

Language Use in the Malay Community of Mecca

Asmah Haji Omar

University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur
hajiomarasmah@gmail.com

Abstract: *This study looks into intergenerational use of language in the Malay community of Mecca, Saudi Arabia. The first and second generations have managed to hold on to Malay while adopting Arabic, but this seems to be a transitional stage before a total shift takes place to Arabic in the third generation. This shift has also influenced the attitude of the speakers, i.e. while the first and second generations still consider themselves Malays, the third generation refers to themselves as Arabs. Another process of change is taking place, and that is a reversal to the ancestral language with the hope of returning to the original homeland, due to the selective policy of the host government in awarding citizenship to foreign settlers.*

Keywords: *intergenerational language use, attitude, shift, maintenance, reversal of shift*

1. INTRODUCTION

Mecca is the holiest city in Islam as it is the birthplace of the religion, plus the fact that it is the direction that Muslims, wherever they are, face when they pray. Mecca is also the place where Muslims converge every year in the twelfth month, the Dzulkaidah, of the Muslim calendar to perform the Hajj, the Fifth Pillar of Islam, which is obligatory for all Muslims on condition they are of sound health and have the financial means to travel there. ⁽²⁾ It is a city of about two million people. During the Hajj season another two million will converge in the city, but this situation is temporary and lasts for about two months. However, outside the Hajj season, there are pilgrims all the year round who go there for the minor Hajj, i.e. the *Umrah*.

The Malays, who are the subjects of this paper, are natives of the Malay world consisting of Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei Darussalam, Singapore and Southern Thailand. This region is also known as the Malay Archipelago, and the people belong to the big Malay race speaking languages which are members of the same family, i.e. the Indonesian family of the Austronesian stock. Although their mother tongues are heterogeneous, the people are all bonded by a common lingua franca, and that is the Malay language. This is the language that is the national language of Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei Darussalam and Singapore. Malay does not have the status of national language in Thailand, but its use is quite widespread in the southern provinces of the country where Malays form a sizeable part of the population.

2. MALAY SETTLERS IN MECCA IN THE 19TH CENTURY

Islam first came to the Malay World circa the 10th century C.E. It is not known when Malays first made their pilgrimage to Mecca as there is no written record on this subject. Furthermore, the only narrative on the life of the Malays in Mecca is the work of Snouck Hurgronje, *Mekka in the Latter Part of the 19th century, Daily Life, Customs and Learning: The Moslems of the East-Indian Archipelago*, published in 1970 by E. J. Brill.⁽³⁾ This is an account of his first-hand observation of the subjects during his stay in Mecca and Jeddah in 1884 – 1885. Hurgronje was advisor to the Dutch colonial government in Batavia (now Jakarta) on the affairs of the Muslims in the East Indies, now Indonesia. In the book, he uses the name *Jawah* (from *Java*) to denote all the indigenous groups in the Malay world, while the term *Malay* is used to refer to the group whose native tongue was Malay, not Javanese, Achenese, Sundanese, etc. The Malays in his study were those from Malaya, or the Malay Peninsula (now Peninsular Malaysia), Sumatera, and Pontianak in Borneo.

The Malay or Jawah community mentioned by Hurgronje was already well established in Mecca at the time he was there. As at that time the nation state of Indonesia had not yet come into

existence, Hurgronje refers to each group from the islands of the East Indies as a nationality. Hence, there was a Javanese nationality, a Sundanese nationality, an Achehnese nationality, and so on. Each nationality had its “colony” or “settlement” which was identified according to the nomenclature by which each subgroup was known; an Achenese colony, a Javanese colony, etc. To quote him,

The immigrants of different nationalities begin by forming separate societies; though their dealings may bring them into contact with various circles, they have intimate intercourse with their own countrymen only. (Hurgronje 1970: 6).

The early Malays in Mecca went there to study religion and the Arabic language. Those who were successful in their quest became known as *ulama* (i.e. one who is knowledgeable in the Holy Sciences and Arabic). Some of these ulama chose to settle there, and themselves became teachers, very much in demand by the younger generation who followed in their footsteps to study in the holy city. It was a normal practice for these students to choose to study under an ulama who was of their own nationality or linguistic group. Teaching was done in the Great Mosque, better known as *Masjid al-Haram*, in the form of tuition classes where the students sat around the teacher, and listened to his teaching. In the case of the Malays, there could have been several groups of students, and each group taught by an ulama of their own region.

The choice of an ulama by students from their own region may be interpreted as a show of provincialism, as each province was a separate political entity from the other, although the provinces of the East Indies were under Dutch colonial rule. However, looking at the situation more closely, it was also a pragmatic consideration on the part of the students who at the time of their arrival in Mecca had very little proficiency in Arabic or none at all. Under the ulama they had to learn Arabic as well as read books (*kitāb*) on Islam written in this language. An ulama who shared the same language as them would be able to use their common indigenous language to teach Arabic and subjects on religion. As the students’ proficiency in Arabic improved, the teacher could use codeswitching from Arabic to the common language and vice versa. In this way, they could better understand Arabic and the subjects on Islam they were learning. Where students were a mixed group, i.e. originating from different provinces in the Dutch East Indies, Malay was used together with Arabic. This shows that the role of Malay as a lingua franca in the East Indies was extended to Mecca when the different groups of the islands immigrated to the holy city.

3. PRESENT-DAY MALAY COMMUNITY IN MECCA

Based on their countries of origin, the present-day Malay community of Mecca may be divided into three subgroups: Malaysian, Indonesian, and Pattani Malay; the last mentioned being those of Southern Thailand. There does not seem to be any Brunei or Singapore immigrants here. There could have been settlers from these two countries, but they could have been absorbed into the Malaysian subgroup. Most of the Malays live on the slopes of hills around the Great Mosque, namely the sections known as Ajjad, Qubais, and Misfalah. There are others who live a bit farther away in districts known as Aziziyyah and Ghazāla.

Since statistics of the community and the subgroups are not available, the population of Malays in Mecca is anybody’s guess. Our fieldwork was conducted in mainly in Ajjad, but we were also able to visit informants in Misfalah. According to our informants, there were 200 families of Malaysians, Indonesians and Pattani Malays in the Ajjad alone, and in Misfalah there were about 400 people. Here, one must be cautious in the interpretation of the word *family* which in Malay is *keluarga*. The Malay word may be interpreted to mean the nuclear family of father-mother-children; a polygamous family of husband and two, three, or four wives, each wife with her own children; and a family comprising three generations (from grandparents to grandchildren). The term *household* would be more suitable as a generic name for the three types of families mentioned here.

Although polygamy is allowed in Islam, with certain restrictions, it appears that it is not the norm in this community. Of the 10 households we visited, only two were polygamous. The number of children of the nuclear families of father-mother-children is between 6 and 10. Taking into

consideration the parents and grandparents, the total population of Malays in Ajyad and Misfalah would be about 2,000, or slightly more.

All the three subgroups live in the same area, and there appears to be a tendency among the Pattani Malays to live close to Malaysian Malays in one part of the Ajyad, than to the Indonesians. This is understandable because Pattani and Malaysian Malays are close neighbors in their homeland; the Pattani region in Southern Thailand is adjacent to the northern part of the Malay Peninsula, and close contact between them is made easy by overland crossing of the border. The number of the Pattani Malays is not as many as Malaysian Malays in Mecca, and most of them are found in Ajyad. In the words of a Pattani lady, given in her dialect, but translated here as follows: "In Ajyad, there are many people from Pattani. To feed them, one must slaughter three cows".

4. HOUSEHOLDS AND INFORMANTS

In each household visited, there were at least two generations of people, i.e. parents and children. There were homes with three generations: grandparents, parents, and grandchildren. One polygamous family (of two wives) lives together in one building on separate floors: the first wife and her children on the first floor, and the second wife and hers on the ground floor. Between them there are 10 children. The other polygamous family has broken into nuclear families because the children have all grown up and have their own families, while the father and one of the wives have passed away. They are survived by the first wife, and she became our informant (representing the first-generation group).

Most of the informants were ladies, for various reasons. First and foremost, in a three-generation family they numbered more than the men in representing the first generation, and they were of the age-range 65 – 90. The third generation, i.e. the grandchildren, who were our informants, were between 20 – 30 years old, and some of them are already married and have their own families.

Secondly, when a house was chosen for meeting informants, it was not only members of the household that were present but also friends of the family, whose information on their families was also valuable to us. And these were ladies who came purportedly to help in the kitchen. Thirdly, the ladies were eager to receive guests, serve meals, and tell their stories. Fourthly, they were available all day long.

This is not to say that the men were not good informants. Only that they were not as good at talking as the ladies. As there were more grandmothers than grandfathers, a great deal of the history of their settlement came from the former.

The majority of our informants were Malays from Malaysia. Due to the constraint of time and financial resources we were not able to stay longer to interview the other subgroups of Malays. However, we did manage to meet with Indonesians who worked as maids in Malaysian households. The 83-year old lady whom we interviewed at her house adopted a whole Pattani Malay family of husband and wife and their two children and gave them room in her apartment as she needed company. It was a win-win situation as the wife helped the host with carrying out domestic chores. There were also Pattani ladies who joined their Malaysian neighbors to be our informants.

5. OBJECTIVE OF RESEARCH

The data collected for this paper is part of a larger corpus which includes various aspects of the life of the Malays in Mecca. As far as language use is concerned, through contact with members of the community who often visit their relatives in Malaysia and through our previous visits to Mecca as pilgrims, we were informed that Malays in Mecca still maintained their mother tongue and at the same time could speak Arabic. So our objective was:

To look into language use in the Malay community situated amidst a larger community of Arabic-speaking people.

The hypothesis was that there have been maintenance of Malay and shift to Arabic, but not on a universal scale that involves the whole community, especially when we were examining language use across three generations. Our questions in the interviews were focused on the following topics:

- (1) Situations and domains in which Malay and Arabic were used.
- (2) The people who spoke mainly Malay;
- (3) The people who spoke mainly Arabic;
- (4) Factors underlying (1), (2), (3).

Our method of data collection was in the form of free interviews, or rather conversations. The atmosphere was informal, and this put the informants in a mood when they were willing to tell their stories, their family life, and the life of the community as a whole. As we were facing three generations, and experiencing their day to day life in having meals with them and joining them in their prayer sessions, we were able to get a general picture of the history of their settlement in Mecca and the changes that the community had gone through. We are in agreement with Labov when he says,

... one cannot understand the development of a language change apart from the social life of the community in which it occurs. Or to put it another way, social pressures are continually operating upon language, not from some remote point in the past but as an immanent social force acting in the living present. (Labov: 1972: 3)

The topics (1) – (4) above are examined within the theoretical framework of maintenance and shift across the generations.

6. LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE AND SHIFT

Literature on language maintenance has given varying definitions for this phenomenon, which all boil down to the same basic premise, and that is the effort to maintain one's language, whether as part of a community, a country, or a family, in the face of another or others which threaten its existence. Kaplan and Baldauf (1997: 77 - 78) categorizes language maintenance according to the contexts in which it occurs; hence, community language maintenance, and dominant language maintenance. According to them,

On the one hand, when a community language is threatened with extinction, there is an obvious need for language maintenance and, on the other hand, even dominant languages require some effort at maintenance to prevent significant language drift away from the standard model. Language maintenance efforts have been directed at the preservation of a large number of indigenous languages having limited numbers of speakers ...

In the second context, where every language needs to be maintained so as to prevent it from diverging excessively from some mutually agreed upon standard, English provides an apt example.

Maintenance of the Malay language in the Malay community of Mecca falls into the first category. Kaplan and Baldauf focus this category on endangered languages of various parts of the world; hence in their view community language maintenance precedes that of language revival.

Malay is not an endangered language as it is spoken by almost 280 million speakers: in Malaysia (more than 25 million), Indonesia (about 250 million), as well as in Brunei, Southern Thailand and Singapore. If ever there is endangerment of this language in the Malay community in Mecca, it is the decline of the number of speakers owing to the shift to Arabic that is taking place among the third generation. So the question of language revival per se is not relevant here.

In view of the situation in the community concerned, and probably in other communities as well, language maintenance means that there is a conscious effort on the part of the community or even family to keep their primordial language alive within the milieu of another community whose language is used in almost all domains of interaction. This latter community, which we will call the host community, is considered more powerful than others in the same society, and is usually one that is larger in terms of the number of speakers. More significantly this community has an advantage with speaking a language that is given a higher status in the socio-political context in the society or the country concerned.

Just as for language maintenance, scholars have varying explanations on language shift. All agree that there is a movement in the language choice of speakers from one language to the other, due to certain factors. Speech communities which undergo language shift, according to Fishman, are those,

whose native languages are threatened because their intergenerational continuity is progressing negatively, with fewer and fewer users (speakers, writers and even understanders) or uses every generation.” (Fishman 1991: 1)

The above quote from Fishman is relevant to this study which is focused on the intergenerational use of Malay in the Mecca Malay community. What is taking place in this community in terms of shift shows some similarity with that occurring in the Malay community in Australia where the shift from Malay to English begins with the second generation. (Asmah Haji Omar 2008). That is to say, a shift in language use within a community means that the community has adopted or is in the process of adopting another language in place of its original one.

From what is evident in the Malay community in Mecca, the shift can be of two kinds: one is the total displacement of the primordial language; the other is partial displacement. The latter type of displacement means that there are certain domains in the life of the community where the primordial language is maintained, whereas in other domains it is the more powerful language that has taken over. A shift may also be viewed at in temporal terms, i.e. from one generation to the other.

Reversal of shift refers to the reverse process whereby a shift from X to Y reverts to X. The reversal usually occurs after a span of time during which the community, or family, experiences a realization that the learning of their original language is worth reviving for some purpose or other, e.g. the purpose of maintaining an inherited identity. Kaplan and Baldauf (1997), quoting Paulston et al (1993), define reversal of shift as follows:

Language reversal implies the turning around of existing trends in language usage, with the focus on the circumstances in which one language in a state begins to be used more prominently. (Kaplan and Baldauf 1997: 64)

7. LANGUAGE USE ACROSS THREE GENERATIONS IN THE MECCA MALAY COMMUNITY

Hurgronje's observation of the use of language in Mecca among Malays or Jawah took place more than a century before our time. Since then, there have been many significant changes that have taken place both in Mecca as well as in the Malay world.

Mecca has undergone modernization in infrastructure, with modern facilities for pilgrims. Although “Malay faces” are among the most visible there, whether as transient pilgrims or as settlers, Malay is no longer used as a medium of teaching the Holy Sciences in the Great Mosque. There are classes given in the mosque, specifically for the learning the Quran, but the medium is Arabic. There are schools using a uniform curriculum throughout, and universities which use Arabic while English is taught as a foreign language. However, the Malay tongue is still heard all over the place. In fact during the pilgrimage season, Malay is one of the foreign languages used on signages and notice boards, besides English, French, Turkish, Persian, and Urdu. Lately, sermons in the Great Mosque are given simultaneous translations into Malay, English, French and Urdu.

The Malay world has also undergone tremendous change, in various domains. One that has relevance in this study is in the universal use of Malay, not only in social interaction but also as a language of the sciences, including the Holy Science. There are no more “colonies of nationalities” of Hurgronje's time among the Indonesians, as the former insular nationalities have come under one flag, the national flag of the Republic of Indonesia. The Malays referred to by Hurgronje now identify themselves as Malaysian Malays on the one hand, and Indonesians on the other.

In this study, a household is a unit within a community. Hence, investigating language use within a community means getting data on the use of the language concerned by and between members of the same household, as well as between members of different households. For some

of the households visited, there were also visiting members of other households. In such cases we were able to observe their use of language in their interaction with one another. As most households comprise two generations, and some three, we were also able to observe language use in the communication between members across the generations.

The first generation consists of grandmothers and grandfathers in a three-generation household, and father and mother (i.e. husband and wife) in a two-generation household. These are the people who have maintained the use of their primordial language when they interact among themselves. The Malay they use is the dialect of their home milieu whether in Malaysia, Pattani, or Indonesia.

For the grandfathers and the grandmothers, the regional dialect was the only variety of Malay they knew when they left home for Mecca before the Second World War. At that time, the standard Malay as we know today had yet not existed, as the Federation of Malaya had not been formed, and each Malay state in the Malay Peninsula was free to choose whatever form of Malay they called standard. As Malay education at that time was given only at the primary school, the men found an alternative institution for the purpose of continuing their education and that was in the *madrrasah* (Islamic religious school) which provided them with the basics in religious education and the Arabic language. It was when they went to Mecca that they were able to enter Darul 'Ulum (a well-known *madrrasah* established in the 19th century), or study under the tutorship of an *ulama*. Here they improved their proficiency in Arabic, and at the same time maintained their original Malay dialect. Interaction between Malay men from different dialectal regions would not cause a breakdown in communication, which means that one party does not have to accommodate to the other if he does not wish to. Conversation can still be carried on, as the dialects have a common core system, and the differences between Malay dialects mostly lie in the pronunciation of words which speakers of different dialects get used to as the conversation progresses. This is quite a common phenomenon in Malaysia.

The first-generation grandmothers were childbrides when they first landed in Mecca, as it was the tradition of Mecca Malay men to return to the Malay world to get married to their own kind. And usually those they took as brides were of the age 12 to 15 years. This means that if these brides ever went to school, at best they could only reach Standard Three of the Malay primary school in their village. There was not much time for them to learn to use the standard language. The dialect was maintained and enforced when the husband shared the same dialect as them. Arabic, if it became a form of interaction between husband and wife, came much later, through listening to the children and grandchildren, as well as through listening to its use in public places.

It all goes to show that the childbrides did not know a word of Arabic at the time of their marriage. Except for the very few, they never took lessons in the language before going to Mecca and even after settling down there. Being brought up as Muslims and were taught to read the Quran and perform prayers in Arabic, they were able to recognise Arabic words when these were uttered within their hearing. But this does not mean that they were not able to speak the language or understand it when it was spoken to them. In the many years of living in Mecca, they acquired the language as a result of immersion in the speech community concerned.

When the children, the second generation, were growing up and had started going to school, this was the time when the linguistic landscape of the household, and henceforth that of the community, began to change. These children went through a curriculum where Arabic was the medium of instruction, which means that they could acquire the language formally and at the same time use it in their interaction. They soon became Malay-Arabic bilinguals. At home they spoke Malay with their mother, while at school and with peers Arabic was the language of interaction. Once they acquired Arabic, they could use the language when speaking with their father who was already a Malay-Arabic bilingual. Gradually, the household became a bilingual one. This state of affairs had a great effect on the mother, who "picked up" the language through absorption on the home ground and also through interaction with Arab women in the market places.

In our conversations with the former childbrides, who in our study are first-generation grandmothers, they spoke to us in Malay, specifically the dialect of their original village. Each would maintain her original dialect even in an interaction where participants in the conversation

came from different parts of the Malay Peninsula. We were able to witness this situation in gatherings where participants were from Kedah, Kelantan and Pattani. It appears that their children in the second generation, who were brought up in Malay in the early years of their life and managed to maintain the language, spoke Malay of the regional dialect of their parents.⁽⁴⁾

In the homes of the more affluent grandmothers, there were maids of Indonesian origin. Employer and employee would interact in Arabic, although they have a common language, i.e. Malay - the employer using a Malaysian dialect, and the employee the Indonesian variety with features of her own region, Javanese, Madurese, or any other. This situation was seen in two affluent households of two first-generation grandmothers: one from Kelantan, and the other from Kedah. During our visits the employers spoke with us in their own regional Malay dialects, while the maids used the Indonesian variety of Malay (better known as *bahasa Indonesia*). The maid of the Kelantan lady was a Javanese, while that of the Kedah lady was a Madurese. Both maids had been in Mecca for quite sometime.

Using Arabic in the type of interaction mentioned above could have been a matter of convenience. Both of employer and employee have been speaking Arabic for all their years in Mecca, and the domain of use of this language is common to both, i.e. that of cooking and housekeeping. Resorting to Malay in their different regional versions would have caused a confusion in their communication. Bidialectals of Malaysian Malay and *bahasa Indonesia* are all aware that lexical items referring to food (both cooked and uncooked), cooking utensils, and processes of preparing food, as well as articles of furniture and furnishing are not isomorphic between the two varieties of Malay. Arabic is the the solution to having a smooth communication between employer and employee. A most obvious factor for the choice of Arabic lies in the fact that both parties in the interaction know the language well, at least the spoken language of the everyday life. There is also the fact that life in the household has been very much influenced by Arab culture, including the food the family takes everyday and the way the rooms are set up and furnished.

The first-generation fathers and mothers appear to have maintained their regional Malay dialect in the same way as the first-generation grandfathers and grandmothers, i.e. through constant use in the home. Both of them may have been educated at least at the secondary level while still in Malaysia, but the tendency to find a life partner among people of the same dialectal area is a significant factor in the maintenance of their original dialect. This is so even if it happens that the wife has some proficiency in Arabic having been educated at a religious school which taught Arabic, while in Malaysia. It is quite natural for husbands and wives who are bilingual in the same set of languages to have a recourse to their common first language unless the situation requires that they use Arabic.

As for the second generation learning to speak from a monolingual mother, and most probably in a household situation where both parents interact in their first language, the first language that a child of this type of household learns to speak is the first language of the parents, which is the home language. As the Malay families tend to mix among themselves within their community, there is a possibility that the home language, and in this case, Malay, is also the language of interaction between the child and other Malay children of his age and generation. There is also another possibility, and that is when the child finds himself in a circle of children of his age but who are of the third-generation Malay settlers in Mecca. In this case there is a high probability that the Arabic used by his playmates influences his language use, and incipient bilingualism starts to set in. As time goes by, with more input of Arabic into his speech system his acquisition of this second language improves. The result may take the form of a balanced bilingualism, in which both Malay and Arabic are used by the child in his daily life: in the home on the one hand where Malay is the language of interaction, and in his circle of friends on the other where communication is in Arabic.

At the age six, the child starts going to school where only Arabic is used. The child becomes immersed in the language, and in no time he speaks more Arabic than Malay. There may be a probability that in a household where the mother is monolingual, or where the monolingual mother has a low level proficiency in Arabic, Malay is used more than Arabic. In such a case, there is greater longevity for Malay as a home language, and arising from this a stability in the bilingual Malay-Arabic situation.

Malay- Arabic bilingualism in the home is also maintained through a conscious effort on the part of the parents, for some reason or other, as illustrated in the attitude of a Pattani lady informant who was 44 years old at the time of the interview. She had a firm stand on maintaining Malay, specifically the Malay dialect of Pattani. While still in their homeland, she and her husband studied at a village religious school, where they learned Arabic. After their marriage they decided to study religion in Mecca following the footsteps of the husband's sister who had gone there with her husband. Our Pattani informant and her husband had been in the Holy Land for 16 years, and their intention was to stay there for good. They had three children, all born in Mecca, and all attended a private school, where the medium of instruction is Arabic.⁽⁵⁾ However, when they are at home, the language of interaction is Malay. To her, as Malays they should keep the Malay language alive by speaking it at home and at the same time they should be proficient in the language of the host country, Arabic. On the other hand, she did not think there was any necessity for her children to learn to speak Thai, the official language of her native country, because the family had no intention to ever go back to Pattani.

As has been shown earlier in this paper, it was always the husband who first acquired Arabic through religious education in Mecca, while the wife fresh from the Malay world did not have this skill when she first landed in the Holy Land. It took sometime for her to be able to function in this language. It is in such a home situation that Malay-Arabic bilingualism as discussed above is maintained. The obverse of this situation is where only Arabic is spoken as children are brought up in this language from the time they were born. In such a case the mother is usually one who had already learned Arabic in a religious school in Malaysia before joining her husband in Mecca to make their home there. This reflects a conscious effort not in the preservation of the native language, as in the case of the Pattani lady, but in accommodating to the new surrounding and be immersed in the Arabic-speaking milieu.

Informants consisting of third-generation Malay settlers in Mecca are all Arabic-speaking. According to their parents who are second-generation immigrants, the children only understand certain words and simple sentences in Malay. Some of them understand what is being said to them in Malay but are not able to respond in the language; their response in such a situation is in Arabic.

Three members (two boys and one girl, who are already career people) of the third generation (formerly domiciled in Mecca but had moved to Jeddah) said that they could only understand certain words in Malay. They have spoken only Arabic all their life. The two boys work in the business sector, while the girl is a doctor, a graduate of the King Abdul Aziz University, Jeddah. Their father was educated in London specializing in ICT, while another brother was still pursuing an engineering degree in America. What this means is that they have a high level of proficiency in English, and our interviews could run smoothly in this language. While their grandfather who was in his late 80's is a Malay-Arabic bilingual, the grandchildren are Arabic-English bilinguals. The parents, representatives of the second generation, are trilinguals with Malay, Arabic and English.

In the Misfalah section of Mecca, the father of the family whom we visited is a second-generation immigrant. His father, from Kelantan, went to Mecca at the age of 16 to study religion and Arabic in 1940 or 1941 in a Japanese warship, and later got married to a Malay lady also from Kelantan, in Mecca. Our informant grew up in Mecca, but he had not lost the Malay language, specifically the Kelantan dialect, which he acquired from his parents. This shows that the home language at the time of his growing up was the Kelantan Malay dialect. When it was time for him to get married, he went back to Kelantan to look for a suitable candidate, and married her in her hometown in Pangkal Kalang, Kelantan before taking her to Mecca with him. She was educated in an Arabic school in Kelantan and communication in her adopted land had never been a problem with her from the beginning. The couple (the husband was 48 years old at the time of our meeting, and the wife in her late 30's) had six children (five boys, and the youngest is a girl), and the language of the home is Arabic. The children knew a few words of Malay and could understand simple sentences, but no more. The youngest boy, who was about 11 years old could only utter a few words, like *duduk* (sit), *bangun* (get up), *jalan* (walk), *masuk* (enter). The third son, worked in the management office of a hotel within the vicinity, and conversed with us in English.

The third generation of the Malay settlers we met are in their 30's and below. This means that they had attended school using Arabic from when they were still very young. In the school they mingled not only with Arab children but also children from other groups of foreigners who have made Mecca their home. So the only form of verbal communication that school children are nurtured in is Arabic. Here one sees the occurrence of a total shift to Arabic among most of the third-generation Malays, such that Arabic has become their mother tongue, which means that this is also their home language. As for their parents, Malay is the primary language which is used in the home and in most other situations within the community, but at the same time Arabic is also used in interaction with their Arabic-speaking children at home. In this situation there appears to be the process of adopting Arabic as a home language.

The dominance of Arabic in the life of third-generation Malays in Mecca has influenced their perception of themselves. When asked whether they considered themselves Malays or Arabs, their response came most promptly that they were Arabs. And some of the boys said they would choose a wife from among Arab girls. This attitude is different from the second-generation Malays, and more so the first generation, who purposely went back to Malaysia to get a Malay wife, and who still consider themselves Malays.

8. REVERSAL OF SHIFT

Lately, there appears to be an interest among parents to send their children back to Malaysia to attend school there, and to continue their study in Malaysian universities. Schools in Malaysia abide by the national language policy which stipulates that the main medium of instruction is Malay, and this policy extends to the university. This means that Malay students from Mecca wishing to study in Malaysia have to use the language of their grandfathers and grandmothers. Here comes the reversal of shift back to Malay. However, with these students the language that they have been using since their childhood through education and immersion in society, i.e. Arabic, is not lost. But at the same time we can say that they have to revitalise themselves in their ancestral language for the purpose of studying in Malaysia.

Reversal to Malay does not mean loss of Arabic. If these students decide to stay in Malaysia and make the country of their ancestors a permanent home, Arabic will not suffer a loss among them. However, the situation may not be the same with their children who will grow up in a society where Malay is the national and official language and English is the second language. As there are government schools which teach Arabic as a second language, and Arabic studies departments in local universities, besides the International Islamic University where Arabic is used as a medium of instruction, there will be hope for their children should they decide that Arabic be maintained as one of the languages spoken in the family.

Reversal of shift as mentioned above is due to a situation whereby Malays in Mecca find themselves in an unstable position concerning their residence in the Holy City. Families who have chosen for their children an education in Malaysia are those who have not been able to get a permanent residence in Saudi Arabia, let alone a Saudi citizenship. This is despite them being there for decades on end. Foreigners, including Malays, who migrated to the Holy City during the reign of King Faisal could easily get a citizenship, because during that time the population of Mecca was still small, and the city needed foreigners for certain jobs. The policy changed during the rule of King Fahd, when the award of citizenship to foreigners became more stringent. The select category to get this privilege comprises doctors and engineers, who are most needed for the development of the Holy City and the country as a whole.

9. FINDINGS

Five separate strands in language use in the Mecca Malay community can be identified. These are:

- (1) Maintenance of Malay
- (2) Loss of Malay
- (3) Shift to Arabic
- (4) Adoption of English
- (5) Reversal to Malay

In considering the intergenerational use of language, each of these strands, which may be interpreted as processes, does not occur by itself within its own time frame. Language maintenance persists at the same time as its loss is taking place, which means that each process is determined by the social factors affecting different sections or generations of the community.

The maintenance of Malay has been possible even as the shift to Arabic is going on. Social factors affecting the families in different ways, attitude as far as the original homeland is concerned, and constant contact with families in the homeland through visits both ways have kept the use of Malay alive among members of the different generations, especially the first and the second. Language maintenance that surfaces in this community is the type that Kaplan and Baldauf categorize as “community language maintenance”, and community language in this context is Malay, the primordial language, with its regional varieties. There is no concern among speakers to accommodate for the purpose of having a single common variety in their intergroup communication.

While the Malays learn and adopt Arabic in order to live in Mecca, they also learn English in the school as a language of worldly knowledge and of commerce. Acquisition of this language only affects the present third generation, and it will not affect the Mecca Malay community much except for those who venture to live and work outside the Holy City. In reference to Labov, as quoted in a previous page, the changes that have taken and are taking place in the Mecca Malay community are due to the fact that “social pressures are continually operating upon language, not from some remote point in the past but as an immanent social force acting in the living present”.

10. CONCLUSION

Malay language use in the Mecca Malay community of today is confined to members of the community itself. One hears Malay spoken in the market places and the mosques, but it is between pilgrims from the Malay world, and between these and the vendors. In the latter situation the language is in the form of minimal and simple sentences in buying and selling. The situation of the 19th century in which Malay was also a medium of instruction of the Holy Sciences as described by Snouck Hurgronje had all gone with the passing of time brought about by social changes in Mecca as well as in the Malay world.

Language use seems to differ from one generation to the other, and also from family to family according to their attitude in maintaining their native heritage, and their eagerness to be part of the Arabic-speaking community. Language use appears to influence speakers' identification of themselves, as seen in the Arabic-speaking third generation referring to themselves as Arabs, while the first and the second still consider themselves as Malays.

Notes

- (1) This paper is based on data collected in a fieldwork in Mecca undertaken by the writer in January-February 2014. I wish to record my gratitude to friends in the field; they are Kamila Ghazali, Faridah Noor Mohd. Noor, Muhammad Seman and Mat Taib Pa, all of whom are staff of the University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur.
- (2) The other four pillars are: (i) the *shahadah*, i.e. declaration of belief that there is no other God but Allah, and Muhammad is his Prophet; (ii) performance of prayers five times a day; (iii) fasting in the month of Ramadhan; (iv) giving of *zakat* (tithe) of one's savings and property.
- (3) This is a reprint of the original text which was first published by E. J. Brill, Leiden and Luzac & Co., London in 1931.
- (4) From information given by students of the International Islamic University, Malaysia, students of Malay origin from Arabia are able to speak Malay, but only in a dialectal form - Kedah, Kelantan etc. In the early years of their stay in Malaysia they could not speak standard Malay. This is proof that they were brought up by their mothers, or grandmothers, using the dialect of their original hometown.

- (5) All private schools in Mecca have the same curriculum as government schools. The only difference is that education is free in government schools, whereas high fees are charged in private schools.

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