

# **Cultural Integration: Enhancing Malay Proverbs with Visual Narratives for Better Understanding through Digital Illustrations**

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## **Abstract**

*Lack of awareness and sensitivity of our culture, specifically Malay proverbs in our youngsters have been growing rapidly. This study will explain more about the combination of Malay proverbs and visual narratives. So that there will be a possibility to create one better. With the use of visuals, especially narratives, it can be an effective weapon in delivering the audiences understanding about the Malay proverbs. Visual narratives can benefit all audiences but can be helpful as well to individuals with high interest in learning cultures. This research data collection was based on questionnaires survey, interviews and observations on visual analysis that were collected from readers, designers, and students. The data then can be evaluated and analyzed to create a product of their preference. Through this study, researcher will acknowledge the previous solutions and ways to create a better solution of maintaining the Malay proverbs with visual narratives.*

**Keywords:** *Malay proverbs - Visual Narratives - Digital Illustrations - Storybook*

## **1. Introduction**

Visual narrative, often referred to as "visual storytelling," is a powerful means of conveying stories and information through various visual media. This term combines "visual" and "narrative" elements, encompassing mediums like infographics, illustrations, photography, and interactive media, all with the aim of delivering messages or stories. As Ron (2017) states, "Visual storytelling is a marketing strategy that communicates powerful ideas through a compelling story arc, with your customer at the heart of the story and delivered through interactive and immersive visual media, in order to create profitable customer engagements." Supported by statistics indicating that articles with visuals garner 94 percent more views than text-only articles, visual narratives have gained prominence, particularly among younger generations seeking engaging and accessible learning methods. Vanessa Borris (2017) highlights that stories foster connection, trust, and openness to learning. However, the diminishing emphasis on visual learning can negatively impact understanding of local culture. To address this, leveraging visual narratives, especially in conveying Malay proverbs, offers an ideal solution. As aptly stated by Noraini Shahida Ishak (2011), proverbs are an important tool to capture and bring the messages regarding Malay's idealistic and cultural lifestyle. Today's millennials need exposure to local traditions and cultures, and visual narratives serve as an effective tool to pique society's interest and improve knowledge dissemination. This research, as Ron (2017) suggests, advocates for the use of visual narratives across various mediums, including books, social media, and exhibitions, to bridge the gap in understanding culture, even among teenagers aged 12 to 18, making the study of Malay traditional proverbs more accessible and engaging.

## **2. Problem Statement**

The lack of sensitivity among youngsters which is increasing will have some serious negative effects on Malay heritage and traditions (Zainah Ibrahim, 2017). In this matter, Malay proverbs are also part of our culture and the focus of this study to be researched. Most teenagers nowadays, especially those who are in schools and universities, are not keen to talk about proverbs. This scenario is not something weird because many proverbs use natural elements that cannot be reached by their thinking level (Muhammad Daud, Sinar Harian, 2019). As stated by Tan Sri Dr. Rais Yatim (Utusan, 2017), enhancing cultural program from primary to university level must be started immediately if we want the Malay customs and culture to be maintained stronger in our society. Thus, in supporting the issue stated by him, this research can contribute as part of the solutions to retain the culture particularly in Malay proverbs.

## **3. Aim and Objectives**

To visualize the meaning of the Malay local proverbs through visual narratives with our local community especially youth as the target audience. The outcome of this research will mainly help them in improvising their sense of understanding and also give them the knowledge about our local cultures and will contribute to retaining the Malay cultural heritage among the community. Objectives following :

- I. To discuss the understanding of local community about the Malay proverbs.
- II. To illustrate a few chosen Malay proverbs through local folklore narratives.
- III. To propose a story book design that can help teenagers with the use of visual narratives to give more impact and understanding in our local Malay proverbs.

## **4. Literature Review**

The beauty and fondness of Malay proverbs has been charmed by many local people or foreigners. Through many histories, mostly sources claimed that Malay proverbs origins were from Minangkabau during the days when Malay people started to learn to read and write. According to Sir Richard Windstedt (1957), a proverb has a universal validity, even though it must have capabilities of wide application and generally can be expresses the abstract and universal by the concrete and particular. This proves that there were many people who often use proverbs in their daily life to communicate to each other and some other implementation such as in writings. For them, proverbs containing abstract are meant to be expressed and to be translated for more understanding. Abang Patdeli Abang Muhi quoted Zainal Abidin Ahmad in his article for Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka (2018) “A proverb refers to all sequences of short sayings commonly used among the people from years ago due to the beauty and wisdom of the words, the breadth and truth of its purpose, these sayings were used by the people as comparison, example and lesson.” (1962:165). As part of cultural elements, traditional local proverbs have been used for ages within our society, that have been taught from a young age.

### **4.1 Cultural Values in Malay Proverbs**

Malay proverbs have a very close connection to the lives and minds of its own original race or community. As one of the oldest poems that represent the intellect of the race, the creation of proverbs is strongly tied to the old Malay customs and geo culture. Through proverbs, it can channel the rules of life, positive values and ethics, and the thinking and beliefs of the old Malay community. In short, the nature environment itself is a derivative of Malay proverbs. This happens when the Malay people found something that has the characteristic of an object, organisms (plants, animals, and other living things) or human behavior, will occur an interaction of ideas with objects, organisms and human behavior thus forming the meaning of thought and values expressed in the form of proverbs (Zaitol Azma, 2011).

## 4.2 Visual Narratives

Nowadays, the advancement in visual language may reach its limit or can go even further. Various medium in visualization has been widely used since now. Visuals can fit anywhere, anytime, any who without limitations drawn. According to Helen Lloyd (2015), visual language is the language of images. Shapes, colours, forms, lines, patterns, objects, people are examples of elements in images arranged to create a particular visual effect or to communicate certain thoughts, ideas, feelings, meanings, and messages. It is a form of communication, different from written or oral language, but it can become a very powerful tool in conveying the messages through visuals. Based on the main topic, this research study on visual narratives which can be considered as part of the visual language.

Although the real definition of ‘Visual Narrative’ is not clearly stated in detail, Julia Murray (1995) mentions a working definition on her behalf opinion of ‘narrative illustration’ as the pictorial representation of or reference to one or more “events” that occur in a sequence of time and that bring about a change in the condition of at least one character. Based on the definition given, in a simple understanding, we can say that visual narratives are somewhat can depict the changing process of a story, events, or character through anything visual presentation using photography, illustrations, video plus can be enhancing with graphic, music, or voice.

## 5. Methodology

The qualitative method is probably the most used by most researchers and schools. It is primarily concerned understanding human experiences in a humanistic, interpretive approach. Its aims to produce rounded and contextual understandings based on rich, nuanced and detailed data (Jennifer Mason, 2002). This method is often used for its validity and reliable information from trusted sources from the issues concerned. Researcher has outlined the qualitative method that will be use which is interviews and observation.

### 5.1 Visual Analysis



source : [www.behance.net/gallery/72317433/Picture-book-digital-work](http://www.behance.net/gallery/72317433/Picture-book-digital-work)

<b>Description</b>	This picture book was created by Japanese illustrator Yasushi Muraki for secondary student in 2018. The genre of this book is science fiction as its purpose for educational learning.
<b>Analysis</b>	Created fully with digital vector. Various usage of colors also has been the choice of the illustrator. Illustration such as the characters in the product can be seen. Some of the layout are widespread. The text is fully in Japanese.
<b>Interpretation</b>	Using vector illustration was the most popular method in the digital field. Colorful palette

	usage for the purpose of attracting more student to buy the product. Characters in the book can possibly boost the learning process as it can make visual narratives. Widespread layout to give more variation.
<b>Judgement</b>	Illustrator successfully created a product that can help student, but it is limited to only Japanese student only.



source : [www.commart.com/project/17317/where-s-walrus](http://www.commart.com/project/17317/where-s-walrus)

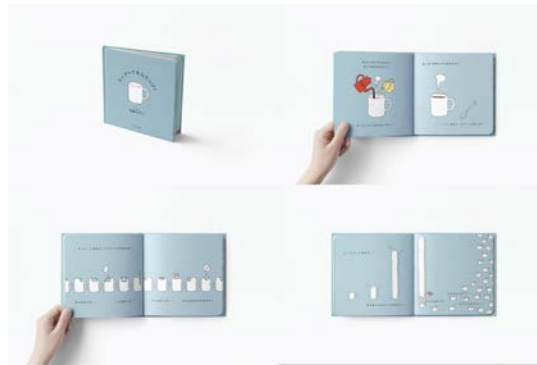
<b>Description</b>	<i>Where's Walrus?</i> illustrated by Stephen Savage is a wordless children's book about a happy go-lucky walrus who escapes from the zoo by wearing different hats to elude the clueless zookeeper. 32 pages, 10 x 10, 4 color.
<b>Analysis</b>	Simple flat color with minimalism concept. Attractive color usage. No text is found since it is a wordless book. Widespread pages.
<b>Interpretation</b>	Minimalism concept can make reader comfortable to read. Various bright color to attract people. Widespread pages are usually to enlarge the illustration so that people can understand.
<b>Judgement</b>	Great simple storyline especially for kids. The author makes a good choice of using minimal concept to gives direct narratives.



source : <https://www.behance.net/gallery/41463597/SOL-Activity-Book>

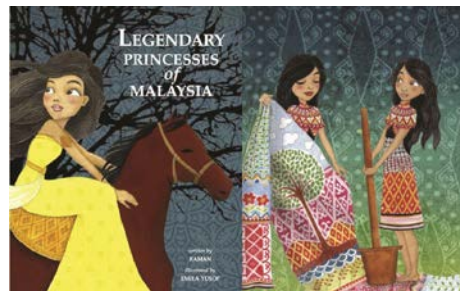
<b>Description</b>	SOL is an activity book that includes a different activity on every page. The theme is astronautic history that can let reader explore a planet sized shopping mall, a colorful subaqueous reef and an inn on the solar system.
<b>Analysis</b>	Most of the pages are packed with interesting illustrations. Color schemes are limited with yellow and some gray and brown. Characters are created with astronomy appearance. Also, widespread layout.

<b>Interpretation</b>	In SOL the author welcomes readers to draw, to crayon, to decipher and to unravel the mysteries of the universe. This means that the book is specialize in gamification or activities content.
<b>Judgement</b>	SOL successfully made thanks to the unique content and visuals.



Source : <http://www.nendo.jp/en/works/not-just-a-cup/>

<b>Description</b>	A picture book title ‘What is a Cup?’ featuring an ordinary “cup” as its main character. The story is about a cup that notices a spoon is missing to stir the coffee and tries to solve the problem by changing itself into different forms. Created by Japanese design company Nendo in 2018.
<b>Analysis</b>	Fully minimal picture book that uses illustration as the style. The color used also seems harmony with pastel blue and white. Simple typography in most of the pages. Element of space also is greatly use.
<b>Interpretation</b>	Creator of this book explained that the plot of the book showcases the essence of design and emphasizes the notion that design is not only about creating beautiful shapes, but about recognizing the little inconveniences in our everyday lives and finding new ways to solve them.
<b>Judgement</b>	Simple visuals yet so catchy in the eyes. Great example to make visual narrative using minimal illustration.



source : [oyezbookstore.com/reviews/legendary-princesses-of-malaysia](http://oyezbookstore.com/reviews/legendary-princesses-of-malaysia)

<b>Description</b>	Created by Malaysian illustrator, Emila Yusof, containing folktales about the princesses if Malaysia. Published in 2013, the book’s genre would be folklore.
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<b>Analysis</b>	In terms of technique and medium, the author probably used pencil or pastel for illustration with various colors. The layout would be double spread with wordings on the other side.
<b>Interpretation</b>	Colorful illustrations can attract kids. Various characters impact readers. Double spread layout with some wordings to tell the story.
<b>Judgement</b>	Great use of medium as pencil colors nowadays rarely use. Malaysian cultures are outstanding in a form of illustration such as songket.



Source : [coconuts.co/kl/news/lats-kampung-boy-comic-wins-japans-gaiman-award/](https://coconuts.co/kl/news/lats-kampung-boy-comic-wins-japans-gaiman-award/)

<b>Description</b>	Kampung Boy is a famous series by Dato' Lat as it packs with elements of local culture. Originally published in 1979, Kampung Boy is an autobiography genre comic.
<b>Analysis</b>	Zero use of colors as it was fully inked in black and white. Each pages contain visuals of a scene or two with minimal text on the page to explain the situation. Simple and catchy illustration and pack with visual storytelling.
<b>Interpretation</b>	Dato' Lat tries his best to portray our local culture based on his experiences. Unique style of his symbolizes the Malaysian style of sketching.
<b>Judgement</b>	Great visuals especially in terms of storytelling. Without colors, author can portray the narratives successfully.

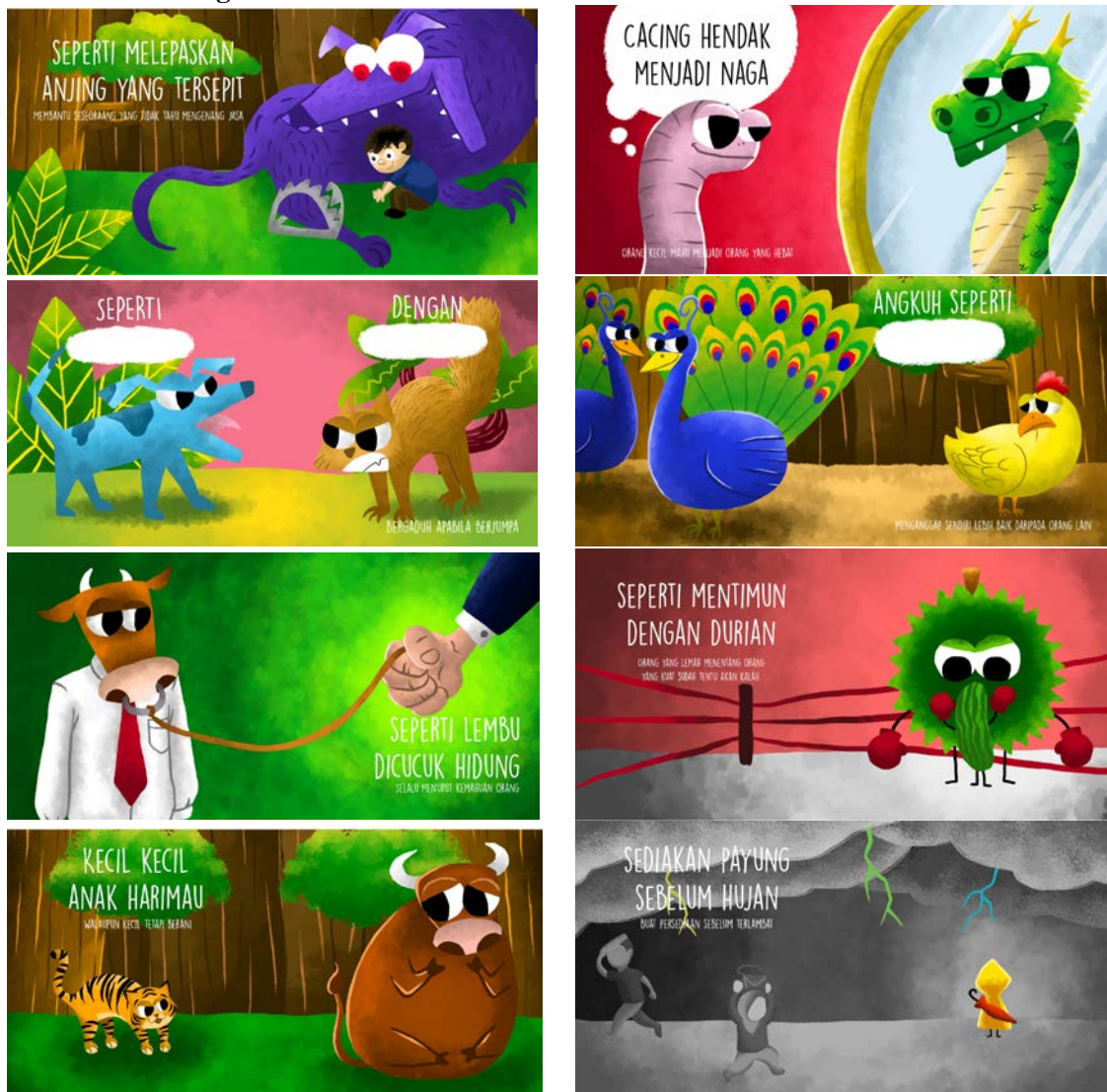


Source : <https://www.thefingersmithletterpress.com/products/mee-siam-mai-hum-some-of-the-darnedestthings-our-politicians-say>



<p><b>Description</b></p>	<p>Mee Siam Mai Hum is a book compilation of the most memorable quotes uttered by Singapore's politicians. Collected over several years, the quotes accompany witty illustrations by Jackie Goh from The Fingersmith Letterpress. It is published in 2017 with the size of 148x105 mm and 96 pages.</p>
<p><b>Analysis</b></p>	<p>This books likely lacks narratives as it only visualizes the quotes of politicians. But in term of the design, colors and composition can become a reference for this study as it has good element of design.</p>
<p><b>Interpretation</b></p>	<p>Jackie Goh tried illustrating the quotes by politicians which contains controversial, stretched analogies, shockers and emotional overwhelming that have created news headlines and stirred up the online</p>
<p><b>Judgement</b></p>	<p>Fancy looking book with good design sense but in term of the content, it would not really much help as it does not relate to project title.</p>

**5.2 Pre Test Design**



Interviews were held because researcher aim to hear and record respondent’s opinions and experiences about the design related to Malay proverbs and visual narratives. Researcher has chosen 5 volunteers based on their expertise related but the interview also included student as respondent because of this research target audience are among teenagers.

**Interview Questions:**

- I. *Do you believe that Malay proverbs can be interpreted through visuals?*
- II. *Respondent’s opinions and critics on the outcome design shown.*
- III. *Respondent’s suggestions or improvement on the future design?*

Name	Age	Duration	Place	Date	Career
Nur Maizan binti Mustafa	25	29 minutes 24 sec	Seksyen 7, Bandar Baru Bangi	25/4/2019	Visual Designer, MPH Sdn Bhd
Syazrul Suhaimi bin Badrol Zaman	25	15 minute 51 sec	Seksyen U12, Shah Alam	30/4/2019	Graphic Designer
Zainal Hazif bin Zainal Azman	28	28 minutes 15 sec	Seksyen 7, Bandar Baru Bangi	2/5/2019	Marketing Executive, Susanoo Sdn Bhd
Puteri Nurain binti Abdullah	27	Online Interview (Questionnaires)	Google Meet	12/5/2019	Art Lecturer, Perak Institute of Art (PIA)
Feety Shazana binti Ismail	23	18 minutes 32 sec	UiTM Puncak Alam	25/5/2019	Architect Student, UiTM Puncak Alam

**Figure 1 : Respondent's Information**

**5.3. Post-Test Design**

A post-test is where the final stage of visualization on the product is made. It is made based on the information from the pre-test survey and interviews in order to have a better improvements and changes in this stage. Besides, the post-test proposes an improved of final visual design that its changes were taken based on the results given from the data collected.



**Figure 2 : Visual Design Process**





**Figure 3 : Post Test Design**

#### 5.4 Feedback

This questionnaires specially made for collecting the feedback from the volunteers. These volunteers are the same people from the interview session. The reason why choosing them is because of their opinions are currently the most reliable one to be record as they have their own specialization.

Poor/Dark/Dull	Fair/Nice/Good	Great/Attractive/Awesome
	✓✓✓✓	✓
Poor/Crowded/ Heavy	Nice/Neutral/ Approved	Love it /Great/Fun
	✓✓✓✓	✓
Unreadable/Unreachable narratives	Easily Understand/Reachable narrative	
	✓✓✓✓✓	
Too big/Too small/crowded	Nice styles/easy to read	Others
✓	✓✓✓	

**Figure 4 : Feedback**

## 8. Findings

At the end, the findings of this study, indicates that there are lacks of solutions, problem-solving methods or even some of related research has been made until today in order to achieve the objectives to maintaining the Malay proverbs. Because of that, people can be affected by forgetting their own cultures, so a solution must be executed to maintain it starting from young generation. The most important finding raised through the analysis is that visual narrative can become a positive major cause to something that has possibility to extinct if not practise it such as Malay proverbs in this research. It can boost the mood of audiences plus the combination of narratives with visuals can extend the time spend by audiences to learn.

## 9. Relation To Sustainable Development Goals (Sdg)



### SDG Goal Number 4 : Quality Education

In conjunction with Sustainable Development Goals, this research would be suitable to be implemented in SDG number 4 which is “Quality Education”. In this matter, education has become essential for human to strive in the modern era. Every knowledge is important as it is. Every year, it keep explored new knowledge and keep enhancing the methods to learn it. This research can be part of enhancing the quality of education by implementing the learning method of Malay proverbs. It can helps preserve the culture among the students. Thus, Quality Education of SDG Goals is the most suitable to become a part of it.

## 10. Conclusion

In cultural values term, effective and innovative solutions play important role in creating awareness hence retaining the culture itself among the society who nowadays most of them strayed from the values of national cultures and history. It is also can become important for us to implemented it through the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) which is SDG Number 4 as it can improve the learning proverbs for students. Thus, researcher believes that in order to create a problem-solving method, it is crucial for this research to study and exploring the structure of the issue related as there are lacks research about cultures especially Malay proverbs. This is the main reason why this study is an experimental research which is to create a possibility on how Malay proverbs be implemented with visual narratives.

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