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

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Noble Resort Hotel, Melaka
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MY MALAY FABLES

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ABSTRACT:

Folktales are stories that have been passed down from generation to generation by our forefathers. In the absence of digital books, it is possible the content of the stories may have changed over time as they were passed down orally. However, with the advancement of modern technology and the empowerment of Western culture, it is believed that Malay folktales are being forgotten. As a result, “My Malay Fables” was created which will be available in an e-book format. It consists of three Malay folktales and it features illustrations. The study aims to expose the public to Malay folktales especially lesser-known stories in the hopes that it will attract them to read them digitally. The result of the survey shows the respondents’ familiarity with Malay folklore in general, although they agreed that these folktales are slowly losing their popularity. The implication of this innovation is that folktales can be used in the teaching and learning of the English language as Malaysians and non-Malaysians can be familiarised with Malay folktales. In short, Malay folktales can be preserved for future generations using modern technology.

Keywords: Folktales, Malaysian folktales, younger generations, E-book, Malay folktales.

1. INTRODUCTION

Folktales are stories passed down from generation to generation by our ancestors. They have been inherited from our forefathers for a long period of time (Norfarizah, Mohamad Omar and Ahmad Amirul, 2018). Furthermore, they also contain valuable life lessons for living a good life. As it is passed down generationally verbally, it is possible the content of the story might have changed. Some folktales are believed to be myths and some of them are also believed to be true such as the folktale “Mahsuri”. These folktales embody a person’s identity. However, it is believed that folktales are gradually fading from society due to the development of modern technology, which is heavily influenced by Western culture. Malay folktales are the most well-known literature preserved in Malay composition and verbal storytelling (Ninot, 2021). Prohibits, knowledge and tradition have been passed down generationally in several ways, written, symbolic among ethnic and religious populations around the Southeast Asia region. (Norfarizah et al., 2018)

As a result, *My Malay Fables* was created. It is an e-book that contains three Malay folktales: two less familiar stories and one familiar story which are *Hikayat Puteri Saadong*, *Telaga Tujuh*, and the well-known *Bawang Putih Bawang Merah*. The goal of this innovation is to expose Malaysians, particularly the younger generation, and non-Malaysians who would be interested in reading Malay folklore. The theme of the e-book is inspired by the “old fairytale theme” with self-illustrations included. The elements incorporated in this project are translation and new media language in terms of content design. Based on the aim, the objectives of the innovation are presented below:



1.1 Objectives

1. To develop an e-book of Malay folktales for Malaysians and non-Malaysians.
2. To translate Malay folktales into the English language.
3. To investigate readers' perception of Malay folktales.

1.2 Entrepreneurial Opportunities

There's value of commercialisation for *My Malay Fables*. It can be marketed digitally at the price of RM 5 on any platform. Digital e-books are often found sold on various platforms such as Amazon, Kindle, Wattpad, Popular, and other platforms available across the Internet. The book managed to be sold on Instagram and gained RM 90. The e-book is suitable for primary school students between the ages of 10 to 12 years old in Malaysia and can be used in teaching and learning of English. Additionally, it can also be used as an extensive reading material in literature classes for both Malaysian and non-Malaysian schools. These folktales also may be adapted into roleplays, dramas or movies. According to WWI Virtual Academy, film adaptations have also worked well for less-known books and it has helped them to reach a wider audience. Relatively, this will potentially give advantage to the stories included in this e-book.

Furthermore, it also has the potential as an audiobook, where readers read to their listeners. There have been several audiobooks made available on the platform YouTube, Spotify or podcasts, the majority of which are free. Along with that, a paid live reading session can also be held on any platform, with the local people paying only RM 0.50 and foreigners paying USD one to participate. This also opens an opportunity to approach those with disabilities. Johnson (n.d.) stated that audiobooks have conventionally been used by second-language learners, students with learning disabilities, and readers and non-readers who struggle with reading. Relatively, it is also helpful to those with visual impairments.

1.3 Literature Review

Tan (2020) reports that younger Malaysians are mainly familiar with Western fairytales as well as Egyptian and Greek stories. In addition, she claims that many Malaysians are more familiar with legends from other cultures than their own. Norfarizah et al., (2018) believe that Malay folklore is being drowned by Western culture. Additionally, she also believes that younger generations are more interested in Western culture than their own due to the modern innovation of technology that is heavily influenced by Western people.

As a result, researchers have developed several ways to promote Malay folklore into today's market. One of the ways would be through an interactive tale motion comic. It is believed that allowing the readers to interact with the story and have full control would attract them to folklore and legends (Norfarizah et al., 2018). Moreover, a game named *CERITERA*, based on *Hikayat Hang Tuah* was created by Wan Fatimah, Aliza, and Fathin Suraya. *Ceritera* was created to assess cognitive learning using numerical, problem-solving, comprehension, and recall memory techniques (Wan Fatimah, Aliza, Fathin Suraya, 2016).

2. METHODOLOGY

In creating the *My Malay Fables* e-book, there were 6 phases involved. Below is a flow chart that illustrates the overall process of producing the e-book.



Figure 1 Flow chart

As shown in the flowchart above, in the first phase, ideas were generated through readings from past studies. Next, a pre-survey questionnaire was distributed to help gather information on folktales the respondents were familiar or less familiar with.

In the second phase, the folktales were selected and translated. The criteria for the selection of the folktales is that they must contain moral values, are appropriate for students and the general public as well as based on respondents' familiarity.

Phase three involved illustrating and colouring. As it is a children's e-book, everything that comes with it should be simple as well as eye-catching at the same time. Illustrations are one of the most important elements in telling a story as it allows children to explore their imagination and expand their creativity, especially when it comes to telling stories or folktales. In total, 11 illustrations were made and then meticulously coloured.

The next phase four was designing the content of e-book. With the use of Canva, the frontcover of the book was also meticulously designed with the "old fairytale" theme, with a few inspirations and references from the Internet. The theme allows the e-book to appear different from other illustrated books. The inner look of the e-book involves mini elements used on Canva that suits the theme perfectly.



Figure 2 Instagram account used to promote the e-book

The fifth phase was promoting the e-book on Instagram. To attract readers, Instagram was used as a platform, which is also used by many business owners. Posts related to Malay folklore were often shared time-to-time along with 'sneak peeks' to further anticipate the readers on the release of the e-book. The e-book was sold for two weeks at RM 5 and received

a total of RM 90 to date from 18 customers overall.

The final phase was the evaluation of the product. The e-book was evaluated to investigate readers' perception on the Malay folktales selected. A survey Google Form was distributed to gather information on readers' perception. Readers were also asked on their general opinion after receiving the e-book.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Findings of the Survey

A survey questionnaire was also distributed which received 52 respondents in total. The survey was to gather information on the respondents' interest in folktales, where they have learnt about folktales and their familiarity with Malay folktales. As shown in Figure 3, majority of the respondents responded that they are familiar with Malay folktales.

Have you heard of any Malay folklores?
 52 responses

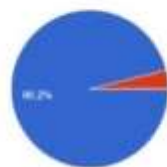


Figure 3

Which of these folklores are you familiar with?
 52 responses

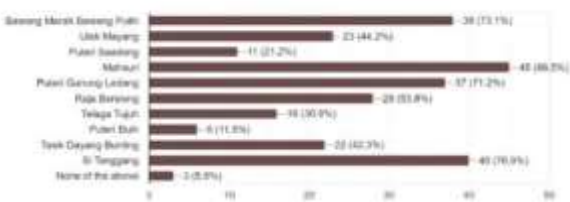


Figure 4

Moreover, a list of Malay folktales was prepared in the survey. The folktale list in the poll consists of both lesser familiar stories and more familiar stories. Respondents were given the option to choose the stories they are familiar with. Based on the findings as shown in Figure 4, the story that was the most familiar among the respondents was *Mahsuri* with 86.5% and the story that was the least familiar among the respondents was *Puteri Buih* with 11.5%. Therefore, information was gathered from the poll above in choosing the stories to be included in the e-book. The folktales chosen for the e-book were determined by the responses received on the familiarity or non-familiarity of the stories.

Do you think Malay folklores are being forgotten?
 52 responses

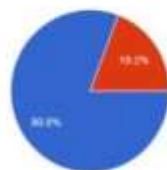


Figure 5

Would you like Malay folklores to be translated into English?
 52 responses

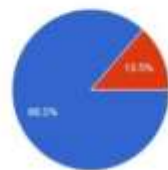


Figure 6

In addition, in response to the question if they think Malay folktales are being forgotten, 80.8% of the respondents claimed 'Yes' while 19.2% said 'No'. The purpose of this question was to actually prove the study that shows Malay folktales are indeed gradually fading in today's society due to technological development and the over-empowerment of the Western culture on social media platforms. Hence, it further proves that the e-book is necessary to be developed in today's society.

Last but not least, in order to receive positive responses in creating this e-book, respondents were asked about their interest in reading English-translated Malay folktales. As a

result, 86.5% of the respondents answered “Yes” meanwhile 13.5% of the respondents answered “No”. This question serves the purpose of the e-book that is necessary in today’s society. Although there have been a lot of translated Malay literature materials, however, less familiar stories were not exposed. Therefore, with the majority of positive responses, *My Malay Fables* was created.

3.1 Results of ‘My Malay Fables’ E-Book

Below are screenshots of *My Malay Fables* illustrations, the design of the cover page and inner pages, and the Instagram account used to promote the e-book.



Figure 7 Sample of Illustrations made: Telaga Tujuh, Bawang Putih Bawang Merah & Puteri Saadong



Figure 8 The book cover and inner pages

3.1 Readers’ Perceptions of the Folktales

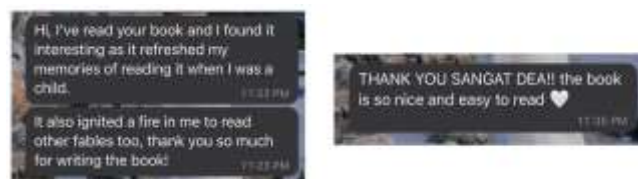


Figure 9 Feedback from readers through WhatsApp

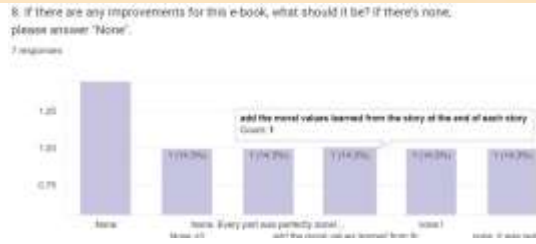


Figure 10 Feedback through Google Form

Readers' perceptions were gathered to gain feedback regarding the e-book. After distributing the e-book and after their purchase, readers were asked on their opinion generally regarding the e-book and a customer answered that his memories of him reading as a child were refreshed and inspired him to read more fables. Another customer also responded that the e-book was nice and easy to read, which is one of the purposes of the content of the e-book.

A feedback form was also prepared and distributed among readers after they had completed their reading. The feedback form also comprised an open-ended question where readers can provide their suggestions if there is any room for improvement regarding the e-book. A reader responded that the e-book should include moral values learned at the end of each story.

4. CONCLUSION

Folklore in general should not be overlooked by society because it represents a person's background and identity. Aside from that, it contains valuable life lessons for living a good life. Moreover, Malaysians should value the beauty their own folklores hold over Western culture. With *My Malay Fables*, it is hoped that less familiar stories will be recognised by the general public, particularly primary school teachers and parents, along with Malay folktales to be brought into the market digitally. Other than that, the e-book is applicable in the teaching and learning of the English language as well as to familiarise Malaysians and non-Malaysians with Malay folktales. In summary, this innovation can help preserve the Malay culture and identity.

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