

The Semantic of Prefix *peN-* in Malay: A Bridging Cross Reference Analysis

Nor Hashimah Jalaluddin

Ahmad Harith Syah

UKM

Many Malay grammarians describe the semantic of *peN-* based on its structure and functions. Za'ba (2001), Asmah (1986), Nik Safiah et. al (1993), Abdullah & Liaw (1994) and few others agreed that the prefix *peN-* semantically refers to as an agent and instrument. Some grammarians noted that the prefix *peN-* as a patient, habitual manner and abstract marker. For instance *petani* (*farmer*) is an agent, *perokok* (*smoker*) is habitual, *pemarah* (*bad tempered*) is an abstract, *penimbang* (*scale*) is a measurement and so on. It is apparent that the description on *peN-* seems to be quite broad and overlapping and this can lead to ambiguity in meaning. Relevance theory that focuses on communication and cognition with reference assignment as one of its traits can offer a better description on *peN-*. In reference assignment, bridging cross reference (BCR) which allows the dependent on context in utterances facilitate the hearer to determine the intended meaning. '**pemakan sayur**' (vegetarian) and 'perosak bahasa' (language corrupter) need no modifier to determine that they are referring to human, as opposed to 'burung **pemakan** bangkai' - (carnivorous bird) and serangga perosak (destructive insects). The latter needs a modifier such as 'burung' (*bird*) and 'serangga' (*insect*) to show that it is non-human. In BCR, the meaning of *peN-* can be simplified as human and non human. Non-human can be further sub-classified as [+animate] and [-animate]. *PeN-* referring to human/agent does not need a specific attribute and the context will explicate the reference. Meanwhile *peN-* referring to animate and inanimate need a specific attribute modifier.