

BABA MALAY: THE LANGUAGE OF THE 'STRAITS-BORN' CHINESE

Sonny Lim

1. INTRODUCTION

This investigation of Baba Malay was carried out in Malacca and based on approximately 15 hours of recorded speech from a total of 25 informants ranging in age from 18 to 85. The chief method used to elicit speech samples from them was to invite them to talk about aspects of their unique culture, such as their cuisine, their marriage, birth and funeral ceremonies, the impact of modern changes on their traditions and on their personal lives. No difficulties were encountered in eliciting samples of Baba Malay. Generally, native speakers of Baba Malay were enlisted to conduct the interviews in my presence, but on the occasions when these assistants were unavailable, I conducted the interviews myself. My less-than-fluent Baba Malay proved to be no hindrance as a few carefully chosen questions were enough to inspire my informants to talk at great length.

It will be observed from the linguistic illustrations used in the following pages that English words are frequently used by my informants. This is because until recently nearly all 'Straits-born' Chinese, if they received any education, were educated in English. That is to say, they went to schools which offered English as the medium of instruction. If they formally studied Standard Malay at all, they studied it as a second language at school. Recent changes in educational policy in Malaysia will mean that the present generation of Straits-born Chinese, or Baba Chinese as they are often referred to, like every other ethnic group in Malaysia, will be educated primarily in Standard Malay.

In addition to Baba Malay, speech samples of Chitty-Indian Malay and the Malay of a Malaccan Portuguese and a non-Baba Chinese were also recorded for the purposes of comparison. Each of these represented a major non-Malay ethnic group found in Malacca, and a comparison of the three varieties of 'reduced Malay' spoken by them with Baba Malay was an aid in placing Baba Malay in perspective with other varieties of 'reduced Malay' in Malacca.

While this investigation may offer linguistic insights into Baba Malay, it is not meant as an exhaustive description of the language. Its primary aim where a linguistic description is concerned is to point out the distinguishing features of Baba Malay and to relate them where appropriate to the two source-languages, Hokkien and Malay. It has also to be noted that no attempt has been made to frame the linguistic description within any specific current linguistic theory as it is felt that much of the theoretical discussion still remains unsettled. In any case, it was felt that linguistic enquiry may still

proceed profitably independent of the dictates of specified theoretical frameworks, and that concern with any particular linguistic framework is of less importance for our purposes than seeing which of the insights offered by recent linguistic research best explain or describe the specific linguistic phenomenon under scrutiny. Thus, the linguistic approach used in the following pages lies well within the theoretical domain of general linguistics even though it avoids adherence to any one linguistic theory.

For the sake of convenience and simplicity, an orthographic system has been devised for Baba Malay, which, being an oral, uncodified language, currently has no written form. This seemed preferable to the alternative of a phonetic transcription because, quite apart from its inconvenience, the focus in this investigation is essentially on the syntactic structure of Baba Malay rather than on its phonological structure. The orthographic system used for Baba Malay has been guided by the Standard Malay system for the purpose of easy cross-reference. The table below sets out the system.

Baba Malay orthographic system						
	SOUND	SYMBOL	SOUND	SYMBOL	SOUND	SYMBOL
CONSONANTS	/p/	p	/tʃ/	c	/r/	r
	/t/	t	/dʒ/	j	/w/	w
	/k/	k	/s/	s	/m/	m
	/b/	b	/h/	h	/n/	n
	/d/	d	/l/	l	/ɲ/	ny
	/g/	g	/j/	y	/ŋ/	ng
VOWELS	/i/	i				
	/e/	e	/ɛ/	ɛ	/o/	o
	/ə/	ë	/a/	a	/u/	u

It should be noted that because an orthographic system has been used for Baba Malay throughout these pages, any peculiarities of individual pronunciation of the informants are not revealed, nor are the ellisions and contractions of natural speech. Thus, for example, *punya* is usually pronounced [pia] or [mia], and *sêmua* is pronounced [smua]. The policy being followed is that for the sake of easy recognition, the existing Malay spelling of words should be retained unless the Baba Malay pronunciation is so distinctively and consistently different from that suggested by the Malay orthography and it does not permit the variant pronunciation suggested by that orthography. Thus, Baba Malay has *bole*, *mintak*, *pigi* and *pake* where Malay has *boleh*, *mintak*, *pergi* and *pakai*. On the other hand, a word such as *tahun* is always pronounced [taun] in Malay, with a silent 'h', and this spelling has also been adopted for Baba Malay in which the 'h' is also not sounded.

The spelling of Hokkien words follows, with modifications, the system of romanisation used by Chiang Ker-Chiu in his *A Practical English-Hokkien dictionary*. The system is as follows:

Hokkien orthographic system						
	SOUND	SYMBOL	SOUND	SYMBOL	SOUND	SYMBOL
CONSONANTS	/p/	p	/p ^h /	ph	/s/	s
	/t/	t	/t ^h /	th	/h/	h
	/k/	k	/k ^h /	kh	/m/	m
	/b/	b	/ts/	ch	/n/	n
	/d/	d	/ts ^h /	chh	/ŋ/	ng
	/g/	g	/dʒ/	j	/l/	l
	/ʔ/	ʔ				
VOWELS	/i/, /ĩ/	i, ĩ	/a/, /ã/	a, ã	/o/, /õ/	o, õ
	/e/, /ẽ/	e, ẽ	/ɔ/, /õ/	ɔ, õ	/u/, /ũ/	u, ũ
TONES	1st tone	upper even		unmarked		
	2nd tone	upper		'		
	3rd tone	upper departing		`		
	4th tone	upper entering		unmarked		
	5th tone	lower even		^		
	6th tone	upper		'		
	7th tone	lower departing		—		
	8th tone	lower entering		l		

1.1 Baba Malay and the question of pidgins and creoles

'Baba Malay' is the name given to the native language of a community of people in Malaysia and Singapore who are commonly referred to as the 'Babas' or 'Straits-born Chinese'. The Straits-born Chinese are the descendants of the earliest Chinese settlers in the Malay peninsula who arrived there primarily from the southern Chinese province of Fukien long before the period of mass emigration from China (i.e. the latter half of the 19th century) which was to result in the present ethnic Chinese composition of the region. The first major Chinese settlements were in Malacca, though after the foundation of the ports of Penang and Singapore in the years 1786 and 1819 respectively, both these islands also saw major Chinese settlement. Together, Malacca, Penang and Singapore, all found along the important narrow strip of seaway known as the Straits of Malacca, make up, along with Labuan, the 'British Straits Settlements'; hence the source of the initially somewhat enigmatic designation 'Straits-born' to these Chinese immigrants.

Today, the most concentrated pocket of Straits-born Chinese or Babas in the Malay peninsula is to be found in Malacca, the smallest of the 11 states that make up the nation of Malaysia. In all other places, the Baba is hard to pick out from the rest of the community, having been greatly outnumbered by the non-Straits-born Chinese who, taken together, comprise some 40% of the population of Malaysia, and are the second largest ethnic group in the country. The present numbers of the Babas, however, cannot be gauged. Even apart from the fact that they are officially designated 'Chinese' for all purposes (they are so in the national census), continual marriage with other Chinese means that the boundaries for such terms as 'Baba' and 'Chinese' have become rather nebulous. It is only in a place such as Malacca, regarded by many Straits-born Chinese as the ancestral homeland of the Baba, that the Baba community has been close-knit enough to maintain its identity more successfully. The distinctness of the Baba identity there is plainly evident: the style of dress favoured by the women, the forms of jewellery, the distinctive cuisine, the customs and rites, the traditions, all are neither strictly Chinese nor Malay, but an interesting and unique blend of both.

Although the Baba is descended from the first Chinese settlers, he is not a 'Baba' by virtue of this fact alone. Another, and more significant defining feature of this designation is the fact that he has mixed Chinese-Malay ancestry, a consequence of the fact that the immigration of Chinese women took place much later than the immigration of Chinese men. The first Chinese settlers were, in fact, all males who, in the absence of Chinese women, married local Malay women. It is out of this inter-racial background that the language of the Baba Chinese developed.

The language of the Baba Chinese, popularly known as 'Baba Malay', therefore has its basis in the two relevant languages, Malay and Hokkien-Chinese, the latter because the first Chinese immigrants were in fact predominantly from the Hokkien-speaking province of Fukien in southern China. The fact that Baba Malay has its basis in both these two languages is not immediately obvious. The language appears, apart from the obvious Hokkien loan words, to be simply a reduced form of Malay, having undergone the process of 'simplification' in the Hymesian sense (i.e. reduction in the complexity of the outer form - Hymes 1971:65-85), which is one of the three parameters along which Hymes proposed to define the processes of pidginisation and creolisation. However, when the pidginisation/creolisation process can be defined along another parameter, that presented by the notion of 'convergence', the influence of Hokkien will be seen to be greater than is initially apparent.

Baba Malay is essentially the Malay language pared down to the minimum, with the expected morphological and some syntactical features of Malay altered or missing, and with radically modified phonology. Affixation, for instance, a feature of Malay, is not a systematic process in Baba Malay, so that affixes are either not analysed as separate morphological entities at all, or are used in a way that is idiosyncratic and not associated with speakers of Malay (e.g. *ketawa-kan* to *laugh*, has a suffix, *-kan*, the presence of which would not be acceptable to a speaker of Malay). In addition, there are many examples of the process of semantic neutralisation that is frequently associated with pidgin and creole languages, such as the neutralisation of the inclusive-exclusive distinction of *kita* and *kami* (1st person plural pronoun) and the human-nonhuman distinction of *laki-laki* and *jantan* *male* found in Malay. Semantic extensions, as represented by the extension of the word *banyak* *many* to fulfil the function of an adjectival intensifier *very*, are also a feature of Baba Malay. To the

non-linguist, the overall impression is that of a vulgar and 'market-place' language whose chief virtue is that from time to time its peculiarities do provide moments of mirth. To the linguist, however, these impressions are familiar enough; they are encountered wherever any kind of proximity between a 'pidginised' variety and its source language is found. And the term 'pidginised' does spring immediately to the mind because it is a readily accessible and convenient one.

However, the use of such a readily-accessible term does nothing in the way of providing definitions, for to the linguist confronted with a linguistic variety of the type exemplified by Baba Malay, the ability to characterise it precisely in linguistic terms is of some theoretical importance. It certainly demands an adequate description. In this particular case, reaching out for the established labels is a natural response to the demand, but one finds that the need to qualify and modify these labels arises much too rapidly and too frequently for comfort. It is clearly inevitable, then, that one should arrive at the conclusion that the labels themselves are imprecise.

However, although imprecise, the labels need not be a bad thing, for they serve to provide reference-points against which all the facts of the specific case may be measured up, useful sign-posts that tell us how close or how far we are from the mark. Against the established sign-posts, then, the patois or 'mixed-language' Baba Malay, being the native tongue of a portion of the speech community, would be a 'creole', while Bazaar Malay (a closely related 'reduced' variety in widespread use in the region as a lingua franca - see below), being the native tongue of no one, would be a 'pidgin'. This is the usual first step in the sorting out and labelling process, and although of course, the matter is quite a bit more complex than this and has in fact been recognised to be so by linguists, particularly in the last few years, this basic criterion does serve to underline an important distinction within the category of 'reduced languages'. For the acquiring of native speakers by a language is not merely a simple fact. It has sociological and linguistic interest because of the kind of changes that take place within both the speech community and its linguistic system during the process of the language's acquisition of native speakers. Something significant happens when a reduced language becomes the native tongue of a community that makes it important and necessary that a distinction be made between a variety that is the unique property of a group of human beings and a variety that is not uniquely the property of anyone. For convenience, therefore, we shall call one a 'pidgin' and the other a 'creole', although it must be kept in mind that it is also our intention to question both the adequacy and the accuracy of the type of relationship that is usually posited between them.

Any consideration of Baba Malay will need to take note of the other reduced Malay variety very widespread in the Malay peninsula, and that is the variety commonly known as 'Bazaar Malay'. Bazaar Malay is the lingua franca of the non-English-educated Malays, Indians and Chinese of Malaysia and Singapore (those who are English-educated will use English as a lingua franca).

It should be noted at this point that the Bazaar Malay in widespread use in these two countries differs from the other variety (or varieties) of pidgin Malay used in the Indonesian archipelago, though it too is known as 'Bazaar Malay'. The reason for taking note of this version of Bazaar Malay is that it bears a striking resemblance to Baba Malay and the two are clearly related. This fact has obvious theoretical significance and will be examined in the course of this study.

The purpose of the investigation undertaken here is two-fold. First, it is to examine where a 'mixed language' such as Baba Malay stands in relation to the theoretical perspectives on the linguistic processes of pidginisation and creolisation that have emerged in recent years and to place Baba Malay firmly within the bounds of those perspectives. It is intended, of course, that such an approach will both contribute to clarifying Baba Malay as a language-type, as well as to clarifying the theory underpinning discussions of pidginisation and creolisation. Secondly, it is to provide, for the first time, a record of Baba Malay as a language, its basic syntactic make-up and the source of some of its enigmatic characteristics, for although many know 'about' the language, its existence as a *rational* linguistic system is not commonly acknowledged. The record, however, is not intended as a comprehensive grammar of the language, but serves merely to note the basic features of its structure and to highlight the areas of its uniqueness as a language distinct from its source languages, Hokkien and Malay.

2. BABA MALAY: THE SOCIAL, HISTORICAL AND LINGUISTIC BACKGROUND

2.1 Baba Malay and present-day Malacca

Before proceeding to sketch in the history of Chinese immigration to Malacca and the historical conditions out of which Baba Malay developed, it is necessary to look at the position of Baba Malay in present-day Malacca for a contemporary perspective on the language.

The linguistic situation that exists in Malacca today is not a simple and straight-forward one. In the urban areas, no single ethnic group predominates, and so the question of who speaks what to whom is largely dependent on the ethnic background of the participants and the language in which they received their education. Because of Malaysia's colonial links with Britain, English was until recently the favoured medium of education, and it is still in frequent and widespread use. However, the true lingua franca in Malacca would seem to be the non-standard variety of Malay which, for convenience, we will call 'reduced Malay'. The rule to follow when in Malacca is that if all else fails, use 'reduced Malay'. It is the lowest common linguistic denominator.

The term 'reduced Malay' covers a gamut of linguistic varieties that include Baba Malay and the whole continuum represented by Bazaar Malay. These varieties are all mutually intelligible, but this is not to say that they are all 'the same thing'. Baba Malay can be differentiated from the others by certain syntactic characteristics peculiar to it and by its sizeable lexicon of Chinese loan-words, and against the Bazaar Malay continuum, it is differentiated by its stability of structure. In other words, it is a more clearly-defined linguistic system.

Baba Malay speakers, therefore, may use Baba Malay in communicating with members of other ethnic groups should English be unavailable. Among themselves, i.e. in intra-group communication, Baba Malay is invariably used if either participant has no access to English; otherwise, English or a mixture of both English and Baba Malay may just as likely be heard (socio-linguistic determinants such as the setting and the topic of discourse, for instance, obviously govern the choice of either English or Baba Malay in specific cases).

In recent years, changes in the educational policy of Malaysia have had some effect on the language situation in Malacca. The use of English as a medium of instruction in schools is being gradually phased out in favour of Standard Malay. The effect this will have on the future generations of Baba Malay speakers can only be guessed at, but it does seem that there will be an extension of the linguistic continuum, with Baba Malay (and reduced Malay in general) moving towards Standard Malay, thus bridging the gap that quite clearly exists at present between Standard Malay and reduced Malay. There has thus far been a great difference between these two broadly-labelled varieties because they really constitute two separate systems; no linguistic continuum can be said to have spanned these two varieties thus far. However, the change in this state of affairs is already evident in the speech of Baba Chinese children of school age, in whom there is, for example, a tendency to observe the morphological inflections of Standard Malay. Other influences such as the use of Standard Malay passive structures and vocabulary are also noticeable in the speech of the generation of Baba Chinese who are gaining their literacy in Malay.

The implications of the change in educational policy where Baba Malay is concerned would seem to be obvious. Baba Malay is not likely to remain the language as we now know it. Indeed, the extension of the linguistic continuum would so obliterate the very defining linguistic features of Baba Malay that it would become pointless and also inaccurate to maintain that there would any longer be a demonstrably well-defined and self-contained linguistic system that ought to be identified by any special name.

The position of Baba Malay, like that of many creole languages, is of course made more tenuous by its lack of a current body of literature. It is not possible today to be 'literate' in the language, and this naturally prevents it from being a functional system in every possible way. However, Baba Malay has not always been a language without a written form. For a few years at the end of the last century there was in circulation a daily newspaper in reduced Malay called *Bintang Timor* (*Eastern Star*) published in Singapore and apparently catering to the Baba Chinese community. The language of *Bintang Timor*, although recognisably reduced Malay, does not entirely resemble the Baba Malay as spoken by the Baba Chinese today. Rather, it seems to be an attempt to approximate Standard Malay with its morphological affixation (not entirely systematic) and stylistic formality. The result is clumsy and unmistakably non-Standard Malay, despite its apparent intentions. Aside from *Bintang Timor* (which began publication in 1894), there also existed a large number of works of fiction in reduced Malay, usually reinterpretations of Chinese 'classics' that tell of the exploits of errant warriors. One informant, a woman in her eighties, recalled that she and her brothers and sisters did go to school to learn Standard Malay, though the schooling was merely for a short period of time (two or three years). The purpose seemed more to have been to acquire literacy, to be able to 'read the written word' than to acquire a competence in Standard Malay as such. This would explain the impression gained from looking at the early written literature that the language resembled Standard Malay imperfectly acquired.

Literacy, then, did exist among the Baba Chinese, though it was probably not very widespread and was a prerogative of the wealthy. However, whatever literacy there was in Malay gradually became less widespread in this century (due to the preference among the Baba Chinese for an English education) as evinced by the disappearance of this body of literature. It would seem that

the ability to read and write Malay was not universal enough among the Baba Chinese and did not remain with them long enough for it to lead to the codification of Baba Malay. Had there been an opportunity for the codification of Baba Malay, the development of the language might have taken a different course.

2.2 Chinese settlement in Malacca

In the 16th Century, Malacca was a great trading-port. There was a steady flow of trade between Asia and Europe, and Malacca was the most convenient mid-point port of call for merchant vessels from both continents. In fact, goods from both continents changed hands at Malacca as it was not normal for merchant ships, whether east-bound or west-bound, to travel beyond Malacca because sailing conditions were found to be neither congenial nor convenient. The vitality of Malacca as a trading-port may be seen from this contemporary account:

Those from Cairo bring the merchandise brought by the galleys of Venice... Those from Mecca bring a great quantity of opium... In these companies go Parsees, Turks, Turcomans and Armenians, and they come and take up their companies for their cargo in Gujerat and from there they embark in March and sail direct for Malacca; and on the return journey they call at the Maldive Islands.¹

Although the Chinese were known to have periodically visited the Malay archipelago from an early date (even as early as the 5th Century), it was not until after the foundation of the Malay kingdom of Malacca at the beginning of the 15th Century that their presence could be said to be of significance (Purcell 1948:14-26). For, although it was possible that there could have been temporary trading settlements, it was only after this date that any evidence of permanent settlements made by the Chinese can be established without doubt. As further attestation to this, Purcell has noted that no records of any Malacca Chinese family go back further than the first half of the 17th Century.

The Chinese population was, initially, not large. At the beginning of the 17th Century, there were only an estimated 300-400 Chinese in Malacca. In 1750, 150 years later, they numbered 2,161 in a total population of 9,635, and by 1860, the Chinese population was 10,039 in a total 67,276 (Purcell 1948:x). By this time, however, Malacca was by no means the only place with a permanent Chinese settlement. To the north of Malacca, the island of Penang, which had been founded in 1786, saw its Chinese population rise to 28,018 in a total of 59,956 by 1860. By the same year too, the number of Chinese in the settlement at Singapore, which was founded in 1819, was 50,034 in a total of 81,734. These figures, while showing the steady increase in number, do not, however, reveal that some very important differences were emerging between the early Chinese settlers and the later immigrants. For it does appear that by the middle of the 19th Century, a clear distinction had already arisen between the 'native' Chinese and the 'sinkheh', the recent arrivals from China. Purcell gives this account of the attitudes of the 'native' Chinese towards the newcomers (Purcell 1948:61):

It is in the Malacca and the Penang of this period i.e. around 1860 that we can obtain a view of the Baba, or Straits-born Chinese, as he was after he had been

conditioned by local influences, but before he was swamped in numbers by the China-born and before he came under the immediate influences, either of the West with its ever accelerating tempo of existence or of cultural revolution in China which gave birth to modern nationalism. The Baba felt his apartness from the newcomers and was inclined to despise them. Some even repudiated the suggestion that they were Chinese at all and claimed to be 'orang puteh' or white men, meaning that they were British subjects and proud of it. They had clubs of their own to which natives of China were not admitted. Yet at the same time they adhered punctiliously to the outward signs of a Chinaman. The queue was a badge of servitude, having been forced on the Chinese by the Manchus, and every Baba knew it, but it had come to be looked on as a badge of honour in his fatherland, and he was careful to preserve it as a tradition of his ancestry as he did his thick-soled shoes, mandarin costumes, and conical hats. He rejected, however, the barbarous custom of binding the feet of his females which was of greater antiquity than the queue, dating from about the tenth century. The Baba's claim to consideration was the claim of most aristocracies — the priority of arrival.

We know that the Straits-born were not pure Chinese by blood, but although they would have Malay or half-caste mothers, children of Babas were almost always brought up in the ways of their fathers; even when the fathers died young and the children were left to the local mothers. Vaughan [see Vaughan 1971] says that it was striking sometimes to see 'black Chinese' with all the characteristics of their fathers strongly brought out. But in Malacca, where the Malays were in majority, he tells us that the women were more prejudiced and leant more to their own people. It is remarkable to consider the tenacity with which those Malacca Baba, who did not speak anything but Malay, adhered to the Chinese way of life, modified though it was by Malay and other local influences.

That there had arisen a difference in appearance and outlook between the Baba and the 'sinkheh' was quite evident. However, the question is, what was the basis for the Baba's perception of his own distinctness of identity? This question is important because one of the things that characterise this distinctness of identity is, of course, the fact that the Baba spoke a different language. Purcell's account raises a few questions on this score. We are told that the Straits-born Chinese had 'Malay or half-caste' mothers, but this should surely be amended to read 'Malay or half-caste ancestry', for I doubt that a 'sinkheh' who took a Malay or half-caste woman for a wife would, simply by such an act, afford his progeny immediate entry into the exclusive circle of the Straits-born community. For a 'sinkheh', the gap between being a lowly new immigrant (who would usually arrive without a cent to his name and whose status on arrival was hardly any different from that of a slave), and a proud and wealthy Baba (to judge by his thick-soled shoes, mandarin costumes and conical hats, in contrast to the sinkheh's 'pair of short drawers tied around

the waist with a piece of string and a pair of straw sandals' — Purcell 1948:62) cannot be so easily bridged, one would imagine, by simply taking a Malay woman for a wife. It is more likely, then, that the Baba identity was already well and truly established by this time, and that the fact of the Babas having Malay or half-caste mothers was significant only at a much earlier stage. From Purcell's account, therefore, it is clear that the fact of the Babas being descended from the earliest Chinese immigrants was one of the factors which contributed to the distinctness of the Baba identity. What is not so clear, however, is that the thing which more than any other set him apart from the new immigrants was his higher economic standing in the community. Sinkhehs, after all, were commonly employed as household servants and gardeners in Baba homes. This feeling of class difference was quite likely a very important factor. Wealth has always had a notoriety for elevating the common man a notch above others who would otherwise have been equally common. The Baba's claim to aristocracy, as given by one's socioeconomic status, was indeed his priority of arrival; it is, as ever, the familiar principle of the 'early bird'.

2.3 The origin of Baba Malay

2.3.1 Baba Malay and the pre-pidgin continuum

The origin of Baba Malay cannot be considered without reference to the related variety, Bazaar Malay. The 19th Century Malay scholar, W.G. Shellabear, who was probably the first writer to give any attention to Baba Malay, in fact wrote of Baba Malay and Bazaar Malay as if they were one and the same language, and astutely noted that 'Low Malay' (which is the term he uses to refer to both varieties collectively) was the unique creation of the Chinese in Malaysia (Shellabear 1913). It would be hard to dispute that Baba Malay and Bazaar Malay are essentially the same language, with the difference that the latter, being a 'pidgin', is more variable in structure and has not the sizeable lexicon of Hokkien loan words to be found in Baba Malay. What is more interesting, however, is Shellabear's observation that what we have called 'reduced Malay' ('Low Malay' is Shellabear's term) was originally created by the Chinese. The investigation undertaken will certainly support Shellabear's claim, and it will be seen that not only is Baba Malay a creation of the Chinese (which is an obvious fact given that its native speakers are ethnic Chinese) but that Bazaar Malay, the lingua franca widespread in Malay peninsula, was also created in large part by the Chinese.²

Given what we know about both Baba Malay and Bazaar Malay from this investigation in the following pages, then, the picture of the linguistic situation that existed in Malacca in the 17th and 18th Centuries would seem to be quite clear. The Chinese in Malacca during that period created a pidginised Malay, which gained currency and acceptance due in large part to the economic importance of the Baba Chinese in the community. Shellabear notes that '... in the British settlements ... the Chinese have always had a commanding influence in all business affairs, and in a proportionate degree have left their impress upon the language in which the business of the Settlements has always been transacted ...' (Shellabear 1913:51). Although by far the largest proportion of the population in Malacca was formed by the Malays, the linguistic situation was not a simple bilingual one. There were present in Malacca southern Indians and other traders from the surrounding regions as well. As Whinnom (1971) has pointed out, probably no pidgin arises out of a simple bilingual situation, particularly in a situation where one group is disadvantaged in any way, as for example, by the lack of sheer numbers.

This, however, presupposes that there are no other extraneous 'barriers' between the two groups. Shellabear claims that the Baba Chinese held the language of the Malays in some contempt, no doubt regarding it as the unsophisticated language of a commercially unimportant sector of the community, for Malay is '*bahasa hutan*', *the language of the jungle*. Even in a bilingual situation, then, such an attitude on the part of the minority group might well constitute a barrier to the effective learning of the numerically or geographically dominant language. Such an attitude would probably serve to maintain and consolidate the pidginised Malay that was used by the Baba Chinese. Even the initial intermarriage with the Malay women would not have undermined this, for the tendency of the Baba Chinese to cling tenaciously to their Chinese identity would have been another factor in their maintaining their distance from the larger Malay-speaking community.

The linguistic situation, then, was no doubt an interesting one, but due to the paucity of our knowledge regarding the real facts as they existed in that period, more than one hypothesis for the actual manner in which Baba Malay developed is possible.

At this point, however, it may be worthwhile to state an important distinction easily overlooked, and that is the difference between a 'pidgin' and a 'pidginised variety'. The latter term refers to any linguistic variety that has been simplified or reduced in form, while the former is applied to such varieties when they have attained a measure of stability, i.e. when they in time come to exhibit certain norms and hence become much less subject to the personal idiosyncracies of their speakers and other variation of this kind.

Whether Baba Malay was ever a fully-fledged pidgin before undergoing creolisation remains uncertain. If it was, then the situation would be that creolisation took place in only one sector of the speech community while elsewhere the pidgin remained technically a pidgin (thus giving rise to the two varieties for which we have two distinct names). If, on the other hand, there was only some kind of pre-pidgin continuum, then creolisation took place without the varieties having gone through a prior pidgin stage, and the pidgin that is now called Bazaar Malay stabilised independently. The second possibility does seem more convincing. A full-fledged pidgin would hardly have had the time to develop in the light of what we can guess about the frenetic linguistic situation that existed in Malacca then. A reduced form of Malay would have been in vigorous use then, and certainly immediately in use even in the homes of the Chinese who had, after all, married the local Malay women. Given the fact that a reduced form of Malay would probably have been used in Chinese homes as well as, of course, used in the trading community at large, then it does not seem likely that the language we now call 'Baba Malay' would have developed diachronically from the pidgin now called 'Bazaar Malay'. Rather, it would seem that a general form of reduced Malay was in use, a form that was probably quite unstable and variable over a range of speakers, i.e. a pre-pidgin continuum rather than a stable linguistic variety. On examining the two varieties, it would thus appear that a creole emerged against the background of a pre-pidgin continuum, and that furthermore this creole actually exerted some influence on the grammatical structure of the as yet unsettled variety, in the process helping to stabilise its structure. The process was probably never quite as clear-cut as this, and the interaction that took place was likely to have been quite complex, but the mutual clarifying and stabilising effect was clearly a benefit. The establishment of two new, related, though technically distinct, varieties of Malay must have come about more quickly because of the peculiar characteristics of the linguistic situation that existed in Malacca at the time.

If this view of the relationship between Baba Malay and Bazaar Malay is correct, then the relationship that is usually posited between a pidgin and its kin creole, and even the very definition of a creole itself, is called into question. Not only would it no longer be valid to assume that there is always a diachronic relationship between pidgin and creole, but it would also be invalid to insist on a *necessary* prior pidgin stage as a condition in the definition of a creole. Bickerton (1974) and Tonkin (1971) have both propounded the same idea. Bickerton suggests that immediate creolisation must have taken place among children of slaves or immigrant indentured labourers before any pidgin had had time to stabilise because they would have needed immediately a language to use, and Tonkin suggests that creoles may originate as native languages in mixed households and subsequently become contact languages between different ethnic groups. In both suggestions, creolisation is seen to be a relatively immediate process, with pidginisation taking place either concurrently or perhaps even occurring later.

3. BABA MALAY AS CREOLE: A BASIS FOR A DEFINITION

If the foregoing discussion reveals anything at all, it is that it is singularly unhelpful to approach the question of pidgins and creoles, and to attempt to define the notions of pidgins and creoles, from the point of view of their evolutionary history. The labels 'pidgin' and 'creole' are, as has been pointed out, useful as an initial working classification of particular linguistic *types*, but they are clearly not the end of the matter, and no completely satisfactory classification can be expected to issue from their application.

Hymes (1971) was among the first to recognise the limitations of these labels and to argue for a more precise definition of these linguistic types. He suggests that the processes of pidginisation and creolisation would be best examined along three parameters:

1. Change in the complexity of the outer form of the variety (i.e. its morphological structure) — positive change being designated by the term 'complication', negative change by the term 'simplification'.
2. Change in the scope of the inner form (i.e. its syntactic-semantic structure) — positive change being designated by the term 'expansion', negative change by the term 'reduction'.
3. Change in the scope of its function — positive change being designated by the term 'extension', negative change by the term 'restriction'.

Pidginisation, then, would be characterised by simplification, reduction and restriction, while creolisation would be characterised by complication, expansion and extension.

This set of criteria, Hymes argues, must be viewed in conjunction with another important criterion: that of 'convergence'. The term 'convergence' refers to the mixture of linguistic elements that is found in pidgins and creoles at each of the phonetic, the lexical, the syntactic and the semantic levels. The criterion of convergence is usually assumed, but Hymes underlines its importance. Convergence, unlike the other criteria already mentioned, does not, of course, distinguish pidgins and creoles from other languages, but it would be clearly strange to talk about the concept of pidgins and creoles if there were no

evidence of convergence whatsoever in the language under examination. Hymes argues that 'if creolization is to have significant meaning... creolization, like pidginization, must be understood as a complex process, involving the occurrence of three components, here expansion, and extension of role, as well as convergence. It is not reducible to any one of them' (Hymes 1971:77).

Hymes' framework seems a reasonable one, and cognisance of it will be taken in this investigation. It does at least provide a set of guidelines to keep in mind during the course of the investigation, and what is more important, it will serve its function *even* in the cases when it may be found to be faulty or inadequate, for that is the inherent value of theoretical frameworks. Perhaps 'faulty' and 'inadequate' are overly strong terms, but there are certainly problems nevertheless.

The first and more obvious of these is associated with the idea of specifying the direction of the changes that take place. Unless one has prior documentation and a description of the pidgin or the pre-pidgin continuum (and this is very uncommon indeed), how does one decide whether there has been complication or simplification, expansion or reduction? The conjectures of the linguist about the earlier structure and form of the language, however plausible, will remain mere conjectures. This is precisely the problem we encounter in our examination of Baba Malay.

The other and not so obvious problem is that where non-European-based pidgins and creoles are concerned, some of Hymes' considerations are not at all relevant. Malay, one of the two languages from which Baba Malay is derived, has a well-established system of affixation; but Hokkien, the other source-language, is an analytic language and its words are largely monomorphemic in nature. In Baba Malay, the systematic process of affixation is virtually non-existent. According to one of Hymes' criteria for distinguishing pidginisation from creolisation, then, there has been a negative change in the complexity of the outer form, a 'simplification'. Clearly this is some evidence of the simplification that Malay underwent, but the fact that there has developed no complexity in the morphological structure of Baba Malay even after all this time (no form of systematic affixation, for instance, has arisen), is no indication that creolisation has not in fact taken place. For it is not illogical that Baba Malay should follow Hokkien in not considering the grammatical function of affixation to be 'necessary'. After all, looked at from the point of language learning, Hokkien is the source- and Malay the target-language. This being the case, many of the apparent pidgin/creole features of Baba Malay could be interpreted simply as examples of source language interference. One typically pidgin/creole feature already noted, that in place of the derivational and inflectional morphological variation found in Malay, there is an invariant relation between form and grammatical function, is in fact the normal state of affairs in Hokkien. It is therefore always prudent to bear in mind the specific nature of the languages on which the pidgin or creole in question is based. This is no less necessary when it comes to examining the changes in the syntactic structure of the pidgin or creole, for, as will be seen with Baba Malay, given the particular syntactic make-up of both Hokkien and Malay and the resulting convergence in Baba Malay, it is by no means a simple matter to decide whether there has in fact been, in Hymes' terms, an 'expansion' or a 'reduction'.

The first two parameters in Hymes's schema, then, are not without problems. The third, which attempts to specify the changes in the scope of the pidgin/creole's function, is perhaps more straightforward. Where Baba Malay is concerned, its

use as a primary language in the homes of the Straits-born Chinese surely constitutes an extension in scope, albeit a limited one. Baba Malay is never called upon to serve any function more complex than that associated with normal, daily social intercourse.

3.1 Convergence in Baba Malay

An examination of the amount and the kind of convergence in Baba Malay provides the most direct and interesting way of observing the results of the linguistic contact between Hokkien and Malay. It will also serve to reveal something of the phonological, morphological and syntactic differences between the two languages.

3.1.1 Phonological convergence

The phonological system of Baba Malay is, curiously enough, completely congruent with that of Malay. None of the uniquely Hokkien phonemic elements can be found in Baba Malay. The most prominent of these, viz., the Hokkien phonemic tones, with their seven-way distinction, are likewise conspicuously absent. Even the body of Hokkien loan words in Baba Malay has been phonologically modified, and rigidly conforms to the phonological pattern of Malay. Hokkien and Malay have the following phonemic inventories of segmental consonants:

(i) Hokkien		LABIAL	DENTAL	VELAR	GLOTTAL
STOPS	unasp. v'less	p	t	k	ʔ
	voiced	b	d	g	
	asp. v'less	p ^h	t ^h	k ^h	
AFFRICATES	unasp. v'less		ts		
	voiced		dʒ		
	asp. v'less		ts ^h		
FRICATIVES	v'less		s		h
NASALS	voiced	m	n	ŋ	
LATERAL	v'less		l		

(ii) Malay		LABIAL	DENTAL	PALATAL	VELAR	GLOTTAL
STOPS	v'less	p	t		k	ʔ
	voiced	b	d		g	
AFFRICATES	v'less			tʃ		
	voiced			dʒ		
FRICATIVES	v'less	f	s	ʃ		h
	voiced		z			
LIQUIDS	voiced		l	r		
NASALS	voiced	m	n	ɲ	ŋ	
SEMI-VOWELS		w		j		

The consonant inventory of Baba Malay is identical with that of Malay with three exceptions. The voiceless labio-dental /f/, the voiceless palatal fricative /ɟ/, the voiced dental fricative /z/ and the voiceless velar fricative /x/ are not present in Baba Malay. However, it should be noted that these four phonemes are not indigeneous to the Malay sound system, but were introduced into the system by way of the Arabic loan-words that have been taken into the language. The majority of native Malay speakers tend to avoid these three sounds and substitute instead the voiceless labial stop /p/ for /f/, the voiced palatal affricate /dʒ/ for /z/, the glottal fricative /h/ for /x/, and occasionally the voiceless dental fricative /s/ for /ɟ/. Thus, the consonant inventory of Baba Malay would look like this:

(iii) Baba Malay		LABIAL	DENTAL	PALATAL	VELAR	GLOTTAL
STOPS	v'less	p	t		k	
	voiced	b	d		g	
AFFRICATES	v'less			tʃ		
	voiced			dʒ		
FRICATIVES	v'less		s			h
LIQUIDS			l	r		
NASALS		m	n	ɲ	ŋ	
SEMI-VOWELS		w		j		

As can be seen from a comparison of the three tables, there is almost no admixture in the phonological system of Baba Malay (the total consonant and vowel inventory attest to this — see the discussion on vowels below). The system is almost exactly congruent with that of Malay, and there is no interference from the Hokkien system whatsoever. All the lexical borrowings from Hokkien into Baba Malay are phonologically modified to conform to the Malay sound system. The modifications are regular and predictable. Examples:

HOKKIEN	BABA MALAY	
/lâu téŋ/	/lo teŋ/	<i>upstairs</i>
/tʰĩa/	/tia/	<i>living-room</i>
/pò pí'a/	/popia/	<i>spring-roll</i>
/sin kʰeʔ/	/sinke/	<i>new immigrant</i>
/tê kʰ/	/teko/	<i>kettle</i>

The loan words are also without phonemic tone, of course.

The vowel system of Baba Malay is absolutely congruent with that of Malay. A comparison of the three tables below will show this:

Hokkien has a set of corresponding nasal and non-nasal vowels:						
	FRONT		CENTRAL	BACK		
HIGH	i	ĩ		u	ũ	
MID	e	ẽ		o	õ	
LOW	a	ã		ɔ	õ	

Malay			
	FRONT	CENTRAL	BACK
HIGH	i		u
MID	e	ə	o
LOW		a	

Baba Malay			
	FRONT	CENTRAL	BACK
HIGH	i		u
MID	e	(ɛ) ə	o
LOW		a	

The vowel systems of Malay and Baba Malay are congruent in all respects except that Baba Malay possesses an extra vowel /ɛ/. This vowel, however, is not present in all Baba Malay speakers but only in those who live in the urban areas (as opposed to those who reside in the rural areas). The difference in the speech of urban and rural speakers of Baba Malay is slight but quite discernible. The presence of the vowel /ɛ/ is, however, the clearest mark of an urban speaker. It occurs in those Malay words which have, as consecutive segments in syllable-final positions, the sequence /a/ + /r/ or /a/ + /l/. For example, the Malay word /tingal/ *to stay* is [tiŋgɛ] for the urban Baba Malay speaker, and the Malay word /ular/ *snake* has as the urban Baba Malay equivalent [ulɛ]. For the rural speaker of Baba Malay, these words are rendered [tiŋgal] and [ula] respectively. This shows up one difference in the distribution of phonemes between Malay and urban Baba Malay. In contrast to the pattern in Malay, the phonemes /h/ and /r/ do not occur in word-final positions.

The presence and the distribution of the vowel /ɛ/ among urban speakers of Baba Malay is a matter for speculation. It would seem that the early Straits-born Chinese could have had contacts with speakers of some particular Malay dialect that must have had the vowel /ɛ/ as a variant realisation of the segmental clusters /ar/ and /al/ (which dialect that was is not known but it is clearly not the present Malay dialect of Malacca). The fact that it is the urban speakers of Baba Malay who possess this vowel is significant, for they are the ones who have the closest links with the early Chinese settlers. Many of them still live in the area around the Malacca River, in the central and oldest part of the city. One would logically expect this sub-community of speakers to be the most conservative linguistically, quite in contrast with rural Baba Malay speakers who have been in greater contact with the local Malay population.

In any case, the most interesting fact to emerge from the comparison of sound systems is that unlike most creoles, which show the influence of their substrate languages in their phonology, Baba Malay reveals hardly any influence at all of its substrate language, Hokkien, in its phonology.

3.1.2 Syntactic-semantic convergence

Syntactically, the gap between Baba Malay and colloquial Malay is less great than that between Baba Malay and formal Malay (which is the 'educated' codified variety of the language). The spoken language of the Malay who has had limited contact with formal Malay for instance, can often approach the syntactic and

morphological terseness of Baba Malay, so that on occasion, what is 'grammatical' Baba Malay is also 'grammatical' colloquial Malay. However, what keeps Baba Malay distinct is the quite obvious admixture of linguistic elements that are derived from Hokkien. These elements are, however, *calques* from Hokkien, so that the essential *Malay nature* of Baba Malay lexicon and phonology is preserved. Where these elements are concerned, then, what is borrowed from Hokkien is their *meaning*, not their *form*. The most salient of these elements that are derived from Hokkien are the following.

3.1.2.1 Punya

The word *punya* has the literal meaning of *to possess* in Malay, and is semantically related to the Hokkien morpheme *ê*. However, the meaning of the Hokkien *ê* is a grammatical one whereas the meaning of the Malay *punya* is a lexical one. *ê* is often termed a 'possessive particle', somewhat akin to the possessive suffix in English which is rendered orthographically as *-'s*. In Baba Malay, however, *punya* has acquired the grammatical function of its Hokkien semantic counterpart. *Punya* has no lexical meaning in Baba Malay, and has in fact become another member of the closed set of function words in the language. It is phonologically realised either as [pia] or [mia] (very rarely as [puna]) and receives no stress within the sentence contour. In short, it behaves just like any purely functional element phonologically.

The example of *punya* illustrates the particular nature of linguistic convergence or admixture in a creole such as Baba Malay. Convergence takes place in Baba Malay without damage to the essential lexical and phonological patterning of the language which has been, it might even be said, almost rigidly based on the formal example of the superstrate language, Malay. Just as no Hokkien phonological feature was allowed to intrude into the phonological system which Baba Malay had evolved for itself, so no *formally* Hokkien grammatical element could be taken into its syntactic system, although its function could be appropriated with no qualms. In this way, Baba Malay preserves its homogeneity of form.

Punya in Baba Malay has in fact three grammatical functions, all of which are conceptually related to the idea of 'possession', and all of which correspond exactly to the grammatical functions of the word *ê* in Hokkien. These functions are (a) as possessive marker, (b) as marker of temporal and locative modifiers, and (c) as relativiser.

3.1.2.1.1 Punya as possessive marker

As possessive marker, *punya* occurs in such phrases as:

- (a) *gua punya ruma*
I punya house
my house
 Hokkien: *gúa ê chhù*
I ê house
 Malay: *rumah saya*
house I
- (b) *Sek Po punya kreta*
Sek Po punya car
Sek Po's car

Hokkien: Sek Po ê chhia
Sek Po ê car

Malay: kereta Sek Po
car Sek Po

3.1.2.1.2 Punya as marker of temporal and locative modifier

Some examples of punya as marker of temporal and locative modifiers are the following:

- (a) sini punya orang
here punya people
the people of this place

Hokkien: chit-tau ê lâng
here ê people

Malay: orang yang disini
people who here

- (b) Pasir Panjang punya Methodist Church
Pasir Panjang punya Methodist Church
the Methodist Church of Pasir Panjang

Hokkien: 'Pasir Panjang' ê 'Methodist Church'
Pasir Panjang ê Methodist Church

Malay: 'Methodist Church' yang di Pasir Panjang itu
Methodist Church which in Pasir Panjang the

- (c) tiga bulan punya holiday
three months punya holiday
the holiday of three months

Hokkien: sā-ko-gé ê pang-kè
three months ê holiday

Malay: cuti tiga bulan
holiday three months

- (d) dulu punya cakap
past punya language
the language of the past

Hokkien: téng-pai ê ^{mn}oe
past ê language

Malay: bahasa yang lama
language which old

- (e) belum kawin punya time
before marry punya time
the time before (I) was married

Hokkien: iá-bôe kiat-hun ê sí
before marry ê time

Malay: semasa belum berkawin
time before marry

All the above are, as can be seen, structurally identical to their Hokkien equivalents but are totally foreign to Malay. The concept of 'possession' is in this instance less tangible and more abstract, but nevertheless still perceptible, as the gloss in English shows. Interestingly enough, (c) above may be glossed as *three month's holiday*, which would tally very precisely with the Baba Malay original. It is therefore possible to regard all the examples with *punya* here as genitive-type constructions related to the examples in 3.1.2.1.

3.1.2.1.3 *Punya* as relativiser

As a relativiser, *punya* occurs in the structure exemplified by the following:

- (a) orang tarek punya cia
man pull punya vehicle
the vehicle which a man pulls (i.e. rickshaw)

Hokkien: lāng khiu ê chhia
man pull ê vehicle

Malay: kereta yang ditarik oleh seorang
vehicle which is pulled by a man

- (b) gua pukul punya itu orang
I hit punya the man
the man whom I hit

Hokkien: gúá pha ê hit khô lāng
I hit ê the CLASSIFIER man

Malay orang yang saya pukul itu
man whom I hit the

The embedded sentence is realised as a subordinate clause preceding the head nominal and marked off by *punya*.

Similarly, with relativised adjectives:

- (c) béx punya ruma
big punya house
a house which is big

Hokkien: tòà keng ê chhù
big ê house

Malay: rumah yang besar
house which big

- (d) kase punya orang
unrefined punya person
a person who is unrefined

Hokkien: chho ê lang
unrefined ê person

Malay: orang yang kasar
person who unrefined

It will be seen that in Baba Malay, as in Hokkien, modifiers generally precede the head nominal within the noun-phrase. The relationship, to borrow a term

from the physical sciences, is a *centripetal* one because the modifiers tend to order towards the centre of the noun-phrase, which is the head nominal.

Baba Malay: gua punya kawan punya RUMA
my friend's house

Hokkien: gúa ê pèng-iu ê CHHÙ

In Malay, the relationship between modifier and head nominal is a *centrifugal* one, i.e. the modifiers tend to order away from the head nominal.

Malay: RUMAH kawan saya

It can be seen from the above examples that the function of punya as a relativiser again corresponds semantically and syntactically to the function of ê in Hokkien.

3.1.2.2 Kasi

Kasi (literally *to give* in Malay) is the counterpart of the Hokkien hō, and in Baba Malay has all the grammatical functions of the latter. These functions are as follows:

3.1.2.2.1 Benefactive

An example of the Benefactive function of kasi is the following:

- (a) dia béli itu baju kasi gua
he buy that dress kasi me
he bought that dress for me

Hokkien: i bōe hīt- nîa sã hō gúa
he buy that CLASSIFIER dress hō me

Malay: dia membeli baju itu bagi saya
he buy dress that for me

Kasi in this instance acts as a pure function word in Baba Malay, corresponding to the English preposition *for*.

3.1.2.2.2 Causative-benefactive

- (b) dia-orang kasi gua tahu
they kasi me know
they let me know

Hokkien: in-lâng hō gúa chai
they hō me know

Malay: mereka memberitahu kepada saya
they inform to me

- (c) gua punya mak kasi gua pigi
my mother kasi me go

Hokkien: gúa ê lâū-bú hō gúa khì
my mother hō me go

Malay: ibu saya membiarkan saya pergi
mother my let me go

Kasi in these instances has the sense of *to cause something to happen for someone's benefit or to someone's advantage*.

3.1.2.2.3 Causative

Kasi also functions as a straightforward causative:

- (d) dia pèkek-pèkek kasi gua tapranjat
she scream kasi me startled
her screams startled me

Hokkien: i dʒióng hō gúa chhua?
she scream hō me startled

Malay: pekeknya memeranjatkan saya
her scream startled me

3.1.2.2.4 Passive marker

Kasi functions as a Passive Marker in these instances:

- (e) dia curi duit kasi gua tengok
he steal money kasi I see
his stealing of the money was seen by me

Hokkien: i thau lui hō gúa khūa tio?
he steal money hō I see

Malay: kecurian wang oleh dia telah dilihat oleh saya
theft money by him was seen by me

- (f) dia kasi gua pukol
he kasi I hit
he was hit by me

Hokkien: i hō gúa pha?
he hō I hit

Malay: dia dipukul oleh saya
he was hit by me

(See 4.6 for a fuller discussion of passives.)

3.1.2.3 Kena

Kena in Malay has the general sense of *contact*, but it is usually contact of an abstract kind, e.g. *kena denda to incur a fine (to come into contact with a fine)*, *kena sakit to fall ill (to come into contact with illness)*. In its general sense of *contact*, it has an almost exact Hokkien equivalent in the Hokkien *tio?*. Their respective semantic fields are not perfectly congruent with each other, but they do overlap at one point, and this point is exemplified by the following Hokkien and Malay sentences.

Malay: dia kena pukul
he kena hit
he got hit

Hokkien: i tio? pha?
he tio? hit
he got hit

In this specific instance, both the abstract and concrete senses of the notion of *contact* are in operation. The subject in both sentences are said to have *incurred a blow*, or *come into contact with a blow*. This use of the word *kéna* is, not surprisingly, perfectly acceptable in Baba Malay.

There is, however, another sense of the word *kéna* in Baba Malay which is quite alien to a native speaker of Malay, and which has quite clearly been derived from one of the senses of the Hokkien *tio?*. This other function of *tio?* is to denote the concept of *obligation* and/or *non-volition*. Thus:

gúa *tio?* khì
 I *tio?* go
 I had to go (i.e. I had no choice)

The corresponding Baba Malay sentence would be:

gua *kéna* pigì
 I *kéna* go
 I had to go

The one difference between Baba Malay *kéna* and Hokkien *tio?* is that while the latter may signify both the notions of *obligation* and *non-volition*, *kéna* signifies only *non-volition*. The twin semantic components of *tio?* are split and distributed in Baba Malay between two lexemes, *kéna non-volition* and *misti obligation*. Examples:

- (a) kita *kéna* jalan sana
 we *kéna* walk there
 we had to walk there
- (b) kita *misti* jalan sana
 we *misti* walk there
 we must walk there

The example of *kéna* is an illustration of one interesting typological process of linguistic convergence in Baba Malay. That the *semantic* and *syntactic* functions of two lexemes from two distinct languages, Hokkien and Malay, should be so nearly similar is a surprise in itself, and this fact alone certainly ensured the survival of this specific semantic notion in Baba Malay. But the semantic features of the derivative Baba Malay *kéna* are, as we can see, a little different from their Hokkien and Malay prototypes. The semantic field of *kéna* is in fact a composite of the prototypes, for the near-congruence of the semantic fields of Malay *kena* and Hokkien *tio?* permitted the grafting of specific semantic features of *tio?* onto Baba Malay *kéna* with minimal obtrusion; it also permitted the weeding out of other semantic features which were originally components of the Hokkien and Malay prototypes but which have been 'deemed' unimportant in Baba Malay.

The semantic and syntactic coincidence of Malay *kena* and Hokkien *tio?* surely means that, where Baba Malay was concerned, there must have been a predisposition towards convergence in this area, for it is only reasonable to expect that shared features of this nature have priority of selection.

The example of *kéna* differs from the other examples of convergence discussed thus far, because while the others cloak Hokkien function in Malay form, *kéna* is a word that is semantically a selected composite of both Hokkien and Malay function in Malay form.

3.1.2.4 Mau

Mau, most often phonologically realised as [mo], is similar to the case of k^éna as it has an almost exact semantic and syntactic parallel in a Hokkien word; the Hokkien equivalent in this instance being be[?]. As is the case with k^éna, the close parallel between Malay mau and Hokkien be[?] clearly ensured the continued survival of this linguistic item in Baba Malay. The Malay mau is a modal auxiliary indicating 'intention', e.g.

Malay: saya mau pergi
 I mau go
 I want to go

The Hokkien be[?] is also a modal auxiliary indicating 'intention'.

Hokkien: gúa be[?] khì
 I be[?] go
 I want to go

Syntactically and semantically, then, mau and be[?] parallel each other.

Examples from Baba Malay:

- (a) orang tak mau pake kreta lagi
 people not mau drive car anymore
 people don't want to drive cars anymore

Hokkien: lâng mài hūa chhia liau
 people not drive car anymore

Malay: orang tak mau memandu kereta lagi
 people not drive car anymore

(Note: Hokkien mài is the negation of be[?].)

- (b) mau pigi sana susa
 mau go there difficult
 it's difficult (for me) to go there

Hokkien: be[?] khì hit-tau kāng kó
 be[?] go there difficult

Malay: susah mau pergi sana
 difficult mau go there

3.1.2.5 Pigi/datang

Pigi (literally) *to go* is a member of the class of full verbs in Baba Malay as well as the minor class of function-words. Pigi in its guise as a function-word has a parallel in the Hokkien khì *to go*. Both pigi and khì indicate 'direction away from speaker' when juxtaposed with a verb of motion.

- (a) gua pake parka pigi sekola
 I wear parka pigi school
 I wear a parka to school

Hokkien: gúa chhēng parka khì ó[?]-tńg
 I wear parka khì school

Malay: saya berpakai parka kesekolah
 I wear parka to school

Pigi has as its complementary opposite the word *datang* (literally) *to come*, which is again paralleled by the Hokkien *lâi*. *Datang* and *lâi* have the semantic function of indicating 'direction towards the speaker' when preceded by a verb of motion. The same function is performed in Malay by the preposition *ke-* and *dari(pada)*.

3.1.2.6 Nanti

Nanti (literally) *to wait* occurs in Baba Malay as a time-adjunct (or time-adverbial) and indicates 'near-futurity'. Its function as a sentential modifier finds a semantic and syntactic parallel in the Hokkien *tan* (also literally) *to wait*.

- (a) *dia nanti mau datang*
he nanti want come
in the near future he wants to come

Hokkien: *i tan be? lâi*
he tan want come

Malay: *nanti dia mau datang*
nanti he want come

Nanti is also used in the same manner in Malay, and like *kêna* and *mau*, it is an example of a linguistic item that coincidentally has semantic and syntactic parallels in Hokkien, and has therefore been readily preserved in Baba Malay.

3.1.2.7 -la

-la is a particle that may occur in phrase-final or sentence-final positions. It is also to be found adjoined to single words, but these 'single words' function as full sentences in Baba Malay.

- (a) *mura- la*
cheap la
it's cheap

- (b) *susa- la*
difficult la
it's difficult

The *-la* particle in Baba Malay is clearly related to, and functions in much the same way as the *-la* particle in Hokkien, Bazaar Malay, Singapore English and Malaysian English. Richards and Tay (1977), in tracing the links between the *-la* particle in Singapore English, Hokkien and Malay, came to a tentative conclusion that the origin of the particle was in Hokkien. They are, I think, correct in their conclusion. My own investigation of Baba Malay supports the idea that Bazaar Malay, which is after all syntactically similar to Baba Malay, owes much of its structure to Hokkien, and that the influence of Hokkien on these linguistic varieties spoken in the Malay peninsula has been quite marked.

Richards and Tay suggest that the *-la* particle in Hokkien and Singapore English functions as a 'code label', which serves 'both to carry part of the message and to identify the style'. It is not a grammatical element but serves to identify the level of 'rapport, solidarity, familiarity and informality between the participants in the speech event'. However, although it is true that the *-la* particle is not a grammatical element in that its presence or absence does

not fundamentally alter the meaning of the message, it nevertheless needs to be stressed that the meaning of the message may be *modified* by the particle, and in ways that have little to do with the sociolinguistic factors of rapport, solidarity, familiarity or informality between the participants in the speech event. Curiously enough, the Hokkien examples that are given by Richards and Tay themselves bear testimony to this. They point out, for example, that the presence of the -la marks emphasis (which is one of its main functions) and that another function is to express a kind of cause-and-effect relationship between clauses in a sentence. These two functions at least, seem to be well within the domain of 'grammar', and would have little to do with the sociolinguistic concept of the speech event and the role-relationships of its participants.

The function of -la in expressing cause-and-effect relationships, or more accurately, in expressing the notion of 'consequentiality' is evident in Baba Malay. It expresses the idea that 'if you do X, then you must do Y'.

- (a) abi kalau dia cakap lu misti kawin, lu misti kawin-la
so if she say you must marry you must marry-la
so if she says you must marry, you must marry
- (b) dia bila mau balek jantan punya ruma, dia kena angkat tebu
he when want return the man's house he has to carry sugarcane
 sama ayam- la
with chicken-la
when he wants to return to the man's house, then he must take some sugarcane and a chicken with him
- (c) jadi, bila datang sini, orang tak ada bini carek bini-la
so when come here people not have wife find wife-la
so when people came without wives, then they looked for wives
- (d) kalau winter datang ini, mati- la
if winter come death-la
if winter comes, then it's death!

Besides this function of marking 'consequentiality', -la in Baba Malay also has the sociolinguistic function of indicating solidarity and informality, of indicating the speaker's mental attitude (whether it be warm and friendly or otherwise) towards the addressee. It is interesting to point out that such matters are often indicated in English by the speaker's tone of voice and intonation pattern, rather than by the presence of any overt linguistic item. A sentence such as 'It's expensive' may be said in a self-mocking and pleading way and mean something like 'It's expensive, you know, don't say I'm stingy!', but this, of course, cannot be brought across orthographically.

It still needs to be said, however, that -la is a very semantically elusive linguistic element. Quite often, it seems to express varying degrees of the speaker's impatience with his interlocutor, and may simply be translated into English by a sigh! The following are further examples from Baba Malay.

- (e) dia mau sayang-la, dia mau lu cium, ko-ko
he want love- la he want you kiss brother
he wants love, he wants you to kiss (him), brother
- (f) itu dulu punya cakap- la, tak sama sekarang
that past punya language-la not same now
that is the language of the past, it's not the same now

- (g) tengok-la
see- la
we shall see
- (h) bole tahan- la sekola
can tolerate-la school
(I) can tolerate school
- (i) nasib-la
fate- la
that's fate

3.1.2.8 Word order

The word order in Baba Malay has already been dealt with briefly (see 3.1.2.1.3). Word order in Baba Malay is patterned after Hokkien rather than Malay in that modifiers of all types may precede the head nominal. These modifiers may be locative phrases, adjectives, temporal phrases or full sentences. If they do precede the head nominal, they will have to occur with *punya*, which serves as a relativiser.

- (a) Adjective + Nominal
bêse punya ruma
big punya house
a house which is big
- (b) Locative phrase + Nominal
sini punya orang
here punya people
the people who are here
- (c) Temporal phrase + Nominal
tiga bulan punya holiday
three months punya holiday
the holiday which is of three months
- (d) Full sentence + Nominal
orang tarek punya cia
man pull punya vehicle
the vehicle which is pulled by a man

None of the above patterns are permissible in Malay but they are fully permissible in Hokkien where the above examples may be regarded as noun-phrases containing an embedded sentence.

Another area of word order in which Baba Malay differs from Malay because it is patterned after Hokkien word order is in the positioning of determiners in relation to the nominal. Thus:

Malay: orang itu	Baba Malay: itu orang	Hokkien: hit-ê lâng
person the	the person	the person
the person	the person	the person

In brief, then, the admixture of Hokkien linguistic elements in Baba Malay is strictly semantic-syntactic in nature. What is borrowed into Baba Malay is not the Hokkien forms of these elements but their meanings and syntactic functions. On occasion, it will be seen that the 'meanings' of some of these elements have

a ready semantic and syntactic parallel in Malay, and so the Malay forms of these elements are easily maintained. The process of convergence in Baba Malay therefore takes place with little disruption to the lexicon and to the phonological form of Baba Malay, which in these respects adheres to the form of the superstrate or target language, Malay.

3.1.3 Lexical convergence

The lexicon of Baba Malay is Malay in nature, except for quite a number of Hokkien loan words which deal predominantly with kinship and ceremonies and the customary practices of the Hokkien-Chinese. These are in the main associated with the rites of religion, of marriage, birth and death. In addition, Baba Malay has also borrowed words that denote certain Chinese moral and ethnical concepts. This is not surprising as the Baba Chinese have retained their 'Chinese-ness' where these things are concerned. Hokkien lexical items which have been adopted by the Babas and which occur in my transcripts are listed in Appendix 2, but there is, besides this body of loan words, another area which evinces the impact of Hokkien on Baba Malay and which is clearly more of a 'core area' linguistically than the corpus of loan words. This is the pronominal system of Baba Malay.

3.1.3.1 The pronominal system of Baba Malay

Curiously, the pronominal system of Baba Malay exemplifies quite different types of convergence. One type involves calquing, i.e. semantically Hokkien elements appear in Malay form (such as we have encountered in the preceding section on syntactic-semantic convergence), and this is obviously the case with the third-person plural form of the pronoun, *dia orang* (from Hokkien *in-lâng*). The other involves wholesale borrowing into the language of the Hokkien forms, albeit with phonological modification, and this is the case with the first and second-person singular forms of the pronoun, *gua* and *lu* (from Hokkien *gúa* and *lú*). Still another type of convergence involves a combination of these two processes and this is the case with the second-person plural form of the pronoun, *lu-orang*, the first element of which is Hokkien in form and the second element Malay, but clearly semantically calqued from the Hokkien *lâng* (literally, *person*) which is customarily attached to singular forms of pronouns to give their corresponding plural forms. The other pronouns, the third-person singular and the first-person plural, however, retain their Malay forms. The following table displays the pronominal forms across the three languages.

	Baba Malay	Malay	Hokkien
<i>I</i>	<i>gua</i>	<i>saya/aku</i>	<i>gua</i>
<i>you</i>	<i>lu</i>	<i>kamu/awak/engkau</i>	<i>lú/lí</i>
<i>he/she</i>	<i>dia</i>	<i>dia</i>	<i>i</i>
<i>we</i>	<i>kita</i>	<i>kita</i> (inclusive) <i>kami</i> (exclusive)	<i>gún-lâng</i> (incl) <i>lán-lâng</i> (excl)
<i>you</i> (pl)	<i>lu-orang</i>	<i>kamu/awak/engkau</i>	<i>lín-lâng</i>
<i>they</i>	<i>dia-orang</i>	<i>mereka</i>	<i>ín-lâng</i>

It is curious to note that the 'inclusive-exclusive' distinction in the first-person plural pronoun which is observed by both Malay and Hokkien has been neutralised in Baba Malay. It would be expected in the examples of such items as *këna* and *mau*, that the semantic parallel here between Hokkien and Malay would facilitate the incorporation of this semantic distinction into the Baba Malay pronominal system, but this has not occurred.

3.1.3.2 Conclusion

A survey of the processes of convergence in Baba Malay points quite clearly to the heavy reliance on Hokkien as a source for many semantic and syntactic structures. Most of these borrowed structures from Hokkien are direct substitutes for already-existing Malay equivalents rather than being structures incorporated into the language to 'plug' any gaps that are felt by Baba Malay speakers to exist in the superstrate language. These structures, Malay in form but really Hokkien in function, seem to have sometimes arisen as a consequence of the morphological simplification that took place in Baba Malay. In place of the verb affixation found in Malay to express the idea of 'causation', for instance, Baba Malay makes use of a single, free morpheme *kasi* (see 3.1.2.2) to perform the same function.

Other structures that have their source in Hokkien are not merely substitutes but actually have no direct equivalents in the superstrate language, Malay. The functions of the modal auxiliary *këna* and the *-la* particle in Baba Malay would come under this category.

The problem at this point is the difficulty in evaluating these semantic and syntactic structures, all of which are truly unique to Baba Malay and the Bazaar Malay continuum, in terms of Hymes' concept of 'expansion' and 'reduction'. How, after all, is the relative semantic and syntactic complexity between two languages to be determined? The relative complexity of the 'inner form' between any two languages, i.e. of their semantic-syntactic core, needs in reality to be quantified. However, even if a precise statistical quantification were possible, the results would mean little, as such a methodology would ignore the different areas of importance on which each language chooses to focus. Thus, a creole may remain a language with a tenseless system even though both its superstrate and substrate languages may well have sophisticated tense systems. Clearly it would be unfair to see our hypothetical creole as being 'lacking' in this respect. Such a recognition of linguistic relativity would certainly confound the notion of 'expansion' in a creole. Where semantics is concerned, one could not overlook the fact that each language might categorise the objective world differently. Thus, that Baba Malay has only the one word *potong* for the different ways of *cutting* that Malay recognises linguistically (as shown by the variety of words that have the same basic denotation, e.g. *potong to cut*, *slice*, *belah to cut lengthwise*, *raut to pare*, *sabit to cut with sickle*, *tebang to cut down trees*, *tetak to slash*) is not necessarily a significant fact within the Hymesian framework. Where Baba Malay is concerned, any 'losses' vis-a-vis its superstrate language, Malay, is made up for where necessary by calques from Hokkien.

However, Hymes' terms, 'reduction' and 'expansion', clearly should be seen to refer to diachronic changes that take place *within* each creole. For these terms to make sense in our context, a description of the early form of Baba Malay would be needed with which present-day Baba Malay could be compared. If Baba Malay did exist in some 'simpler' form initially, and we have assumed this to be so, then the term 'expansion' could certainly be used to describe the direction of Baba Malay's development up to the present time.

4. TOWARDS A SYNTACTIC DESCRIPTION OF BABA MALAY

4.1 Word classes

Word classes have always been a perplexing area in linguistics. Definitive and universal criteria for setting up word classes have not been forthcoming, and this problem has been readily acknowledged.

The criteria for the establishment of (word) classes are not yet known and their discussion is still a central theme in grammatical theory. (*Lingua* 17: Editorial Preface)

Yet, it is clear that the words in any language may be grouped according to their characteristics and functions, and that such groupings will be generally found to be intuitively 'correct' to native speakers. It would be hard to deny that terms such as 'nominals' and 'verbals' refer to quite universal and common characteristics and functions of words. All languages categorise words into those that denote 'things' and those that denote 'qualities' and 'actions'.

The following discussion, therefore, takes the notions 'nominals' ('things') and verbals ('qualities and actions') to be primitive notions, and other word classes will be defined with reference to them.

4.1.1 Nominals

The class 'Nominals' comprises nouns and pronouns.

4.1.2 Verbals

The class 'Verbals' includes both adjectives and verbs. Adjectives and verbs have often been considered to be subclasses of the same grammatical category because semantically, the typical function of both is that of predication. However, in languages where there are syntactic differences between the two (as in English, for instance) a distinction between verb and adjective has been made. In Baba Malay (as in Malay) there is no syntactic basis for distinguishing between verb and adjective. The adjective in Baba Malay, when it occurs in predicate position, occurs without a copula and hence is structurally similar to the verb.

- (a) dia gémok
he fat
he is fat

- (b) dia nyanyi
he sing
he sings

If both these words are placed in prenominal position, their syntactic resemblance will still be maintained:

- (c) gémok punya orang
people who are fat
- (d) nyanyi punya orang
people who sing

As the distinction between verbs and adjectives in Baba Malay is a semantic one rather than a syntactic one (adjectives denote 'attributes' while verbs denote 'acts'), it would be more convenient to regard them as belonging to the same syntactic word class called 'Verbals', the only difference being that one

belongs to the subclass of 'Attributive Verbals' and the other to the subclass of 'Active Verbals'.

The designation 'Active' requires some explanation. It refers to 'acts' described by words such as *tido to sleep*, *dudok to sit* etc., which, although not referring to any overt physical activity, seem to have more in common with one another *semantically* than with words such as *bése big*, *pande clever* etc. In addition, Attributive and Active Verbals in Baba Malay are distinguishable from each other semantically by the different 'adjuncts of intensification' (see 4.1.4) they may occur with:

- (e) *dia bése skali*
he big very
he is very big
- (f) *dia nyanyi banyak*
he sings a lot
he sings a lot

However, this difference can be neutralised if instead of the adjunct *skali*, the more indigenous Baba Malay adjunct *banyak* is used:

- (g) *dia banyak bése*
he is very big

The word *banyak* (literally, *many*) has in Baba Malay taken on the function of an intensifier, much as the word *plenty* has done in many English-based pidgins and creoles (and this seems to be a common occurrence in many pidgins and creoles). It is interesting to note that the ability of *banyak* to function as an intensifier for both Attributive and Active Verbals in Baba Malay may be taken as further evidence that both these verbals are subclasses of a common category. It is not at all surprising that this fact should manifest itself in a 'younger' language such as Baba Malay where perhaps finer distinctions have yet to emerge. Semantic neutralisation may therefore be indicative of deeper linguistic behaviour.

4.1.3 Auxiliaries

Auxiliaries are a closed set of words that occurs in an invariant position within a syntactic construction; they immediately precede the Verbal in the Verb-Phrase. There are two types of auxiliaries in Baba Malay, the Aspectual auxiliary and the Modal auxiliary.

4.1.3.1 Aspectual auxiliary

The Aspectual auxiliary marks the aspect of the Verbal:

- (a) *dia suda pigi*
he suda go
he has gone/he went

There are four Aspectual auxiliaries in Baba Malay:

- belum* *action not yet completed/commenced*
- lagi* *action in progress*
- suda* *action completed*
- baru* *action recently completed*

These auxiliaries, which denote the perfective or imperfective nature of actions, naturally enough apply to Active Verbals.³ However, it is interesting to note that some of them may also be applied to Attributive Verbals:

- (b) dia suda bẽsẽ
 he suda big
 he is already grown up

This is further evidence of the syntactic similarities between Active and Attributive Verbals in Baba Malay. However, it appears that only the auxiliaries suda and bẽlum may occur with Attributive Verbals, i.e. the state or quality denoted by the Attributive Verbal is deemed to have been either attained or yet-to-be-attained; no other aspectual statement is permissible.

4.1.3.2 Modal auxiliary

Whereas the function of the Aspectual auxiliary is to qualify a statement with respect to the Verbal, the function of the Modal Auxiliary is to specify the 'modal attitude' of the statement as a whole. The following are the Modal auxiliaries in Baba Malay:

- kẽna *idea of non-volition* i.e. compelled by circumstances
 not to one's liking, therefore unfavourable
- misti *idea of obligation/necessity*; unlike kẽna, not
 unfavourable necessarily
- bole (a) *idea of capability*
 (b) *idea of permissibility*
- mau *idea of volition or intention*

Some of these Modal auxiliaries may co-occur in the same sentence subject to certain constraints. The first of these constraints is that if two Modal auxiliaries co-occur, the first auxiliary must be misti and the other must either be bole or mau. No other combinations are permissible. Semantically, misti mau seems not to be different from misti, but misti bole has the sense *must be able to*. The second constraint is that should two Modal auxiliaries co-occur, no Aspectual auxiliary is permitted in the same sentence. The third constraint is that their ordering with respect to each other is to be invariant; the Aspectual auxiliary must precede the Modal auxiliary in all instances.

The auxiliary is distinct from adjuncts (see 4.1.4) in that it has a fixed position within a construction. Confusion is possible because an adjunct may also be slotted into a normal auxiliary position. The adjunct nanti is a case in point. Nanti denotes *near-futurity* as well as having a verbal meaning, *to wait*) and dia nanti pigi *he will go*. However, nanti has no fixed positioning and does not invariably precede the verbal on all occasions. Thus, the sentences nanti dia pigi and dia pigi nanti are also acceptable.

4.1.4 Adjuncts

Adjuncts are words or phrases that are adjoined to a sentence in order to extend the meaning of the sentence. As the word 'extend' implies, such adjoined linguistic items are not essential to the 'grammaticalness' of the sentence: the sentence is grammatical even in the absence of these items. Thus, the locative phrase in the house is an adjunct in the sentence Mildred rebuked George in the house as even in its absence, Mildren rebuked George is a well-formed sentence.

The adjuncts in Baba Malay may be divided into two types, Verbal adjuncts and Sentence adjuncts.

4.1.4.1 Verbal adjuncts

Verbal adjuncts by and large have inflexible position within the Verb-Phrase and, unlike Sentence adjuncts, may not be shifted around the sentence:

- (a) makan p¹elan-p¹elan (*p¹elan-p¹elan makan)
eat slowly
to eat slowly
- (b) mahal sekali
expensive very (*sekali mahal)
very expensive

It will be noted that adjuncts that occur with Attributive Verbals form a subclass called Adjuncts of Intensification (see (b) above). Adjuncts of Intensification may, however, also be adjoined to another adjunct:

- (c) makan P¹ELAN-P¹ELAN S¹EKALI
to eat very slowly

Further examples of Verbal adjuncts:

- (d) bole balek S¹ENANG
can return easily
can go back easily
- (e) bole b¹eli barang BANYAK-BANYAK
can buy things in large quantities
can buy things in large quantities
- (f) tahu dia B¹ETOL-B¹ETOL
know him properly
to know him properly
- (g) tahu dia SIKIT-SIKIT SAJA
know him slightly only
to know him only slightly
- (h) baru datang TIGA BULAN
just come three months
(I've) only been here three months
- (i) baru balek SATU KALI
just return once
(I've) only returned once
- (j) tak practise LAMA-LAMA
(I) haven't practised for a long time

4.1.4.2 Sentence adjuncts

The items of this class have freer position within the sentence (though there are some constraints) because they have no immediate relationship with any particular constituent of the sentence. Instead, their relationship is to the sentence as a whole. Sentence adjuncts may be of a *locative type*, a *temporal type*, or a *modal type* that states, for example, the definiteness or otherwise of the idea expressed by the sentence.

- (a) bëlaja KAK AUSTRALIA
study in Australia
to study in Australia
- (b) SANA mahal
there expensive
it's expensive there
- (c) SINI tak kèna baya school fees
here not have to pay school fees
one doesn't have to pay school fees here
- (d) TADI Fong dapat surat, bukan
just then Fong got letter didn't she
Fong got the letter just then, didn't she?
- (e) kalau NANTI mau pigi Australia
if in future want go Australia
if in future she wants to go to Australia
- (f) TËNTU tak bole drive
sure not able drive
(I'm) sure (I) can't drive
- (g) BARANGKALI dia mau balek
perhaps he want return
perhaps he want to return

Although the position of the adjunct within the sentence is fairly flexible, the constraints are that the adjunct is not permitted to occur between the auxiliary and the verbal, nor between the verbal and its object noun-phrase:

*tak kèna SINI baya
school fees

*tak kèna baya SINI
school fees

4.1.5 Prepositions

The term 'preposition' denotes that closed set of invariable words or particles that have either a 'semantic-case'-type function or an 'orientational' function in a sentence. The words are 'prepositional' with respect to the nominal or the noun-phrase. Baba Malay has the following set of prepositions, which is a modified and much smaller set than the one found in Malay:

sama	<i>with</i>	sampe	<i>till</i>
atas	<i>on, above</i>	kak	<i>at</i>
bawa	<i>under</i>	dalam	<i>in</i>
bëlakang	<i>behind</i>	dari	<i>from</i>
dëpan	<i>in front of</i>	kasi	<i>for</i>

Of the set above, the two prepositions which are most specifically Baba Malay are kak and kasi. The former is invariably found where di is found in Malay, and is related morphologically and phonologically to the Malay dekat *near, close by* which is often used in place of di with locative phrases in colloquial Malay. This demonstrates again that the variety of Malay from which Baba Malay drew its resources is not the codified variety, but the colloquial variety. The historical contact between the two source languages of Baba Malay was clearly a contact of oral varieties.

The other preposition which is also nearly uniquely a property of Baba Malay is *kasi*. *Kasi* is also a verb in Baba Malay meaning *to give*. Its appearance as a preposition with a grammatical, semantic-case function is no doubt a reflection of Baba Malay's links with Hokkien in which the morpheme *hō* also performs this dual function (see 3.1.2.2). However, it is also worth noting that the use of a word meaning 'to give' in a purely functional, grammatical capacity to denote 'benefaction' is also widespread among many African contact-languages (see Hall 1966). This has given rise to the suggestion that this might be seen as one of a set of 'universal' pidgin or creole features, something by which a variety may be recognised instantly as pidgin or creole. However, the evidence here would suggest that it is a language-specific rather than necessarily a 'universal' or 'innate' feature of pidgins and creoles.

4.1.6 Conjunctions

The set of conjunctions in Baba Malay is also a very much reduced set as compared to the set of conjunctions in Malay.

sama <i>and</i>	sébélum <i>before</i>	pasa <i>because</i>
tapi <i>but</i>	sélépas <i>after</i>	kalau <i>if</i>
bila <i>when</i>	asa <i>as long as</i>	abi <i>consequently, subsequently</i>

Sama functions only to conjoin nominal phrases, and never units longer than the nominal phrase. In fact, it does not seem to be possible to link with conjunction two sentences of the same 'rank' or 'depth' to form compound structures (as opposed to complex, embedded structures) in Baba Malay (see 4.4).

4.1.7 Quantifiers

Quantifiers are of two types, numeral and non-numeral. Numeral quantifiers are morphologically the same as those in Malay. Non-numeral quantifiers consist of items such as *sémua* *all*, *banyak* *many* and *tiap-tiap* *every*.

4.1.8 Particles

There is one important particle which occurs in phrase-final or sentence-final position in Baba Malay and that is the particle *-la* (see 3.1.2.7 for a fuller discussion).

4.1.9 Determiners

Determiners combine readily with nominals and have the effect of making the referent of the nominal definite. The two determiners are *ini* *this* and *itu* *that, the*.

4.2 Sentence structure: the simple sentence

4.2.1 The noun-phrase

The NP in Baba Malay has the following surface structure:

$$\text{NP} \rightarrow (\text{Q}) (\text{Det}) \left(\begin{array}{l} 1. \text{Verbal} \\ 2. \text{VP} \\ 3. \text{Sent. Adjunct} \\ 4. \text{Nominal} \end{array} \right) \text{punya Nominal (Verbal) (Sent. Adjunct)}$$

The Sentence Adjunct of course, has flexible positioning, and if all the options within the braces were taken, the following NPs would be possible:

- (1) sémua itu bése punya ruma cantek kak Mélaka
Q Det Verbal₂ punya Nominal Verbal₂ Adjct
all the nice houses that are big in Malacca
- (2) sémua itu belaja sana punya orang kaya
Q Det VP punya Nominal Verbal₂
all the rich people who study there
- (3) sémua itu sana punya orang kaya
Q Det Sentence Adjct punya Nominal Verbal₂
all the rich people there
- (4) sémua itu pokok punya daun kécik
Q Det Nominal punya Nominal Verbal₂
all the trees' small leaves

4.2.2 The verb-phrase

The VP in Baba Malay may be divided into three types:

4.2.2.1 VP-Simple

The VP-Simple is a VP that contains only one verbal, either a verb (Verbal₁) or an adjective (Verbal₂), or it may contain an NP without any verbal at all. This last permissible VP structure occurs in sentences of the type 'X is Y', which in Baba Malay and Malay (but not Hokkien) simply consists of the two nominals X and Y located in apposition to each other. Hokkien, however, has a copula which is obligatorily present in such constructions. Both the Aspectual auxiliary (Aux_A) and the Modal auxiliary (Aux_M) are optional components of VP structure.

1. $VP \rightarrow \left\{ \begin{array}{l} (Aux_A) (Aux_M) \\ (Aux_M Aux_M) \end{array} \right\} Verbal_1 (NP) (NP) (Adjunct)^4$
 - (a) belum bole beli dia buku
Aux_A Aux_M Verbal₁ NP NP
not yet able to buy him a book
 - (b) misti mau beli dia buku
Aux_M Aux_M Verbal₁ NP NP
must buy him a book
2. $VP \rightarrow (Aux_A) Verbal_2 (Adjunct)$

suda pande
already clever
3. $VP \rightarrow NP (Adjunct)$

gua punya mak
my mother

4.2.2.2 VP-Compound

The VP-Compound differs from the VP-Simple in that it has obligatorily at least two Verbal₁ components in its structure. A third Verbal₁ is permissible, but only if the middle Verbal₁ is either the verb *pigi* to go or *datang* to come. These two verbs may function like the directional prepositions to and from in English respectively. *Pigi* expresses the notion 'direction away from speaker'

(see 3.1.2.5). It is in this function that these two verbs may each co-occur with two other verbs in the structure of the VP-Compound.

$$VP \rightarrow \left\{ \begin{array}{l} (Aux_A) (Aux_M) \\ (Aux_M Aux_M) \end{array} \right\} Verbal_1 (NP) \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \{pigi\} \\ \{datang\} \end{array} \right\} Verbal_1 (NP) (Adjct)$$

Some examples:

- (a) belum bole ikut dia pigi carek ruma
 Aux_A Aux_M Verbal₁ NP pigi Verbal₁ NP
 not yet able to follow him to go to find a house
- (b) mau ikut dia pigi Sydney
 Aux_M Verbal₁ NP Verbal₁ Adjct
 want to follow him to Sydney
- (c) mau pigi berenang
 Aux_M Verbal₁ Verbal₁
 want to go to swim
- (d) selalu balek makan
 Adjct Verbal₁ Verbal₁

One constraint that will be obvious from the above is that should one of the Verbal₁ be either pigi or datang, then the pigi/datang option within the braces cannot be chosen. Thus, although co-occurring Verbal₁ is a characteristic of VP-Compound structure, there are no examples of such co-occurrences as pigi pigi.

4.2.2.3 The VP-Complex

The VP-Complex differs from the VP-Compound in that it contains, in generative-transformational terms, an embedded sentence in its underlying structure. It is obvious that in the sentence gua pigi berenang *I go to swim*, which contains a VP-Compound, the relationship of the two Verbal₁ constituents is basically one of the simple conjunction *I go and I swim*; ⁵ in the sentence gua suka berenang *I like to swim*, which contains a VP-Complex, the relationship of the two Verbal₁ constituents is clearly not of the same level **I like and I swim*. In the VP-Complex, one of the Verbal₁ constituents would seem to be a higher level constituent than the other. The VP-Complex has the following structure:

$$VP \rightarrow \left\{ \begin{array}{l} (Aux_A) (Aux_M) \\ (Aux_M Aux_M) \end{array} \right\} Verbal_1 (NP) Verbal_1 \left\{ \begin{array}{l} (NP) (NP) \\ (NP) \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \{pigi\} \\ \{datang\} \end{array} \right\} Verbal (NP) \end{array} \right\} (Adjct)$$

The above in effect shows that the VP-Complex may have, as an embedded structure, either a VP-Simple (if the upper option within the braces is taken), or a VP-Compound (if the lower option within the braces is taken). The simplest VP-Complex would, of course, contain two Verbal₁ constituents (e.g. suka pigi). The following are some examples of the above structure.

- (a) belum bole panggil dia beli gua buku
 Aux_A Aux_M Verbal₁ NP NP
 not yet able to ask him to buy me a book
- (b) misti bole panggil dia ikut gua pigi carek ruma
 Aux_M Aux_M Verbal₁ NP Verbal₁ NP pigi Verbal₁ NP

4.3 Sentence structure: the compound sentence

4.3.1 And-coordination

Sentences with 'and-coordination' in a language such as English actually cover a range of semantic relations that may be expressed by different specific co-ordinators in other languages. For example, in the sentence, she cooked the rice and she ate it, the two events expressed by the two sentences, despite the presence of the co-ordinator and, can obviously not be taking place simultaneously. The co-ordinator actually expresses a *sequential* relationship between the two sentences, and this kind of sequential relationship is denoted by either specific co-ordinators or grammatical cues in the three languages that we have been concerned with, Baba Malay, Malay and Hokkien.

- Baba Malay: dia suda masak nasi, dia makan-la
she Aux cook rice she eat la
- Malay: dia masak nasi lalu dimakannya
she cook rice then she eats it
- Hokkien: i chú p̄ng liau chīu chīa?
she cook rice Perfective Morpheme then eat

Likewise, where a *simultaneous* relationship between two sentences is being expressed, as in the English, he was speaking and weeping, specific co-ordinators are employed to convey this semantic information.

- Baba Malay: dia cakap cakap sama nangis
he speak and cry
- Malay: dia bercakap sambil menangis
he speak while cry
- Hokkien: i na kóng na háu
he na speak na cry

4.3.2 But-coordination

The Baba Malay 'but-coordination' is *tapi* and is the same lexeme as the Malay co-ordinator. Both function much like the Hokkien *tān-sī* and conjoin only sentences and not noun phrases.

- Baba Malay: dia mau kēja tapi tak bole kēja
he want work but not can work
- Malay: dia mau bekerja tapi tak boleh bekerja
he want work but not can work
- Hokkien: i be? chò kang tān-sī bōe sai chò kang
he want work but cannot work

4.3.3 Or-coordination

Although the 'or-coordinator' *atau* is sometimes found in Baba Malay, it is not common. Instead, or-coordination is frequently effected by the juxtaposition of the elements being co-ordinated and with each element carrying its own question intonation. Alternatively, the question particle *-ka* may also be present.

Baba Malay: lu suka cakap Melayu-ka suka cakap English?
you like speak Malay Question Particle *like speak English*

Malay: kamu suka bercakap bahasa Melayu atau suka bercakap
 you like speak *Malay or like speak*

 bahasa Inggeris
 English

Hokkien: li aì kóng huan-ōē á-sī aì kóng ang-mō-ōē
 you like speak Malay or like speak English

There are no restrictions on the level of elements being conjoined this way in Baba Malay; the elements conjoined may be words, phrases or clauses.

4.4 Sentence structure: the complex sentence

The complex sentence involves not co-ordination but subordination. The conjoined sentences in a complex sentence are of 'unequal rank' in that one of them will carry the 'primary message' of the whole sentence while the other serves to qualify or modify this primary message. They are of unequal rank, then, in their semantic functions.

Grammatically, subordination is effected by the presence in the sentence of at least one subordinating conjunction or by the presence of a relative pronoun, e.g.

- (1) They were happy **ALTHOUGH** they were poor.
(sub. conj.)
- (2) The man **WHO** was arrested was his father.
(rel. pron)

In Baba Malay, subordination is similarly effected by a small set of subordinating conjunctions (see 4.1.6) as well as by the process of relativisation (see 3.1.2.1.3). The process of relativisation, however, is a more restricted and much less frequent one than in English. The restriction appears to be on the length of the subordinate sentence. Anything more than a subject noun with its attendant verb would seem to be uncommon. Thus, the subordinate sentence, whose function is to qualify or modify the main sentence, rarely permits of further qualification or modification of itself in Baba Malay. A sentence such as *tarek cia punya orang tak ada lagi the men who pulled the rickshaws are no longer around*, with a single simple subordinate sentence embedded in it, is fairly common in Baba Malay; however, one such as the English *the men who pulled the rickshaws slowly every day around the city*, with its multiple qualifying adjuncts, is rare in Baba Malay. Such a sentence is not, strictly speaking, ungrammatical, but in normal discourse, the preference is for less complex structures.

The corpus of Baba Malay as used in daily discourse which has been collected for this investigation would suggest that it is quite common for sentences to be conjoined by merely having them strung together without the use of either subordinating conjunctions or relative pronouns.

- (a) dia-orang mati, dia punya orang tak bole campo orang
they die their people cannot mix (with other) people
 when there is a death, they are not allowed to mix socially with
 other people

- (b) dulu, orang mati, coffin lama-lama
in the past people die coffins for a long time
 létak ruma
are placed (in the) house
in the past when people die, their coffins are left
for a long time in the house

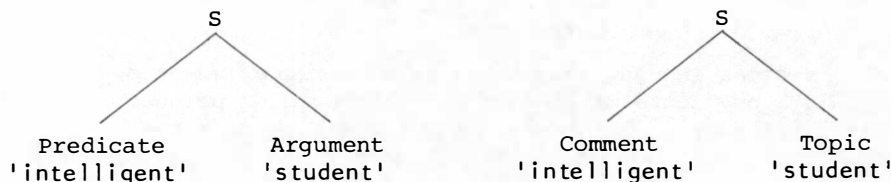
In sentences (a) and (b) above, the sense would seem to require a subordinating conjunction such as *bila when* or *kalo if* before each of the subordinate sentences, *dia-orang mati* and *orang mati*. The primary message is clearly carried by the second sentence in each of the examples above, and the first sentence in each merely provides 'background' qualifying information which specifies the conditions under which the information provided by the second sentence would hold true. Thus, even without the presence of subordinating conjunctions, it is clear that the relation between the two sentences in each example above is one of subordination rather than coordination.

4.5 Sentence structure: topic-comment as the basic form of the Baba Malay sentence

It has been suggested that the notion of 'subject and predicate' by which every grammatical or well-formed sentence of any Indo-European language is defined may not accurately define the grammaticalness of some non-Indo-European languages (Li and Thompson 1976). Long acquaintance with Indo-European languages has led many linguists to assume the notion of subject and predicate to be a universal one, one that is necessarily applicable to all languages. By such a view, the majority of sentences produced by speakers of a language such as Baba Malay would appear to be ungrammatical, and therefore somehow 'inferior'. The belief that there is no order or 'grammar' in Baba Malay, that words are merely strung together unsystematically, is indeed a widespread one, and one that even many Baba Malay speakers hold.

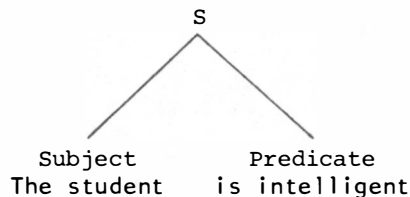
However, the grammaticalness of Baba Malay, it is suggested here, can be better defined by another notion. Li and Thompson (1976) have convincingly argued that many Asian languages are more accurately characterised by the Topic-Comment structure of their sentences, and on examining the corpus of Baba Malay sentences and after having noted the frequent impossibility of assigning them a subject-predicate structure, I have also come to the conclusion that Baba Malay sentences are basically Topic-Comment in structure.

Although the notion of Topic and Comment covers a wide range of sentence-types, at its most basic it is not dissimilar semantically to the Argument-Predicate postulate of symbolic logic. Thus, in a sentence such as the student is intelligent, the Argument (Topic) is 'the student', and what is being predicated (the Predicate/Comment), i.e. stated as being true of or pertaining to 'the student', is that he is intelligent.



According to one explication of Topic-Comment, the Topic is 'the given information' and the Comment is 'the new information'. In terms of this explication, we have the given information that 'here is the student', and the new information that 'this student is intelligent'. It therefore follows that the main part of the message is contained in the comment because it is the Comment that carries the information that would expand on the information held by the Topic.

Given what is known about Topic and Comment, it will be seen that the notion of Subject and Predicate can in fact be characterised in terms of the Topic-Comment distinction. This should come as little surprise as the terms 'Subject' and 'Predicate' themselves literally mean 'topic' and 'that which is stated of the topic'. Thus, *as an utterance in its most neutral form, unmarked by intonational emphasis in speech*, the Subject of a sentence may be taken to be the given information, while the Predicate of the sentence may be seen to be providing new information.



Subject-Predicate constructions, therefore, are also Topic-Comment constructions, though of course, not *all* Topic-Comment constructions are necessarily Subject-Predicate constructions. Put another way, it can be said that Subject-Predicate structures are a subclass of Topic-Comment structures (other subclasses of Topic-Comment structures will be discussed below). The following simple sentences may be analysed in terms of Topic-Comment.

- (a) mau turun city susa
 -----TOPIC----- COMMENT
want to go city difficult
going to the city is difficult
- (b) gua pigi Kuala Lumpur belaja lagi baik
 -----TOPIC----- COMMENT
I go Kuala Lumpur study better
for me to go to Kuala Lumpur to study, it's better
- (c) pake socks pun sejok
 -----TOPIC----- COMMENT
wear socks even cold
even wearing socks, it is cold
- (d) tengok saja cukup
 -----TOPIC----- COMMENT
to watch only enough
just to watch, it is enough

The pattern is clear enough. The Topic is a sentence (sometimes agentless) and the Comment is a predicate of some kind. It should be pointed out that under a Subject-Predicate analysis, these sentences would be considered non-normal as structures of this kind demand a nominalised form of the Subject rather than a full sentence. This is certainly the case for languages such as English and

Standard Malay (though not for Hokkien). The point to note is that although it is possible to regard the above examples as some kind of low-level or 'primitive' constructions which would have contained nominalised structures if only Baba Malay had the 'linguistic machinery' to turn them into nominalised structures, they do seem to belong in the same category as all the paratactic structures frequently produced by speakers of Baba Malay. Words, phrases and sentences are commonly juxtaposed rather than grammatically linked in the way that, for example, an English speaker is accustomed to. Even those complex sentences given in the previous section (section 4.4) can be analysed in terms of Topic and Comment.

- (e) dia-orang mati, dia punya orang tak bole campo orang
 ---- TOPIC ---- -----COMMENT-----
they die, their people cannot mix socially with other people
- (f) dulu, orang mati, coffin lama-lama létak ruma
 ----- TOPIC ----- -----COMMENT-----
in the past people die, the coffins are placed for a long time in the house

The pattern consists in the juxtaposition of two full sentences. They are regarded as complex sentences because, as it has been pointed out in the previous section, the first sentence of each pair is semantically subordinate to the second sentence. It merely provides a statement on which the second sentence will expand and develop. In other words, the first sentence provides the topic on which the second sentence will comment. Thus, Topic-Comment operates even on a higher, sentential level.

Here again, one could analyse (e) and (f) as being complex sentences that 'lack' subordinating conjunctions. However, to say that these complex sentences 'lack' subordinating conjunctions is to imply that they would have been fully well-formed had ellipsis not taken place. Such a view would be quite mistaken. The point is that these sentences should not in any way be regarded as malformed. They are in fact quite typical of that paratactic characteristic that is such a common feature of Baba Malay syntax. This being so, any imputation of a more 'complete' structure would be to view Baba Malay with a perspective that is foreign to the nature of the language. The need to guard against bringing pre-conceived linguistic notions to bear unnecessarily on an unfamiliar language should certainly be an important tenet of linguistic studies. In any case, sentences (e) and (f) can be quite adequately analysed (in terms of Topic-Comment) without recourse to the notion of structural ellipsis.

The analysis in terms of Topic-Comment seems to me to accord better with the actual corpus of Baba Malay speech amassed for this investigation. For what is frequently heard in Baba Malay speech are not stretches of grammatically-connected sentences, but chunks of juxtaposed phrases or clauses that are semantically-connected. On the larger sentential level, the semantic links are of this Topic-Comment nature, whereby one sentence (or a word or a phrase) announces a theme which is developed by another sentence, all within the same intonation contour. This, of course, indicates that the clauses are not two separate sentences but in fact constitute the one sentence. Topic-Comment certainly operates in Baba Malay over many levels, as will be seen from the following paradigm constructed with the examples discussed in this and the next section (section 4.6).

1. Subject as Topic

- (a) ORANG mati
people die
people die
- (b) NIKA PUNYA BARANG, sémua ada sama lagi, tak
wedding punya things all Emphatic same still Question
are all the wedding things still the same?
 morpheme marker

2. Object as Topic

- (a) CHINESE CUSTOMS, dia pake
Chinese customs he observes
the Chinese customs he observes
- (b) LAIN-LAIN ADAT, sémua ada ikut lagi, tak
other customs all Emphatic follow still Question
the other customs, are they all still being followed?
 morpheme marker

3. Sentence as Topic

- (a) GUA PIGI KUALA LUMPUR BÉLAJA lagi baik
I go Kuala Lumpur study better
for me to go to Kuala Lumpur to study, it is better

4. Subordinate Clause as Topic

- (a) DIA ORANG MATI, die punya orang tak bole campo orang
they die their people Negative marker can mix people
when they die, their people cannot mix (socially) with other people
- (b) DULU ORANG MATI, coffin lama-lama létak ruma
in the past people die coffin a long time leave house
in the past when people die, the coffins are left for a long time
in the house

It will be seen from the examples given above that the Topic-Comment structure is a linguistic device that performs many functions. One of these is to focus on certain grammatical elements such as the grammatical subject of a sentence (example 1b) or the grammatical object of a sentence (examples 2a and 2b). This function is known as 'Topicalisation' and will be discussed in the next section (section 4.6). Another function of Topic-Comment structure is to facilitate communication by simplifying the need for complicated structural 'machinery' in a sentence. For example, Baba Malay has no need for nominalisations with their attendant morphological and/or syntactic re-structuring of elements; a predicate may simply follow a full sentence (example 3), and a complex sentence may simply have a Topic-Comment structure.

Baba Malay may have acquired its basically Topic-Comment nature from Hokkien, because Hokkien too, contains structures of precisely the same kinds as those listed for Baba Malay. Li and Thompson have in fact claimed that Mandarin is predominantly Topic-Comment in nature rather than Subject-Predicate. The same claim is also made for languages such as Lahu and Lisu (Lolo-Burmese), and in their discussion of Topic-Comment, they provide examples of other subtypes of Topic-Comment structure. For example:

- (1) nèi- chang hǔo xìngkuí xiāofang-duì lài de kuài
that Classifier fire fortunate fire-brigade came Adverb quick
particle
the fire, fortunately the fire-brigade came quickly (Mandarin)
- (2) SAKANA-WA tai ga oisii
fish Topic marker red snapper Subject marker delicious
fish, red snapper is delicious (Japanese)
- (3) NEÌKE SHU yèzi dà
that tree leaves big
that tree, the leaves are big (Mandarin)
- (4) hǒꞥ na- qhṑ yì ve yò
elephant Topic marker nose long Particle Declarative marker
elephants, noses are long (Lahu)

In example (1), Topic-Comment seems to operate on a very 'high' level. Unlike the Baba Malay examples in which the grammatical link between Topic and Comment is still implicit, the Topic here, *the fire*, stands in relation to the Comment as a kind of discourse-heading. The link between Topic and Comment is no longer implicitly grammatical; it is purely semantic. Example (2) like example (1), has a Topic which is a discourse-heading: where *fish* is concerned, red snappers are very delicious fish. In examples (3) and (4), the Topic-Comment structure seem to be a substitute for a genitive construction (*the leaves of the tree*, *the noses of the elephants are long*). The relationship between Topic and Comment is an implicitly grammatical one, much like it is in the Baba Malay examples.

All these examples, however, do indicate that an alternative to a Subject-Predicate analysis of the languages concerned needs to be looked at, for although the linguistic phenomenon exemplified above may also be found to some extent in undoubtedly Subject-Predicate languages such as English, the point has to be made that this particular phenomenon is much more widespread and more an *integral* part of linguistic behaviour in languages such as Mandarin, Hokkien, Korean and Baba Malay.

Li and Thompson have proposed that languages be regarded as being either Subject-Prominent or Topic-Prominent, i.e. either as being basically Subject-Predicate in nature or Topic-Comment in nature. Such a classification would be a matter of degree as almost all languages fall somewhere between the two categories, and it could only be said of them that they were more oriented or less oriented towards one category. Li and Thompson suggest that two major characteristics of Topic-Prominent languages are: first, passive constructions either do not exist at all, or they appear as a marginal construction rarely used in speech, or carry a special meaning (e.g. the 'adversity' passive in Japanese); second, dummy subjects do not occur at all, in contrast to Subject-Prominent languages where a subject is grammatically necessary whether or not it plays a semantic role. As defined by these two characteristics, Baba Malay would seem to qualify as a Topic-Prominent language, for not only are dummy-subjects non-existent but grammatical subjects are frequently missing, and so too is the passive construction (see the following section for a discussion of passivisation in Baba Malay).

4.6 Sentence structure: passivisation and topicalisation

Baba Malay, like Hokkien but unlike Malay, has no 'Passive voice'. By this it is meant that there is no morphological marking of the verb in a sentence that would signal its status as either an 'active' verb, i.e. with its semantic subject acting as the grammatical subject of the sentence, or a 'passive' verb, i.e. one with its semantic object acting as the grammatical subject of the sentence. This distinction between an 'active' verb and a 'passive' verb is quite obvious in a language such as English or Malay.

- English (1) Active: he ATE the fish
 (2) Passive: the fish WAS EATEN by him
- Malay (3) Active: dia MAKAN ikan itu
 (4) Passive: ikan itu DIMAKANNYA

It has been pointed out (in the previous section) that the notions of 'Subject' and 'Predicate' could be more generally described in terms of the Topic-Comment distinction. That is to say that as an utterance in its most neutral form, unmarked by intonational emphasis in speech, the Subject of a sentence may be taken as 'the given information', while the Predicate may be seen as providing 'new information'. 'The given' and 'the new' is precisely the way in which Topic and Comment have been characterised, and it can therefore be seen that in a general way, Subject-Predicate constructions are also Topic-Comment constructions (though of course, not all Topic-Comment structures are necessarily Subject-Predicate constructions).

In sentence (1) then, the Subject he is the Topic, whereas in sentence (2), because of the passivisation process, it is a different subject, the fish, that now serves as the Topic.

Passivisation, therefore, is one form of the very common process of topicalisation, but unlike the form of topicalisation that produces a sentence such as that man, I used to know him, passivisation is accompanied by morphological changes in the verb (as well as some structural changes such as, in English, the addition of the preposition by before the grammatical object).

In Baba Malay, such a topicalisation process is quite common. The semantic object is pre-posed to the front of the sentence, the semantic subject often does not appear, and the verb undergoes no change at all:

- (1) coffin lama-lama lètak ruma
coffin for a long time leave house
the coffin is left for a long time in the house
- (2) lain-lain adat sémua ada ikut lagi, tak
other customs all Emphatic follow still Question
morpheme marker
the other customs are all still followed, aren't they?

These sentences are semantically passive, and although they are examples of topicalisation, they differ in form from two other types of topicalisation exemplified by the sentences below, the types that produce the quite common 'Double-Subject' and 'Pre-posed Object' constructions.

- (3) ORANG CINA, DIA-ORANG kaya (Double Subject)
people Chinese they rich
the Chinese, they are rich

- (4) CINA PUNYA ADAT, dia pake (Pre-posed Object)
Chinese customs he observes
the Chinese customs, he observes

These three types of topicalisation are quite distinct although two of them might appear suspiciously similar. Sentences (1) and (4) appear similar except for the overt presence of the semantic subject *dia* in (4). However, I believe this difference to be crucial. Sentences (1) and (4) do exemplify two different types of topicalisation; it is not simply the case that (1) has an unspecified agent and that apart from this, (1) is not different from (4). In fact, the difference between them is exactly the difference reflected by their English glosses:

- (5) the Chinese customs are observed
(6) the Chinese customs, he observes (them)

Sentence (2) above would seem to differ from sentence (1) in that it would seem to have undergone two types of topicalisation, which I will call 'pseudo-passivisation' (in which the semantic object serves as grammatical subject without attendant morphological changes to the verb) and 'subject-doubling'. Pseudo-passivisation would have produced the following construction:

- (7) semua lain-lain adat ada ikut lagi tak
all other customs Emphatic follow still Question
morpheme marker
all the other customs are still followed, aren't they?

Next, subject-doubling would have shifted part of the noun-phrase to the front of the sentence, leaving the quantifier *s mua* as a trace of the second, duplicate subject. Thus, *s mua* serves an anaphoric function, much as *he* in *this man, he was walking down the road...* serves to refer to its duplicate subject *this man* (double subjects of course must both have the same semantic referent):

- (8) lain-lain adat semua ada ikut lagi tak
other customs all Emphatic follow still Question
 morpheme marker
the other customs, all are still followed, aren't they?

Topicalisation, a process whereby information is arranged such that the part of the information that is given, or the part that is already familiar, is placed at the front of the sentence (and thereby highlighting it as well), is a common mode of language behaviour. In languages that do have a so-called 'passive voice', passivisation is a distinct linguistic process which is at least morphologically and/or grammatically identifiable in the verb (and this is the defining condition for the process), as well as grammatically identifiable elsewhere in the structure of the sentence (this latter is a frequent but not necessary condition for the definition of the process).

Passivisation, then, in a language such as English for example, is a specific formalised mode of topicalisation. Baba Malay has no 'passive voice' as so-defined (there is perhaps one restricted set of structures that could be exceptions, and this is discussed below), but the general process of topicalisation is quite common.

Besides the pseudo-passives of which sentences (1) and (2) above serve as examples, there is a restricted set of sentence structures in Baba Malay which

could satisfy the conditions that define the Passive Voice. These are the constructions which contain the free morpheme *kasi* in one of its grammatical functions (see 2.1.2.2.4):

- (9) *dia kasi gua pukol*
 he kasi I hit
 he was hit by me

There are a few things to note about sentence (9). First of all, as in all passive constructions, the semantic object *dia* is in grammatical subject position. Secondly, the sentence differs from (10) below which is an example of object-preposing topicalisation.

- (10) *dia gua pukol*
 he I hit
 him, I hit

Sentence (9) therefore represents a type of structure distinct from the examples of topicalisation we have encountered thus far. The free morpheme *kasi* serves to mark the verb as 'passive', and when a verb is marked 'passive', then it signals that the grammatical subject of the sentence is actually the semantic object, much as the form BE eaten signals that its grammatical subject is no longer to be interpreted as the agent. Viewed in this way, then, it can be seen that *kasi*, though not a morphological marking on the verb, is a grammatical marking, and as such, the sentence satisfies the definition for a genuine 'Passive'.

However, it has to be noted that *kasi* may serve this function in only a very restricted set of cases. As does its Hokkien equivalent *hō* from whose function it probably derives, *kasi* may only serve as a passive marker with verbs that denote some kind of sense-contact such as touching (in its myriad forms, aggressive or otherwise), seeing, smelling and hearing, and with certain verbs that denote emotions, such as love and hate.

It can be seen, therefore, that the semantic function of the passive voice is served in the main by topicalisation in Baba Malay. In fact, it may even be argued that topicalisation is the general method of 'focussing' and that passive constructions, which exist in many languages, are a specifically formalised mode of topicalisation.

4.7 Variability in Baba Malay syntax

It should not be assumed from the foregoing discussion of the salient and defining syntactic characteristics of Baba Malay that Baba Malay is a syntactically invariant language, that every single identified Baba Malay feature is to be found in every single speaker of the language. Baba Malay, after all, is a natural language, and variability is very much a characteristic of natural languages.

Variability in Baba Malay syntax may be examined by taking a look at the occurrence of four very common and identifiable Baba Malay features.

These are:

- (1) The pre-nominal position of the determiner: *itu* + Noun.
- (2) The pre-nominal position of the adjective: Adjective + *punya* + Noun.
- (3) The marking of possession with *punya*: Noun + *punya* + Noun.
- (4) The 1st person singular pronoun: *gua*.

These four features were selected not by any particular conscious process; rather, their variability attracted my attention in the course of the investigation, thereby making them natural candidates for closer scrutiny.

The intention was to find out which of the four features was the most variable and which the least variable among Baba Malay speakers as a whole. In order to make proper comparisons, those informants who could be used in this part of the investigation had to be those in whom *all* four features could be found in their individual recorded samples of speech. Following this principle, nine informants were used.

Profile of participating informants			
Informant	Age	Sex	Other languages known
A	56	F	-
B	23	F	English, Malay
C	60	M	English
D	71	F	-
E	53	F	English
F	64	M	English, Malay
G	26	F	English, Malay
H	18	F	English, Malay
I	24	M	English, Malay

Percentage of times the following Baba Malay features occur in each informant in ½ hour stretch of speech				
	itu+Noun	Adj+punya+Noun	Noun+punya+Noun	gua
A	$\frac{1}{1} = 100\%$	$\frac{2}{2} = 100\%$	$\frac{2}{3} = 66\%$	$\frac{13}{13} = 100\%$
B	$\frac{2}{2} = 100\%$	$\frac{1}{1} = 100\%$	$\frac{2}{2} = 100\%$	$\frac{0}{2} = 0\%$
C	$\frac{19}{19} = 100\%$	$\frac{13}{19} = 68\%$	$\frac{41}{45} = 91\%$	$\frac{48}{61} = 78\%$
D	$\frac{3}{3} = 100\%$	$\frac{1}{1} = 100\%$	$\frac{9}{13} = 69\%$	$\frac{1}{16} = 6\%$
E	$\frac{1}{1} = 100\%$	$\frac{0}{1} = 0\%$	$\frac{0}{1} = 0\%$	$\frac{9}{13} = 69\%$
F	$\frac{10}{10} = 100\%$	$\frac{0}{5} = 0\%$	$\frac{11}{14} = 78\%$	$\frac{13}{44} = 29\%$
G	$\frac{1}{1} = 100\%$	$\frac{3}{4} = 75\%$	$\frac{2}{5} = 40\%$	$\frac{1}{1} = 100\%$
H	$\frac{3}{9} = 33\%$	$\frac{4}{4} = 100\%$	$\frac{17}{22} = 77\%$	$\frac{26}{26} = 100\%$
I	$\frac{1}{8} = 12\%$	$\frac{1}{2} = 50\%$	$\frac{0}{2} = 0\%$	$\frac{7}{16} = 43\%$
Average:	<u>82.7%</u>	<u>65.8%</u>	<u>57.8%</u>	<u>58.3%</u>

In each of the four columns, the Baba Malay feature is contrasted with its corresponding non-Baba Malay form. Thus, for example, for informant H, there were nine occasions in a half-hour stretch of speech in which the determiner *itu* co-occurred with a noun, but only on three of these nine occasions did the occurrence of determiner and noun take its accepted Baba Malay pattern, viz., *itu* + noun (the determiner preceding the noun). The remaining six occurrences took the Malay pattern, which is noun + *itu*. Thus, for informant H, this particular Baba Malay feature occurred 33% of the time in a particular half-hour.

The 'average' figure at the bottom of each column should be interpreted thus: out of nine informants, the Baba Malay feature occurs _% of the time on the average. On the basis of this figure, it would appear that the least variable (most stable) of the four selected features is the positioning of the determiner *itu* (occurring 82.7% of the time on the average among the nine informants) and the most variable (least stable) is the use of *punya* as a possessive marker and the form of the 1st person pronoun *gua* (occurring 57.8% and 58.3% of the time on average respectively).

The table is, of course, only a general indication of the relative variability of the four features as the number of informants used was small and the occurrences of the features in individual informants in a half-hour stretch of speech were not as numerous as one might have hoped for or even expected. The determiner *itu* for example, occurred only once in the speech sample of informants A, E and G.

What the table does clearly show, however, is that Baba Malay speakers do not behave linguistically as ideal speakers of their language; they do not use *exclusively* those linguistic forms which have been seen as being indigenously theirs. Quite often, Baba Malay speakers will use Malay linguistic forms to conform with their perceptions of 'correctness' or 'formality' (this being observable in the way Malay forms gradually and unconsciously give way to Baba Malay forms as the informants relax in the course of the conversation), but quite often too, there will be no predictable or explicable reason for linguistic variability.

It may seem strange that one needs to be reminded of the inherent variability in language at all; after all, much of the recent attention of linguists has been directed to just this issue. Inherent variability has become a linguistic axiom, and, paradoxically, needs no longer stand in the way of the kind of general, 'ideal-speaker' description of Baba Malay that has been attempted in this investigation. Thus, even while the salient syntactic features of Baba Malay are being described, cognisance is being taken of the fact that 'not all Baba Malay speakers talk that way all the time'.

5. BABA MALAY AND OTHER REDUCED MALAY-BASED VARIETIES IN MALACCA

An examination of Baba Malay on its own, as has been done thus far, provides only a partial picture of the significance of the language, because Baba Malay, like all creoles, emerged against a background of historical inter-cultural links. Consequently, its present standing has to be viewed in the context of other reduced Malay-based linguistic varieties that are such a noticeable feature of the language situation in Malacca. It is only by observing the inter-relationship between these varieties that Baba Malay can be seen in its proper perspective. The importance of doing precisely this has already been

dealt with in the brief discussion of the relationship between Baba Malay and its related pidgin Bazaar Malay (see 2.3). However, having familiarised ourselves with the main grammatical features of Baba Malay, we can now further clarify the actual linguistic significance of Baba Malay by taking a look at the linguistic continuum simply labelled 'Bazaar Malay' as well as at another creole called 'Chitty-Malay' and examine the relationship of both with Baba Malay.

5.1 Chitty-Malay

The fact that the Chinese exerted a great linguistic influence on the pre-pidgin continuum can be seen not only in certain linguistic features of Bazaar Malay, but also in the features of another Malay-based creole found in Malacca called 'Chitty-Malay'.⁶

Chitty-Malay is the native-tongue of the Chitty-Indian community of Malacca, a community of Dravidian (Tamil-speaking originally) Indians who are descended from the earliest Indian settlers in Malacca. The history of the Chitty-Indians in Malacca seems to parallel that of the Baba Chinese. It would seem that the community was an established (albeit small) one by the 17th Century,⁷ so that the variety of Malay spoken by the Chitty-Indians would certainly not be any older than Baba Malay.

Chitty-Malay exhibits most of the syntactic features that have been identified as being indigenous to Baba Malay. Among these are:⁸

- (1) The use of *punya* as a possessive marker e.g.
aku punya rumah *my house*
- (2) The use of *punya* as a marker of temporal and locative nominal modifiers e.g.
sini punya orang *the people of this place*
dulu punya orang *the people of the past*
- (3) The use of *kasi* in its benefactive function e.g.
dia belikan satu kain meja kasi aku *he bought a shirt for me*
- (4) The use of *kasi* in its causative-benefactive function e.g.
dia-orang kasi aku pergi sekolah *they let me go to school*
- (5) The use of *kasi* in its causative function e.g.
dia sorak-sorak kasi aku takut *his screams made me frightened*
- (6) The use of *kena* in its modal function of expressing 'non-volition' e.g.
kita kena jalan sana *we had to walk there*
- (7) The pre-nominal position of the determiner
itu orang *the man*

Phonologically, Chitty-Malay is distinguishable from Baba Malay, but the basic syntax and lexicon are similar (the latter of course taken from Malay). The similarity in syntax can probably be attributed to the fact that the general simplification and reduction processes applying to Malay work in general and predictable ways, such that the structures that actually result from these two processes are structures that one would expect to result if Malay had to undergo simplification and reduction. However, the significant observation here is that those syntactic features of Baba Malay which are demonstrably a consequence of its Chinese origin are also found in Chitty-Malay to some degree.

Unlike lexical items, such semantic-syntactic features are not likely to be late incorporations into the language. The linguistic evidence, therefore, would suggest that Chitty-Malay must have derived from a heavily Chinese-influenced pre-pidgin continuum that existed in Malacca in the 17th Century.

5.2 Bazaar Malay

There is in reality no single autonomous variety called 'Bazaar Malay'. It exists only by virtue of having certain defining characteristics and these are that it is recognisably a linguistically reduced form of Malay with simplified syntax and no or little morphological inflection, and that it is not the native-tongue of any group in the speech community. It is this latter characteristic that chiefly distinguishes it from both Baba Malay and Chitty-Malay. The lack of a community of speakers using Bazaar Malay as a first language means that there is no guarantee that it will exhibit a fairly high degree of consistency or stability of form each time it is encountered. Any foreigner attempting to communicate by stringing together isolated Malay words to a minimally-acceptable sentential pattern may be said to have produced a Bazaar Malay sentence. The continuum of competence ranges from such a low-level 'Me Tarzan, you Jane' type to a type that is as formally consistent and as functionally operative over the widest necessary domain as Baba Malay and Chitty-Malay, the two varieties that do claim native speakers. Thus, at one end of the continuum, there is the form of Bazaar Malay that resembles Baba Malay and Chitty-Malay syntactically even if phonologically it may be coloured by the specific speaker's own first language, and even if lexically there may be words in both Baba Malay and Chitty-Malay that are unfamiliar to him.

However, it is again significant that this high-level type of Bazaar Malay exhibits many of those demonstrably indigenous Baba Malay structural features. It is possible to examine the Bazaar Malay as spoken by an informant who is a member of another culturally interesting ethnic group in Malacca, the Portuguese-Eurasians, to see evidence of this.

5.2.1 Bazaar Malay of a Portuguese-Eurasian speaker (male, in his fifties)⁹

- (A) Itu dulu kita sewa ... 1928, itu rumah sudah bikin. Itu Padre Francois, tahu, Padre Francois punya rumah ini-la. Tanah hutan semua. Dia sudah beli satu kebun sini. Belakang sudah bikin rumah.
That, we once rented ... in 1928 that house was built. That Padre Francois, you know, this was Padre Francois's house. It was all jungle. He bought a plot here. Then he built the house.
- (B) Dua ringgit setengah itu jam tiga rumah satu jamban. Abi belakang, kita complain, complain, complain, government bikin kasi naik dua-puluh sen lagi. Jadi sudah bikin satu rumah satu jamban, dua ringgit tujuh-puluh lima. Abi government tak boleh tahan lagi, pasal rumah bocor-bocor, pecah sana pecah sini ... kasi free sekali ini rumah. Kita bayar ini tanah, satu tahun satu ringgit; satu tahun satu ringgit itu tanah punya. Juga pintu, juga jamban, kita kena bayar, itu macam.
Two dollars fifty then for three houses to one toilet. So in the end we complained and complained, and the government raised it another twenty cents. So they made it one house to one toilet, two dollars and seventy-five cents. Then the government couldn't stand it any longer because the house was run-down, broken here and there ... this house was then given

free of charge. We paid for the land, a dollar a year, that was the cost of the land. Even the door, even the toilet, we had to pay for; that was the situation.

This informant's Bazaar Malay may be taken as a general documentation of the kind of high-level Bazaar Malay as spoken by the Portuguese Eurasians in Malacca. Syntactically, there is little discernible difference between his Bazaar Malay and Baba Malay, but what is significant is the presence of the following Baba Malay features:

- (1) Gua/Lu: The presence of these pronoun forms in the Bazaar Malay spoken by a Portuguese-Eurasian (not in the transcripts of the selected extracts) is perhaps the strongest reflection of the influence exerted by Hokkien on the pidgin Bazaar Malay.
- (2) Punya: Punya appears as a possessive marker, one of the main grammatical functions of the word in Baba Malay. It also appears as a marker of a locative modifier: *kedai punya orang the people of the shop*. This, too, is a grammatical function that the word has in Baba Malay.
- (3) Kasi: Kasi appears in its causative function: *kasi naik cause to rise, to raise*.
- (4) Kena: Kena appears as a modal auxiliary expressing 'non-volition': *kena bayar (we) had to pay*.
- (5) Ini/itu: The determiner *ini* and *itu* precede the nominal as they do in Baba Malay.

These are the features that have been identified as being typical of Baba Malay and the above were all found in a half-hour stretch of speech sample. It is quite likely that other grammatical functions of such items as *punya* and *kasi* discussed in Section 4 would also be found in this particular idiolect of Bazaar Malay as well.

5.2.2 Bazaar Malay of a Hokkien-speaker (male, in his forties)

- (A) *Ini ikan, ah, macam bawang, ah, tak tetap itu harga, tahu? Kadang-kadang kalau ada, satu ringgit satu kati. Kadang-kadang tak ada, lima-belas ringgit. Dia kalau beli lima belas ringgit satu kati, se-ekor, dia mesti mau untung tiga ringgit...*
This fish, ah, like onions, ah, the price is not fixed, you know. Sometimes if it's available it's a dollar a kati. Sometimes if it's not available, it's fifteen dollars. If he buys at fifteen dollars a kati, for each fish he (i.e. the seller) must want to make a profit of three dollars.
- (B) *Ah, rumah lu punya, anak lu punya, abi lu tak mau control dia, lu susah-la. Nanti lu mati...*
Ah, the house is yours, the child is yours and you don't want to control her, you are therefore in difficulties. When you're dead...

The most noticeable thing about the Bazaar Malay of this Hokkien-speaking informant on listening to him is that it stands out as being phonologically different from Baba Malay or any of the Malay-based varieties so far discussed. While the others have basically Malay phonology, the Bazaar Malay as spoken by this informant shows some obvious Hokkien phonological interference. [n] and [r] in word-initial position become [l], and [d] becomes [l] in all positions.

Thus, nanti is [lanti], ringgit is [linget], dia is [lia], and kadang-kadang is [kalaŋ kalaŋ]. These differences immediately stamp the speaker as being a Chinese who has clearly not had much educational contact with English or Malay. The Malaysian Chinese who are English-educated encounter no difficulties with [n], [r] and [d] in the above-specified positions when Bazaar Malay is spoken.

The half-hour sample of speech reveals the predictable presence of punya in its function as possessive marker, the pronoun forms gua and lu, the pre-nominal position of the determiners ini and itu, and the particle -la.

Having viewed some of the other reduced Malay-based varieties that are encountered in Malacca, we are in a better position to see the ways in which Baba Malay is similar to these varieties as well as the ways in which it is different from them. The similarities suggest that historically, the Chinese played quite a big part in the linguistic development of these varieties, perhaps a bigger part than has hitherto been recognised. Specific grammatical parallels between these varieties and Hokkien, and the quite obvious examples of semantic calques are too numerous and consistent to be mere coincidences. Shellabear's contention that it was the Chinese who created Bazaar Malay (see Section 2.3), which on first acquaintance seemed so sweeping a belief, would seem to be the truth.

The similarities between Baba Malay and the other reduced Malay-based varieties may also reflect more general linguistic processes that deal with the ways in which a specific language such as Malay is 'simplified' by learners who have either no inclination or no opportunity to learn it perfectly. The fact is that it would appear that the grammatical structures of these reduced Malay-based varieties are remarkably similar to one another. Coincidence is clearly too facile an explanation. On a close examination of the way the basic sentence is structured, one may quite easily be convinced of the 'minimal' nature of its pattern; it would simply be quite difficult to reduce the pattern to any other simpler form. This is not a claim that the basic sentence structure of these varieties reflects a universal, 'psychological' minimal structure, which would clearly be too sweeping a claim. What is suggested here, however, is that for a particular language (in this case, Malay), the processes of reduction may be quite predictable.

6. SOME CONCLUDING REMARKS

The stated purpose of this investigation was first, to examine where a 'mixed language' or a 'reduced language' such as Baba Malay stands in relation to the linguistic processes of pidginisation and creolisation, and secondly, to provide a sketch of the linguistic make-up of Baba Malay.

With regard to the first aim, the question whether there ever was a full-fledged, linguistically stable pidgin in Malacca out of which Baba Malay developed cannot be answered with certainty. What is certain is that there must have at least been a pre-pidgin continuum in Malacca in the 17th and 18th Centuries, a continuum of 'reduced Malay'. A creole, then, would seem not to need a full-fledged pidgin as a prior stage in its development. Baba Malay could have emerged very quickly if we accept the reasonable assumption, from what we can gather of the particular lifestyle and attitudes of the Chinese in 17th and 18th Century Malacca, that children of mixed Chinese-Malay parents would have spoken this 'reduced Malay' as a first language. What is also certain is that

the variety of reduced Malay spoken by the Chinese community must have exerted a strong influence on the 'reduced Malay continuum' during its development, for today we can see the distinctly Chinese linguistic features in the pidgin Malay spoken by other ethnic groups in the country. There probably were no neat and clearly-defined stages in the development of both Baba Malay and Bazaar Malay. It is of course, possible that present-day Bazaar Malay could have been a result of a process of re-pidginisation after Baba Malay had achieved stability, but given what we know of 'language behaviour', such *clearly-defined* developmental stages and links have more to do with theoretical models than with reality. It seems more realistic to assume that there was a 'reduced Malay' continuum and out of this emerged the stabilised variety called 'Baba Malay'. The 'reduced Malay continuum' may be evident even today in the loosely-labelled 'Bazaar Malay'. The creole Baba Malay, then, developed side by side with the 'pidgin' Bazaar Malay. In this case, the creole stands in a 'fraternal' relationship with the pidgin rather than a 'filial' one. Baba Malay's genealogy, therefore, would seem to be dissimilar to that of many other creoles.

The second purpose of this investigation was to provide a sketch of the linguistic make-up of Baba Malay. The structural consistency of Baba Malay should be clear from the foregoing pages, and its precise linguistic relationship with its substrate language, Hokkien, has been explicated. Even if this investigation accomplishes nothing else, it will have provided, I believe for the first time, a record of Baba Malay for the linguist.

APPENDIX 1: SAMPLES OF BABA MALAY SPEECH

1. Male, 61 years old, educated in English.

Kita sini semua cakap bahasa kebangsaan dalam ruma, tapi itu bahasa kebangsaan bukan macam pigi sekola punya, ini ruma punya. Jadi sini punya orang Melayu bilang itu bahasa pasa. Ini macam punya cakap bukan kata Melaka bole erti, Singapore bole erti jugak. Banyak senang...

Saya punya mak, bila mau kawin saya punya bapak, saya punya bapak sebela pigi mintak saya punya kong mau kawin. Saya punya kong semua mau tahu, "Lu semua pake kain, lu punya laki siapa?" Jadi gua punya gua-kong mau tanya gua punya lai-kong. Jadi ini orang pigi mintak, mau kasi tahu-la. "Lu-orang kalau takut, lu pigi Melaka tam-tia..."

We all speak the national language at home here, but this national language is not the school variety, it is the home variety. So the Malays here say it is the language of the marketplace. This type of speech is not one that (only) Malacca understands, it is understood in Singapore too. It's very easy...

My mother, when she wanted to marry my father, my father's side (of the family) went to ask my grandfather in order for her to be married. My grandfather wanted to know everything, "Do you all 'wear cloth' (i.e. of Baba stock), who is your boy?" So my maternal grandfather wanted to ask my paternal grandfather. So as this person went to ask all this, you want to tell him. "If you are afraid, go to Malacca and investigate..."

Some observations

The sample here reveals many of the characteristic Baba Malay features discussed in this investigation. Note in particular the use of *punya* in genitive-type constructions:

pigi sêkola punya (bahasa)
the language of the schools

sini punya orang Melayu
the Malays of this place

saya punya mak
my mother

The pronouns *saya* and *gua* appear to be freely variable in this extract, although in the course of the interview the tendency was towards *gua* as the informant became more relaxed (at the beginning of the interview he adhered resolutely to *saya*). Variation in pronoun usage among all my informants is restricted to the 1st person singular form only; *lu*, for example, never alternates with the Malay *awak* or *engkau*.

Hokkien loan words are clearly evident, as is the use of *banyak* (a word semantically equivalent to the English *many*) as an adjectival intensifier.

2. Female, 36 years old, educated in English

Bêlakang ada orang kata orang mau kasi anak. Dia kata anak itu dua tahun, tapi pèrèmpuan. Kasehan tak orang mau. Abi dia kata tak apa-la, kalau dia tahun macam bese tak orang mau, "gua pigi amek". Dia pigi tengok, bukan dua tahun, dua minggu saja. Abi mak gua dukong kasehan budak itu dua minggu. Ingat tak mau, dua minggu susa jaga. Bila mau tarok itu baby, baby nangis. Kenapa ini? Dia dukong, dia diam-diam. Suda-la, tak apa-la, dia kata, amek-amek-la. Mak dia kata, "Lu kasi-la gua enam tin susu, lu kasi gua ang-pau." Mak gua kasi ang-pau lima-pulo ringgit. Abi kaki babi se-pasang, susu enam tin, itu dia mintak. Itu-la adek kècik sèkali. Sèkarang umo dia dua-pulo-lima, suda kawin, suda tahun kawin...

Mak saya sunggo dia amek anak, tapi dia sayang tiga anak macam anak dia sèndiri, tak pèna pukol, tak pèna kotok.

Finally someone said that there was someone who wanted to give away a baby. He said that the baby was two years old, but it was a girl. It was a pity that no one wanted it. So she (i.e. informant's mother) said that it didn't matter, if the baby was so old and no one wanted it, "I will go and take her". She went to see it, and it wasn't two years old, it was two weeks old. Then my mother picked up the poor two-week-old child. She thought she didn't want it, a two-week-old child being hard to look after. When she put the baby down, the baby cried. Why is this? When she was carrying it, it was quiet. "All right, never mind", she said, "I will take it". The baby's mother said, "You give me six tins of milk and you give me an ang-pow". My mother gave her a fifty-dollar ang-pow. Then, she gave a pair of pig's legs and six tins of milk, this being what she asked for. And that was my youngest sister. She is now twenty-five years old and she is now married, married for a year now...

Although my mother adopted children, she loved the three children as if they were her own, never hitting them and never ill-treating them.

Some observations

On the evidence of this extract, this informant seems to favour the more Malay form of the possessive construction:

mak gua	mak dia	umo dia	mak saya
<i>my mother</i>	<i>her mother</i>	<i>her age</i>	<i>my mother</i>

There is inherent saya/gua variation, but the tendency is towards gua as the interview progresses. As was the case with informant A, informant B began the interview with saya, which gave way to a mixture of saya and gua as she became less conscious of the tape-recorder.

Another noticeable feature is the preference for post-nominal positioning of *ini* and *itu*, which is less characteristic of Baba Malay in general. There is, however, an example in the extract of pre-nominal *itu* (*itu baby*). (The choice in this instance could have been governed by her choice of the English word *baby*; the pre-nominal determiner would conform with English patterning.)

anak itu	budak itu
<i>the baby</i>	<i>the child</i>

3. Female, 18 years old, educated in English, studied Malay at school

Kémaren gua sama gua punya cousin pigi Singapore. Abi, kita mau pigi Johore-la, mau tinggal sama cousin punya ruma. Abi gua baru beli satu swimsuit, tahu, tapi gua takut kena tax. Gua pake swimsuit, gua pake jeans sama T-shirt. Abi bila sampe custom, takut-takut, hati berdebat-berdebu...

Gua ingatkan dia tanya, gua cakap baru balek swimming. Baik tak nampak. Abi sampe dekat Johore, hujan, hujan. Cousin pun tak datang. Pigi telephone dia. Telephone dia kena tunggu berjam-jam, pasa bila cousin gua telephone, ah, cakap dia lain tempat. Kita tunggu, dia carek lain tempat. Kita tunggu, tunggu, tunggu. Baik dia pusing satu round, berjumpa kita. Kalau tidak, kena balek Singapore. Macam orang gila, tunggu.

Sometime ago, I and my cousin went to Singapore. We wanted to go to Johore, to stay in my cousin's house. I had just bought a swimsuit, you know, but I was afraid it would be taxed. I wore the swimsuit, I wore jeans and a T-shirt. So when I reached the Customs, I was afraid, my heart was beating fast...

I thought if he asked, I would say that I had just been swimming. It was good he didn't notice it. So we got to Johore and it was raining. My cousin hadn't arrived and I went to telephone him. After telephoning him, we had to wait hours because when I rang him they said he was elsewhere. While we waited, he was looking somewhere else for us. We waited, waited and waited. It was good he made a round and saw us. Otherwise, we would have had to go back to Singapore. Like crazy people, we waited.

Some observations

Informant 3, although educated in English, studied Malay at school and this is probably most clearly revealed by her use of words with Malay affixation, e.g. berdebat-berdebu, berjam-jam, berjumpa. English words are liberally used, but apart from all this, her speech is still recognisably Baba Malay.

APPENDIX 2: LEXICON OF HOKKIEN LOAN WORDS IN BABA MALAY FOUND IN CORPUS

Baba Malay	Hokkien	English
cap-cai	chap-chhài	<i>mixed vegetables</i>
popia	pó-p'ia	<i>spring-roll</i>
tau-ge	tāu-gê	<i>bean-shoots</i>
kiam-cai	kiâm-chhài	<i>salted vegetables</i>
tau-yu	tāu-iû	<i>soya sauce</i>
lo-teng	lâu-téng	<i>upstairs</i>
tia	thĩa	<i>living room</i>
sin-kek	sin-khe?	<i>new immigrant from China</i>
ca-bó-gan	cha-b'ó-gan	<i>maidservant</i>
lang-kek	lâng-khe?	<i>guest</i>
to-cang	thâu-chang	<i>queue</i>
cia	chhia	<i>vehicle</i>
te-ko	tê-k'ó	<i>kettle</i>
teng	teng	<i>lamp</i>
tok	to?	<i>altar table</i>
bio	b'io	<i>temple</i>
ting-kong	thĩ-k'ong	<i>Heavenly Father</i>
cio-tau	chio?-thâu	<i>stone</i>
hau-lam	hau-lam	<i>mourner</i>
minang	mui-lâng	<i>matchmaker</i>
kia-sai	k'ia-sài	<i>son-in-law</i>
kuan-si	k'uai-sì	<i>accustomed</i>
yau-kin	iàu-kín	<i>important</i>
cai-ki	chai-khì	<i>luck</i>
kek-sim	kek-sim	<i>sad</i>
cin-cai	chhin-chhai	<i>easy-going</i>
ho-mia	ho-m'ia	<i>a fortunate life</i>
pai-mia	pai-m'ia	<i>an unfortunate life</i>
u-hau	u-hàu	<i>filial</i>
kau-ce	kau-che	<i>fussy</i>
cia	chĩa	<i>real</i>
tai	tāi	<i>generation</i>
se	s'ĩ	<i>surname</i>
cut-si	chhut-sì	<i>birth</i>

kai-siau	kaì-siáu	<i>recommend</i>
tam-tia	tham-thiá	<i>investigate</i>
tim	tīm	<i>to steam</i>
cat	chhat	<i>paint</i>
ngkong	án-kong	<i>grandfather</i>
nio	níu	<i>grandmother, mother-in-law</i>
sun	sun	<i>grandchild</i>
taci	tūa-chí	<i>elder sister</i>
ngko	á-ko	<i>elder brother</i>
ngso	á-só	<i>elder brother's wife</i>
ngtia	á-tia	<i>father</i>
kō	kô	<i>paternal aunt</i>
kō-tio	kô-tíu	<i>paternal aunt's husband</i>
yi	î	<i>maternal aunt</i>
yi-tio	î-tíu	<i>maternal aunt's husband</i>
m-pek	á-pe?	<i>elder paternal uncle</i>
cek	che?	<i>younger paternal uncle</i>
mak-m	á-m	<i>elder paternal uncle's wife</i>
ngcim	á-chím	<i>younger paternal uncle's wife</i>
ngku	á-kū	<i>maternal uncle</i>
ngkim	á-kim	<i>maternal uncle's wife</i>
ta-kua	ta-kūa	<i>father-in-law</i>
ko-po	kô-po	<i>great paternal aunt</i>

The loan words in the above list are, of course, not exhaustive, nor is each word equally familiar to every Baba Malay speaker. Some of the words have Malay equivalents and they may be used in preference to the Baba Malay forms by some Baba Malay speakers, e.g. *béranak* may often replace the more archaic *cut-si*, and *cucu* frequently replaces *sun*. However, although not exhaustive, the list nevertheless gives an idea of the type of Hokkien loan word found in Baba Malay. Hokkien words have been borrowed by Baba Malay mainly to designate objects, concepts and relationships that are closely associated with the Chinese way of life.

NOTES

¹From Pires (1944) as quoted by K.T. Joseph, "Why was Malacca chosen as the site for a kingdom and how it became an emporium soon" in *Illustrated historical guide to Malacca* (1973:37-39).

- ²The Chinese have also left their mark on Jakarta Malay, a variety of Malay spoken in Jakarta. This can be traced in, for example, the Jakarta Malay pronouns *gua* and *lu* and in the use of the word *punya* as a possessive marker, both of which items are a feature of Baba Malay.
- ³The only Active Verbal which seems to behave differently is *tahu to know*. It will not occur with Aspectual auxiliary *lagi*, nor will it occur in such a structure as *tahu punya orang*, and in these respects it stands apart from all the other verbals. Linguists have long noted the peculiarities of a small set of semantically 'stative' verbs of which *know* is a member, but except for *tahu*, these so-called semantically stative verbs behave normally in Baba Malay (in contrast to English in which, for example, stative verbs do not inflect in the same way as other verbs).
- ⁴Adjuncts vary in position depending on their type (see 4.1.4).
- ⁵Of course, *I go to swim* has a sense of purpose about it as well. It has the added sense of *I go in order to swim*.
- ⁶The origin of the term 'Chitty' is in some doubt, but my Chitty-Indian informant, Mr B.S. Naiker suggests that it means 'trader'.
- ⁷See Naiker (n.d.)
- ⁸The examples have been verified by Mr B.S. Naiker.
- ⁹The transcription in this and the next section has been rendered in standard Malay orthography.

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