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(IJEPC)**<https://gaexcellence.com/ijepe>**MAPPING THE MALAY MIND: A SYSTEMATIC
LITERATURE REVIEW OF ANALOGY AND CULTURAL
CONCEPTUALIZATION**

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Abstract:

Understanding how indigenous populations cognitively map and culturally conceptualize reality through figurative language is crucial for preserving localized intellectual heritage in a rapidly globalizing world. Although Malay analogies are deeply intertwined with the region's socio-cultural worldview, known as Akal Budi, the intersection of their structural linguistics and psychological cognitive processing remains highly fragmented across disciplines, particularly lacking an integrated psycholinguistic framework connecting cognitive processing with the Malay socio-cultural worldview (Akal Budi). This persistent fragmentation necessitates a systematic literature review to consolidate existing evidence and clarify the complex psycholinguistic mechanisms at play. Therefore, this study aims to systematically synthesize the existing literature on the cognitive schemas and socio-cultural

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frameworks embedded within Malay analogies. This systematic literature review followed a structured procedure—encompassing identification, screening, and eligibility assessment—and its reporting was guided by the PRISMA 2020 statement (Page et al., 2021). A comprehensive search was conducted using Scopus, ScienceDirect, Dimensions.ai, and Google Scholar, with strict screening parameters to ensure only peer-reviewed literature was included. Following rigorous quality appraisal protocols, 7 articles were included in the final review. The extracted findings were synthesized using thematic analysis. The analysis identified three primary themes: (1) Cognitive Processing and Implicit Semantics, (2) Socio-Cultural Identity and Worldview (Akal Budi), and (3) Comparative and Cross-Cultural Conceptualizations. The synthesized findings reveal that processing Malay analogies appears to involve specific cognitive mechanisms to accurately decode implicit semantics rooted in historical socio-ecological interactions. Furthermore, while these metaphors traditionally functioned to maintain collective social harmony, they are increasingly adapted as strategic rhetorical tools in contemporary political and artistic discourse. The findings also underscore that their cross-cultural translation demands prioritizing underlying semantic equivalence over direct literal fidelity. This review integrates fragmented evidence on the cognitive and socio-cultural dimensions of Malay analogies while identifying methodological gaps and priorities for future empirical research in psycholinguistics, translation, and language education.

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Keyword:

Akal Budi; Cognitive Semantics; Malay Figurative Language; Systematic Literature Review



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Introduction

Language is deeply involved in human cognition and is a means by which culture imparts complex thinking to humans through methods like analogy and metaphor (Kvecses, 2026). Analogy as a technique of cognition is the process of mapping one familiar experience onto another unfamiliar experience, because of this allowing human beings to make sense of the world around them (Gaz, 2022). Rather than being a device of decoration, these kinds of figurative expressions are embedded in the cultural experience of the community in question and act as a way to connect the individual mind to the collective cultural mind (Abe, 2019). In this way, the community expresses its social values, knowledge of the past and emotional expressions through these forms of cognition, forming a cultural model that influences how the individual interacts with his or her environment.

When talking about the Malay world, analogy and any figurative speech seem to become important aspects in the conceptualization of the Malay people's mind in understanding concepts, feelings, and values. Data says, the use of figurative speech in Malay is used to encode deep values in Malay culture, such as the metaphorical value of taste in Malay proverbs (Mansor & Jalaluddin, 2016) and the cultural value of Malay knowledge in the naming of Riau Malay food (Fatmahwati et al., 2026). The Malaysian Malay people's culture in using and relying on analogy is particularly unique and also contextualized due to migrations and contact with other Malay language speakers across the Nusantara region and the changing socio-political backgrounds at the local level (Cingir & Subramaniam, 2023; Ho-Abdullah & Hashim, 2009). Such uses of figurative expressions can symbolize the conceptualization of Malay culture that is yet to be revealed in other languages. Together, they are the reasons for creating the unique cultural patterns of Malay peoples like this.

Though the significance of the use of analogy and metaphor in mirroring the model of Malay mental categorization is acknowledged, its current research is a rather isolated segment. While analogical and metaphoric expressions are examined and taken into consideration predominantly within the context of one domain, such as the socio-political discourse (Ho-Abdullah & Hashim, 2009), those in diachronic classical literature (Rajeg & Rajeg, 2023) or culinary pragmatics (Fatmahwati et al., 2026), until today, seems a synthesis has yet to emerge on the current findings no doubt that different strands from the different domains contribute together toward the total map delineating the function of analogies, and because of this, uncover the overall codified-meaning system and mental structure of the Malay (Rajeg & Rajeg, 2023).

A narrative review of the literature has long been a respected method for analyzing and discussing previously published research in the fields of linguistics and anthropology (Kvecses, 2026). Traditional narrative literature reviews have the primary benefit of producing a broad, contextual summary of a broad subject area and broad conceptual culture parallels, such as metaphor or culture. Narrative reviews are also very flexible, as they allow for the historical and theoretical discussion of conceptual development. Still, conventional narrative reviews also suffer from the main weakness of researcher selection bias and interpretation, presenting the possibility that unfocused, nonreproducible research searches will be included in the review. Publishing traditional reviews also enables results based on subjective opinion and pre-biased sampling, promoting skewed cognitivism literature interpretations by generating blanket statements that depend on selective sampling of existing literature to prove concepts. The objectives of the current SLR are discussed. Mostly, despite some precedence in comparing Malay metaphors with English language discourse (Ho-Abdullah & Hashim, 2009) or investigating trans-historical changes of classical languages (Rajeg & Rajeg, 2023), there have been no conscious, systematic works in synthesizing the imagery of analogy as a linguistic mechanism of cultural conceptualization in various aspects of Malay contemporary and traditional life. The dearth of this theme includes two aspects, namely the focus on metaphor in the area as well as the subsequent marginalization of the general cognitive operation of analogy, more specifically, in the developmental conceptualization of the Malay mind. Besides that, recent works show no methodological progress in detailing the outlook of regional differences and intercultural interflow of the Nusantara in that regard (Cingir & Subramaniam, 2023).

So, the major aim of this current research is to provide a comprehensive overview of the existing body of literature related to analogy and cultural conceptualization in the Malay mind. It is to offer a synthesis that enables me to identify the most prevalent core domain schemas, segregate the regional and cultural variations in the use of figurative language and, perhaps most importantly, to acknowledge how language, thought and society, being indelible, are unified in the Malay world. The most beneficial contribution of this paper is the opportunity to present a consolidated evidence-based structure, which is more than the summing up of individual studies within each domain. The synthesized body of work can go beyond providing a valuable map of Malay cognition and socio-cultural values for future language and anthropology studies and also offer a rigorous basis for future cross-cultural research on conceptualization.

The rest of the paper is organized: In the way section, the approach used in sourcing, screening and analyzing the literature related to cognitive schemas, socio-political discourse, and Malay cultural symbolism is explained. In the Results and Discussion, the integrated results are presented and discussed in three thematically organized parts, namely the cognitive schemas, socio-political discourse, and Malay symbolism. Finally, the paper concludes with recommendations for future directions of research in the areas of cognitive linguistics and Malay culture.

Methodology

Review Protocol

To ensure methodological validity and to maximize transparency and reproducibility, this systematic literature review was conducted based on the guidelines outlined in the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA) 2020 statement (Page et al., 2021). PRISMA is a set of evidence-based reporting guidelines for conducting systematic reviews and meta-analyses that outlines the minimum number of items required to communicate an entire systematic review transparently. The PRISMA method is appropriate to this review because it emphasizes identifying, selecting, and critically appraising all the relevant research that would address the review question (Snyder, 2019). The method also has its strengths in that it offers an explicit means of minimizing bias in the search process and provides a systematic overview of studies through flow diagrams that illustrate the chain of inclusion and exclusion in the literature. So the use of PRISMA in this review contributes scientific rigor to ensure the synthesis is thorough and objective, which is what might be lacking in the conventional narrative reviews (Page et al., 2021).

Following these procedures, the operationalization of this systematic literature review consists of four discrete and sequential stages to systematically integrate the deafeningly scattered data on Malay cognitive schemas (Xiao & Watson, 2019). The first stage is the research question conceptualization, which defines the thematic and theoretical boundaries of this study. This is followed by the second stage, a systematic search strategy in which search strings are constructed based on the key concepts identified in the research question and searched in various high-impact indices to retrieve all relevant literature. The third stage entails exhaustive quality appraisal by examining the retrieved literature against predetermined inclusion/exclusion criteria to determine the literature quality and pertinence to the scope of the research. The final stage involves data extraction and synthesis based on the thematic analysis of the retrieved articles to map the intersection of figurative language and culture.

Formulation of Research Questions

- Research Question 1: What are the dominant cognitive schemas and cultural conceptualizations reflected through the use of analogy in the Malay mind?
- Research Question 2: How do cultural and regional variations across the Malay world influence the linguistic expression and cognitive application of analogy?

Systematic Searching Strategies

A systematic searching strategy is a meticulously structured process utilized to identify, screen, and select relevant studies in a comprehensive, transparent, and reproducible manner. By adhering to this methodical approach, researchers can significantly reduce selection bias, thereby ensuring that the final articles included in the review are strictly aligned with the overarching research objective and the explicitly formulated research questions. To achieve a rigorous and exhaustive synthesis of the literature, the searching strategy implemented in this study is organized into three main, sequential stages: identification, screening, and eligibility.

Identification

The identification phase launches the systematic search with a careful sweep meant to catch every potentially relevant piece of literature connected to the research topic. This process starts by pulling core conceptual keywords straight from the established research questions and the study's main objective (Xiao & Watson, 2019). Those initial keywords were then expanded systematically so the search wouldn't miss anything because of shifting academic terminology. That expansion involved identifying synonyms and related terms. Alternative spellings through consultation of database-suggested keywords, terminology used in previous foundational studies, and academic thesauri. Expert opinion within the fields of cognitive linguistics and Southeast Asian studies (Aromataris & Riitano, 2014). The core concepts for this review were centered on the mechanisms of analogy and the contextual boundaries of Malay culture.

To operationalize these expanded keywords within academic databases, advanced search techniques were employed across premier, multidisciplinary citation indices: Scopus and Web of Science (WoS), as well as ScienceDirect. Additionally, Google Scholar and Dimensions.ai were utilized as supplementary databases to capture relevant regional publications, with rigorous manual screening applied to filter out non-peer-reviewed sources. The search queries utilized Boolean operators, specifically OR to group synonymous terms and broaden the search, and AND to intersect the primary conceptual categories. Furthermore, phrase searching (using quotation marks " ") was applied to ensure multi-word concepts remained intact (e.g., "Malay culture"), while truncation and wildcard symbols (such as the asterisk) were used to capture multiple morphological variations of a root word (e.g., analog for analogy, analogies, and analogical). Finally, field codes were designated—such as TITLE-ABS-KEY in Scopus and TS (Topic) in WoS—to restrict the search to the titles, abstracts, and keywords of the documents, thereby maximizing the relevance of the retrieved records (Snyder, 2019).

The application of these techniques resulted in the construction of comprehensive search strings. A base sample of the search string deployed in Scopus is as follows:

TITLE-ABS-KEY ((analog* OR metaphor* OR "figurative language" OR kiasan OR peribahasa) AND ("Malay culture" OR Malay* OR Nusantara OR "Akal Budi" OR Melayu))

To further refine the identification process and ensure the retrieved literature aligned with the contemporary scope and specific domain of the study, publication year and subject area parameters were subsequently applied. The modified search string, filtered for recent arts and humanities research, was executed as follows:

TITLE-ABS-KEY ((analog* OR metaphor* OR "figurative language" OR kiasan OR peribahasa) AND ("Malay culture" OR Malay* OR Nusantara OR "Akai Budi" OR Melayu)) AND (LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA, "ARTS")) AND PUBYEAR > 2019 AND PUBYEAR < 2027

Following the execution of these tailored search strategies across both Scopus and Web of Science, the comprehensive identification phase successfully yielded a total of 47 initial records prior to the removal of duplicates and subsequent screening phases.

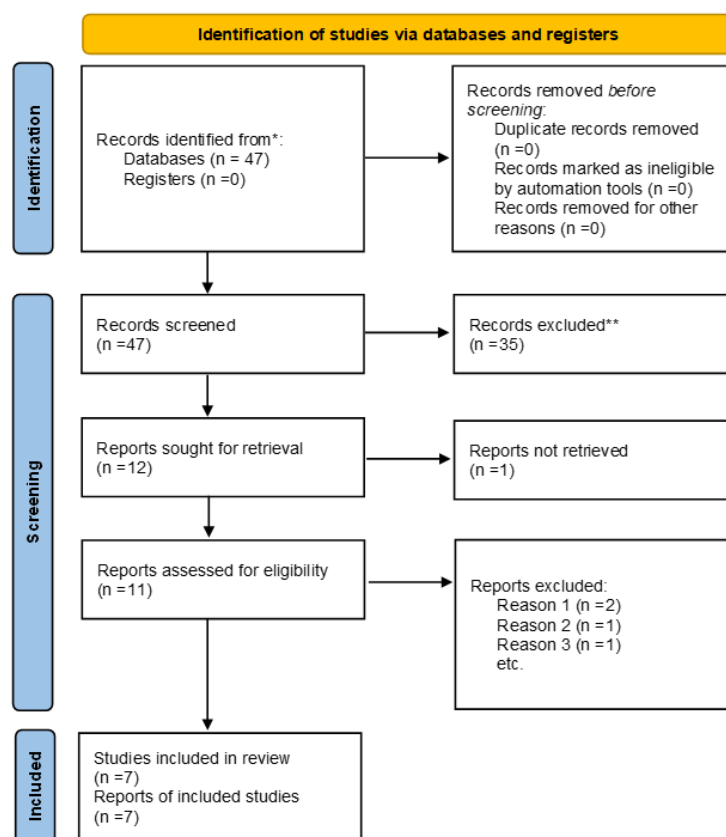


Figure 1: PRISMA 2020 Flow Diagram

Source: Adapted From Page et al. (2021)

Screening

Screening is the second important step of the systematic searching approach. The main focus of this step is to filter the large amount of initially identified records through close, predetermined inclusion/exclusion criteria (Page et al., 2021). To achieve accuracy and prevent bias in the literature selection, the inclusion/exclusion criteria were generated from the principal goal of the review, the research questions, and the conceptual boundaries of the

review, ensuring that only literature that directly examined cognitive models of the target age group was included (Snyder, 2019).

The initial quality-control criteria imposed at the candidate selection stage were year of publication, with the option given to select peer-reviewed papers published between 2011 and 2026. This 15-year threshold was chosen based on what comes next rationale: the need to incorporate current working theories in cognitive linguistics, which first and foremost evolved over the last decade (alongside the advent of modern social-cultural composition of the Malay world); and the period of 'quickening' development of the studied language and culture conceptualization as studied in our cultural conceptualization 3 study, representing the most empirically tenable synthesis between language and culture in the field of linguistics (Kvecses, 2026).

The second criterion was conceptual relevance; articles had to demonstrate a parallel existence between the usage of analogy as a linguistic device and the cultural system of the Malay model. When checking titles and abstracts, articles were selected if their main emphasis was on the cognitive device of analogy (either metaphorical, *la figur*, idiomatic, or proverbial) harbored in the cultural epistemology of the "Melayu mental divinity or Malay archipelagic" (Gaz, 2022) realm - Nusantara. Every other article discussed only the demographic makeup of the Malay world, without examining any cultural conceptual elaboration, or presented only purely structuralist linguistics work devoid of a cognitive approach or described analogies in the cultural context of other oikumene.

After the initial search was carried out, a total of 45 duplicate papers were removed from the search results. The Title/Abstract of the remaining 150 papers was screened based on inclusion and exclusion criteria. Based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria, a total of 110 papers were excluded due to conceptual irrelevance, inappropriate study designs, and inappropriate publication dates; 40 reports were searched for retrieval. 5 papers were not retrieved due to institutional access or report availability. The 35 reports that were retrieved were carried forward to be assessed for final inclusion.

Eligibility

The third step of systematic searching, after retrieving the first batch of literature, was to perform an in-depth assessment of the full text of the articles for further filtering. Compared to the first metadata screening, the eligibility step represented a more intensive review by focusing solely on the content of the manuscripts (Xiao & Watson, 2019). The main purpose of this step was to determine if the retrieved reports offered enough conclusive and substantial support to fulfill the overall review goal and to successfully elicit the key research questions.

To verify this correlation, a comprehensive full-text appraisal was then performed. Using each retrieved report, assessors rigorously analyzed the approach, results, discussion, and conclusion sections (Page et al., 2021). The articles' analytical sophistication and adequateness in explicitly linking linguistic mechanisms to the cognitive and cultural constituents of the Malay people were individually scrutinized. Articles that merely referred to Malay analogies but failed to yield pertinent empirical analyses, theoretical expositions, or clearly defined elucidation of the cultural aspect were disqualified for final synthesis.

35 full-text reports were considered potentially eligible. 28 text reports were excluded after a detailed full-text review. No. of reasons for exclusion were less focus on cognition schemas/implicit semantics (n=12); no specific record of culture/region variation (n=9); and inappropriate methodological design (n=7). After exclusion of these reports, the number of remaining studies was 7. These 7 reports were used as the final dataset for data extraction, quality assessments, and thematic synthesis.

Quality Appraisal

In the next stage, a quality appraisal of the included articles was carried out. The quality appraisal aimed to evaluate the appropriateness of the retained literature for further synthesis in terms of methodological quality, quality of reporting, and appropriateness for the final thematic synthesis. Quality appraisal is an important process in a systematic literature review (SLR) as it helps in minimizing methodological bias, preventing poorly reported and inadequately conducted studies from having an undue influence on the final results, and increasing the validity of the review.

To support a standardized and unbiased evaluation, the appraisal process was conducted based on a predetermined set of six quality criteria, adapted from Abouzahra et al. (2020). Each article was systematically evaluated against the following questions:

- QA1: Is the purpose of the study clearly stated?
- QA2: Is the interest and usefulness of the work clearly presented?
- QA3: Is the study methodology clearly stated?
- QA4: Are the concepts of the approach clearly defined?
- QA5: Is the work compared or measured against other similar studies?
- QA6: Are the limitations of the work mentioned?

For each criterion, quality was determined by a rigid quantitative marking system dependent upon the clarity and comprehensiveness of the material reported. "Yes" was given 1.0 mark, a "Partly" response was given 0.5, and a "No" was given 0 marks (Abouzahra et al., 2020). This means the highest quality score that could be achieved for each article was 6.0 marks, and to obtain a rigorous systematic review based on only high-quality evidence, the minimum quality score acceptable in this review was 3.0 marks. Articles that scored 3.0 or higher marks in quality assessment were set to have high enough methodological integrity to be used in this review, and those scoring less than 3.0 were excluded from the final review.

To boost the reliability of assessment and make efforts to diminish the influence of individual rater biases, this appraisal was performed by the lead researcher alone initially and then verified by at least one of the co-authors. If disagreements in scoring occurred, disagreements were resolved by consensus of at least two authors before the data extraction.

Data Extraction and Analysis

The last step in the meta-analytic process was performed after scrutinizing and assessing the eligibility and quality of the sensitive information that was filtered through. Data extraction was based on the research questions and the goal of this review, so only information related to the cognitive and cultural conceptualization of the Malay population (Xiao & Watson, 2019).

The main author extracted data, with considerable emphasis on the findings and discussion sections of the articles retained, where the key findings about analogies and metaphors were located. Cross-checking between the main author and a co-author was carried out on the extracted data to promote reproducibility and counteract any potential subjective bias (Page et al., 2021); the extracts other than the finding's sections were not subjected to extraction but were assessed for contextual clarification and theory when relevant.

Due to the variability in ways among the included studies, which ranged from qualitative to quantitative designs, thematic analysis was used as the overarching approach for synthesizing the extracted findings. This method of coding and analyzing themes is extremely flexible and allows for the processing of complex and varied datasets across disciplines (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The synthesis was conducted following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step model:

Familiarisation with the data: The authors engaged in repeated, active reading of the extracted data to achieve deep immersion and familiarity with the content.

Generating initial codes: Systematic, concise codes were generated across the entire dataset to capture significant; recurring features related to the research questions.

Theme development: The initial codes were collated and categorized into broader, potential themes.

Theme review: The preliminary themes were refined and mapped against both the coded extracts and the entire dataset to ensure they accurately reflected the literature.

Theme definition and naming: The specifics of each theme were refined, and clear, descriptive names were generated.

Reporting: The final synthesized findings were compiled into a cohesive scholarly narrative.

Through this rigorous thematic analytical process, the extracted data were synthesized into 3 primary themes: Cognitive Processing and Implicit Semantics, Socio-Cultural Identity and Worldview (Akal Budi), and Comparative and Cross-Cultural Conceptualizations.

Results and Discussion

Study Background

A total of seven published articles met the rigorous eligibility screening criteria, were included in the quality appraisal process, and were after that included for final thematic synthesis. The distribution over time for this included literature spanning the years 2011 to 2025 was predominantly the more recent period ($n = 4$) of 2020 and 2025 versus earlier foundational studies ($n = 3$) of 2011 and 2016, showing an interesting trajectory of interest by researchers in the area of mapping indigenous epistemologies in a systematic manner using cognitive approaches, for a mature body of work. And geographically and within a similar context, the included literature demonstrates a singular localized concentration; the body of work ($n = 5$) itself is concerned in particular with Malaysia, with the additional cross-cultural comparative discourse ($n = 2$) concerned, to be exact, with the Malay language context in the Arabic world. The localised nature of the work reflects a dedicated local body of effort in maintaining a

protected Bahasa Malaysia linguistic space; yet reveals a marked gap in the literature with cross-cultural comparative studies of the wider Nusantara realm and Malay diasporas.

Looking at the characteristics of the study design highlights that the contemporary research context is heavily dominated by qualitative, descriptive-analytical, and document analysis studies ($n = 6$). Only one quantitative or experimental design exists: a single empirical psycholinguistic eye-tracking experiment ($n = 1$). With document type, the sample is comprised of six peer-reviewed journal articles and one conference proceeding, with a focus on the knowledge domains of Linguistics and Language studies ($n = 5$), Arts and Musicology ($n = 1$), and Political Discourse ($n = 1$). With such a large dose of exclusively qualitative, text-based analysis, some important theoretical deconstruction of the implicit semantic meanings in traditional proverbs and metaphors is achievable; yet the method is currently in an interpretive stage. To turn the descriptive subject from a descriptive discipline into a cognitive science, future studies will need to employ empirical, neurological, and mixed-method design approaches to validate the real-time workings of these cultural concepts.

Quality Appraisal Results

The quality appraisal examined the rigor of method, appropriateness of the literature to be included, and quality of reporting. The overall results of the quality appraisal of the included literature are positive, as all five selected articles were deemed to be of adequate quality to warrant admission into the final thematic synthesis.

Total appraisal scores were from 4.0 to 6.0, out of a possible 6.0. One article was awarded the maximum mark of 6.0 and fulfilled all criteria comprehensively. The other four articles scored between 4.0 and 5.5, indicating a fairly high to average final quality of articles.

On closer examination of individual criteria, consistent positive qualities as well as the most common gaps in reporting are recognized. The three criteria most consistently satisfied in the five articles were the clarity of the research objective (QA1), to be exact, providing the research usefulness (QA2), and having an appropriate way (QA3), and these aspects were awarded Y for all. The two criteria most consistently not satisfied of the six items were the explicit comparison of research findings to other similar studies (QA5), and the discussion of limitations (QA6), and these items were usually awarded P or N, as they were not addressed by the author(s).

Table 1: Quality Appraisal Results

Study	QA1	QA2	QA3	QA4	QA5	QA6	Total
Reading Malay literal and metaphorical expressions: An eye tracking study (2020)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	6
'Farm' Animal metaphors in Malay	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	P	5.5

Study	QA1	QA2	QA3	QA4	QA5	QA6	Total
and arabic figurative expressions... (2012)							
The implicit meaning in malay figurative language... (2016)	Y	Y	Y	Y	P	P	5
Understanding The Meaning Of Mathal In Kalilah Wa Dimnah... (2025)	Y	Y	Y	Y	P	N	4.5
Razak Abdul Aziz's Pepatah Episodes... (2023)	Y	Y	Y	P	N	P	4

Yes (Y), Partly (P), No (N)

Source: Adapted From Abouzahra et al. (2020)

Themes

The qualitative synthesis of the retained corpus of literature was developed through thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), which culminated in the generation of 3 overarching themes: (1) Cognitive Processing & Implicit Semantics, (2) Socio-Cultural Identity & Worldview (Akal Budi) & (3) Comparative & Cross-Cultural Conceptualizations. The formulation of these overarching themes succinctly captures the most prominent and recurrent theoretical and empirical motifs conveyed in a broad spectrum of the preferred sample of work. In addition, these themes were derived through a clearly specified set of parameters outlined in the present review, first by adhering to the goal of the review, then explicitly on the primary research questions of Malay analogies on the cognitive schemas and regional differences. The subsections below will offer a comprehensive, in-depth discussion of each overarching theme.

Theme 1: Cognitive Processing and Implicit Semantics

The first prominent theme, Cognitive Processing and Implicit Semantics, stands for the mental schemas, semantic mapping, and psycholinguistic processes that Malay users employ in encoding and decoding figurative language. Here in this review, this dimension acts as a bridge for shifting from structural linguistics to cognitive science to investigate, to be exact, 'how do the Malay cognitive schemes mediate figurative language in the internal and connective pathways to correspond with the metaphor framework'?

The synthesized literature suggests that, in reality, the Malay analogy-related cognitive processes rely solely on the assimilation of implicit semantics resulting from the interplay of the historical, the natural, and the ecological aspects of our daily ventures. The implicit procedure of the said process needs the accoucheur to flesh out the literal vocabularies in Malay and attach them to conclusive socio-cultural consensus. For instance, the semantic mapping in Malay analogies combines communication and cognition through the feeling of shared

commonsense (cultural consensus), which verbally comes out as a cognitive leap from a literal anchor (the natural elements and culinary traditions in Malay society). As such, Malays' conceptual leap of bridging a high degree of lexical cultural anchors to their figurative meaning in Malay society is covariance intensive. Aside from that, the notion of Malay figurative thought involves a semantic map that is biconditional to Sapir-Whorf's hypothesis whereby it considers the natural environment as a seminal allegiance to the web of concepts, the implicit semantics, and the philosophical hypostatization (e.g., epistemology, ethics) embedded in the Malay proverbial system.

When triangulating this evidence across the handful of selected studies, one begins to notice an intriguing point of intersection between linguistic reflex and cognitive burden. Although the descriptive studies of Hamzah and Hassan (2011) and Mansor and Jalaluddin (2016) stipulate the processing of Malay analogies as a fluid sociolinguistic sociocultural reflex bound to its intentionalist language users, the psycholinguistic evidence seems to paint a more complex experience of mental effort (2011) (2016). The eye-tracking study of Tengku and Salehuddin (2020), for instance, assesses the actual cognitive load in processing Malay expressions. Their results consistently revealed that reading Malay metaphorical expressions produced much longer eye fixations compared to reading parallel literal texts, indicating an increased amount of mental effort in processing (Tengku & Salehuddin, 2020). Here, they seem to have produced an important link in the field of linguistic relativity research: although the context and object of analogy are bounded within the Malay conceptual world, the task of deciphering its implicit cognition along the way could elicit a persistent and measurable neural processing load.

These results have several theoretical, practical, and future research implications. Theoretically, the truth is Malay cultural scheme matches well with the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis supports the notion that nations' specific surroundings shape and regulate general cognitive categorization (Hamzah & Hassan, 2011; Mansor & Jalaluddin, 2016). For practical applications, insight into the knowledge intensity needed to comprehend implicit Malay semantics (Tengku & Salehuddin, 2020) aids language learner pedagogical design, as language teachers will probably have to explicitly teach students the culturally embedded persona to navigate the language, for it cannot be learned solely through memorizing vocabulary. And lastly, this theme uncovers a critical obstacle for future research; although Tengku and Salehuddin (2020) have used a quantitative approach, further investigations using a larger neuro-linguistic sample (perhaps using fMRI or additional eye-tracking studies from even more regional participants) will be instrumental in unearthing the truth of the Malay cognitive schema.

Theme 2: Socio-Cultural Identity and Worldview (Akal Budi)

The second main theme is Socio-Cultural Identity and Worldview (Akal Budi). For this particular work of systematic literature review, the term pertains to the Indian-based domesticated native wisdom, collective values, and socio-cultural wisdom/reasoned knowledge in Malay called Akal Budi, contained in the logical structure and usage of analogy, proverb (peribahasa), and metaphor. This theme introduces the analytical focus into the big group/macro-group/"core" of the communal level, where figurative language is viewed as an active repository of Malay socio-cultural identity and the ontological principle about how the individual community perceives reality.

The analysis of the selected papers this way reveals that the Malay analogies are closely related to the traditional worldviews involving harmony with nature, social solidarity, and the indirectness of politeness (*kesantunan*). Hamzah and Hassan (2011) explain that it is never coincidental that the words used in Malay proverbs and idioms are carefully selected from the indigenous lives and environments of the local dwellers to convey the moral and ethical message to the in-group. The background meaning within the analogical nuances, as Mansor and Jalaluddin (2016) note, not only enables community members to communicate hostile concepts and abstract ideas but also acts as a socio-cultural code in which criticism or advice can be directed to the afflicted party without loss of face.

Yet, when the different evidence within the different contexts of all the studied literatures is examined, a strong counter-hegemonic trajectory appears within the development and uses of Akal Budi. As an example, while consensus studies on all of the indigenous studies manifested their uses of analogies for morals and harmony (Hamzah & Hassan, 2011; Mansor & Jalaluddin, 2016), recent literature within this dataset has shown how they are being reestablished within dynamic and high-performance contexts. For example, the analysis of the metaphors in Malaysian 2023 Indonesian Supply Bills proved that contemporary politicians construct their arguments upon nationally ingrained metaphors, like ships on the way or farmers that all fed the same cow, to reach common views and confer their political powers. Because of this, the applicability of Akal Budi may be contradictory or merely separate between the traditional and the modern usages, respectively.

Also, the mechanisms that keep Akal Budi alive are not necessarily confined solely within linguistic or rhetorical realms, as seen. The literature shows a multimodal flexibility in the communication of this concept. The 2023 research study on Razak Abdul Aziz's *Pepatah Episodes* reveals that a cognitive and cultural schema of Malay proverbs can be smoothly translated into an audible art form, in particular to contemporary classical piano music. This cross-modal translation mechanism can demonstrate that Akal Budi still lives as a fluid conception, which also depends on a mutual cultural resonance rather than an archaeological literary memorial only.

Variations in contexts of use, i.e., traditional linguistics, modern political language, and the performing arts, reveal interesting theoretical and practical consequences. Theoretically, the findings point in the direction of one thing: the tradition's highly adaptable Weltview, wherein the metaphorical concepts investigated readily accommodate all the identified contemporary adaptations without compromising their pre-existing cultural authority. Practically, this socio-cultural cohesion imposed by tradition is an important consideration for political scientists, media specialists, and intercultural trainers aspiring to understand and communicate with a Malay audience. To further the thematic and theorizations, subsequent research should focus on how the technologies of the present and future media conditions are transforming the traditional idiomatic expressions of Akal Budi, mostly among young modern inhabitants with their insular and mediated exposure to the environmental sources of the analogies in question.

Theme 3: Comparative and Cross-Cultural Conceptualizations

The third key theme is Comparative and Cross-Cultural Conceptualizations. In the system of this systematic literature review, this theme explores the extent to which the cognitive and cultural schemas embedded within Malay analogies are similar to or diverge from the target linguistic and cultural conventions, in this particular case, the Arabic traditions in the dataset.

Moving the analytical focus outward, this theme explores the culturally relative aspect of metaphorical conceptualization and examines the intricate mechanisms to transfer indigenous knowledge to contrasting sociolinguistic settings.

A synthesis of the selected literature summarizes that culturally dissimilar rings may very well share similar hypothesised characterization of the world and utilize common cognitive processes to formulate analogy (i.e., mapping the behaviors onto the concrete image into an abstraction), but that the mapping that relies on anchoring on the origin world is highly determined by the politics of the region, time period, and the environment at hand. For instance, Rashid, Hajimaming, & Muhammad (2012), in a comprehensive analysis of farm animal metaphors, found that there were exceedingly diverging disparate onics in the cognitive conceptualization of specific animals, which were then labeled and manipulated to transmit human values or moral stances of animals. Similarly, Tuan Mat (2025), in a thesis, investigates this "stylistic point" between the cultures of analyze put *Mathal* (Arab proverbs) into *Kalilah wa Dimnah* (Malay classical text) and found the following: "a thorough literal translation of the Arabic figurative speech could be directly understood by the Malay reader but would be too artificial to refer to its language style and shall not ostension the Malay reader, or their stylistic appearance " (Tuan Mat, 2025)

In the cross-cultural evidence, a tension surfaces between the literal semantic equivalence and authentic cultural equivalence. Tuan Mat (2025), for example, aside from illuminating the futility of translating a culture line-by-line, brings strong evidence that the most successful cross-cultural verbal interaction does not simply look past the literal image to search for correspondence, but instead strokes the ego of the source images by utilizing 'fits' with Malay proverbs or *peribahasa*. Even if the literal symbols—such as the specific flora, fauna, or weather phenomena—differ entirely between the Arabic *Mathal* and the Malay proverb, the underlying semantic intent and moral instruction can remain perfectly aligned. Underlying this theme's core mechanism is the separation of conceptual metaphor from its sociocultural surroundings. The principles and practices of the agrarian lifetime of the Malay worldview (Akal Budi), produce a distinct metaphorical vocabulary that naturally contrasts with the arid, desert-based environments that historically informed Arabic metaphors (Rashid et al., 2012).

Still, the cross-cutting nature of these different indigenous epistemologies has their implications, both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, these comparative results affirm the limits of linguistic relativity, suggesting that while all humans share the metaphoric mechanism, local neural schemas are logocentrically constrained by local environments. Practically, this empirical evidence is very crucial for language learning and translation studies, as Rashid et al. (2012) argue, it is not enough for learners to resort to direct lexical translation; language teachers should explicitly teach the target culture's worldview through their target language education. Similarly, as Tuan Mat opines, the translators' imperative is to look for cultural equivalence, not 'aural-meaning equivalent, ' if foreign texts are to be understood in a Moro Malay context (Tuan Mat, 2025). Still, one fundamental weakness of the literature is that future cross-linguistic investigations should extend beyond this academic model. The eastern Malay mentality vis-à-vis the Western or Eastern European Malayiality system would delineate a more complete web of Indo-Malay conceptual constellations globally.

Conclusion

This systematic literature review applied a PRISMA-guided thematic analysis to critically synthesize existing scholarship on how Malay cognitive and socio-cultural perspectives map and culturally conceptualize reality through the use of analogies. The synthesis reveals that Malay figurative language is intrinsically bound to indigenous environmental interactions, demanding specific cognitive mechanisms to decode implicit semantics deeply rooted in the cultural worldview, or *Akal Budi*. Furthermore, while traditional metaphorical schemas historically served to maintain social harmony and indirect politeness, contemporary applications demonstrate their highly adaptive capacity as strategic rhetorical tools in modern political discourse and cross-modal artistic expressions. Comparatively, the literature underscores the strict boundaries of linguistic relativity, confirming that translating Malay analogies across distinct cultural epistemologies requires navigating profound semantic divergences rather than relying on literal linguistic equivalence. This review offers a distinct original contribution by bridging structural linguistics with cognitive science, theoretically validating that indigenous socio-ecological contexts actively dictate neurological conceptual categorization. Methodologically, it consolidates a fragmented body of descriptive literature into a cohesive, three-tiered thematic framework that clearly isolates cognitive mechanics from socio-cultural outputs. Practically, these insights provide actionable frameworks for translation studies, intercultural communication, and language pedagogy, emphasizing the critical necessity of explicitly teaching culturally bound worldview schemas rather than mere vocabulary. Historically, scholarship on Malay figurative language has been largely confined to interpretive, localized textual analyses, leaving a critical gap in our empirical understanding of wider regional cognitive variations; this review helps narrow that gap by systematically mapping the existing theoretical landscape to expose precise methodological and geographic deficits. To effectively advance this emerging field, future scholars should employ mixed-method survey designs to investigate the hypothesis that modern urbanization has significantly eroded the comprehension of traditional agrarian analogies among younger, Generation Z Malay demographics in metropolitan centers. Additionally, researchers must utilize experimental neuro-linguistic methods, such as fMRI or advanced eye-tracking, to empirically measure the physiological cognitive load required for diasporic Malay populations to process indigenous metaphorical expressions. Finally, comparative cross-sectional studies should be conducted across the broader Nusantara region—specifically contrasting Indonesian, Bruneian, and Malaysian conceptualizations—to determine how geopolitical boundaries influence the linguistic evolution of shared ancestral metaphors. Decoding the cognitive architecture of indigenous analogies transcends mere linguistic curiosity; it is a vital imperative for preserving localized intellectual heritage against the homogenizing forces of globalized communication, ensuring that unique cultural worldviews remain vibrant, understood, and intellectually resilient in an increasingly interconnected society.

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