

PRONOUN BORROWING AND 'OPEN' ADDRESS SYSTEMS – A BROAD TYPOLOGICAL DISTINCTION

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The category of personal pronouns is often used in historical linguistics as evidence for or against claims of genetic affiliation. The evidential validity of this category is predicated on the argument that personal pronouns, and especially personal pronoun paradigms, are rarely borrowed from one language into another. (cf. Nichols & Peterson 1996, Dixon 1997). This claim seems largely sustainable in the case of many languages, particularly those Indo-European languages that have been the primary focus of inquiry in 19th and early-to-mid 20th century historical linguistics. However, more recent work on Southeast Asian languages, and other non-Indo-European languages, (cf. Foley 1986, Thomason & Everett 2005, Goddard 2005) has shown that many languages, representing many different language families (e.g. Austronesian, Papuan, Mon-Khmer), have readily borrowed personal pronouns, and even partial paradigms, along with other terms of address commonly used as second-person markers (e.g. kin terms and titles), throughout their long histories of contact with other languages.

The present diachronic study of second-person markers used in the Indonesian media shows that many terms have been borrowed from a wide range of other languages in many instances, and that this borrowing has been going on for a very long period of time, and continues to occur. Terms in current use in the Indonesian language are borrowed from many sources, the primary ones being Sanskrit, Hokkien Chinese, Arabic, Dutch and English (cf. Sneddon 2003, Robson 2004). This borrowing appears to be facilitated by two related factors; the multi-term nature of these pronoun systems (cf. Enfield 2006); and the common use of nominal forms to mark second-person in syntactically bound (i.e. subject and object) positions. On this basis, a broad typological distinction between 'open' and 'closed' systems of address is developed. This distinction was mooted by Court (1997) and appears to apply to language groupings defined by geo-cultural area rather than being delimited by membership in this or that language family.

This presentation examines the wide range of terms available for use in the Indonesian language (an 'open' address system), with reference to some examples from other Southeast Asian languages, and compares this use with the more limited pragmatic application of personal pronouns in English (a 'closed' address system), and other Western European languages. In support of these arguments, some reference is made to first person pronouns, which often form 'borrowed pairs' with their second person counterparts, thus being evidence of the borrowing of partial pronominal paradigms.

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