

*A Design Framework for Illustrating Malay Proverbs:
Shaping Learning Modalities for Generation Alpha*

Neesa Ameera Mohamed Salim, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia
Mohd Nor Shahizan Ali, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Malaysia
Syahrini Shawalludin, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia
Nurul 'Ayn Ahmad Sayuti, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia
Azhar Abd Jamil, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia

The Asian Conference on Education 2024
Official Conference Proceedings

Abstract

Proverbs have played a crucial role in shaping civilizations and humanity throughout history. As intangible elements of national art and cultural heritage, Malay proverbs convey the wisdom of previous generations, defining and preserving the essence of a particular culture. This study introduces a design framework based on the ARCS (Attention, Relevance, Confidence, Satisfaction) model, aimed at illustrating Malay proverbs to enhance learning among Generation Alpha. The study explores how design, specifically children's illustration styles, plays a significant role in integrating educational psychology and child-centered design to convey these culturally rich proverbs. By combining design and motivational principles, the study develops illustrations that not only capture attention but also facilitate deeper comprehension and retention. Findings from the study reveal that Generation Alpha shows a strong preference for "Cartoon Style" illustrations, which are both appealing and engaging for young learners. By aligning design principles and visual strategies with the preferred learning modalities of Generation Alpha, the study contributes to the field of art and design, as well as education supporting the integration of traditional cultural content into modern learning platforms.

Keywords: Malay Proverbs, Illustration Design, ARCS Model, Cartoon Style

iafor

The International Academic Forum

www.iafor.org

Introduction

Proverbs are generally employed as metaphorical forms of communication, characterized by their structured, concise, and precise phrasing that conveys a clear and accurate meaning (Jalaluddin, 2014). Within the rich tapestry of Malaysian culture, proverbs serve as an essential linguistic heritage that encapsulates the Malay community's collective wisdom, values, and moral teachings. However, this heritage is increasingly forgotten and is at risk of being overlooked and underappreciated, particularly among the millennial generation who are increasingly immersed in digital content and modern educational approaches (Kamarul, 2024; Norleyza et al., 2020). The traditional approach to learning is increasingly irrelevant to Generation Alpha, who are digital natives. Prensky (2001) asserted that traditional teaching methods, which rely on lecturing, verbal presentations, and step-by-step logic aimed at memory recall, fail to account for the learning preferences of digital natives. As a result, such methods lead to disengagement and a negative perception of school. This observation is further supported by Tapscott (2009), who identified that digital natives typically value autonomy, the ability to personalize content, engagement through conversation and collaboration rather than lectures, and a preference for speed in learning (Jones, 2011).

This shift underscores the need for innovative and creative approaches to preserving and teaching culture-based languages. Language teaching, when designed effectively, offers authentic, valuable, and engaging learning experiences that foster language acquisition, communicative competence, and learner autonomy. It reflects real-life communication scenarios, is purposeful and meaningful, integrates diverse language skills, promotes interaction, contextualizes learning, empowers learners, and serves as an authentic tool for assessment (Jin, 2024). Consequently, the research question emerges: How can Malay proverbs be visually represented to optimize learning experiences for Generation Alpha, using the ARCS (Attention, Relevance, Confidence, Satisfaction) model? This study aims to address this challenge by developing a design framework that captures the essence of these proverbs and aligns them with contemporary pedagogical methodologies that resonate with younger, tech-savvy learners. The objectives of this study are twofold; first, to identify and categorize key Malay proverbs that reflect cultural values and norms, and second, to design educational illustrations that utilize the ARCS model to foster engagement, comprehension, and motivation among the Generation Alpha. By marrying traditional wisdom with modern educational tools, this study holds the potential to bridge the generational gap in understanding cultural narratives, reinforcing the importance of identity and heritage. Academically, it contributes to the discourse surrounding culturally responsive pedagogy and the integration of indigenous knowledge within formal educational frameworks. Practically, it aims to equip educators with innovative and creative strategies to facilitate meaningful learning experiences that honor both cultural heritage and the diverse learning preferences of modern learners. The findings of this study will not only serve to empower educators but also enhance cognitive and motivational engagement among learners, thereby nurturing a deeper appreciation for Malay proverbs and, by extension, the rich cultural heritage they represent. Ultimately, this study underscores the critical need for adaptive educational frameworks that respect and celebrate traditional narratives while making them accessible and relevant in today's globalized educational landscape (Fomina et al., 2023). Various pedagogical models and frameworks based on the ARCS Model have been adapted for real-world educational settings, as evidenced by studies in the field (Hannig et al., 2013; Hong et al., 2019; Keller & Keller, 2010; Li & Keller, 2018).

Literature Review

In the quest for effective educational methodologies, the integration of cultural elements into learning processes has emerged as a significant focus in recent years. Recognizing the need to engage newer generations in a meaningful way, educators and researchers are increasingly exploring how traditional forms of knowledge, such as proverbs, can be employed in contemporary teaching practices. This is particularly pertinent for Generation Alpha, the cohort born from 2010 and 2024, who are growing up in an era marked by rapid technological advancements and multicultural exposure (Spasova, 2022). The increasing reliance on digital tools necessitates innovative approaches to learning that not only convey content but do so in ways that resonate with the learners' intrinsic motivations and cultural identities. One such framework that stands out is the ARCS model, which emphasizes Attention, Relevance, Confidence, and Satisfaction as essential components in motivating learners. To date, literature indicates that proverbs, as encapsulations of cultural wisdom, serve as effective educational tools that can develop their cognitive abilities and enhance cultural appreciation among learners (Davranovna & Nilufar, 2024; Mammadova, 2024). Several studies have illustrated the positive impact of integrating proverbs into curricula, notably in fostering deeper connections to cultural heritage and improving language skills (Munir & Nudin 2021; Ngalim & Stanislaus 2020). For instance, study has demonstrated that utilizing proverbs in language teaching encourages learners to engage with the material on a personal level, thereby enhancing retention and comprehension. By merging traditional wisdom with design principles and visual strategies, educators can tap into the cognitive, emotional, and motivational drivers of learning processes. However, despite the promising findings, significant gaps remain in the literature regarding the systematic design frameworks for incorporating Malay proverbs into learning experiences tailored for Generation Alpha. Most existing studies have either focused predominantly on theoretical perspectives or have failed to provide concrete implications that tie together proverbs, culturally relevant pedagogies, and specific learning modalities through a structured framework. Furthermore, there is a need for exploration into how the nuances of cultural identity and engagement can be optimized within educational settings that cater to a digitally native generation (Peng & Patterson, 2022). Through this comprehensive review, this study aims to elaborate on the existing body of study but also to propose a structured design framework that educators can employ, thereby enriching the learning experience while preserving the rich tapestry of Malay proverbs for future generations. This exploration is essential in paving the way for more effective and culturally responsive educational practices that resonate with today's technologically savvy youth. Early discussions surrounding the use of proverbs as educational tools largely emphasized their cultural importance and moral teachings. Scholars such as Mammadova (2024), Davranovna and Nilufar (2024), Ngalim and Stanislaus (2020), and Munir and Nudin (2021) have emphasized how proverbs encapsulate indigenous wisdom while fostering cognitive abilities by bridging traditional knowledge with modern-day challenges.

As technology advanced, the integration of design principles began to reshape the approach to illustrating these proverbs, illustrating a shift towards creative learning modalities (Gan & Leung, 2020). By the late 2010s, emphasis shifted towards more structured learning principles, such as the ARCS Model, which seeks to enhance learner motivation through Attention, Relevance, Confidence, and Satisfaction. The application of the ARCS Model in illustrating proverbs allows educators to create engaging contextual experiences that resonate with the digital literacy of Generation Alpha. This transition towards incorporating innovative teaching methods, supported by ongoing study (Fomina et al., 2023), reflects a broader trend in educational psychology aimed at creating learning environments that are not only informative

but also appealing to the emerging generations who are accustomed to interactive digital experiences. The incorporation of Malay proverbs within educational frameworks can significantly enhance learning experiences for Generation Alpha, a group characterized by their engagement with technology and diverse learning modalities. A design framework that utilizes the ARCS (Attention, Relevance, Confidence, Satisfaction) model can effectively facilitate this integration. For instance, the attention component can be captured through dynamic presentations of proverbs using design elements, or any visual strategies, which have shown promise in making content more appealing for young learners. Studies have emphasized the role of culturally relevant pedagogy in fostering connections between students' backgrounds and educational content, thereby increasing their investment in learning since it is equally critical in this context. Unfortunately, the teaching of proverbs often fails to capture students' attention as it merits, primarily due to the widespread belief that proverbs have lost their relevance in contemporary society. Additionally, the symbolic and metaphorical nature of proverbs demands advanced cognitive skills for interpretation, which contributes to their lack of engagement and interest among students (Nasir & Subet, 2023). When educators contextualize proverbs within contemporary examples and tailored to their preference and experience, it will illustrate timeless wisdom in ways that resonate with learners' daily lives, building confidence and cultivating critical thinking skills (Fomina et al., 2023). Satisfaction, the final element of the ARCS model, can be achieved through positive feedback mechanisms, where learners see the real-world applications of proverbs. The incorporation of peer collaboration and reflection has been shown to heighten satisfaction levels in educational settings. The application of the ARCS (Attention, Relevance, Confidence, Satisfaction) model provides a structured approach to this integration, enhancing engagement through contextually rich proverbs. Additionally, sociocultural theory emphasizes the importance of cultural context in learning. By embedding cultural proverbs within instructional design, learners can build connections between their personal experiences and traditional wisdom, promoting deeper comprehension and retention (Nadeem et al., 2024). This connectivity highlights the relevance aspect of the ARCS model, suggesting that culturally enriched materials foster a sense of belonging and ownership among learners.

On the other hand, some critiques arise concerning the potential oversimplification of cultural narratives when applied in educational settings. Critics argue that without careful consideration of the complexity within these proverbs, there is a risk of perpetuating stereotypes or misrepresentations (Fomina et al., 2023). However, when aligned with pedagogical strategies, these concerns can be mitigated, ensuring that proverbs are presented with context and variety, thereby enriching the learning experience. Moreover, the use of technology, especially with design frameworks that incorporate design principles, adds another dimension by making proverbs more visually appealing and accessible, which may significantly enhance the satisfaction and engagement of Generation Alpha learners. Together, these theoretical perspectives offer a holistic foundation for advancing the design framework needed to utilize Malay proverbs effectively in contemporary educational settings. The main discussion of this review underscores the importance of merging traditional cultural knowledge with contemporary educational methodologies to support the educational needs of Generation Alpha. Engaging with the richness of Malay proverbs through innovative, creative and more personalized approaches not only cultivates a sense of belonging and cultural pride among learners, but also equips them with critical skills necessary for navigating an increasingly complex world.

Methodology

In this study, the focus centres on Generation Alpha, specifically targeting six-year-old pre-schoolers, who are at the preoperational stage of cognitive development characterized by symbolic thought (Lowenthal, 1975). The sample consists of 41 pre-school learners drawn from four kindergartens—two located in urban areas and two in rural settings in Central and North Malaysia. Employing a focus group discussion method, the study is organized into eleven groups to facilitate structured dialogue. A total of six illustration styles (Salisbury & Styles, 2018) were presented: (i) Whimsical, (ii) Cartoon, (iii) Black and White, (iv) Line, (v) Realistic, and (vi) Sketchy, as illustrated in Figure 1. The selection process for illustrations incorporated ‘sticker voting’ to collectively define individual preferences based on the six illustration styles. All these illustrations were developed based on one specific Malay proverb, “*Sikit-sikit, lama-lama jadi bukit,*” which translates into English as “Take care of the pennies, and the pounds will take care of themselves.”

This is followed by grouping participants based on chosen thematic illustration styles. This is complemented by discussions aligned with the indicators of the ACRS Model, culminating in a thematic analysis that seeks to identify prevalent trends and insights within children’s illustrative preferences, thus advancing the understanding of their cognitive engagement with visual stimuli. This analysis helps to distil key insights from these discussions, providing clarity and direction for interpreting the outcomes. This systematic approach not only enhances the validity of the research but also acknowledges the unique cognitive characteristics of Generation Alpha, reflecting the importance of tailored methodologies in developmental studies.



Figure 1: Illustration Styles

Findings & Discussion

The findings reveal a clear preference among Generation Alpha for the ‘cartoon style’ illustration, which garnered 56.1% of the votes, highlighting its effective engagement with young audiences. This overwhelming endorsement can be attributed to the dynamic and colorful nature inherent in cartoon visuals, which capture children’s attention and create an immersive experience. As noted, cartoons engage young minds through vibrant imagery that not only entertains but also nurtures imagination and curiosity (Bedekar & Joshi, 2020). This style’s ability to blend imagination with storytelling allows children to connect deeply with

relatable characters, creating emotional ties that invite further exploration of the narratives presented. Furthermore, cartoons serve a dual purpose: while they entertain, they also convey educational content and important life lessons, acting as effective pedagogical tools (Siddiqui & Islam, 2022). It also aligns well with the learners' characteristics, reflecting their preference for visually engaging, vibrant, and technology-friendly content which requires an approach grounded in negotiation and compromise (Spasova, 2022).

In stark contrast, other styles such as whimsical and sketchy illustrations received much lower preferences, at 31.7% and 3%, respectively. The minimal votes for the monochromatic and realistic styles suggest limited appeal, indicating that children may prefer vibrant, imaginative depictions that immerse them in adventurous worlds. Overall, this preference underscores the importance of dynamic visuals in fostering not only engagement but also educational opportunities through entertaining narratives. The heightened understanding exhibited by this study indicates that the realization of cultural identity through learning materials and activities aligns with several studies that advocate for culturally responsive pedagogy as a means to strengthen learners' relationship to content (Altugan, 2015; Vickov, 2007).

A careful review of the findings shows that using the ARCS (Attention, Relevance, Confidence, Satisfaction) model to illustrate these proverbs significantly boosts learners engagement and comprehension, while also encouraging deeper inquiries into the significance of cultural content in modern educational contexts. The incorporation of visual elements plays a pivotal role in shaping learners' aesthetic preferences and boosting their engagement with diverse subjects. Illustrative drawing serves as a crucial tool for fostering visual literacy, enabling students to connect emotionally and intellectually with the material they encounter. Through illustrations, children gain a better understanding of literary texts, as these visuals elucidate complex themes, characters, and narratives, thereby enriching their comprehension of the written word. This kind of engagement is essential as it helps cultivate moral ideals and a deeper appreciation for the arts. By immersing students in the illustrative world, educators can nurture both creativity and critical thinking, preparing learners to interpret and appreciate artistic expressions in a more profound manner. As mentioned, utilizing design principles and visual strategies within educational frameworks can stimulate either emotional or technical awareness, ultimately enhancing the individual's overall aesthetic experience (Farhodovna et al., 2023 ; Tursunmurotovich, 2020). These findings have significant implications for both theoretical and practical applications, suggesting that incorporating local cultural narratives into curricula enables educators to cultivate more inclusive learning environments that not only honor learners' preferences but also improve educational achievements (Fomina et al., 2023). Educators must ensure that teaching and learning materials are up-to-date and aligned with learners' preferences and current educational trends, as this can improve their information retention and increase their motivation to learn (Gan & Leung, 2020).

The ARCS model serves as a foundation for exploring technology-enhanced learning techniques across diverse subject areas beyond proverbs, highlighting its broader potential for various educational applications. As more scholars and educators recognize the importance of culturally informed teaching, this study contributes valuable insights that could influence policy and curriculum design at multiple educational levels (Rachabatuni et al., 2024), sparking vital conversations about the role of cultural narratives in contemporary education (Isnah et al., 2021). The combination of cultural heritage and technological advancement in this context highlights the possibilities for multi-modal learning strategies to effectively engage diverse learners, paving the way for future scholarly exploration of the intersection between culture, technology, and education (Rachabatuni et al., 202). Such initiatives reinforce the need for

aligning educational practices with students' cultural backgrounds and values, thus progressing pedagogical theories and nurturing the socio-cultural understanding critical for shaping informed global citizens. Overall, the results from this study represent a significant step toward revitalizing cultural education and equipping the next generation to appreciate and engage with their heritage more fully.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study thoroughly examined the design framework for illustrating Malay proverbs, with a particular focus on how the ARCS (Attention, Relevance, Confidence, Satisfaction) model influenced Generation Alpha's preference for the 'cartoon style' illustration as a motivating factor in learning Malay Proverbs. The study provided key insights into the importance of proverbs as significant cultural treasures that align with modern educational methods. The central research issue, which aimed to effectively incorporate traditional Malay proverbs into educational systems, was addressed through the creation and evaluation of a structured illustration technique that enhanced both understanding and engagement. The findings revealed significant improvements in learners' awareness and appreciation of Malay proverbs, thereby supporting the strategies promoted by the ARCS model, culturally responsive pedagogy, and the integration of design principles and visual strategies. The implications of these results extend beyond academic settings, offering practical recommendations for educators across various environments who wish to weave cultural heritage into contemporary curricula. By integrating local wisdom into instructional and creative resources, educators can cultivate a stronger bond between learners and their cultural identities, ultimately fostering engagement while aiding in collective identity formation and emotional connections.

Furthermore, embracing such frameworks can help bridge generational divides, ensuring that the values reflected in Malay proverbs are successfully passed down to future generations in ways that are both relevant and meaningful. Looking forward, there are numerous avenues for further investigation in this field. Longitudinal studies that track the lasting impacts of educational interventions based on the ARCS model could also provide further validation of its effectiveness across diverse educational settings. Ultimately, fostering collaborations among educators, cultural practitioners, and researchers is crucial to advance the discussion regarding the significance of cultural heritage and its incorporation into the education of Generation Alpha. Such initiatives will be instrumental in enriching the educational landscape while fostering a deeper appreciation for cultural narratives and the pivotal role of design principles among future learners (Rachabatuni, 2024). Moreover, expanding this framework to include other cultural expressions or proverbs from diverse contexts could provide valuable comparative insights (Fomina et al., 2023; Zhou et al., 2024). The findings indicate that the quality of design principles in educational tools has a significant impact on children's engagement and motivation in learning Malay proverbs.

Acknowledgment

Authors acknowledge the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) Malaysia of funding under the Fundamental Research Grant Scheme (FRGS) 2022: FRGS/1/2022/SSJO/UITM/02/27).

References

- Altugan, A. S. (2015). The relationship between cultural identity and learning. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 186, 1159–1162.
- Bedekar, M., & Joshi, P. (2020). Cartoon films and their impact on children's mentality. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary*, 5(6), 13–18.
- Davranovna, H. K., & Nilufar, S. (2024). Importance of folk proverbs in child education. *Образование Наука и Инновационные Идеи в Мире*, 43(3), 150–153.
- Farhodovna, R. D., & Toxirovna, I. N. (2024). Methodology of teaching English language and literature. *Innovation in the Modern Education System*, 5(46), 319–321.
- Fomina, T., Karimova, R., & Shilmagambetova, Z. (2023). Enhancing international communication through modern approaches to teaching visual art in kindergarten and junior high school: Exploring landscape themes as examples. *Journal of International Legal Communication*, 8 (76).
- Gan, Z., & Leung, C. (2020). Illustrating formative assessment in task-based language teaching. *ELT Journal*, 74(1), 10–19.
- Hannig, A., Lemos, M., Spreckelsen, C., Ohnesorge-Radtke, U., & Rafai, N. (2013). Skills-omat: Computer-supported interactive motion-and game-based training in mixing alginate in dental education. *Journal of Educational Computing Research*, 48(3), 315–343.
- Hong, J. Y., Ko, H., & Kim, J. H. (2019). Cultural intelligence and ARCS model for the digital era. In *Proceedings of the 9th International Conference on Web Intelligence, Mining and Semantics* (pp. 1–4).
- Isnah, E. S., Subandiyah, H., & Pairin, U. (2021, December). Cross-cultural narratives in literature for children: A cyber semiotics analysis. In *International Seminar on Language, Education, and Culture (ISoLEC 2021)* (pp. 91–95). Atlantis Press.
- Jalaluddin, N. H. (2014). *Semantik dan akal budi Melayu [Semantic and Malay wisdom]*. Penerbit Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.
- Jin, S. (2024). Optimizing English teaching: ARCS motivation model and task-based language teaching in university. *Learning and Motivation*, 87, 102028.
- Jones, C. (2011). Students, the net generation, and digital natives: Accounting for educational change. In *Deconstructing digital natives* (pp. 30–46). Routledge.
- Kamarul, K. (2024). Cultural integration: Enhancing Malay proverbs with visual narratives for better understanding through digital illustrations. In *Proceedings of ICITS 2024 e-ISSN: 2716-6732 8th International Conference on Information Technology and Society 2024 (ICITS 2024)*, June 26–27, Al-Fahad Hotel, Hat Yai, Thailand.

- Keller, J. M. (2010). The ARCS model of motivational design. In *Motivational design for learning and performance: The ARCS model approach* (pp. 43–74).
- Li, K., & Keller, J. M. (2018). Use of the ARCS model in education: A literature review. *Computers & Education, 122*, 54–62.
- Lowenthal, B. (1975). Piaget's Preoperational Stage of Development and Applications for Special Preschoolers.
- Mammadova, I. (2024). The role of proverbs in language learning: A cognitive and cultural perspective. *EuroGlobal Journal of Linguistics and Language Education, 1*(1), 40–45.
- Munir, M. A., & Nudin, B. (2021, March). Educational design for Alpha generation in the industrial age 4.0. In *2nd Southeast Asian Academic Forum on Sustainable Development (SEA-AFSID 2018)* (pp. 137–145). Atlantis Press.
- Nadeem, S., Shahid, M. A., & Mahmood, A. (2024). Portrayal of Gender Roles in the Saraiki Proverbs: A Sociocultural Study. *Pakistan Languages and Humanities Review, 8*(3), 221-232.
- Nasir, M. R. M., & Subet, M. F. (2023). Malay proverbs in inquisitive semantics approach lens: The case of Malaysian textbooks. *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics, 13*(2), 317–332.
- Ngalim, V. B., & Stanislaus, F. (2020). Using oral traditions in provoking pupils to wonder and grow in moral and intellectual values. In *Wonder, education, and human flourishing* (pp. 237–250).
- Norleyza, J., Ning, C. T. S., Latih, R., Ismail, A., Muda, Z., Bakar, M. A., ... & Yatim, N. M. (2020). Reka bentuk aplikasi multimedia berasaskan kinect untuk pembelajaran peribahasa melayu. *AJTLHE, 12*(2), 152-176.
- Peng, A., & Patterson, M. M. (2022). Relations among cultural identity, motivation for language learning, and perceived English language proficiency for international students in the United States. *Language, Culture and Curriculum, 35*(1), 67–82.
- Prensky, M. (2001). Digital natives, digital immigrants part 2: Do they really think differently? *On the Horizon, 9*(6), 1–6.
- Rachabatuni, P. K., Principi, F., Mazzanti, P., & Bertini, M. (2024, April). Context-aware chatbot using MLLMs for cultural heritage. In *Proceedings of the 15th ACM Multimedia Systems Conference* (pp. 459–463).
- Salisbury, M., & Styles, M. (2020). *Children's picturebooks: The art of visual storytelling* (2nd ed.). Hachette UK.
- Siddiqui, A. M., & Islam, R. (2022). Role and impact of cartoons in building children's attitude at the primary level. *Propel Journal of Academic Research, 2*(1), 49–60.

Spasova, D. (2022). Generation Alpha and the education. *Science. Business. Society*, 7(2), 75–78.

Tapscott, D. (2009). *Grown up digital: How the net generation is changing your world*. McGraw-Hill.

Tursunmurotovich, S. S. (2020). Importance of illustrations for perception of content of the book. *European Journal of Research and Reflection in Educational Sciences*, 8(4), 98–101.

Vickov, G. (2007). Learners' own cultural identity in early language learning. In *Teaching modern languages to young learners: Teachers, curricula and materials* (pp. 105–118).