- a) the number of non-technical words in a language is greater than technical terms
- b) the rise of scientific and technical terms in a language is due to proper planning in coining terms by PUIBM75, MABBIM87
- c) the usage of the newly coined terms is mainly restricted to specific fields
- d) the terms have become monosemous, i.e. they have one meaning in one field but something else in another ('morphology' is found in biology and linguistics and yet it has its own definition within each respective field).

Modernisation of the Malay language began with the progress of standardisation mentioned above. According to Nik Safiah Karim (1971: 58), the notion of modernisation is "the adaptation/adjustments required of a language in order to function successfully as the means of expression of modern ideas and concepts." It basically involves grammar and terminology. The task of coining terminology in the Malay language was favoured by the DBP over writing a modern grammar for the Malay language, although both aspects were equally important (Nik Safiah Karim 1971: 60-1). The success of the DBP can be seen from the number of terms coined for various subjects. Several methods were applied to the coining of new terms for the language:

- a) using existing terms found in Malay
- b) borrowing from English and other foreign languages
- c) translating concepts and using Malay words that carry the same idea/concept
- d) coining new words for foreign terms
- e) reviving archaic words
- f) using indigenous words that may carry the same concept/idea as the source language words.

Despite its success in coining thousands of scientific and technical terms, a few linguistic and administrative problems still had to be overcome.

- a) linguistic problems:
  - inconsistencies in the translation of certain English affixes
  - certain borrowings of loan words were not linguistically sound due to lack of guidance from linguists.
- b) administrative problems:
  - linguistically-trained experts in each subject committee were outnumbered by subject experts; for example in the Terminology Committee for Biology there was only one linguist in a committee of 14 members

- the influence of linguists in these committees was limited,
- word coinage was affected by the “lone ranger syndrome,” in the sense that each subject committee worked independently from the others although the Terminology Division oversaw the co-ordination of these committees.

### Discrepancies in the guidelines and terminology manual

It has been assumed that the new terms will be used consistently within the guidelines and terminology list, thus speeding up the naturalisation process of the new terms into the Malay language. In the early stages of language planning, words were coined or borrowed independently. Syntactical, morphological and morpho-phonemic difficulties surfaced when these words were used, and these difficulties are still experienced by translators today.

The problem of translating English affixes, e.g. the *-ic* and *-ical* suffixes, was first mentioned in the third conference of MABBIM in Penang, Malaysia in December 1973 (Abdullah Hassan 1989: 150). The problem has yet to be solved. Quite often the equivalents of the same English affix found in PUIBM75 and MABBIM87 are different. The PUIBM75 contains the guide for translating the foreign affixes into Malay. The translations recommended by PUIBM75 for the affixes mentioned above are *-ic* → *-ik* and *-ical* → *-is*, *-ik*.

The translation of these English affixes as suggested by PUIBM75 does not consider the usage of these terms in context. In Malay adjectives are not marked, as such. Thus the English suffixes *-ic* and *-al* need not be translated. For example:

1. *logical steps* → *langkah logik*
2. *geological information* → *maklumat geologi*
3. *embryonic development* → *perkembangan embrio*
4. *geomagnetic field* → *medan geomagnet*

Suggestions for the translation of suffixes *-ic* and *-ical* into Malay have made by Abdullah Hassan (1989: 180), as follows:

- a) English nouns with *-ic* → *-ik*
  5. *politics* → *politik*
  6. *conflicts* → *konflik*
- b) English adjectives ending *-ic* → *-ik*
  7. *scientific method* → *kaedah saintifik*
  8. *inorganic chemistry* → *kimia tak organik*
- c) English adjective ending *-ical* → *-is*
  9. *theoretical* → *teoritis*

The various translations into Malay of the *-ic* and *-ical* suffixes raised the question of which Malay alternative should then be used in translation. For instance, two forms, ‘*teoritis*’ and ‘*keteorian*’ were used in the translation of ‘*theoretical*’ as shown in examples 10 and 11 below:

10. *theoretical activity* → *kegiatan teoritis*
11. *theoretical and empirical tools* → *bahan-bahan keteorian dan empirik*.

If the guideline given by PUIBM75 is to be followed, then the translation of ‘*theoretical*’ in 11 should be ‘*bahan-bahan teoritis dan empirik*’. Because the translation of *-ical* can be either *-is* or *-ik* in Malay, the next question is which one is to be used:

12. *?kegiatan teoritis* or  
 12a. *?kegiatan teoritik*  
 13. *?bahan-bahan teoritis dan empiris* or  
 13a. *?bahan-bahan teoritik dan empirik*

In MABBIM87, '*empirical*' was borrowed as:

- a) '*empirik*' for Medical and Literature subjects  
 b) '*empiris*' for Psychology and Management subjects  
 c) '*empirik/berempirik*' for Agricultural subjects  
 d) '*empirikal*' for Mathematics subject.

According to the MABBIM87, the general rule is that if the suffix functions as an adjective, then the term is listed as '*empiris*' for social science subjects such as '*aliran empiris*' [empirical trend] and '*ujian empiris*' [empirical test], and '*empirik*' for the science subjects such as '*data empirik*' [empirical data] and '*hukum empirik*' [empirical law] (Daftar Istilah MBIM 1987a: 605). If this rule is observed, then the translation for examples 10 and 11 above should be 14 and 15 as shown below respectively.

14. *kegiatan teori*  
 15. *bahan-bahan teori dan empiri*

### Borrowings from English

One problem that has yet to be fully addressed is the translation of affixes from foreign languages and their usage in written Malay discourse. Ninety three affixes have been borrowed from English so far (Abdullah Hassan: 100 points out that there are actually 94). The term 'borrow' used by Abdullah Hassan with respect to affixes is not suitable, as there is a need to clarify that English affixes entered into Malay by way of English loan words. English affixes have never been 'borrowed' into Malay in isolation so Abdullah is not correct in using this term to refer to English affixes in the Malay language. The English language has a large repertoire of affixes, particularly suffixes, compared to Malay affixes. Due to the huge differences in the number of affixes, some problems have risen in translating a number of English affixes into Malay.

One of the main difficulties when borrowing new scientific and technical terms has been to determine the usage of these words in Malay. Most of the words borrowed in derived forms create more problems than words borrowed in root forms. For example, the word '*normal*' is borrowed as '*normal*' in Malay. Similarly, the word '*abnormal*' is borrowed as '*abnormal*' but there is another form using a word '*tak*', which means "not": '*tak normal*' [not normal]. This is in contrast to the borrowing of '*inorganic*' to become '*tak organik*' [not organic]. The use of '*inorganik*' is not allowed in Malay. Modern English-derived words like these create considerable difficulties in translation. Alisjahbana (1965: 526) states that "since the application of the affixes is the very essence of the morphology of Malay, it is imperative that the function of the various affixes be reassessed and restated." His statement stands today.

Another problem is translating English affixes that carry similar meanings, such as the English *a-*, *in-*, *im-*, *ab-*, *ir-*, *dis-*, *de-*, *un-*, *non-*, etc. which function as negative prefixes. In contrast, there are three in Malay, '*tidak/tak*' [no], '*tanpa*' [without], and '*bukan*' [not]. English prefixes *a-*, *ab-*, *dis-* or *mal-* are sometimes absorbed into Malay with the English words attached, as shown below:

- 16a. *abnormal* → *tak normal, abnormal*  
 16b. *malformation* → *malformasi*  
 16c. *inorganic* → *tak organik*

## METHODOLOGY

This article's selection of texts was based on a list of translated academic books supplied by Malaysian publishers. A random sampling was selected to represent a whole range of translated academic works. The books were categorised into various subjects, Law, History, Chemistry, Medicine, etc. They were then divided into two main fields, science and the social sciences and humanities.

In the study, the texts were limited to 11 pairs of randomly selected books. Five pairs of texts from sciences and six pairs of texts from the social sciences and humanities were again randomly selected for this study. The subjects chosen were Medicine, History, General Science, Psychology, Ecology, Economy, Chemistry, Political Science, Geophysics, Law, and Psycholinguistics. The description and analysis for the study were primarily based on a small corpus taken from English (original) and Malay (translated) academic books. The selection of the texts and their translations were based on criteria as follows:

- a) the translated books were already used in the institutes of higher education in Malaysia,
- b) the translated books underwent editing prior to publication,
- c) the sample for this study was chosen from a list of published translations (1980 to 1993) supplied by Malaysian publishers who responded to questionnaires sent out for the purpose of the pilot study,
- d) the original (English) books were readily available alongside the Malay books in translation. A few of the originals have several editions; therefore, the original was matched to the translation.

In order to undertake the analysis, the Malay translations must be compared to the English source texts. The technique used to analyse and evaluate translations is known as the parallel texts technique utilized since the late 1950s (Hartmann 1980: 37). A similar technique called parallel reading is used by Lindquist (1989: 23). He says of this that "the most natural way of analysing or evaluating a translation is to read the SL text in parallel with the TL text, noting anything that is remarkable, and then to list deficiencies (or felicities) of all kinds."

Parallel texts are used to make interlingual comparisons between languages at all levels of the texts. The main difference between the two techniques is where they are used. Parallel texts techniques, used in the area of contrastive analysis of languages, were later adapted to compare "translationally equivalent texts" (Hartmann 1980: 37). On the other hand, the parallel reading proposed by Lindquist shows in details the relationships between two written languages. This method is useful for assessing the quality of a particular translation, and discovering translation difficulties between two languages (Lindquist 1980: 23), as well as recommending ways to deal with such translations. Thus, one of the most important tools of the translator is the parallel texts (c.f. Snell-Hornby 1988) procedure (Neubert & Shreve 1992: 89). In this study both methods were used for the comparison of the English source texts with the Malay target texts.

Since so few studies have been conducted in the area of Malay translation, it seemed reasonable to cover a wider range of academic genres for the study. The



description of English grammar here is based on Quirk and Greenbaum (1993) and Quirk *et al.* (1985). The description used for Malay grammar is based on Asmah Hj Omar (1993) and Nik Safiah Karim *et al.* (1994). Each of the English sentences is compared to its Malay translation.

## FINDINGS

Borrowing from English was due to two factors. The first factor is the absence of Malay terms that can accurately carry the meaning of English terms. Technical and scientific terms are only adopted into Malay if the terms cannot be found in the Malay language and its dialects, or in related languages such as Javanese, Iban, etc. (Asmah Hj Omar 1984: 19). The second factor consists of the fact that even if the terms are found in Malay, the terms may not be suitable or conducive to the derivation of other linguistically related terms. For example, the Malay word for 'stomach' is '*perut*'. However, in medical science the term '*gaster*' and the existence of derivations such as '*gasterectomy*', '*gastric*', and '*gastrocentrous*' have convinced the Terminology Committee that the English root word and its derivations have to be adopted into Malay. With the Malay '*perut*' as the root word, equivalents of the derived terms are difficult to achieve. While '*perut*' remains with its referent in general use, '*gaster*' stands for its more scientific and technical counterpart (Asmah Hj Omar 1984: 21).

Sometimes the scientific and technical terms adapted are root words whose derived forms are not adopted into the Malay language. This practice causes difficulties for translators when they encounter the derivational forms. For example, the term '*ecology*' was adopted into Malay as '*ekologi*', but the derived form '*ecologically*' was not. Borrowed English terms follow certain rules and procedures which conform to the phonology, orthography, morphophonemics and grammar (morphology and syntax) of the Malay language. This is to ensure that the terms borrowed are acceptable linguistically after adjusting spelling to conform to the spelling rules of the Malay language (Asmah Hj Omar 1984: 18-19).

When coining scientific and technical terms, a closer resemblance to orthographic spellings of English loan words is preferred, even though these spellings represent different pronunciations. Thus the word '*psychology*' would be spelled as '*psikologi*' instead of '*saikologi*'. By and large, the borrowing of words is in accordance with the rules and procedures set by the committee to standardise technical terms. In other words, all the English terms found in the texts have undergone the standardisation of the phonological system and spelling of the Malay language.

Malay has been enriched with scientific and technical terms for various disciplines and professions. In practice, the coining of technical terms in Malay morphology should follow the English morphology as closely as possible. The pronunciation of these terms is governed by graphemic appearance. Thus, technical terms such as '*ionic*' for '*ionik*', '*equity*' for '*ekuiti*', '*cataract*' for '*katarak*' were borrowed when the search for Malay terms was unsuccessful in other related Austronesian languages (Asmah Hj Omar 1982: 156). The spelling of the words adhered as closely as possible to the visual symbols of the phonological aspects of the English words (Asmah Hj Omar 1975: 103).

There are two common methods of borrowing in Malay. Below are a few examples taken from various subjects to illustrate these methods.

- a) adopting the words “wholesale” (including the meaning and spelling) from English into Malay:
- 17a. *novel* → *novel*
  - 17b. *virus* → *virus*
  - 17c. *mineral* → *mineral*
- a) giving the closest resemblance to the orthographic spelling of the English words in Malay
- i) /y/ /i/
    - 18a. *mystery* → *misteri*
    - 18b. *theory* → *teori*
    - 18c. *geophysics* → *geofizik*
  - ii) /c/, /ct/, /que/, /ch/ /k/
    - 19a. *technique* → *teknik*
    - 19b. *interact* → *interaksi*
    - 19c. *congenital* → *kongenital*

Borrowing has expanded the Malay lexicon of scientific words and affixes, such as *-isme* as in ‘*mekanisme*’ for ‘*mechanism*’. The suffix *-isme* is said to be from Dutch (Asmah Hj Omar 1993b: 156). Certain suffixes stand for certain denotations. The suffix *-tion* as in ‘*inflammation*’ and ‘*interaction*’ denotes a state or a process. Such endings underwent a phonological transformation. For the purpose of making them more “Malay,” they underwent a transformation to *-si*, as in ‘*inflamasi*’ [inflammation] and ‘*interaksi*’ [interaction], both of which denote a state or process. The decision to choose *-si* to replace *-tion* followed the attempt to standardise spelling with Indonesia. That country had adopted the suffix *-si* to replace *-tjie*, adopted from the Dutch (Mohd Taib Osman 1986: 11).

Malay is primarily a prefixal language with the majority of its affixes located in front of the words (Asmah Hj Omar, 1984: 14). Contact with the English language has increased the number of suffixes in Malay. For example, translation of complementary pairs of English suffixes used specifically in legal texts, e.g. *-or/-er* and *-or/-ee* in ‘*assignor-assignee*’, ‘*payer-payee*’, ‘*bailor-bailee*’, is discussed in T. Sepora T. Mahadi (1996). In her analysis of translated legal texts from English into Malay, T. Sepora T. Mahadi (1996: 218-221) discovers that there are no equivalents of such suffixes working as a pair in Malay. But such English complimentary pairs are found to have the native Malay prefix *peN-* as equivalents. However, the native Malay prefix does not cover the opposite meanings contained in the English complementary pair. Therefore, an additional word is needed to carry the contrastive meaning.

The adaptation of English affixes was done quite unsystematically. In theory, the adaptation and the adjustment of English affixes has taken place according to rules and procedure. The following examples illustrate this point:

- a) the adjustment of English suffixes carrying over the original functions of the suffixes.
- i) *-tion -si*
    - 20a. *action* → *aksi*
    - 20b. *malformation* → *malformasi*
  - ii) *-ity -iti*
    - 21. *personality* → *personaliti*
  - iii) *-logy log-i*
    - 22. *meteorology* → *meteorologi*
  - iv) *-ism -isma*
    - 23. *organism* → *organisma*

The unsystematic adaptation of suffixes usually happened when the suffixes involved were not adopted by the Malay language, or did not have any counterpart in the Malay inventory (Asmah Hj Omar 1975: 114). Instead, the translators chose to use English words with different suffixes that were likely to change the word-class of the original words in English, as seen in example 24a and 24b:

- b) replacing one English suffix with another English suffix which was adopted by the Malay language.

24a. *reformers* → *reformis* (English = reformist)

24b. *theoretical* → *teoritis* (English = theorist)

Suffixes for marking adjectives do not exist in Malay. Most of the time, the translator either uses another word to mark the adjectival function, or uses the root word and leaves the adjectival function to be conveyed by the rest of the sentence. This phenomenon is clearly seen in most of the texts in this study. For example,

25a. *political scientist* → *ahli sains politik* [science = *sains*; politics = *politik*]

25b. *cultural phenomena* → *fenomena budaya* [culture = *budaya*]

The problem is further complicated by the various ways found in the study of translating the English affixes in Malay:

- a) *-ic* → *-is*,  $\emptyset$  (zero), *-ik*
- 26a. *hypnotic* → *hipnosis*
- 26b. *economic* → *ekonomi*  $\emptyset$
- 26c. *embryonic* → *embrio*  $\emptyset$
- 26d. *geomagnetic* → *geomagnet*  $\emptyset$
- 26e. *seismic* → *seismos*  $\emptyset$
- 26f. *scientific* → *saintifik*
- 26g. *ionic* → *ionik*
- 26h. *organic* → *organik*
- b) *-ist* → *ahli* [member of], *-is*
- 27a. *anthropologist* → *ahli antropologi*
- 27b. *economist* → *ahli ekonomi*
- 27c. *sociologist* → *ahli sosiologi*
- 27d. *psychologist* → *ahli psikologi*
- 27e. *psycholinguist* → *psikolinguis*
- 27f. *determinist* → *determinis*
- c) *-(ic)al* → *-is*, *ke-an*, *-ik*,  $\emptyset$  (zero)
- 28a. *theoretical* → *teoritis*, *keteorian*
- 28b. *empirical* → *empirik*
- 28c. *practical* → *praktik*
- 28d. *logical* → *logik*
- 28e. *geological* → *geologi*  $\emptyset$
- 28f. *physical* → *fizik*  $\emptyset$
- 28g. *septal* → *septum*  $\emptyset$
- 28h. *atrial* → *artrium*  $\emptyset$
- 28i. *myocardial* → *miokardium*  $\emptyset$

The examples above show that English adjectival suffixes have been translated into Malay several ways. This is in contrast with Malay morphological rules, as Malay does not form adjectives from nouns with the help of suffixes as English does. Based on the Malay morphological rule, the English adjectival suffixes of *-ic* and *-ical/-al*

need not be borrowed. Thus *-ic* and *-ical/-al*  $\emptyset$  (zero). Confusion arises when the guidelines in PUIBM75 for affixes gave different forms for the adaptation of *-ic* and *-ical* to *-ik* and *-al* respectively.

In another instance, two forms, '*ionik*' and '*ion*,' were used in the translation of '*ionic*'. PUIBM75 did not distinguish the functions of *-ic*. Therefore, any word with this suffix should be translated into *-ik*; then '*ionic bonding*' becomes '*pengikatan ionik*'. On the other hand, MABBIM87 gave a clear distinction of the function of *-ic*. Hence the translation of 29a below is correct, but in 29b the translation becomes '*pengikatan ionis*'. However, if the rule for not marking adjectives in Malay was observed, 29b would be correct. MABBIM87 has indicated that *-ic* was not borrowed into Malay; for example '*ionic product*' is '*hasil ion*'.

29a. *ionic* → *ionik*

29b. *ionic bonding* → *pengikatan ion*

Ariffin Suhaimi (1981: 275) claims that the PUIBM75 guideline puts heavy emphasis on linguistic procedures which are too rigid, and that this may impose certain constraints to the growth of the Malay language. Ariffin proposes a "compromise" system between the language planning committee and language users as to which guidelines are to be accepted. However, details of the "compromise" system have not been clarified by Ariffin. In my opinion, if implemented, the so-called "compromise" system may pose co-ordinating problems between the language planning committee and the various groups of Malay language users. The choice of terms between various groups of users and the language planning committee differs, and a new committee may have to be set up to co-ordinate this system, creating another level in the complex hierarchy of terminology committees in Malaysia.

## SUMMARY

The findings of the study have shown that without linguistic procedures many standardised terms cannot be achieved. Emphasising linguistic procedures in standardisation of scientific and technical terms is important in order to achieve uniformity for all loan words in the Malay language. Claims made by Ariffin with respect to the heavy emphasis on linguistic procedures lack foundation. Ariffin also claims that because of linguistic procedures, guidelines became rigid, restricting the growth of the language. However, Ariffin has not looked deeply enough into this matter: the reason for any rigidity is not due to linguistic procedures but to guidelines updated infrequently since 1975. In addition, Ariffin forgets that PUIBM75 has not been updated since its first publication. If PUIBM75 were to be subjected to frequent improvement on its guidelines, I am convinced that problems of rigidity and constraints on growth would likely not occur. The difficulty in translating English affixes is essentially due to unclear guidelines from the PUIBM75 and MABBIM87, and has been hampered further by the lack of effort in improving these guidelines.

It has also been shown in the study that the use of affixes is still not consistent despite the existence of guidelines and terminology lists. Inconsistent translations occurred in all 11 texts chosen for the study. These inconsistent translations mainly result from the English and Greco-Latin affixes taken into the Malay language.

Inconsistent translation is not confined to English adjectival suffixes but also

affects other prefixes and suffixes. From the findings, it is clear that affixes play an important role in the Malay language because their use is important in standard Malay grammar. However, the use of affixes has caused problems in the Malay language. The limited number of affixes in Malay means that the Malay language has to adopt and adapt foreign affixes in translation in order to enrich the Malay vocabulary. It is the translation of these affixes that creates considerable problems in Malay.

A few conclusions can be drawn from the findings with regard to the translating of English affixes:

- a) prefixes or suffixes were translated in more than one way into Malay
- b) derived forms of English words were introduced as root forms in the Malay language, for example ‘*transcription*’ and ‘*interaction*’
- c) in certain cases, both the root form and the derived forms of the English word were borrowed into Malay; for example ‘*specific*’, ‘*specification*’ and ‘*specificity*’
- d) in certain cases, only root forms of the English word were borrowed into Malay; for example ‘*synthesis*’
- e) guidelines were not adequate to deal with certain English prefixes and suffixes,
- f) certain English prefixes and suffixes in Malay translations did not conform to the guidelines or the terminology lists
- g) the guidelines provided by PUIBM75 are not adequate
- h) inconsistencies occurred between PUIBM75 and MABBIM87
- i) when guidelines were available, these were not fully applied in the Malay translations
- j) in certain cases borrowed English words actually have their counterparts in Malay but are still borrowed — for example ‘*specific*’ borrowed as ‘*spesifik*’ rather than ‘*khusus*’.

The study found strong evidence that the area of affixation in Malay caused problems in translations from English, and that these concerns need to be investigated further.

#### NOTES

1. I would like to thank Peter Newmark for his comments on an earlier draft of this paper and for translating its abstract into French.

#### REFERENCES

- ABDULLAH HASSAN (1989): *Isu-isu Perancangan Bahasa: Pengintelektualan Bahasa Malaysia*, Kuala Lumpur, Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.
- ALISIAHBANA, S.T. (1965): “New national languages: A problem modern linguistics has failed to solve”, *Lingua*, vol. 15, pp. 515-530.
- (1971): “Language policy, language engineering and literacy in Indonesia and Malaysia”, T. SEBEOK (Ed.), *Current Trends in Linguistics*, vol. 8, The Hague, Mouton, pp. 1087-1109.
- (1976): *Language Planning for Modernization: The Case of Indonesian and Malaysian*, The Hague, Mouton.
- ARIFFIN SUHAIMI (1981): “National language in the teaching of natural sciences”, ASMAH HJ OMAR & NOOR EIN MOHD NOOR (Eds.), *National Language as Medium of Instruction*, Kuala Lumpur, Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, pp. 272-277.
- ASMAH HJ OMAR (1975): *Essays on Malaysia Linguistics*, Kuala Lumpur, Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.
- (1984): “The development of the national language in Malaysia”, *The Philippines Journal of Linguistics*, vol. 14-15, pp. 7-23.
- (1993): *Nahu Melayu Mutakhir*, 4th ed., Kuala Lumpur, Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.

- BERITA PERISTILAHAN (1992), "Majlis Bahasa Brunei Darussalam-Indonesia-Malaysia (Mabbim)", *Berita Peristilahan*, bil. 15, November, pp. 36-39.
- DAFTAR ISTILAH MBIM (1987a): *Hasil Sidang ke 7-23 Majlis Bahasa Indonesia-Malaysia 1974-1985: Istilah Sumber-Istilah Malaysia A-J*, Kuala Lumpur, Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (1987b): *Hasil Sidang ke 7-23 Majlis Bahasa Indonesia-Malaysia 1974-1985: Istilah Sumber-Istilah Malaysia K-Z*, Kuala Lumpur, Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.
- HARTMANN, Reinhard R. K. (1980): *Contrastive Textology: Comparative Discourse Analysis in Applied Linguistic*, Heidelberg, Julius Groos Verlag.
- HEAH, Carmel Lee Hsia (1989): *The Influence of English on the Lexical Expansion of Bahasa Malaysia*, Kuala Lumpur, Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.
- KONGRES BAHASA MELAYU SEDUNIA (1995): *Bahasa Melayu sebagai Bahasa Antarabangsa: Wawasan dan Keyakinan*, Jil. I & II, 21-25 Ogos 1995, Kuala Lumpur, Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.
- LINDQUIST, Hans (1989): *English Adverbials in Translation: A Corpus Study of Swedish Renderings*, Sweden, Lund University Press.
- MOHD TAIB OSMAN (1986): *An Introduction to the Development of Modern Malay Language and Literature*, Singapore, Times Books International.
- NEUBERT, Albrecht & G. M. SHREVE (1992): *Translation as Text*, Ohio, Kent State University Press.
- NIK SAFIAH KARIM (1971): "Modernizing Bahasa Malaysia: The Malaysian experience in implementing its national language", *The Philippine Journal of Linguistics*, vol. 2, 2, pp. 57-69.
- NIK SAFIAH KARIM *et al.* (1994): *Tatabahasa Dewan*, (edisi baharu), Kuala Lumpur, Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.
- QUIRK, Randolph & S. GREENBAUM (1993). *A University Grammar of English*, 27th impression, London, Longman.
- QUIRK, Randolph *et al.* (1985): *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language*, London, Longman.
- SNELL-HORNBY, Mary (1988): *Translation Studies: An Integrated Approach*, Amsterdam, John Benjamins.
- T. SEPORA T. MAHADI (1996): *Translation of Legal Texts from English into Malay with Examples from Constitutional and Didactic Texts*, Unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Surrey, England.