

# Latin Influence in Early Malay Grammars

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## ABSTRACT

The writing of Malay grammar began in the 17th century. The first Malay grammar appeared in the form of a table written by Frederick de Houtman (1603). This was followed by discussion of a few aspects of grammar by Sebastian Danckaerts (1623). And finally with a complete grammar, which was written in 1653 by Joannes Roman. These were the earliest grammars in Malay and also among the earliest in the world. These grammars were influenced much by Latin, in term of conjugations, word classes, etc. In light of this influence, this paper attempts to discuss these grammars from the perspective of history of linguistics. The discussion will focus on the influence of Latin in these grammars. As Latin was a *lingua academica* at that time, the influence could not be avoided. Thus, this makes Malay a language at par with other languages in the world, especially Latin because Latin means grammar.

Key Words: grammar, influence, climate of opinion, evolution, structure

## ABSTRAK

Penulisan tatabahasa Melayu bermula pada abad ke-17. Tatabahasa Melayu pertama kali muncul dalam bentuk jadual yang ditulis oleh Frederick de Houtman (1603), diikuti oleh perbincangan beberapa aspek tatabahasa oleh Sebastian Danckaerts (1623), dan tatabahasa Melayu yang lengkap ditulis oleh Johannes Roman pada tahun 1653. Tatabahasa-tatabahasa ini adalah tatabahasa Melayu yang awal dan juga antara tatabahasa yang terawal di dunia. Tatabahasa-tatabahasa ini banyak dipengaruhi oleh tatabahasa Latin, misalnya daripada segi konjugasi, kelas kata dan sebagainya. Perbincangan ini akan memberi fokus terhadap pengaruh tatabahasa Latin dalam tatabahasa-tatabahasa Melayu ini dari pespektif sejarah linguistik. Sebagai *lingua academica* pada waktu itu, pengaruh bahasa Latin memang sukar untuk dielakkan. Justeru pengaruh ini menjadikan bahasa Melayu sebaris dengan bahasa-bahasa lain di dunia, terutama Latin kerana Latin membawa maksud tatabahasa.

Kata Kunci: Tatabahasa, pengaruh, suasana keintelektualan, evolusi dan struktur

## Introduction

In Europe, the traditions of grammar writing began in the 5th and 4th B.C. Two thousand years later, Latin grammar followed the Greek's and dominated the grammar writing in Europe until the 16<sup>th</sup> century and in the following centuries (Law 2003). However, in the 16<sup>th</sup> century in Europe, Latin was not a mother tongue,<sup>1</sup> but been used in Christianity, printed materials and in academic discourses. In the mean time, however, Greek was still spoken by the Greek minority in Ottoman Empire, and its form was changed to the old Greek. During that century, the learning of Greek was carried out through the Classical Greek literature and academic writings which had been used since two thousand years ago (Law 2003). Besides Greek and Latin, there were a lot of grammar writtens in the 16th and the 17th century. According to Rowe (1974), the first grammar construction in the world, other than Latin and Greek, was Spanish, written by Elio Antonio de Nebrija in 1492.<sup>2</sup> Rowe (1974) has listed, between 1492 and 1700, there had been a total of 62 grammars. Of that numbers, 21 grammars had been published in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and the other 41 in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Malay grammar was among the earliest grammar in the world listed by Rowe (1974).

The earliest Malay grammars even known was written by Dutch merchants and missionaries. Although Spanish and Portuguese were the earliest seafarer who made contact with the Malay world, they did not introduce grammar. Only after seven years of the Dutch arrival, they described Malay in the form of grammar. These Malay grammars described by the Dutch appeared in stages, in a series of evolutions, and these occurred during the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The grammar aspect was first projected in table form of conversation book entitled *Spraeck ende Woord-boeck* (1603), written by Frederick de Houtman. This was followed by a grammar Appendix written by Sebastian Danckaerts (1623) entitled *Observationes aliquot hinc illinc decerptae ex Grammaticâ latinâ, utilissmae studiosis linguae Malaicae, insulis Iavâ Amboynâ, Moluccis, Bandâ & earundç circûvicinys usurpatae*. Then, in 1653, Johannes Roman wrote a Malay grammar book entitled *Kort Bericht van de Maleysche Letter-Konst*.

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<sup>1</sup> Latin was developed and spread to modern Romanic, such as French, Spanish, Italy, etc (see Tavoni 1998)

<sup>2</sup> However, some scholars believe that Leon Battista Alberti grammar (between 1437-1441) was the first. Possibly, due to the late publication of this grammar in 1908, scholars did not consider this grammar as the first (see Law 2003).

These early Malay grammars showed a great deal of Latin influences. These can be seen in two features, first, in their structure, and second, in their grammar. The structural features means the format of the grammar prevails Latin influence, for example the use of the word class framework, conjugation tables as well as the usage of Latin. By just looking at their grammars we would be able to recognize the influence of Latin grammars. The grammar feature, on the other hand, means the grammar aspects being discussed, for example cases, tenses, modes, compound word, participles and pronominals.

In this paper I will try to show that Malay grammars were influenced by Latin in the form of structure and aspect of grammars. This influence will also be discussed from the perspective of climate of opinion. Climate of opinion is a view or opinion shared by scholars at a given time. The view or opinion is not confined to linguistics matters but encompasses intellectual perspectives as well as scientific advances taking place at the said time (Koerner 1978). It also covers current social contexts (Robin 1967, 1993) and theology (Aarselff 1967). In other words, when examining the development of linguistics, we need to consider other disciplines present at that time including the intellectual, social and religious environment. In fact, an idea that is found in linguistics is not only related to other disciplines but is related to other ideas of the preceding periods as well. In other words the influenced was in line with the development of the writing of grammars taking place in the world at that time.

### A brief description of early Malay grammar

In this paper, I will discuss three of Malay grammars written in the 17<sup>th</sup> century as an early Malay grammar. The first grammar was written by Frederick de Houtman (1603). This grammar is not a full account of Malay grammar but only an aspect of grammar, namely conjugation as a part of his book entitled *Spraeck ende Woord-boeck*. He presented his grammar in the form of tables. His grammar contained eleven tables entitled *Dier nae volcht de Conjugatie*. The tables covered tenses, modes and ordinals. Five of the table comprised tenses, and the other five comprised modes while one table comprised ordinal. De Houtman's tense tables covered the present, past perfect, future tense with the verb *hebben* and the present and past perfect tense with the verb *zijn*. The mode tables were made up of the past and present subjunctive tables with the verb *zijn*. The ordinal table was made up of the personal

pronominal list. The grammar tables were produced in two languages, Dutch and Malay.

The de Houtman's grammar was considered unsuccessful by Gonda (1936). However, we consider de Houtman's effort 400 years ago as a pioneering effort in producing Malay grammar and one which should be commended. De Houtman undeniably only produced tables which he called conjugations, but the table, in fact, were a complete and comprehensive grammar description of verbs in the Dutch language that were adapted from the Malay language. This proved that the Malay language at that time, just like the Dutch language, had grammar that was on par with European languages that used Latin grammar as a benchmark. Thus, he was the person responsible for placing Malay grammar on a par with languages found in Europe.

As we mentioned above, the Malay grammar evolved stage by stage. After a table of conjugations as a part in a conversation book, the second Malay grammar appeared as an appendix in a dictionary. The dictionary published in 1623 entitled *Vocabularium, ofte Vvoort-boeck, naer ordre vanden Alphabet in 't Duytsch-Maleysch, ende Maleysch-Duytsch*. The dictionary was written by Sebastian Danckaerts and Caspar Wiltens but the grammar entitled *Observationes aliquot hinc illinc decerptae ex Grammaticâ latinâ, utilissmae studiosis linguae Malaicae, insulis Iavâ Amboynâ, Moluccis, Bandâ & earundç circûvicinys usurpatae* was written by Sebastian Danckaerts. The grammar was also used as an aid to the user of the dictionary. The tradition of placing grammar as an appendix in a dictionary continues up to today. For example, in compiling Dutch-Indonesian dictionaries published in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, grammar is still appended to the dictionaries as the compilers are of the opinion that the grammar is useful as an aid when using the dictionary (see Soeisi Moeiman 2005).

Danckaerts grammar only focused on affixes; namely particulae praepositive: prefixes and particulae postpositive: suffixes. Particulae postpositive consisted of prefixes while particulae postpositive consisted of suffixes, possessive pronominals and emphatic words. Beside that he also discussed the addition of words at the beginning and ending of a word. He observed that in Malay, a word could be added to another word either before or after a base word. The addition of words results in the form of the genitive, nominalisation, degrees of comparison, indicative, participles, passive, substantive nominal, comparatives, and verbs that show change in location. In contemporary Malay, the results of the combination will form phrases.

The complete of Malay grammar only appeared in 1653 when Johannes Roman completed his writing entitled *Kort Bericht van de*

*Maleysche Letter-Konst* (1653). Although the writing of this grammar was completed in 1653, the grammar was only published in 1655. The grammar was published in two editions. The first edition was published in 1655 entitled *Kort Bericht van de Maleysche Letter-Konst*. In the first edition, the discussion focused more on Jawi (Arabic) writing system and without inclusion of Malay grammar. The second edition published in 1674 entitled *Grondt Ofte Kort Bericht Van De Maleysche Tale, Vervet in twee Deelen; het eerste handelende van de Letters en haren aenhangh, het andere, van de deelan eener Redene*, and in 1689 this grammar was republished. In the second edition and 1689 publications both the Jawi writing system and grammar were included. The grammar was written in Dutch.

## Structural features

Although in the 17<sup>th</sup> century the intellectual climate in Europe was devoted on writing the vernacular compared to Latin, Latin still played important roles. Latin was still used as the lingua franca among the European scholars because no language was able to replace Latin. In England, scholars in Royal Society tried to find a universal language to replace Latin. Thus the climate of opinion in this era was still influenced by Latin. Whereby the writing of Malay grammar was also influenced by Latin.

The most striking Latin influence in early Malay grammar was the use of word class framework in Malay. Roman (1653) applied the word class framework in his grammar. He classified Malay language into seven word classes, namely *namen* ‘nominal’, *voor-namen* ‘pronominal’, *woorden* ‘verb’, *By-woorden* ‘adverbs’ *voorzettingen* ‘prepositions’, *koppelingen* ‘conjugations’, and *inwurpen* ‘interjections’. At that time, the Latin word class was also applied as a framework in grammar writing in Europe. The same framework of writing grammar has been absorbed into Malay grammar as a consequence of the climate of opinion in Europe.

The using of word class framework in Malay grammar was in line with the climate of opinion in Europe in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. In Netherlands, *Twe-Spraack* (1584), *De Nederduytsche grammatica ofte spraeckkonst* by van Heule (1625), *Ont-werp der Neder-duytsche letterkonst* by Kok (1649), *Aanmerkingen op de Neederduytsche taale* by Leupenius (1653), and in England *Pamphlet of grammar* by Bullokar (1586), Shirley (1651) were all written in word class framework. We can say that the Latin grammar was used as universal framework to describe any language at that time.

The Latin word class framework was applied from the Greek grammar. The system was first time introduced by Aristarchus in the 2<sup>nd</sup> B.C. (Robin 1973).<sup>3</sup> He introduced eight word classes in Greek, namely noun, verb, participle, article, pronouns, preposition, adverb, and conjunction. The system, was then developed by his student, Dionysius Thrax in *Tekne grammatike*. Later, the system was copied by Appolonius Dyscolus to describe the Greek syntax. Then, Priscian followed the Appolonius Dyscolus word class system to produced Latin grammar.

Although Roman used Latin grammar framework he it was not done indiscriminately. The seven classifications of word class in Malay were proof that he did not follow Latin and other European grammar in toto. During the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the writing of vernacular grammars in Europe was expanding and was attempting to divert from Latin influence. In the writing of grammars in Netherlands, for example, the classification of word class varied from one grammarian to another. Van Heule (1633) classified Dutch word class into six, while Kok (1649) classified it into three. The variation was due to the natura concept of “meaning” which became the principle and guide of grammarians in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

Roman grammar had already started using grammar terminology. It used not only Dutch, but also Latin terminology. For example, *van namen* was given the Latin equivalent *nomina* and *van woorden* its Latin equivalent of *verba*. The equivalent Latin terminology was given to match Dutch terminology as well as to help users of the language. These Latin words were written on the left or right side of the page. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the writing of grammars in vernacular language was still new. Thus, should there be problems in using Dutch terminology, the readers could still refer to the Latin terminology. The use of Latin terminology not only showed that Malay, like Dutch, had a grammar that was on a par with Latin but it showed Latin influence as well.

The use of tables as a guide and aid in the understanding of a grammar of a language was influenced by Latin grammars. In the early Malay grammar written by Frederick de Houtman (1603), he described conjugation of verb in the form of tables. Actually, this policy originally was used in learning Latin at the end of the Middle Ages. At this time, university students were obliged to hear, read and expound the *Institutiones grammaticae* by Priscian once or twice during their course. But they found it very difficult to understand Priscian. As teachers tried to help their students they found this new policy. Then, this new policy expanded in the fifteenth century in northern Europe. Many works

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<sup>3</sup> At this time the term used was *partes orationis* which is equivalent to word class today.

produced in this region were full of diagrams and tables to make the information visually striking and memorable (Law 2003). Frederick de Houtman followed this policy and also the format of Latin grammars which had tables as an appendix to help learners of Latin. In fact, Latin textbooks published in the 20<sup>th</sup> century have retained the same format, whereby tables, including conjugation tables are given as appendix (see Wheelock 1963; Fokker 1954).

The title of Danckaerts grammar *Observationes aliquot hinc illinc decerptae ex Grammaticâ latinâ, utilissimae studiosis linguae Malaicae, insulis Iavâ Amboynâ, Moluccis, Bandâ & earundç circûvicinys usurpatae* clearly showed that Malay was influenced by Latin. In fact in the title, Danckaerts indicates that his grammar was taken from Latin (*decerptae ex Grammaticâ*). Furthermore, the grammar was written in Latin and he also translated Malay example into Latin. The writing of Malay in Latin was also in line with climate of opinion in Europe. Although Latin was not used as a spoken language in Europe, this language was still used as a *lingua academica*. In other words, the influence not only occurred in Malay but also in European vernacular grammars. For example in England, Latin still used as a guide to written English grammar and also the English grammars were written in Latin. Ben Johnson grammar (1640) was written based on Latin grammar written by Ramus (1585) and Shirley (1651) makes English same as Latin. It shows that the intellectual climate at that time played important roles in writing grammars including Malay grammar.

### Aspect of grammar

The influence of Latin was not only found in structural features but also more profoundly in terms of aspect of grammar or content. The influence of the tradition of Latin grammar which emphasised the writing aspect could be seen in the early Malay grammars, particularly in Roman's grammar. There is a section in his grammar, the first section, which discussed the Arab-Malay writing aspect. In 17<sup>th</sup> century writing of grammars, discussions on spelling as a part of grammar were essential before one could discuss word class. This was a continuation of the Greek and Latin tradition. In the former, grammar consisted of four aspects, namely *orthographia*, *prosodia*, *etymologia*, and *syntax* (Dibbets 1992). Dutch grammars produced in the 17<sup>th</sup> century also included discussions on spelling, for example van Heule (1633), Kok (1649) and Leupenius (1653) (see Dibbets 1992). Such discussions originated from the Greeks who viewed language elements as *grammata*,

and Latin, *literae* meaning ‘letters’ (Gonda 1936). This tradition also influenced the writing on Malay grammars. Roman stated that in Malay, it was letters that formed words.

The aspect of conjugation by Frederick de Houtman (1603) considered as Latin influence was not only from the perspective of structural features but also from the perspective of aspect of grammar. The discussion of conjugation was also found in Danckaerts (1623) and Roman (1653). The discussion came about following the climate of opinion in grammar writing during that century. From the 15<sup>th</sup> till the 17<sup>th</sup> century the grammar writing in Europe was devoted to conjugation. This influence came from Latin. The influence was in line with the climate of opinion at that time. We must bear in mind that Latin was a lingua franca and used extensively by scholars in Europe; in Netherlands, Erasmus a philosopher wrote *Moriae encomium* (1511) in Latin; in Poland, Copernicus wrote *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium* (1543) about astronomy in Latin; in Italy, Galileo wrote *Siderus Nuncius* in Latin; and in England, Newton wrote *Principia* also in Latin. With this intellectual climate, of course the writing of grammar could not avoid the Latin influence especially the vernaculars grammars.

The conjugation aspect as placed by Frederick de Houtman in his book was discussed in Europe since the fifteenth century. This aspect could be seen in Italian grammar written by Leon Battista Alberti (between 1437-1441) and Spanish grammar by Nebrija (1492). Both grammars were the early efforts in writing vernaculars grammar in Europe. Leon Battista Alberti wrote the first Italian grammar entitled *Grammatica della lingua toscana* using Latin rules, although he was aware that Italian differed from Latin. For example when he discussed the Italian tenses, he listed five tenses in Italian, namely present, imperfect, perfect, pluperfect and future (Law 2003). He knew that Italian had more than five tenses, but the influences of Latin made him list only five tenses. In *Grammatica castellana* (1492) Nebrija also discussed the conjugation. He discussed it in great length in part two of his book. He also discussed the five tenses same as in Latin.

In fact, Malay as an analytic language has no conjugation. Only European language such as Latin does have the conjugation. Actually, de Houtman, Danckaerts and Roman were aware that in Malay, verbs did not inflect; they were of the opinion that auxiliaries had a role in determining the tense. For example, Roman said that the auxiliaries *adda*, *souda* and *mauw* followed by verb could determine whether the action was in the present, past, or future tense. Similarly, de Houtman saw the use of certain words to indicate conjugation.

Similar to conjugation, Malay also has no cases. But in these early grammar cases were discussed as part of Malay grammar. Roman (1653) for example discussed six cases in Malay, namely *nomer* ‘nominatif’, *barer* ‘genitive’, *gever* ‘dativ’, *aenklager* ‘accusative’, *roeper* ‘vocative’, and *ofnomer* ‘ablativ’. The discussion was also in line with the climate of opinion at that time. In European grammar, especially the Dutch grammars, Latin rules were followed. As Roman was of Dutch origin he also followed the same rules. He indicated in his grammar that the discussion of the Malay cases followed the Dutch grammar. The Dutch grammar *Twe-Spraack* used the Latin cases as stated in *Twe-Spraack* “*De Latijnen hebender zes, die wy in dezen volghen zullen, om daar deur tot grondlyker Naspuering der eighenschappen onses taal te komen*”. Gonda (1936) proved that the Malay cases were taken from the *Twe-spraack*. *Twe-spraack* itself had taken the cases from *Exercitium pueroram grammaticale* (1485) (Grammatical practice for children).

## Conclusion

The climate of opinion played an important roles in grammar writing in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The Latin influence in writing grammar not only influenced the Malay grammar but also the grammar writing in Europe. The first Malay grammar appeared in the form of a table written by Frederick de Houtman (1603), followed by discussion of a few aspects of grammars by Sebastian Danckaerts (1623). It finally appeared with a complete grammar written in 1653 by Joannes Roman which showed a great deal of Latin influence. These grammars were greatly influenced by Latin, in term of conjugations, word classes, etc. As Latin was a *lingua academica* at that time, so the influence could not be avoided. Thus, this made Malay a language at par with other languages in the world, especially Latin because Latin means grammar. The Latin grammar influence found in 17<sup>th</sup> century Malay grammars was continually found in the Malay grammars written by the Dutch in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The influence can be seen in their discussion on tenses, pronominals, case, and gender (see for example de Hollander 1893/1984; van Wijk 1909/1985; Spat 1910/1989).

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