

# CHAPTER TEN

## FEMALE KINSHIP TERMS

### 10.0 Introduction

Although the study of female kinship terms and their use in different cultures can contribute towards a whole study on its own, an examination of some of these terms will contribute towards completeness of womanword corpus in this study. Basic female kinship terms examined here will be limited to those that express direct blood relations in the context of three generations and relationships procured through marriage.

Sixteen terms will be examined. They are “aunt”, “auntie/aunty”, “daughter”, “daughter-in-law”, “grand-aunt” (“great-aunt”), “granddaughter”, “grandma”, “grand-mother”, “grandniece”, “mother”, “mother figure”, “mother-in-law”, “niece”, “sister”, “sister-in-law” and “wife”.

### 10.1 “Aunt” (“Auntie/Aunty”)

A study of the meaning of “aunt” in the three English monolingual dictionaries *OED*, *LDOCE* and *Cobuild*, shows that this English term has three main common meaning components as shown in Table 10.1. The first two meaning components represent “aunt” as a relative, while the third does not.

The bilingual dictionaries *KIMD* and *KDB*, both have this term as a main entry. However, as seen in the table, *KDB* provides an equivalent for only one of the components of meaning, while *KIMD* is more exhaustive in

its explication of the meaning of “aunt” not only in terms of the English component meanings but in terms of the use of “aunt” equivalents in Malay. *KIMD* lists the corresponding equivalents for the meaning components of “aunt”. In the first instance (“SISTER OF EITHER PARENTS), not only are suitable equivalents given, but a sociological aspect of the use of these equivalents is given, that is, the use of different terms for an aunt according to her status in that family (eldest, middle and youngest). In addition the sociologically correct term for politeness and royalty (“bonda”) literally “mother” is also given as an equivalent. A similar explication for aunt as “WIFE OF UNCLE” is seen in the presentation of meaning in *KIMD*.

*KDB* on the other hand, provides equivalent “emak saudara” for only one component of English “aunt”. The general nature of this term is seen in the meaning given in *Utusan* (1995: 463) “saudara perempuan kepada emak/bapa kita sendiri” (simply translated: “female relative to our own parents”). This implies that any female relative of our parents would be our aunt. This general nature of the equivalent denies the user knowledge of the specific distinguishing aspects of other equivalents for “aunt” as seen in the meaning presentation in *KIMD*.

“Auntie/aunty” is given separate entry status in *OED*, *Cobuild*, *KIMD* and *KDB*. In *LDOCE* it is shown to be synonymous with main entry “aunt”. Basically, “auntie/aunty” have the same meaning components as “aunt”. However, “aunt” is considered a more formal usage while “auntie/aunty” are informal and show affectionate use.

Component meanings of English “aunt”	Corresponding Malay equivalents	
	KIMD	KDB
SISTER OF EITHER PARENTS	mak saudara, mak cik. (elderst) mak long.  (between eldest and youngers) mak ngah  (youngest) mak/busu, cu, su, usu, bongsu.  (polite) bonda/especially in correspondence  (in royalty) bonda.	No equivalents given.
WIFE OF UNCLE	mak cik, mak + name/ nickname (of eldest uncle) mak long  (of middle uncle) mak ngah.  (of youngest uncle) mak/ busu, cu, su, usu, bongsu.	emak saudara
FAMILIAR WOMAN FRIEND OR NEIGHBOUR	mak cik (name or nick- name)	No equivalents given.

Table 10-1: Malay equivalents for component meanings of English “aunt” by dictionary.

*KIMD* cross-refers the two words to “aunt” with the label “colloquial” before it. *KDB* however treats “auntie/aunty” as main entry and provides Malay equivalent “emak saudara” with gloss (“panggilan mesra untuk”, i.e. “affectionate use for”). However, the fact that “auntie/aunty” is increasingly

used by the young person for an unrelated family friend, (*OED*), is not mentioned in any of the other four dictionaries used in the study.

**10.2 “Daughter” and “Daughter-in-Law”**

A daughter is a female offspring of a set of parents. A daughter-in-law is also like a daughter to the parents except that she is related through marriage. Although the two English terms are lexically similar, the Malay equivalents for each are not. The word “daughter” is usually translated “anak (perempuan)”, literally (“female offspring”) whilst daughter-in-law” is “menantu (perempuan)”. The word “anak” can be applied to humans and animals and is not gender specific. “Menantu” is only applicable to humans. The suffixal “perempuan” is needed in both cases to specify the gender of the person being mentioned. In both *KIMD* and *KDB*, “daughter” is a main entry. However, “daughter-in-law” is a main entry in *KIMD* only. In *KDB* it is a sub-entry under “daughter”.

Table 10-2 shows some important components for English “daughter” and corresponding Malay equivalents. *KIMD* appears to cover more componential aspects of “daughter” than does *KDB*. *KIMD* also shows variation of equivalent for “daughter” when applied to royalty or a prophet (“puteri”). Where “daughter” has components “PERSONIFIED” and “RELATIONSHIP TO SOURCE”, there appears to be a lexical gap or absence of equivalent expression. An example of this meaning of daughter in English is seen in the relationship between a language and its source language. So language X, for example, can be a daughter of language Y, if language Y is its source.

Component meanings of English “daughter”	Corresponding Malay equivalents	
	KIMD	KDB
OFFSPRING(FEMALE)	anak(perempuan) (of royalty) (puteri); (of prophet) puteri, anak perempuan	anak perempuan
DESCENDANT (FEMALE)	anak (perempuan)	—
WOMAN IN RELATION TO NATION OR PLACE	puteri	—
OFFSPRINGS OF THINGS (BIOLOGY AND PHYSICS)	anak	—
PERSONIFICATION RELATION TO ITS SOURCE (EG. LANGUAGE)	—	—

Table 10-2: Malay equivalents corresponding to some component meanings of “daughter” by dictionary.

### 10.3 “Grand Aunt” (Great Aunt”) “Grand Daughter” “Grand Mother” (Grandma”) and “Grand Niece”

English kinship terms with the prefix “grand” indicate relationships one generation removed. The suffixal terms specify the type of relationship that exists.

Among the monolingual dictionaries, “grand aunt” as main entry is found only in *OED*. Both *LDOCE* and *Cobuild* have synonym “great aunt” as sub-entry at “great”. *KIMD* has both synonyms as main entries and provides the same equivalent. *KDB* only has sub-entry “grand aunt” at “grand -”.

In fact , in the *KDB* all the kinship terms being examined in this section are found as sub-entries under “grand -”, except for “grandma” for which there is no entry by itself.

Malay has no single equivalent for “grand -” to show relationships one generation removed. Varying lexical items are used to represent the relationships. Table 10-3 lists the Malay equivalents for each of the English kinship terms by dictionary.

English Kinship terms with prefix “grand-”	Corresponding Malay equivalents	
	KIMD	KDB
GRAND AUNT (GREAT AUNT)	nenek saudara (no gloss) [ME]	nenek saudara (perempuan) [SE-(grand)]
GRANDDAUGHTER	cucu perempuan (fml and polite) cucunda perempuan [ME]	cucu perempuan [SE-(grand)]
GRANDMA	(grandma) (ma) (colloq) nek, tok, opah, tok mak, mak tok [ME]	[NE]
GRANDMOTHER	nenek (mother of one's parents) (fml. and polite) nenda, nenekanda, nenenda [ME]	nenek (perempuan) [SE-(grand)]
GRANDNIECE	cucu saudara (perempuan) [ME]	cucu saudara perempuan [SE-(grand)]

Table 10-3: Malay equivalents for English kinship terms with prefix “grand -” by dictionary.

Legend: ME - Main entry, SE - Sub-entry, NE - No entry

Although some Malay lexical items are repeated like (for example “cucu” and “nenek”), the addition of a second lexical item “perempuan” or “saudara” differentiates the relationship. It is unclear why *KDB* has “perempuan” after “nenek saudara” and “nenek” as in Malay the word is

female specific. “Cucu” is not gender specific, therefore there is a need to attach “perempuan” when the specificity is required. The list of colloquial equivalent terms for “grandma” (“nek, tok, opah”) stands out clearly different when compared to the terms for the more formal “grand mother”. The more formal and polite “nenda”, “nenekanda” and “nenenda” are appropriate when used to address the grandmother in letters.

A discussion about the word “saudara” is necessary as its use raises some ambiguity. It is used in the equivalents for “grandaunt” and “grandniece”. Both *KL* (1990:961) and *MED* (1989:434) state that it can mean a brother or sister or a relative or even a colleague or a comrade or companion. This range of possibilities for “saudara” would prevent one understanding the actual person referred to not only for the Malay words in which it occurs but for the English terms that it represents, especially individuals who have no knowledge about Malay culture.

**10.4 “Mother”, “Mother Figure” and “Mother-in-Law”.**

Unlike the Malay equivalents for English kinship terms with prefix “grand -”, Malay equivalents for kinship terms “mother” and those found from it, are basically derived from the two Malay equivalents words “ibu” and “emak”. Some principal component meanings of “mother” are listed in Table 10-4 together with corresponding Malay equivalents found in *KIMD* and *KDB*. The table shows that not all aspects of meaning of “mother” are represented in Malay. In addition, the more preferable equivalent for mother is “ibu” in many instances.

Component meanings of English “mother”	Corresponding Malay equivalents	
	KIMD	KDB
FEMALE PARENT (HUMAN)	ibu, emak	ibu, emak
FEMALE PARENT (ANIMAL)	induk, ibu	-
FORM OF ADDRESS: MUM, MUMMY, STEPMOTHER, MOTHER-IN-LAW, UNRELATED ELDERLY WOMAN	ibu, emak - mak cik, ibu	- -
MOTHERLY FEELING	perasaan seorang ibu	-
FEMALE HEAD OF CONVENT/ RELIGIOUS ORDER	-	ketua (wanita) dalam suatu kumpulan agama ((woman) head in a religious sect)
CREATOR/ORIGINAL CAUSE	ibu	sifat atau keadaan yang membangkitkan sesuatu
ORIGINAL THING/SOURCE FROM WHICH OTHERS GROW. (ALSO IN BIOLOGY AND PATHOLOGY)	-	-

Table 10-4: Some important components of meaning of English “mother” and corresponding Malay equivalents by dictionary.

Comparatively, *KIMD* has dealt with more aspects of meaning of “mother” than *KDB*. *KIMD* places emphasis on providing simple equivalents while *KDB* resorts to longer description or explanation to achieve more precise definition.

The Malay equivalent “induk” for animals is also used for inanimate things like ships and human race (“induk bangsa”) meaning “principal” or “source”. Therefore it is used for the mother of animals as they are the “source” of the young animal.

Although in English “mother” can be used for an older unrelated woman, Malay prefers “mak cik” which was also used for a similar set of features for “great-aunt”. The preference for reserving “ibu” and “emak” for female parent is maintained. There is a tendency to retain these two words for one specific referent.

Malay equivalent meanings for “mother figure” and “mother-in-law” are derived from the two preferred equivalents for “mother”. They are “ibu” and “emak”. The only monolingual dictionary that has an entry for “mother figure” is *Cobuild*; and only *KIMD* has an equivalent “tokoh ibu”. Malay “tokoh” for person has, among others, the features “PROMINENT”, “OUTSTANDING” and “WELL-KNOWN” (*MED*: 560 and *KL*: 1174). The positive aspects of these features make it suitable as an equivalent for “figure” in “mother figure”, that is someone who can support, care and help, to be looked up to.

“Mother-in-law” has equivalents “/ibu, emak/ mertua”, in *KIMD* and “ibu mertua” in *KDB* when it is a sub-entry at “mother”. Here is a case of direct equivalent for an entry. However the different spellings in both *KIMD* and *KDB* do not indicate that they are different words. They are synonyms. “Mertua” however is a Malay word used in Jakarta (Indonesia) (*KD*:1989:820) and it is also used here in Malaysia.

## 10.5 “Niece”

“Niece” in English refers to a daughter either in blood relationship or through marriage. In the former case she is the daughter of one’s brother or

sister. In the latter case, she is the daughter of one’s wife’s brother or sister, or one’s husband’s brother or sister. The Malay equivalents for niece are presented in Table 10-5. As no glosses were given for any of the equivalents presented, it is uncertain if the Malay equivalents are equivalent to “niece” in all the cases mentioned above or in more or less.

Dictionary	Equivalents for “niece”
KIMD	/ anak saudara, anak buah / perempuan
KDB	anak saudara (perempuan) anak kemanakan perempuan

Table 10-5: Malay equivalents for “niece” by dictionary.

As was seen above under the discussion for English kinship terms with “grand”, “saudara” has many referents. In this instance too, ( for “niece”) the ambiguity holds as it is uncertain if the limitations of relationships placed on the meaning of “niece” are applicable for “saudara” too.

The range of uses for “anak buah” are not bound by blood or marital relationships. *KL* (1990:23) and *MED* (1989:12) state that “anak buah” is a member of a family or district, or member of a team or a crew. Therefore its use goes beyond that of kinship relations, which is not so of “niece”.

The equivalent “anak kemanakan” (in *KDB*) appears to be the most suitable for “niece” ( or “nephew”) as it refers specifically to the child of one’s brother or sister. However this applies only to one meaning aspect of “niece” that is that of blood relationship (*KL*, 1990:471); (*KD*, 1989:575). Although in

the Minangkabau language this equivalent refers specifically to a “female person”, in Malay usage it is gender neutral, hence the need for “perempuan” in suffixal position. The use of “perempuan” for the other equivalents given for “niece” is necessary for the same reason.

### 10.6 “Sister” and “Sister-in-Law”

In English the word “sister” has many referents and therefore many components of meaning. Table 10-6 lists some important components of meaning for “sister” and the corresponding Malay equivalents by dictionary.

Component meanings of English “sister”	Corresponding Malay equivalents	
	KIMD	KDB
HUMAN SIBLING	(elder) kakak (younger) adik (perempuan) (considered together)/ adik-beradik; saudara (perempuan)	adik perempuan kakak
FELLOW FEMALE HUMAN	kawan saudara	-
NUN	rahib wanita	biarawati, rahib perempuan
FORM OF ADDRESS: NUN FOR WOMAN NOT KNOWN	sister -	- -
TITTLE FOR HEAD NURSE	sister	-
NURSE IN CHARGE AT HOSPITAL WARD	ketua jururawat	jururawat kanan di hospital
THING WITH SIMILAR CHARACTERISTICS (RELATIONSHIP) TO ANOTHER	kembar	-

Table 10-6: Some principal meaning components of “sister” and corresponding Malay equivalents by dictionary.

Compared to the *KDB*, *KIMD* has covered more aspects of the meaning of English “sister”. The notions of elder and younger (as seen in “aunt”) are important in Malay. Therefore the lexical equivalents “kakak” (for elder sister) and “adik” (for younger sister) have these features inherent in them. In English, the same notions have to be expressed by the relevant lexical items, “elder” or “big” and “little” or “younger” respectively. When sisters are considered together, the gender marker “perempuan” has to be used as “adik-beradik” and “saudara” (also seen in “kawan saudara” ) are gender neutral. The same applies for “rahib” (monk or nun). Therefore gender specific “wanita” or “perempuan” is used.

As Malay has no equivalent for form of address for sister as “NUN” and “TITLE FOR A NURSE”, the English “Sister” has been borrowed and used. The equivalents “ketua” (“head”) and “kanan” (“right” or “senior”) although semantically different, are both suitable equivalents for sister as “ward nurse in charge” as both words have feature of “authority” and “being in charge”.

English “sister-in-law” is used for basically three relationships through marriage: (a) the wife of one’s brother; (b) the sister of one’s husband or wife; and (c) the wife of one’s husband’s or wife’s brother.

*KIMD* has “sister-in-law” as a main entry while *KDB* has the item as a sub-entry at “sister”. In the equivalents given by both dictionaries the common lexical item is “ipar”. “Ipar” in Malay is used of relatives by marriage or in-laws. It is a gender neutral term. *KIMD* discriminates between an elder

sister-in-law (“kakak ipar”) and a younger one (“adik ipar”). *KDB* does not make this distinction as its equivalent “ipar perempuan” just means “female in-law”. Although “kakak” is gender specific, “adik” is not. However no gender specific term like “perempuan” or “wanita” has been given for “adik ipar” to indicate gender. *KL* (1990:365) and *MED* (1989:171) both state that the same term is used of a younger brother-in-law or sister-in-law. It is possible that the gender of the in-law can be identified from the situational context.

As “ipar” is used for the relatives of one’s husband or wife (“saudara suami atau saudara isteri”: *KL*:1990:365), the boundaries of its use are uncertain. Unlike the use of English “sister-in-law”, which has quite specific referents, as mentioned at the beginning of this section, “ipar” appears to have a wider range of referents. It appears as if it is not necessary to establish the specific nature of the relationship of the female in-law. The lack of any form of gloss in both dictionaries supports this inference.

## 10.7 “Wife”

In English the use of “wife” has a broad range. Table 10-7 lists several component meaning usages for English “wife” and corresponding Malay equivalents by dictionary. It is clear from the table that only one usage of “wife” has equivalents in Malay, that is, that of the human female spouse in a marriage. *KDB* has “bini” in addition to “isteri”.

Component meanings of English "wife"	Corresponding Malay equivalents	
	KIMD	KDB
HUMAN FEMALE SPOUSE IN MARRIAGE	isteri	isteri, bini
WOMAN (HUMBLE OR LOWRANK)	-	-
FEMALE OF LOWER ANIMALS	-	-
PASSIVE MEMBER OF HOMOSEXUAL RELATIONSHIP	-	-

Table 10-7. Some principal components of meaning of English "wife" and corresponding Malay equivalents by dictionary.

*KL* and *MED* do not indicate any differences between the two equivalents "bini" and "isteri". *KD* however labels "bini" as "less refined" ("kurang halus": p. 149) and "isteri" as "refined"(bh=bahasa halus: p. 462). Also as seen in *KL*. "bini" enters into expressions that have negative connotations such as "bini aji" (mistress of sultan or ruler) and "bini gelap" or "bini simpan" (mistress). Expressions formed from "isteri" do not imply such negative meanings.

As both dictionaries fail to provide lexical or semantic equivalents for other meaning aspects of English "wife", they are seen to represent in this case, the context of use of the word only in the Malay culture and not in the English. Alternatively, this lack can be seen as a situation in which lexical

gaps occur in the language because the contexts of use do not exist in the culture (that is, the Malay culture).

## **10.8 Discussion of Results**

### **i) Meaning issues**

Meaning of entry words is basically given in the form of lexical or semantic equivalents. This is more so of *KIMD* than *KDB* which resorts to longer explanations where equivalents are not available. Both dictionaries do not always provide all meaning aspects of the entry word as seen for 'mother' (Table 10-4) and 'sister' (Table 10-6). *KIMD* attempts to cover a greater range of meaning of the entry word than *KDB*. *KIMD* also provides details of usage of the Malay equivalents in the Malay sociocultural context, as seen for 'aunt' (Table 10-1) and 'daughter' (Table 10-2). *KDB* however focuses more on explication of principal English meanings of the entry word. It does not delve into details of usage of the Malay equivalents in the Malay sociocultural context.

The general trend in the presentation of meaning is for one English entry, to be equivalent to several Malay lexical terms based on sociocultural norms of use. The various polysemic and connotational aspects of the English entry are represented by different Malay lexical items or expressions as seen in the meanings for 'aunt' (Table 10-1), 'daughter' (Table 10-2) and even 'mother' (Table 10-4).

In the course of translating from English to Malay there is a loss as well as a gain meaning. The loss is seen when not all senses attached to

the English word are provided. The user will be deprived of the total range of meanings represented by the source word. The gain is realized in the knowledge obtained from the range of Malay meanings given and the norms of usage of these meanings, especially in *KIMD*. The use of glosses makes it easier to understand the limitations of use of the Malay equivalents.

The various lexical meanings given in Malay show that for one English lexical entry, meaning is distributed over several Malay lexical items. This is so because there are seldom one-to-one correspondences between English and Malay which represent each other's totality of meaning. On one hand the presentation of various lexical items for the different componential aspects of the English entry word will result in a certain measure of accuracy being achieved by the Malay meanings. On the other hand, a lack of one-to-one equivalence will result in lexical gaps existing in cases where several componential meaning aspects of the entry word are not provided with any equivalents as for example "daughter" (*KDB*), "mother" (*KIMD* and *KDB*) and "wife" (both *KIMD* and *KDB*).

## **ii) The concept of woman**

A casual count of the equivalents in the tables shows that for the sixteen English terms Malay has a total of about forty-one lexical or semantic representations. This is because specific equivalents are used for various meaning aspects of entry words. These equivalents represent the notions of woman in Malay in specific contexts. The specific lexical items (of Malay) result because different items are used to differentiate the age and status of the women and the contexts of use (polite, formal, informal).

Besides the specific lexical items given as equivalents, 'woman' in Malay kinship terms is represented by generic 'anak' (child), 'perempuan' (gender marker) 'ibu' and 'emak'. 'Wanita' is used only once for 'sister' 'rahib wanita' (meaning 'nun') (*KIMD*).

The different uses of 'perempuan' and 'wanita' were discussed earlier in the chapter, and it was shown how the two bilingual dictionaries fail in clarifying these differences which affect usage to a certain extent.

Similarly 'ibu' and 'emak' for mother are also not interchangeable equivalents. Asmah Haji Omar, in a componential analysis of the two terms shows that the two words indeed differ in a significant way (1988: 183-184). Of the five components used to compare the two lexical items (*FEMALE SEX, PARENT, HUMAN BEING, ANIMAL, INANIMATE OBJECT*), 'emak' does not have the last two components (*ANIMAL AND INANIMATE OBJECT*) because it is not used to refer to animals or inanimate objects. Figure 10-1 shows how the concepts of 'ibu' and 'emak' overlap and differ. Therefore there is a preference in the Kedah dialect to use 'emak' rather than 'ibu' for 'mother' as this shows the uniqueness of the individual being referred to. The use of 'ibu' would be degrading and scornful.

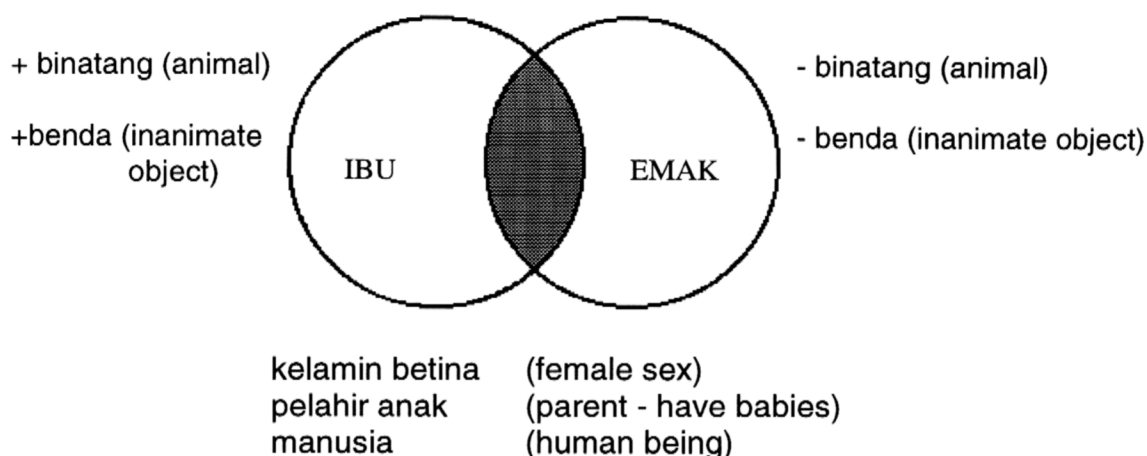


Fig. 10-1: Important conceptual differences between Malay "ibu" and "emak"

Adapted from: Asmah Haji Omar (1988: 184)

It can therefore be seen that the lexical resources of English and Malay differentiate gender differently in the kinship terms. While English kinship terms for 'woman' are basically polysemic with some connotations, Malay kinship terms are specific for different referents in different interpersonal and social contexts. However, subtle (but significant) differences in use are not explicitly identified by the dictionary meanings (as in the case of 'ibu' and 'emak') where the evaluative loading of each word is unknown to the user.

### iii) **Extent of realistic presentation of meaning**

The two dictionaries (*KIMD* in particular) aim at a realistic presentation of the meanings of entry words. Although both dictionaries seldom present the totality of meaning of the English entry words, they attempt to explicate the most significant component meanings of the entry items.

*KIMD* presents more aspects of meaning of the entry word than does *KDB*. However, *KIMD* focuses a great deal on the socio-cultural norms of use for the Malay equivalents. This implies that, the Malay equivalents are given to reflect the world-view of the target language, more than that of the source language. *KDB* however, limits its meaning presentation to the world-view of the source language. In some, as in the case of 'aunt', 'daughter', 'mother' and 'sister', it falls short, as it does not cover many important meaning aspects of the source word. In some instances, it is probably because the meaning of the English entry may not have been dominant at the time the dictionary was written, for instance, for component four for 'wife' (PASSIVE MEMBER OF HOMOSEXUAL RELATIONSHIP) (Table 10-7). In other cases it may be because of constraints of space. (*KDB* has 1457 pages, *KIMD* has 1945 pages).

The extent of realistic (or accurate) presentation of meaning falters when there are no glosses (for example for 'niece') or the referent is uncertain (for instance 'anak buah', one equivalent given for 'niece').

In two instances the lack of boundaries of use for the Malay equivalents 'saudara' (for 'niece') and 'ipar' (for 'in-law') reduces the accuracy of the Malay equivalents for the English entry.

Overall, a realistic representation of the meanings is seen in the relationship the entry items contracts with the equivalents. Correspondence between the two is established by the provision of several lexical items (Malay) for each individual English entry. This allows for the different senses

of the English entry to be represented in Malay as accurately as context and usage permits.