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RATIONALES AND CHALLENGES OF THE MALAYSIAN  
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This work is licensed under [CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)**Abstract:**

The focus of the discussion in this paper is about the use of the Malay language among plural societies in Malaysia. This writing attempts to cover the empowerment of the Malay language that is being worked on by the Ministry of Higher Education, which includes (i) the mastery of the Malay language regardless of race or ethnicity, (ii) the ability and authority of the Malay language, (iii) the organization and strengthening of programs to dignify the Malay language, and (iv) the use of the Malay language as the medium of communication. The use of a qualitative approach in this writing utilizes secondary sources such as research results in journals, scholarly writing, online news sources and public forums. The results of the study found that (a) the use of English today as the first medium in speech is a contributing factor to the lack of use of the mother tongue among the multi-ethnic community in Malaysia and instils an individualistic attitude., (b) the use of the Malay language in the private sector has not been prominent because there are a few parties who think that the Malay language has a low commercial value in the business sector, (c) Malay language empowerment programs play a vital role in catalysing the fluency of students as well as the administrative parties at the school and university level so that, issues such as lack of fluency and the dignity of the use of the Malay language as an official language that should be mastered by every Malaysian citizen can be improved and streamlined and (d) If Malay is not used as a medium of instruction, it is unlikely that it will be able to stand majestically on the world stage. As a result, drastic measures must be taken to ensure that the empowerment of the Malay language is in line with the country's development and does not fall solely on the shoulders of the Ministry of Education and Culture. The study's direction looks at the continuation of the

impact of the Malay language's empowerment as a language of unity and one of the mediums that play a role in realising our country's aspirations, which is to create racial harmony.

**Keywords:**

Malay Language, Malaysian Ministry of Education (KPM), Multi-Ethnic Society, Medium Of Instruction, Unity

**Introduction**

The issue of the propriety of mastering the Malay language regardless of race or ethnicity is frequently linked to the use of the Malay language in today's society. Our language, Bahasa Malay, is crucial in daily communication because language has the ability to strengthen unity and understanding between races in Malaysia (Othman, Yusoff, Jupiter & Mokhtar, 2021a). Not only that, but given our country's multi-ethnic Malays, Chinese, Indians, and ethnic of Sabah and Sarawak, this language has the potential to boost nationalist sentiment. Malay is the primary language of the Malays, while Chinese, Indians, and ethnic of Sabah and Sarawak use it as a second language after their mother tongues (Lukin, Esa, Abang Muis, Ationg, Mohd Tamring, Othman & Mokhtar, 2021). As a result, despite the fact that they were born and raised in Malaysia, their command of the language is limited.

This is concerning because mastery of this official language falls short of the Malaysian Ministry of Education's wishes and expectations. Malaysia is made up of people of various races and ethnicities. It is an undeniable fact. There is no denying that each race has the right to speak in their mother tongue, especially in a country with multiple cultures. However, there are still many Malaysians who are unable to speak the national language well and correctly in official matters. As a result, this writing attempts to unravel the causes of Malaysians' lack of mastery of the Malay language and argues for the government's efforts, particularly those of the Ministry of Education and Culture, to dignify our language (Yusoff, Othman, Jupiter & Mokhtar, 2021). Malaysia's diversity of races and nationalities is a privilege and source of pride that not all countries enjoy.

Malaysia is divided into Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah, and Sarawak, each of which has its own race and language. The intermediary language serves as a vital communication tool in this context, conveying concepts and statements. In keeping with the passage of time, which has transformed information and communication technology into a medium of communication, society should be wise and sensitive to the use of appropriate language in order to avoid the use of inappropriate language in specific contexts (Sharif Adam, Othman, Hamid, Esa, Ationg, Lukin & Mohd Tamring, 2021). Malay is Malaysia's official language and its national language. However, the Malay language's authority and capability in the country are frequently contested, particularly in the field of education. Despite the fact that the Federation of Malaysia has now been in existence for 59 years, the issue of language proficiency is frequently raised by Malaysians and debated in Parliament (Mohamad Kamil & Mohamad, 2020). Not only that, but foreign languages, particularly English, the world's lingua franca, are seen to be the favourite or dominate the choice of a few people (Jupiter, Othman, Yusoff & Muda, 2021). After which, a series of such practises invite one of the issues that contribute to the younger generation's lack of interest in the Malay language (Ationg, Esa, Othman & Yusoff, 2021).

The ability and authority of the Malay language as a medium of instruction is the Ministry of Education's main agenda, with the implementation of programmes to dignify the country's official language by setting the goal of mastery of the Malay language regardless of race or ethnicity. Malay is recognised as the national language of Malaysia in Article 152 of the Malaysian Constitution (Esa, Ationg, Othman & Jupiter, 2021a; Amir, 2009). Nation development frequently involves answering questions about how a country communicates effectively with its citizens, given that language is an important symbol in culture and can be used to create culture (Basir, 2012). This is due to the fact that different languages can form different cultural bases. Language is an important part of a society's or nation's culture because it represents a group's identity (Zulhaimi, Ationg, Othman, Abu Bakar, Muda, Esa & Mokhtar, 2021). Furthermore, language serves many functions in cultural development, such as representing something, conveying information to people, being a listener, expressing feelings, and providing intellectual reasoning (A'zmi, Mustafar & Abdul Karim, 2017).

### Methodology

The research methodology in this writing uses a qualitative approach based on social science disciplines that require careful observation of aspects that focus more on processes and events. Information from various sources such as primary and secondary sources by using secondary data content analysis methods related to history, law, historiography, sociology and ethnography and partnered with descriptive analytical discussion (Creswell, 2014; Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2015). The use of a qualitative approach in this writing utilizes secondary sources such as research results in journals, scholarly writings, online news sources and public forums that discuss about the use of the Malay language among plural societies in Malaysia.

This writing attempts to cover the empowerment of the Malay language that is being worked on by the Ministry of Higher Education, which includes (i) the mastery of the Malay language regardless of race or ethnicity, (ii) the ability and authority of the Malay language, (iii) the organization and strengthening of programs to dignify the Malay language, and (iv) the use of the Malay language as the medium of communication. The study's direction looks at the continuation of the impact of the Malay language's empowerment as a language of unity and one of the mediums that play a role in realising our country's aspirations, which is to create racial harmony.

### Literature Review

Indeed, it cannot be denied that unity is significant in developing our country according to its own model. The strengthening of a national unity starts from education because Malay is taught as an important and compulsory subject in all levels of study from preschool to university. Therefore, in 1956, the Razak Report was introduced after the government promised to provide an equal education system for all residents (Esa, Ationg, Othman, Raymond Majumah, Abu Bakar, Mohd Shah & Yusoff, 2021b). One of the main proposals of the Razak Report is to promote national education that helps foster unity among the people. In the 1956 Razak Statement, it is written that Malay is made the national language and the main medium of communication. If Malay language functions as a language of unity, automatically, it can be considered part of the issue in uniting Malaysians because it is a language used in various fields (Baharudin & Yusoff, 2014).

Undoubtedly, education is one medium that contributes to the realisation of our country's goal of racial unity. Furthermore, Malay language can help to cultivate the spirit of the nation. This

is because the Malay language is a symbol of the people's identity and pride. Language is undeniably one of the most important characteristics or markers of identity (Marzuki, Rahman, Kaspin, Jamal, Mohd Nor & Othman, 2021). Language identity can be viewed from a variety of perspectives and contexts, including physical, stylistic, psychological, social, ethnic, and national (Sharif Adam, 2014). People's pride in our official language can only be measured in a variety of ways, such as their attitude and the way they communicate, thus people's confidence has elevated Bahasa Malay as the national language and a symbol of the nation's identity following independence (Othman, Esa, Abu Bakar & Mokhtar, 2021b). Admittedly, the sense of pride that arises from every soul of the people in using the Malay language is what can strengthen nationalism, create love for our country, and foster the spirit of a united nation (Che Hodi & Musa, 2014).

Mohamed & Hassan, (2019) study aims to determine the level of patience and use of the Malay language among private university students, regardless of whether they are aware of the use of the Malay language in the learning process. The study's findings show that the majority of IPTS students at UTAR and MSU prefer to study English over other languages, including Malay, with the majority of students agreeing that Malay is less important to use throughout university studies. While Hamid, Aman, and Harun (2010) empirically investigated the attitude and acceptance of urban and rural communities toward Malay language mastery by focusing on Malay speakers on Peninsular Malaysia's East Coast. Age, gender, marital status, ancestry, religion, income, and residential location were all considered in this study. According to the study, there was no difference in mastery of the Malay language based on age nor difference between men and women in terms of Malay language mastery and knowledge, attitude and acceptance, and ability. However, there is a difference in knowledge mastery, attitude and acceptance, as well as Malay language ability, between Malay and non-Malay ethnic groups, according to lineage.

In terms of religion, the study's findings show that Muslims have a higher level of understanding and mastery of the Malay language than non-Muslims. In terms of income, the ability to speak Malay makes no difference, and there is no difference between urban and rural residents, according to the findings. A study on the level of Malay language use and social interaction among students at SMJK(C) Malacca State by Mat Pesa, Dzakaria, Saidi, Ahmad, and Hamzah (2017), accompanied by 130 respondents, revealed that the level of mastery of the Malay language by students at SMJKC in the state of Melaka is moderate, while. Meanwhile, Munusamy's (2013) study examines the Malay language achievement of Transition class students over three years, namely 2010, 2011, and 2012. The purpose of this research is to coordinate the importance of the Malay language and the role of the government in uplifting the Malay language by assisting students who received poor grades in Malay from Chinese and Tamil National Schools. According to the data collected, the percentage of Malay language proficiency among Transition students has reached a satisfactory level, with an increase from 60% to 80% for all three schools between 2010 and 2012.

According to Sharif Adam (2014), the scenario of today's society, which has shown a lack of use of the Malay language whether in government or private premises, as well as a lack of pride, lack of awareness, and lack of national identity, causes efforts to uphold the Malay language as the National Language to be increasingly affected. Furthermore, students are less enthusiastic about awareness campaigns that help to elevate the Malay language (Musa, Che Rodi & Muhammad, 2014). At the same time, the globalisation process, which requires the use

of English as an intermediate language, has given rise to a sometimes-excessive enthusiasm among university students to prioritise mastery of the English language over mastery of the Malay language (Yalani & Bakar, 2017). Thus, one of the issues impeding efforts to elevate the Malay language stems from students' preference for learning a foreign language over learning the national language, resulting they are uninterested in fighting for the Malay language, and students are less interested in participating in events aimed at elevating the Malay language (Esa, Othman, Abu Bakar & Mokhtar, 2021c).

According to Musa, Che Rodi, and Muhammad (2014), the use of English or the so-called colonial master's language among the younger generation is vulnerable to the risk of suffering from "colonised mentality," as occurs in Asian, African, South American, and Central American countries. Globalization is regarded as the mother tongue's demise, whether or not in the pursuit of information technology. Malay speakers, in particular, are increasingly distancing themselves from their mother tongue (Mohd Kassim, 2021). As a result of this research, we can also conclude that the impact of colonial rule in the past, which emphasised the use of their language, has interfered to some extent with efforts to consolidate the Malay language (Esa, Ationg, Othman, Mohd Shah, Yusoff, Ramlie & Abang Muis, 2021d). According to Zubir, Abdul Rahim, Zulkifli, and Yusuf (2012), the Malay language's ability as an international language in a globalised world is dependent on Malay language practitioners' willingness to use it as a language of knowledge.

If there is no sense of greatness towards the Malay language and it is more convenient to use the English language, the Malay language's function and role will eventually decline and eventually disappear. In order to elevate the Malay language to a global level, it must be practised in all fields. Thus, it is a priority for people's readiness, particularly students' readiness, to study any field using Malay as the primary medium of communication in seeking knowledge (Mahamod, Anak Lasan & Nik Yusoff, 2009). Mohamad Kamil and Mohamad, (2020) stated that there are several challenges that hinders the efforts in achieving a nation state through the use of the Malay language. Among these are a lack of mastery of the Malay language among various ethnic communities, a lack of emphasis on the Malay language as a medium of education, and incorrect use of the Malay language. The government through educational sectors has made numerous efforts to empower the Malay language for the Malaysian community, and these efforts must be sustained so that the Malay language can be used as one of the primary tools and mediums in shaping the Malaysian community's identity (Marinsah, Abang Muis, Esa, Othman, Ramlie, Mokhtar & Yusoff, 2021).

Mohamed and Hassan (2019) discovered that the level of reinforcement of private university students towards Malay language is moderate in a study conducted on 100 students at a private university using a random sampling method. This is due to students' preference for English, which results in a lack of fluency in Malay, a lack of cooperation and effort among lecturers and university management, a less emphasis on the meaning of the constitution, and a lack of confidence in the Malay language's status as an issue of the Malay language's use in private higher education institutions. Meanwhile, a study conducted by Mohd Tohar, Ab Halim and Ku Samsu (2017), on students from Universiti Malaya (UM), Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), Universiti Selangor (UNISEL), and Universiti Multimedia (MMU) discovered that university students have a high level of fluency and recognition. Nonetheless, their level of sophistication or fluency in the language is moderate. Furthermore, the general level of dignity of the Malay language is moderate. As a result, while university students are fluent in and



recognise the national language, the level of fluency and recognition is low. Furthermore, they have yet to fully master the skills of rhyming, rhyming, and using proverbs as a benchmark for speaking sophisticatedly and loudly.

According to a study on a group of students regarding the use of the Malay language in management and Administration at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) demonstrates that the Malay language is still not widely used in management, administration, and communication at UKM (Mohd Tohar, Ab Halim & Ku Samsu (2017). To ensure the survival of the nation's heritage and identity, the Malay language must be promoted. Meanwhile, a study of Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) students on the use of the Malay language in teaching and learning discovered that the use of the Malay language in teaching and learning is important for students of different races. Mastery of the language is an important value for Malay speaking citizens, and it should be empowered for all students, including students of different ethnicities. As a result of the Malay language problem, educators must be sensitive to students' levels of mastery and adaptation of language use.

Educators must be prepared to face the challenges of teaching students from various ethnic groups and languages, as well as being aware of the students' cultural backgrounds (Ationg, Esa, Othman, Mohd Shah, Yusoff, Ramlie & Mokhtar, 2021b). The use of Malay in education should be consistent with the wisdom of preserving the Malay language. According to Munusamy's (2013), study on Malay language mastery among transition students in three schools in the Skudai district, some of the issues raised to support the problems in this research are linked to students' language skills from the aspects of reading, speaking, and writing, student engagement, language barriers, and the environment of students' attitudes towards the use of language in everyday life. It is related to the discipline of psycholinguistics and sociolinguistics that focuses on the problem of using and mastering the Malay language among ethnic Chinese students in national schools, as agreed by Hoon and Mezah's (2012), research on the problem of using and mastering the Malay language among ethnic Chinese students in Malaysia whereby they are always communicating in Chinese but was born into a family who is not fluent in speaking Malay family.

## Discussion

Among the challenges in strengthening the mastery of the Malay language regardless of race or ethnicity in the 21st century is the fierce competition with the English language. The increase in the use of English as a second or third language has had a profound effect on our country's education system (Mamat, 2016). The lack of scholarly books as a source of information leaves almost no choice but to source material in English. In addition, the improvement in the field of information technology has also caused the Malay language to be viewed as difficult by people who have made progress in the field (Abu Bakar, Othman, Mokhtar & Esa, 2021a). Commercially, there is no denying technology that was created with the intention of using English for marketing purposes. As a result, options in Malay language are limited. Smartphone applications, for example, have dominated the presentation of information in English, where the majority of users are from the younger generation (Tobi, Osman, Abu Bakar & Othman, 2021).

Regrettable to state that one of the challenges in empowering Malay language mastery is the commitment from some of the school teachers who do not care about the Malay language. This occurs when teachers prefer to speak in their mother tongue because student acceptance is

easier than in Malay. The attitude of educators who marginalise the official language demonstrates a lack of understanding of the Malay language's importance in fostering a sense of unity through the national language. This makes students feel more at ease when speaking in their native language. According to Nahar and Abd. Rahman (2018), 55.7 percent of respondents in SJK Kuantan District are still not fluent in Malay speaking skills. Among the reasons obtained seemed to be that students were unable to practise the correct use and conversation of the Malay language as taught in Malay language class, resulting in a lack of mastery of Malay language skills.

The following discussion focuses on issues of concern to the Ministry of Education and Culture, specifically the use of the Malay language in Malaysia's pluralistic societies. This writing attempts to cover the Ministry of Higher Education's work on Malay language empowerment, which includes (i) mastery of the Malay language regardless of race or ethnicity, (ii) the ability and authority of the Malay language, (iii) the organisation and strengthening of programmes to dignify the Malay language, and (iv) the use of the Malay language as the medium of communication.

### ***The Issue of Mastering the Malay Language Regardless of Race or Ethnicity***

Language is the primary means of communication for all humans to interact two-way in conveying information. As a result, the use of language that each individual can understand must be well mastered in order to deliver messages according to each individual's wishes. In this regard, we can interpret where Malaysian society should have a primary medium of communication that all Malaysian citizens of various races and ethnicities can understand, such as the use of Malay in everyday speech. Furthermore, to ensure that the Malay language's role and function are preserved, the Malay language provision has been made a part of an important provision in the Federal Constitution as Malay is the National Language, as according to Article 152 of the Federal Constitution (Musa & Che Rodi, 2014). Malay language has been chosen as a symbol of Malaysian citizenship in this matter. As shown by historical records, Malay has only been the main spoken language in Malay vernacular schools since the era of British rule, while other ethnic vernacular schools have used their own mother tongues, such as Mandarin and Tamil. This is because of the breaking of policy and the British colonial order at the time (Musa, 2004).

At the same time, Malay language appeared as a 'lingua franca' or the main intermediate language of the archipelago from the 7th century until the 19th century, when it was the main language of the world with a number of speakers exceeding 300 million individuals (Othman, Esa, Ationg & Muda, 2021c). Hence, Malay language is one of the languages with the most speakers in the world, including people from Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei, Singapore, southern Philippines, and southern Thailand (Hassan, Angterian, & Yusop, 2017). There are many factors involved in mastering the Malay language regardless of race or ethnicity. Among the factors is the use of English as the first medium in speech. Malaysians are well aware that Malay is the official language of our country. However, our official language is rarely used nowadays, and English is commonly used as the primary language, despite being the second or third language in our country's society.

Our country is multi-racial, with Malay, Chinese, and Indian ethnic groups, as well as ethnic groups from Sabah and Sarawak. Except for the Malays, the Chinese, Indians, and ethnic groups from Sabah and Sarawak do not speak our national language fluently. Even among the

Malays, some do not use Malay as a daily language in speech because some families prefer English because of its importance in education and employment (Othman, 2019a). Despite numerous efforts, the problem of Malay language mastery persists. According to Yaacob, Ali, and Abd Wahab (2017), in Malaysia, the use of foreign languages, particularly English, is preferred over the use of Malay as the primary language medium. The provisions of the Constitution requiring the use of the national language in various key areas such as education, business, advertising, and communication are still largely ignored and given less priority than the use of English.

According to Peng and Ishak, (2008), the mixing of English and Malay in Malaysian society's speech is becoming more common. Language slang from Western countries appears to be eroding the identity that is brought together with the uniqueness of the Malay language (Othman, 2019b). The spread of incorrect Malay language usage also contributes to a lack of mastery of the language itself. English, as we all know, is a lingua franca that is spoken all over the world, including in our own country. The use of the mother tongue in ethnic groups or races in Malaysia is one of the contributing factors. Our country does not forbid any ethnic group from using their native language.

On the other hand, while the Malay language has been designated as the country's official language, it should not be used arbitrarily, denying other ethnic groups' rights to develop understanding and use of their mother tongue (Ramli, 2017). Article 152, Clause (1) (a) and (b) of the Federal Constitution, for example, allows for the teaching and learning of other languages as long as they are not used for official purposes (Legal Research Board) (2008:110-111) However, as Malaysians, we must learn and practise the Malay language. That is a way for us to honour the Malay language and promote inter-racial harmony because the Malay language improves our understanding of other races especially in encouraging expatriates and outsiders to assimilate in our culture by having Malay language as a medium of communication (Othman, 2019c).

### ***The Authority and Capability of the Malay Language***

In today's fast-paced, high-tech world, effective communication is critical to accurately understanding something. When it comes to communication, Malaysia is made up of various races, each with their own language that they use to communicate with one another. As a result of the race's diversity, there is also cultural cohesion and a variety of native languages. As a multi-ethnic country, Malay has been elevated to national language status so that the community can communicate with one another thus treated each other as one big family (Othman, 2019d). Nonetheless, the Malay language's authority and ability are frequently questioned. In this context, authority is the nature or privilege of something, such as an institution, that holds it accountable or accountable, whereas ability is the willingness or ability to do something. There are several factors that contribute to the question of the Malay language's authority and ability, one of which is a lack of scientific materials in the Malay language.

The majority of the university's reference materials are written in English rather than Malay. According to Abdul Hamid, Esa, Ationg, Othman, Sharif Adam, Mohd Tamring and Hajimin (2021), schools built during the colonial era were primarily oriented toward English as the primary medium of instruction in schools. This undermines the Malay language's dominance as Malaysia's primary language. Furthermore, Malay language users must have good faith and



belief in the value of their language and bear the responsibility of firmly, honestly, and committedly implementing it (Abd Razak, 2009). On March 22, 2022, Malaysia's 9th Prime Minister, YAB Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob, met with ASEAN leaders to propose Malay as ASEAN's second language (Berita Harian, 2022). According to him, Malaysians should not feel embarrassed or awkward when using the Malay language on a global scale because this effort to elevate the Malay language is also in line with one of Malaysia's Foreign Policy Framework's priority areas.

This effort will be maintained in any international meetings, meetings, and conferences, whether bilateral or multilateral, held within or outside the country (Berita Harian, 2022). Therefore, Malaysians should take the opportunity to strengthen their use of the Malay language so that this agenda can be realized more quickly. The Malay language's authority and speaking ability should no longer be questioned, because the Malay language's role in the construction of the nation-state is based on the three main positions assigned, namely as the national language, the official language, and the language of knowledge (Othman, Yusoff, Awang & Jupiter, 2016a). As the national language, Malay becomes one of the foundations of the people's and country's identity, as well as an element of the unity of people of multiple descent and dynamic in building international human resources (Othman, Yusoff, Awang & Jupiter, 2016b). As the official language, Malay becomes a tool for communication that powers the country's administrative machinery.

The Malay language, as a language of knowledge, plays an important role in imparting knowledge to the people, particularly the young generation, in order to form human capital to help the country develop in all fields (Othman *et al.*, 2021). Furthermore, the Malay language is very important because the use of the Malay language is mandatory in most official ceremonies, as stated in Article 152 of the Federal Constitution. According to the provision, the Malay language, also known as Bahasa Malaysia, is an official language whose function and role as the National Language cannot be contested. The National Language Act of 1967 strengthened Malay's position as an official language. Its significance as a medium of teaching and learning has resulted in the publication of the Education Act 1961 (Amendment 1996). Simultaneously, Malaysia's multiracial community is free to use other languages, such as Mandarin by Chinese and Tamil by Indians.

Furthermore, English remains the dominant commercial and industrial language in the country. Malaysian citizens are also encouraged to learn other international languages, particularly for tourism and international trade (MOE, 2014). Furthermore, Malay can be used as a business language. The rate of use of the Malay language in business is heavily influenced by the extent to which native speakers of the language use it in business. According to Othman (2021c) the relevance of MOHE initiatives in reducing the unemployment rate, especially among high quality graduates where the group will make huge contribution to the development and economy of the country. If many of them are involved in business, the language they use will be widely used as a business communication tool. In reality, the Malay language is very important in everyday life, but many Malaysians are unaware of this and would rather learn and study a foreign language than their own national language and the challenges that will be encountered in carrying out this agenda.

First and foremost, Malay language activists' ability to use information and communication technology (ICT) as research tools, hardware, software, applications, and others in the future

to develop the Malay language more actively and effectively. As we all know, despite the fact that the Malay language has been around for hundreds of years, our science and technology terms have fallen far behind foreign languages such as Korean, Japanese, and the world's lingua franca, English (Deraman, 2014). Following that, the Malay language community must use, strengthen, and expand the Malay language at the virtual level for national purposes, as well as distinguish the Malay speaking community's identity from other language communities..This is due to the fact that successfully highlighting the image, willingness, and ability to compete will have a positive impact on the younger generation who are looking for a model identity.

The Malay language can fill this void and provide new inspiration for a brighter future. Therefore, a program to empower the Malay language that is planned and implemented effectively can give birth to a modern Malaysian nation. In this context, modernity has been conveyed in the formation of an integrated nation-state civilization based on Malaysian language, culture, and ideology (Othman, Ationg, Esa, Hajimin & Abang Muis, 2021d). Therefore, the MoE's efforts to work with higher education centres and the private sector to achieve closer cooperation based on Article 152 of the Malaysian constitution to develop the identity of the Malaysian community. Malay has the authority and ability as a language that can function as a media to unite people from various races, political thinking, administrations, legislation, backgrounds and proven to play an effective role as an effective language in education, trade and other employment sectors (Mohd Shah, Othman, Yusoff, Ationg, Abu Bakar, Esa & Abang Muis, 2021d).

In addition, we often hear Malay speakers using low quality language. The language is mixed, namely Malay and English. The mixing is done at every level of language mastery, pronunciation, spelling, affixes, phrases, sentences, vocabulary, meaning and proverbs. Language pollution is a phenomenon that has existed for a long time as a result of the use of technology such as the Short Messaging System (SMS) through the use of mobile phones and chatting on virtual sites which are among the highest in use such as Tik Tok, WhatsApp, Twitter and Facebook applications (Mohd Kassim, 2021). The inundation and obsession of the youth and society on the use of technology is now expanding in line with the development of global technology and we are also affected by it when we cannot avoid the adverse effects of the paradigm shift.

This ultimately, causes the phenomenon of language pollution in the education system when there are students who also use abbreviations, symbols, terms and so on that are not allowed in their learning when writing essays or answering in exams. The reduction of the role of the Malay language in the education system as a result of the implementation of several decisions, such as the teaching of science and mathematics-based subjects in English at school, the increase and expansion of English as the language of course delivery in IPTA and also the exclusion of teaching in IPTS in foreign languages as well as the exclusion of teaching Malay as a compulsory subject (Yalani & Bakar, 2017).

It started when the Education Act 1996, was disrespected when the foundation was set aside with the decision to teach Science and Mathematics as well as technical subjects in English, starting in 2003. A policy that is contrary to the National Language Policy and the National Education Policy and brought misfortune to the majority of the generation the country's youth was decided to be abolished completely in 2012 (Othman *et al.*, 2021). Then it was replaced by MBMMBI (Enhancing the Malay Language, Strengthening the English Language). In

continuation of that, the Malaysian Education Development Plan 2013-2025 places the role of the Malay language as the national language, the language of knowledge and the language of instruction in the field of education has been reaffirmed (Abdul Hamid *et al.*, 2021).

### ***The Organization and Consolidation of Programs to Dignify the Malay Language***

After Malaysia achieved independence in 1957, the Malay language was declared as an official language and the national language as stated in the National Constitution (Sharif Adam, 2014). The Malay language should be preserved so that it can serve as an important medium and foundation for catalysing harmony and strengthening the unity of multi-racial communities. However, it was discovered this decade that the Malay language's strengthening is still being challenged and weakened as a result of the influence and development of the new world order of the English language in the fields of education, employment, and relationships. The importance and emphasis on science and technology in English has caused a few people to lose confidence in speaking Malay, particularly among students at public universities (UA), who make up the majority of non-Malay ethnicities (Yaacob, Ali, & Abd Wahab, 2017). As a result, it is appropriate that the empowerment of the Malay language is maintained and emphasised by all parties such as the government, educational institutions at Institutes of Higher Education or Public Universities, the Ministry of Education Malaysia, and authorities such as *Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka* (DBP) gather effort in an attempt to uphold the use of the Malay language among the Malaysian community today.

It is common knowledge that many words from the English language are used in everyday speech in Malaysia today, such as in the fields of science and technology and medicine, where the majority of the terms used are in English. As a result, the *Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka* (DBP) has made an effort and played a significant role in enriching our national language, Malay language, in order to be able to produce more words guided by Malay language in fields that are rapidly growing this decade, such as science and technology. Among the efforts made by *Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka* (DBP) to increase the use of Malay language is the intensification of programme implementation from time to time, such as the Youth Writers' Week. The goal of this Youth Writers Week is to produce and nurture young writers. This programme also aims to produce future heirs to literary knowledge (Ku Samsu, Adnan, Ismail, Lee, Ab. Majid & Ab. Razak, 2020).

*Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka* (DBP) uses the awarding method to strengthen literary knowledge in order to encourage writers to enter this field. *Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka* (DBP) plays such an important role in furthering the development of the Malay literary language that it was designated as a Statutory Body by the government department through an Act of Parliament in 1959 (Amir, 2009). *Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka* (DBP) is also a very important organisation in the printing and publishing industry of books, pamphlets, dictionaries, and various forms of scientific materials, as it is Malaysia's largest publishing organisation. *Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka* (DBP) has also printed and published a large number of school books, such as textbooks and reference books, that are essential scientific materials for primary and secondary school students, such as the Primary School Integrated Curriculum (PSIC) and the Secondary School Integrated Curriculum (SSIC) (KBSM).

Meanwhile, the Malay Audit Pilot Program (ABM) was implemented from July to August 2012. The implementation of this programme is an effort on the part of the government to elevate the use and mastery of the Malay language among Malaysians. Furthermore, this

program was initiated to promote the practise of language unity in the public sector. Tan Sri Myhiddin Yassin stated that the implementation of this programme in the Public Service Department began in December 2012 with the goal of auditing the use of the Malay language in Public Service Department (Fadzillah, 2016). *Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka* (DBP) implemented the Malay Language Audit Program ABM), which placed Malay language auditors in every government ministry and department. Language auditors play an important role in monitoring the use of the Malay language, as well as acting as language officers to ensure that each party complies with official circulars.

Furthermore, ABM evaluates the use of Malay throughout, the use of Malay in conjunction with other languages, and the use of Malay in audited documents. In terms of quality assessment, ABM evaluates spelling, punctuation, vocabulary, sentence structure, grammar, pronunciation in oral communication, politeness of language, manners and delivery of information, and accuracy of information. The success of ABM is the most recent initiative of the DBP's 2011-2015 strategic plan to further catalyse the use of Malay among Malaysian civil servants and private employees. In fact, the success of ABM has been successfully implemented for eight years, from 2012 to 2020. Among the early effects of this six-year pilot programme are those described in the paper "Malay Language Audit in the Government Sector" (Fadzillah, 2016). Meanwhile, the use of the Malay language in official documents in JPA's 10 government departments is 86%.

Language quality has also been assessed in official letters, e-mails, notices, minutes, memoranda, reports, presentation notes, handouts, speech texts, complaint responses, and information displays, which are the corpus and data used in Public Service Department as well as covering all government departments throughout Malaysia. However, as a result of the DBP's follow-up, there are some strengths and weaknesses in various aspects of language and grammar that should be improved in the use of the Malay language in departments and ministries. Thus, in general, the impact of the launch of the Malay Language Audit Program (ABM) in an effort to dignify the Malay language from 2012 to 2021 can be implemented effectively while facing the challenges of development and globalisation in the public and private sectors, and it also reflects the highest level of the Malay language's integrity in Malaysia.

Following that, *Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka* (DBP) has organised the Reading Movement and the National Reading Month Program. The Reading Movement was founded in 1972 in order to foster a love of reading among the Malaysian community and the development of a knowledgeable society. The main activities of this movement have been carried out in stages and for short and long periods of time. *Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka* (DBP) also organises this reading movement program. Looking back 40 years, the Minister of Education, YB Datuk Musa Hitam, launched the Nationwide Reading Movement Project on 28 January 1980 at Balai Tun Syed Nasir, *Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka* (DBP), Kuala Lumpur (Amir, 2009). Short-term activities prioritise efforts to hold conferences, book exhibitions at the district, state, and national levels, organise seminars, forums, discussions, lectures, and quiz competitions, publish the best essays from within and outside the country, provide information and book reviews, and expand library services.

Long-term activities include reading habits research, publication, distribution, and marketing of reading materials, as well as studying people's reactions and changes in attitudes toward



reading (Amir, 2009). The main focus of the reading movement project is concentrated in areas with high dropout rates, illiteracy and poor reading such as in rural areas and small towns. Accordingly, the Reading Movement Unit has been established to ensure the smooth running of this project. In 1995, the Reading Campaign with the slogan "Let's Read Together" was launched in conjunction with the National Reading Month which was celebrated in August until 2000. In early 2001, this program was moved to July every year to avoid the overlap of the Independence Month which is celebrated in August 2002.

In addition, based on the narrative reference of the Lens programme by institute of higher education on TV1 on 13 April 2022, Associate Professor Norazlina emphasised that the use of Malay language in daily conversation is very important and should be given serious consideration (Amir, 2009). She also stated that the use of Malay that does not correspond with the correct DBP word terms is very concerning, as many of today's youth use terms that are mixed with foreign languages in their daily speech, such as English and Malay language. The issue of the use of these mixed colloquial terms stems from Malaysians' attitude toward the use of colloquial language, which they regard lightly because they face no restrictions or punishment for doing so. Furthermore, Malaysians who take for granted the use of Malay language with the incorrect term do so because they believe it is a culture that is accepted among their friends. To add, authorities such as the government, the Ministry of Higher Education, the Institute of Higher Education and Statutory Bodies such as Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka should take strict action in such cases.

This is significant because, with the obligation regarding speech issues involving incorrect Malay, society will become more sensitive to the importance of using correct Malay (Hamid, Aman & Harun, 2010). It has been enshrined and written on the National Principles in the 3rd, 4th, and 5th principles, which are the Sublimity of the Constitution, the Rule of Law, as well as Politeness and Morality, where Malaysians should raise the Malay Language. If Malaysians do not comply and do not use Malay as the medium of instruction, it is clear that the law or National Principles have been violated (Othman, Yusoff, Mohd Shah, Esa, Ationg, Ibrahim & Raymond Majumah, 2021e, Yusoff *et al.*, 2021). As a result, every party, particularly the young, should rally to support or empower the use of Malay as the national language, the official language, and the medium of instruction in HEIs, among other things. In the context of education, the community must believe that Malay can be used and that it has been used for a long time; for example, Malay was used as a lingua franca from the 7th to the 19th centuries. As a result, the administrator must be vigilant to ensure that there is no violation in the context of the use of Malay or our country's official language (Hassan, Angterian & Yusop, 2017).

### ***Malay as the Medium of Instruction***

When Malaysia gained independence on August 31, 1957, Article 152 (1) of the Constitution designated Malay as the national language whereby the choice of Malay as the country's national language can be interpreted as an opinion. Malay language emerged during the colonial era and has since progressed and developed into what it is today (Ibrahim, Ationg, Esa, Abang Muis, Othman, Yusoff & Mokhtar, 2021). Za'ba outlined six reasons why Malay was chosen as the national language of the independent Federation of Malaya in his article. Since Malaya is a Malay country, Malay is the official national language. Malay is the country's intermediate language. Malay is a living language that evolves over time. Malay is the national language of Indonesia, and it is a simple language (Jambi, 2008). Whatever the reason, considering the history and background of the community in Malaya, the choice of Malay as



the national language is right and correct. The issues that took place in the ten years following independence, from 1957 to 1966, are significant because they show how the government worked to establish Malay as the medium of instruction and the country's sole official language (Sharif Adam, 2014). The government is working to make the Malay language more widely used in areas such as administration and education, thus the value of education cannot be overstated, it is also critical to ensure that all Malaysians understand the Malay language as an important component of their national identity (Othman, Din, Said & Aziz, 2021f).

Malaysians are proud of their national language, Malay. Malaysians should make an effort to respect the Malay language wherever we go. As a result, several efforts are being made to elevate the Malay language, such as making it the medium of instruction. To accomplish this goal, the Razak Declaration (1956) mentioned the policy of using Malay as the language of instruction (Esa *et al.*, 2021). The proposal was voiced during the National Student Leadership Conference (PEMANAS) at the Putra World Trade Centre (PWTC) by Mohamad Reeza Abd Patah who is a representative of the Education portfolio and is also a student at Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia (UTHM) (Berita Harian, 2017). He suggested Malay as the language of instruction in vernacular schools in this country in order to further strengthen the fluency and mastery of students and teachers (Berita Harian, 2017). He also emphasized that the proposed proposal aims to inspire patriotism among teachers and students in vernacular schools through the mastery of Malay language.

According to the proposal made by the students of Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI), they found Malay as the Language of Knowledge in Public Universities in Malaysia. They argue in their proposal that Malay is a language with the potential and ability to express various disciplines and fields. There is no doubt about the Malay language ability to be used as an introductory language in any field because there is ample evidence to support that claim (Berita Harian, 2017). Since the days of the Malacca Malay Kingdom, the Malay language has served as a means of communication between Malacca and other countries around the world (Esa *et al.*, 2021). They emphasised once more that the Malay language would not be able to stand majestically on the international arena if it was not made the medium of instruction and that the Malay language should be placed in its proper place.

### Summary and Recommendations

Overall, the issue of ability and authority should not be contested or questioned again because, since independence, the Malay language has been enshrined in the national constitution as the national language. The importance of the Malay language should be fought for because there are numerous advantages to giving the Malay language dignity. Following that, all challenges and obstacles to the dignity of the Malay language must be faced together for the sake of the Malaysian nation's identity, because the Malay language demonstrates that we are a true Malaysian nation. As a result, preserving the Malay language is a shared responsibility that must be defended and fought for in order for our country to become a harmonious nation with a language that unites all. For example, the Malaysian Ministry of Education and Institutes of Higher Education should conduct training that can catalyse the fluency of students as well as administrative parties at the school and university level in order to improve and streamline issues such as lack of fluency and dignified use of the Malay language as an official language that every Malaysian should master.

This is significant because, in this decade, there is a lot of use of language and terms that are mixed up in people's everyday speech because they are not subjected to serious restrictions or punishment for doing so. Meanwhile, Statutory Bodies such as DBP should continue to actively implement projects and programmes that can raise community awareness at any level, for example, the implementation of programmes such as the Reading Movement and the National Language Month should be carried out every year by further diversifying the activities carried out throughout the duration of the program so that the approach to efforts is consistent. The implementation of programs that aim at elevating the Malay language in Malaysia's multi-racial and ethnic society is critical. This is important to emphasise because fluency, volume, grammar, and knowledge of the Malay language, for example, using proverbs in speech, can elevate the Malay language even higher, just as the Malay language once served as the language of introduction, language of knowledge, and lingua franca in the archipelago between the 7th and 19th centuries.

Furthermore, with the dignifying attitude and fluency in the Malay language among Malaysia's pluralistic society, it is undeniable that they are able to establish the Malay language as the national language, in addition to highlighting their national identity as Malaysian citizens who obey the constitution that has been drafted by the government since the beginning. Finally, if the government, such as the Ministry of Education and institution of higher education, want to implement programs that can catalyse the fluency of students as well as administrative parties at the school and university level, issues such as lack of fluency and the dignity of Malay as an official language that every Malaysian should master can be improved and streamlined. This is significant because, in this decade, there is a lot of use of language and terms that are mixed up in people's everyday speech because they are not subjected to serious restrictions or punishment for doing so.

In the meantime, Statutory Bodies such as DBP should continue to actively implement projects and programmes that can raise community awareness at any level, such as the Reading Movement and the National Language Month, which should be carried out every year by diversifying the activities carried out throughout the duration of the programme in order to approach efforts to catalyse, streamline, and dignify the Malay language as the National Language. Federation is a possibility. The study's direction looks at the continuation of the impact of the Malay language's empowerment as a language of unity and one of the mediums that play a role in realising our country's aspiration to achieve racial harmony. (a) the use of English as the first medium of speech today is a contributing factor to the lack of use of the mother tongue among Malaysia's multi-ethnic community and cultivates an individualistic attitude., (b) the use of the Malay language in the private sector has not been prominent because there are a few parties who believe that the Malay language has low commercial value in the business sector, (c) programs that empower the Malay language play an important role in catalysing the fluency of students as well as administrative parties at the school and university level, allowing issues such as lack of fluency and the dignity of the use of the Malay language as an official language that should be mastered by every Malaysian to be improved and streamlined; and (d) the Malay language is unlikely to stand majestically on the world stage if it is not used as the medium of instruction.

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