

Understanding Islamic Culture Through Learning Malay as a Foreign Language

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Abstract. Malay is taught as a foreign language at the Department of Malay-Indonesian Translation and Interpretation, Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, South Korea. During the teaching and learning sessions, various words and terms are introduced to students to give them as much knowledge and vocabulary. The words and terms introduced include general and special terms that represent the diverse needs and interests in communicating and interacting using the Malay. Observation showed that many Malay words and terms used either directly or indirectly, such as prayer, fasting, obligatory, halal and scarves have sparked the curiosity of students about Islam and Muslims. Description of the application of foreign influence in the formation of a Malay word, including Arabic, English and Sanskrit has generated many questions related to the phenomenon. The explanation of the historical background and the general information about Malaysia and Malay language open space for students to get a clearer picture about Islam, who had only read in the media or hear the views from the perspective of their community only. This study aims to explore the knowledge of Malay language students in Islamic through linguistic experience. The method used is to distribute reading material in the Malay language that contains words and terms related to Islam, as a part of reading activity (ISP Nation & Stuart Webb, 2011). Few activities are carried out to test the students' awareness about the Islamic relate words contained in the materials they read. This pilot study is a starter for a larger research scale on Malay as a foreign language and its contribution in understanding Islam among learner.

1. Introduction

As a Muslim, author is wearing hijab and cover all parts of the body as requested by Islam, perform prayer and fasting; food always creates a big curiosity among student in two situations: daily and during fasting. The pork has been always Korean favorite food (according to Yummie Lee, 20) and they show their concern on this matter especially about the difficulties for an author and other Muslim staff to find a halal food in our town area (Yongin). Student taught only the pork that Muslims cannot consume, they don't understand why chicken, lamb or beef also cannot be consumed by Muslim in certain condition. During fasting they are worried about hungry and thirsty, and during summer they are impressed with Muslim's women attires. The Department of Malay-Indonesian Translation and Interpretation (DMIT)'s student actually has been introduced generally about Malay, Muslim and Islamic culture by the other local lecturer (Korean) and Indonesian in the specific courses about it. Because of that, they have an idea what is Islam is about, one of the students asking about praying and masjid (mosque). There is shown that the student has a knowledge about Islam and its practices, but sometimes they're getting confused when saw other Muslim (as they thought all people from

Malaysia, Indonesia and Middle East must be a Muslim) are not practicing or doing things forbidden by Islam. The answer given to this question is a confession that not all who declare they are Muslim are fully understood about Islam and practice an Islamic culture as a way of life. Muslim nowadays faces difficulties image on media that may give a misunderstanding to anybody whose only depends on that information of sources. The indirectly information and explanation blended into language learning activities hopes could help the student have a better understanding about Islam and its cultures.

2. Background of the study

Courses related to Malay language are not only focused on acquisition. Student year two or above could or have to choose a Malay course that covered about literature, media, multimedia and linguistic. Those courses are offered to help student explore and understand more about Malay language in the specific area that are related to the language development and vice versa. For this purpose also, HUFs was import a native speaker to teach and expose a student towards the original language's accents and cultures. This study focus on 29 students who register for Understanding Malay-Indonesian (after this Understanding Malay, 4 students), Intermediate Multimedia Malay-Indonesian (after this Multimedia, 6 students) and Elementary Reading and Writing Malay-Indonesian (after this, Elementary; 23 students) in Spring Semester (September-December 2013). This study aims to explore the knowledge of Malay language students of Islamic cultures through language activity. Besides exploring the student's existing knowledge baru (Ahmad Arifin Sapar et.al, 2013) about Islamic culture, this study wants to explain and discuss any questions or confusing about Islamic matters. Language activity would give students a space to read about Malay writing in actual uses, find a new corpus of vocabulary in a specific theme, experience a variety form or sentences and gain an information about the theme that they are reading off. In this case, the theme is about Islamic character which appear in the drama and the Malay film that critics of the President of Women Research Malaysia as not suitable to Islam-Malay images.

Malay language has an Islamic culture in it, the world view of Malay based on Islam [Hashim Haji Musa, 2009]. Islamic culture basically is a way of life for its believer, a combination of social life and values based on Islamic teachings that arise and practiced among them when formed a living nation with a life of their collective defense and the orderly [Muhammad Uthman, 2013]. History has shown, Islamisation was empowerment the Malay language when it has been a tool to explain about Islam to Malay people and other society during an early of its arrival at Malay Land or now Malaysia. "The result is enriched in the vocabulary of the language, because the propagation of the religion of Islam utilizes the instrument of language to explain central concepts such as the nature of God as well as a projection of the basic elements which form the world view of Islam" [Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas' 2013]. Arabic loan words significantly related to an Islam and its cultures that Malay people has been accepted it as their religion since the 13th century [Hashim HJ Musa, 2009, Ibtisam Abdullah, 2012]. Based on the study by Ayatroheadi [2002] and Noresah [2006], words such as *awal* (early), *akhir* (end), *nafas* (breath), *kudrat* (energy), *fardu* (obligatory), *was-was* (anxious), *jiran* (neighbor), *iman* (faith), *salam* (greetings), *mutakhir* (current) and *tadbir* (governance) is an Arabic word that has long absorbed into the Malay language so that the Malay community did not realize that these words are loan words from Arabic [Ibtisam Abdullah, 2002]. According to Mat Taib Pa [2012] as cited by Ahmad Arifin Sapar et.al [2013], amount of Arabic loanwords in Malay language in between 1100 to 2000 words. Besides an Arabic, English and Sanscrit has a dominating influence towards Malay language vocabularies expanded.

3. Methodology

This study uses a reading activity [ISP Nation & Stuart Webb, 2011] as an approach to explore about student's existing knowledge of Islamic culture and to get student have an informative about the

particular issues. This approach uses an article with an Islamic theme which embedded is an Arabic loan words and others language base terminology. The focus is on the article's theme or issue and the Arabic loan words. There are two approaches in reading activity that differ between two groups of the students. For the first group (Understanding Malay and Multimedia student) the activity is including reading for understanding about the issues that highlight in the article. This is followed by a question - answer session related to the difficulties or new words that they find in the article. The second approach for the second group (Elementary) is almost same to the first group: read the article (same article to the first group) but following with a language activity. The approach in this study is planned with an awareness about the student's religion or believe that was different with the subject or theme of the article. Therefore, the article is not directly an explanation about Islam and its culture but its have a connection with an entertainment issue, its about character and image that was shown by the drama and Malay films. Here are the steps for those activities:

First Group

- i. Read the article to have an overview and info about Islamic culture content.
- ii. Find the difficult or not understand's words: for correct meaning and more understanding about the related aspect.
- iii. Explanation about the Arabic loan word [Asmah Haji Omar, 2008] in Malay by researcher: meaning and spelling differences.
- iv. Find an Arabic loan word by referring to the list provided by Ahmad Arifin Sapar et.al [2013], *Wikipedia.com* [2013] and *Pusat Rujukan Persuratan Melayu@DBP* [2013].
- v. Discuss/explain any Islamic matter that coins by the student and that were mentioned or listed in the article.

Second Group

- i. Explain briefly about the distributed article: Islamic issues and loan word using in Malay language including Arabic and English.
- ii. Read and find the English loan word: the aims is to encourage student to read and having an idea about the article (English is a second language beside Mandarin for Korean and teaches at early ages).
- iii. Find an Arabic loan word by referring to the list provided by Ahmad Arifin Sapar et.al [2013], *Wikipedia.com* [2013] and *Pusat Rujukan Persuratan Melayu@DBP* [2013].
- iv. Explain the meaning and pronunciation
- v. Detect the similarities and spelling differences
- vi. Write five (5) question in Malay language regarding to the article.

4. Results/Finding And Discussion

First Group: The reading session successfully encourages the student to ask a question and gave their opinion, speaking and using a new vocabulary, sharing an experience about Islamic culture, asking for more explanation about certain Islamic law/sharia, Muslim life style, Islamic country and etc. Student in this group, basically have a knowledge about Islam, there is a course which teaches or introduce about Islam including a principle of the religion. But from their feedback during this reading session is they found it's difficult to understand/remember certain terminology because it includes an Arabic word or terms. All students read the article and they are aware its about Islam and Malay on screen (drama and film). In this reading activity the purpose is to introduce them to the Islamic principles in various aspects as listed in the article. This activity is done as a part of the syllabus which is focused on understanding Malay language and the Malay which lies or hide behind.

During this reading activity, the author is seated together with student group and help them to find the correct meaning for those difficult words, also introduce to them about the article's subject focus. This is the moment where student started asking more about the meaning and the practices in the real world, especially at Malaysia and Indonesia for particular words and terms. Beside learnt about Islam in classes, the student also having a life experience when they are in Indonesia, Malaysia and some other places. Media also played a big role to give a student an image about Islam and its society. Some of the questions listed is from their own experience, media and other source information including friends and academic staff. Information about Islamic culture has been sharing with student through discussion and question-answer as listed (Table 1). This resulted or derived from question about new/difficult words and directly question, opinion or argument by students:

Table 1: Discussion and question-answer session

Words/Issues	Student question/source of information/experience	Explanation according to Islamic view
Shake hand between man and women	K-Pop singer shake hands with Malays fan (male singer with female fan and vice versa). Source: Media	Shake hand between non consanguineous (mahram/muhrim) are forbidden. ¹ But Islam also not allowed Muslim to embarrassed others. Therefore Muslim should avoid from the action politely.
Proper language	The meaning of the 'Bahasa Melayu Tinggi' (high standard Malay language) and the differences between language using or teaches in the class. Student referring to his experience listen and saw a Muslim's husband and wife fight each other in public areas. Source: Article	Character, as suggest by the article's author must use a proper language or the high standard Malay language whenever speaking to each other, avoided using a rude or impolite slang, tones and words. A Muslim must use or speak with a proper language.
Shaman	Source: Article	Shaman in this case is a person whose has a skill to cure a certain illness with <i>mantera</i> (sermon) and evil spirits. This is forbidden by Islam and its call <i>syirik</i> or someone who trust/believe or ask for help from other than Allah (God).
Muslim custom in certain ceremony/situation: kissing and wedding ceremony	Entertainment/Culture Source: Article	Kissing: Husband and wife are encouraged to be a romantic couple but cannot show off in public like non Muslim do, including kissing (mouth to mouth). But but some film or drama still shows this kind of acting in their scene using the camera trick. This is still not allowed. Wedding ceremony: <i>Bersanding</i> (a married couple seated on the stage or specific place during the wedding reception) is not an Islamic culture, its become Malay's tradition carried from Hindu-Buddha, before the arrival of Islam.
The Five Pillar of Islam: verbal solemnization of the <i>Kalimah shahadah</i> , prayer (<i>solat</i>), fasting, alms-giving (<i>zakat</i>), and pilgrimage to Mecca (Hashim Haji Musa, 2009)	Prayer position and movement: Student concern about the difficulties and the hard position perform especially during the seated that required a specific skill combination of the whole body. Fasting and prayer practices among Muslims: one of the student found	Korean's Buddha prayer in the temple in front of the Buddha statue/picture; Muslim can pray anywhere along as the place is clean including masjid and house. Muslim's prayer direction: facing to kiblat/Kaabah in Mecca, Saudi Arabia; a Muslim has been trained to practice all Islam's five requirements at the early age so basically all Muslims have no problem to perform the prayer

¹ Ustaz Fathul Bari Mat Jahya. November 5, 2012. Haram berjabat tangan lelaki & wanita bukan mahram. <http://ustazfathulbari.wordpress.com/2012/11/05/haram-berjabat-tangan-lelaki-wanita-bukan-mahram/>

	<p>her family driver in Indonesia, with is a Muslim, are not fasting during Ramadhan and she ha never seen or detected his perform prayer. She has a maid that practices all the devotion, as she could see. Beside that, the church in Indonesia advises his people to respect other Muslims brotherhood during Ramadhan for not eating outside or in front of them. The lack of Islamic devotion by her family’s driver compared to their maid has put her in confusion.</p> <p>Source: Live experience and Islam/Malay culture courses</p>	<p>with the correct position but still have a consideration for those unable because of sickness.</p> <p>All Muslims are obligatory to perform all the devotion, it sinned towards Allah if they neglected the obligation. Unfortunately, there are many levels of practices and unpracticed, obeyed and disobeyed, understood, misunderstood and not understood among Muslim around the world towards an Islamic principles, law and cultures.</p> <p>Author had explained about <i>zakat</i> as a way for Muslim who has an certain amount an income within the time as stated in al-Quran, to give or share with others, especially the poor, orphan, traveler (musafir) and some other category.</p>
Plastic surgery	<p>Student found many of the client or patient in the plastic surgery center, where she works as a translator, are coming from South East Asia including Malaysia and Indonesia.</p> <p>Source: Live experience from industry</p>	<p>Plastic surgery is forbidden by Islam unless it is for medical purposes not for cosmetic or beauty factor. People not allowed to change the originality of their body created by Allah but its possible and permissible of medicated reason.</p>
Aurat	<p>Meaning of the word; Male student asked if he allowed to doing/give a hair treatment to a Muslim’s woman because he want to start that kind of business in Malaysia or Indonesia in the future.</p>	<p>The body part that must be covered by suitable clothes from the eyes of non mahram/muhrim. There are different <i>aurat</i> between man and women. Women must cover all their body except face and hands while man is from navel to knee.</p>

Second Group: Elementary

Strategy or approach for this group is totally different with the first group because of their different level in language acquisition. Students in this group are still in first year of studying after only get through their first semester. That means they are only having one class about Malay language which is Basic Reading and Writing Malay-Indonesian. Approach for this group more focus on language activity, starting with the simple introduction about the article and the purpose of use the article as a tool for learning Malay language. The article is a complainer, advice and suggests by Yang Mulia (Your Highness) Puan Tengku Nurhusni bt Tengku Ab Razak, Chairman of Women Research Centre Malaysia to an online newspaper, *harakahdaily.com*. Her writing is about a Malay character in the drama and Malay films that she called as Islam-Melayu (Islamic-Malay). According to her, the character is embarrassing and cannot be a good example of an Islamic-Malay to the audience. Instead of criticizing on the character she also listed an example of good personality, action and attitude that should put on the screen. The article was chosen because it doesn't directly explain about Islamic culture or law (sharia) but criticized on characters appears in Malay drama aired on Malaysia’s television especially on Malay language channels.

Reading and language activities for Second Group’s student manages to coins few questions about Islam as listed in the table below (Table 2), identified Arabic word-loans,² create 15 questions about Islamic culture extracted from the reading article. Question from Table 3 created by students for the ‘write question sentence’ activity. From 23 students of this group, this study received 15 questions related to Islam. This is relatively a small amount because every student should prepare 5 questions by each person. This is mean, the level of student understanding about the article’s idea or

theme of Islamic culture only 13.04%. Most of the questions they created have been more focus on roles of media, director and academician, concept of unhealthy culture and character types. Through language activity student has been practicing or doing an exercise about topic teaches in the syllabus, while this study could have seen their skill of the particular aspect. Table 3 is presented a list of student's question sentences about Islamic culture and sample of the correct sentences.

Table 2: Questions by student

Question from student	Explanation/Answer
How Arabic comes to Malaysia or Malay Land?	Arabic came to Malaysia through Islamic propagation since the 13th century. Malay as an origin people of Malay Land has been accepted Islam and its culture in their life.
Do you know Arabic?	I'm not speaking Arabic but I can read Arabic because Muslim holy book's al-Quran in Arabic. During <i>solat</i> or prayer, Muslim reads or use a phrase from al-Quran, without translation into native language but we should or must be understood well the meaning.
How do you know the meaning?	I read the translation version either in English or Malay. Al-Quran has been translated to many languages in this world, including Korean or Hanguel. I can't speak but I could understand the meaning of certain words or phrases.
Have you performed your prayer (Asr)? This question was asked by a student because of words <i>solat Subuh</i> or <i>Subuh's</i> prayer has been used in the article. And at the same time, the schedule for the class is between 3.30 to 6.30 p.m. When the researcher explains about the prayer time for Muslim, student immediately refers to their watch to check the time at that moment.	<i>Subuh</i> (Fajr), <i>Zohor</i> (Dhuhr), <i>Asar</i> (Asr), Maghrib and <i>Isyak</i> (Isha) are an Arabic words have related to time concepts [Muhammad Fauzi, 2002]. In Islam it's referred to prayer time for Muslim within 24 hours, every day, its change and different time for each country depends on the Islamic calendar. In Seoul, South Korea, on November 19 th , 2013: Fajr: 5:46 until 7:15 (sunrise) Dhuhr: 12:18 pm Asr: 2:59 pm Maghrib: 5:19 pm Isha: 6:45 pm By the time class started, Asr prayer has already passed about 31 minutes, so I have enough time to perform my prayer.
What do you mean by prayer or <i>solat</i> , is it means <i>doa</i> (request ritual from God)?	As a Korean people, you have your own <i>doa</i> or prayer version when you do special ceremony during Chuseok Day. You do the ceremony to praise and request from your ancestor for happiness and prosperity. You also go to the temple where you pray to your Buddha for anything. During the prayer event, you have a specific movement to perform the request properly. For Muslims, <i>doa</i> also can be performed anywhere and any place because every person has a direct contact to the Allah, the name of Muslim's God, and Muslims believe Him are God for all and all over the world and universe. But prayer or <i>solat</i> are performing to send the 'doa' with a very special way, more intimate and to prove the humblest of the human. Prayer for Muslims is a one of the pillars of the religion and it's a requirement that must be done by every person who declare they are Muslim. There are positions in <i>solat</i> or Muslim's prayer that has similarity with Buddhist's prayer position: stood still and bow. Muslim bows and put their head (forehead) on the ground directly to Kaabah at Mecca, Saudi Arabia. Buddhist bows in front of specific space for pray in the temple. Normally there is a portrait or statue of Buddha placed in the temple for prayer purposes.

Table 3 Writing a 5 question activity

Question by student	Correct question sentences
Apakah budaya di dalam media budaya Islam-Melayu?	Apakah yang dipaparkan oleh media adalah budaya Islam-Melayu?
Bilakah watak seorang Islam-Melayu menunaikan solat subuh?	Mengapakah watak seorang Islam-Melayu perlu dipaparkan menunaikan solat subuh?
Mengapakah budaya di media bukan budaya Islam-Melayu?	Mengapakah drama dan filem Melayu di media bukan memaparkan budaya Islam-Melayu?
Siapakah tidak menunaikan solat subuh?	Siapakah yang tidak menunaikan solat Subuh yang dimaksudkan oleh penulis artikel ini?
Siapa tidak menutup aurat dengan sempurna ?	Siapakah yang tidak menutup aurat dengan sempurna yang dimaksudkan oleh penulis artikel ini?
Bilakah watak seorang Islam-Melayu yang tidak menunaikan?	Mengapakah watak seorang Islam-Melayu dipaparkan tidak menunaikan solat oleh drama dan filem Melayu?
Siapa tidak menyokong bahwa watak-watak di dalam filem dan drama yang dipertontonkan kepada kita adalah watak dan budaya Islam Melayu?	Mengapakah penulis artikel ini menyatakan bahawa watak-watak dalam filem dan drama Melayu tidak memaparkan budaya Islam-Melayu?
Mengapa orang-orang tuntutan media bukan budaya Islam-Melayu?	Mengapakah media didakwa tidak memaparkan budaya Islam-Melayu?
Bagaimana budaya di media bukan budaya Islam-Melayu?	Apakah yang dimaksudkan dengan budaya di media bukan budaya Islam-Melayu?
Bila kita menyokong bahwa watak-watak di dalam film dan drama dipertontonkan kepada kita adalah watak dan budaya islam melayu?	Adakah kita/masyarakat menerima bahawa watak-watak dalam filem dan drama Melayu adalah watak dan budaya Islam-Melayu?
Bagaimana budaya media bukan Islam-Melayu ?	Apakah yang dimaksudkan bahawa budaya yang dipaparkan di media bukan budaya Islam-Melayu?
Siapakah yang mempersendakan budaya Melayu dan Islam?	Siapakah yang mempersendakan budaya Melayu dan Islam?
Billakah kita mahu terus berjuang untuk mempromosikan budaya yang sihat, budaya yang akan menjadi contoh ikutan, budaya yang akan mencerminkan inilah watak Islam Melayu yang kita idamkan?	Bagaimanakah masyarakat harus disedarkan agar menyokong promosi budaya sihat yang mencerminkan watak Islam-Melayu yang sewajarnya?
Mengapakah watak seorang wanita Melayu Islam tidak menutup aurat dengan sempurna?	Mengapakah watak seorang wanita Melayu-Islam dalam drama dan filem Melayu tidak menutup aurat dengan sempurna?
Mengapa warga Islam gelisah dengan senario?	Mengapakah terdapat masyarakat Islam-Melayu yang gelisah dengan scenario pemaparan budaya tidak sihat di media?

5. Conclusion

Year two or senior student had attended a specific class or lecture about Islamic and Malay culture, so basically they are having a knowledge about this subject. Apparently, even though the subject is taught in their language by local lecture (s) but they found it's still put them in confusion and difficulties. This is because of the terminology are dominated by Arabic words that they found difficult to pronounce and to remember. Other issues the student was expressing is the Islamic culture or law practices among the Muslim, the obligation or specific duties of Muslims to perform such as fasting, hijab for females and the sitting position in *solat*. Article reading and discussion session have been a space for them to ask a question and they feel free to share their opinion, criticize and concerns about Islamic matters. Chances to asking a question to the author as a Muslim, and, because of the small size class, had helped them to understand better about Islamic culture, the basic principles and the practices. Most of the questions come from the Arabic loan words from the article. But, sources of information and other experiences also contributed a few relevant questions. Explanation about

Islamic culture to the Second Group of students are limited compared to the First group. The level of their existing knowledge about Islam also limited because this group is yet to expose to Islamic culture in a formal way, in their curriculum or syllabus. They are also having a limited understanding towards the article because of the language barrier either to understand or to discuss. But this study still managed to explain about Islamic culture to student and identified their knowledge's level about this aspect. Malay language combined with reading and language activities show an ability to be a space for students to have an information about Islam and its culture.

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