

Contact-Induced Elements in Arabi-Malayalam

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Abstract

This paper describes the linguistic process and outcome of language contact between Malabar dialect of Malayalam and Arabic and analyse Arabi-Malayalam (henceforth AM) as a language emerged out of this contact. It aims at tracing out the contact induced elements in AM based on the data obtained from various genres of AM literature. The empiric foundation of the present study is the extensive data collected from AM literature representing different period and different genres. Findings of the study indicate that a few grammatical patterns of Arabic have been crept into AM. The study also identifies that the foreign concepts and cultural ways influence the semantic process of the recipient language which is evident in the ways of framing new word forms using native resources. The existing words are used in different sense as an alternate to foreign concepts. The study concludes that borrowing of grammatical patterns, changes in case marking patterns, peculiar way of forming adjectives, readopting of already abandoned features due to the influence of donor language, hybrid words, linguistic diffusion due to shared cultural practices are the major contact induced linguistic outcomes found in AM

Keywords: Arabi-Malayalam, Contact Elements, Mixed Language, Grammatical Borrowing, Loanword diffusion

Analysis on Contact Elements

The way through which foreign forms creep into the indigenous language is a fertile field of contact linguistic research for the past few decades. Differentiating the contact induced elements from genetic elements, and independent innovations is a challenge before a contact linguist. It has already been observed by Aikhenvald (2007) that foreign forms and patterns make their way into a language through a number of paths—enhancement of an already existing feature, or extension by analogy, or reinterpretation and reanalysis, or a really induced grammaticalization, or grammatical accommodation, or loan translation, or lexical and grammatical parallelism. The present study evaluates whether Aikhenvald's observations are relevant in AM, a mixed language developed out of the contact between Arabic and Malayalam among Mappila Muslim community in Kerala.

Social Background of the Emergence of Arabi-Malayalam

While analysing the socio-cultural and political factors of 15th to 18th century Malabar, it can be found that the Mappila community experienced a sense of insecurity and the socio-cultural and political background of the period necessitated the formation of a conscious identity among them. At the time of Portuguese arrival, Mappilas in Malabar region of Kerala were politically stable and had a crucial role. Kunhi (1982) attested that the monopoly of international trade with

east and west and the strong political and diplomatic relations with Zamorins of Calicut was the base for their social and economic importance. Portuguese strategies were aimed at disturbing the Mappila's social and economic importance and there by pick the monopoly of international trade with sea ports of Kerala from the hands of the Mappilas

It is evident that with the coming of western groups like Portuguese, French, Dutch and English, the higher status enjoyed by Mappilas in all fields of social life began to decline. The Zamorins, the chief patrons of Mappilas were compelled to give in before the strategies adopted by Portuguese with an aim to acquire the Monopoly of the seaport trades. The Mappilas were compelled to give up trade and commerce, migrated to the interior parts of Malabar and adopted agriculture for their livelihood in the political context after the arrival of Portuguese. The feeling of insecurity emerged out of this situation made the community to find a linguistic medium for their identity flagging. The linguistic medium they invented for their community discourse was Arabi-Malayalam.

Arabi-Malayalam a 'Mixed Language'

Bakker (1996) viewed languages known as 'mixed' or 'intertwined', arise as a result of peculiar sociolinguistic circumstances with semi-conscious efforts to 'create a language', in which parts of grammar and lexicon come from different languages. "Several studies are attested for the emergence of the mixed languages that come about as a result of semi-conscious language engineering and reflect as an effort to forms a new ethnic group" (Matras 2003: 151-3). As Bakker (1996) pointed out, "the documented intertwined languages do not result from code switching or code mixing; neither is they products of heavy borrowing. The ways in which they come about are closely linked to speakers' awareness of different components of a 'language' used for 'identity flagging', and to the extent of conscious language engineering". Since AM emerged out of a semiconscious effort of the Mappila community to propagate and express their ideal and to form a literary tradition, it can be considered as a Mixed Language. Therefore, there is much evidence to prove that this language is typically the result of an attempt to create a special language, or a language register purposely, by the Mappila ethnic group, asserting its identity.

Contact-Induced Linguistic Features in Arabi-Malayalam

"Languages borrow forms and patterns. Borrowed forms may include a lexeme, a pronoun, an affix, a phoneme or intonation pattern, or a way of framing discourse" (Campbell: 1997). Being a mixed language, the patterns and forms adopted by AM from Arabic (Donor Language) are analysed here, mainly based on the Aikenvald's framework. The linguistic data for the present study was collected from different genres of AM literature including prose and poetry.

Grammatical Elements

Coordinating Conjunction

In AM some grammatical features of Malayalam tend to be replaced by the grammatical ways of Arabic. For example, in Standard Malayalam the marker '-um' is used for the conjunction 'and'. It is suffixed with all Malayalam nouns as coordinating conjunction. Eg. ākājavum bhūmijum (the sky and earth). In Arabi Malayalam -um is suffixed only with one of the nouns.

E.g. /ākājabūmijum/ More examples are given below.

Word with coordinating conjunction	The parts without conjunction	Meaning	Remarks
najanmūkkum	nayan + mūkkə	Eyes and nose	The conjunction marker is added with the second part
dārtalavum	dār(a)+talam(m)	House and region	„
kuṭiquasrum	kuṭi (m) + quasr(a)	House and palace	„
/kursarsum/	kurs (a) + arʃ (a)	The royal seat of God and the position	„
/taqtumbāʃka/	taqt(a) + bāʃka (m)	The royal seat and the exercise of power	The marker added with the first part

It can be treated as a grammatical borrowing from Arabic, where the conjunction ‘/-va/’ is added between nouns only once. E.g. /rāmāvasiitā/ (Rama and Sita). Though many exceptions are found, this feature is widely seen in the AM works analysed as part of the present study. Here AM gave up one of the Malayalam grammatical features and tried to adopt the equivalent Arabic grammatical pattern.

Dual Marker

“If one language has a number system consisting of just singular and non-singular while a neighbour has singular, dual, and plural, then the first language may innovate a dual either by internal grammaticalization, or by borrowing a dual form from the second language” (Aikhenvald : 2007). In AM, the writers used Arabic dual marker also with Arabic loan words, which can be treated as an addition of grammatical system into the language in contact. Eg.

/swahābijāni/ =Two followers
 /jabalāni/ = Two mountains
 /jamalāni/ = Two camels

So, the above observation of Aikhenvald is relevant in the case of AM too.

Discarding Grammatical Properties in the Loan Forms

The grammatical properties of the loan form from source language may be neglected in contact language situation. Even if the borrowed form bears a grammatical element, the same is made irrelevant without being modified. Examples:

/ʃahiid/ -> /ʃuhadā/ -> /ʃuhadākka/
 /ṣālih/ -> /ṣālihiin/ -> /ṣalihiinʃa/ (the virtuous persons)

In the word cited above the Malayalam plural marker /-ka/ is added with the Arabic plural form of /ṣālih/. Even if the Arabic plural marker /-iin/ is there, it becomes irrelevant with the addition of Malayalam plural marker /-ka/. Hence, the significance of the loan plural marker is lost with the addition of native plural marker, even if the /-iin/ is retained with the root form. The borrowed Arabic plural morphemes were reinterpreted as singular markers and thus integrated into the Malayalam plural marker system already in place.

Recovering and Reinforcing Obsolete Grammatical Feature

As Aikhenvald (2007) observed, language contact may increase the frequency or its productivity of shared category or a construction. This is found to be true in the case of AM in the detailed analysis of gender verb agreement. In modern Malayalam, no markers are used for gender-verb agreement. However, Tamil still follows the gender-verb agreement which had been existed in Malayalam too as attested by several studies on earlier inscriptions and ancient literatures in Malayalam. Since the gender-verb agreement with inflections is one of the important feature of Arabic language (the donor language), the AM readopted and retained the obsolete feature (gender-verb agreement), possibly under the influence of Arabic. Examples: /cārrinān/ (AM) = he said, /jā'a/ (Arabic) = he came, /jā'at/ (Arabic) = she came

Verb form	Verb without suffix	gender/number marker	meaning
/jedirtār/	/jedirttu/	/-ār/	They protested
/poruttar/	/poruttu/	/-ār/	They resided
/cāttinār/	/cātti/	/-ār/	They said
/cōdikkunnan/	/cōdikkunnu/	/-an/	He asks
/colliyāl/	/colli/	/-āl/	She said

Variation in Case Markers

Case-marker in some AM works deviate from the accepted ways of mainstream Malayalam. The case marking systems of native language are found to be altered in the following ways.

Accusative case suffix /a/ instead of /e/

Standard Malayalam	AM
/kalāmine/	/kalāmina/
/avane/	/avana/
/ʃariiattine/	/ʃariiattina/
/ʃahādattine/	/ʃahādattina/
/sōmane/	/sōmana/

Deletion of phonemes from the case markers (-ooṭu becomes -ṭu with /a/ ending sounds in sociative case marker).

Standard Malayalam	AM
/ummajōṭu/ To Mother	/ummāṭu/
/ikkajōṭu/ To Brother	/ikkāṭu/
/allahuvōṭu/ To God	/allāṭu/

Some case markers even appear in the place of others (locative case markers in the place of sociative marker).

Standard Malayalam

/māranōtu/ To husband
/rasūlinōtu/ To prophet
/tōlarōtu/ To the companions
/onṭanōtu/ To the One (The God)

AM

/māraril/
/rasūlil/
/tōlaril/
/onṭanil/

The phonemic variations of the case markers (accusative case suffix /a/ instead of /e/), deletion of phonemes from the case markers (/o:tu/ becomes /-tu/ with /a/ ending sounds in sociative case marker), and interchanging of case markers (locative case markers in the place of sociative marker) can be treated as a system-altering change as a result of language contact.

Emergence of Marginal Phonemes

Fries and Pike (1949) point out that “contact-induced change results in creating a new somewhat marginal subsystem within a language without affecting the ‘core’. This is often found as the effect of an influx of loans. Unassimilated loans are likely to produce ‘loan phonology’, much in the spirit of the ‘coexistent phonemic systems’ and such loans stand out as phonologically different from the rest”. The AM loan phonemes justify the above observation.

The process of borrowing words from Arabic into AM is accompanied by adoption of the Arabic phonological system into the native phonological system. The adopted phonemes are:-
/t̤/, /d̤/, /q/, /θ/, /ð/, /x/, /ɣ/, /ʕ/, /ħ/, /ð̣/, /ṣ/, /z/.

All these adopted phonemes except /f/ occur only with Arabic loan words, not with native words. The labio-dental fricative /f/ is largely used with native words as a substitution for labial plosive /p/, for /p/ is absent in Arabic phonemic system and /f/ is phonetically closer to it.

Developing New Lexical Elements Using Native Resources

Neologism

It is also found that several new patterns are developed out of the language’s own resources in the situation of AM language contact. Formation of new verbs and nouns using the roots of native word elements in the way unfamiliar and unaccepted to native language can be treated as a contact induced system altering change. E.g.

/tanippittu/	Alienate
/akkarattōrka/	Outsiders
/akkaṇattār/	Those who are included in the group
/udaviketṭōn/	Helpless man

Hypercorrection

In the masculine word ending with /-i/ and additional /-an/ is suffixed as masculine gender marker even if the word itself without any marker signifies masculinity in Standard Malayalam. Eg. /adipadijan/= /an/ as gender marker

In standard Malayalam /adipadi/ indicates the Masculine form. Since the word is ended with /-i/ and the /-i/ is a feminine marker, /-an/ is added in order to avoid confusion. This can be treated as an hypercorrection due to the interference of Arabic linguistic ways in which all the nouns are strictly demarcated with gender marker. It is also to be noted that AM does not prefer the nouns related to human beings without gender marker. In standard Malayalam, there is another word /adhipan/, which can be used, in the same context. However, the poet used the word /adipadi/ by adding /-an/ as the gender marker.

Cultural Practices and Loanword Diffusion

Speakers of languages in contact may share cultural practices like food, dress, religious ideology etc. Often these borrowed cultural practices will not have alternate linguistic expression in native language. This facilitates the diffusion of vocabulary from donor language.

In AM a number of loanwords are found rooted as a result of shared cultural practices. ExampleS: /bānkə/ (calling for prayer), /ceerŋi/ (sweets-derived from /širiin/), /vudu/(ablation), /dars/ (religious seminaries), /uru:s/ (ritualistic prayer), /rātiib/ (ritualistic worship) etc,

The linguistic gaps for expressing borrowed concepts are filled not only through borrowed forms, but also by exploiting native resources by matching the expression in the source language. The concept of God in Islam and the monotheism is expressed in AM using many native word forms. example: /padaccavan/, /perijōn/, /udajōn/ etc.

Arabic nouns adopted without any semantic deviation are often suffixed with Malayalam forms like /ājo:n/, /ājavan/. Such nouns are found in abundance in the Arabi Malayalam works analyzed here and most of them are used as homonyms for Allah (the God). E.g.

Word	Morphophonemic	Meaning
/quadiimājōn/	/quadiim/+ājōn/	The one who existed at beginning of the universe (God)
/vahdājōn/	/vahd/+ājōn/	The one (God)
/subhānavan/	/subhān/ + /avan/	The most sacred one (God)

Several Arabic adjective forms are used to qualify Malayalam nouns.

Adjective form	Arabic word part	Malayalam suffix	Adj+noun	Meaning
/šarafutta/	/šaraf/	/-utta/	/ šarafutta diin/	Respected religion
/rahmatta/	/rahmatt/	/-a/	/rahmattakkaṭal/	the ocean of mercifulness
/miska/	/misk/	/-a/	/miskakkaṭal/	The ocean of fragrance
/haquāna/	/haqu’/	/-āna/	/haquānakōn/	The God of ultimate truth
/takkōvar/	/taqva/	/-ar/	/takkōvarhāmidar/	The pious hāmid
	>/takkōva/			

/adabatta/	/adab/	/-atta/	/adabattamoli/	Indecent words
/swagiirām/	/swagiir/	/-ām/	swagiirām	The small person
/kafijāje/	/kafi/	/-āje/	kafiāje mūppan	The leader who is enough
/aa'lāje/	/aa'l/	/-āje/	/aa'lājedoodar/	The great prophet

The Arabic adjective forms are phonemically adapted to Malayalam. They are suffixed by Malayalam morphemes like -āye, -ām, -atta, -āna, -utta, and -a

Conclusion

Based on the detailed linguistic evaluation of the data collected, several contact-induced elements in the AM have been traced out. AM borrowed a few grammatical features from Arabic. It is evident in the usage of coordinating conjunction. Under the influence of Arabic, AM adopted Arabic inflected segments that functions as dual marker in Arabic loan words. Inflected segment in the Arabic plural form becomes irrelevant with the addition of Malayalam plural marker. It is also found out that several new patterns are developed out of the language's own resources in the situation of AM language contact. Formation of new verbs and nouns in an unfamiliar and unaccepted ways of native language using the roots of native elements can be treated as a system altering change. Such a change is noted also in case markers. The borrowed Arabic plural inflections were reinterpreted as singular markers and thus integrated into the Malayalam plural marker system already in place. The gender-verb agreement feature, which had been given up by stream Malayalam language, was retained and reinforced under the influence of the donor language Arabic. An existing structure can develop additional meanings, matching the ones in a contact language. Such a process is evident in AM with formation new words using native resources and the extension of its meaning in the direction of foreign concepts.

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