

King's Leadership in Malay Manuscripts through a Language Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Malaysian society should get to know more closely and know about the position of the king who should be respected unconditionally. Writings related to the king through Malay manuscripts often display stories of his leadership to the people that should be known and used as an example. Malay manuscripts related to the king should be highlighted as an educational element for the public to better know and recognize the royal institution. This study examines the appearance of the king's leadership in Malay manuscripts from a linguistic perspective by focusing on the role of language as a vehicle for the formation, disclosure, and maintenance of the power of the royal institution. Malay manuscripts such as *Sejarah Melayu*, *Hikayat Hang Tuah*, *Hikayat Raja-Raja Pasai* and *Tuhfat al-Nafis* not only function as historical records, but also as an ideological medium that displays the position of the king as a symbol of sovereignty, protector of religion, upholder of the law and moral example of the community. From a linguistic point of view, the use of speech acts such as directives and constatives play an important role in asserting the king's power. Directives speech acts such as *as titah*, *larangan* and *nasihat* function to control the actions of officials and the people, while constative speech acts are used to assert facts, laws and events that legitimize the king's position. In addition, the use of courtly language, honorific titles and formal language structures demonstrate social hierarchy and reinforce sovereignty. Language in Malay manuscripts is not just a means of communication, but an instrument of power that shapes society's perception of the king's leadership and sovereignty. Education related to royal institutions through Malay manuscripts is expected to raise awareness among the public about the king's position which must be respected and honored.

Keywords: royal institutions, leadership, language, Malay manuscripts, speech acts

INTRODUCTION

The legacy of Malay manuscripts is an invaluable national treasure for the current generation in observing the content of knowledge related to traditional Malay society. Written Malay manuscripts are important vehicles that reflect the social, political and economic aspects of past societies and are not just worthless documentation of past events. Various stories and tales are consistently depicted in Malay manuscript writing, including those related to the royal institution as the helm of the people's leadership. The role and leadership of the king are clearly presented in various Malay manuscript works such as *Hikayat Hang Tuah*, *Hikayat Raja-Raja Pasai*, *Tuhfat al-Nafis* and *Sejarah Melayu*, thus demonstrating the function of Malay manuscripts as a medium for recording the thoughts and governance structure of traditional Malay society (Awang Sariyan & Jamian, 2020). Classical Malay manuscripts not only function as historical records, but also become an important medium for displaying the visibility of the king's leadership in Malay society. Texts such as *Sejarah Melayu (Sulalatus Salatin)*, *Hikayat Raja-Raja Pasai*, and *Tuhfat al-Nafis* show the king not only as a political ruler, but also as a symbol of stability, guardian of customs, and moral guide of the people. Through the narrative and storytelling structure in these manuscripts, the king's leadership is presented in various aspects such as government management, national defense, law enforcement and the formation of Malay cultural identity. This representational function is in line with the view that Malay historical literature plays a role in affirming the king's position and power in the social and cultural system of Malay society (Liaw Yock Fang, 2011).

One of the clear manifestations of king's leadership in Malay manuscripts is political and administrative leadership. The king is depicted as the main director of government who makes strategic decisions for the well-being of the people and the stability of the state. For example, in the Malay History (*Sulalatus Salatin*), the king's edicts and orders to court officials are evidence of authority and structured and hierarchical political power. The use of authoritative language in these manuscripts reinforces the king's image as a firm, just and authoritative leader and emphasizes the importance of the people's obedience to the royal institution. In this context, language functions as a tool of power that shapes and maintains government through dominant political discourse (Fairclough, 1995). In addition, Malay manuscripts also highlight the king's role as a protector of the people and a military leader. Tales such as the *Hikayat Hang Tuah* and the *Hikayat Raja-Raja Pasai* tell how the king led the army in war, defended the territory, and maintained the peace of the state. These actions demonstrated the king's firmness, courage, and responsibility in protecting the people and government institutions. Such narratives not only reinforced the image of the king's leadership, but also formed the perception of the Malay ruler who was highly regarded for his courage and loyalty to the people and religion. In this context, the king's role as protector reflected the concept of sovereignty, which is the sacred power that binds the people's obedience to the government. According to Milner (1982), this concept showed that military power was not only physical, but also functioned to confirm the legitimacy and authority of the king in the traditional Malay political system.

The visibility of the king's leadership in Malay manuscripts is also revealed through his moral and social role. The king is depicted as a guardian of customs, a moral guide and a role model for the nobles and the people. Manuscripts such as *Adat Segala Raja-Raja Melayu* and *Undang-Undang Raja Melaka* emphasize the king's responsibility in upholding justice, maintaining peace and preserving the cultural values of the community. Through this narrative, the people are taught to respect and highly regard the king, thus realizing that the king's leadership functions as a moral and social guide in life. As described by Hooker (1972), the king in traditional Malay society acts as a normative authority that determines the boundaries of social acts. Thus, the royal institution functions as a center of reference for values that unites customs, laws and social ethics in the life of traditional Malay society. Furthermore, Malay manuscripts record the king's leadership in diplomatic and international relations. Texts such as *Tuhfat al-Nafis* highlight how the king manages relations with foreign governments through the formation of agreements and political cooperation for the benefit of the state. According to Andaya (2017), diplomatic relations in the traditional Malay kingdom are not only aimed at maintaining political stability, but are also closely related to strengthening the economy and recognition of power at the regional level. This manifestation shows that a Malay king does not only play a role in domestic affairs, but also plays a strategic role in the international political and economic arena. Through effective diplomatic management, the royal institution can build a reputation as a sovereign power and is respected by foreign governments. This situation thus strengthens the king's rule in the context of the international relations of the traditional Malay community.

In conclusion, the Malay manuscripts provide a clear picture of the manifestation of the king's leadership in various dimensions, including politics, military, moral, social and diplomacy. These texts not only record the history of the government, but also function as a guide and example to the people about the responsibilities and leadership of a king. Through the manuscripts, the king is understood as a symbol of stability, justice and Malay cultural identity that should be respected and upheld. The manifestation of the king's leadership written in the Malay manuscripts clearly proves that leadership is not just power, but a responsibility that must be shouldered with wisdom, courage and integrity throughout the reign.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Role and Leadership of King

The royal institution is an important component of the Malaysian government system which is based on the concept of Parliamentary Democracy. Various previous studies have discussed the role of the royal institution from the perspective of the constitution, politics, religion, racial unity and national stability. According to a study by Abdul Aziz Bari (2006) in his writing on the Constitutional Monarchy in Malaysia, the royal institution does not only imitate the Westminster system as in Britain, but has its own characteristics rooted in

the history of the Malay Sultanate and the development of the Federal Constitution. The study emphasizes that the king functions as the head of state who acts within the constitutional framework and is a symbol of the continuity of the country's government. From the perspective of legal history, a study by Wan Ahmad Fauzi Wan Hussain, Mohd Zamri Othman and Ashgar Ali Mohamed (2017) shows that the Malay Rulers played an important role in the process of forming the 1957 Federal Constitution of Malaya. The study found that the royal institution was not just a symbol of tradition, but was also involved in the institutionalization of the state structure and the preservation of the sovereignty of the Malay states during the independence process.

In addition, a study by Nazri Muslim (2011) emphasized the role of the Malay Rulers as protectors of Islam based on the Federal Constitution. The study explained that the rulers act as the Heads of Islam in their respective states and have certain powers in religious affairs. This role is seen as important in ensuring that the position of Islam continues to be preserved and balancing the demands of the diverse society in Malaysia. In the context of ethnic relations, a study by Nazri Muslim and Azizi Umar (2012) found that the royal institution functions as a symbol of unity and national identity. The study showed that the majority of respondents considered the institution of the Malay Rulers as a mechanism that helps maintain harmony between races and is an important element in the country's social contract. A more recent study by Mohd Anuar Ramli, Muhammad Ikhlas Rosele and Mohd Al Adib Samuri (2020) focused on the role of the royal institution in maintaining social and political stability. The research found that the royal institution functions as a protector of the rights enshrined in the Constitution, including the position of Islam, the Malay language and the special rights of the Bumiputera. The study also emphasized that the Conference of Rulers plays an important role in addressing sensitive issues related to religion and race and serves as a platform for checks and balances in the country's governance system.

Current studies as described by Mohd Hazmi Mohd Rusli (2024) show that the royal institution is still relevant in a modern democratic system because of its neutral nature and is above the interests of partisan politics. In situations of political uncertainty, the royal institution acts as a balance of power and a facilitator to ensure the continuity of the country's administration in accordance with the constitution.

Language and king

Language studies on kings and royal institutions have focused on aspects of court language, royal letters, classical Malay language patterns and the use of language as a symbol of sovereignty and social hierarchy in Malay society. These studies show that language is not just a means of communication, but also functions as a medium that elevates the dignity of the king and maintains traditional social structures. According to Raja Masittah Raja Ariffin (2001), a study of selected Malay letters shows that the language used in royal correspondence has its own linguistic characteristics in terms of the *Jawi* spelling system, morphology and vocabulary. The study found that the language in royal letters reflects the development of the Malay language across several eras and shows elements of politeness and respect for Malay government institutions.

A study by Noor Suraya Adnan Sallehudin (2008) focused on language changes in Malay royal letters sent to the British between the 18th and 19th centuries. The study findings show that there were changes in the use of vocabulary, forms of greeting and language style due to political influence, administration and diplomatic relations between the Malay government and Western powers. However, the element of glorification of the king is still maintained in the structure of the language used. In a more specific study on palace language, Awang Azman Awang Pawi and Hayati Adnan (2022) emphasized that palace language is an exclusive language used among the royal family and official palace ceremonies. A study of the Pahang Royal Coronation Ceremony found that the use of elements of exaltation, deference and repetition in palace language functions to elevate the position of the king and is a manifestation of the people's loyalty to the government. The study also shows that palace language serves as a symbol of intellectuality, manners and Malay cultural identity. In addition to palace language, studies of the works of royal figures have also received scholarly attention.

Akmaliza Abdullah, Abd. Latif Hj. Samian, Maznah Ali and Adibah Muhtar (2015) through an analysis of Raja Ali Haji's works found that language is used as a medium for shaping the morals and character of the Malay community. Raja Ali Haji saw good language as a reflection of a person's personality, moral values and the height of knowledge. This study shows that the thinking of the Malay nobility and royals also contributed to

the development of Malay philosophy. In the field of literature, Ibrahim et al. (2023) examined the use of language in contemporary Malay royal poetry of Perak and Johor. The study found that poetic language in royal poetry was used to describe the characteristics of the king's leadership who was caring, visionary and close to the people. Although written in the modern era, the language used still retains the element of glorification of the royal institution that has become a tradition in Malay literature.

Studies on the development of the Malay language also show the influence of the royal institution in efforts to standardize the language. Nik Safiah Karim (1984) and Abdul Hamid Hassan (1970) explained that the establishment of the Johor Royal Literature Malay Language Alliance played a major role in efforts to standardize the Malay language, produce dictionaries and develop modern Malay literature. The Johor royal support for the development of the Malay language has contributed to the strengthening of the Malay language as the language of knowledge and administration.

DISCUSSION

The Sovereignty of the King Through His Language

The sovereignty of the king through speech acts in Malay manuscripts can be understood by examining the way language is used strategically in traditional texts to express, strengthen and maintain the power and legitimacy of the royal institution. In the context of Malay manuscripts, language is not just a communication tool, but an ideological vehicle that shapes the public's perception of the king's position as a sovereign ruler. According to Fairclough (1995), language that functions in forming and maintaining this power relationship reflects the hierarchy between the king, the nobles and the people, thus affirming the king's sovereignty in the discourse of government. In this context, language plays a role in normalizing royal power by placing the king in an unquestioned position in the social order. In Malay manuscripts, speech acts refer to the use of utterances, expressions and language structures that carry out certain functions such as ruling, asserting authority, legitimizing power and cultivating obedience. Speech in this context does not simply convey meaning, but rather carries out social actions that have implications of power. This speech acts can be identified through royal edicts, orders, oaths of allegiance, prohibitions and declarations that often appear in historiographical texts, sagas and laws, thus marking the position of the king as the highest source of authority in the social hierarchy (Searle, 1969). Therefore, speech act analysis allows the relationship between language forms and the exercise of royal power to be systematically detailed.

One of the most obvious forms of speech act is the royal edict. In manuscripts such as the Malay History, the royal edict is not just a directive, but functions as an absolute command that must be obeyed. The language used in the edict is usually strict, formal and loaded with palace expressions, thus reflecting the sovereignty of the king. The implementation of the royal edict by the officials and the people signifies the recognition of the king's authority and shows how speech acts as a tool to activate the system of government. The unbalanced power relationship between the speaker and the listener in the royal edict reinforces the function of the utterance as a linguistic mechanism that maintains the power structure and stability of the government (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

In addition, speech acts involving oaths of allegiance also play an important role in expressing the sovereignty of the king. Malay manuscripts often record agreements or pledges of allegiance between the king and the chieftain, which are expressed through sacred and symbolic language. The utterance of this oath not only binds the chieftain politically, but also morally and spiritually. Violation of the oath is often associated with bad consequences, thus strengthening the king's position as a sovereign ruler protected by the concept of sovereignty. According to John Searle (1969), the oath of allegiance functions as a binding force to show how loyalty is institutionalized through speech. Through the oath of allegiance, the power relationship between the king and the chieftain is established in the form of a commitment that cannot be easily withdrawn.

Language practices in Malay manuscripts are also evident through legal language. In texts such as the Melaka Code, legal statements usually begin with a reference to the king's consent or decree, indicating that all regulations and punishments emanate from his authority. This legal language reinforces the king's sovereignty as the law-maker and guardian of justice. In other words, law is not just a social norm, but a manifestation of

the king's power expressed through written language. In the Malay legal tradition, legal language binds the people's direct obedience to the king's authority (Hooker, 1972). The formal and authoritative language structure in legal texts emphasizes the king's position as the center of reference for justice. The use of courtly language and honorific titles in Malay manuscripts functions as language practices that affirm the king's sovereignty. Titles such as "Paduka Seri Sultan" and "Yang Dipertuan", as well as expressions of humility by the people, indicate an unbalanced power relationship between the king and the people. This hierarchical language structure not only controls the way of speaking, but also creates an awareness of the king's high and unquestionable position.

In the context of Malay sociolinguistics, the system of titles and salutations reflects the hierarchical structure and power relations in society (Asmah Haji Omar, 1993). This linguistic practice further fosters respect for the king as something common in the social life of Malay society. Overall, the sovereignty of the king through speech acts in Malay manuscripts can be seen as an interconnected system of utterances, symbols and beliefs. Language not only depicts power, but also creates the reality of power itself. Through decrees, oaths, legal statements and court language, Malay manuscripts emphasize that the sovereignty of the king is not just an abstract concept, but an authority that lives and functions in the life of society. Therefore, the study of speech acts in Malay manuscripts opens up a space for a deeper understanding of how language is used to build, maintain and pass on the sovereignty of the royal institution in Malay tradition.

Directives Speech Acts of a King in a Malay Manuscript

Language is one of the important mediums in human life. In the context of the classical Malay kingdom, language is not only used as a means of communication, but also functions as a tool of power and legitimacy. In Malay manuscripts such as *Sejarah Melayu*, *Hikayat Hang Tuah* and *Hikayat Raja-Raja Pasai*, a king often uses language to give orders, prohibitions or advice to his officials and subjects. The use of language as a vehicle for the exercise of power is in line with the view that language functions to form and maintain power relations in society (Fairclough, 1995). This act of using language is known as directive speech acts.

Directive speech acts refer to speech acts that aim to influence or direct the actions of the listener. According to Levinson (1983), this speech acts functions to control the actions of the listener through the use of language in a particular social context. When used by a king, directive speech acts carry the implication of higher power because the king's position is at the highest social hierarchy. In Malay manuscripts, the use of directive speech acts functions to ensure compliance and order in the government system. The difference in the form of directives, whether they are orders, prohibitions or advice, determines the level of obligation imposed on the listener. Therefore, the king's directive language plays an important role in controlling the actions and acts of officials and the people.

First, the king's command or decree. These orders are usually strict and direct, using language markers such as "it is necessary", "his royal decree" or "immediately". In *Sejarah Melayu*, the king often issues orders to officials to carry out important tasks such as military preparations or administrative affairs. These orders show an unbalanced power relationship between the king and officials, in line with the characteristics of authoritative speech in high-hierarchical situations (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Therefore, the king's decree functions as a linguistic mechanism that controls actions in the government system. The clarity and firmness of the language of commands reduces the room for rejection or negotiation from the listener. In this way, the king's decree ensures that the implementation of the ruler's will occurs immediately and effectively.

Second, prohibition. The king uses the language of prohibition to uphold customary law and morality in society. These prohibitions are usually marked with words such as "don't", "forbidden" or "cannot", which serve to limit the listener's actions. Prohibitory language in the context of government reflects the speaker's power to set the boundaries of permitted and prohibited acts (Searle, 1969). Thus, prohibitions function as directive speech acts that maintain social order and stability. The king's prohibitions form clear guidelines about acceptable acts within the government structure. Violations of these prohibitions are usually associated with specific punishments or consequences, thus reinforcing the king's authority.

Third, advice or recommendations. Although still directive in nature, the king's advice is delivered in a softer and more polite way. Words such as "*ingat-ingatlah*", "*baiklah*" or "*patutlah*" are often used. This speech act shows the king's wisdom in guiding the dignitaries or heirs to the throne to act in accordance with the interests of the kingdom. This approach is in line with the use of politeness strategies that aim to influence actions without direct coercion (Leech, 1983). The king's advice functions to maintain authority while maintaining the harmony of social relationships. In this way, power is conveyed in a subtle but effective way. Through advice, the king also displays leadership authority based on wisdom and moral considerations.

In addition, there are also subtle requests or invitations, especially in the context of diplomacy or communicating with equals. The language used is more persuasive and polite, but still reflects the king's authority. This shows that the Malay king not only prioritizes power, but also politeness in conveying his will. In social interactions, the use of language that respects the honor of others plays a role in maintaining the balance of power relationships (Goffman, 1967). Subtle prompting allows the king to achieve political goals without creating open tension. This strategy demonstrates the king's sensitivity to the context and position of the interlocutor.

A king's directive speech acts not only regulate the acts of the people and dignitaries, but also serve to reinforce social hierarchy, strengthen sovereignty and preserve Malay culture. The politeness strategy used in the king's edicts and advice shows that language also functions as a tool for political and moral education. Thus, Malay manuscripts are not just historical records, but also guides in understanding the relationship between language, power and customs in classical Malay society. The king's language operates as a symbolic power that is accepted and recognized by society (Bourdieu, 1991). Through this acceptance, the king's authority is strengthened without the need for physical coercion. Speech acts then become the basis for the continuity of the government structure.

In conclusion, a king's directive speech acts in Malay manuscripts play an important role in controlling, guiding and upholding social order. The king's language becomes a symbol of power, wisdom and politeness, thus showing how Malay tradition relates language to politics and culture. Therefore, a study of this speech act provides a deep understanding of social and political life in classical Malay government. Through the analysis of speech acts, Malay manuscripts can be read as texts that demonstrate the symbolic exercise of power (Austin, 1962). Language not only reflects the reality of government, but also shapes the way in which power is understood and received. This approach opens up space for further research into the relationship between language and power in Malay tradition.

Constatives Speech Acts of a King in a Malay Manuscript

Language in classical Malay manuscripts is not only used to communicate, but also to record history, customs and government regulations. One important type of speech act in Malay texts is constative speech act. Constative speech act refers to speech acts that function to state a fact, provide information, or explain a situation. In the context of a king, constative language is often used to record events, affirm laws or explain royal customs and decrees. Through such declarative utterances, royal events and decrees are framed as legitimate and undisputed realities, in line with the function of constative utterances in the formation of social meaning (Mey, 2001). In Malay manuscripts such as *Sejarah Melayu* and *Hikayat Raja-Raja Pasai*, a king uses constative speech acts to deliver official statements that contain certainty and truth. For example, the king announces military success in war, the birth of a crown prince or the affirmation of royal customs and regulations. This constative speech acts usually uses clear declarative sentences such as "is", "has happened" or "has happened" to emphasize facts that are considered authentic and undisputed. Explicit statements of facts serve to strengthen the authority of the text and guide the reader to accept the information as official truth (Hyland, 2005).

In addition, the king's constative also serves to establish history and customs in written form so that future generations can understand it. For example, in the Malay History, the king states important events in an objective form, such as the conquest of territory or the establishment of diplomatic relations with other governments. This statement is not only to record facts, but also to demonstrate the king's power, wisdom and

legitimacy. In the study of collective memory, the narration of historical facts plays a role in maintaining a narrative that supports the political position of the ruler (Jeffrey & Robbins, 1998).

According to Asmah Haji Omar (1993), the use of structured and official language in the Malay tradition reflects the society's view of nature that glorifies authority and order. The king's constative speech acts in Malay manuscripts have several main characteristics. First, it is objective and clear, providing reliable information. Secondly, constative language can also strengthen the king's authority because every statement is considered authentic and comes from the highest source. Thirdly, it passes on historical, customary and political knowledge to the reader or the people. These characteristics make the king the main source of reference for truth in government discourse. Through constative language, the continuity of Malay government values and structures can be maintained across generations. In conclusion, the constative speech acts of a king in Malay manuscripts plays an important role as a tool for conveying facts, asserting laws and documenting history. The king not only conveys information, but also asserts sovereignty, power and wisdom in government with this language. Malay manuscripts that contain constative statements of the king become valuable sources for understanding classical Malay culture, politics and history. Through constative speech, royal authority is also presented as something stable and continuous in historical discourse (Van Dijk, 2008). So, constative language plays an important role in maintaining the legitimacy and continuity of Malay government.

CONCLUSION

Overall, classical Malay manuscripts highlight the visibility of the king's role as the center of political, religious and social power in Malay society. Through texts such as *Sejarah Melayu*, *Hikayat Raja-Raja Pasai* and *Tuhfat al-Nafis*, the king's role is clearly depicted not only as a ruler, but also as a guardian of customs, lawmaker and preserver of social harmony. These manuscripts show that the king is a symbol of sovereignty for the entire kingdom, thus reinforcing the social hierarchy that has existed since the beginning of the Malay sultanate. Reid (1988) asserts that political traditions in the Malay world form the king as a centre of authority that binds the social structure and government.

This representation shows how the king's power is consolidated through historical and cultural discourse. In addition, the writing of Malay manuscripts emphasizes the king's wisdom and leadership in managing the government. Through directive and constative speech acts, the king is depicted giving clear instructions, advice and decrees as well as recording historical facts and political decisions. This shows that the king's role is not only authoritative, but also functions as an educator for officials and the people. Malay manuscripts can serve as a medium for the people to understand the responsibilities of the king and their own roles in the social and political system of the kingdom. According to Searle (1979), utterances in the form of directives and statements of fact reflect the institutional power of the speaker and its function in controlling social acts. The language practices of the king in Malay manuscripts show a direct relationship between language, power and the responsibilities of government.

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