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Linguistic Variation of Malay and Indonesian Derived From English A Comparative Study

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ABSTRACT :

Languages can vary from one region to another, even if they originate from the same root. This research aims to explore how identical English words or phrases are adapted in both Malay and Indonesian. Despite sharing a common linguistic origin, Malay and Indonesian have evolved in distinct cultural and historical contexts. This study employs descriptive and comparative methods to analyze the language variations in Malay and Indonesian resulting from the derivation of English words. The data in the form of words/phrases in Malay and Indonesian are derived from the same English source, yet may differ in form, pronunciation, or meaning. Having been collected and validated by native Malay speakers, they were classified according to their similarities and differences, and compared to further classify them relating to form, pronunciation, or meaning. The findings highlight two primary categories: (1) instances where both languages use the same derivation for an English word, and (2) instances where they use different words for the same derivation. The second group is further subdivided into: (a) slight differences, such as minor variations in pronunciation or spelling, and (b) substantial differences, where both form/spelling and meaning diverge significantly. These variations reflect the unique historical influences of British colonization in Malaysia and Dutch occupation in Indonesia. The results are expected to help Indonesians and Malaysians to avoid miscommunication and promote stronger cooperation and mutual understanding.

Keywords: differences, meaning, pronunciation, similarities, spelling, variation

INTRODUCTION

Language is both universal and unique. This means that while certain features of a language can be found in multiple languages, other features may be exclusive to a specific one. As a result, languages can vary from one region to another, even if they originate from the same root. English, as an international language, has influenced many languages around the world, including Malay and Indonesian. Despite their shared origins, these two languages have evolved differently due to various socio-cultural and political factors. Historically, Malaysia was colonized by the British, while Indonesia was under Dutch rule. Consequently, Malay has been more heavily influenced by English, to the extent that English is now considered a second language in Malaysia, whereas it remains a foreign language in Indonesia.

Malay and Indonesian share many similarities. The Indonesian language traces its roots back to the Malay Peninsula, which is now Malaysia. Bahasa Indonesia, as it is commonly called, was initially spoken in regions surrounding the Malacca Strait (Nugroho, 1957) before spreading across Sumatra and other nearby Indonesian islands. Long before Indonesia's independence, this language served as a lingua franca - a common language for communication - among the people of the scattered Indonesian archipelago.

Moreover, Indonesians and Malaysians can easily communicate with each other using their respective national languages due to the close linguistic similarities. A Malaysian speaker can generally be understood by Indonesians and vice versa. Aside from language, the people of both nations share similar cultural practices, skin tones, and geographic conditions. These commonalities foster a sense of brotherhood between the two countries. Additionally, the growing influx of Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia - currently around 2.7 million - has further strengthened the bond between the nations.

Research into the relationship between these two languages is ongoing. Lin et al. (2018), for example, highlighted that contemporary Indonesian and Malay share the same origin and exhibit notable similarities. Their study focused on lexical differences between the languages, categorizing them into three groups: words that appear in only one language, interlingual homographs, and words frequently used in one language but not the other. Charong (2019) examined the basic vocabulary of Indonesian and Malay (specifically the Patani Jerang dialect), noting 77 shared terms, 80 similar ones, and 43 differences between the two. Other studies have explored the historical branching of Malay variants by analyzing their phonological and morphological features (Utsumi, 2020). These features include basic lexicons, pronominal systems, aspect particles, negation words, and address terms. Additionally, Efrizah (2023) conducted a contrastive analysis of two Malay dialects, identifying differences and similarities in pronunciation, phonological structures, and other linguistic characteristics.

This research focuses on the derivation of English-origin words and phrases in both Indonesian and Malay. Despite the historical fact that Malaysia was colonized by the British and Indonesia by the Dutch, both languages have absorbed many terms from English. For example, words like "ice," "cake," and "card" have become "ais," "keik," and "kad" in Malay, and "es," "roti," and "kartu" in Indonesian. These phonological and morphological adaptations are fascinating phenomena. Therefore, this research aims to explore how English words have been integrated into Malay and Indonesian, examining the significance of these changes.

METHOD

This ethnographic study investigates the process by which English words and phrases are derived in Malay and Indonesian. As qualitative research (non-numerical data, Denscombe, 2007:286), it employs multiple sources and methods to provide a comprehensive analysis. Data collection involves a combination of observation (note-taking, video recording, and diary entries) and interviews, aiming to understand how English words are adapted in both languages. Document reviews will support the analysis, as historical contexts in Malaysia and Indonesia may explain the differences in how English terms are incorporated.

This is a descriptive and a comparative study that examines language variations in Malay and Indonesian as a result of English influence. The data consist of words or phrases in Malay and Indonesian derived from the same English origins, but which differ in form, meaning, or usage. Data were collected from public spaces (government offices, markets, transportation hubs, tourist sites) in both Indonesia and Malaysia, as well as from daily conversations in both countries. After collection, the data were validated by native Malay speakers to ensure its accuracy. The data were then classified according to form, meaning, and usage, with explanations provided for each classification group.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

After being collected, validated, and sorted, the data were grouped based on form/spelling, pronunciation, or meaning. Generally, the data fall into two main categories related to the derivation of English words into Malay and Indonesian. The first category includes English words that are derived into identical forms (with the same spelling and meaning) in both Malay and Indonesian. The second category consists of words that differ in form or spelling, pronunciation, and usage between the two languages. The following table presents the result of this research.

Table 1: The Result of the research

No.	The Linguistic Variation
1.	Identical/Similar forms, pronunciations, and meanings
2.	Different forms, with variation in spelling, pronunciation, or meaning
	2.1 Entirely distinct forms
	2.2 Entirely distinct forms, with the Malay version (presents) in Indonesian
	2.3 Variations in spelling and pronunciation
	2.4 Same forms with slightly different pronunciation
	2.5 Slightly different forms with similar meanings
	2.6 Similar pronunciation to the English version

The result of this research has been presented in Table 1. Each group of data is analysed and discussed below for revealing how this variation may happen, and what the effect of this variation to the speakers of Malay and Indonesian.

1. Similar forms and Meanings

Since Malay and Indonesian both originated from the same language (*bahasa Melayu*), they tend to share similar vocabulary. As a result, many English words are derived into similar form and meaning in both languages. For example, the English word "book" becomes "buku" in both Malay and Indonesian. Table 1 below presents examples where Malay and Indonesian adopt the same words derived from English.

Table 2: The same forms and meanings

No.	English Words	Derived into	
		Malay	Indonesian
2.	book	buku	buku
3.	brother/sister	abang/kakak	abang/kakak
4.	drink	minum	minum
5.	eat	makan	makan
6.	grandma	nenek	nenek
7.	house	rumah	rumah

8.	minister	menteri	menteri
9.	mosque	masjid	masjid
10.	palace	istana	istana
11.	school	sekolah	sekolah
12.	computer	komputer	komputer

Table 2 shows that Malay and Indonesian use identical word forms when deriving certain English words. This similarity helps speakers of both languages communicate easily on general topics and fosters quick rapport. However, the number of these shared derivational words is limited. Many English words are derived into different forms, with variations in spelling, pronunciation, and even meaning.

2. Different forms, with variation in spelling, pronunciation, or meaning

In addition to their similarities, the derivation of English words into Malay and Indonesian also reveals some differences. These differences can range from minor variations to completely distinct forms. If speakers are unaware of them, these differences may cause misunderstandings in communication. They include the use of entirely different words (in both spelling and meaning), slight variations in spelling, differences in pronunciation, and even changes in meaning.

2.1 Entirely distinct forms

The first version of difference is many English words are derived into completely different forms or use entirely different words either in Malay or Indonesian. In fact, some Malay versions are unfamiliar to Indonesian speakers. Please refer to the data presented in Table 3.

Table 3: The same English words derived into completely different words

No.	English Words	Derived into	
		Malay	Indonesian
1.	water melon	tembikai	semangka
2.	toilet, rest room	tandas	kamar mandi
3.	drugs	dadah	obat
4.	lecturer	pensyarah	dosen
5.	lecture	syarahan	kuliah
6.	meeting	mesyuarat	rapat
7.	kindergartens	tadika	taman kanak-kanak
8.	lawyer	peguam	pengacara
9.	neighbour	jiran	tetangga
10.	sport	sukan	olah raga
11.	whip	sebat	cambuk
12.	zalaca	zalaca	salak
13.	sap	sap	getah
14.	city	bandar	kota
15.	bike	basikal	sepeda

As illustrated in Table 3, the same English words are derived into completely different forms in Malay and Indonesian. This difference can make communication between Malay and Indonesian speakers more difficult to understand. Malay words resulting from English derivation, such as *tembikai*, *tandas*, *dadah*, *syarahan*, *mesyuarat*, *tadika*, and *peguam* (data no. 1 to 15) are not found in the Indonesian vocabulary.

2.2 Entirely distinct forms, with the Malay version (presents) in Indonesian

In addition to the completely different forms (as shown in Table 2), where the Malay versions are not found in Indonesian, another variation occurs when the Malay version is present in Indonesian but has a different meaning. In this case, the Malay words or phrases derived from English may present in both languages but they refer to a different meaning. These differences can appear as either a single word or a phrase level.

(a) A single word

The type of variation in usage occurs when a single word in Malay, derived from English, also exists in Indonesian but with a different meaning. In this case, the Malay word originates from an English derivation and undergoes a derivational process in both Malay and Indonesian. However, despite sharing the same root, the meanings in the two languages can differ. Examples of such words are presented in Table 4a.

Table 4a: Different words and different meanings

No.	English Words	Derived into	
		Malay	Indonesian
1.	car	kereta	mobil
2.	accidence	kemalangan	kecelakaan
3.	recommendation	cadangan	rekomendasi
4.	staff	kaki-tangan	staf
5.	driver	pemandu	sopir
6.	economical	jimat	hemat
7.	truck	lori	truk
8.	office	pejabat	kantor
9.	delay	kelewatan	penundaan
10.	(un)till	sehingga	hingga
11.	shoes	kasut	sepatu
12.	sight-seeing	pusing-pusing	jalan-jalan

As shown in Table 4a, many Malay words resulting from the English derivational process also exist in Indonesian, but with different meanings. Words like *kereta*, *pemandu*, *jimat*, *pejabat*, *sehingga*, *kaki tangan*, *cadangan*, and many others are indeed found and used in Indonesian, though their semantic usage varies significantly.

For instance, the word "kereta" in Indonesian never refers to "car" as it does in Malay. Instead, it is commonly a shortened form of "kereta api", meaning "train." It can also be used as a short form of "kereta kencana", meaning "golden chariot," which was used in ancient kingdoms. Another instance is the word "cadangan" which is never used to mean "recommendation." Instead, it is typically used as a modifier, as in "pemain cadangan" (substitute players) in sports like football or volleyball. It can also function as a noun, as in "cadangan pangan", meaning "food reserves". The following variation is the word "kaki-tangan" that is also familiar in Indonesian, where it means "accomplice" referring to someone who helps a boss or leader in criminal activities. Meanwhile, the words "sehingga" and "hingga" have distinct uses in Indonesian. "Sehingga" is a conjunction used to show a cause-and-effect relationship, as in: "*Dia tidak pernah berkabar, sehingga saya tidak tahu keberadaannya*" (He never contacted me anymore, so I don't know where he is). On the other hand, the word "hingga" is used to indicate duration, similar to "until" or "to" in English. Further differences in meaning are presented in the following table.

Table 4b: Different meanings for the same forms

No.	Indonesian	English Equivalence
1.	kereta	(rail way) train, golden chariot
2.	guru besar	professor
3.	cadangan	substitute player, food/oil/foreign exchange reserver
4.	kaki tangan	accomplice
5.	pemandu	(tourist) guide
6.	jimat	amulet
7.	lori	lorry
8.	pejabat	officer
9.	kelewatan	too late
10.	sehingga	so, so that, therefore,
11.	kasut	sock
12.	pusing-pusing	headache

(b) Phrases

In addition to a word level, such a variation also happen in a phrase level. The English word "feedback" is translated as "maklum balas" in Malay and "umpan balik" in Indonesian. Interestingly, both "maklum" and "balas" from the Malay version also exist in the Indonesian language, but with different usage. In Indonesian, unlike in Malay, the words "maklum" and "balas" are commonly used separately and are not related to the concept of "feedback." The word "maklum" comes from the verb "memaklumi", meaning "to understand", and the word "balas" is derived from the verb "membalas", meaning

"to repay", "to respond," or "to reply". These two words, "memaklumi" and "membalas", are never combined in Indonesian to form a new meaning as they are in Malay with the phrase "maklum balas". Finally, the phrase "guru besar" is widely recognized in Indonesia, but it only refers to the highest academic rank for a university lecturer, equivalent to "professor" in English, and not to "headmaster" as in Malay. The following table illustrates the variations in usage between these languages.

Table 4c: Variation in usage for the same phrases but different meanings

No.	English Words	Derived into	
		Malay	Indonesian
1.	feedback	maklum balas	umpan balik
2.	parking lot	letak kereta	lapangan parkir
3.	close friend	kawan rapat	sahabat karib
4.	job vacancy	jawatan kosong	lowongan kerja
5.	head master	guru besar	kepala sekolah

2.3 Variations in spelling and pronunciation

Some English words or phrases are adopted into Malay and Indonesian, but they appear with slight differences in spelling. These variations in spelling can occur at the word or phrase level.

(a) Variation in word level

In the current research, it has been observed that many English words are adopted into both Malay and Indonesian, often appearing in similar forms. These variations arise through processes such as assimilation, deletion, and reordering, as shown in Table 5a.

Table 5a: Variation in spelling and pronunciation

No	English Words	Derived into	
1.	army	Malay	Indonesian
2.	vehicle	kendaraan /kəndəraan/	kendaraan /kəndəraan/
3.	crew	anak (kapal) /anak/	awak (kapal) /awak /
4.	different	berbeza / bərbeza /	berbeda / bərbeda /
5.	registered	berdaftar (bərdaftar)	terdaftar / tərdaftar /
6.	English	(bahasa) inggeris / ingəris /	(bahasa) inggris / ingris /
7.	flight crew	krew (penerbangan)	kru (pesawat)
8.	wasteful	membazir / məmbazir /	mubazir / mubazir /
9.	wedding	perkahwinan / pərkahwinan /	Perkawinan / pərkawinan /
10.	apple	epal / e p ə l /	apel / a p ə l /

As Table 5a illustrates, slight differences in spelling occur in three primary ways. First, instances of assimilation can be seen in data points 1 through 5, where the letters "e," "n," "z," "b," "ew," and "em" are transformed into "a," "w," "d," "t," "u," and "u," respectively. Second, slight difference in spelling is evident when the letter "h" in Malay is deleted in the Indonesian equivalent. Lastly, the data also reveals a reordering of letters, as seen in data point 10, where the sequence of "a" and "e" in Malay is reversed to "e" and "a" in Indonesian.

(b) Variation in phrase level

In addition to a word level, variation in spelling also occurs in a phrase level. For instance, the English verb 'take off' is derived as "berlepas" in Malay, while in Indonesian, it becomes "lepas landas". The verb "berlepas" is not commonly used in Indonesian. Instead, Indonesian uses the verb "melepas" (active verb), meaning "to let go," or "terlepas" (passive verb/adjective), meaning "being freed from" or "released." Further examples of this phenomenon can be found in Table 4b.

Table 5b: Variation in the phrase level

No.	English Words	Derived into	
		Malay	Indonesian
1.	take off	berlepas	lepas landas

2.	vice dean	timbangan dekan	wakil dekan
3.	elementary school	sekolah rendah	sekolah dasar
4.	bedroom	bilik tidur	kamar tidur
5.	welcome to	selamat datang ke	selamat datang di

As shown in Table 5b, some English phrases, such as ‘vice dean,’ ‘elementary school,’ and ‘welcome to,’ are adapted into both Malay and Indonesian. However, they take on different word forms and convey slightly different meanings. For instance, the Malay word ‘timbangan’ originates from the Javanese word ‘ditimbali,’ meaning ‘summoned.’ In both Indonesian and Javanese, this term implies an unequal relationship, where one party is dominant. In contrast, the word ‘wakil’ does not carry this connotation of dominance but rather indicates assisting someone with their duties. Another difference appears in the adaptation of the English phrase ‘welcome to.’ In Malay, it becomes ‘selamat datang ke,’ while this exact expression is not used in Indonesian. Instead, the Indonesian form is ‘selamat datang di’.

2.4 Same forms with slightly different pronunciation

Another phenomenon in the derivation process from English into Malay and Indonesian is that both languages often adopt the same spelling of words, but with slight differences in pronunciation, as shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Similar forms with slightly different pronunciation

No.	English Words	Derived into	
		Malay	Indonesian
1.	ABC	ABC / e bi si /	ABC / a be tje /
2.	COD	COD / si o di /	COD / tje o de /
3.	DNA	DNA / di en e /	DNA / de en a /
4.	generation	generasi / dʒə nə ra si /	generasi / gənərasi /
5.	technology	teknologi / tek no lo dʒi /	teknologi / teknologi /

Although the derived words share identical spellings, Malay pronunciation tends to be much closer to the English pronunciation compared to the Indonesian version. This suggests a closer historical linguistic connection between Malay and English, likely due to Malaysia's history of British colonial rule, whereas Indonesia was influenced by Dutch occupation.

2.5 Slightly different forms with similar meanings

Further variation in the derivation process from English into Malay and Indonesian involves slight differences in form while retaining similar meanings. These minor variations include differences in word order, word combinations, and slight changes in wording, as illustrated in Table 7.

Table 7: Similar forms and meanings

No.	English Phrases	Derived into	
		Malay	Indonesian
1.	football	bola sepak	sepak bola
2.	volleyball	bola tampar	bola voli
3.	belt	tali pinggang	ikat pinggang
4.	counter attack	serangan balas	serangan balik
5.	waiting room	bilik menunggu	ruang tunggu
6.	receptionist	penyambut tetamu	penerima tamu (resepsionis)

Table 7 shows that the English word "football" is transformed similarly in both Malay and Indonesian, but undergoes a reordering: "bola sepak" in Malay and "sepak bola" in Indonesian. Similarly, "volleyball" becomes "bola tampar" in Malay and "bola voli" in Indonesian. The Indonesian version retains the English root word with a different order, while Malay uses "tampar," which, though familiar to Indonesian speakers, is less commonly used, as "memukul bola" (hitting the ball) is more typical in Indonesian.

For the English words "belt" and "counter attack," we see one different word in each translation, though the meanings are the same. For instance, "tali" and "ikat" both refer to tying or binding, just as "balas" and "balik" both imply a response, and "bilik" and "ruang" both mean "room." An interesting case occurs with the word "receptionist," which is translated as "penyambut tetamu" in Malay and "penerima tamu" in Indonesian. Here, "penyambut" and "penerima" are synonymous, but the word "tetamu" is less common in Indonesian compared to "tamu."

2.6 Similar pronunciation to the English version

Finally, an interesting phenomenon in the derivation of English into Malay and Indonesian is that both languages sometimes retain pronunciations similar to English for certain words. In some cases, Malay pronunciation is closer to the English version Table 7a), while the Indonesian pronunciation differs. In other cases, Indonesian pronunciation aligns more closely with English compared to the Malay version (Table 7b).

Table 7a: Malay Pronunciation closer to the English version

No.	English Words	Derived into	
		Malay	Indonesian
1.	electric	elektrik /ælæktrik/	listrik /listrik/
2.	faculty	fakulti /fakulti/	fakultas /fakultas/
3.	university	universiti /universiti/	universitas /univərsitas/
4.	ice cream	ais krim /ais krim/	es krim /es krim/
5.	traffic	trafik /træfik /	lalu lintas /lalu lintas/
6.	sap	sap /sɒp/	getah /gətah /
7.	telephone	telefon /telefon/	telepon /telepon/
8.	police	polis /polis/	polisi /polisi/
9.	garage	garaj /garadz/	garasi /garasi/
10.	bus	bas /bas/	bis /bis/
11.	immigration	imigresen /imegræsn/	imigrasi /imigrasi/
12.	beg	beg /bæg/	tas /tas/
13.	cake	kek /keik/	kue, roti /kue, roti/
14.	hospital	hospital /hospitəl/	rumah sakit /rumah sakit/

Table 7b: The Indonesian pronunciation closer to the English version

No.	English Words	Derived into	
		Malay	Indonesian
1.	staff	kaki tangan	staf /sta:f/
2.	parking area	kawasan letak kereta	area parkir /area parkir/
3.	pilot	juru terbang	pilot /pilot/
4.	truck	lori	truk /truk/
5.	tourist	pelancong	turis /turis/
6.	receptionist	penyambut tetamu	resepsionis /resepsionis/
7.	biscuit	biskut	biskuit /biskuit/

CONCLUSION

The derivation of English-origin words in both Malay and Indonesian showcases significant linguistic variations due to their unique historical, cultural, and political contexts. While both languages share a common root and demonstrate several identical word forms, they also exhibit striking differences in spelling, pronunciation, and meaning. These differences can result in potential miscommunication between speakers of both languages, especially when the same English-derived word takes on divergent forms or meanings. Understanding these variations is crucial for fostering better communication and cultural understanding between Indonesians and Malaysians, reinforcing cooperation and avoiding misunderstandings.

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