



**JOURNAL OF TOURISM,
HOSPITALITY AND
ENVIRONMENT MANAGEMENT
(JTHERM)**
www.jthem.com



**ENHANCING THE ROLE OF THE MALAY LANGUAGE (MBM)
IN KNOWLEDGE AUGMENTATION, PRACTICAL
APPLICATION, SKILL DEVELOPMENT, AND ATTITUDINAL
GROWTH**

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Article Info:

Article history:

Received date: 25.10.2023

Revised date: 15.11.2023

Accepted date: 21.12.2023

Published date: 28.12.2023

To cite this document:

Othman, I. W., Moharam, M. M. A., Ambo, H., Abd. Salam, S. M., Lebai Ahmad, M. K., & Yusoff, M. S. (2023). Enhancing The Role Of The Malay Language (MBM) In Knowledge Augmentation, Practical Application, Skill Development, And Attitudinal Growth. *Journal of*

Abstract:

The Malay language is a unifying factor among the diverse populace of Malaysia. It plays a pivotal role as a language of knowledge and communication in a multiracial country like Malaysia. Therefore, one of the prominent means by which a nation measures its proficiency in a language is through verbal communication using that language. This paper seeks to analyze the proficiency of the Malay language and its significance in daily life, particularly in the field of education. The study aims to identify the extent of Malay language proficiency within the community and to assess the competence of teachers and students in the practice of the Malay language. The discussion delves into findings that associate the Malay language as a language of knowledge. Consequently, this approach emphasizes the use of academic writing, especially through literature review, by gathering primary and secondary sources to substantiate facts related to actual events. Among the issues discussed are: 1. Promoting writing in the Malay language among academicians, 2. Upholding the Malay language within the secondary and primary education system, 3. The Malay language as a means of expressing

Tourism Hospitality and Environment Management, 8 (34), 113-142.

DOI: 10.35631/JTthem.834008.

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knowledge in higher education institutions, and 4. Empowering the use of the Malay language among the community. The findings analyzed from this study indicate that the Malay Language Elevation Program (MBM) has not been executed as effectively as intended. This conclusion is drawn from clear data illustrating that the Malay language proficiency among students is not as satisfactory as desired, and the teaching skills of Malay language teachers are not at an optimal level. Furthermore, this is compounded by the failure of school administrators to establish an effective and efficient administrative atmosphere within their premises. This study proposes a reevaluation of the MBM program from the perspectives of school administration and the teaching methods employed by Malay language educators, to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the program implementation, thus ensuring the success of the students in this program in the future. Additionally, the process of realizing this program is also proof that all stakeholders within the country, including individuals, the community, and the government, play a significant role in its implementation. Schools, District Education Offices (PPD), State Education Departments (JPN), the Ministry of Education (KPM), and Higher Education Institutions (IPTA/S) can leverage the results of the study to take steps in increasing knowledge, use, skills, and attitudes regarding the effort to elevate the Malay language. The findings of this study can also serve as a valuable guide in the teaching and learning process at various levels of education in IPTA/S. Therefore, all parties must play their respective roles in realizing the effort to enhance knowledge for a broader segment of society, both in the present and the future.

Keywords:

Malay Language, Language Of Knowledge, Malay Language Elevation Program (MBM), Teaching and Learning (PdP)

Introduction

The Malay language serves as a cohesive element in Malaysia, uniting its diverse population. As a language of knowledge and communication, it holds a central role in this multiracial nation. Proficiency in a language is often gauged through verbal communication, making it a key indicator for a nation. This paper delves into an analysis of Malay language proficiency and its importance in daily life, specifically within the realm of education. The study seeks to ascertain the level of proficiency within the community and evaluate the competence of both teachers and students in utilizing the Malay language effectively. Against the backdrop of Malaysia's rich linguistic tapestry, exploring Malay language proficiency becomes essential for fostering effective educational practices and promoting cultural unity.

Issue 1: Enriching Writing in the Malay Language Among Academics

The initiative to elevate the Malay language as the nation's high-level language of knowledge is well-founded and aligns with its status and mandate, as enshrined in Article 152 of the Federal Constitution (Ab. Rahman, Ahmad, & Adnan, 2022). Malay is no longer confined solely to the domains of language and literature. The Malay language, with its comprehensive linguistic corpus, demonstrates its potency as a language of high-level scholarship. Evidently, Malay has the capacity to engage with academic domains scientifically, facilitating the dissemination and exchange of knowledge, acting as a means of communication, and serving as a fount of ideas for the community (Othman et al., 2021a). It is imperative to prioritize reference materials in Malay. Efforts to produce academic content in Malay must be promoted to liberate students from an overreliance on English-language academic resources. However,

the extent to which the Malay language functions as a high-level language of knowledge within the country, particularly in the context of academic publications by local scholars, remains a subject of inquiry.

Academics in institutions of higher learning play a pivotal role in elevating the Malay language as a high-level language of knowledge through their scholarly writings and publications (Yusoff et al., 2021). The pertinent question is: What is the current scenario regarding the production of scholarly works in the Malay language by national academics? To what extent are these scholars capable of generating content and scholarly publications using Malay as the primary medium of expression? Can these scholars employ Malay as a high-level language of knowledge to articulate a wide range of expertise spanning various domains? The goal here is to investigate and analyze the extent to which national scholars, including educators and lecturers, have engaged in scholarly writing and publication, thereby contributing to the elevation of Malay as the country's high-level language of knowledge. Malay should not be taken lightly; the Malaysian populace should take pride in its strength and believe in its potential to become a globally spoken language alongside English, Mandarin, and Japanese, considering the language's undeniable influence and reach.

Issue 2: Uplifting the Status of Malay in the School System

On July 8, 2009, the Cabinet meeting implemented the Malay Language Empowerment Policy and Strengthening of the English Language (MBMMBI) while abolishing the Teaching of Science and Mathematics in English (PPSMI) (MOE, 2014). This decision followed the failure of the PPSMI policy to achieve its intended objectives, as elucidated in the PEMBINA study (2008) (MOE, 2014). Many parents, students, and teachers acknowledged that PPSMI hindered better performance in learning Science and Mathematics and did not have a positive impact on English language proficiency. Consequently, student achievements in Science and Mathematics continued to decline, exacerbating disparities in academic performance between Malay and non-Malay students as well as urban and rural students (MOE, 2014). The MBMMBI policy should be implemented because students demonstrate better proficiency in the Malay language compared to English, and it allows students to excel in Science and Mathematics (MOE, 2014). Moreover, the MBMMBI policy should be adopted because the use of English by Science and Mathematics teachers in the classroom is at a minimum.

Simultaneously, the use of standard Malay has been compromised by various linguistic phenomena plaguing the nation, such as colloquial speech, code-switching, linguistic fusion, and the blending of multiple languages in contemporary discourse. Furthermore, the significance of the Malay language is diminishing, especially among Malay and non-Malay students in urban schools, who predominantly employ English as the primary medium of communication both at school and at home (Gani Hamzah, Abdullah & Hussin, 2018). Consequently, the primary goal of using Malay as a language of communication and knowledge for nation-building remains unfulfilled, as stipulated in the Education Act of 1996 (Othman et al., 2021a). Consequently, students face challenges in oral proficiency and written performance. The same issue exists in terms of students using Malay as a medium of communication in most SRJK(C), SRJK(T), and SMJK(C) schools, which have yet to witness substantial encouragement (Bukari & Kechik, 2022; Peng, 2016). As a result, students who progress to national secondary schools and SMJK(C) face difficulties in oral communication and writing activities in their respective areas of study (Peng, 2016). The majority of Malay language teaching and learning processes in schools remain conventional, providing

insufficient emphasis on language fundamentals, limited integration of information technology into the teaching and learning processes, and insufficient incorporation of concepts like Didik Hibur, among others, which prevent the establishment of a more constructive learning environment (Agus, 2021). The implementation of the Malay Language Empowerment Program (MBM) under the MBMMBI policy is necessary to address these challenges.

Issue 3: Malay as the Language of Knowledge Expression in Higher Education Institutions

The use of the Malay language for knowledge dissemination has a longstanding history. It dates to the days of the Sriwijaya kingdom in the 7th century and reached its zenith during the Islamic golden age in the Malay world. The prestige of the Malay language as a language of knowledge continued to evolve and was meticulously cultivated, particularly as the primary medium of instruction in the national education system. This was due to the integral role of the Malay language in the promotion of a culture of knowledge among Malaysians. The significance of the Malay language as the national language is enshrined in Article 152 of the Federal Constitution (Esa et al., 2021). Malay does not impede the influx, growth, and dissemination of knowledge; on the contrary, it advances as a bridge to diverse fields of study. Consequently, the Malay language elevates its status as a conduit for knowledge. Furthermore, the National Language Act of 1963/1967 (revised in 1971) and the existing Education Act safeguard the Malay language's importance as the national language and official language of the country (Othman et al., 2021b).

The Malay language also serves the role of a unifying language in Malaysia, a nation comprising diverse ethnicities and religions. Education plays a crucial role in fostering robust economic growth, enhancing a country's competitiveness, and improving the quality of life for its citizens. However, making Malay the language of knowledge expression in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) is not as straightforward as one might desire. Changes in language policies at Public Higher Education Institutions (IPTAs) in 1993 and the flexibility introduced in the Education Act of 1996 for Private Higher Education Institutions (IPTs) to use English as the primary medium of instruction have had a detrimental effect on the function and standing of the Malay language in HEIs (Peng & Ishak, 2008). While the use of English is permitted in IPTs, public universities have also adopted it for most courses. Only Malay language-related courses and mandatory university courses such as National Studies and Philosophy of Knowledge are still conducted in Malay (Ramli, Sarudin & Redzwan, 2017). Additionally, some students seldom communicate using Malay in their daily lives, leading to difficulties in mastering General Studies (MPU) subjects taught in Malay (Nasir et al., 2019). Today's students seem to show a lack of enthusiasm for promoting the Malay language and, in some cases, attempt to undermine its relevance as a national language for academic purposes due to the perceived inadequacies in technical and scientific terminology (Mohamed & Hassan, 2019). This situation has arisen from global developments that have elevated English's prominence, causing the Malay language to lag behind and face marginalization. While English is the official medium of instruction for all recorded lectures, the Malay language remains widely used.

Professor Emeritus Dato Seri Dr. M. Mustafa Ishak has suggested that the Ministry of Higher Education (KPT), Department of Higher Education (JPT), and the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) should require all international students to take the Certificate of Malay Competency for Non-Citizens (SKBMW) as part of a proactive effort to internationalize the Malay language (Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 2022). Furthermore, extracurricular activities

involving student participation outside of classroom hours can be harnessed to enhance the visibility of the Malay language as a medium of instruction in global universities (Othman et al., 2021a). As native Malaysians, we should not question the credibility of the Malay language and should recognize its potential to stand on equal footing with other global languages.

Issue 4: Empowering the Use of Malay in Society

Malaysia is a culturally diverse nation composed of various ethnic groups, each with its own mother tongue. This diversity has positioned our country as one of the most multilingual in the world, both in a global and regional context, particularly within Southeast Asia. Historically, the Malay language, now the official language of Malaysia, has enjoyed high status for over a millennium. Since the 17th century, under the Srivijaya empire, Malay served as the language of royalty, trade, religious education, and the lingua franca for the Malay Archipelago (Hassan, Angterian & Yusop, 2017). Since independence, especially around 1957, Malay has been elevated to the official language of Malaysia. This is evident in Article 152 of the Malaysian Constitution, which designates Malay as the official language, though it allows for the use and study of other languages (Che Hodi & Musa, 2014).

Malay language continued to flourish as the language of the new Malay civilization, becoming the language of administration, diplomacy, law, science and philosophy, commerce, statecraft, and high literature during the era of Malay sultanates from the 13th to the 19th century (Hassan, Angterian & Yusop, 2017). However, Malaysia's history as a British colony has influenced national language policies, leaving a lasting impact on the language situation in the country. Although Malaysians speak a variety of languages, Malay and English remain the two primary languages used in everyday life across various domains. Consequently, conflicts surrounding the use of these languages within our diverse society are inevitable. For example, Malays speaking English within the Malay community often encounter negative reactions, while English speakers attempt to adapt their language use when interacting with certain communities that do not tolerate the use of English, leading to internal conflicts (Hassan, Angterian & Yusop, 2017).

In our daily lives, humans interact with one another, and for this to occur, a medium is needed, which is language. Consequently, language plays a significant role in a nation because it acts as a bridge across socio-cultural, socio-political, socio-economic aspects, and most importantly, it is a means of communication between individuals (Sharif Adam, 2014). The Malay language holds great value across various aspects of societal life, particularly considering its close association with national unity (Esa, Othman, Sharif & Abdul Hamid, 2022). The value of a language is further studied by psycholinguistic scholars who delve into the cognitive processes of the human mind and brain involved in receiving, comprehending, retaining, and employing that language. Moreover, using the Malay language during interactions signifies a love and loyalty to the country, a source of pride in the nation's development policies, ultimately fostering a strong sense of identity. Therefore, we should take pride in the Malay language without viewing it through the lens of internationality, belief, or skin color, while emphasizing the importance of its use within Malaysian society today (Basir, 2012).

Literature Review

The Malay language serves as a unifying element in Malaysia, playing a pivotal role as a medium of knowledge and communication in its diverse, multiracial context. A nation's

language proficiency is often evaluated through verbal communication in that language. This paper scrutinizes Malay language proficiency and its contextual importance, focusing on education. The study seeks to identify the community's proficiency levels and assess the effectiveness of teachers and students in Malay language practice. The discussion explores findings that emphasize the Malay language's role as a conduit of knowledge, highlighting its central position in fostering effective communication and educational practices within Malaysia's multicultural society.

Issue 1: Fostering Writing in the Malay Language Among Academics

The act of writing and publishing scholarly works among academics serves as a crucial source for the exchange and dissemination of knowledge resulting from research and innovation. The reputation of a scholar is often built upon their documented contributions, which are appraised by peers for publication (Mansor & Mansor, 2015). A study of historical publications in the country has also revealed that the prestige of the Malay language as a vehicle for advanced knowledge in academic writing has been elevated since the pre-independence era (Mohamad Kamil & Mohamad, 2020). History has shown that, during that time, Malay was already playing a significant role as a means for disseminating high-level philosophical knowledge throughout the Malay Archipelago (Hassan, Angterian & Yusop, 2017). Furthermore, the development of writings on nationhood and governance has been actively pursued, with these works demonstrating the high status of the Malay language as a medium for academic writing in areas related to astronomy, religion, statecraft, and literature. Malay possessed the attributes of an academic language with an extensive lexicon, linguistic precision, and grammatical rigor, whether written in the Jawi or Rumi script.

In addition, scholarly publications in the Malay language have consistently shone as a high-level academic language through the expansion of Malay Studies Scholarship, which has seen significant growth since the country's independence, especially in the field of Malay Studies (Mansor & Mansor, 2015). To this day, the endeavors and initiatives of Malay Studies scholars continue with the proliferation of scholarly journals that serve as platforms for scholars to present their work and introduce online cross-disciplinary writing. These academic journals encompass various fields and reach the status of peer-reviewed journals. All public universities in the country are still vigorously promoting their academic publications to international levels, despite the wide array of fields and subfields of Malay Studies (Ab. Rahman, Ahmad & Adnan, 2022). The Malay language, as a medium of communication and thought, undoubtedly plays an academic role in elevating the standing of Malay academia to international standards (Ab. Rahman, Ahmad & Adnan, 2022). Malay, along with Malay civilization, has spread throughout the world thanks to Malay scholarship, which continues to produce cross-disciplinary writings through scholarly publications. Moreover, online journal publications meet global needs, positioning Malay as a high-level academic language on the world stage (Ku Samsu, Ab. Halim & Sulaiman, 2013).

Clearly, the capability of scholarly writing in the Malay language as a medium for disseminating knowledge across various fields is robust and well-established. The Malay language has achieved the status of a high-level academic language without a doubt. Thus, the current generation of academics should confidently continue their work in the Malay language to convey knowledge in their respective areas of expertise. However, the effort to establish the Malay language as the nation's high-level academic language faces obstacles and challenges in the context of knowledge dissemination. This is because students, in particular, do not prioritize

writing, believing that the quality of the Malay language as an academic medium is inadequate and holds no economic value (Roslan & Aznam, 2017). Additionally, English is often seen as a catalyst for national progress. Yet, the extent to which this commitment and responsibility can be maintained and accepted remains a mystery and a question. Connected to this issue, doubts and concerns regarding the credibility of the Malay language as a high-level academic language emerge when there is a scenario of Malay language practices within the nation's public universities that genuinely reflects our own lack of confidence in the national language, the official language, and the language of academia that the Malay language has carried for so long in the national education system (Mansor & Mansor, 2015). If even our public university community lacks confidence in the potential of the Malay language, how will it rise to the status of a high-level academic language? In accordance with Article 152 of the Malaysian Constitution, the prestige of the Malay language must be elevated. All parties must make an effort to preserve and empower the Malay language to be recognized and accepted as a high-level academic language.

Issue 2: Upholding the Malay Language in the Education System

Since January 2010, the "Upholding the Malay Language and Strengthening English" (MBMMBI) policy has been introduced as part of the country's higher education paradigm shift in the face of current challenges, particularly those related to graduate employability (Othman, 2021c). The nation has shown a high interest in implementing approaches and strategies in the teaching and learning process (MOE, 2014). The policy was enacted based on the Ministry of Education's Special Circular (No. 2/2010) titled "Implementation of the Upholding the Malay Language and Strengthening English Policy" and Special Circular No. 12 of 2011 titled "Implementation of the Upholding the Malay Language and Strengthening English Policy" (MOE, 2014). This policy was implemented in January 2011, with all primary schools directed to start implementing the new policy in line with language changes made in the Malay language textbooks for the 2011 school year (Gani Hamzah, Abdullah & Hussin, 2018). To determine the level of Malay language proficiency and challenges faced in upholding the Malay language, especially concerning the influence of the mother tongue on oral skills, for non-Malay students. The influence of the mother tongue on Malay language proficiency is influenced by family background, socioeconomic factors, and low intellectual ability, which have a high tendency towards the mother tongue (Bukari & Kechik, 2022).

In the same vein, the root issue of Malay language learning among Chinese primary school students is a concern, especially their performance in reading Malay language books and pronunciation. Previous studies have indicated that Chinese students in Chinese and national primary schools face pronunciation issues because of limited reading of Malay language materials. Chinese students are less inclined to read Malay language materials or books due to cultural factors, peer influences, and family influences (Peng, 2016). It is commonly understood that the learning process, teaching methods used by teachers, and student attitudes and interests are factors contributing to language learning outcomes. Therefore, to explore the teaching methods of excellent Malay language teachers (GCBM) and their impact on students, the views of educators, namely the teachers, must be considered. Factors contributing to the challenges in the teaching and learning of the Malay language, especially among weaker students, include teacher excellence, the emphasis on GCBM learning outcomes to keep GCBM's teaching in line with educational developments, and the alignment of teaching materials with the thinking level of students (Chong, Mahamod & Hamzah, 2017).

As such, to identify the influence of 21st-century learning on student attitudes, motivation, and achievements in Malay language learning, several studies have been conducted on upper secondary students. The results show that 21st-century learning has had a positive impact and motivated students, thereby improving their performance in Malay language learning (Ationg et al., 2021). Based on the studies conducted, the Upholding the Malay Language and Strengthening English Policy is still at a rudimentary level. This can be seen when many primary and secondary school students who are not Malays still do not master the Malay language. However, the role of teachers and student attitudes to master the Malay language is fairly high and, to some extent, can make the MBMMBI policy a success. A review has been carried out for the purpose of assessing the implementation of the Upholding the Malay Language Program. The evaluation of the implementation of the MBM Program is crucial because it is an element of management that helps stakeholders identify the effectiveness and efficiency of the program. The impact of this issue is significant, as it will provide a sound foundation for the organization to make improvements and ensure program costs are effectively managed (MOE, 2014). Nevertheless, information in program evaluation is not sufficient to allow controlling officers to take more effective actions and make future decisions regarding any program. Therefore, the OBB concept should be implemented for each program, at least once every five years, in accordance with the assessment plan determined by the relevant ministry (MOE, 2014). The results of the initial evaluation of the implementation of the MBM Program currently underway will assess the status of the program's implementation, align the right track, and make improvements if the program is to be carried out in the future or otherwise. This is because the purpose of program implementation assessment is for organizational corrections and adjustments, ensuring the cost-effectiveness of the program (Abd. Aziz & Mansor, 2013).

Issue 3: Malay as the Language of Knowledge Dissemination in Higher Education Institutions

Through a review of scholarly literature, several studies have been conducted to promote Malay as a language for disseminating knowledge. One of these studies involved assessing the perception of academic staff regarding the competency of Malay as a medium for knowledge dissemination in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). This study focused on the analysis of the use of Malay as the medium of instruction in the teaching and learning processes, particularly in the fields of Science and Technology. This examination originated from the language policy change in Public Higher Education Institutions in 1993, which emphasized the use of English as the primary medium of instruction, especially in these fields. The findings revealed that Malay was predominantly used in lecture delivery (62.7%) and classroom discussions (54.7%). The prevalence of Malay in these two aspects stemmed from its ability to enhance the understanding of the teaching and learning processes (Abd. Aziz & Mansor, 2013).

Bakar (2013) conducted a study addressing the challenges faced by non-Malay students in using their Malay speaking skills. Foreign students studying Malay at HEIs often encounter difficulties and weaknesses in their spoken Malay language skills. Many of these students react negatively to lecturer instruction due to various factors or constraints, including personal factors like attitude, motivation, shyness, the influence of their mother tongue, cultural factors, age, and pronunciation issues. Additionally, teaching faculty must be skilled in creating engaging activities that spark students' interest in learning Malay. Short training programs and environmental factors can also be barriers to learning and conversing in Malay.

Another study focused on Private Higher Education Institutions (IPTS) in Sarawak, aiming to explore students' perceptions of Malay language teaching and learning approaches, teaching methods, curriculum, teaching materials, and assessment. The study discovered that IPTS lecturers in Sarawak frequently employ all four teaching approaches: deductive, inductive, elective, and communicative, in teaching Malay. However, they prioritize the communicative approach in Malay language instruction, emphasizing student-centered learning (Mahamod, Lasan & Yusoff, 2013).

The overarching issue stems from the pervasive use of English in HEIs, which risks supplanting the Malay language in fields critical for national development, particularly in Science and Technology. The intellectual pursuits in Malay will be stymied if it ceases to be the medium of higher knowledge and cannot evolve in line with the progression of science. This diminishes the status and relevance of the Malay language, relegating it to an everyday, rather than a high-level academic, medium of communication. In contrast, English gains dominance as the de facto language of high-level discourse and scientific inquiry in Malaysia (Musa, Rodi & Muhamad, 2014).

Issue 4: Empowering the Use of Malay in Society

The discussion on the importance of and empowerment of Malay language use within society starts with the transition of Malay from being the language of the Malay race to the language of the Malaysian nation. This change is pivotal in sociolinguistic and sociocultural processes, embodying the harmonious coexistence of the diverse ethnicities sharing this common language. It symbolizes the unity of those who speak it and signifies the shared national identity of Malaysia, transcending all racial boundaries. However, a minority of people believe that Malay is nothing more than a symbol of the nation, not a tool for national development. Therefore, the research conducted holds the potential to demonstrate that Malay values can contribute to sustainable national unity (Ayob, 2012).

Despite being recognized as the national and official language, Malay continues to be seen as having a lower status and utility than English, and in some areas of the country, Mandarin. The issue of Malay's status has remained a topic of discussion. Malay's official status is enshrined in Article 152 of the Malaysian Constitution (Baharudin & Yusoff, 2014). Therefore, it is the duty of every Malaysian citizen to honor this status. Malay is not the sole possession of the Malay race but belongs to every citizen of Malaysia who recognizes themselves as loyal to the nation. However, the loyalty to this language should be demonstrated through its use and practice.

The language proficiency and the prevalence of mixing languages in daily conversations, which create confusion and undermine the value of the Malay language, need to be addressed. It's essential to encourage oral interaction in the classroom and actively promote Malay use in various aspects of daily life to strengthen the language's role in society. The globalized world's demands are increasing the need to learn English, diminishing the role of Malay, which is often seen as a requirement for passing examinations and gaining admission to higher education institutions. Additionally, the widespread use of English in today's social media and online reading materials further marginalizes the Malay language (Mamat, 2016).

While it is challenging to address the language constraints and confusion within society, it's important to consider the cultural and linguistic influences on the younger generation, who may perceive language as less important than other issues. Amir (2009) suggests that the value of a language is reflected in the loyalty of its speakers. Language loyalty can lead to the preservation and promotion of a language, while language antipathy can result in language decline. Thus, the attitude of Generation Z towards Malay, which reflects their love and pride in the language, is a key determinant of its future. The concept of social identity aligns with the social self-concept, a person's behavior and conduct in society. A study conducted by Musa, Rodi & Muhamad (2014) aimed to investigate whether the Malay identity, defined as the preservation of traditional values and practices, remains intact.

In 2016, a survey conducted in households every ten years revealed a gradual decline in the use of Malay for communication. The data showed that 36.9% of individuals aged five and above predominantly spoke English, with an increasing trend: 23% in 2000, 28.1% in 2005, 32.3% in 2010, and 36.9% in 2016. In contrast, the use of Malay diminished from 13.2% in 2005 to 12.2% in 2010 and 10.7% in 2016 (Mohd Yussof & Jamian, 2011). This trend isn't limited to the Malay population; the Chinese and Indian communities are also speaking less of their mother tongues. The globalization of English and the preference for English language use continue to grow among the people of Malaysia (Mamat, 2016).

From a positive perspective, this trend can motivate Malaysians to empower the use of Malay in their daily lives while still learning and using English as required, without elevating it to a level that compromises their identity as Malaysians. Mixing languages, particularly Malay rojak, which combines Malay with other languages, should be discouraged. Such mixing, which goes beyond borrowing or assimilation, is often informal and harms the formal image of the Malay language. Malay rojak signifies low language standards and should be avoided, while formal and complete use of Malay is encouraged.

Finally, books like "Melayu Hilang di Dunia" by Khalid Salle and "Nasib Melayu di Bumi Melayu" by Dr. Ridhuan Tee Abdullah explore the real stories about people, nations, language, and the fate of the Malay language in Malaysia. These works aim to awaken a sense of responsibility in the people of Malaysia towards their mother tongue and ensure that it is upheld for future generations. Despite challenges, Malaysians should take pride in their national language and its importance in their lives, allowing it to maintain its place and evolve in a changing world (Deraman, 2014).

Methodology

This exposition principally concerns the elevation of the Malay language to a position of prominence as a language of knowledge. The research methodology employed herein is predominantly oriented toward strengthening the corpus of knowledge concerning the intrinsic value of the Malay language as a medium of scholarly discourse. It endeavors to analyze the causative factors and repercussions that define the interplay between these two facets, necessitating a qualitative data collection and analysis modality.

The research methodology embraced for this undertaking primarily takes the form of a literature review. Within the domain of literature review, the analytical content analysis technique is engaged. Through this method, data and information are culled from secondary written sources, often manifested in digital form. These secondary sources encompass a

spectrum of materials including journal articles, books, theses, conference proceedings, newspaper reports, government publications, non-governmental organization reports, websites, and the like.

Furthermore, media sources such as video recordings of conferences, news reports, investigative documentaries, and the ilk, which are accessible via the internet, are also marshaled as a repository of data and information germane to the core thematic and principal issues under consideration. Supplementarily, primary sources, albeit to a lesser extent, are integrated into the analytical framework to lend elucidation and interpretation to the heterogeneous data culled.

Subsidiary themes articulated in a thematic format include, but are not confined to:

1. Fostering prolific scholarly composition in the Malay language within the academic fraternity.
2. Ennobling the Malay language within the educational apparatus.
3. The Malay language as the medium for the dissemination of knowledge in higher education institutions.
4. Empowering the utilization of the Malay language within society.

To procure qualitative data, it is incumbent to contemplate linguistic aspects, image projections, and interpretive acumen. The analytical process, therefore, seeks to decode linguistic trends across the diverse strata of society by recourse to data that is graphically and statistically represented. Subsequently, the assembled information is deciphered with respect to the contextual relevance of the subject matter and issues in discourse. This interpretation is essential to unravel the overarching language patterns that characterize the Malay language's role within the Malaysian sociolinguistic milieu.

The resultant findings, pertaining to the subject matter in reference, represent an assemblage of information that underscores the generation of meaning, with a view to apprehending the intricacies of the social linguistic phenomena. The interpretive course undertakes to accommodate both the concrete and non-concrete facets of the issue at hand, including discernment and opinion as articulated from diverse vantage points.

In essence, the adopted data collection methodology emerges as most apropos for the analysis of the Malay language as a language of scholarship. Furthermore, this research approach engenders the cultivation and accrual of copious newfound insights into the Malay language at large, the quandaries that impede its consolidation as a language of knowledge, and the prospective remedial measures that may redress and reinvigorate this paradigm.

Discussion: Issues and Challenges

The discussion delves into findings associating the Malay language as a medium of knowledge. This involves emphasizing academic writing, especially through literature reviews, utilizing primary and secondary sources to validate facts concerning real events. Discussed issues encompass encouraging academic writing in Malay, sustaining the Malay language in primary and secondary education, Malay as an academic knowledge expression in higher education, and empowering Malay language use in the community. Empowering Malay language use in the community. Study findings reveal the Malay Language Elevation Program's (MBM) less

effective implementation than anticipated. Study findings indicate that the Malay Language Elevation Program (MBM) has not been executed as effectively as intended.

Issue 1: Encouraging Writing in the Malay Language Among Academics

In the context of discussing the involvement of academic personnel in composing books, articles, or journals in the Malay language, there exist myriad challenges faced by those committed to elevating the status of the Malay language in the realm of education. Jambi (2008) aptly points out the stereotypical views held by Malay society concerning the competence of the Malay language. These views, often championed by vested interests, perpetuate the predominance of the English language. English is frequently regarded as the language of development and global engagement in many third-world countries. Malay language speakers are often encouraged to prioritize English in university settings. This kind of thinking impedes translation efforts, as it presumes that quality academic and scientific work in English need not be translated, as all Malay language speakers can easily master English. However, effective knowledge dissemination can only be achieved when one uses their mother tongue. Hence, this issue embodies a form of modern ideological colonization that requires prompt rectification to ensure that the Malay language functions in its rightful sphere.

Based on data from the National Institute of Translation and Books Malaysia, it is evident that translated Malay works into Arabic are still insufficiently published (Ab Rahman, Ahmad & Adnan, 2022). The main challenge in this regard is the lack of fundamental reference materials for translation techniques and methodologies.

Translation is not limited to rendering works from Malay to Chinese and Arabic; there has also been a long-standing effort to translate Malay literary works into other languages, such as French and German. For instance, Anwar Ridhwan's work, "Hari-Hari Terakhir Seorang Seniman," has been translated into French by Lajoubert (Ab Rahman, Ahmad & Adnan, 2022). One of the problems encountered in these translation activities pertains to language and cultural aspects, including linguistic and sociocultural differences between the source language (Malay) and the target language (e.g., French). Significant challenges also arise due to differences in idiomatic expressions, wordplay, honorifics, Islamic terms, flora, and fauna. Translating humorous Malay stories into German, such as "Lebai Malang and Pak Belalang," led translators to grapple with the substantial linguistic differences between languages from different language families. However, it is imperative to acknowledge that the existence of such translation activities reflects the unique cultural aspects of Malay literature, capturing the interest of foreign scholars. Proficiency in both the source and target languages is pivotal for a translator.

The National Laureate, Prof Emeritus Dr. Muhammad Haji Salleh, characterizes the stagnation and lethargy in the translation of Malay works into foreign languages as stemming from financial constraints. Additionally, Malaysia is said to lag behind in providing specific incentives to translate local literary works abroad compared to countries like China, South Korea, Turkey, Georgia, and Brazil (Ku Samsu, Ab. Halim & Sulaiman, 2013). The question that emerges is whether alternative methods or enticements are needed to foster the growth and proliferation of translation activities as a vastly beneficial scholarly tradition. Malay literature possesses its unique cultural essence, manifesting in various forms such as pantun, poetry, or classical texts like "Sulalatu Salatin" and "Hikayat Hang Tuah." Texts chosen for translation must be captivating, of high quality, and not readily available from other cultures worldwide.

Recent studies indicate that the Malay language ranks sixth globally in terms of the number of speakers (Ku Samsu, Ab. Halim & Sulaiman, 2013). However, the Malay language still does not feature among the top 10 languages used in economics, science and technology, social sciences, academia, or law (Ku Samsu, Ab. Halim & Sulaiman, 2013). Thus, Malaysians from all age groups need to be more open-minded when facing the challenges posed by the rapid advancement of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the English language. The use of ICT as a research tool, hardware, software, applications, and more needs to be scrutinized by Malay language researchers. Malay must compete on the grounds of scientific and technological terminology. For example, the successes of South Korea and Japan in the fields of science and technology, while maintaining their native languages, stand as an example. They continue to learn and master English as a second and international language, especially in the current era of globalization. Therefore, this challenge must be addressed by every Malay language speaker with intelligent and strategic planning to help Malay play its role as a platform for transferring science and technology in line with the contemporary era. In this era of globalization, translation activities are deemed a necessity, given the diversified fields of knowledge. This situation has led to the emergence of educational institutions that offer translation courses to further enhance the translation activities in Malaysia.

This situation is closely related to the National Education Policy, which aims to place Malaysia on the international education stage (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2012). The National Book Policy (1992) charges the National Institute of Translation and Books Malaysia with the responsibility to expand and diversify the translation and publication of high-quality knowledge materials into the Malay language, vary the translation and publication efforts of essential national works into other languages, and nurture competent and highly skilled individuals through courses and training in translation and language skills among the public. Thus, it is undeniable that translation training is crucial today to cultivate a greater number of qualified and ethical translators.

However, these translation courses and activities must be aligned with the goals and objectives of the respective organization or institution. The National Institute of Translation and Books Malaysia (ITBM) is a prominent entity in Malaysia tasked with planning, executing, managing, and coordinating translation standards, language competence, and multilingual information dissemination at national and international levels (Roslan & Aznam, 2017). ITBM has not been immune to the challenges posed by globalization in the field of translation. One significant hurdle is the difficulty of finding proficient translators, linguists, and editors, especially in certain languages. These experts not only need to be fluent in the relevant language but must also be specialists in their respective fields. This constitutes a substantial challenge, particularly in technical and emerging fields of study. The shortage and inadequacy of expert translators can hamper the empowerment and development of the Malay language on a global scale. Therefore, courses in foreign languages at universities must be conducted earnestly to ensure that Malaysia can produce experts in the field of translation.

Issue 2: Promoting the Malay Language in the Educational System

Malaysia is a nation of rich ethnic and cultural diversity. However, the colonial policies of the past have contributed to conflicts among its various ethnic groups (A'zmi, Mustafar & Abdul Karim, 2017). In response, the Malaysian government has endeavored to foster unity and intercultural integration, with patriotism as a core element of appreciation (Othman, Hamid & Esa, 2022d). An essential approach in building a united nation has been the adoption of a

common language, which is Malay. Measures taken include the enactment of special laws and acts concerning the Malay language and the establishment of visionary schools. Through this approach, we have witnessed an increasing use of the Malay language among diverse ethnic groups in Malaysia, which, in turn, elevates the status of the Malay language (Abdullah, 2010).

Nonetheless, challenges persist in the use of the Malay language. Among these are the inadequacies in Malay language proficiency among people from various ethnic backgrounds, political aspects, issues in education, and incorrect usage of the Malay language. From this perspective, citizenship knowledge is considered equally vital, as the spirit of loving one's nation is most prominently expressed when the younger generation can proficiently communicate in their mother tongue (Othman, Esa, Abu Bakar, and Mokhtar, 2021e). As is widely known, many Chinese and Indian students still struggle to communicate effectively in Malay. Previous research has shown significant disparities in Malay language proficiency between students in national schools and Chinese vernacular schools (Peng, 2016). This phenomenon can be attributed to various factors, including a lack of enthusiasm for reading, cultural influences, and the influence of peers and family. Consequently, multiple stakeholders must take proactive steps to address these issues. Primary school teachers, for instance, should modernize their teaching and learning methods, both within and outside the classroom, by promoting the use of the Malay language. Parents also play a crucial role in educating their children to communicate effectively in Malay, particularly when it is their second language. This holds true for Indian students in Malaysia as well. Research has explored the impact of native languages and communication traits on students' speaking proficiency. In the context of Tamil-speaking community members in Malaysia, several factors influence speaking proficiency, including environmental factors and issues with their mother tongue (Gani Hamzah, Abdullah & Hussin, 2018). Students from the Indian community should be encouraged to develop speaking skills informally, engage in direct interactions in daily activities, and practice speaking Malay outside the classroom.

On another note, some students from abroad have opted to learn Malay as a third language. Their motivation is driven by a positive attitude and eagerness. Educators play a crucial role in imparting knowledge and creating a lively learning environment. However, the local environment often does not facilitate the learning of foreign students, as the local community may be hesitant to communicate in Malay with them. Nevertheless, foreign students generally exhibit a strong interest in learning Malay, provided they receive encouragement and support from relevant individuals (Muslim & Samian, 2012).

As we are aware, language is a tool for interpersonal communication, serving as a bridge that connects various communities regardless of skin color or borders. However, Malaysia is unique in its ethnic diversity, and this means that individuals often converse in their mother tongues when communicating with one another. Yet, in the modern age, there is a segment of the population, particularly among the youth, that is heavily influenced by Western culture, leading to a widespread use of the English language. It is undeniable that English is crucial in contemporary times, especially as individuals progress into university and the workforce. Inadequacy in English language proficiency can lead to higher future unemployment rates, as English is the common medium for international communication. Nevertheless, an overemphasis on English has contributed to the diminishing proficiency of the Malay language (Yalani & Bakar, 2017). To mitigate this, the government has implemented policies aimed at providing job opportunities that do not require English proficiency. It is essential to view this

matter not only in the context of the short term but also as a matter of long-term significance for a multiethnic and multireligious Malaysia.

During the pandemic era, a differentiated approach was introduced by the Ministry of Education in Malaysia (MOE) as one of the teaching and learning methods that can enhance student performance and knowledge (Ationg et al., 2021). As a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic's spread in Malaysia, all teachers, including Malay language teachers, were unable to conduct face-to-face teaching in schools. To address this, the MOE provided a home-based teaching and learning manual (PdPR) to all teachers to ensure that teaching continued (Mokhtar, Othman, Abu Bakar & Esa, 2021). Consequently, many studies were conducted to determine the level of mastery of the differentiated approach in PdPR during the Movement Control Order (PKP) period. Research findings indicate that Malay language teachers possess extensive knowledge and are prepared to implement the differentiated approach in PdPR. The implications of the study underscore the need for Malay language teachers to be better prepared and continuously seek to enhance their knowledge and teaching skills in PdPR during the PKP period.

Looking back, we can see the dedicated struggle of Malay teachers in upholding the national language's status post-independence until the 1970s. They faced various challenges, including conflicts with the Federation of Malay Teachers' Associations (KPGMS) and the government during that period. KPGMS was a significant driving force pressing the government to ensure the elevation of the national language's status in line with the legislation and policies formulated (Deraman & Rus, 2019). The responsive stance of Malay teachers toward language issues significantly heightened the government's awareness of the numerous challenges surrounding the national language's status. Therefore, it is incumbent upon us to be grateful and to play a part in upholding the Malay language as a language of knowledge.

Efforts to strengthen the Malay language in primary and secondary schools in Malaysia have involved a study exploring the teaching methods of excellent Malay language teachers in the state of Sarawak. Qualitative data analysis revealed six primary themes extensively employed by these expert teachers in their pedagogical practices: PdP preparation, PdP induction set-up, classroom management during PdP, the application of various PdP pedagogies, in-class assessments, conclusion of PdP, and the use of diverse teaching aids (Chong, Mahamod & Hamzah, 2017). However, a matter that requires attention from various stakeholders is the sustainability of the educational infrastructure system, which impacts student achievement, particularly in Borneo states that grapple with less conducive learning environments, consequently impeding the implementation of PdP (Othman, Esa, Hajimin, and Marinsah, 2021d).

Issue 3: The Malay Language as the Medium of Knowledge Expression in Higher Education Institutions

The choice of language for teaching and learning sessions at the higher education level is of paramount importance. The flow of knowledge through language shapes the thinking and comprehension of students. However, there exists a debate among language advocates who seek to elevate the status of a single language within higher education institutions. Globalization and diversity often necessitate the selection of one language as the international language, while also serving as the language of academia (Jupiter et al., 2021). This decision should ideally be a democratic process within universities, allowing students to choose the

language with which they are most comfortable when expressing their opinions, be it during presentations or in scholarly writing. Upon closer examination, globalization and diversity can indeed provide an opportunity for the Malay language to become a crucial language of academia in the Malaysian context (Jupiter et al., 2021). In other words, the Malay language can serve as a comprehensive academic language, equipped to discuss various fields such as science, technology, economics, engineering, medicine, law, as well as literature and religion. As a language of knowledge, the Malay language must embody intellectual qualities and linguistic excellence, which can be attained through an enriched vocabulary and a sound grammatical system (Roslan & Aznam, 2017).

The Malay language today operates in different domains than it did in the past, necessitating changes in its vocabulary and grammar systems. The grammar system encompasses all aspects of language, including sentences, clauses, phrases, spelling, pronunciation, and more (Ab Rahman, Ahmad & Adnan, 2022). In addressing these issues, particularly in terms of pronunciation, plans and implementations of standardized language have been set in motion (Ab Rahman, Ahmad & Adnan, 2022). The objective is to position the Malay language as a high-status language, ensuring the harmony of its use. In Malaysia, two common languages are used in higher education institutions: Malay and English. This is because the sharing of knowledge in higher education should not be limited to a single language. Observing the prevalence of English in higher education, the use of the Malay language has dwindled among students. This is due to the government's belief that the use of English will expedite the nation's progress in science and technology (Peng & Ishak, 2008). However, this has negatively affected the role and status of the Malay language in higher education.

The government's efforts to revive the Malay language within the Malaysian populace are primarily channeled through university students. This is because university students comprise not only domestic students but also international students studying in Malaysia. Therefore, international students enrolled in Malaysian universities are required to take Malay language courses. Various teaching methods and techniques can be employed in the teaching and learning of the Malay language. Being a foreign language to international students, the use of a bilingual approach, incorporating both Malay and English, is inevitable. Most students can write Malay proficiently but encounter difficulties in spelling and pronunciation. This is due to the inadequate duration of classes, which last only 2 hours per week. In contrast, 3 hours per week satisfies the requirements for effective teaching and learning. A duration of 2 to 4 hours per day is the ideal range for intensively mastering the Malay language (Peng & Ishak, 2008). Clearly, this issue cannot be taken lightly, and immediate changes are needed. According to the Department of Higher Education (JPT), learning Malay is a prerequisite for international students to continue their studies. However, the 2- to 3-hour duration per week, intended to facilitate communication in daily life, is insufficient. To enhance Malay language proficiency among international students in this country, they must practice Malay in their daily lives by communicating and interacting with other students in the Malay language (Bakar, 2013). International students are also encouraged to participate in university activities that involve the use of the Malay language. This will greatly assist international students in understanding and speaking Malay more fluently, thereby elevating the Malay language to the status of a knowledge language in higher education institutions while also making it the medium of communication among university students.

In the effort to master English and strengthen the Malay language through balanced bilingual education, there are also challenges faced when striving to empower the Malay language. It is apparent that each endeavor made continues to indicate an increasing issue. As we are aware, language serves as a tool for communication among individuals and as a bridge connecting communities, irrespective of skin color or borders. Furthermore, language is emblematic of a nation's soul (Abd Razak, 2009). Malaysia is a unique nation due to its cultural diversity, indicating that each ethnicity possesses its own language and culture. Consequently, communities of different ethnicities communicate in their mother tongues within their own circles. However, some individuals, due to a lack of awareness, have become overly exposed to Western culture, causing them to adopt English as their primary language, neglecting their mother tongue. It is undeniable that the use of English is essential for individuals. For instance, the use of English for other courses is essential in the social sphere, particularly in the workforce, as private entities do not commonly use Malay as the language of communication, as many projects undertaken by private enterprises involve collaboration with foreign countries.

Undoubtedly, the issue of unemployment among college and university students is primarily linked to the inadequate ability to use English correctly (Yalani & Bakar, 2017). However, beyond the issue of unemployment and communication skills, there is a situation in which the widespread use of English in daily life, especially among the younger generation, has contributed to the diminishing proficiency of the Malay language. This is particularly evident in communities that frequently converse in English, compared to those who communicate more frequently in Malay. In terms of the Malay language's status, the incorporation of English into the education system has impeded the position of the Malay language. These challenges are related to the nation's agenda to elevate the Malay language as the mother tongue of native Malay speakers (Sharif Adam, 2014). This is in direct contradiction with the National Education Policy and the National Language Policy, as enshrined in the National Language Act 1967/68 (Othman et al., 2021a). The Policy of Teaching Science and Mathematics in English (PPSMI) has eroded the role and importance of the Malay language among Malay speakers. To prevent this issue from becoming more critical, the government has implemented policies to help individuals secure employment regardless of their proficiency in English. Therefore, this matter should not be viewed solely in the short term, but rather as a consideration for the future of Malaysia, a nation characterized by its multiculturalism and multireligious diversity.

Issue 4: Empowering the Usage of the Malay Language within Society

A challenge in strengthening and promoting the use of the Malay language within society lies in understanding why certain Malay and non-Malay communities do not fully embrace, believe in, or endorse the Malay language. It prompts the question: is it because the authorities have not been resolute in employing assimilation processes by imposing requirements on newcomers seeking to reside and become citizens in Malaysia, urging them to adapt to our patterns of governance and culture? Consequently, they are seemingly free to adhere solely to their customs, lifestyles, and the use of their mother tongue, for they perceive no necessity in mastering the Malay language, our national language, for any purpose, believing that acquiring the Malay language will ultimately serve no purpose. More disconcerting still is when Malaysian citizens, irrespective of their ethnicity, particularly the Chinese and Indian communities, use English as their primary mode of daily communication. This is highly irregular, as individuals who reside, were born, and grew up in Malaysia should naturally be

proficient in the Malay language. However, they prioritize English proficiency, even for their children, as they perceive it as a requirement for a prosperous future. Consequently, they deem it unnecessary to learn the Malay language. They contend that not knowing Malay poses no disadvantage since they can lead peaceful and comfortable lives in the country using English or their mother tongue (Mohamed & Hassan, 2019).

Another challenge is the perceived lack of firmness and a disregard by the government and authorities in Malaysia in their efforts to elevate the Malay language. This is evidenced by the absence of regulations to promote it and the lack of stringent penalties for those who degrade it.

The next challenge is the increasing popularity of the English language, which is often given precedence in society. Using both languages concurrently is a rarity because few individuals possess fluency in both. Consequently, the diminished use of the Malay language in communication is disheartening and ultimately negatively impacts language proficiency among Malaysians. Furthermore, issues involving errors and misuse of the Malay language on signs and advertisements in public spaces persist, tarnishing the status of the Malay language. This is due to many signs, whether on the sides of roads or billboards, not utilizing correct and precise Malay wording, instead resorting to a hodgepodge of languages within a single sentence. This situation is unacceptable, as it tarnishes the image of Malaysia not only among its citizens but also among foreign tourists. Furthermore, some argue that one of the challenges impeding the success of various efforts to achieve a nation through the Malay language includes the limited proficiency of the Malay language among various ethnic groups in society, political aspects, education, and incorrect usage of the Malay language (Mohamad Kamil & Mohamad, 2020).

Additionally, for ease of communication and interaction among diverse linguistic and cultural groups worldwide, a common language is deemed a necessity, and this is where the English language is viewed as having the most potential to be the primary medium of communication. Furthermore, East Asian countries such as Japan, China, and South Korea, which have traditionally emphasized their mother tongue, have increased their English language proficiency, and have developed English language learning (Mohamad Kamil & Mohamad, 2020). Consequently, monolingualism is no longer sufficient, and bilingualism is becoming the current trend. Indirectly, globalization has weakened the standing and use of native languages, particularly the Malay language, as it is rarely used due to its perceived low economic value, with English being viewed as the international language and a global lingua franca. The sociolinguistic scenario showcases how Malaysia's ethnically and linguistically diverse population utilizes Malay and English, our two primary communication languages in daily life. This is because, although Malaysia is composed of speakers of various languages, English continues to thrive linguistically, as more individuals employ it in daily life.

This phenomenon raises questions about the functions, values, and importance of the Malay language compared to other languages, particularly English (Mohamad Kamil & Mohamad, 2020). Furthermore, the internet primarily provides information in English, and the evolving economic landscape has increased the demand for English language proficiency. In addition, the majority of information, reading materials, magazines, newspapers, and online video games are predominantly available in English (Jambi, 2008). The culture that esteems foreign languages is now influencing the young generation, particularly those who seek to enhance

their English language skills and are actively pursuing English language proficiency to meet the demands of globalization and advancement. While also adhering to the government's campaign to strengthen the Malay language, the net result is that the Malay language is no longer taken seriously, as there is a flood of information, oral and written, in the medium of English. Moreover, the Malay language is not adequately cultivated among the young generation, as they are rarely exposed to it.

Additionally, all social media platforms, applications, online games, reading materials, and information online are predominantly in English. Therefore, the Malay language is progressively marginalized in this era of modernization. Moreover, there is a misconception among some sectors of society regarding the position of the Malay language and English language. The perception is that the needs of the nation and international interests threaten the status and importance of the Malay language, making its position less secure. For example, the introduction of the Dual Language Program (DLP), which employs English as the language of instruction for Science and Mathematics subjects in schools, has eroded the position of the Malay language (Mohamad Kamil & Mohamad, 2020). As a result, existing language conflicts provide room for non-Malay communities in Malaysia to also advocate for their mother tongues.

Presently, native languages are seen as increasingly marginalized and often disregarded, although they are constitutionally guaranteed a place. The primary challenge faced by the younger generation today is a great struggle between their own identity and role confusion. Furthermore, the basic framework introduced to enhance English language proficiency undermines students' familiarity with the Malay language. Moreover, the level of mastery in the correct use of the Malay language without any admixture with other languages among Generation Z is cause for concern (Mohamed & Hassan, 2019). This is because only a minority of them seem concerned about using the Malay language comprehensively, while the majority do not mind employing slang or abbreviations in their communication (Dazali & Awang, 2016).

This situation becomes further aggravated as information and communication technology advances. The widespread use of slang, which simplifies language and shortens words, often leads to misunderstandings and language confusion, subsequently undermining the status of the Malay language. Slang usage, which was previously commonplace, has now become widely recognized and popularized, especially among the current generation, paralleling the technological advancements of our time. Applications such as Facebook, Twitter, WeChat, and many more, which are vital communication channels and have become the norm in societal communication, intensify the usage of slang and abbreviated language, especially among Generation Z (Shafiee et al., 2019, Mokhtar, Sharif Adam, Othman & Esa, 2022).

The use of unclear language and their preference for brief language styles has created concern that these tendencies will impact the integrity and elevation of our native language. Furthermore, research indicates the phenomenon of code-switching in our multilingual society, including among school students, as a form of simplification for delivering information to listeners. Observations reveal that people who use slang often face difficulties in effective communication, especially in English. Therefore, they use slang in daily conversations, despite their limited skills and fluency in the language, ultimately creating slang due to their desire to follow current trends.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the study addresses key issues, including promoting academic writing in Malay, sustaining the language in primary and secondary education, emphasizing Malay as a medium for expressing knowledge in higher education, and empowering its use within the community. The findings underscore challenges in implementing the Malay Language Elevation Program, indicating the need for reevaluation and enhancement in school administration and teaching methods. This study provides valuable insights for stakeholders, urging collective efforts to strengthen the Malay language's role in education and community life. The outlined issues demand concerted action for the effective preservation and elevation of the Malay language in diverse contexts.

Issue 1: Promoting Writing in Malay Among Academics

As we conclude this discourse, the concerted efforts made by the formal education sector towards the Malay language stand as an ongoing initiative that should be collectively embraced by all formal educators in Malaysia. This is crucial for elevating the use of Malay as a language of knowledge in schools. The relevance of the Education Act 1996, in line with efforts to enhance and establish Malay as a language of knowledge, reflects the government's commitment to position the national language for prominence and recognition as the medium of instruction in the country's education sector (Othman et al., 2021a).

Present-day society must cultivate the spirit and endeavor to master the national language, not merely as a means of communication in daily life but also as a widely used tool in professional settings. In the postmodern era, some of the younger generations have lost interest in and desire for the Malay language, perceiving it as inferior to other foreign languages. Society today should be conscious and confident that the value of our national language is on par with foreign languages, making it a language standing shoulder to shoulder with those of other nations. While it is undeniable that proficiency in foreign languages such as English is comprehensive and serves as a means of international communication, this should not erode or diminish the identity of the Malay language ingrained in the Malaysian population since time immemorial (Yusoff et al., 2021).

The consequence of expanding the reading network of the younger generation to delve deeper into the field of linguistics would fulfill the nation's desire to establish Malay as a language of global knowledge. If all parties join forces, fostering a love for the mother tongue will provide a solid unity of national solidarity that cannot be opposed by any other nation in the world.

The implementation of the use of Malay in teaching and learning for students of various ethnicities must be considered by all, as Malay is the medium of instruction in all government educational institutions in the country. The solidification of Malay in education must be extended to all students, including those of various ethnicities. This is because language proficiency is one of the core values of identity and the spirit of patriotism for Malaysians. Difficulties in terms of students' proficiency in Malay should prompt teachers to be aware of the students' proficiency levels and adapt the use of language to levels that are easily understood by students. Teachers also need to be aware and prepared to face the challenges of using Malay in teaching students of various ethnicities. Exposure to other cultures may help teachers handle the teaching and learning process more effectively. The use of Malay in education should align with the MOE policy in establishing Malay and outlined in the Malaysian Education Development Plan (PPPM2013-2025) (Othman et al., 2021a).

The idea of promoting and elevating the position of the Malay language has always been a significant topic of scholarly discussion, focusing on the appropriate approach to restore the standing of Malay. This is because Malay was widely used since the 13th century as a trading language in the Nusantara. Translation activities of scholarly works from Malay into foreign languages, especially English, began early through the writings of Western orientalist scholars for colonial purposes. The lack of accuracy in translation, considering cultural differences, proverbs, the use of titles, idioms, and more, made the translated works less appealing. Lack of support and funds have also been factors contributing to the failure of large-scale translation efforts. Financial aid to agencies involved in empowering the Malay language should be provided. Collaboration networks between DBP, the Institute of Translation and Books of Malaysia (ITBM), and local higher education institutions with foreign institutions need to be implemented (Othman et al., 2021a). Such collaboration allows Malay language courses to be promoted to those interested in delving into it. Translations of local works that reflect socio-cultural backgrounds, thoughts, and lifestyles can dispel prejudices and open eyes to the strength of the Malay nation. Through this initiative, interest in learning Malay as the language of instruction for these reading materials can be sparked among foreign communities.

Issue 2: Upholding the Dignity of the Malay Language in the Education System

After gaining independence in 1957, Malaysia declared Malay as its official language (Amir, 2009). The use of Malay is crucial in daily discourse, especially as it serves as the medium of instruction in Malaysia. As we know, Malaysia consists of a diverse population with various ethnicities in Sabah and Sarawak. Therefore, Malay plays a vital role in unifying each community and maintaining harmony among the people in Malaysia. However, with the increasing tide of technology, English is gaining precedence in education, employment, science, and technology. This has resulted in some Malaysians feeling uncertain about speaking Malay, perceiving it as outdated. While the importance of English cannot be denied, especially in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and Public Universities (PUs), it is unjust for Malay to be increasingly neglected (Peng & Ishak, 2008).

Language, being a tool that should be understood by everyone, must be mastered effectively to convey messages according to everyone's desires. In this regard, it can be interpreted that Malaysian society should have a primary communication medium understood by every citizen, considering the diverse ethnicities, such as the use of Malay in daily discourse. However, today's youth tend to use a mix of languages and incorrect terms in their daily speech. This is concerning, as the community tends to trivialize the correct use of language, given the lack of restrictions and penalties for using incorrect terms, making individuals accustomed to it without feeling guilty. Therefore, as a conscious and sensitive society, steps should be taken to address this issue.

One approach to overcoming this is by dignifying Malay among primary and secondary school students, as most individuals who do not use Malay correctly are those who did not receive proper education from the beginning. Therefore, various parties should join forces to dignify Malay in Malaysia, especially among the youth, as the twig is bent, so grows the tree. Among the efforts that can be implemented is to strengthen the use of Malay in daily discourse. For example, using Malay during teaching and learning sessions and extracurricular activities. This, to some extent, can influence students, especially those of Chinese and Indian descent, to speak Malay. Moreover, parents also play a role in strengthening Malay among students, such as using Malay when chatting at home. As we can observe, most school activities today are

based on Science and Technology in the context of the English language. It is undeniable that knowledge of science and technology is crucial for the development of today's youth and the future. Still, as technology advances, the use of Malay among students is decreasing. Therefore, the Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE) should take steps to restore and prioritize the use of Malay as before. This can be done by organizing a Language Week in schools throughout Malaysia (Mohd Yussof & Jamian, 2011). Language Week is a week where students must use Malay entirely in their speech. Not only that, but various activities can also be carried out during Language Week, such as public speaking, storytelling, writing poems, and much more. Thus, students will become closer to the Malay language, influencing how they communicate with each other.

In addition, educators should go to great lengths to ensure that students can master the Malay language. This is crucial because the Malay language is a mandatory core subject for every student. Therefore, teaching and learning activities, both inside and outside the classroom, should run smoothly to ensure that students can master it, especially students of Chinese and Indian descent. This effort can create a society that appreciates and dignifies the Malay language in the future, lifting the dignity of the Malay language on the world stage. As commonly known, Malay has been used as a lingua franca from the 7th to the 19th century (Hassan, Angterian & Yusop, 2017). Therefore, the government must be more vigilant to prevent violations in the context of the use of Malay or our official language. The program to dignify Malay is crucial and should be emphasized because with proficiency, fluency, the use of grammar, and mastery of knowledge in Malay, such as using proverbs in speech, can elevate the Malay language further, as Malay was once used as a language of instruction, a language of knowledge, and a lingua franca during the 7th and 19th centuries in the Nusantara (Othman, Radzi & Esa, 2022b). Thus, it is undeniable that Malaysian society can dignify the Malay language as a language of knowledge and the national language, highlighting their national identity as Malaysian citizens who adhere to the constitution drafted by the government since the beginning.

Issue 3: Malay Language as the Medium of Knowledge Expression in Higher Education Institutions

The Malay language is recognized as the national language and official language of Malaysia through the highest law of the land, the Federal Constitution. Article 152 stipulates the elevated status of the Malay language in Malaysia (Che Hodi & Musa, 2014). Besides the Federal Constitution, the enactment of the National Language Act 1963/67 further reinforces the position of the Malay language in the country. The use of the Malay language should remain undisturbed and serve as a crucial medium in fostering harmony and strengthening societal unity in Malaysia. However, the status of the Malay language as the official and national language is increasingly challenged in the country. The acceptance and usage of the Malay language by the people are disappointingly low. More troublingly, the status of the Malay language as the mother tongue is challenged among Malay speakers. Recently, the number of Malay speakers whose mother tongue is Malay has been declining. Many among them prefer to converse in English, albeit with limited proficiency and understanding. Furthermore, the prioritization of English over Malay in education, employment, and communication poses a significant challenge. The importance of English in the fields of Science and Technology has also contributed to a diminishing confidence in the Malay language, especially among non-Malay ethnic students in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) who tend to favor English as the medium of instruction.

Additionally, there exists a group of individuals who prefer to use their native language over Malay. The proliferation of 'rojak' language and slang further complicates matters for language speakers (Shafiee et al., 2019; Yazid et al., 2020). The use of 'rojak' language is not a new phenomenon in a multicultural country like Malaysia. The mixing of languages during communication has become a common and accepted daily lifestyle. Language is the most effective communication tool to convey thoughts, meanings, and intentions. Therefore, the use of language that can be understood by everyone must be mastered to effectively convey messages and information according to each individual's desires. In this context, it can be inferred that Malaysian society should have a primary communication medium that can be understood by every citizen, given the diverse ethnicities, such as the use of Malay in daily discourse.

The language policy implemented in the national education system is key to uniting the diverse communities in the country. The selection and implementation of Malay as the intermediary medium in the national education system need to be strengthened because proficiency in the mother tongue can enhance students' self-confidence and academic performance (Othman, Rahim & Abu Bakar, 2022e). Based on the declaration of Malay as the national language, Malay has been symbolized as the identity of Malaysian citizens.

Therefore, the empowerment of the Malay language needs to be upheld and emphasized by all parties, including the government, educational institutions in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) or Public Universities (PUs), the Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE), and relevant authorities such as the National Language and Literature Agency (DBP), pooling efforts to dignify the use of the Malay language in Malaysian society today (Esa et al., 2021). Additionally, the launch of the Action Plan to Dignify Malay as a Language of Knowledge in HEIs by the Minister of Higher Education in 2011 was a wise step in strengthening the Malay language in the context of learning, teaching, research, and publishing at the higher education level (Mahamod, Lasan & Yusoff, 2013). This is crucial to implement to empower and enhance the role and function of the Malay language as a language of knowledge.

strategies implemented by the Ministry of Higher Education align with the efforts of the Ministry of Education Malaysia in implementing the Policy to Dignify Malay and Strengthen English (MBMMBI) (MOE, 2014). Therefore, efforts to increase the use of Malay as a language of knowledge in the Malaysian education system can be carried out from lower levels to higher levels, ensuring that Malay can be fully implemented in the education system in Malaysia. This creates continuity in the effort to dignify Malay to fulfill its function as a language of knowledge. It makes the language policy in HEIs more focused and clear. To implement the first objective strategy in the Action Plan to Dignify Malay as a Language of Knowledge, one aspect that needs emphasis is that mandatory courses in HEIs should be taught in Malay. Therefore, compulsory courses such as Malaysian Citizenship, Islamic Civilization, Southeast Asian Civilization, and Ethnic Relations should be taught in Malay (MOE, 2014). Teaching and learning in the fields of social sciences and humanities in the Malay language need to be implemented gradually according to set targets. This Action Plan not only enhances the use of Malay among local students but also requires international students to take Malay Communication courses to achieve excellent results. To strengthen Malay in Publishing and Research, academics are encouraged to produce research and publications in Malay. This strategy is implemented by strengthening local Malay-language journals to be indexed in ERA, Scopus, and ISI. Several Malay-language journals, such as Gema Journal, Malaysian Economic

Journal, Malaysian Communication Journal, Vacana Seni, and Sains Malaysiana, have been indexed (Mansor & Mansor, 2015). Simultaneously, the number of journals focusing on being indexed is actively pursued by HEIs, such as the efforts for Pendeta journal at UPSI to achieve this status. The ability to increase Malay-language writing in these local journals demonstrates Malaysia's commitment to empowering Malay as a high-level language of knowledge that can be recognized globally. The term 'global' does not mean that English is the only language of knowledge; rather, Malay is crucial to be recognized as a language of knowledge, especially in Malaysia and the region, as local knowledge is closely related to the local population for digestion, interpretation, and utilization of received knowledge. Furthermore, the number of Malay Studies educators in foreign institutions is also increasing. Through this Action Plan, the dignity of the Malay language as a language of knowledge and the medium of instruction in HEIs needs to be implemented and strengthened by the leadership of HEIs. The position of Malay as the official language, national language, and language of knowledge needs to be restored through teaching, research, and publications in Malay. Additionally, internationalization of the Malay language needs to be developed and expanded.

Oral interaction is a process that involves the conveyance and exchange of information through speech between a speaker and a listener. The information conveyed includes ideas, feelings, news, and messages, transmitted through a symbol system known as language. From a language perspective, interaction is not formed solely by a single word or a string of words but involves several elements such as speech fluency, clarity of meaning, conversation situation, tone of voice, and social distance between conversation participants. In other words, oral interaction not only emphasizes linguistic aspects but also involves pragmatic aspects of language. Therefore, oral interaction in the classroom is also a solution to preserving the Malay language for extensive use in the country and consequently strengthening the use of the Malay language. It cannot be denied that language and interaction are two inseparable words as they are closely related. This is because when a student uses Malay and interacts more frequently with others in the class, it proves that the use of the Malay language as a communication tool is widespread not only in the class but also outside the class.

Mastery of language, especially in oral communication, indicates a nation practicing that culture. The importance of effective oral interaction is an aspect that can have a significant impact and needs to be emphasized from the early stages. The ability of students to interact effectively in Malay is a skill that needs to be mastered, especially for non-Malay ethnic students. This facilitates active relationships among them and can elicit responses from all parties. Consequently, this will make it easier for educators and students to communicate in Malay, making Malay the language of instruction in HEIs and public universities. This indirectly contributes to the success of the Ministry of Higher Education's Action Plan to dignify Malay as the language of knowledge in HEIs.

Therefore, everyone, especially the younger generation, should rise to love and strengthen the use of the Malay language as the national language, official language, and medium of instruction in HEIs, and so on. In the context of education, society must believe that Malay can be used as a language of knowledge, and it has been used for a long time. For example, Malay has been used as a lingua franca from the 7th to the 9th century (Hassan, Angterian & Yusop, 2017). Therefore, administrators should be cautious to avoid any violation in the use of the Malay language or the official language of our country. The implementation of programs to dignify Malay among the multicultural and ethnic communities in Malaysia is crucial,

especially as Malaysian studies become a compulsory course in universities (Esa, Othman, Abu Bakar, & Mokhtar, 2021c).

This is crucial to emphasize because with fluency, eloquence, the use of grammar, and knowledge of Malay, such as using proverbs in speech, can make Malay even more prestigious. Similarly, the use of Malay as an introduction, language of knowledge, and lingua franca during the 7th to 19th centuries in the Nusantara. Moreover, with the pride and proficiency in Malay among the diverse population in Malaysia, they can dignify Malay as the national language, highlighting their national identity as Malaysian citizens who abide by the constitution drafted by the government since the beginning.

Issue 4: Empowering the Use of Malay Language in Society

Despite numerous challenges and obstacles in nation-building and promoting the use of the Malay language in the lives of the Malaysian community, there are various proposed efforts that can be undertaken to continue safeguarding the function and value of the Malay language as our national mother tongue (Othman, Mokhtar & Esa, 2022). These include enacting special laws and acts related to the Malay language, generating writings in various fields in Malay, and establishing Vision Schools believed to foster a sense of concern among the nation's community regarding the total use and learning of the Malay language. Various efforts by the government to strengthen the Malay language can be continued to ensure that our mother tongue becomes a primary tool in enhancing unity among diverse ethnicities, thereby shaping the identity of the Malaysian people (Mohamed & Hassan, 2019). Consequently, society will become more attentive to the use of the Malay language in daily affairs, whether official or unofficial. The community will also be exposed to the proper Malay language environment, reducing language errors over time. Additionally, the government can strengthen the Malay language by intensifying activities related to creation, linguistics, literature, translation, and existing materials and literature since the era of the Malay Melaka Sultanate, especially through the establishment of the Language and Literature Agency (DBP) since 1956 for the purpose of publication, encouragement, and development of the Malay language. DBP has also been allocated in Act 213, the Language and Literature Agency Act, along with other acts, to further strengthen this agency as a motivated body for the empowerment of the Malay language (Esa et al., 2021).

Furthermore, a fundamental step is to enhance students' understanding of the position and value of the Malay language as the national language. Language is a crucial matter as it is written in the legal framework. This requires various efforts from educators to make Malay language education interesting to attract students' attention and immediately improve students' proficiency in both written and spoken Malay. Therefore, to this day, the government continues to strive to ensure that the Malay language remains the primary medium of communication to build a nation, aligning with the creation of one nation, one language, and realizing the government's desire to dignify the Malay language while strengthening understanding in English (Othman, Ahmad & Esa, 2022c). This includes giving a role to the Malay language for use in various fields and levels, from the lowest to the highest level, from social communities to formal communities and various formal fields such as business, administration, law, intellectual discourse, and many other formal areas (Mohamad Kamil & Mohamad, 2020).

Moreover, the government and authorities must be firm and vigilant in their efforts to dignify the Malay language. A regulation must be established where all buildings, place names, and

business names in both oral and written communication are mandatory in Malay. Consequently, all parties will comply, and there will be no one who will violate it if penalties are imposed. However, can the authorities implement it? That is the question. This is because they are more afraid to do so when they prioritize votes in elections over the nation and language policy in Malaysia. They feel that the Malay language cannot put them in the cabinet. Therefore, this is a reality that we, the Malay people, must be aware of so that our country and the language of our ancestors are not left in the hands of others (Language and Literature Agency, 2022). Therefore, various parties must play their roles to uphold the image and status of the Malay language. As loyal Malaysian citizens, we must all instill a patriotic spirit in ourselves so that we can harmoniously preserve the language and our country. In conclusion, this writing delves into the use of the Malay language as one of the crucial factors in educational development. It is related to the development of a country that has a quality and positive environment and unification among communities to ensure the well-being of society in a nation.

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