Madrassah textbooks: Mediating and shaping Mauritian Sunni Muslim identities in a multilingual context.

A Mooznah Auleear Owodally

Department of English Studies

University of Mauritius

4 November 2014

fppt.com

Mauritius Multifaithism

- Mauritian multifaithism
- Constitution protects all religious groups
- Mauritian Muslims (MM)
  - Minority group (17%)
  - Co-existing with Hindus and Catholics
- MM do not form a homogeneous group: different sub-groups
  - Sunni Muslims are one sub-group

Mauritian Multilingual Repertoire

- European Languages

- Ancestral Languages
  - Diasporic languages: Urdu, Hindi, Telugu
  - Liturgical languages: Arabic, Sanskrit…

- Local languages: Kreol Morisien (KM)
  - Supra-ethnic language
  - Intra-ethnic language

Ethnoreligious identities

- Spread of religions → Spread of languages

- Language varieties associated with religious groups
  - "markers of ethnoreligious identities"

- (Religious) language varieties as part of multilingual repertoire

Muslims and Multilingualism

- Arabic: The liturgical language

- Urdu: The diasporic language

- KM: The local language

(Auleear Owodally, 2011; Edun, 2006; Rajah-Carrim, 2004, 2010)

At a glance…..

THE MADRASSAH TEXTBOOK

TAHAARAT

1. Q : Ki veut dire Tahaarat ?

Tahaarat signifie la propreté.

2.Q: Ki Quran finne dire concernant Tahaarat ?

Allah Ta'ala finne dire:

$$إِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُحِبُّ التَّوَّابِيْنَ وَيُحِبُّ الْمُتَطَهِّرِيْنَ$$

"... *Allah content banne dimoune qui faire tawbah et li content banne qui garde zotte paak et propre...*" (2:222)

3.Q: Ki Rasulullah (ﷺ) finne dire concernant Tahaarat?

Rasulullah (ﷺ) finne dire:-

$$اَلطَّهَارَةُ شَطْرُ الْاِيْمَان$$

Tahaarat li la moitié imaan.

En voici quelques hadiths:-

Hazrat Ibn 'Abbas (ﷺ) raconté qui ene jour Rasulullah (ﷺ) ti arrête cotte deux qabar et li (ﷺ) dire: "*ça deux dimounes là (qui enterre ici) pé gagne punition, mais pas à cause un grand gounah (un gounah qui capave facilement éviter). Ene là pas ti pé prend precaution (pour empèche l'urine saute lors li) quand li ti pé uriner.*

Focus of the present study

- **Lexical Borrowing**

- Urdu/Arabic
  - 23% of Urdu words are Arabic/Persian
  - Many Arabic words entered KM through Urdu
  - The aim of the paper is not to retrace earliest occurrence of lexical borrowings to determine the source language

Argument

Although KM has been kept outside the realm of officialdom in Mauritius until the turn or the century and although KM has been perceived as an intra-ethnic language, KM has been **adopted**, **adapted**, **extended** and **enriched** with Urdu/Arabic lexical borrowings by the MM community since the mid-1990s to communicate religious matter, leading to an emerging in-group variant which contributes to cementing a Muslim (local/global) identity.
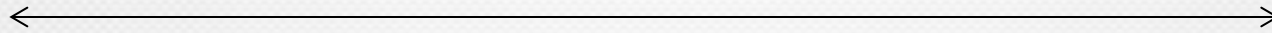
Lexical borrowing

Borrowing is the term used to describe the incorporation of single lexical items or short, frozen idiomatic phrases and expressions from a source language into a receiving language.

(Grosjean, 1982, 2010; Gumperz, 1982: 66; Mesthrie et al, 2000)

fppt.com

Lexical borrowing

- Characteristic of 'contact zones'

- Continuum

← ————————————————————————————————————— →

Spontaneous LB   *Uncertain lx status*   Established LB

Lexical borrowing

- Motivations for LB

  - Filling a lexical gap

  - Using the correct word (complementarity principle)

  - Identifying with native speakers of the source language

Lexical borrowing: Semantic fields

- Studies about LB from Urdu/Arabic into English

- Semantic fields:
  - Religious – Islamic concepts, devotional terms
  - Domestic
  - Commonly used expressions

Lexical borrowing

- ## Social functions of LB:

  - Symbolical affiliation/disaffiliation

  - We-code:
    - Appeals to shared ideas, values, practices

  - We-code vs they-code:
    - Perform contrasting/boundaried identities

Research aims

- Provide a descriptive account of LB from Urdu/Arabic from a sample of madrassah textbooks

- Identify the main semantic fields/domains for these LB

Methodology

- ## Descriptive analytical study of madrassah textbook
  - Anwar-Ul-Ta'alim (2003)
  - Qissasul Ambiya -L'histoire des prophetes (1996)
  - Ahkaam-e-Ramadwaan (1991)
  - Mon Livre de L'Islam (1994)
  - Printemps de la Jeunesse (translation of Bahare Shabab) (1996)
  - Anwar – E Shariat

- ## Qualitative interview with the key textbook writer

Key findings

- 271 unique borrowed items

- All LB belong to semantic field of religion

- Some of these LB are social terms driven by a religious context

- Domains that I will focus on
  - Naming Practices and Terms of Respect
  - Islamic Terms
  - Religious Practices
  - Social Practices

fppt.com

Naming Practices and Honorifics

Naming Practices

- Isa (AS)
- Lut (AS)
- Muhammad (SAW)

Honorifics

- AS
- SAW
- Hazrat
- Huzoor

Comment

- Use of Islamic names as Bible/Quran do not share the same understanding of these prophets
- Terms of respect in referring to the prophets
- Honouring the prophets

Islamic Terms

Examples

- Alhamdoulillah
- Assalamoualaikoum
- Allah
- Ameen
- Ayat
- Hadith
- Maghrib
- Surah

Comment

- Terms not accompanied by definitions
- Islam and translation:
  - Islamic vs secular world views
- Reflect pan-Islamic expressions

Religious Practices

Examples

- Aalim (intelligent)
- Ambiya (prophet)
- Insaan (person)
- Ghuna (sin)
- Halaal (allowed)
- Haraam (not allowed)
- Namaaz (prayers)
- Taharaat (cleanliness)
- Wouzou (ablution)

Comment

- Equivalents available in KM
- Textbooks provide KM equivalent terms in explanations or parenthesis
- Examples of the complementarity principle
- Connotations carried by borrowed words

Religious Practices

Social Practices

Examples

- Agarbathi (incense sticks)
- Attar (perfume)
- Majalis (religious gathering)
- Kurta (tunic)
- Tchiouste (trousers)
- Wafat (death)
- Wasila (intercession)

Comments

- Lexical items used mostly by Sunni Muslims

- Reflect their:
  - Beliefs (death)
  - Values (intercession)
  - Social practices (dressing)
  - Cultural practices (perfume)

fppt.com

DISCUSSION

Textbook: The artifact

- A sediment of history

- 'ideological space'
  - Macro-linguistic choices
  - Micro-linguistic choices

- Repository of MM identities in the making

Textbook: Its production

- KM is appropriated and extended with LB
- LB: Part of an in-group communication tool which creates, perpetuates and maintains an in-group identity marker
- LB: Cements a community
  - Global Islamic community
  - Local Muslim community
  - Local Sunni Muslim community

Textbook: Its reception

- Language socialisation – Religious socialisation

- Language practices
  - Part of set of social practices (eating, dressing, cleanliness)

- Role of textbook in shaping MM identity/practices

Conclusion

- **Data herewith presented**
  - MM have adopted KM (written and oral) despite its ethnic index (KM as a Creole language)
  - MM, through its institutions, have Islamised KM → a new variety of KM (still on the periphery)

Spontaneous LB   *Uncertain Ix status*   Established LB

  - In-group identity variety (we code – they code)