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PAWS AND PEDAGOGY: EXPLORING MALAY FELINE PROVERBS AS TOOLS FOR LANGUAGE PRESERVATION IN UNIVERSITY EDUCATION

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Abstract:

Language preservation has become a critical concern in this increasingly globalized world, where the dominance of major languages threatens the survival of indigenous and regional linguistic traditions. This study addresses the underutilization of Malay feline proverbs in higher education as a tool for preserving the Malay language, despite their cultural richness and metaphorical depth. The aim of this conceptual paper is to explore the untapped potential of these proverbs as pedagogical tools for language preservation, emphasizing their theoretical and practical contributions to fostering cultural identity, enhancing critical thinking, and promoting active engagement with the Malay language among students. A comprehensive literature review synthesizes existing research on proverbs, language preservation, and culturally responsive pedagogy, highlighting gaps in the systematic integration of Malay feline proverbs into university curricula. The study proposes a conceptual framework grounded in three interconnected components: Cultural Relevance, Pedagogical Innovation, and Sustainability. Cultural Relevance ensures that proverbs resonate with students' identities, while Pedagogical Innovation leverages interactive teaching methods, such as storytelling and creative writing, to enhance critical thinking and communication skills. Sustainability focuses on the long-term preservation of linguistic diversity and intergenerational transmission of cultural knowledge. The main findings underscore the potential of Malay feline proverbs in creating inclusive and culturally responsive educational environments, addressing both academic and societal needs. By bridging traditional wisdom with modern teaching practices, this approach aligns with decolonizing methodologies and promotes equitable education systems. The implications extend beyond academia, offering

strategies to counteract globalization's impact on endangered languages and enrich multicultural societies. Future research should focus on empirical investigations, cross-disciplinary studies, and digital innovations to scale up these efforts sustainably.

Keywords:

Culture, Education, Innovation, Language, Malay Proverbs, Pedagogy, Sustainability.

Introduction

Language preservation has emerged as a critical concern in an increasingly globalized world, where the dominance of major languages threatens the survival of indigenous and regional linguistic traditions (Crystal, 2023; UNESCO, 2021). Language, as noted by Sariyan (2009) and Nor Hashimah (2014), is a pivotal element in expressing the philosophy, knowledge, and thoughts of people, as well as a tool of human creativity that encompasses the varied ways of life (Kasdan, Jalaluddin, & Ismail, 2016). Among the strategies employed to safeguard endangered languages, proverbs particularly those rooted in cultural and oral traditions offer a unique avenue for revitalization. In the Malay archipelago, feline-themed proverbs serve as vivid embodiments of cultural wisdom and linguistic richness, encapsulating values, social norms, and collective experiences (Hamid, 2023; Mieder, 2020). According to Riyanto (2018), proverbs are considered part of the cultural specification of a specific language society because they convey social facts and are shaped by the society's values, traditions, wisdom, and beliefs. These proverbs help form identity and personality, reveal continuity of life, and express the knowledge and wisdom of a given society, which are then passed down to future generations (Rashidi & Ghaedi, 2013).

Malay proverbs distinguish themselves from the varied collage of proverbial traditions through their unique mixture of poetic elegance and deep truths that underscore the meanings attributed to these phrases. Since the values of Malay society are known to be polite and courteous, proverbs in Malay culture are also essential for educating Malay society (Ismail, Samian, & Muslim, 2017). According to Muhammad and Rashid (2014), animals are a common source of metaphor in proverbs because humans have a close-knit relationship with animals in this environment. Given that animals share an existential connection with human beings, they are understandably and naturally chosen for comparison and symbolic representation in the proverbial lexes of a given society. However, these proverbs are still seldom used as teaching devices in higher education settings, creating a significant gap in both academic discourse and efforts to ensure the continuation of the Malay language. With universities increasingly embracing culturally responsive teaching paradigms (Nakata, Nakata, Keech, & Bolt, 2012; Safitri & Wismanto, 2024), incorporating such proverbs into the curriculum presents an innovative avenue to help students reconnect with their linguistic heritage while ensuring their survival in the broader sense of cultural sustainability and identity preservation.

Proverbs have gained wider acknowledgment as instruments of linguistic conservation, but little insight has been offered on their usage, especially regarding Malay feline proverbs, within higher education. Past research has primarily focused on documenting and analyzing the cultural significance of proverbs (Mieder, 2020; Hamid, 2023). Nevertheless, limited attention has been paid to incorporating them into university curricula to foster linguistic continuity.

Preserving these languages involves not just documenting the words but finding methods to integrate them into classroom practices without losing their cultural significance. To bridge this gap, this research aims to explore viable methods and theoretical underpinnings for leveraging these proverbs in teaching and learning paradigms. Such exploration is essential for creating culturally responsive pedagogies that respect indigenous ways of knowing while promoting critical thinking and communication skills (Nakata et al., 2012; Smith, 2022).

The significance of this topic extends beyond academia and addresses pressing societal concerns. As noted by UNESCO (2021), nearly 40% of the world's 7,000 languages are at risk of extinction, with many indigenous languages disappearing due to urbanization, migration, and the prevalence of global languages such as English. The Malay language of Malaysia, despite being a national lingua franca, faces threats from foreign language influence and trends in digital communication (Talib, 2013). This approach, which recognizes the relevance of local resources and draws from one's cultural background, suggests that using culturally significant resources such as cat-related sayings could establish a bridge between linguistic heritage and modern education. This aligns with calls to decolonize education systems and encourage inclusive pedagogies that honor local epistemologies (Smith, 2022). Thus, incorporating Malay feline proverbs into university education contributes to preserving the Malay language while fostering a more equitable and relevant education system that caters to both academic and social needs.

Hence, the objective of this conceptual paper is to explore the untapped potential of Malay feline proverbs as instructional tools for language conservation at the higher education level, addressing both theoretical and practical contexts. By grounding the analysis of these proverbs in the principles of culturally responsive teaching, this study provides a unique conceptual framework for embedding traditional linguistic artifacts within contemporary paradigms of university instruction. More specifically, it explores how Malay feline proverbs can enhance the Malay language and culture by engaging students to develop critical thinking and cultural identity through active use of the language. This includes examining how these proverbs align with decolonizing methodologies in education (Smith, 2022) and their ability to connect indigenous knowledge systems to modern educational practices (Nakata et al., 2012). This exploration addresses the identified research gap and provides traction to issues of language revitalization and sustainable educational innovation. Ultimately, the paper seeks to offer insights for educators and policymakers on leveraging cultural heritage to maintain language preservation.

This article is structured to guide readers through a comprehensive exploration of the subject matter. Following this introduction, the second section reviews relevant literature, synthesizes existing research on proverbs, language preservation, and culturally responsive pedagogy, and presents the proposed conceptual framework, detailing how Malay feline proverbs can be included in higher education settings. The third section delineates future directions and gaps in this line of research, emphasizing its potential to enhance teaching practices and foster linguistic sustainability. Finally, the conclusion recaps key insights, summarizes limitations, and proposes areas for future research, contributing coherently and impactfully to the field.

Literature Review

This literature review examines existing research on proverbs, language preservation, and culturally responsive pedagogy to assess the potential for inclusion of Malay feline proverbs in higher education. It starts with exploring proverbs as instruments of cultural and linguistic preservation and ends with their inclusion into contemporary learning practices. A conceptual framework is presented for embedding these proverbs into university courses, and analyze its wider academic and practical implications. It concludes with a discussion of research gaps, contributions to the fields of language revitalization and sustainable education.

Synthesizing Existing Research on Proverbs, Language Preservation, and Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

Proverbs have long been recognized as powerful linguistic and cultural artifacts, encapsulating the collective wisdom of a community while serving as tools for language preservation (Mieder, 2020). They function not only as repositories of traditional knowledge but also as instruments for transmitting values, norms, and social practices across generations. In the context of endangered languages, proverbs offer a unique avenue for revitalization by embedding linguistic heritage into everyday communication and educational settings (Crystal, 2023). However, existing research has predominantly focused on documenting and analyzing the cultural significance of proverbs rather than exploring their pedagogical applications (Hamid, 2023). This oversight becomes particularly evident when examining regional proverbs, such as those from the Malay archipelago, which remain underutilized in higher education despite their metaphorical depth and cultural resonance.

Language preservation efforts often intersect with culturally responsive pedagogy, an educational approach that seeks to honor students' cultural backgrounds while fostering inclusivity and equity (Nakata et al., 2022). Scholars argue that integrating indigenous knowledge systems into curricula not only enriches learning experiences but also strengthens students' connection to their linguistic and cultural heritage (Smith, 2022). For instance, studies on African and Native American proverbs highlight their potential to enhance critical thinking, communication skills, and cultural awareness in educational contexts (Claybrook, 2023). Yet, similar investigations into Malay feline proverbs—a rich yet underexplored subset of Malay oral traditions—are conspicuously absent in current literature. This gap underscores the need for research that bridges traditional knowledge systems with modern teaching methodologies to address both academic and societal concerns related to language preservation.

Additionally, Nor Hashimah Jalaluddin's (2014) work provides valuable insights into Malay linguistic heritage and wisdom, offering a deeper understanding of the cultural significance of Malay proverbs. Furthermore, Safitri and Wismanto (2024) emphasize the importance of culturally relevant pedagogies in enhancing student engagement and promoting inclusive education systems. Their study highlights how integrating proverbs into curricula can foster meaningful connections between traditional wisdom and contemporary issues, making education both engaging and culturally enriching. Moreover, Kasdan, Jalaluddin, and Ismail (2016) explore the metaphorical richness of Malay proverbs, demonstrating their potential as tools for language revitalization and sustainable educational innovation. Their findings underscore the need for innovative approaches that leverage proverbs to bridge traditional knowledge systems with modern educational practices, ensuring linguistic diversity and intergenerational transmission of cultural knowledge. Finally, Rashidi and Ghaedi (2013) provide insights into contrastive discourse analysis of Persian and English animal proverbs,

highlighting the symbolic and metaphorical depth of such expressions. While their focus is on Persian and English proverbs, their methodology offers valuable lessons for studying Malay feline proverbs, particularly in terms of identifying metaphorical richness and cultural relevance.

These studies collectively highlight the untapped potential of Malay feline proverbs as pedagogical tools for language preservation in higher education. By synthesizing existing research on proverbs, language preservation, and culturally responsive pedagogy, this paper aims to propose a conceptual framework that integrates these proverbs into university curricula, addressing the identified gaps and contributing to broader theoretical discussions on language revitalization and sustainable education.

Conceptual Framework: Integrating Malay Feline Proverbs into Higher Education Settings

The first principle, cultural relevance, ensures that the proverbs resonate with students' lived experiences and identities, fostering a deeper appreciation for the Malay language and its cultural nuances (Safitri & Wismanto, 2024). By grounding these proverbs in students' cultural contexts, educators can create meaningful connections between linguistic heritage and contemporary education. The incorporation of these proverbs paired with cultural awareness helps bridge the gap between students' linguistic heritage and their current formal education.

The second principle, pedagogical innovation, involves designing interactive activities such as storytelling, role-playing, and creative writing that leverage the metaphorical richness of these proverbs to develop critical thinking and communication skills. For instance, a Malay proverb like "*Bila kucing tidak bergigi, tikus berani melompat tinggi*" ("When the cat is toothless, the rat dares jump high"), which means that when the person who is feared is no longer in power, people will do what they like. A cat is seen as a dreaded entity because of its inherent hunting abilities, similar to the big cat family lineage such as tigers and lions (Mohamad Khairul Adilah & Jamal, 2021). By integrating these proverbs into coursework across disciplines from literature, linguistics, sociology, and communication studies educators can merge traditional wisdom with contemporary issues, making education both enjoyable and culturally nurturing.

Lastly, sustainability which underlines the long-term importance of incorporating Malay feline proverbs into curricula. This approach serves to preserve linguistic diversity while simultaneously enabling culturally relevant knowledge transfer from one generation to the next, where this process becomes essential for continuity of these traditions within society (Crystal 2023). Moreover, using digital platforms and multimedia resources can enhance accessibility, allowing students to interact with these proverbs in creative ways, such as films and language songs (Talib, 2013). Combining traditional oral traditions with modern technology democratizes access to cultural artifacts and inspires creative applications in classrooms worldwide.

Integrating Malay Feline Proverbs in Education

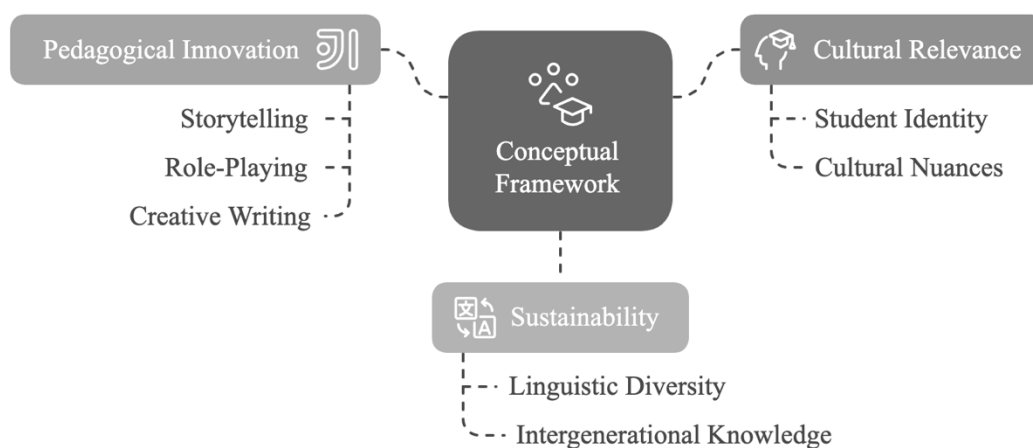


Figure 1: Integrating Malay Feline Proverbs in Education

The figure reviews a conceptual framework on teaching approaches of Malay feline proverbs in the classroom. It consists of three broad elements:

1. **Pedagogical Innovation** : This part utilizes innovative teaching methods centred around storytelling, role-playing, and creative writing to teach and engage students with Malay felines proverbs.
2. **Cultural Relevance**: This aspect stresses the need to connect proverbs to students' cultural identities and complexities in order to ensure that the material is meaningful to their lived experiences.
3. **Sustainability** : This component aims to preserve linguistic diversity and promote the intergenerational transmission of knowledge through the integration of these proverbs in education.

The center of the figure visually depicts the "Conceptual Framework" or the core framework integrating these three elements. This approach attends to the interchanging of pedagogical innovation, cultural relevance, and sustainability in the meaning-making process of the integration of Malay feline proverbs in educational contexts.

Implications for Academia and Practice: Enriching Teaching Methodologies and Promoting Linguistic Sustainability

The integration of Malay feline proverbs into higher education has significant implications in both academia and practice. From an academic perspective, this approach contributes to the growing body of research on decolonizing methodologies and inclusive education systems (Smith, 2022). By incorporating local epistemologies, it challenges the dominance of globalized languages and standardized curricula, thereby fostering more equitable learning environments. This initiative addresses pressing issues such as globalization, urbanization, and digital communication trends, which threaten linguistic diversity (UNESCO, 2021).

Moreover, the integration of Malay feline proverbs into educational practices holds practical value by encouraging interdisciplinary collaboration. For instance, linguists can collaborate with educators to design culturally relevant lesson plans, while technologists can develop interactive tools to make these proverbs accessible to a broader audience. Such collaborations align with calls for sustainable educational innovation, ensuring that language preservation efforts are scalable and adaptable to diverse contexts (Ter Horst & Pearce, 2010). By embedding Malay feline proverbs into university curricula, institutions can play a pivotal role in safeguarding linguistic heritage while preparing students to navigate increasingly multicultural societies.

This strategy also carries pedagogical implications, as it promotes interdisciplinary teamwork. Linguists could partner with educators to create engaging lesson plans, while technologists could develop innovative digital tools to enhance proverb accessibility. These collaborative efforts reflect a holistic approach to preserving linguistic diversity and developing adaptable educational frameworks (Ter Horst & Pearce, 2010). Integrating these proverbs into curricula presents both opportunities and challenges. Universities can serve as key players in preserving linguistic heritage while equipping students to thrive in today’s multicultural world.

Addressing Research Gaps

Despite growing interest in proverbs as tools for language preservation, significant gaps remain in understanding their pedagogical applications within higher education, particularly concerning Malay feline proverbs. Existing studies primarily focus on documenting and analyzing the cultural significance of proverbs (Hamid, 2023; Mieder, 2020). However, there is limited guidance on how to effectively integrate these proverbs into modern educational practices. Additionally, empirical research evaluating the outcomes of such integration such as its impact on student engagement, cultural identity formation, and linguistic proficiency is lacking.

This paper seeks to address these gaps by presenting a conceptual framework that bridges traditional knowledge systems with contemporary teaching methodologies. By situating Malay feline proverbs within the context of culturally responsive pedagogy, this study not only contributes theoretical insights to language revitalization and sustainable education but also offers practical recommendations for implementation. Future research should explore the successful application of this framework across diverse educational settings, including universities and schools in various contexts. Integrating Malay feline proverbs into university curricula is not only essential for preserving the Malay language but also for fostering more inclusive and progressive educational environments that meet both academic and societal needs (Nakata et al., 2022; Smith, 2022).

Relevant Past Studies

Table 1: Relevant Past Studies				
Author(s)	Year	Title	Method	Key Findings
Safitri & Wismanto	2024	Culturally Responsive Teaching for Cultural Understanding	Qualitative content analysis of traditional texts	The paper emphasizes the importance of Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) in integrating cultural diversity into education, aiming to foster

		in Hikayat Text Learning		cultural understanding among students and create an inclusive learning environment, thereby supporting cultural sustainability and identity preservation.
Hamid	2023	Metaphorical expressions in Malay oral traditions: A case study of feline proverbs	Case study and thematic analysis	Malay feline proverbs reflect metaphorical depth and cultural significance, offering opportunities for teaching critical thinking and communication skills.
Mieder	2020	Proverbs: A handbook	Literature review and comparative analysis	Proverbs are powerful tools for language preservation and cultural transmission, but their pedagogical applications require further exploration, particularly in higher education.
Nakata et al.	2012	Indigenous knowledge and education: Situating the renewal of cultural practices	Mixed-methods research combining interviews and classroom observations	Indigenous knowledge systems, including proverbs, enrich educational practices by fostering inclusivity and cultural sustainability in diverse learning environments.
Smith	2022	Decolonizing methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples	Theoretical framework and case studies	Decolonizing education involves integrating local epistemologies, such as proverbs, to challenge dominant global narratives and promote culturally responsive teaching methods.
Crystal	2023	Language death and revival: Challenges and opportunities	Statistical analysis of endangered languages and case studies	Globalization threatens linguistic diversity, but revitalization efforts, including the use of cultural artifacts like proverbs, can help preserve endangered languages and foster intergenerational transmission.
Talib	2013	The encroachment of English in Malaysian cultural expression	Qualitative content analysis of Malay language songs & texts	The Malay language faces challenges from foreign language dominance and digital trends, but leveraging cultural resources can strengthen its preservation in contemporary contexts.

Claybrook	2023	African Proverbs, Riddles, and Narratives as Pedagogy: African Deep Thought in Africana Studies	Ethnographic research and participatory action research	Integrating indigenous knowledge systems into curricula promotes equitable education systems, addresses critical thinking and cultural awareness.
Ter Horst & Pearce	2010	Foreign Languages and Sustainability: Addressing the Connections, Communities and Comparisons Standards in Higher Education	Action research involving educators and students	The paper highlights collaboration, particularly between language studies and environmental education, enhances language proficiency and cultural understanding, fostering global awareness and community engagement, thus contributing to sustainable educational innovation and the preservation of language through meaningful content creation.
UNESCO	2021	Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger	Global Data Collection and Mapping	Approximately 40% of the world's languages are at risk of extinction, highlighting the urgent need for innovative strategies like integrating cultural artifacts into education to preserve linguistic heritage.

The table combines recent studies that focus on a variety of topics surrounding the incorporation of proverbs, cultural products and language reclamation into teaching and learning, all of which are relevant to the Malay feline proverbs in higher education. Safitri and Wismanto (2024) acknowledge the cultural and linguistic wealth of traditional texts, yet indicate the elements remain underutilized in the formal study of education. Hamid (2023) similarly establishes the depth of metaphorical meaning in Malay proverbs while illustrating their teaching potential for critical thinking and communication. Mieder (2020) highlights the role of proverbs in the transfer of culture and recommends further study on prioritizing their pedagogy in education. Nakata et al. (2012) favor establishing indigenous knowledge systems like proverbs, disseminating culture while practicing an inclusive and sustainable classroom in education. Smith (2022) offers a framework for our decolonized methodologies and advocates for inclusion of local epistemologies to challenge globalistic narratives. Crystal (2023) explains that globalism is an ongoing threat to linguistic diversity and recommends revitalization efforts, such as historical or cultural products, to support previously diminished languages. Talib (2013) reviews the risks faced by the Malay language and considers proverbs as a medium for risk mitigation. Claybrook (2023) recognizes the role of indigenous knowledge systems in filling the void of language preservation efforts underway. Ter Horst and Pearce (2010) acknowledge the utility of culturally relevant pedagogies to aid in student engagement as well

as cultivate new approaches to innovation. Finally, UNESCO (2021) maps endangered languages globally as well as the necessity for some strategies, such as cultural products in schools, to protect and foster the growth of endangered languages. Collectively, these studies underscore the untapped potential of Malay feline proverbs as tools for fostering cultural identity, critical thinking, and sustainable educational practices, while addressing the challenges posed by globalization and linguistic endangerment.

Conceptual Framework

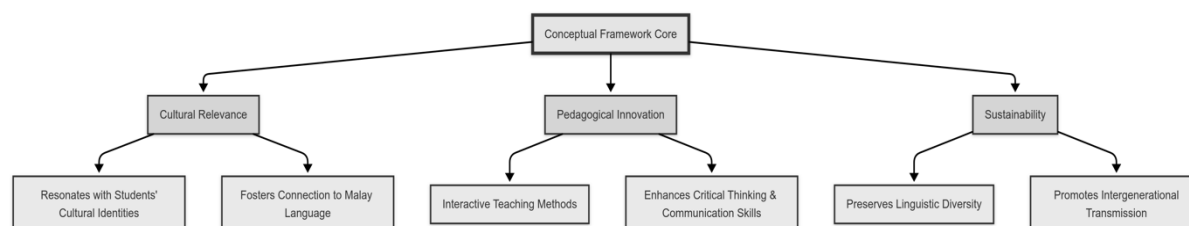


Figure 2: The Conceptual Framework for "Paws and Pedagogy: Exploring Malay Feline Proverbs as Tools for Language Preservation in University Education"

Guided by a central core, the Conceptual Framework is composed of three compounded components: Cultural Relevance, Pedagogical Innovation, and Sustainability, which together drive a pursuit for integrated efforts in language preservation. Based on the principles of culturally responsive pedagogy (Nakata et al., 2012) and sustainable educational innovation (Ter Horst & Pearce, 2010), the framework presented aims to highlight the significance of Malay feline proverbs as bridging the traditional knowledge systems and contemporary curricular implementations. When incorporated into the lesson plans using Cultural Relevance, these proverbs are made familiar to the students, creating not only connections with their own identities and lived realities but connects them deeper to Malay language and cultural heritage (Smith, 2022). Thus, directly fostering Pedagogical Innovation, encouraging alternative interactive methods including storytelling, role playing, and creative writing when working with proverbs to exploit their metaphorical richness (Hamid, 2023), ultimately developing critical thinking and communication skills. These two aspects together stand for Sustainability that is concerned with the long-term maintenance of linguistic diversity as well as intergenerational phenomena of cultural knowledge transmission (Crystal, 2023). Locating Malay feline proverbs within this triadic frame, this study approaches with a decolonizing methodology that considers indigenous set of epistemologies (Smith 2022), alongside emerging issues of globalization and language endangerment (UNESCO 2021). Subsequently, the relations between the three components is emphasized: cultural relevance as the basis for meaningful engagement, pedagogical innovation as the vehicle for actual implementation, and sustainability as an indicator of continuity, which collectively can strengthen the aim to preserve the Malay language within institutions of higher education.

Future Directions and Research Gaps

Despite the increasing interest in proverbs and other cultural artifacts as tools for language preservation, there remains a significant gap in the pedagogical discussion regarding how to effectively utilize these tools within higher education, particularly concerning Malay feline proverbs. Most studies focus on documenting and analyzing their cultural significance (Mieder, 2020; Hamid, 2023). However, limited attention has been given to integrating these proverbs

into university curricula as effective tools for linguistic continuity (Safitri & Wismanto, 2024). There is a lack of empirical research exploring how educators can incorporate Malay feline proverbs into teaching methodologies to foster critical thinking, communication skills, and cultural awareness among students. While literature on culturally responsive pedagogy exists (Nakata et al., 2012), few studies apply these frameworks to endangered or regional languages like Malay, leaving a gap in understanding how traditional knowledge systems can be operationalized in modern educational settings. Additionally, the intersection of digital technologies with traditional oral traditions remains underexplored (Talib, 2013), suggesting missed opportunities for leveraging multimedia platforms to enhance accessibility and engagement.

To address these gaps, it is essential for researchers to focus on several key areas for future investigation. First, interdisciplinary studies are crucial for exploring the integration of Malay feline proverbs across various domains, such as literature, linguistics, sociology, and communication studies. Collaborations between linguists and educators could lead to the development of lesson plans aligned with curriculum standards, while technologists could design interactive digital tools to make these proverbs accessible to diverse audiences. Such cross-disciplinary approaches would shed light on how these integrations impact student outcomes, including cultural identity formation and linguistic proficiency (Hamid, 2023; Nakata et al., 2012).

Secondly, empirical research is needed to evaluate the effectiveness of incorporating Malay feline proverbs into higher education curricula. Longitudinal studies could assess their impact on student engagement, critical thinking, and retention of cultural knowledge over time. Mixed-methods research combining qualitative interviews with quantitative assessments would offer robust insights into best practices (Crystal, 2023). Thirdly, future research should explore policy frameworks that support the inclusion of indigenous knowledge systems, such as proverbs, in national education systems. Policymakers could benefit from evidence-based recommendations on how to institutionalize these practices, ensuring scalability and sustainability across universities (Smith, 2022).

Fourthly, further exploration of digital platforms such as animations, podcasts, virtual reality, and gamified learning modules could uncover innovative ways to engage younger generations with traditional oral traditions. This aligns with calls for sustainable educational innovation (Ter Horst & Pearce, 2010) and addresses challenges posed by globalization and digital communication trends (UNESCO, 2021). Finally, additional research on decolonizing methodologies (Smith, 2022) could inform strategies for integrating local epistemologies into curricula, challenging dominant global narratives and promoting equitable education systems.

Based on these identified gaps, this paper makes several recommendations. Universities should consider embedding Malay feline proverbs into existing courses through interdisciplinary modules that emphasize both linguistic and cultural dimensions. Practical applications, such as storytelling workshops or creative writing exercises, could serve as tangible extensions of narrative engagement for students. Capacity building is another critical area; professional development programs should equip educators with the skills needed to incorporate culturally relevant materials like proverbs into their teaching practices. Training sessions could focus on designing interactive activities and leveraging digital tools to enhance accessibility and engagement (Talib, 2013). Community engagement is vital to ensure authenticity and relevance

in the selection and interpretation of proverbs. Collaborations with local communities, cultural organizations, and elders who are custodians of oral traditions not only promote community ownership but also enrich preservation efforts.

In addition, researchers and educators should advocate for policies that prioritize the preservation of regional languages and encourage the inclusion of indigenous knowledge systems in formal education. Policymakers could draw on case studies from this research to create actionable guidelines. Lastly, technology integration plays a pivotal role; developing open-access digital repositories of Malay feline proverbs, complete with translations, explanations, and multimedia resources, could democratize access and inspire creative uses in classrooms worldwide. By pursuing these recommendations, this study contributes to bridging traditional wisdom with contemporary educational needs, fostering a more inclusive and culturally responsive landscape.

Conclusion

This paper has examined the untapped potential of Malay feline proverbs as pedagogical tools for preserving the Malay language within higher education settings. The study successfully achieves its primary objective by proposing a conceptual framework that integrates these proverbs into university curricula, emphasizing their theoretical and practical contributions to fostering cultural identity, enhancing critical thinking, and promoting active engagement with the Malay language among students (Hamid, 2023; Mieder, 2020). By situating Malay feline proverbs within the context of culturally responsive pedagogy, the study bridges traditional knowledge systems with modern educational practices, addressing the identified research gap in both academic discourse and practical applications aimed at preserving endangered languages.

The study makes significant contributions to theory, practice, and policy. Theoretically, it enriches discussions on language revitalization and sustainable educational innovation by positioning Malay feline proverbs as dynamic instruments for linguistic preservation and cultural transmission (Crystal, 2023; Smith, 2022). Practically, it provides educators with actionable strategies for integrating these proverbs into teaching methodologies, such as storytelling, role-playing, and creative writing, thereby fostering critical thinking, communication skills, and cultural awareness (Nakata et al., 2022). In terms of policy, the study advocates for institutionalizing indigenous knowledge systems in national education systems, offering evidence-based recommendations for policymakers to ensure scalability and sustainability across universities (Smith, 2022).

Despite these achievements, challenges remain. One notable challenge is the limited empirical research evaluating the effectiveness of integrating Malay feline proverbs into higher education curricula, particularly regarding their impact on student engagement, cultural identity formation, and linguistic proficiency (Hamid, 2023; Crystal, 2023). Additionally, while frameworks for culturally responsive pedagogy exist, few studies have applied these frameworks to endangered or regional languages like Malay, leaving gaps in understanding how traditional knowledge systems can be operationalized in modern educational settings (Abdullah & Yusoff, 2022). Furthermore, the intersection of digital technologies with traditional oral traditions remains underexplored, suggesting missed opportunities for leveraging multimedia platforms to enhance accessibility and engagement (Mohamad, 2023).

To address these gaps, future research should focus on several key areas. First, cross-disciplinary studies are essential for exploring the integration of Malay feline proverbs across fields such as literature, linguistics, sociology, and communication studies. This approach can provide a more holistic understanding of their potential applications and shed light on how such integrations impact student outcomes, including cultural identity formation and linguistic proficiency (Hamid, 2023; Nakata et al., 2022). Second, empirical investigations such as longitudinal studies combining qualitative interviews with quantitative assessments are needed to evaluate the effectiveness of these proverbs in diverse educational contexts (Crystal, 2023). Third, future research should explore policy frameworks that support the inclusion of indigenous knowledge systems, such as proverbs, in national education systems, ensuring scalability and sustainability across institutions (Smith, 2022).

In conclusion, this paper underscores the transformative potential of Malay feline proverbs in bridging traditional wisdom with contemporary educational needs. However, sustained commitment and collaborative action are required to translate these insights into impactful practices. Future research and interdisciplinary collaboration hold the key to unlocking the full potential of Malay feline proverbs, ensuring they continue to enrich both education and society for generations to come. By pursuing these efforts, we can foster a more inclusive, culturally responsive, and linguistically diverse educational landscape that addresses both academic and societal needs.

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