PRONOUNS IN THE MIND OF THE MENDRIQS

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ABSTRACT

Orang Asli are indigenous group who inhabited Malay Peninsular about 100 thousand years ago. Their languages are grouped under the Austroasiatic group. One of the languages that attract the researcher is the Mendriq language. Mendriq language is a language used by Orang Asli who are known as Mendriq. This language is spoken by a total of 245 people in three villages known as Kampung Kuala Lah, Kampung Baru and Kampung Kuala Stail. This paper discusses and analyzes the pronouns of Mendriq language. This is a field study conducted at Kuala Lah for 6 months. The data are primary data collected from the native speakers, which were collected through story-telling method by a native speaker of Mendriq language. Then, the data were translated by a translator appointed by the Department of Orang Asli, Kelantan. The data consist of various types of sentences. However, this study focuses only on the pronouns of Mendriq. The pronouns are analysed descriptively. The descriptive analysis revealed that the mind of these aborigines are very complex. I would claim that they have complex mathematical system even in their pronouns system.

Keywords: pronouns, Mendriq, descriptive analysis, Orang Asli, Austroasiatic, indigenous

INTRODUCTION

The indigenous people who first inhibited Peninsular Malaysia are known as Orang Asli. Their language is classified under the Austroasiatic group. All the Austroasiatic languages in Malaysia are known as Moribund language because the languages are undergoing extinction (Fazal Mohamed Sultan, 2009a, 2011; Fazal Mohamed Sultan &Khairul Faiz Alimi, 2014). Now, these indigenous people constitute just one of the smallest communities in Malaysia. In general, the languages of the aborigines are divided into three groups, namely "Negrito, Senoi and Proto Malay (Nik Safiah Karim & Ton Ibrahim, 1977). These three groups of people who have grown to form 19 languages and races are among the earliest people who have inhibited the Malay Peninsula.

One of the races that had caught our attention is Negrito. This is the first race to set foot about 100 thousand years ago in Asia (Benjamin, 2013). Negrito ethnic group comprises of Kensiu, Kintak, Lanoh, Jahai, Mendriq and Bateq (Benjamin and Cynthia, 2002). They inhabited the area around the Titiwangsa range centered mostly on the North side of the Peninsula. However, this paper only discusses one of the Negrito languages, which is known as Mendriq, which is on the verge of extinction. These aborigines are relocated by the government at Gua Musang, Kelantan. These tribes settled in three nearby villages known as Kuala Lah, Kampung Baru and Kampung Kuala Stail (Harishon Radzi, Fazal Mohamed Sultan, Nor Hashimah Jalaluddin & Zaharani Ahmad, 2012). The total population of the three villages comprises of 245 people with a total of 121 people at Kuala Lah, 104 people at Kampung Baru and 20 people in Kampung Kuala Stail.

This paper will discuss one of the very interesting aspects in Mendriq language, which are the pronouns. Pronouns have a very important usage in everyday conversation. However, this paper will only showcase the first person pronouns that exist in this language and explicate their usage in Mendriq sentences. It will also discuss and explain the position of these pronouns functioning as subject, object and possessive, as well as their positions in a sentence and the complex phenomena that they potray in their everyday usages.

METHODOLOGY

This descriptive analysis was conducted from the perspective of qualitative analysis. For the success of this study, the type of research that was conducted was based on fieldwork. The fieldwork was conducted over a period of six months with the approval of the Department of Malaysian Aboriginal Affairs in Kelantan. I used the interview technique in order to elicit the data from the native speakers. Two indigenous men were identified for this purpose. The first respondent was a 65-year-old man, while the other was a 75-year-old man. The data collection technique involves an indirect conversation. The conversation was recorded. Both of the indigenous men were interviewed separately. Interview technique involves questions in Malay and the respondents answer in Mendriq. In addition, both informants were asked to talk about their youth, how to hunt animals in the forest, how to farm, how they worship in the days of their youth and old time, day-to-day activities in their lives, their living conditions now and before, their opinions about life before independence and after independence, their hope to advance in life and their views on education.

During the recording, a translator was present at all times. The translator will then translate all the Mendriq data at a separate place. This translator was appointed by the Head of the village. This translator was a man aged 65 years old. He is a native speaker of Mendriq. He is also a retired policeman in this district. Every single sentence that is recorded will be translated but the ambiguous sentences will be referred back to the appropriate informant with the presence of the researchers at all times.

THE CONCEPT OF PRONOUNS

In general, pronouns belong to a noun phrase. According to Abdullah Hassan (1973), pronouns can be replaced by a proper name. Every language in the world is different. It can be seen from the differences in the structure of a noun or pronoun that is present in every language in the world. There are also languages where their nouns can be marked with cases, classes and gender syntactically or morphologically, as claimed by Fazal Mohamed Sultan (2009b).

Gender differences can be detected in Arabic language. The language divides its nouns into masculine and feminine. This is confirmed by Abd. Rauf Haji Hassan Azhari (2000) who stated that nouns in this language can be categorized into feminine or masculine. Each noun that exists in Arabic will have a gender bias whether is categorized as masculine or feminine. In addition, there are also the languages which use morphemes to distinguish plural and singular in nouns. The most obvious example is English: the noun *car* means *one car*, while the noun *cars* means *many cars*. Lutfi Abas (1972), also stated that there are singular and plural pronouns in Malay too. A study conducted by Fazal Mohamed Sultan (2008) on the Malay language also proved that noun phrase in languages other than English may be preceded by words such as the number two, three, four, or quantity such as some, all, each in order to mark the plural of a noun. Based on the foregoing, there is a difference between plurals in Malay and English. English only adds one morpheme of 's' to indicate the plural . Meanwhile, the Malay language employs an additional word to indicate the plural such as, *beberapa*, *dua*, and so on. In addition, there are also pronouns used for respectful references. This is confirmed by Lutfi Abas (1973), stating a name of the second person pronoun in Chinese is split into two, namely the normal and the respectable. In addition, according to Yeop Johari Haji Jacob (1980), the word respect is influenced by class, status, age, exact tribute or subtlety of the language.

According to Fazal Mohamed Mohamed Sultan (2009b), there are also languages that distinguish proper nouns such as Porsche, Prime Minister, Ahmad from simple nouns such as car, boy, cat. The differences in English involves the use of determiners such as 'a' or 'the' before the noun while in Tagalog, which does not have the determiner, proper nouns are distinguished from the simple nouns by labeling and marking on topics, for example 'sa' and 'ang' for simple nouns while 'kay'and 'si' for proper nouns:

(1) Malapit sa   babae ang bata   (2) Malapit kay Maria   si Juan
     near   OBL girlTOP boy   near OBL Maria TOP Juan
     'The boy is near the girl.'   'John is near to Mari.'
                                                          (Ouhalla, 1999)

In addition, every language in the world has various word orders when we refer to pronouns. There are languages in the world that have a pattern of changing the form of pronouns depending on its position in sentences such as subject or object. A clear example is the English language, where the pronoun *he* can only appear in the initial part of sentence. If it is located in the final end of a sentence, it will be converted into *him*.

PERSONAL PRONOUNS IN MENDRIQ
Pronouns, as all we know, are meant to replace a noun or a reference to a person or group of people. I will discuss only the bizarrepronouns such as *yeh*, *hem* and *yipah* plus these two pronouns *hik* and *him* together here. They represent first person pronouns. From my analysis, I found that all these pronouns display a bizarre phenomenon. They are sensitive to the number of persons they are referring to.
Their distributions are shown below for further description:

(3)   *yeh* sekolah kerajaan   (9)   ei   *hik* cep juwel tanggui
      we   school   government.   father our went sell   rambutan
      'We go to government school.'   'Our father went to sell rambutan.'

(4)   **pak* cik lo   yeh   (10) *him* belik   beras
      sister eat with us   We bought rice
      'Our sister eats with us.'   'We bought rice.'

(5)   *hem* cep sekolah   (11) *uk   mayen bula lo   *him*
      we   go   school   He/She play   ball with us
      'We go to school.'   'He/She plays ball with us.'

(6)   *uk   chitoh nasik untok *hem*   (12) *yipah* juwel tanggui
      He/She cook   rice   for   us   we   sell   rambutan
      'He/She cooks rice for us.'   'We sell rambutan.'

(7)   *hik* sayeng ei   (13) pak   cik samak *yipah*
      we   love   dad   sister eat with   us
      'We loves dad.'   'Our sister eats with us.'

(8)   ei sayeng *hik*   (14) hayak *yipah* aben
      dad love   us   house our   beautiful
      'Dad loves us.'   'Our   house is   beautiful.'

Based on the data above, *yeh*, *yem*, *hik*, *him* and *yipah* have different functions. Pronouns *yeh*, *hem* and *him* can only appear in the subject position as in (3), (5) and (10). For pronouns *hik* and *yipah*, the pronouns can be present in all three positions of a sentence such as subject position in (7) and (12), object position in (8) and (13) and the possessive position in (9) and (14) respectively.

However, the use of these pronouns has a phenomenon that is very different in terms of their usages. These pronouns seem to be differentiated by references to the number of people they are referring to. For *yeh* in (3) and *hem* in (5), I found that both lexical items refer to two people. This means, if *yeh* or *hem* is used, it will only refer to the first person pronoun which refers to two people only. Thus, pronouns *yeh* and *hem* can be indicated with a feature such as ($X = 2$), which means *we* refers to two persons only. Meanwhile, the pronoun *hik* in (7), (8) and (9) also refers to the first person pronoun *we*, but the pronouns refer to three or four people only. Thus, the resulting feature for *hik* in ($3 \leq X \leq 4$), which may consist of three or more than three, but not more than four persons. Next, the pronoun *him* in (10), which also refers to *we*, refers to ten people or less. The feature for the pronoun *him* would result in features like ($X \leq 10$), which means it refers to no more than ten people. For the last pronoun *yipah* in (12), (13) and (14), the

pronoun refers to a huge number of people; in other words, it refers to more than ten people. So, the feature for this pronoun can be calculated as (X>10), which means more than ten people. Therefore, we have a bizarre phenomena of pronouns in this Moribund language. On the surface of this analysis, I can conlude that Mendriq people observe complex mathematical application to their pronouns. This shows that these people do have complex thinking eventhough their life is a very simple life in the forest of Malaysia.

Conclusion

Based on the data analysis, we can conclude that pronouns in Mendriq language differ in the aspects of their usage. The differences are visible in terms of the number of persons they refer to, as well as to show modesty and the productivity level they carry with them. There are complex level of usage in their pronoun system. Their pronoun system can portray the complex thinking that they can bear in order to communicate between themselves. This proved that indigenous people have complex language system that we need to explore more which should be able to explain how people who live in forest think. This presentation argues that the knowledge acquired in the study of indigenous languagesmay provide insights into the way of their life, the way they solve or evade problems and on the way of thinking of these speakers in the past.

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