CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background

Today, dictionaries are available in various forms. In size, they vary from the smallest pocket dictionaries to the multiple volumed encyclopaedic dictionaries. A dictionary can be monolingual, bilingual or multilingual. It can contain limited information on a language, like pronunciation only, or a range of information from pronunciation, grammar, meaning and usage to etymology. Language in the dictionary can be dealt with in a normative or descriptive manner. The information given about the language can range from being purely lexical to a detailed encyclopaedic type.

The items or entries in the dictionary can be arranged alphabetically or thematically. The varied information of dictionaries can today be found in the form of the conventional book or the more sophisticated electronic forms such as the compact disks. Whatever the size or type of the dictionary its one basic function as a repository or record of a language - past and present - persists.

The task of recording a language is a difficult one. This difficulty is further enhanced when two languages are to be recorded in a manner that makes them comparable or even equivalent. This is because language is a complex of various facets - structure (phonology, morphology and syntax) semantics and pragmatics.

Some facets of language such as its structure, can be studied objectively, making comparisons between languages possible. In other aspects such as meaning, in which the subjective element is present in varying degrees, comparisons between languages can become more involved, and sometimes difficult.

The influence of culture and society on language and meaning has been raised time and again. Fries (1963:104-109) views language as having three layers of meaning: lexical, structural or grammatical and socio-cultural. Language has total meaning only when all three layers are taken into account.

Corder (1975: 71) states that

> "...languages do reflect cultures, it is easy to see that where there are cultural differences between communities, these will be reflected in differences in their linguistic systems ".

Larson (1984: 43) states that "all meaning is culturally conditioned". An individual interprets language in terms of his/her own culture. The importance of the socio-cultural meaning of words is no where more vital than in its record in bilingual dictionaries.

This study investigates the lexical and socio-cultural meanings of words in the context of one type of bilingual work, the English-Malay dictionary. The dictionaries chosen for this study are the *Kamus Dwibahasa* (1990) which was first published in 1979, and *Kamus Inggeris-Melayu*

Dewan (1992). The reasons for their suitability for this study are discussed in 1.3 below. The research takes the view that such dictionaries are not only lexical records of the two languages concerned but a record of their socio-cultural meanings as well.

If one of the functions of a bilingual dictionary is to provide information about the meanings of words from a source (entry) language in the target language, then the fact that lexical meaning can have various levels must be transferred to the user of the dictionary.

The English language (an Indo-European language) and Malay (an Austronesian language) are not cognate languages. They are used in societies which are as far apart physically as they are culturally. Their convergence into Malay society was a result of a chance of history. This being the case, the role of a bilingual dictionary to meet the needs of such a society, becomes vital in recording language information that is not only lexically correct but socially and culturally accurate and appropriate.

Although much has been said or suggested about the importance of socio-cultural meanings in dictionaries, systematic study according to linguistic principles and methods has not been widely undertaken to investigate the extent of this importance. It is hoped that this study will contribute in some measure to a greater understanding of this aspect of bilingual dictionaries. This in turn, it is hoped, will benefit writers and consumers of such dictionaries.

1.1 The Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of this thesis is to study how the meanings of a select corpus of lexical items of English are presented in Malay in the English-Malay dictionaries chosen. It is a study about the concept of `woman' in both these languages. The words that represent this concept and the changes that occur with each lexical representation of the concept in English and Malay are examined. The study also attempts to investigate how realistic the representations of meaning in a bilingual dictionary are in terms of the socio-cultural aspects of the words, that is the load of meaning of and behind the words.

In more specific terms, the thesis aims, firstly, to describe how and to what extent the bilingual dictionary deals with the source language words, whether the meanings given are in the form of equivalents, definitions or simple explanations. With reference to equivalents, the study aims to identify how many lexical items correspond to the same lexical (or semantic) representation of the source language.

Secondly, the study will investigate the extent to which there is a loss or gain in meanings in the course of translating from the source language (English) to the target language (Malay). In this respect attention will be paid to the polysemic and connotational aspects of the lexical items and their corresponding meanings, the different distribution of meaning between words in both the languages and the existence of lexical gaps in either of the languages. In addition to identifying lexical gaps between the two languages, the thesis also aims to examine how the gaps are filled.

The study also attempts to find out if the Malay meanings provided in the dictionary reflect the same differences and inequalities that exist in the lexical items about women in English. In this respect the study seeks to look beyond the sexist implications of words so as to understand if and how language creates differences in gender in both the languages.

In connection with the above aim, the thesis hopes to identify how the lexical resources of the source language differentiate gender compared to the lexical resources of the target language. For example, it will study the different evaluative loadings on lexis referring to women in both languages compared to men. It will also compare and contrast the prescriptive rules for pronoun use in both the languages.

Another specific aim of the thesis is to show if the Malay meanings given, reflect the world-view of the source language only or the target language only, or, if the meanings are imbued or tinted with the world view of the target language or both the languages.

In addition to the above aims, the study examines the viability of presenting only lexical meanings of words in a bilingual dictionary, that is meanings devoid of any socio-cultural implications or norms. In relation to this, the study hopes, finally, to establish the extent of objectivity or subjectivity present in the meanings of lexical items in the dictionaries. It will enable the researcher to show relationships which certain lexical items can contract with items in another language, how the lexical item contrasts with it and how correspondences are and can be established between two different

languages in a bilingual dictionary.

1.2 The Scope of the Study

The scope of this thesis is limited to an investigation of the presentation of the meanings of lexical items about women (subsequently, womanwords) in two English-Malay (bilingual) dictionaries. It is generally accepted that to know the meaning of a word one must know the word syntactically, semantically and pragmatically. This investigation is limited to the semantic aspects of the items. Specifically feminine intonation patterns, syntax or discourse will not be studied. The womanwords to be studied will comprise individual lexical items, and some complex lexemes (compounds) about women.

The lexical items to be analysed are limited to nouns referring to woman. Lexical items from other parts of speech will be discussed only where relevant, but will not be analysed or dealt with explicitly.

No indepth study of example sentences or usage examples given in the dictionaries will be made, except where relevant to the analysis. This is because the meanings of words in the dictionary are in the first place, based upon an extraction of meaning from the language in actual use.

As the emphasis of the thesis is on womanwords and their semantic aspects in a dictionary, no attempt will be made to descibe the structure of either the English or Malay language, other than to the extent where necessary for any category of womanwords.

The collection of the corpus is limited to mainly written works of reference, that is, dictionaries, thesauruses and encyclopaedias. This is because it is assumed that the largest convenient resources for such a corpus would be easily located in works of that nature. This is further justified by the fact that the study is limited to two works of a similar nature, the aim being to study particular semantic aspects of a type of bilingual dictionary. The list of womanwords for the study will be selected using two criteria: first, the womanwords must be entries (either as main entries or sub-entries) in the two bilingual dictionaries studied, and, secondly, the list should contain a representative sample of womanwords.

All Malay meanings for the English entry words are derived from the two dictionaries under study and from no other source. Therefore the ensuing discussions are based on an analysis of the entry words and their respective meanings found only in the two dictionaries under study. The study will not attempt to make comparisons of meanings of womanwords in various other monolingual and bilingual dictionaries. The object of the study is an examination of such words in two bilingual works. However, English and Malay monolingual dictionaries will be referred to countercheck or confirm any doubtful aspects of womanword entries found in the dictionaries under study.

The thesis itself will not be made a battleground for proposals to change words that relegate women to second class status or that project a poor image of them. The thrust of the study is an examination of how womanwords from two culturally divergent societies are understood and

interpreted in a bilingual dictionary. Although some comparisons of words related to men are alluded to in the aims stated above, no detailed analysis of words about men will be undertaken. Any such discussion will be restricted to situations where lexical differences creating gender differences are reflected.

1.3 Materials

The data for this study was extracted from written resources, mainly works of reference like encyclopaedias and dictionaries.

For Chapter Two, where a review of some eighty works was undertaken, information was obtained from the following sources:

(a) wordlists

(b) manuscripts

(c) microfilms

(d) boundworks

The corpus of womanwords for the study was accumulated mainly from the following works:

(a) *Roget's International Thesaurus*

(b) *Womanwords*

(c) *Longman Lexicon of Contemporary English*

(d) *Kamus Dwi Bahasa (KDB)*

(e) *Kamus Inggeris-Melayu Dewan (KIMD)*

A corpus of exactly two hundred and ten (210) lexical items about women was collected and categorised for analysis.

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To study the Malay meanings of the English womanwords the *Kamus DwiBahasa* (1990) and *Kamus Inggeris-Melayu Dewan* (1992) were chosen. The *Kamus DwiBahasa (KDB)* precedes *Kamus Inggeris-Melayu Dewan (KIMD)*, being first published in 1979. It is a general bilingual dictionary which aims to fulfil the needs of Malaysians of all races. It was compiled so that its users could gain a more systematic and complete understanding of Bahasa Malaysia (Malay language in Malaysia). However the compilers were aware that the dictionary could not fulfil the needs of all its users. One further aim for compiling the dictionary was as a contribution to the field of Malay lexicography.

The main reason for selecting the *Kamus Inggeris-Melayu Dewan* was that it proved to be the most comprehensive and up-to-date dictionary on the market. In its Introduction (p. xi) it is stated that "the Dictionary represents a major new development in the field of lexicography". The dictionary, which took thirty-seven years to complete, boasts 38,000 headwords with various derivatives, phrases and phrasal verbs. In addition to standard everyday words, some informal, literary and technical terms are also included. Attention is also given to polysemic and homonymic properties of the entry words.

The main purpose of the *KIMD* is to provide the user with precise and suitable equivalents. It does this by providing detailed information about the source and target languages. The suitability of the dictionary for this study was further enhanced by the fact that the writers of the dictionary paid close attention to specific cultural aspects of both languages. The fact that the

dictionary can be used by a wide range of people for translation and as a reference tool, further strengthens the reasons for using it in this particular study.

1.4 Definition of Terms

In the thesis many terms will be referred to in the course of discussion. For easy reference and understanding a definition of some of the terms will be given here as used in the thesis. Other terms will be defined as they occur.

The expression cognate languages is used to refer to languages that are related. More specifically they are languages that are shown to have a common ancestor in the family tree of languages. English and Malay are therefore not cognate languages, as they have not been shown to have descended from a common traceable language.

Meanings in bilingual dictionaries are usually presented in the form of equivalents. The concept of equivalence can be looked at in various ways as represented by such expressions as total equivalence, partial equivalence or functional equivalence. Basically equivalents are translations of the source language lexis into the target language forms. In this thesis the concept of equivalence is taken as this widest possible meaning of translation, whether the translation is a single lexical item, a phrase or a brief explanation. In the terminology used by Al-Kasimi (1983: 60) the first, (a single lexical item) is called a translational equivalent while the latter two (a phrase or a brief explanation) are called explanatory (or descriptive) equivalents.

Generally lexical gaps are lexical items "which are possible lexical items of a human language and which do not occur in a given language" (Lipinska, 1980: 175)

According to Lehrer (1974:95), a lexical gap is "applied to all sorts of instances where a word is in some way or another missing". Lexical gaps can be found at the different levels of language study, that is, at the phonological, morphological, syntactic and semantic levels. In this thesis, the focus will be on lexical gaps that have to do with meaning (morphological or semantic). The gaps could exist in either English or Malay.

Lehrer (1974: 14-105) lists certain conditions under which the lack of a lexical item is not considered a lexical gap. If it is not possible to create a lexical item in a language, then there is no lexical gap as the item has been expressed in some other way. There is also no lexical gap for lexically impossible concepts in a language. No lexical gaps exist for objects and situations that are not found in a given language community. For gaps to be identified, the relevant components must be of the basic words and not peripheral ones.

One type of lexical gap related to meaning is the derivational gap. In English, such a gap results when stems and affixes are put together but are unacceptable, although the lexical items formed are comprehensible, for example items like "ungood" and "mistelephone" (Lehrer 1974:96). As this thesis deals with two languages, a derivational gap will be taken to mean that the derivational aspects of one language are not found in the other.

When lexical items are broken down into semantic features and placed in a chart, matrix gaps can result. However, one lexical item must exist for each row or column of the matrix. This will show that lexical items are missing for certain features or available lexical items are too general or narrow to fit the component features. The chart will therefore show an absence of precise lexical items for combinations of certain semantic features. A functional gap forms when a suitable lexical item is not available to express what is needed.

Lexical gaps are filled because the users of the language see that there is a need for items with a particular set of components (or features). The lexical item to be formed is therefore determined by the needs of the community, and not the language system. Heller and Macris (1967:16) believe that when there is a matrix gap, either it is filled up or the parameters may disappear. A functional gap, for instance, can be filled through borrowing.

For the purpose of this thesis a lexical gap will be defined as a lexical item which occurs in one language and does not appear in the other. An attempt will be made to identify the types of gap outlined by Lehrer.

Womanwords are lexical items that refer to or describe women. They include lexical items that refer directly or indirectly to women, and that describe women physically, socially, psychologically or emotionally. The study will not, however, examine words that are used only by women, or are thought to be used by them. The corpus of womanwords includes mainly one major grammatical category of language, that is nouns, (and pronouns).