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BAHASA TANJONG: THE HERITAGE LANGUAGE OF THE JAWI PERANAKANS OF PENANG[1]

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Bahasa Tanjong (Tanjong language) in the present discussion refers to a Malay dialect which has been labelled as "Penang Malay" and "George Town Malay" by past researchers. It is a variation of the Northern Malay dialect of Peninsular Malaysia which emerged over two centuries ago in the George Town area of Penang, also known locally as Tanjong. It is a hybridised form of Malay that grew out of the language contact situation between two cultures, Malay and South Indian Muslims. The intermarriage between the two groups produced an Indo-Malay community known as Jawi Peranakans who are the native speakers of the dialect. Bahasa Tanjong, as with other languages is a product of culture and is inextricably bound to its speech community. Thus, while considered a Northern Malay dialect, its emergence amidst a locale that was considered a colonial cosmopolitan caused it to possess features that are distinct from other Malay dialects. Early descriptions of bahasa Tanjong, such as Hamilton's discussion of "Penang Malay" published almost a century ago, considers the distinguishing characteristics of the dialect as a deviation of the Northern Malay Dialect. This is the point of departure for this article that argues that the features are in fact cultural markers that contribute to the construction of the bahasa Tanjong identity. Its Indian linguistic heritage, particularly Tamil, as well as its inclination to allow influences from other languages, sets it apart from other Northern Malay dialects. The uniqueness of bahasa Tanjong mirrors the equally distinctive community of speakers to which it belongs, namely the Jawi Peranakans of Penang. As the heritage language and living language of a minority Malay community, bahasa Tanjong cannot help but be affected by various socio-political factors within the wider Malaysian context. This is addressed in the present article in analysing bahasa Tanjong as the heritage language of the Jawi Peranakans using archival information, early 20th century data on Penang Malay, and contemporary bahasa Tanjong data.

Keywords: bahasa Tanjong, heritage language, Jawi Peranakan, hybridised Malay, Penang

THE ROOTS OF *BAHASA TANJONG*

The term *bahasa Tanjong* is used in this article to refer to a variation of the Northern Malay dialect[2] that is spoken by Malays in the George Town area of Penang. The dialect is labelled *bahasa Tanjong* (Tanjong language) in the present discussion because the locale where the dialect originated, i.e. George Town in Penang, is known locally as **Tanjong**. Indeed the reference to this area as Tanjong is found even in writings by colonial officers on early Penang.[3]

George Town or Tanjong, was a British Straits Settlement and a meeting place of various ethnicities, beliefs, cultures, geographies and economies. That old Penang, particularly the George Town area was a cosmopolitan, is evident from archival materials such as the extract below (cited in Mills, 1960: 53–54).[4]

> The greater part of this community are but sojourners for a time, so that the population of the island is continually shifting as to the individual members of whom it is composed; this population includes British subjects, foreigners, both Europeans and Americans, people of colour originally descended from European fathers and Asiatic mothers, Armenians, Parsees, Arabs, Chooliars (Indians), Malays from the Malay Peninsula, Sumatra, and the Eastern Islands, Buggeses from Borneo, Celebes and other islands in the China Seas, Burmans from Pegu, Siamese, Javanese, Chinese, with Mussulmen and Hindoos from the Company's territories in India.

Although old Penang comprised a multicultural and multilingual community, the language of communication between the various groups that were in contact at the time was Malay (Kratz, 1995; Gallop, 1994).[5] This is not surprising because the Malay language functioned as the lingua franca of inter-ethnic relation as well as the language of trade in the Nusantara as early as the 16th century. This fact is evidenced in archival materials such as Thomson's (1864) stories of his travels in the Far East in the early 1800s in which he documents incidents such as one in Singapore where Thomson, an Englishman spoke Malay with a Jew whom he met because that was the language they both knew. Other archival materials such as wordlists in Pigafetta (1523), Houtman (1598), the *Vocabulaer* (1599), as reported by Collins and Schmidt (1992), and Bowrey's 1701 English-Malay dictionary are proof of the importance of the Malay language as a trading language in the region over the last four centuries.

The importance of Malay as a lingua franca in Penang was perhaps the reason for Hamilton's 1922 publication entitled "Penang Malay". In the article, Hamilton (1922: 67) introduces the language as follows:

> The difference between the so-called "Penang Malay," which is really the Malay of Kedah altered slightly to suit the needs of a cosmopolitan town population with a large element of Southern Indians from Madras Presidency, and "Singapore Malay," which is a similar corruption of the speech of Johore to meet the requirements of a busy mart dealing with many races and much influenced by its proximity to Java, come mainly under six heads:
>
> 1. Harshness in pronunciation.
> 2. The alteration of a final "l" into "i"
> 3. The clipping of certain common words.
> 4. The use of peculiar idioms and idiomatic constructions.
> 5. The use of words not in common use elsewhere, or confined in use to Kedah.
> 6. The inclusion of words in Indian origin sometimes to the exclusion of native Malay words.

The introduction of the dialect as a bastardised version of the Northern Malay language is not surprising by a colonial officer and a non-linguist in the early 1900s when a variation of a known form was seen as decayed or corrupted. Notwithstanding the label that was given, Hamilton's documentation of Penang Malay is a useful point of reference for the description of the colloquial and standard forms of Malay in the Straits Settlement at the time. In his discussion, he provides lists of Penang Malay lexical forms and expressions and how they were pronounced at the time to establish his point on the linguistic deviations of the dialect. The publication also documents a useful list of Penang Malay words and compares them with those found in Singapore Malay at the time. Although Hamilton (1922: 67) uses the term "Penang Malay", his reference to it as a language that was altered to fulfil "the needs of a cosmopolitan town population" suggests that the language that he was referring to is essentially the form that was prominent in the George Town area of Penang. In line with this fact, Fujimoto (1988) uses the term "Georgetown Malay" to refer to the dialect. Thus, in the present discussion, Hamilton's "Penang Malay", Fujimoto's "Georgetown Malay" and *bahasa Tanjong* that is suggested here all refer to the Malay dialect used in George Town, Penang.

Local linguists recently proposed the term *Dialek Melayu Pulau Pinang* (henceforth DMPP), which directly translates into "Penang Malay Dialect" to refer to the Malay used in Penang. Geographically, Penang includes the island of Penang (*Pulau Pinang* in Malay) and the area on the mainland known as Seberang Perai (previously known as Province Wellesley). Taking this into consideration, DMPP essentially represents the Malay dialect used on the island of Penang and beyond. This means that the DMPP is the overarching form that comprises the sub-dialects found in Penang including *bahasa Tanjong*. It is

necessary to establish this point in underlining the argument of the present paper that although *bahasa Tanjong* is a dialect spoken in Penang, it does not represent the whole of Penang. It is inextricably linked to its locality, i.e. George Town[6], its colonial past and most notably the speech community to which it belongs, namely the Jawi Peranakans. It is the native tongue and heritage language of the Jawi Peranakans who reside in George Town Penang. This point brings the discussion to the issue at hand, i.e. *bahasa Tanjong* as the heritage language of the Jawi Peranakans of Penang.

BAHASA TANJONG: THE HERITAGE LANGUAGE OF THE JAWI PERANAKANS

The literature suggests that the term **heritage language** was first used in the Canadian context to account for languages other than English and French as well as those that are used by indigenous and immigrants (King and Ennser-Kananen, 2013). This term was modified accordingly by those who discussed it in the context of other countries including Australia and the United States (see also Cummins, 1991; Clyne, 1991; Campbell and Peyton, 1998; Fishman, 2001). Over the last two decades, the term heritage language has received wider attention as it began to be considered and employed in various contexts. As King and Ennser-Kananen (2013) explain in their discussion on heritage language and language policy, the term "heritage language" has been used to reference home language or language used in familial context, ethnic language, ancestral language including indigenous, colonial and immigrant, as well as language of origin. Besides the debate on terms and definitions, there is also much concern, within the field, over the endangered status of many heritage languages. Notwithstanding the issues that have emerged in the literature due to the problematisation of the term and its definitions, the present study considers *bahasa Tanjong* a heritage language, not just because it is rooted in old Penang, but more importantly because of the unique minority Malay community to which it belongs, the Jawi Peranakans of Penang.

The Jawi Peranakans or Jawi Pekans[7] are a hybrid Malay community who is the product of the intermarriage between Indian Muslims and local Malays[8]. According to Turnbull (1972: 46) the "South Indians, particularly Muslims, merged easily with the Malay population, and Indo-Malay marriages produced a class known as Jawi-pekans, who were particularly numerous in Penang, where they had a reputation in the early years for being smart and quick-witted as traders". Past research in Indo-Malays (e.g. Andaya and Andaya, 1982; Fujimoto, 1988) suggests that the South Indian Muslims that came to Penang were mostly from the Coromandel Coast, an area along the east coast of India. They are known as Chulias (chooliars) and were made up of several groups: Maraikkayar, Rawther, Labbai and Kayalar based on their occupations. The

South Indian Muslims that migrated to Malaya were the Maraikkayars who were mainly maritime people such as sailors or merchants. It is reported that the earliest Indian Muslim settlers in Penang were the Maraikkayars from Kedah who settled and concentrated in Penang as early as the 18th century. According to Khoo (2009: 100), "Maraikkayars would take wives in other ports, preferring to marry the *Shāfi'ite* Muslim women of the archipelago. In Penang, they preferred to marry Malay or *Jawi Pekan* women".

The intermarriage between the two groups also created the "Jawi Peranakan or Pekan (urban Malay) culture" (Karim, 2009: 17). This means that they used Malay as their home language and adopted many of the Malay customs and traditions. Despite this, the South Indian heritage of the community strongly features in their culture including their language. This is evident for instance in the Malay language spoken by the Jawi Peranakans[9] or Jawi-Pekans which demonstrates influences from its Indian linguistic heritage, especially Tamil. Thus, while *bahasa Tanjong* is a Northern Malay dialect, it is unique and more distinct "with a strong Tamil accent, and… a greater admixture of Tamil words" (Fujimoto, 1988: 169).

Some have argued that *bahasa Tanjong* is a creole[10] which is essentially a contact language or "a pidgin[11] language which has become the mother tongue of a community" (Crystal, 2003: 346). The suggestion that *bahasa Tanjong* is a creole may have stemmed from the knowledge that a broad spectrum of speakers with different linguistic backgrounds used it as a form of communication in old Penang. Given that Malay was the lingua franca of the diverse immigrant community at the time, it may be possible that a pidgin did emerge among immigrant speakers in George Town at the time. However, it is inaccurate to suggest that the form is *bahasa Tanjong* because unlike a creole, which has its roots in a pidginised variety, *bahasa Tanjong* is in fact a stable Northern Malay dialect and the native language of a particular Malay community. The suggestion that *bahasa Tanjong* is a creole is further nullified with archival evidence which shows that the intermarriage between the Indian Muslim settlers and local women, and the emergence of the hybrid community happened even before the arrival of the British in Penang. This suggests that the language used by the community was already in existence prior to British colonisation of Penang and the existence of cosmopolitan George Town.[12]

With regard to Fujimoto's earlier point on the influence of Tamil in the dialect, it is necessary to note that due to the linguistic heritage of the Jawi Peranakans, the dialect has more Indian influences (particulary from Tamil) compared to other Malay sub-dialects. According to Asmah (1987: 6), the Indianisation of the Malay language is well-established due to the heavy borrowing from Sanskrit particularly. This happened "at the time when the Malay society, especially the ruling class, was permeated by an influence from Indian culture and Hinduism…in the early centuries A.D.". Sanskrit words that were borrowed, appropriated and naturalised in the Malay language are "mainly those

relating to ritual, law and court ceremony, but also others including book, lion, herald, mango, nutmeg, pleasure, time, punishment, loyalty, religion, fasting, property, vase, intellect, independence and sin" (Sandhu, 1969: 24). Tamil loanwords entered the Malay lexicon much later, from the late 19th century with the arrival of Tamil speakers particularly from South India during British colonial rule. Asmah (1987: 7) suggests that there are much fewer Tamil loanwords in Malay and unlike the Sanskrit loanwords, which "refer to 'high' and abstract culture,…the Tamil ones are mostly terms which refer to common every-day life of people, such as *tirai* 'curtain', *badai* 'windstorm', *tose* 'a kind of food'…etc.".

While Tamil influences exist in the Malay language, they are restricted to limited number of loanwords. This however is not the case for *bahasa Tanjong* which is heavily influenced by its Indo-Malay heritage. The Tamil influence is especially evident in its lexis, a crucial identity marker which sets *bahasa Tanjong* apart from the other Northern Malay dialects. The following section discusses this further based on data derived from interviews with Jawi Peranakans of various ages in Penang between 2009 and 2012, analysis of *bahasa Tanjong* in contemporary Malay dramas that feature Jawi Peranakans as well as introspective data.

THE LINGUISTIC IDENTITY OF *BAHASA TANJONG*

Riley (2007) refers to the concept of "cultural markers" in highlighting the strong connection between culture, language and identity. He suggests that the argument that language is a cultural system necessarily entails that all words are cultural, but some words, he emphasises, are more cultural than others. These words, according to him, are the cultural markers.[13] In relation to this, one may argue that all things that are culture-specific such as food, clothing, music, songs, artefacts and festivals are cultural markers. And often, they are most evident in lexis. Indeed this is the case with *bahasa Tanjong* with its rather distinctive lexis.

As a hybridised form of Malay that emerged through the contact of two cultures and languages, *bahasa Tanjong* possesses features that reflect its Malay as well as its Indian, i.e. Tamil heritage. The influence of the latter is often associated with the intonation and paralinguistic features (particularly hand gestures and head movement) of speakers of *bahasa Tanjong*. Yet, it is the linguistic expression, particularly the lexis of the language that contains cultural markers which assert the identity of the language.

Among the Tamil words that *bahasa Tanjong* possesses but which are not found in the Malay language include those listed in Table 1. Some of the words have retained the original meaning in Tamil while others have been appropriated to suit the needs of a hybrid community. The list of words is not exhaustive but includes words that are still found in the speech of Jawi Peranakans.

Table 1: Examples of Tamil words in *bahasa Tanjong*

Tamil word	Meaning in *bahasa Tanjong*
achi	older sister
aniayom	problem/difficulty
atta	father
auta	bluff
karipullai	curry leaves
karpayi	dark-skinned
kacra	dirty
kerke	crazy/mad
korunggu	monkey
kuttom	family
maale	garland
machan	brother-in-law (elder)
maini	sister-in-law (elder)
maistri	chef
mamak	uncle
mami	aunty
mamu	uncle
mandom	weak/slow
mandrom	blackmagic
maplei	bridegroom
moshom	sad face/long face
nalla	big/great/good
nottu	disturb/nuisance
pandil	tent/marquee
paria	from "pariah" to mean worthless
parpu	lentil
pochik	finished/gone
podu	eat
pokri	poor
ponu	bride
ranggi	proud/arrogant
rasom	South Indian hot-sour soup

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Table 1: (*continued*)

Tamil word	Meaning in *bahasa Tanjong*
remunggai	a long bean-like fruit
sanyom	difficult
sele	long scarf adorned by women
soru	rice/food
tairu	sour milk/yoghurt
tala	lock

Many of the words listed in the table above have equivalents in Malay. The inclination to use Tamil words despite the availability of Malay equivalents shows the importance of Tamil as a cultural marker of *bahasa Tanjong* and the Jawi Peranakans. The prominence of Tamil kinship terms is a significant identity marker because kinship terms often carry crucial cultural connotations.

The analysis of the data collected for the current study reveals that Tamil influence in *bahasa Tanjong* is not limited to its lexis. The following examples are expressions used by Jawi Peranakans that mimic those found in Tamil.

Example 1	*Banyak punya cantik?*	*Banyak punya cantik?* Much so beautiful "Who do you think you are?"
Example 2	*Belakang kira*	*Belakang kira* Behind count "Consider it later"
Example 3	*Bukan ka?*	*Bukan ka?* No/not what "Is it not?"
Example 4	*Takdak punya kerja*	*Takdak punya kerja* No/none so work "A waste of time"
Example 5	*Tak dak kerja cari kerja*	*Tak dak kerja, cari kerja* No/none work look-for work "Doing something not worth doing"

All of the examples demonstrate deviations from Malay in terms of structure as they are literally translated from Tamil expressions. Example 2 for instance comes from the Tamil expression "*welle illek*" (*welle* means "work" and *illek* means "no/none"). Example 3 is from the Tamil form "*ille aa*" which is a question form. Besides the structure, expressions such as the above are usually conveyed using intonations that mirror the Jawi Peranakans' Indian heritage. A typical example of such expressiveness is found in the Jawi Peranakans' use of

the word "*pirah*". This word is the contracted Malay form "*pi la*" (from "*pergi lah*") that is influenced by the Tamil form "*po dah*" meaning "go away" or "get lost". The word "*pirah*" is usually uttered by Jawi Peranakans, just as "*po dah*" is uttered by Tamil speakers, that is, with an emphasis on the first syllable and accompanied commonly by a hand gesture (to shoo off).

Whilst the Indian influence features prominently in *bahasa Tanjong*, it is important to note that as a language that emerged in the Straits Settlement, *bahasa Tanjong* was also open to borrowings from the English language for many objects that were imported into their environment by the British. Words like "ferry", "tram", "buggy" and other colonial imports were used by the locals in old Penang. Some words found their way into the language and have been appropriated in *bahasa Tanjong*. Some of the words and expressions which are of English origin that are still found in the language spoken by the Jawi Peranakans are presented in the Table 2.

Table 2: Examples of English words in *bahasa Tanjong*

English word	Meaning in *bahasa Tanjong*
act/action	show off/arrogant
bus stop	bus stop
cuba try	give it a try
esen (essence)	perfume
landing	sleep
last-last/last *sekali*	finally
gostan (contraction of "go astern")	reverse
hatemba' (from Hutton bulk[14])	things of no value
pantalon	pantaloons
koman (common)	common/low quality
market	market
nade	nadir
Padang Brom (Padang Brown)	Padang Brown – a field in George Town
sidebot (sideboard)	sideboard
shilling	coins
shot	sulk
stop-look-go	traffic lights
tera (terror)	"great" or "clever"

As with borrowings from Tamil, the original meaning of the words have not changed while in other cases the meanings have been appropriated.

Besides the influence of Tamil and English, *bahasa Tanjong* has also been enriched with lexis from other immigrant languages in Penang. Some examples include *sarbat*, *semia*, *gabra*, *haram jadah* and *kereta gadi* from Hindi/Urdu meaning "sherbet/cold syrup drink", "local vermicelli", "worried/agitated", "bastard" and "pulled cart" respectively. Other examples include words related to Arabic culture such as *shorma* (surma/kohl).

As a stable variety of the Malay language, *bahasa Tanjong* also has a number of words that have been coined by its speakers which are original in form and meaning. These words, such as those listed in Table 3, have been conjured up through creative linguistic processes to fulfil the linguistic needs of the community.

Table 3: Examples of original *bahasa Tanjong* words

Original *bahasa Tanjong* terms	Meaning
aade	thin pancake-like food
badqohsalam	stupid
ban	sleep
daoh	indigenous/rural Malay
gondu	big chunk
golmar	make a scene
hapra'/haprakol	low quality/not good
khannas	naughty
kodi	low quality
kolca	a type of traditional biscuit
koltu	surround
lingkup	spoilt/destroyed
makron	naughty
mandom	weak
marka	girl/girlfriend
moshom	sulk
nana	older brother
nishan	high
nondi	limp
osta	barber

(*continued on next page*)

Table 3: (*continued*)

Original *bahasa Tanjong* terms	Meaning
pak tongko	a long fried pastry
pasembor	salad with condiments and spicy peanut sauce
pirah	go away/get lost
pirashat	hypocrite
pokri	cannot be trusted
puduke	menial/slave
ponen	not manly/effeminate
raplah	worry
roshom	show-off
siru	silly
taa pi	move/walk away
tahana	snob
thur	silly/stupid
ushar/par	look at/search

Besides original words, *bahasa Tanjong* is also enriched with unique idiomatic expressions that are used by the Jawi Peranakans and which are not found in Malay used elsewhere. Some of them are listed in the Table 4.

Clearly *bahasa Tanjong* has not only been enriched with Tamil lexis and structure but also borrowings from English and other immigrant languages in Penang. Also, as evidenced in Table 3, *bahasa Tanjong* as a distinct dialect of Malay possesses words that are coined by its speakers.

The identity of the language is further distinguished by the way in which Jawi Peranakan speakers use Malay words in their own context. For instance, the words *jambu*, *bara*, *segan* and *haru* are all Malay words meaning "guava", "hot charcoal", "shy" and "sad" respectively. Yet, the Jawi Peranakans also use *jambu* to mean "beautiful", *bara* to mean "angry", *segan* to mean "lazy" and *haru* to mean "bother". Additionally, certain Malay words are pronounced differently by the Jawi Peranakans. These include *misgid* for *masjid* (mosque), *katup* for *tutup* (cover/close), *angkit* for *angkat* (carry/lift), *glomiang* for *gelumang* (smeared/covered with), *katok* for *ketok* (hit), *linchin* for *licin* (smooth), *naya* for *aniaya* (victimise) and *senayan* for *Isnin* (Monday).

Table 4: Examples of idiomatic forms unique to *bahasa Tanjong*

Idiomatic forms	Meaning in *bahasa Tanjong*
buat ramai	cause furore or commotion
chacha marba	mixed-up/jumbled/chaotic
gempa' keling	bluff
kancing prak	shirt
keta' kepala	pushy
kolom kolpiha	messed-up
lingkup pahana	completely destroyed
mampuih pi kat hang	to hell with you
mangkok hayun	stupid
pekak telinga	noisy
puta' alam	con artist
suap gula	engagement
suku det tak guna	useless/worthless
terbaka' perut	very angry

The Jawi Peranakans are also known to use rhymes in their speech such as *panjang lebaq* (*lebar*), *apa habaq* (*khabar*) and *pi mai, pi mai tang tu* (from *pergi mari, pergi mari, di situ*) which literally translates into "one goes back and forth but not getting anywhere". Their Indian heritage is also evident in the use of blessings in the community. Expressions such as *Tuhanla bagi selamat*, *angkat pangkat darjat*, *panjang umur* which literally means "may God keep you safe, elevate your status, grant you longevity" or "*terima kasih banyak-banyak, Tuhanla bagi selamat, rezeki makmur*" meaning "thank you so much, may God keep you safe, prosperous" are still common among older Jawi Peranakans.

The linguistic identity of the Jawi Peranakans which is manifested in the language they speak can also be found in a form of cultural performance, quite synonymous with Penang, known as the *boria*. The *boria* has its origins in the Muslim Muharram festival which has been argued to be of Indian origin. Overtime, the *boria* evolved so that by the 1860s, the *boria* was essentially "a celebration of folk performances"[15] (Pieris, 2009: 166). The popularity of the *boria* was evident from the many *boria* groups that mushroomed throughout the city.[16] Regardless of the part of the city they came from or the subject of their performance, the language used by the performers was essentially the language used by Malays in the George Town area. Verses used in *boria*, such as the following excerpts cited by Hamilton (1920), demonstrate the liberal use of words from other languages:

Melayu penyamun tanah Inggeris
Pantalon hitam baju puteh
Sa-barang kerja Melayu buleh
Di-kebun Nyior Seri Majlis

Troop Albania jajahan Itali
Ibarat rimau mati berdiri
Alatan dunia ta'ambil peduli
Jalan Baharu sedia menanti

Askar Yunan Kuantong sama
Sudah "resign" daripada China
Keluar menchari som, komkoma
Anak padang selamat sempurna

The language used in the performances is typical of the Jawi Peranakans' language with sprinklings of borrowed forms such as *pantalon* (pantaloons) and code switching with English such as the use of "troop" and "resign". The Indian influence is also evident from the use of words such as *komkoma* which means "saffron" to refer to riches.

The above discussion suggests that while the basis for the *bahasa Tanjong* lexicon is Malay, it is highly influenced by its Indian heritage. It is also enriched by other languages particularly English which was prominent in Penang throughout the colonial period. Additionally, as demonstrated, *bahasa Tanjong* has its own repertoire of original words coined by the speech community. Beyond Hamilton's list of six characteristics therefore, it is crucial to note that the identity of *bahasa Tanjong* must also be defined in terms of its unique lexis as well as its linguistic and non-linguistic features.

THE EVOLUTION OF *BAHASA TANJONG*

In his book *Language and Identity*, Joseph (2004: 12) underlines that "identity is at root a matter of language". This means that beyond its crucial function as a medium of communication, language is a construction of ideas, ideologies and identities of the speakers of the language. Later, in his discussion on identity and the traditional functions of language, Joseph (2004: 15) argues that the traditional dichotamy of the function of language as either one or both "***communication*** with others...***representation*** of the world to ourselves in our minds" is blurred by linguistic identity. This is because a language represents the community to which it belongs. It is a product of culture and considered a living phenomenon. It thrives on use, it varies and it changes. Indeed all living languages have changed and will continue to change (Richards, Platt and Platt, 1992)[17] over geography,

society and context of use (Milroy, 1992). Given this, before embarking on a discussion of the evolution of *bahasa Tanjong* as a Malay dialect and a heritage language, it is useful to reflect briefly on the life of the Malay language as a living language in the region.

Firstly, as a lingua franca, the Malay language thrived for centuries in the Nusantara. Secondly, the spatial and temporal span of its life has borne a number of varieties. And thirdly, the Malay language has, like many living languages, changed. One of the main factors that has caused the language to change is the influence of other languages on Malay. Asmah (1987: vii) points out that, "(f)rom time immemorial Malay has acted as a receiver language...from other languages". She notes three languages, Sanskrit, Arabic and English in particular, that have had major influence on the changes in Malay over the centuries. The "linguistic elements like phonemes, morphemes and lexical items, and even systems and structures" (ibid) of these languages have in other words caused changes in the Malay language at the phonological, structural and semantic levels. The most recent major change in the Malay language in Malaysia happened after the nation's independence when it was elevated to the status of national language. Known officially as *bahasa Malaysia*, the Malay language or *bahasa Melayu* was "chosen from among the vernaculars of the people" to create a national identity (Asmah, 1987: 1). As the official medium of the government and public education, the language had to be developed accordingly. This was a planned development and the English language was an important source at the time. So *bahasa Malaysia* as it were, experienced what could be considered Anglicisation, as a high rate of words from the English language were borrowed and naturalised, and the phonological and the spelling systems of the Malay language were appropriated.

Factors that bring about changes in languages vary, yet, as a linguistic process, language change is not random. Language change occurs because a language is inclined to move in a particular direction (Aitchison, 1997). In the case of *bahasa Malaysia*, as demonstrated above, the socio-political concerns of the country had a hand in the changes that the language experienced particularly in the 1970s and the creation of a standard version of Malay that is recognised in Malaysia. With regard to *bahasa Tanjong*, the historical socio-cultural context in which it emerged has lent it an identity that is distinct from other Malay dialects and not, as Hamilton puts it, a slightly altered Malay of Kedah. Its history and roots in a cosmopolitan colonial port in the northern peninsular region of the Malay states do not only make it unique but also a dialect with heritage value and distinctive identity. However, the local socio-political events in the history of the Malay language have undoubtedly had some impact on *bahasa Tanjong* as well as other minority languages in the country. The question that arises is, has *bahasa Tanjong* evolved since the early 1900s given the socio-cultural and political changes that had taken place throughout the 20th century from the colonial era through the Japanese Occupation in the 1940s, the Independence of Malaya in

1957, the installation of the Malay language as the official language in the 1960s for national development until the present era of globalisation?

A comparison of early 20th century data on Malay used in Penang, such as those reported in Hamilton (1922), with contemporary data on *bahasa Tanjong* shows that most of the words that were used almost a century ago are still in use. These are essentially Malay words and the pronunciation of the words also has not changed. Thus, Hamilton's report on the use of "*i*" in place of "*l*" in words such as *bantal* and *bekal*; the realisation of the glottal sound in place of "r" for words such as *tukar* and *bakar*; the use of "*ih*" in place of "*s*" in words such as *pedas* and *keras* still holds true till the present. This is essentially because the pronunciations are features of the Northern Malay dialect, and not restricted to *bahasa Tanjong*.

Whilst many of the words listed by Hamilton are still intact in the current form of *bahasa Tanjong*, certain words are not in use anymore. These include words that refer to objects that are obsolete in contemporary life such as *sauku* (whip), *poni* (a tin vessel), *gadi* (handcart), *suku duit* (quarter of a cent) and *tan* (stable). Other words that he makes reference to that seem to have become less common in the Jawi Peranakan context of use include words such *ayam piru* (turkey), *tairu* (sour milk/yoghurt), and *shannan* (a coconut tree climber). Besides these, others that have become less known particularly among younger Jawi Peranakans include words of Tamil origin such as *tolenji*, *yello*, *pokeri*, *puduke*.

Fujimoto (1988: 178) reports that the political events in the 1930s and 40s "increased Jawi Peranakan consciousness of the urgency of assimilation to Malay culture". The impact of this on the traditions and culture of the Jawi Peranakans perhaps did not take effect until the mainstreaming of the Malay society which happened after the independence of Malaya in 1957. The dominant cultural elements of the Malay language such as language, festivals, food, and arts affected the traditions and practices of minor communities. With regard to the Jawi Peranakans, we find that biscuits and cakes such as *kolca* and *bahulu betawi* typical in their community can hardly be found anymore and the majority of young people in the community do not know of these traditional foods. Other traditions such as the *suap gula* (literally means "feed sugar") ceremony for a bride-to-be during the engagement ceremony is becoming less known among younger Jawi Peranakans. Indeed the term *suap gula* which is used to refer to engagement ceremony is hardly used nowadays. Other words that seem to be on their way out of the *bahasa Tanjong* vocabulary include *kancing prak* (shirt), *pantalon* (pantaloons) and *sharbat* (cold syrup drink). These words are not used much anymore because they are being replaced by words from the Malay language such as *kemeja*, *seluar panjang* and *air sirap* respectively. This state of things is due to the dominance of the Malay language as the official language of the government as well as the medium of instruction in public schools since the 1970s.

Although many of the words in *bahasa Tanjong* which are of Tamil origin have gone out of fashion, some still have an important place in the Jawi Peranakan everyday communication. Kinship terms from Tamil especially, such as those listed in Table 1, are still common among many Jawi Peranakan families (although there is a trend among third generations to use Malay kinship terms to address family members). Also, there is still a fairly strong inclination among Jawi Peranakan speakers in George Town to use some of the kinship terms beyond the family circle particularly the words *mami* and *mamak/mamu* in addressing older women and men respectively.

THE IDENTITY OF THE JAWI PERANAKANS IN PENANG

At the societal level, "language plays a central part, both the determiner and is determined: language is controlled by the social structure, and the social structure is maintained and transmitted through language" (Halliday, 1978: 89). This crucial interdependence between society and language means that changes in society are mirrored in language and vice versa. Thus, the changes in *bahasa Tanjong* as well as in the way the language is used by the Jawi Peranakans reflect the changes experienced by the community.

Stark (2006: 385) in his discussion of the shifting identities of Indian Muslims in Malaysia suggests that "the degree of ethnic identification of the Jawi Peranakan produced rather ambiguous results". Whilst his point makes reference to the unstable identity of the community from a political standpoint, his observation is not far from the truth where the allegiance of the community is concerned with regard to ethnicity. Karim (2009: 17) argues that the indigenous urban Malays find the Jawi Peranakans and *mamaks*[18] problematic because while "they register their children as 'Malay'…they constantly make reference to the 'Malays' as a 'race' in derogatory terms". Other researchers have suggested that the Jawi Peranakan community oscillates between the two ethnicities of which they are made up, giving them room to comment on the Malays when they are Indian and Indian when they are Malays.

Karim (2009) argues that the inclination by the Jawi Peranakan to oscillate between ethnicities is diametrically opposite to the indigenous Malays or *Melayu jati*. The latter "may be critical but would refrain from ethnic dissociation – reflecting on 'the self' as a separate socio-cultural entity from the Malay world" (Karim, 2009: 17). The Jawi Peranakans' tendency to oscillate is possibly due to the way their ethnicity was conjured up in the society and the powers that be. An analysis of birth certificates of Jawi Peranakans born before the 1970s shows that the ethnicity of children that were born of Indian Muslim men and Malay women in Penang include the following: Indian, Indian Muslim, Jawi Pekan, Jawi Peranakan and Malay. Such an array of ethnicities attached to the children of the

community is an indication of the "shifting identities" projected upon the Jawi Peranakans for the most part of the last century.

CONCLUSION

Despite their ambiguous identity, Fujimoto (1988) stresses that unlike other places, in Penang the Jawi Peranakans are considered to be Malays. And as a Malay community, they possess a Malay dialect that is uniquely their own, i.e. *bahasa Tanjong*. The discussion shows that the rich heritage of *bahasa Tanjong* is an important cultural marker of the language. As a hybridised form of the Malay language which emerged in cosmopolitan George Town, it is enriched with Tamil words and structure, loanwords from English and other languages that were familiar to the community, and possesses a repertoire of words and expressions identifiable only with the Jawi Peranakans. These unique features of *bahasa Tanjong* set it apart from other Malay dialects, and establish it as heritage language of a community which is just as distinctive.

Bahasa Tanjong has evolved alongside the community to which it belongs. As a minority Malay community in Penang, the Jawi Peranakans cannot help but be affected by issues surrounding the Malays within the larger context of Malaysia. The politics of Malay(ness) in postcolonial Malaya especially has had a significant impact on the Jawi Peranakans and their language. As Fujimoto points out, "the most effective factor in speeding the process of Jawi Peranakan assimilation to the Malay community" is the politicisation of the Malays (Fujimoto, 1988: 186). The assimilation and cultural integration process to Malay, especially after the 1970s significantly affected *bahasa Tanjong*. The Tamil linguistic features began to wane and, certain traditions rooted in Indian culture that were imbued in the language became less practiced and less familiar. As these cultural traditions are usually practiced by the older Jawi Peranakan generation, it is very likely that these unique traditions die out with the second or third generation of the community. Art forms such as the *boria* which was synonymous with the Jawi Peranakans and Penang has also faded as a cultural marker. New forms of entertainment that came along with technology in the later part of the last century in Malaysia saw the demise of the *boria* in Penang. Today, the *boria* "refers to a choral street performance" (Karim, 2009: 52). Although it is still known as a Penang heritage, it has joined the ranks of other folk traditions of the country performed at cultural functions.

While changes have taken place, *bahasa Tanjong* and the hybrid community to which it belongs have not lost their unique identity. Like their language, the Jawi Peranakans in Penang have an identity that is distinct from other Malay communities and the "existence of this distinctively 'Penang Malay' culture has been recognised in the Peninsula" (Fujimoto, 1988: 187). In recent years, the Jawi Peranakan culture and language have become a source of interest

among producers of Malay drama and film in Malaysia. Interestingly, the attention on the Jawi Peranakans in Penang and *bahasa Tanjong* has had an effect on the Malay society in general as we see the adoption of some of the words from *bahasa Tanjong* such as *gabra*, *raplah*, *mami*, *mamu*, *ranggi* and a few others into the Malay language.

In conclusion, this paper has argued that Hamilton's (1922) "Penang Malay" which he describes as "the Malay of Kedah altered slightly to suit the needs of a cosmopolitan town population" is in fact *bahasa Tanjong*, a hybridised form of Northern Malay dialect which is the mother tongue and heritage language of the Jawi Peranakans of Penang. It is a unique Malay dialect with linguistic influences from Tamil, English, Hindi/Urdu, and Arabic not found in other Malay dialects in the country. As regards the Jawi Peranakans of Penang, to echo Fujimoto (1988: 187), the distinctiveness of their "culture continues to set them a little apart within the Malay community".

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NOTES

1. This article is a revised and updated version of an earlier publication in Malay titled "Bahasa Tanjong: Evolusi identiti sebuah bahasa warisan" in *Warisan Wilayah Utara Semenanjung Malaysia*, ed. Ooi Keat Gin. Penang: Universiti Sains Malaysia Press.
2. The terms "language" and "dialect" are usually distinguished in linguistic discussions. In the present discussion however, the two are used interchangeably.
3. The word *Tanjong* is found in Steven's (1929) paper entitled "Early History of Prince of Wales Island". He makes reference to the area a number of times in his writing including the following: "It was perhaps natural that in those days the European residential area should be close the business town amid the swamps of the Tanjong" (1929: 387). "The Tanjong, which Light selected for his township, and the area between the Tanjong and the somewhat higher ground near the base of the hills, was very flat and swampy, and liable to frequent inundation" (1929: 389).
4. The excerpt is found in a letter of Dickens, the Magistrate, written to the Lieutenant-Governor of Penang on 1 June 1802.
5. Crawfurd (1848), in his paper entitled "On the Malayan and Polynesian Language and Race" highlighted that of the three main groups that spoke the Malayan language, the Malay race to him is the most remarkable. According to

Crawfurd, this is the only race "from Madagascar to Easter Island, and from Formosa to New Zealand, over 70 degrees latitude and 200 of longitude…that has exhibited a considerable intellectual development. It has for ages possessed the knowledge of letters, worked with useful metals and domesticated useful animals" (1848: 183–184). He also pointed out that the "inhabitants of Java, Sumatra, Borneo, Celebs, Bali, Lombok, and Sumbawa, are of the race, as are most of those of the Malayan Peninsula, and of the Philippine Islands" (ibid).

6. George Town was declared a World Heritage site by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee at their meeting in Quebec on 7 July 2008.
7. The term *Jawi* means "Malay" while *Pekan* means "town".
8. While there are various hybrid Muslim Malay communities in Penang (Arab-Malay, Punjabi-Malay, Pakistani-Malay and other immigrant-Malay heritage), in the current discussion, as established by past researchers (Hamilton, 1922; Nagata, 1974; Fujimoto, 1988), the Jawi Peranakans are of South Indian Muslim and Malay descent.
9. Recent work on Jawi Peranakans in Penang suggests that the group also includes those who are of Arab-Malay descent. This is arguable as the Arab-Malay community in Penang is an established community with a rich social history of their own. The blurring of the two groups may be due to the history of the two communities in Georgetown. See Omar Farouk (1978) for a useful discussion of the Arab community in Penang, and Karim (2009).
10. A creole is a language that emerges, out of necessity for communication, in situations where speakers of different linguistic backgrounds come in contact.
11. A pidgin is a contact language in circumstances where communication would not otherwise be possible.
12. One such evidence is found in Van Ronkel (1922) in discussing the author of a manuscript dated 29 August 1767 written in Malay.
13. In his discussion, Riley (2007) identifies the following as cultural markers: acronyms and abbreviations (e.g. DIY, IRA), places (e.g. Sandhurst, Wembly), organisations (e.g. RSPCA, Oxfam), "days" (e.g. Good Friday, Halloween), dates (e.g. September 11th), characters (e.g. Goldilocks, Jack the Ripper), signs (e.g. Sale, Checkout time), newspapers (e.g. The Times, the Daily Mirror) and games (e.g. snakes and ladders, hopscotch).
14. "Hutton bulk" refers to second hand goods that were sold in an area in Georgetown known as Hutton Lane. The word *hatemba'* is essentially an appropriation of the native pronunciation i.e. "Hutton bulk" by the locals.
15. According to Vaughan (1857), the religious nature of the festival was marred by the irreverence of the participants, namely the *Jawi Pekans* whose "love of fun and devilry leads them to imitate burlesquely all the ceremonies observed by the Mohamedans and Hindus of India to the amusement of bystanders" (Vaughan, 1857).
16. The verses that the theatrical groups "recited were both temporal and geographical and typically explored either a cultural or character trait of a chosen 'nationality'" (Pieris, 2009: 166).
17. According to Richards et al., language change cannot be confused with language shift. The view that language is a living phenomenon implies that the process a language experiences includes development, if the language is dynamic in terms

of its use by speakers, or loss/death, if it loses its importance or if there is another language which is dominant in terms of use.

18. Karim underlines an important point in her discussion on the Jawi Peranakans and the Indian Muslims in Malaysia, known as *mamaks*. The latter refers to Indian Muslims who marry Indian Muslim women. Their mother tongue is Tamil but whenever "these *mamak* communities married *peranakan* women, their children took to speaking Malay at home and eventually peranakan and *mamak* communities fused into a new Malay hybrid community in the township of George Town" (2009:17).

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