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I-RoLE 2023

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF
RESEARCH ON LANGUAGE EDUCATION 2023

**EMBRACING CHANGE:
EMANCIPATING THE LANDSCAPE
OF RESEARCH IN LINGUISTIC,
LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE**

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KRISTANG

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ABSTRACT:

An endangered language is defined as a language that is likely to become extinct in the future. In Malaysia, a multicultural country, one language is facing endangerment. A Melaka-Portuguese creole, Papiá Kristáng is listed as a severely endangered language in the Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger by UNESCO for its low number of speakers. The local community is striving to revive and preserve the language and prevent its extinction, but greater contribution is needed to support their mission. This coffee table e-book about Papiá Kristáng is an effort in aiding the survival of the language. The production of this e-book includes deep review of literature and with Kristáng experts. Besides that, the e-book is designed with Kristáng as the theme and it is accessible on an e-book website. The coffee table e-book is yet to be published; however, it is complete with the history of Kristang, the threats it faces, and the efforts taken to revive the language.

Keywords: Kristang, Papiá Kristáng, Melaka creole, language preservation

1. INTRODUCTION

A small community in Ujong Pasir, Melaka, is still speaking Papiá Kristáng, a variant of the Portuguese language to this day. The Melaka-Portuguese creole, better known as Kristang, is the mother tongue of the Eurasian community in Ujong Pasir. The creole developed during the occupation of Melaka by the Portuguese in the 16th century (Hamzah, Kamarudin, Sopian and Sharifudin, 2020). The contact between the Portuguese language and the local languages birthed Kristang to facilitate the communication between the Portuguese settlers and the local people. Nowadays, it is spoken only by the elderly of the community and occasionally by their children and grandchildren. This makes Papiá Kristáng the final variety of the East and South-east Asian creole Portuguese that children still acquire (Baxter and De Silva, 2004).

During the Portuguese occupation, there were severe labour issues in the Asian colonies, so the Portuguese took in local men for maritime trade and military activities (Baxter and De Silva, 2005). To carry out duties and interact with different people, they needed a common language to communicate. Thus, a creole was born through pidgins that existed for specific functions like selling and buying (Holmes, 2013). The pidgins that existed first were based on Portuguese and local languages like Malay, Chinese and Tamil. They developed solely for business and survival during the occupation. With time, the pidgins evolved further when missionary activities introduced local Christian populations with Portuguese cultural and linguistic orientation. Apart from that, some Portuguese men married local women, further strengthening the Melaka-Portuguese creole's growth.

1.1 Statement of problem

Papiá Kristáng started declining when the new priests that followed the Second World War were reported to be less sensitive towards Papiá Kristáng and taught religion using English or Chinese (Baxter and De Silva, 2005; Hamzah, Kamarudin, Sopian and Sharifudin, 2020). In a more modern setting, the language saw a decline in the number of speakers from 1991 to 2001 because of factors like the growth of English, the domain of religion after the Second World War, and socio-economic changes. This means that the Kristang people, especially the younger generation, left the settlement in search of more job opportunities that exposed them to interactions with outsiders and tourists. The job opportunities and interactions meant they need to acquire a decent understanding of English and other languages but Papiá Kristáng .

Today, the awareness of the threats facing Papiá Kristáng has reached beyond the Portuguese Settlement, but more must be done to completely revive and maintain the language. With only a few speakers over the years, Papiá Kristáng rapidly fades along with other changes taking place world wide. Families still speaking the language at the Portuguese Settlement in Melaka voiced their concern over this issue realizing that the language is their identity and culture (AFP, 2019). Therefore, this project proposes to produce a coffee-table e-book as an effort to raise awareness of the existence of the language in hopes to eventually revive and maintain it for a longer time.

1.2 Project Objective

The objective of this project is to produce a coffee table e-book for the public in hopes that the story of Papiá Kristáng can reach a wider audience as an effort to revive and maintain this creole language as an important part of culture representative of its speakers.

1.3 Entrepreneurial Opportunities

The entrepreneurial opportunity of this project is beyond measure of monetary return. Preserving a language is an effort worthy of linguistics and language values that speak volume of the speakers and their culture. With this e-book that is made accessible online, many will soon learn about a language that has existed for a long time but forgotten. Consequently, it will aid in preserving the language as the efforts will not only be limited to Kristang speakers and linguists but also the public.

2. METHODOLOGY

The project development included finding information about the origins of Papiá Kristáng through academic research papers and connecting with experts of the Kristang culture and language. Apart from that, the contents of the project was determined after confirming all sources with the experts. Lastly, the contents were arranged into sections in the e-book using an online software and it was published on an e-book website. The four steps are shown in Figure 1 below.



Figure 1: The 4 steps of e-book development



3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Searching for Literature

Finding related literature for Papiá Kristáng was never easy provided that not many are into research of things in the past especially one with the status of Papiá Kristáng; extinct. However, the search was continued and this included understanding the history and development of the language. Complete understanding of Papiá Kristáng also needs one to understand how a language developed from pidgin to creole and the blend with other local languages that shape the lexical and structure of the language of which according to Hancock (2009) Bahasa Melayu are among the languages that influenced Papiá Kristáng. Textbooks and journal articles are among the references for the literature. Nonetheless, speaking to the experts is inevitable to understand the language better.

3.2 Connecting With Experts

Two experts of the Kristang culture and language were consulted while carrying out this project to ensure accurate information and resources. The first expert is Chef Melba Nunis who specializes in Kristang cuisine. The communication with Chef Melba was entirely online and she shared famous recipes from the Kristang culture which carry similarities to other cultures in Malaysia. For example, the *Keluak* curry and Stir-fried vegetables pay homage to the Indian and Malay cultures in Malaysia.

The next expert is an educator of the Kristang language. Madam Sara Frederica Santa Maria who continued her late father's research on Papiá Kristáng by collaborating with local linguists to produce Papiá Kristáng books. Other efforts of Madam Sara include teaching Papiá Kristáng the children from the Portuguese Settlement every evening at her house. Apart from that, she curates a YouTube channel about Papiá Kristáng for those interested in learning the language. This project therefore, is a complement to the attempt Madam Sara has initiated.

3.3 Determining the Content

The contents of this e-book; Knowing Kristang is based on chronological order of the language development. This is to ease readers in understanding the history and threats facing Papiá Kristáng as well as the culture and efforts taken to revive the creole. Figure 2 and 3 show parts of the e-book developed. The final page has the phrase *mutu merseh* (thank you in the language) on it.

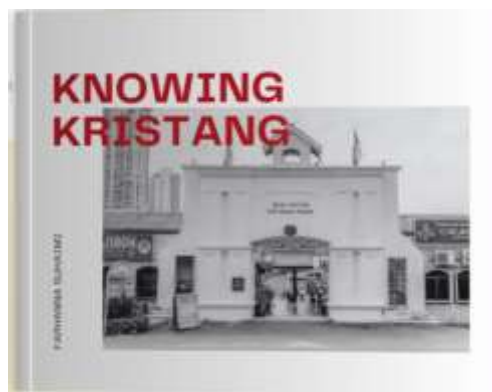


Figure 2: The Front Cover

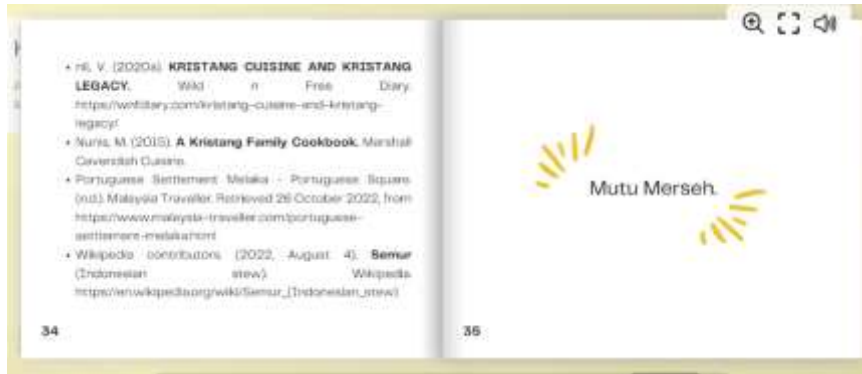


Figure 3: The End of the Book

3.4 Designing and Publishing

The e-book was designed with simplicity in mind. The purpose of this book is to inform and educate readers about a foreign language with pictures to aid the readers in visualizing a culture and community that might be unknown to them. The design incorporated red and yellow accents to symbolize the colourful traditional Kristang wear as shown in Figure 4 and Figure 5. Lastly, the book is published on an e-book website that is easily accessible to readers.

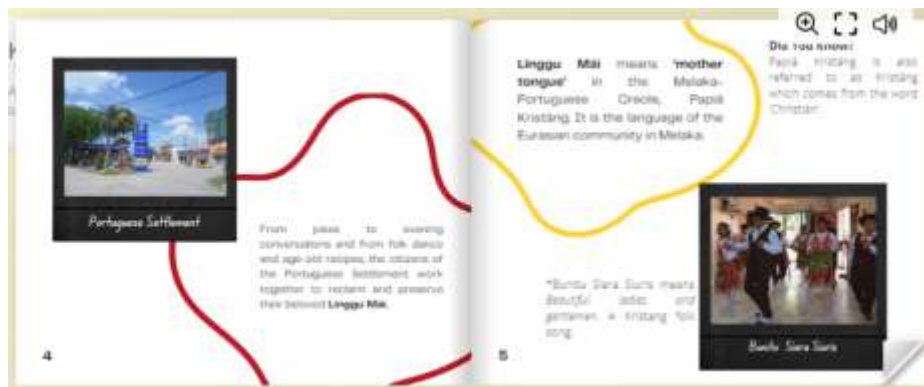


Figure 4: The Introduction



Figure 5: The Content



4. CONCLUSION

Papiá Kristáng is actually slowly surviving in this decade after more people, especially in the Kristáng community are aware of its endangered status. It is learned that when a minority group stays closely together and the frequency of interaction is high, the efforts of preserving and maintaining their language and culture will be optimized. Hence, the Kristang community in Ujong Pasir, Melaka are actively trying to preserve Papiá Kristáng. For example, they encourage tourism to the Portuguese Settlement especially during the Feast Day of St. Peter (Festa San Pedro) to engage and learn more about their culture and traditions. Another example is by teaching the Kristang language to the children in the community. In conclusion, Papiá Kristáng has a chance of survival if the efforts to revive and preserve the language are continued with institutional support.

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