

## BOOK REVIEW

### *Kata Ganda Bahasa Melayu: Tinjauan Bentuk Berdasarkan Data Korpus*

ZAIDI Ismail. 2008.

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There are a number of studies that identify Malay reduplication as part of Malay lexical derivation. Earlier publications, within which Malay duplication is analysed, include those of Asmah (1975; 1987), Tham (1977), Liaw (1985; 1999), Zaharani (1991) and Awang Mohamad Amin (1992) with the publication under review suggesting a renewed interest in the study of Malay reduplication in the 21st century. This is then a continuation of the trend of other such recent studies as Mohd Gani Ahmad (2003), Zaharani (2007) and Sew (2007; 2011), all of which position Malay reduplication as part of a significant Malay lexical derivation.

The linguistic observations on Malay reduplication that this book reports stem from a project developed at the Kuala Lumpur-based Institute of Language and Literature (Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, DBP), a semi-governmental agency for Malay language planning, development and dissemination. This project aims to examine reduplicated data found in a Malay corpus database.

Notably, the preface of this book states that the analysis of data from a corpus database called *Pangkalan Data Korpus* (PDK) provides yet another alternative to the already diverse views on Malay reduplication in the current literature. It is further claimed in the book that the analyses are a first study in Malay reduplication based on this very corpus (p. xii). The book also suggests that a second reason in embarking on such a project is the need to develop DBP staff competency in carrying out academic research of this nature (p. xii–xiii).

In the introduction, PDK is put forward as one of its kind in Malaysia (p. 6) with a history that traces to a memorandum between DBP and Universiti Sains Malaysia in 1993. The corpus currently contains 130 million words organised according to 10 types of print materials such as books, magazines, newspapers, translations, the ephemeral, drama, poetry, resource cards, traditional texts and textbooks (p. 8). Elaborate details regarding the creation of the corpus can be found in Rusli, Norhafizah and Chin (2006). However, this review reveals that, in addition to PDK, there is also MALEX (Malay Lexicon), a corpus database initiated by Knowles and Zuraidah Mohd Don (2008; 2006). MALEX is a corpus

of natural Malay texts that include speeches of Tun Dr Mahathir. Currently, the corpus of 2.5 million words also includes data taken from DBP – produced novels and printed materials.

Examples of Malay reduplication in the book are derived from print materials published between 1990 and 2004 (p. 9). It is worth mentioning here that the first corpus-based analysis of Malay reduplication dates back more than 35 years ago and is already available in the literature of Malay linguistics. The work of Asmah Haji Omar (1975) who pioneered the investigation on various types of reduplication found in written Malay was left out from the literature review of the book. This original corpus-based study is probably the seminal study of Malay morphological formation.

Furthermore, the citation in the book is confusing with only a reference of Asmah (1993) in the bibliography (p. 87). Suspiciously, there is one unaccounted reference to Asmah (1980) on p. xv and p. 2, which finds no corresponding detail in the bibliography. That this reference is actually the first edition of Asmah (1993) and has found its way into the book reflects an inconsistency in the citation process. Additionally, several references to Abdullah (1994) in the text have omitted his co-author Ainon Mohd (see the full reference below).

The literature review is not representative of current studies in Malay reduplication. Book-length studies of Malay reduplication that include reduplication via melodic transfer (Zaharani 2007) or the reduplication of nouns and verbs according to the tenets of cognitive grammar (Sew 2007), for example, have escaped the survey in this study. More specifically, this review observes that Zaharani (2007), whose auto-segmental phonology circumvents first syllabic copying as an underlying rule for partial reduplication, is also not incorporated the literature survey. This is a grave omission, not least as the corpus-based analysis in this book adopts a formal framework as its theoretical underpinning.

Zaharani's work is especially important because it serves as the basis by which the analyses arrive at accurate formal linguistic observations. The significance of phonological analyses mentioned in Zaharani (2007) is that first syllable copying, assumed to be the basis underlying partial reduplication, is misinformation. Zaharani illustrates that first syllable copying fails to account for the Malay "was", which does not reduplicate partially but only doubles fully as "was-was" (doubtful). If first syllable copying governs partial reduplication \**wewas* would have been a prime example of Malay partial reduplication (see Zaharani, 2007 p. 66, 71).

Auto-segmental phonology provides an adequate explanation on the non-existence of \**wewas*. An initial default vocalic template [V]- is suggested at the

skeletal level [V]-CVC; hence blocking \**wewas* from occurring as Malay partial reduplication. The reduplication of monosyllabic word stems are thus impossible in morphological derivations. The constraints of partial reduplication lies in a copy and association rule followed by a melodic transfer model of Malay phonology against the *Wellformedness Condition* (see Zaharani 2007, 123–126). Unfortunately, Zaharani highlights the erroneous lexical phonology rule as the *modus operandi* with which to account for selected partial reduplication in the present study (p. 33, Author's English glosses):

jari (finger) → *jajari* → *jejari* (radius)  
 pohon (tree) → *popohon* → *pepohon* (tree or tree-like)  
 sungut (antenna) → *susungut* → *sesungut* (feeler)

Secondly, according to Zaharani (2007), monosyllabic Malay words are internally bi-syllabic with a vocalic default preceding the first consonant as its underlying lexical structure. The phonological motivation is derived for maintaining descriptive adequacy in the analysis of partial reduplication. This corpus-based study, however, redefines partial reduplication to include final syllable reduplication (p. 21). By erroneously expanding the definition of partial reduplication, the compiler of this book has included *pertama-tama* (firstly) and *segala-gala* (all of which) as examples. As a result, this expanded definition reintroduces the old copying issue to the melodic transfer constraint.

This problem would have been avoided had the literature survey considered the interplay of Malay phonological rules in reduplication. Factoring in Zaharani's analyses (2007) would have solved the issue at hand. If the erroneous linguistic specification were to be argued as part of reduplicating rules proper, however, a new set of copying derivation for reduplicating needs to be proposed. Zaharani's work needs to be revisited with new observational specification in the book, especially since he was named as a consultant to this project.

Thirdly, categorical discrepancy remains an issue in the study of Malay reduplication. Abdullah Hassan et al. (2006) use *kata adverb gandaan* (reduplicated adverb) for *pura-pura* (pretend) whereas the present study classifies *pura-pura* as *kata ganda semu* (original reduplication) (p. 70, 73). This review explains that reduplicated forms are important adverbial equivalents in the translation of English adverbs into Malay, e.g. *benar-benar* (absolutely), *semata-mata* (purely), and *hati-hati* (carefully) (for more details, see Ainon Muhammad 1991, 120).

The observation reported in this book denies that free forms (*kata ganda bebas*) are reduplication; which, in contrast, is considered to be reduplication in Abdullah and Ainon (1994). Four out of the original nine free forms in Abdullah

and Ainon (1994, 45), namely *ulang-alik* (go to and fro), *simpang-siur* (criss-crossing), *mertua-taya* (in-laws), and *patah balik* (return by detour), are regarded as compound terms (*kata majmuk*) and explained as unique form (*bentuk unik*) (p. 31). The notion of free form as compound is made clear in the book on p. 23:

*... bentuk ini tidak boleh dianggap sebagai kata ganda yang sebenarnya kerana antara unsur yang menjadi dasar (unsur pertama) dengan unsur yang digandakan (unsur kedua) tidak mempunyai persamaan yang khusus baik dari segi huruf (vokal dan konsonan), mahupun dari segi suku kata (awal atau akhir).*

... this form cannot be considered as real reduplication because there is no specific similarity between the basic element (first element) and the reduplicated element (second element), either in terms of alphabet (vowel and consonant) or in terms of syllable (first or last) (Author's translation).

Fourthly, the analyses on rhyming within Malay reduplication are different from the understanding of reduplication as prototypical lexical derivation. Prototypical extension from a central nucleus is a typical cognitive process towards the formation and codification of meaning development (Gibbs, 1994). Instead of tracking the copying of morphemic elements to a similar morphemic trigger, this study highlights either vowel changes, consonant changes, or both, in accounting for rhyming and chiming reduplications. For example, *gunung-ganang* (mountain ranges) and *tindak-tanduk* (traits and behavior) are analysed as forms, containing either partial or successive vowel changes (p. 38). This is in stark contrast to Abdullah and Ainon (1994, 44) and Tham (1977), who have noted the repetitive consonants in their findings.

Erroneous analyses will set the study of Malay reduplication back away from linguistic universals – a well-established notion in Moravcsik (1978) and Abbi (1992). The formal framework adopted to account for the corpus data in this book seems inadequate in explaining the reduplicating free forms in Malay morphology. *Porak-peranda* (chaotic or in disorder), for example, is identified as a rhyming reduplication instead of compound (p. 85) although the same datum is considered as free form reduplication in Abdullah and Ainon (1994, 45).

In terms of material development, the reduplicated data in the book could be used as authentic examples for illustrating the means by which new Malay nouns, verbs and adverbs are derived, or the methods by which these Malay grammatical categories are germinated and extended to generate new morphological formations. As a secondary text to language teaching, the book may serve as elementary reading material in the investigation of Malay morphology by which readers may identify more adequate morpho-phonological observations in the analyses of reduplication.

In terms of linguistics research, this study is unaware of the existing analyses in the literature. Due to such a limitation, the classification of Malay reduplication in this study sheds little light in the understanding of this topic. It remains a puzzle as to why the work of Zaharani Ahmad, mentioned as one of the two consultants to the project, was ironically never consulted. This book, hence, may be a target for interested graduates undertaking formal analyses on partial and full Malay reduplication in order to generate a detailed auto-segmental reevaluation.

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