

BEFUDDLED

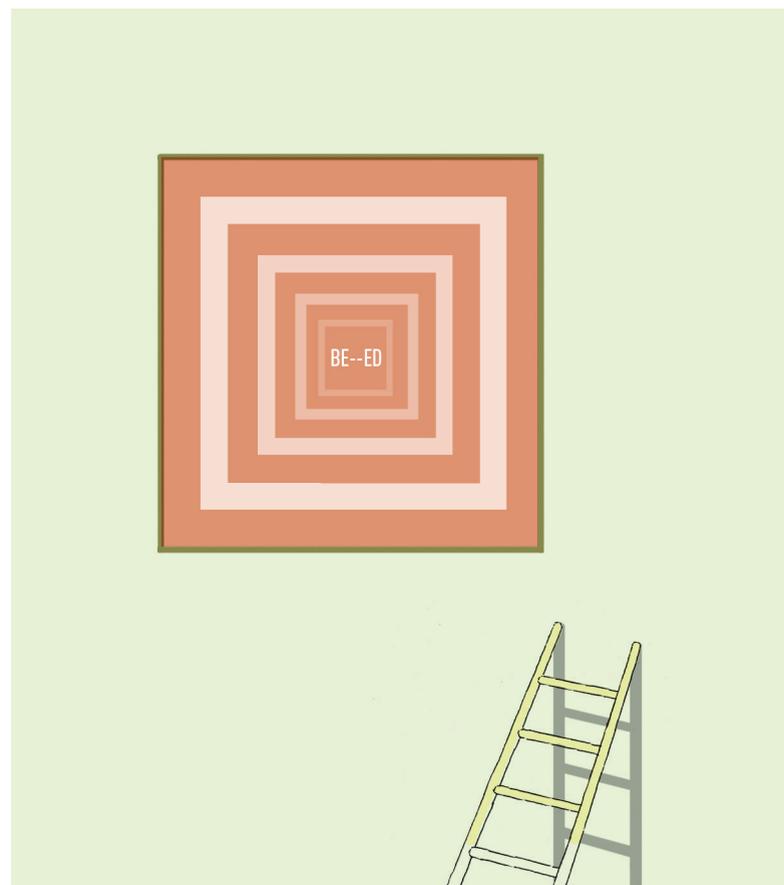
I have always loved the lyrics to that old show tune by Lorenz Hart that Ella Fitzgerald sang so beautifully:

*I'm wild again, beguiled again, a simpering, wimpering child again
Bewitched, bothered and bewildered again am I.*

WE have so many wonderful be-ed words in English and this song features three of them. 'Beguiled' is an old English word formed from adding be- and -ed to the French word *guile* (deceit), to mean 'lured', 'charmed'. 'Bewitched' adds be- and -ed to the word 'witch', to mean 'put under a spell'. The creation of this wonderful word is often attributed to Shakespeare, although he may have merely popularized it. (Shakespeare did coin at least two other be-ed words, though; 'besmirched' from 'smirch' meaning 'stain', and 'bedazzled'.) 'Bewildered' is made from the word 'wilder', an old verb meaning 'to lose your way', and with which we are familiar from the word 'wilderness'. 'Bewildered' is to be overcome by losing your way, and thus, hopelessly confused.

Indonesian can do a similar thing by putting *ke-* and *-an* around words. First, though, before these exciting twists and turns, the basics. The most standard use of *ke-* and *-an* is to turn a word into an abstract noun, words that in English often end in *-dom*, *-hood*, *-ship* or *-ness*. So *raja* is 'king', and *kerajaan* is 'kingdom'; *merdeka* is 'free' or 'independent', and *ke-merdekaan* is 'freedom' or 'independence'; *baik* is 'good', and *kebaikan* is 'goodness'; *anggota* is 'member' and *keanggotaan* is 'membership'; *sulit* is 'difficult', and *kesulitan* is 'difficulty' and so forth. But beware: It is not all smooth sailing. There is the well-known trap for new language learners. While *malu* means 'ashamed' or 'embarrassed', *kemaluan* does not mean 'shame', as one would expect, but rather, 'genitals'. I was once told the story of an Australian diplomat's wife in Jakarta, who in her halting Indonesian was telling an Indonesian woman friend that her husband had made some social gaffe, and how embarrassed he was—but she said his *kemaluan* was great (*besar*). Without missing a beat, the Indonesian woman friend congratulated her on her choice of husband.

The *ke-an* wrap around is also used like one form of the English be-ed words, to mean 'under the influence of', 'suffering from' or 'stricken by'. It allows for wonderful creative expressions. For instance, the word *hujan* means 'rain', but *kehujanan* means 'to get caught in the rain'. This is rather like our English 'becalmed', which is to be over-



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taken by the calm, when ships are motionless with no wind. *Malam* means 'night', but *kemalaman* means 'to be overtaken by the night', as when you planned to get home by dusk, but things went against you and you got home late. Do you know that English used to have an exact equivalent? 'Benighted'. Yes, it is a word dating from the 16th century meaning 'overtaken by the darkness of the night', which is exactly what *kemalaman* means. Indonesian also has *kesiangan* from *siang*, meaning 'to be overtaken by the day'—as when you sleep in. You should have got up in the early morning, *pagi*.

There are other *ke-an* words that resonate directly with Eng-



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lish. For instance, *hilang* means ‘to lose’, and *kehilangan* can mean either the abstract noun ‘loss’, or to be suffering from loss, like ‘bereaved’ in English. We no longer use the root verb of ‘bereaved’, namely ‘reave’ meaning to break, split or tear apart, but ‘bereaved’ (or ‘bereft’) means ‘to suffer from being torn apart’—from losing a loved one.

One fun thing about *ke-an* words in Indonesian, as with be-ed words in English, is that the wrap-around can be used with nouns, adjectives and verbs. It also can distance, alter or obscure the agent. ‘I stayed out too late’ is very different to ‘I got caught by the night’. Suddenly, it is not your fault. ‘He lost his mother’ puts ‘him’ at the forefront, whereas ‘he is suffering the loss of his mother’, or ‘he is bereaved’ turns the loss into some-

thing inflicted, painfully, by something unstated out there.

Indonesian makes many *ke-an* words for which English has no equivalent. For instance *kemalingan*, from the noun *maling* meaning ‘thief’, means ‘to be the victim of a thief’. If you can imagine there being an English word ‘bethieved’, that is what it means. Indonesian also has *kecurian* from the verb *curi* meaning ‘to steal’, so if you say *saya kecurian*, this also means you suffered being stolen from. And whereas English has ‘becalmed’, which Indonesian does not have, Indonesian has *kebanjiran* from the word *banjir* meaning ‘flood’, so *kebanjiran* is ‘beflooded’, if we only had such a word. It could be useful.

But English of course has many that Indonesian does not have. Here are just a couple of examples. The phrase intoned by old-school pastors, ‘dearly beloved’, has no Indonesian equivalent. The Indonesian word for love is *cinta*, but *kecintaan* is used only as the abstract noun, so ‘dearly beloved’ is ‘*yang tercinta*’. ‘Betrothed’, meaning ‘to be promised’, is another one, from the old English word ‘troth’ for ‘promise’. Indonesian has no equivalent *ke-an* form for this.

The fact that the *ke-an* wrap around in Indonesian can be used to make both abstract nouns and be-ed type words means that there are many words with double meanings. Only the context makes the meaning clear. For instance, *panas* means ‘hot’; *kepanasan* can mean ‘heat’ (as in ‘the heat on the stove is too high’) or also ‘to be suffering from the heat’. Similarly, from *dingin* for ‘cold’, *keinginan* can mean the abstract noun ‘the cold’ or can mean ‘to be suffering from the cold’. *Sakit* means ‘sick’ or ‘ill’, so *kesakitan* is ‘sickness’ or ‘illness’, but it can also mean ‘to be in pain’. The word *mati* means ‘dead’, so *kematian* is ‘death’, but it also means ‘to be stricken by death’, in the sense of suffering the death of someone (bereaved, perhaps).

Just to make things more complicated, there is another use of *ke-an*, which is actually an adoption from the Javanese language, and rather scorned upon by those fostering ‘correct’ Indonesian. In Javanese, if you want to say something is ‘too big’ you put *ke-en* around the word for ‘big’. In correct Indonesian, you use the word *terlalu*, which means ‘too’, before the word for ‘big’ (*besar*). But it has become common to adopt the Javanese structure and use Indonesian *ke-an*. If you try on shoes at the shoe shop and they are too big, the assistant might say they are *kebesaran* rather than *terlalu besar*. If you buy something and your friend thinks you paid too much, she will probably say the price was *kemahalan* rather than *terlalu mahal*. If you give one child more cake than the other, the deprived one will probably say the other got *kebanyakan* rather than *terlalu banyak*.

Befuddled? Keep your eyes and ears open for *ke-an* words, especially the be-ed forms. I have a feeling there’s going to be a lot more of them.

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