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ARE ENGLISH PROVERBS DYING A SLOW DEATH IN MALAYSIAN SCHOOLS? A SURVEY IN PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KLANG VALLEY

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to investigate the reason(s) for the failure of the usage of English proverbs among students in the English class, both at primary and secondary level. The results of the research is expected to revive the use of English proverbs in schools as they can be used as a pivotal tool in the teaching and learning of English language. This is a mixed method research utilizing both qualitative and quantitative research analysis techniques. Sample for the research were 100 students from primary and secondary schools (two urban and two rural schools) in Malaysia. Apart from students, 50 English teachers too were used to get their feedback on the teaching and learning of English proverbs. The research has positively answered the three Research Questions. The data collected clearly indicated that English proverbs were not popular among students and teachers. And the interview transcripts clearly showed that the reasons on why English proverbs were underused. The teachers felt that English proverbs were archaic and not trendy to be used in the classrooms. Furthermore, the teaching of proverbs were also not prescribed in the school syllabus. On the other hand, it was found that some proverbs were not suitable for this era, where students are more into the digital world. This paper concludes with a discussion on the pedagogical implications of the results.

Keywords: proverbs, underused, maximize, Malay proverbs, English proverbs

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Introduction

This study focuses on the reasons why English proverbs are being underused in schools and seeks to find out ways to increase their usage in schools. By definition ‘underused’ may be broadly defined as used at a lesser degree or hardly used. Proverbs were a powerful tool to learn English during my days but it is slowly dying a slow death in recent years in Malaysian schools, especially in national schools. A proverb is a simple and concrete saying popularly known and repeated, which expresses a truth, based on common sense or the practical experience of humanity. They are often metaphorical. A proverb that describes a basic rule of conduct may also be known as a maxim. If a proverb is distinguished by particularly good phrasing, it may be known as an aphorism. Proverbs are often borrowed from similar languages and cultures, and sometimes come down to the present through more than one language. Both the Bible (Book of Proverbs) and medieval Latin have played a considerable role in distributing proverbs across Europe, although almost every culture has examples of its own. Proverbs are most of the time universal. According to the Oxford Concise Dictionary a proverb is a short saying in general use, held to embody a general truth. Proverbs are useful in the teaching and learning of the English language and it enhances the understanding of the language and the underlying moral values. Moral values found in proverbs are pivotal in the character building of school students. Of late, it was found that English proverbs are not utilized in the teaching and learning of the English Language in Malaysian schools. Unlike the Malay, Chinese and Tamil proverbs which are extensively used in essay writing of the respective language, English proverbs are dying a slow death as it is hardly used by the students. What are the main reasons for the slow death of English proverbs in Malaysian schools compared to proverbs in Bahasa Melayu which are widely used?

Research Questions

1. Are English proverbs underused in schools?
2. What are the ways to increase the usage of English proverbs.
3. Why Bahasa Melayu proverbs are more popular in schools?

The splendour of proverbs is in the way it is used in language. It soothes the information or advice and lands softly in the ears of the listener, Obeng (1996)¹ is of the same opinion and according to him proverbs are used as a way of saying something gently, in a veiled way.

Mieder (2004, 1982, 1994)^{2,3,4} further says that proverbs have been a subject of interest to many English scholars and such study is called Paremiology. Paremiology means proverb in Greek and the study can be dated back as far as Aristotle. Paremiography on the other hand means a collection of proverbs. The collection and compilation of proverbs has been one of the main works of the scholars as to preserve and pass down to the next generation. Currently, proverbs are also digitalized and those who thirst for proverbs can find them in just a click of the mouse.

Wolfgang Mieder is one of the proverb scholars and his contribution towards the proverb study is incomparable. He is the editor for *Proverbium*, a journal on proverb and has written innumerable articles on proverbs. He has also written and edited over 50 books on the subject. The study of proverbs can expose the kind of believe system that exists in a society in terms of social-

culture and religion. Proverbs are expressed in many different ways. For example, “as white as snow” (known as sub-genres), “Does a chicken have lips?” (Interrogatives proverbial) and “give and take” (twin formulae). Wellerism is another subcategory of proverbs. The term Wellerism was taken from Sam Weller from Charles Dickens’s, *The Pickwick Papers*. Wellerisms are constructed in a triadic manner which consists of a statement, an identification of a speaker and a phrase that places the statement into an unexpected situation. Another category of proverbs is known as anti-proverb or Perverb (Mieder and Litovkina 2002)⁵. Perverbs or anti proverbs are modified version of proverbs and the end result is merely humorous. Proverbs are exceptionally famous amongst the youth and many can be found on T-shirts. Arora (1984)⁶ listed the Perception of Proverbiality as follows: Alliteration, example: Forgive and forget; Parallelism, example: Nothing ventured, nothing gained; Ellipsis, example: When the cat is away, the mice will play and Once bitten, twice shy.

According to Mashadi (2008)⁷ in his studies about moral values in English Proverbs, he concluded that: Moral values that exist in English proverbs consist of aesthetics, carefulness, certainty, courage, education, effort, friendliness, goodness, gratefulness, happiness, heroism, honesty, humbleness, patience, religiosity, self-control, togetherness, truth, uncertainty, uselessness, value judgment, and wisdom. The findings further show that, the most emphasized values in 274 proverbs are effort, truth, self-control, carefulness, education, gratefulness, discipline, honesty and patience. Based on this emphasized moral values, it is proven that most westerners give the most important priority to effort, truth, self-control, carefulness, education, gratefulness, discipline, honesty and patience. In a recent study, Lisa, Sasa and Piret (2016)⁸ concluded that many proverbs have international parallels, but, in order to understand them within a specific context, the specific local and global sociocultural context must be known. Even if living conditions and everyday practices have changed over time, traditional proverbs are also alive in contemporary language and they have a place as part of modern communication

Malaysia being a rich country in terms of culture has its own set of local proverbs too. Proverbs are no alien to Malaysian students and many English Proverbs are similar to that of the English. For example, “Still water runs deep” and “Air yang tenang, jangan sangka tiada buaya” are of the same meaning. Every language has a body of proverb and Malay Language is no exception. Malay proverbs are well known to its native speakers and widely used in daily conversation. In fact any native speakers of any language will recognize proverbs in their language and can use them correctly. The problem arises when one learns proverbs of second language through formal teaching. Proverbs are by product of lay man’s wisdom and in second language most likely proverbs are less liked by students as it has no social sentiments or no resemblance, compare to native learners. In Bahasa Malaysia proverbs or “peribahasa” is made compulsory and clearly stated in the Syllabus (*Huraian Sukatan Pelajaran Bahasa Melayu Tingkatan 1*). Contrary to that proverb is not stated as one of the learning skills or as a component in the English Language Curriculum (*Huraian Sukatan Pelajaran Sekolah Rendah*). Meanwhile in the Malaysian English Language Curriculum, there’s clearly no special requirement for teachers of the English language to teach proverbs in the classroom. The 2004 English Language Specification stipulates that

proverbs could be taught as a sub topic in the part where figurative of Language is taught. This is only stipulated in the curriculum specification for Form One.

In Malaysia, to the knowledge of the researcher, no empirical studies have been done to identify the frequency of use and/or the reason for the lack of the use of English proverbs in Malaysian schools. Proverbs are vital component in English Language and it's high time for an empirical study of Proverbs in Malaysia as English language is the second language of the country.

Research Design

This is a mixed method research utilizing both qualitative and quantitative research analysis techniques. Sample for the research is made up of 100 students from primary and secondary schools (two urban and two rural schools). Apart from students, 50 English teachers too took part in this research to give their feedback on the teaching and learning of English proverbs. The teachers were randomly chosen from the 4 schools mentioned above. Four teachers, one from each school were also randomly chosen to answer interview questions.

Data was collected using the following tools:

1. Questionnaires

1. The questionnaire covered the frequency and the types of proverbs used by the sample in the research. (Appendix A)
2. The second questionnaire covered the frequency and types of proverbs used by teachers from the selected schools. (Appendix B)

2. Interviews

1. The interview was conducted with selected sample on why they do not like to use proverbs in their daily lives and in academic writing (assuming that they hardly use proverbs in schools). The interview was transcribed and triangulated with the quantitative data to strengthen the findings.
2. The second interview was conducted with the selected English Language teachers on how frequently they use proverbs to enhance their teaching.

Sample

The 100 student sample for this study were taken from schools in Klang Valley and Kuala Selangor. The 4 schools were located in rural (2) and urban (2) area. The sample were randomly chosen by the teachers and enumerators who assisted the researcher in this study.

Apart from the students, more than 50 English teachers responded to a questionnaire (Appendix B). The respondents' feedback was pivotal to the research as the researcher needed to know on why the students were quite reluctant to learn English proverbs. The respondents to this questionnaire were all TESL graduates and they either have a diploma or degree in TESL. It's

quite appalling to learn that all the TESL graduates knew very few English proverbs. What was more appalling was that they knew more Bahasa Melayu proverbs than the English proverbs.

Having administered the instruments for this research, the responses were collected and interpreted. The data from the questionnaires were analyzed using frequency count and percentage. The SPSS version 11.5 was used to run analysis of frequencies and cross tabulation of the data for this study. All the interviews were transcribed and used to strengthen the quantitative data collected.

Findings and Discussion

The following analysis is based on the questions in the Questionnaire for students (Appendix A). The first question in the questionnaire was, ‘How many English proverbs do you know?’ Table 4.1 below tabulate the total number of proverbs known to students across four categories that are primary urban, primary rural, secondary urban and secondary rural.

Table 1:
Number of English Proverbs Known to the Students

Proverbs known	Primary		Secondary		Total	Mean	SD
	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural			
None	4	9	-	-	13%	7.42	7.22
1-10	15	10	23	17	65%		
11-20	-	-	5	11	16%		
More than 21	-	-	3	3	6%		
Total	19	19	31	31	100		

Based on the analysis in Table 1, obviously the primary school children have very little knowledge of English proverbs as 34% (13/38) of the respondents from the primary school do not know even a single English proverb. No students from the primary school knew more than five proverbs. Meanwhile, forty (64%) secondary school students knew at least ten proverbs. They know at least 1 proverb and reach a maximum of 30 proverbs. Most of the primary school students interviewed said that they did not understand any English proverbs although they had heard about English proverbs. *“I know some peribahasa in Malay but I have never used any English peribahasa in school.”* (pleases refer to Appendix E)

Across the groups, students in urban school know more number of proverbs than their rural counterpart with higher incidence of zero proverbs known (9/13, 69.2%) compared to urban (4/13, 30.8%). The number of total proverbs known on the other hand is higher in primary urban (15/25, 60%) as compared to primary rural (10/25, 40%). At secondary level higher number of urban students knows proverbs in the range of 1-10 (23/40, 57.5%) followed by higher rural students knowing proverbs in the range of 11-20 (11/16, 68.8) and equal for above 21 (3/6, 50%).

A one-way ANOVA was used to test if the differences for total proverbs known among primary rural, primary urban, secondary rural and secondary urban students were significant. There were significant different in total proverbs known at $p < .05$ across the four school categories, $F(3, 96) = 24.46$, $p < 0.001$. Tukey HSD post-hoc comparisons revealed that the primary rural ($M = 1.11$, 95% CI [0.53, 1.68]) and primary urban ($M = 1.79$, 95% CI [1.18, 2.40]) know significantly lower number of proverbs as compared to secondary rural ($M = 12.32$, 95% CI [9.63, 15.01]) and secondary urban ($M = 9.84$, 95% CI [7.51, 12.17]), $p < 0.001$. However differences between primary urban-rural and secondary urban-rural were not statistically significant at $p < .05$.

Nevertheless, it is quite clear that majority of the students (65%) in the survey know less than ten proverbs and they know almost 7 English proverb only on average (Mean = 7.42, $s = 7.22$) regardless of level. This percentage and mean value is quite alarming as after many years of studying the English language they know only a few proverbs. More alarming is 13% of the respondents didn't even know a single English proverb. Only 6% (6 students) of the respondents knew more than 20 proverbs.

Table 2:

One Correct English Proverb Given by Primary Students

Proverbs known	Urban	Rural	χ^2	p
None	16	18	1.118	0.290
	(-1.1)	(1.1)		
Yes, But Incorrect	3	1		
	(1.1)	(-1.1)		
Total	19	19		

Note. Adjusted standardized residuals appear in parentheses below group frequencies

A cross tabulation was done to compare the number of correct English proverbs known to the respondents (in writing), between primary and secondary level. The data above (Table 2) is to indicate the number of correct proverbs known and chi-squared value for 'One proverb' written at primary level. It is awful that none (100%) of the students were able to write 'one proverb' correctly. Overall 89.5% (34/38) of respondent were not able to write any English proverbs and 10.5% (4/38) wrote it but were incorrect. This response did not differ significantly between urban and rural primary students, $\chi^2 = (1, 38) = 1.12$, $p = .290$ and suggests similar standard of proficiency pertaining English proverbs among primary students regardless of strata.

The following Table 3 shows the frequency and chi-squared value for 'one-proverb' written by secondary level students. The incidence of not able to write any proverb was higher among rural students (16/17, 94.1%) whereas urban students showed higher incidence of writing one proverb either incorrectly (12/14, 85.7%) or correctly (18/31, 58.1%). Nonetheless, 50% of the secondary school student involved in the research could write at least one English proverb correctly. The ability to write at least 'one proverb' differ significant between urban and rural

secondary level students, $\chi^2 = (2, 62) = 21.19$, $p < .001$. Therefore, students in urban school have obtained higher chances of learning or knowing English proverbs than schools in rural area.

Table 3:

One Correct English Proverb Given by Secondary Students

Proverbs known	Urban	Rural	χ^2	p
None	1	16	21.19	0.000
	(-4.3)	(4.3)		
Yes, But Incorrect	12	2		
	(3.0)	(-3.0)		
Yes, Correct	18	13		
	(1.3)	(-1.3)		
Total	31	31		

Note. Adjusted standardized residuals appear in parentheses below group frequencies

The overall ability of writing ‘one proverb’ is illustrated in Diagram 1. It is quite shocking to know that 51% of the respondents can’t even write one correct English proverb and very much contradicting to the statistics of the number of proverbs known to them (please. refer Table 1). This contradictory data clearly shows that there are many students who know at a least one English proverb but they can’t write them correctly. During the administration of the questionnaire, the researcher noticed that many students could start a proverb but were not able to complete it. These information clearly answered RQ1 of the research that the English proverbs are underused in schools.

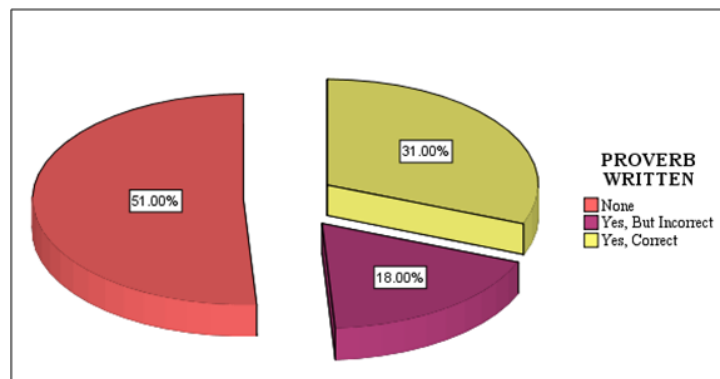


Diagram 1: Percentage of students writing ‘one proverb’

This is quite consistent with the teacher’s knowledge of English proverbs as tabulated below in Table 4.4 based on 50 teachers participated in this study. The output (Table 4) was obtained from the Teachers’ Questionnaire (Appendix B) on the number of English proverbs known to them. Most of the teachers who took part in this study knew very few proverbs. The teachers knew as low as 1 and as high as 150 English proverb. Almost three quarter (70%) of the teachers knew less than 25 English proverbs. If this is the case with the teachers, than it is quite obvious the students are also very weak in the usage of English proverbs in schools (spoken) and

in essay writing. Only 9 English teachers knew more than 50 proverbs. On average, they know 28 English proverbs ($s = 35.09$).

Table 4:

The Number of English Proverbs Known to the English Teachers

Number of Proverbs	N	Cumulative Percentage	Mean	SD
<25	35	70	28*	35.09
26-50	7	84		
51-75	2	88		
76-100	4	96		
101-125	1	98		
>126	1	100		
Total	50			

Note. * = Rounded to nearby whole number

The table above clearly shows that most teachers involved in the survey have very superficial knowledge of English proverbs that led it to underuse in schools. On the reasons for the proverbs underused is as answered by the teachers interviewed, *“I don’t like to use proverbs in the class as they are not popular anymore and are archaic to students. I don’t find it interesting to use in English classroom as part of teaching. Of course there are some English proverbs written on the wall of the classrooms and school walls but those are just part of English Week programme.”* (Please refer Appendix C). Many teachers are of the belief that English proverbs are not popular anymore and surprisingly they are not prescribed in the syllabus. Thus they were not interested to impart knowledge of proverbs to their students.

According to the teachers interviewed there were some proverbs that were so old that even if they were used in the school compound (especially in the secondary school) the students make fun of the proverbs. *“Whenever I use some common proverbs, the students make fun of the proverb and me.”* *“And you know, children nowadays, they have double meaning for everything that you teach. For example, if I were to teach them this proverb, ‘Don’t teach your grandmother to suck eggs,’ they’re sure to pass some nasty remarks.* (Please refer to Appendix C).

In this globalization era, everything moves on a super speed, certain proverbs are not in contemporary with the current generation. Some teachers said that proverbs like, ‘Slow and steady wins the race,’ is not what students of this era prefer. (Please refer to Appendix C) *“Some students are very IT savvy and they want fast answers and delivery in everything. The students also know that proverbs are not tested in the examination. Therefore they are not bothered to learn them. Sometimes some English workbooks give examples of proverbs as enrichment activities.*

Table 5:

Teachers Teaching Proverbs and Students Proverb Usage (Student)

Teaching Taught Proverbs	Encourage Proverb Usage			Total
	Never	Sometimes	Always	
Yes	22	52	8	82
No	17	1	0	18
Total	39	53	8	100

Student's feedback on 'teachers taught English proverbs' and their 'usage of proverbs in writing' was cross tabulated. Table 5 indicates that English teachers have taught their students some proverbs (82/100, 82%). Comparing usage of proverbs in writing, 8 students said they *always* use proverbs in their writing and all of them have agreed that their teacher teaches English proverbs (8/8, 100%). Among students who said that they use proverbs in writing *sometimes*, 98% (52/53) are those who have agreed that their teacher teaches English proverbs.

Table 6:

Teachers Teaching Proverbs and Students Writing and Using Proverb

Measure	Teacher Taught	Proverb Written	Proverb Usage
Teacher Taught	1.000	.334**	.510**
Proverb Written	.334**	1.000	.598**
Proverb Usage	.510**	.598**	1.000

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

A Spearman's Rank Order correlation was run to determine the relationship of 100 student's teachers teaching proverbs in English lesson with writing 'one correct proverb' and proverbs usage in writing. There was a strong, positive correlation between students writing 'one correct proverb' and proverbs usage in writing $r(98) = .60, p < .01$ followed by teachers teaching proverbs and students proverb usage in writing $r(98) = .51, p < .01$. A moderate, positive correlation was observed between teachers teaching proverbs and students writing 'one correct proverb' $r(98) = .33, p < .01$.

Table 7:

Teaching and Encouraging Proverbs Usage and Better Grading for Proverbs (Teacher)

Teaching Proverb In English Lesson	Encourage Proverb Usage		Proverb Improve Grading
	No	Yes	
Yes	5	40	45
No	2	3	5
Total	7 (14%)	43 (86%)	50 (100%)

Consistently, feedback total teachers actually teach proverbs and encourage their students' to use English proverbs was obtained. Table 7 below shows the number of teachers teaching proverbs in their English lesson and those who encouraged students to use English proverbs in their essay. Most of the teachers do teach proverbs in their English Lesson (90%) and encourage the usage of the proverbs in students essay writing (86%). Hence higher incidence of students using proverbs in writing among those who have agrees that their teacher taught proverbs in school (Table 5) together with correlation statistics (Table 6) highlights the need to include proverbs as a part of teaching syllabus to enhance proverbs mastery among school students.

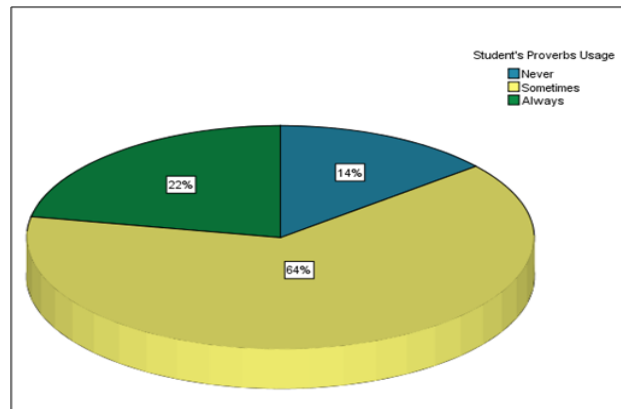


Diagram 2: Teachers feedback on students using proverb in writing

Although teachers teaching and encouraging use of proverbs was observed, only 22% of the teachers agreed that their students do use proverbs in essay writing. More than half (64%) said that only sometimes their students uses proverbs in essay writing and 14% said their students never used proverbs in writing their English essays. This is depicted in the pie chart below. This statistics clearly supports Research Question 1 that English proverbs are under used in the classroom and the main reason behind it is that the teachers teach very limited/none at all. Although 82% of the English teachers have somehow taught them or exposed to them some English proverbs, they didn't like to use them as they felt that proverbs are archaic and not fashionable to use in essays anymore. *"I hardly use proverbs in the essay because I hardly use them in my daily life. My friends make fun of me if I use proverbs as an example."* (pls. refer Appendix D) This data also partially answers RQ 1 on why English proverbs are underused in Malaysian schools.

Many students couldn't even say or write one proverb correctly, most probably due to their attitude of not paying any interest in memorizing or learning the proverbs as they found these proverbs to be of no importance to them. *"Yes, sometimes my teacher mentions about proverbs but do not explain anything (meaning) about them, so we do not remember them as we don't use them in our writing or even conversation.* (Pls. refer to Appendix D). This statement is supported by data obtained on how frequently they use the proverbs in their daily life. Please refer to the table below (Table 5): Only 8% of respondents agreed that they use proverbs on a regular basis in their essay writing. The data clearly indicates that 92% (39+53) of the students who responded in this research did not like to use proverbs in their essay writing.

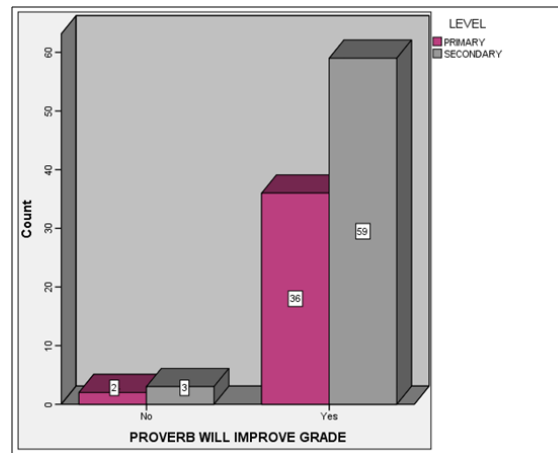


Diagram 3: Student who believes proverbs usage will improve grading

Analysis was done to assess if the use of English proverbs in essay writing was going to improve the grading of the product. Both the teachers and students answered this question. In diagram 4.3, it is clear that 95% (95/100) of students think English proverbs play an important role whereby 94.7% (36/38) of primary level students and 95.2% (59/62) of secondary level students agreed that using English proverbs in their writing will give them a better grading. Meanwhile, all the 50 (100%) language teachers assessed agreed that the use of English proverbs in students' writing will certainly give them a better grading. This information clearly indicate that both the students and the English teachers strongly believe that the learning and using of proverbs in academic writing will help in getting better grades in essay writing. Yet both parties were reluctant to use them as there was no requirement to do so in the curriculum.

Among those teachers who teach proverbs in lesson, 90% (45/50) agrees that the use of English proverbs in students' essay writing will give them better grading. In contrast to this, teachers interviewed in the research, (pls. refer Appendix C) say that they do not fancy teaching English proverbs as students do not find proverbs trendy anymore. Most teachers teach proverbs out of their own initiative as it is not mandatory in the syllabus. Therefore, in order to maximize the use of English proverbs in the classroom teachers must seriously involve the students in understanding the in depth meaning of proverbs. Not only that, curriculum planners should make it compulsory, (especially primary school children) to learn and use English proverbs in the classroom (in the English Language classroom).

To a question, on what should be done to optimize the usage of English proverbs, many teachers agree that the teaching of proverbs should be included in the curriculum. If this happens than more and more teachers would start to teach proverbs seriously. *'Fistly, it should be included in the English Language syllabus and more and more English teachers should use it frequently so that the students will follow suit. I see nowadays, even the Malaysian textbooks too don't use proverbs in their comprehension passages. If the books start to use them, maybe the future generation to will start to use them.'* (Please refer to Appendix C). This statement clearly answers

Research Question 2, on what are the ways to increase the usage of English proverbs. Apparently, most English language teachers do not teach proverbs as it is not stipulated in both primary and secondary English language syllabus. Therefore, on how to maximize the use of English proverbs, the interview transcripts have clearly indicated that:

1. The proverbs must be included in the English Language syllabus in both primary and secondary schools.
2. Teachers must adapt the teaching of proverbs to suit the contemporary needs of the students.
3. Proverbs should be tested in the examination.

In the interview conducted, 50% of the teachers also said that they were not sure what proverbs to teach and what not to teach. They said that they would prefer a list of suitable proverbs suitable for Malaysian students prepared and given in the curriculum specification of the English language syllabus. It would really help them to teach and promote the usage among school children. *“We do not have a guide on which proverbs to teach. The curriculum specification does not specify or give a detailed list of proverbs, like the way they do it for the list of vocabulary. If they do something like that than the teaching of English proverbs will definitely take place in the classroom.”* (Please refer to Appendix F)

Table 8 and 9 show the total number of known Malay proverbs by students and English teachers respectively. The same interval as for number of English proverbs known, was maintained to tabulate data in order to see a clear comparison. It can be deduce that, 25% of students know more than 20 Malay proverbs as compared to only 6% knowing English proverbs more than 20 (Table 1). The number of Malay proverbs known ranged as low as 1 and as high as 200 whereby the maximum number of English proverbs known was only 30.

Table 8:

The Number of Malay Proverbs Known to the Students Across Level

Malay Proverbs Known	Level		Cumulative Percentage
	Primary	Secondary	
1-10	30	17	47 %
11-20	6	22	75 %
>21	2	23	100 %
	38.0%	62.0%	

Table 9:

The Number of Malay Proverbs Known to the English Teachers

Number of Proverbs	N	Cumulative Percentage	M	SD
<25	20	40	42*	34.61
26-50	21	82		
51-75	3	88		
76-100	5	98		
101-125	0	98		

>126	1	100		
Total	50			

Note. * = Rounded to nearby whole number

The table above shows the total number of proverbs known by 50 teachers participated in this study. Surprisingly, the English teachers seem to know more Malay proverbs than English. A minimum of 80% of the respondents knew more than 50 proverbs.. The teachers knew as low as 1 and as high as 150 English proverb. On average, teachers know 28 English proverbs (sd = 35.09) (pls refer Table 4). This is very contradictory to the number of Malay proverbs known to them (M = 42, s = 34.61). According to the teachers interviewed, they have been taught English proverbs since school days and these proverbs are always used by their colleagues and students in school. Therefore they picked up the Malay proverbs through their daily conversation. *'I picked up many Malay proverbs as almost all the Malay teachers use the Malay proverbs every other day in their conversation. The students too use them when they converse with their friends in the classroom. The Bahasa Malaysia teachers too always use the prverbs in their teaching.'* (Please refer to Appndix C).

In order to evaluate if the difference in average English and Malay proverbs known to teacher and students are significant, a one-sample t-test was conducted. This study takes into account mean value of total English proverbs known as test value. As such, the test value used for teacher and students one sample t test was 28 (Table 4) and 7.0 (Table 1) respectively. The t-test revealed that there is a statistically reliable difference between the mean number of Malay proverbs known by English teachers (M = 42.08, s = 34.61) and average English Proverbs known, 28, $t(49) = 2.876$, $p=.006$, $\alpha = .05$. Similarly, for students the mean number of Malay proverbs known (M = 21.63, s = 33.01) differ statistically from English Proverbs known, 7, $t(99) = 4.433$, $p<.001$, $\alpha = .05$. For both respondent groups, higher mean value indicate that more Malay proverbs are known than that of English.

Table 10:

One-sample t Test for Malay Proverbs Known to English Teachers and Students

	Test Value	N	Mean	SD	t	df	p
Malay proverbs known to Teachers	28	50	42.08	34.61	2.876	49	0.006
Malay proverbs known to Students	7	100	21.63	33.01	4.433	99	0.001

Malay proverbs are more popular in schools as they are frequently used in schools as more than 50% of the English teachers know more than 50 Malay proverbs. There are English teachers who know more than two hundred Malay proverbs(Table 8). And as said by students in the interview, *'Oh yes, we learn a lot of Malay proverbs as we have to use them in essay writing. Our Bahasa Malaysia teachers teach on how to use them in essays in order to score more marks in the examination.'* (Please refer to Appendix D). The teacher too said in the interview that Malay proverbs are very popular in schools as students are encouraged to use them in their essay writing

to get better marks. *'I picked up many Malay proverbs as almost all the Malay teachers the Malay proverbs every other day in their conversation. The students too use them when they converse with their friends in the classroom. The Bahasa Malaysia teachers too always use the proverbs in their teaching. During my school days, we were taught to use them in essay writing and essays with many proverbs usually get better marks.'* (Please refer to Appendix C).

Therefore, the statistics and interview clearly indicate that unless the teaching of English proverbs emphasized in the English language syllabus, English proverbs will die a slow death in Malaysian schools. This clearly answers Research Question 3 on why Malay proverbs are more popular than English proverbs, in both primary and secondary schools. The interview and data from the Questionnaire for teachers clearly indicated that:

1. The Malay proverbs are seriously taught at school level, both primary and secondary school.
2. The Bahasa Malaysia syllabus for schools condones the teaching of Malay proverbs.

The empirical data derived from the research shows that it is time for scholars to seriously consider adding the teaching of English proverbs in primary and secondary school in the school syllabus. In schools especially Malaysian schools, the curriculum has been constantly altered to suit the government policies. Most of the time these changes put more emphasis in the language skill and eventually side tracks the teaching of grammar rules and other elements in English Language. A proverb was never a standalone subject or lesson in any Malaysian schools which more or less have contributed to the declining of its usage. Schools are exam orientated institute and teaching happens with the objective to score. In such situation the aesthetic elements of language usually are deemed irrelevant. As a matter of fact proverbs are not the determining factor to pass with flying colours.

The current trend in communication has changed and has evolved with the cyber world. English is no exception and has transformed into a more casual and information friendly language to facilitate the fast growing cyber citizens. In this Internet and high end technology situation, language is just a form of communication to get message through. The need for poetic language or with proverbs attached is not needed and considered as waste of time because poetic languages and ecstatic elements attached gives more rooms for multiple interpretation and can cause complexity in decoding the message and further create misunderstanding in everyday life. The nature of language has to change to suit the current happening and so silicon proverbs are used and those are more recent and obviously relevant to today's life style. This has left old proverbs to the scholars who are working to preserve them. Works on preserving is an ongoing activity not only in language but also in many other fields which is quite natural.

Nevertheless some proverbs are here to stay. They have withstood the test of time and space. Some of commonly used proverbs are, A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush; Accomplish or do not begin; Blood is thicker than water; You can take a horse to the river but you cannot make him drink; All fair in love and war and You offer peanuts, you get monkeys. Most of the time people use proverbs to motivate oneself or others as in "every cloud has its silver line" or to show dissatisfaction as in "good riddance to bad garbage". These are some of the proverbs still in

use in today's digital era. Time may change, people's taste and life style may change but those proverbs that have tagged along are here to stay.

Personal Insights and Implications of the Study

Learning English proverbs could be tough for the students as they were created those days in many foreign lands to cater the needs of the particular community's need, usually to convey some moral values. If more and more Malaysian proverbs (BM) are improvised to the needs of our students, than most probably we can see school children showing some kind of interest in learning the proverbs.

Teaching of English proverbs can be made exciting if language teachers know how to use them positively in the classroom. In a multiracial classroom, students can share proverbs from their own language. In ESL classes where you have students from many different countries and numerous first languages, proverbs allow students to affirm the insights and experiences of their native culture. English language learners can easily memorize proverbs. Using the right proverb at the right moment gives students a tremendous sense of competency and fluency in English - something that immigrants often struggle to achieve. Studying proverbs from around the world helps create a more global education, and counters the fears of English displacing the insights and words of other tongues and times. If students learn to share proverbs, it will teach our students to respect the tradition and the past while students expand their vocabulary in a new, modern language.

Teachers should use proverbs as and when they crop up in their contexts, such as in reading and listening tasks or when they use one naturally in class. Teachers can gather the proverbs by topic and introduce them in conjunction with other activities around the topic. For example, they can teach several 'body idioms' together: to be head and shoulders above the rest, to be long in the tooth, to shoot yourself in the foot etc. It will be easier for students to remember some of them if they're in groups. Teachers can also ask the students to translate the English proverbs into their own language. Most often students will be able to identify one in their own mother tongue.

Teachers too must, on their own initiative make lots of effort to impart their English proverb knowledge to the students. If this takes place than most probably we can see some improvement in the leaning of English proverbs among the students and maybe among the teachers who are not teaching the English language.

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Appendix A (Questionnaire for Students)

Name: _____ SCHOOL: _____ STANDARD/FORM: _____

1. How many (approximately) English proverbs do you know?
2. Please write down ONE English proverbs that you know.
 - _____
3. Have your teachers taught you any English proverbs?
4. How often do you use English proverbs in your essay writing?
5. Have your English teachers taught you any English proverbs?
6. Do you think the use of English proverbs in your writing will give you a better grading? Circle your answer.
Yes / No
7. Do you know proverbs of other languages (Malay, Chinese or Tamil proverbs) in your?
Yes / No
8. If Yes, write down their numbers accordig to the languages?
Bahasa Malaysia _____ Tamil _____ Mandarin _____

Appendix B (Questionnaire for Teachers)

School: _____

1. How many English proverbs do you know?
2. Do you like to teach them in your English lessson?
3. Have you encouraged your students to use them in their essay writing?
4. How often do your students use English proverbs in their essay writing?
5. Do you think the use of English proverbs will give them better grading in their essay writing?
Yes / No
6. Do you know proverbs of other languages (Malay, Chinese or Tamil proverbs) in your?
Yes / No
7. If Yes, write down their numbers accordig to the languages?
Bahasa Malaysia _____ Tamil _____ Mandarin _____

Appendix C

Transcript of Interview (Teachers, Secondary)

Researcher : What is your opinion on the teacing of proverbs in the classroom?

Teacher : Many teachers do not want to use proverbs inthe classroom because they themselves do not wish them in the classroom, for the following reasons:

- I do not know many English proverbs
- Proverbs are not fashionable
- Proverbs are archaic
- Some proverbs are not applicable anymore

- Researcher : Why do you say that some proverbs are not applicable anymore?
- Teacher : Oh... thats because some proverbs are not applicable to our younger generations anymore, for example the proverb “slow and steady wins the race.” School children nowadays are very IT savvy and want fast answers and delivery in all aspects. When I use some of them in the classroom, they make fun of the proverbs.
- Researcher : What about the English language syllabus in secondary school. Is the teaching of proverbs stipulated in the syllabus?
- Teacher : That’s a good question. To my knowledge no part of the syllabus stipulates that. Therefore no teachers want to teach proverbs in the English Language classroom.
- Researcher : Do you still teach English proverbs to your students despite all these problems?
- Teacher : Oh yes, I think it is still intergral part of English Language. Therefore I always encourage them to memorize at least a few.
- Researcher : What do you think is the future of English proverbs?
- Teacher : I think if they are not taught to the students especially primary school students, sooner or later it is going to die a slow death, as the title of of your research says.
- Researcher : What do you think can be done to optimise the use of English proverbs in the classroom?
- Teacher : Fistly, it should be included in the English Language syllabus and more and more English teachers should use it frequently so that the students will follow suit. I see nowadays, evven the Malaysian textbooks too dont use proverbs in their comprehension passages. If the books start to use them, maybe the future generation to will start to use it.
- Researcher : What about the Malay proverbs? Do you know many of them?
- Teacher : Oh yes, definitely I know many of them.
- Researcher : As an English teacher how did you learn more Bahasa Malaysia proverbs than the English Proverbs?
- Taecher : I picked up many Malay proverbs as almost all the Malay teachers use the Malay proverbs every other day in their conversation. The students too use them when they converse with their friends in the classroom. The Bahasa Malaysia teachers too always use the prverbs in their teaching. During my school days, we were taught to use them in essay writing and essays with many proverbs usually get better marks.
- Researcher : Okay, Ms Maslina, thank you very much

Appendix D

Transcript of Interview (Student)

- Researcher : Hi, Thank you for taking part in this interview. What form are you in?
Student : Thank you sir, I'm in Form 4.
Researcher : Do you like English proverbs?
Student : Yes, but I do not know many. I hardly use them in school. My friend too don't use proverbs in school. "I hardly use proverbs in the essay because I hardly use them in my daily life. My friends make fun of me if I use proverbs as an example."
Researcher : Why?
Student : It's not fashionable to use proverb any more. Once in a while we just try to use the one that we know in our essay writing, just hoping to get an extra mark.
Researcher : Do your English teachers use proverbs in the classroom?
Student : "Yes, sometimes my teacher mentions about proverbs but do not explain anything (meaning) about them, so we do not remember them as we don't use them in our writing or even conversation.
Researcher : Do you know Malay proverbs (peribahasa) and do you use them in school?
Student : Oh yes, we learn a lot of Malay proverbs as we have to use them in the Malay essay writing. Our BM teachers teach on how to use them in essays in order to score more marks in the examination.
Researcher : Do you think the use of English proverbs will give you better grades in the essay writing?
Student : Yes, maybe..... But our teachers don't encourage us to use them in writing. Neither do the textbook/workbook teaches us about English proverbs.
Researcher : Okay, Wei Hong. Thank you very much.

Appendix E (Primary School student)

- Researcher : Hi, Fairuz. Thank you for the interview.
Student : Thank you, sir.
Researcher : Do you like English proverbs?
Student : Proverbs???
- Researcher : Proverbs are called 'PERIBAHASA' in Bahasa Malaysia
Student: Oh..... Yes... I like..... but I do not know any in English.....I know some peribahasa in Malay but I have never used any English peribahasa in school.
- Researcher : Why do you say so?
Student: My teacher never taught us any proverbs. But I have seen some on the walls of my school canteen.
- Researcher : Do you think learning and using English proverbs will help you in getting a better 'keputusan' in the examination.
Student : Yes. I think okay.
Researcher : Okay, thank you very much Fairuz.

Appedix F (Primary school teacher)

- Researcher : Hi Ms Farah, thank you for taking part in the interview.
- Teacher : You are welcome.
- Researcher : What is your opinion on the teaching of English proverbs in the classroom?
- Teacher : I think when students learn the language, they should be taught some English proverbs.
- Researcher : But the students who I spoke to just now said proverbs are never taught in the school.
- Teacher : Yes, I agree but.....We do not have a guide on which proverbs to teach. The curriculum specification does not specify or given a detailed list of proverbs, like the way they do it for the list of vocabulary words. If they do something like that than the teaching of English proverbs will definitely take place in the classroom. Anyhow some proverbs are often used by the English teachers in my school, for example: A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush; Accomplish or do not begin; Blood is thicker than water; You can take a horse to the river but you cannot make him drink; All fair in love and war and You offer peanuts, you get monkeys. Most of the time people use proverbs to motivate oneself or others as in “every cloud has its sliver line” or to show dissatisfaction as in “good ridden to bad garbage”.
- Researcher : Yes, I think you have a point there.
- Teacher : I also think that inorder to revive the use of proverbs in schools, the teachers too have to learn them in order to use and teach them in the classroom.
- Researcher : That’s a good point. Thank you very much.
- Teacher : You are welcome.