An Aspectual System in Language Shift: A Case Study of Baba Malay
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1 Introduction*

The Baba Malay aspectual system was developed in the process of language shift, in the course of which Hokkien speakers shifted to Malay. This paper provides an analysis of the Baba Malay aspectual system, compares it with the aspectual systems found in Hokkien (the language shifted from) and Malay (the language shifted to), and looks at the implications of the findings for the study of language shift.

In this paper, the Baba Malay aspectual system is analyzed as a discourse-related phenomenon, one in which aspectual markers correlate with the discourse structure of the narrative. The theoretical framework for the analysis of the discourse structure adopted here is that of Labov and Waletzky (1967). Within their framework events are divided into foregrounded events and backgrounded events. The foregrounded events report what happened next in the story. The backgrounded events report other information, most of which is typically useful for understanding the narrative. In order to understand a narrative, it is crucial for the reader (or the listener) to be able to keep track of which events are foregrounded and which are backgrounded. In Baba Malay, the aspectual system is central to differentiating between events in the foreground and events in the background.

This study shows that the Baba Malay aspectual system consistently uses two overtly-marked aspectual categories — the progressive and the perfect. The progressive encodes the reported event as ongoing and thus incomplete. The perfect encodes "result, current relevance, completion" (Brinton 1988:7). The perfect has to be differentiated from the perfective as both terms deal with different aspectual distinctions. Thus, while the perfect tells us nothing directly about the event itself, but rather relates it to other events (Comrie 1976:52), the perfective tells us a lot about the event itself by marking it as a completed event, "with beginning, middle, and end" (Comrie 1976:18).
1.1 Database

The database for this study consists of five narrative stories published in the Baba Malay daily newspaper Bintang Timor between July 27, 1894 and April 11, 1895. These stories are: (1) Cherita dua orang adek beradek (CDO) 'The story of two siblings', (2) Cherita deri hal mak tiri dengan anak tininya (CDHMT) 'A story about a stepmother and her stepchild', (3) Orang miskin yang datang ka Singapura (OM) 'Poor people who come to Singapore', (4) Putri yang chinta bapanya sperri garam (PYC) 'About the princess who loved her father like salt', and, (5) Smoapun baikjikalau penghabisannya baik (SPB) 'All's well that ends well'. These narratives constitute a database of over 10,000 words. The database also includes a collection of dialogues titled A manual of the Malay colloquial, such as is spoken by all nationalities in the Colonies of the Straits Settlements, and designed for domestic and business purpose by Lim Hiong Seng (1887).

The Baba Malay database is compared with Malay of the same century, including the descriptions of two prominent nineteenth century grammarians, Marsden (1812) and Crawfurud (1852). Further, the Baba Malay aspectual system is compared to the aspectual system of Hokkien, as described in Bodman (1955).

2 Tense and the Two Time Axes

In Baba Malay (and in Malay), overall temporal settings are established lexically through the use of such phrases as waktu jam pukol 7 'at 7:00', pada hari itu 'on that day', or kumdian 'then'. Once a time axis is established, it remains until a new time axis is established.

Events may be reported on the past time axis or on the present time axis. Events reported on the past time axis are either reported in the sequence of occurrence, out of sequence, or as overlapping with other events. Events reported on the present time axis are reported as ongoing. Additionally, a prior event may be related to the present, just as a present event may be related to the future.

3 Chronological Events and Perfectivity

In narratives, the unmarked order for reporting events is in the order they occurred. In Baba Malay, if the chronological order is followed, no aspectual marking is needed to keep track of the event sequence. As an illustration, see example (1).

(1) dan pintu itu pun terbuka, lalu rusa ini masok
and door that also TER-open then deer this enter
and the door opened, the deer entered,
dan pintu itu tertutup kembali.
and door that TER-close return
and the door closed again.' (CDO:152-154)

In (1), the events are reported in chronological order; the first event is reported first, the second event is reported second, and so on. Additionally, each of the events is reported as "a single, unanalyzable whole, with beginning, middle, and end rolled into one" (Comrie 1976:3). In other words, these events are reported as if each one of them were over and done with before the next one occurred. That is, they are reported 'perfectively'. This perfective interpretation of foregrounded events is the normal interpretation in discourse (Hopper and Thompson 1980:286).

As long as the narrative events are reported chronologically and perfectively, no aspectual marking is necessary. However, not all events are reported like that, and those that do not follow this convention require some aspectual marking. In Baba Malay, there are two kinds of aspectual marking — one that marks the event as ongoing and overlapping with some other events (the progressive aspect), and the other that marks the event as not being reported in its chronological order (the perfect).

4 The Progressive Aspect

In Baba Malay, an ongoing event that overlaps with other events is marked for the progressive aspect by ada. As an illustration, consider the passage in (2), which constitutes the continuation of the passage in (1). (2) Maka orang memburu itu ada peratikan baik baik perbuatan
then person MENG-hunt that ADA observe-KAN good good action
The hunter was carefully observing all the actions of
rusa ini smoaa, serta lari-LAH dia kepada raja-nya...
deer this all along with run-LAH 3s to king-NYA
the deer; then he ran to the king... ' (CDO:155-156)

In (2), the first event peratikan 'observe' is marked by ada as overlapping with the events reported in (1). The next event lari 'run', in turn, as a non-overlapping, perfective event, is not marked at all.
Figure 1 represents the events in passage (1-2). Note that the first three events are presented one after another, iconically – that is, in the temporal order in which they occurred. The next event presented, the observing of the hunter, is not the next event to happen, but instead it overlaps with the three events just reported; thus, it is presented to the side. The fifth event, like the first three, is again reported in the order of occurrence and is unmarked.

Figure 1. In-sequence events and overlapping events on the past time axis

In Baba Malay, very much as in English (G. Thurgood 1990:296), events on the past time axis are reported as progressive when they overlap with other events. In my data, there are no examples of foregrounded events marked as progressive that do not overlap with another event. However, with backgrounded events on the past time axis, ada forms may be used to report events that are both habitual and in progress. Comrie (1976:33) observes that “a given situation can be viewed both as habitual, and as progressive, i.e., each individual occurrence of the situation is presented as being progressive, and the sum total of all these occurrences is presented as being habitual (the habitual of a progressive).” In the following example, the event is marked as progressive by ada and as habitual by an adverb phrase.

(3) dan sahari malam begini-lah macham semangat permesuri ini and one-day evening in this way-LAH kind spirit of life queen this 'and every evening in this way the spirit of the queen
datang kepada anak-nya dan rusa-nya, tetapi semangat ini come to child-NYA and deer-NYA but spirit of life this came to the child and the deer, but the spirit
ta'perna bertutor spata pun kepada mak tiri-nya (si baboo tua itu). not ever speak a word also to mother step-NYA SI domestic old that never even spoke a word to the stepmother (the old nurse).
Maka si perampuan tua ini pun ada tengok after that SI woman old this also ADA look
Then the old woman also saw
semangat itu sahari malam datang, spirit of life that one-day evening come the spirit come every evening.' (CDO:299-300)

In (3), only the verb of perception tengok is in the progressive form. The habitual character of the reported event is coded by the adverbial phrase sahari malam ‘every evening’. Here is yet another example:

(4) mak bapa dan saudaranya smoa pulang kerumahnya, tetapi mother father and relative-NYA all return home to-house-NYA but 'the parents and relatives returned home to their houses, but
krap kali mak bapanya ada datang tengok anak menantunya. often times mother father-NYA ADA come look child son-in-law-NYA the parents often come to visit their son-in-law.' (PYC:419-420)

In example (4), as in example (3), it is again the cluster of two features that marks the events as progressive and habitual. It is the presence of ada, and it is the presence of the adverbial phrase krap kali reporting the frequency.

Examples (3-4) contrast with example (5).

(5) rusa ini slalu makan rumput di tangan adek-nya. deer this always eat grass at hand sibling-NYA 'The deer always ate grass from the hand of his sister.' (CDO:93)
In (5), the eating of the grass is reported as habitual and each individual occurrence of the event is presented as being perfective in contrast to (3-4), where each individual occurrence of the event is presented as in progress.

Of course, events may also be marked as progressive, not by ada, but by adverbial phrases such as spanjang waktu ‘for a long time’.

(6) kumdian ini tujoh dewa kechil mandilah, dan siser afterwards this seven deity small bathe-LAH and comb afterwards these seven deities bathed, and combed

diaorang punya rambut, pakai diaorang punya pakaian yang chantek, 3p have hair wear 3p have clothes that beautiful their hair, put on their beautiful clothes
dan kasot yang bagus, tetapi spanjang waktu diaorang ber-hias, and shoe that fine but one-long time they BER-decorate and fine shoes, but for the whole time they were beautifying themselves,
si Putri ini ada menansis sahja, kumdian diaorang ambillah. dan banyaklah suka hatinya. sebab dia sudah dapat itu kepok, the princess this ADA MENG-cry only afterwards they take one chair the princess was just crying, then they took one chair

letkkan diluar khemah itu suruh si Putri dudok. put -KAN in-outside tent that order SI princess sit and put it outside the tent and ordered the princess to sit down.’

(PYC:266-273)

In (6), spanjang waktu ‘for a long time’ marks the event of beautifying as overlapping with something else, just as ada marks the event of crying as overlapping with something else.

5 Out-of-sequence Events and the Perfect

In contrast to the foregrounded events, backgrounded events do not tell us what happened next in the story. More importantly in this context, backgrounded events are usually presented out of chronological order. Since they are frequently reported out of chronological order, they have to be overtly marked. In Baba Malay, out-of-sequence events are often marked by either sudah or telah.

(7) dan raja kasihlah kapada dia itu kepok yang dia mahu, maka dia and king give-LAH to 3s that box that 3s want then 3s ‘and the king gave her the box that she wanted, then she took it,' ambillah. dan banyaklah suka hatinya. sebab dia sudah dapat itu kepok. take-LAH and many-LAH joy liver-NYA reason 3s SUDAH get that box and she was very happy, because she had got the box.’ (PYC:244-247)

In (7), the event of the king giving the box to his wife is reported at the beginning of this passage. At the end of the passage getting the box is again reported. The report about getting the box is clearly not the next event in the sequence; it has already happened earlier. This lack of chronology is marked by sudah, which marks the event as having occurred earlier than it is actually reported.

Like sudah, telah also marks the event as being out of sequence.

(8) Pada suatu hari raja didalam negri itu datang memburu, dan orang on one day king at-inside country that come MENG-hunt and person ‘One day the king of that country came to hunt, and his pemburu-nya smoa tiop-lah itu tandok. serta anjing anjing-nya pun hunter -NYA all blow-LAH that horn while dog dog-NYA also

menyalak-lah. lalu bergaong-lah dan rioh skali bunyi-nya didalam bark-LAH then echo-LAH and noisy very sound-NYA at-inside

descendants jungle. Maka rusa ini telah dengar swara swara yang begitu gadoh The deer had heard the voices which were arguing ’’ (CDO:98-102)

Long before it is reported in the narrative (in 8), the deer had heard the voices in

the jungle.

Malay constitutes the obvious source of the Baba Malay system of aspectual markers. Baba Malay telah and sudah function in the same way in Malay. Crawfurd (1852:48) gives the following example of lelah that he refers to as the auxiliary of the past time.

(9) Maka didangar Chandra biduwan. itupun chuchor then di-hear Chandra singer that-PUN flow ‘It was heard by Chandra, the public singer, and thereupon

ayar-matana, tarkanang suwamina yang talah mati. water-eye-NYA A ter-know husband-NYA that TELAH dead/m (Crawfurd 1852:49)
Although Crawfurd (1852) does not comment, his examples make it clear that he is aware of the aspectual function of telah. Within the framework adopted here, it can be said that in (9) the clause with telah relates the earlier event of dying to the event of crying, which is on the main storyline.

For the Baba speakers, the Malay perfect was a new aspectual distinction. Hokkien, the language they shifted from, has a different aspectual distinction. It marks the perfective. The marker of the perfective is liāu (Bodman, 1955:203).

When shifting to Malay, the Baba speakers learned not only a new aspectual distinction, but also a new word order. In Hokkien, the aspectual marker follows the verb. In Baba Malay, however, as in Malay, the aspectual marker always precedes the verb.

5.1 Aspectual markers related to a time axis

In Baba Malay, telah and sudah are not the only aspectual markers relating events to a time axis. Some of the other markers with aspectual meaning are bāhrū, and the aspectual combination telah ada. These markers occur in passage (13). The past time reference was established earlier (passage 12).

In example (13), the three events reported out of sequence are bāhrū ‘return’, dapat tahu ‘learn’ and datang ‘come’. Although these events are out of sequence, information about their relationship to the past time axis and thus to their chronological order is indicated by three different aspectual markers — telah ada, sudah, and bāhrū. Telah ada marks datang ‘come’ as past perfect and, in this sequence, the first chronological event; sudah marks bāhrū ‘return’ as perfect, and, in this sequence, the second event; and, bāhrū, best translated into English as ‘just a short while earlier’, marks dapat tahu ‘learn’ as a more recent past event. On the past time axis, the three degrees of relative prior time reference may be represented as in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Telah ada</th>
<th>Suhud, Telah</th>
<th>Bāhrū</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>past perfect</td>
<td>perfect</td>
<td>‘lit. newly; recently’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>distant</td>
<td>unmarked</td>
<td>immediate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 shows the three degrees of perfect meaning -- that is, of relative prior time reference.

5.2 The clarification of sequencing: apabila clauses

Besides marking events as out of sequence, aspectual markers may also be used to mark events as sequential when otherwise this would not be clear. This function of aspectual markers may be observed in apabila clauses. The reason for using telah or sudah in apabila clauses is that the conjunction apabila ‘when’ by itself does not signal whether two events overlapped or occurred sequentially.

In (14), it is not clear whether the two events of the fiancé’s opening the door and the fiancée’s speaking (dia berkata) are overlapping or sequential. However, this ambiguity is resolved if one of the events is overtly marked as having occurred before the other event.

In (15), it is not clear whether the two events of the fiancée’s opening the door and the fiancée’s speaking (dia berkata) are overlapping or sequential. However, this ambiguity is resolved if one of the events is overtly marked as having occurred before the other event.
When the king had heard the words of the old servant, he said, ...

In examples (15-16), sudah and telah are used, not because something is reported out of sequence, but because otherwise it is unclear whether the events are overlapping or sequential. Thus, sudah and telah mark the sequentiality of the reported events.

6 The Present Time Axis

Although narratives are usually told on the past time axis, other kinds of discourse may use the present time axis. The present time axis usually characterizes the time of the speech situation. In Baba Malay, the present time axis event, if in progress, is reported with ada.

In Lim's (1887) colloquial Baba Malay, ada also marks the progressive aspect. For example:

In (17) apa-kah rumah rumah sakit (hospital) ada buat?

What are hospitals doing about it?" (OM:13)

In (18) dia ada smo-nyet di Singapura jugah.

He is hiding himself in Singapore

dia blom lari lagi peggi laen neggni.

He has not yet run to any other country.

In contrast to Baba Malay where only ada marks an event in progress, nineteenth century Malay has more aspectual markers reporting events in progress. Crawfurd's (1852:51) list includes the following: sdraya, sddang-lagi, sddang, sdrta and sdldng. However, he does not mention ada. In contrast, Marsden (1812) records ada as a progressive marker when he calls the ada forms present participles. Marsden (1812:77-79) gives the following forms as examples:

(19) ada tidor

 Ada sleep

He also gives the following clause as an example:

(20) ada samun

'is robbing'

Clearly, nineteenth century Malay ada functions as a progressive marker, but for some reason it is not recorded by Crawfurd (1852). More studies of early modern Malay are needed before it is possible to reconcile this discrepancy.

In Hokkien, the equivalent construction is formed with téq. Bodman (1955:118) says that téq usually occurs before the verb, but it "appears after certain verbs indicating a continuing or unchanging state". As an illustration, compare examples (22) and (23).

In (22) téq occurs in front of the verb; in (23) it occurs after the verb.

6.1 Present perfect

A particular event may be reported as having occurred in the past but as being relevant to the present time axis. A past event, if relevant to the present time axis, is reported with either sudah or telah.

(24) Siapa yang sudah chabot jarom jarom itu deri sahya punya badan?

Who that SUDAH pluck needle needle that from Is have body

Who has plucked the needles from my body?" (PYC:107)

Question (24) is uttered by the king, who realizes that he has woken up because somebody plucked the needles from his body. He says later:

(25) Sahya sudah tidor dua bias tahun, skarang sahya bangun

I have slept twelve years, now I get up' (PYC:188-189)
In examples (24-25), sudah indicates what Comrie (1976:60) ascribes to perfect—namely, “the continuing present relevance of a past situation.”

In Baba Malay, not only sudah, but also telah relates the past event to the present time axis.

(26) Maka suatu surat khabar di Singapura telah dapat kenyataan adapun
A newspaper in Singapore has received a notice that
banyak orang orang miskin datang ka Singapura deri
many people poor come to Singapore from
lain lain tempat, dan bawa dengan dia-orang penyakit
other other places, and bring with them disease ...

In (26), the event of having received the information about a lot of people coming to Singapore with different kinds of diseases is related to the present time axis.

As a marker of the perfect aspect, sudah may also be used to code an event that started in the past and continues until the present.

(27) Ini surat gade ini hari sudah chikop tempu,
This mortgage deed is due today,
kepalanya tetapi baik baik,
her head taking care of her very well,' (CDHMT:17-18)

The event reported in (27) is marked by sudah as past, but relevant to the present situation.

6.2 Events ahead of the present

From the present time axis, it is also possible to refer to a future time.

(28) dan skarang malam bila dia tidor sahya nanti datang penggal
and now evening when 3s sleep later come break off
kepalanya tetapi jaga baik baik,
her head taking care of her very well,' (CDHMT:17-18)

In (28), the event reported by the temporal clause bila dia tidor ‘when she is asleep’ is not specified for futurity, but the following event is specified as the future event by nanti. In Baba Malay, as in Malay, nanti marks the event for a later time, but within a particular day (Mintz 1994:308).

To conclude, from the present time axis, Baba Malay aspectual markers (1) relate a past event to the present time (with sudah, telah), (2) mark an event as in progress (with ada), (3) relate an event that has just happened with bahru, and, (4) relate an event that is about to happen (with nanti) -- that is, one that will happen at a point in time just ahead of the present. These aspectual markers are represented in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Aspectual markers on the present time axis

| sudah, telah | bahru |
| perfect | imperfect (recent) |
| ada | nanti |
| progressive | near future (recent) |
| a prior event related to the present | event just completed | ongoing event | event just ahead |

7 Conclusions

The Baba Malay aspectual system has been analyzed as a discourse related phenomenon, one in which aspectual markers correlate with the narrative discourse structure. In this analysis, the function of the aspectual system has also been correlated with two time axes — the past time axis and the present time axis. The aspectual functions of such markers as sudah, telah, and ada interact with foregrounding, backgrounding, and the time axis. In a narrative with a past time axis, sudah and telah mark events as occurring out of sequence or, more rarely, as sequential rather than overlapping, while ada marks events as overlapping with other events. In a speech situation on the present time axis, ada marks events as ongoing and sudah and telah mark past events as relevant to the present. Besides sudah, telah, and ada, Baba Malay has other aspectual markers, such as nanti or bahru, and the aspectual combination telah ada.

Malay constitutes the obvious source of the Baba Malay aspectual system. However, in the Baba Malay system several modifications have been made. First, ada is apparently far more common in Baba Malay than it was in contemporary Malay. Second, Malay has other aspectual markers that Baba Malay lacks. Third, the combination telah ada occurs in Baba Malay, but is not reported in the grammars by Marsden (1812) and Crawfurd (1852).

Although Malay constitutes the primary source of the Baba Malay aspectual
system, it is possible that at the end of the nineteenth century the English known by many Baba Malay speakers reinforced the Malay system as learned by the Babas. The English aspectual system has the same aspectual categories: the progressive and the perfect.

The aspectual system of Hokkien, the language that the Babas shifted from, might have reinforced the Baba Malay progressive aspect, but not the perfect. From the perfective used in Hokkien, the Baba speakers shifted to a new aspectual distinction — the perfect.

Notes

*I am grateful to Graham Thurgood and Ricky Jacobs for their feedback.

†The following abbreviations are used in English glosses:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
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<tr>
<td>CL</td>
<td>classifier</td>
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<tr>
<td>EMPH</td>
<td>emphatic particle</td>
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<td>negative particle</td>
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