

Malay proverbs in inquisitive semantics approach lens: The case of Malaysian textbooks

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ABSTRACT

With reference to the Malay Language Secondary School Standard Curriculum, proverbs in Malaysian contexts are one of the language aspects that students need to use integrated in the language teaching. This research identified proverbs in the Malaysian secondary school textbooks analyzed using inquisitive semantic approach. The proverbs data were obtained from Form 4 and Form 5 Malay Language textbooks, from Ministry of Education Malaysia. Nine pieces of data were identified using the inquisitive semantics study framework involving three stages; surface meaning analysis, the semantics resonance analysis involving speaker's cognitive by applying the Cross-reference Framework (Kempson, 1986) in the Relevance Theory (Sperber & Wilson, 1986; 1995), and the meaning analysis using the inquisitive semantics approach (Jalaluddin, 2014). The study indicated the proverb meaning analysis starting from the knowledge of the meaning from the dictionary, followed by the meaning of the proverbs in the context of sentences, and the exploration into the philosophy and common sense underlying the formation of the proverbs. The study proposed that the textbooks stimulated students' higher-order thinking skills with the inquiry method to create new discovery and knowledge. In conclusion, the textbooks offered teachers the proverbs analyzed by the inquisitive semantics approach as a teaching approach such to make the process of learning language in their classrooms more meaningful.

Keywords: Inquisitive semantics approach; Malay proverbs; philosophy; textbooks

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INTRODUCTION

Proverbs are part of the language, and all races have their own proverbs inherited from their forefathers for decades (Al-Azzam, 2018). They are "all the arrangements of short speeches that linger in the words of the mass, for a long time due to the fact that they sound pleasant and the words are smartly used" (Ahmad, 2022, p.152). There are rules in people's lives that are formed by religious teaching and cultural practices. These are arranged in short and precise utterances that eventually form proverbs (Omar, 2015). In the Malay community, they reflect the culture, nature, and the way the Malays think. A number of sources influences the creation of proverbs. They include the way the Malays see

things happening around them every day, the experience they gain in life, and the experience they have inherited for years from their ancestors.

In general, proverbs are used as a metaphor-oriented communication that has an orderly, brief, and precise line of words, carrying an accurate meaning (Jalaluddin, 2014). They also play a significant role in the life of Malay societies. According to the Malay Language of the Malay Secondary School Standard Curriculum by the Ministry of Education Malaysia, proverbs are taught under the language arts and language system through Forms 4 and 5 (2018). They are treated as equally important as other aspects, as proverbs are also one of the elements that portray language skills.

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Unfortunately, learning proverbs does not gain students' attention as it deserves, as most society members assume that proverbs are no longer relevant today. Another reason why proverbs lack the attention and interest among most students is because the proverbs use symbols and metaphors, which require a high level of thinking skills to interpret their meanings (Rafatbakhsh & Ahmadi, 2019).

The learning of proverbs essentially is considered to be able to expand and stay relevant to the process of language learning as a whole if students are able to master the meanings of the proverbs they learn. The learning and understanding of the meaning of the proverbs in detail aim to increase the language skills among students. Students' language skills can be observed in the context of their ability to use proverbs in learning activities. For instance, their essays are definitely more aesthetic and are of high quality if they use accurate and appropriate proverbs indicating that the students have highly developed skills in using the language (Hamzah & Hassan, 2011; Hassan & Jaafar, 2016; Jalaluddin & Kasdan, 2010; Jalaluddin & Nopiah, 2011; Musanif et al., 2011).

In this vein, students need to be taught about the characteristics and the use of proverbs in more detail and not only focus on the meaning of the words solely in the dictionary. In the context of teaching and learning proverbs, students should not be encouraged to memorize the proverbs and look up their surface meanings in the dictionary. They need to be motivated to use proverbs contextually using a learning method that is more inquisitive or explorative. It is due to the fact that the actual meanings contained in most proverbs do not reflect the lexical meanings that form the utterances of the proverbs (Samburskiy, 2020). For instance, the study by Black (2000, 2022) found that the proverb '*kaki botol*' (bottle foot) does not literally mean 'the foot are in the shape of the bottle,' but the actual meaning is 'an alcoholic person.'. Therefore, teachers have to select an appropriate teaching approach to proverbs to encourage the exploration of the proverbs' meanings so that they can be understood well by the students (Amrullah et al., 2022).

If the level of knowledge of the meanings of proverbs is moderate and weak among students, this complicates, even hampers students from using proverbs in language learning activities orally or in writing (Abdol, 2019; Awang et al., 2022; Bakar et al., 2020; Hussin, 2020; Tang et al., 2021). Thus, the appropriate approach, technique, or method of teaching proverbs needs to be identified, analyzed, and also practiced by teachers so that it can be engaging to the students.

Thus, this study proposes that the content of the teaching of proverbs in the classroom uses an approach that is more contextual and inquisitive,

where students are given the opportunity to further improve their understanding of the implicit meanings of the proverbs. This proposal is deemed appropriate with the content and requirements of the Secondary School Standard Curriculum. With reference to the content of Forms 4 and 5 of the Malay Language of the Secondary School Standard Curriculum, the learning of proverbs is placed under the language arts. This particular aspect concerns directly with the aspects of aesthetic within the language and literature that need to be understood and mastered by the students. The mastery in this aspect also includes mastering the metaphorical language in the Malay proverbs. Through the learning of language arts, students have the opportunity to create, produce, and present creative works of various genres verbally and in writing using a wide range of interesting and captivating techniques (MoE Malaysia, 2018).

In addition, the proverb teaching approach suggested a need to take into account the intention of the Secondary School Standard Curriculum to produce students who can master 21st- century skills. The teaching approach employed by the teachers should involve communication in various directions, as well as the fact that it should be collaborative, cognitive, creative, and innovative to engender high-profile students, in the sense that they are resilient, highly skilled in communicating, thinkers, keen collaborator, curious, principled, informative, caring, concerned, and patriotic (MoE Malaysia, 2018). Through this approach, an observation needs to be done with regard to the relations between the things compared, followed by making a conclusion about the symbolic meanings and finally making an evaluation of the accuracy of the proverb based on its context of usage. This explorative type of learning approach is considered to be able to help students build their cognitive or stimulate their higher order thinking skills (HOTS) and produce students who have the ability to apply, analyze, evaluate, and create language in their communication.

Based on the argument above, the inquisitive semantics approach introduced by Jalaluddin (2014) to study the meanings of proverbs in depth is regarded as consistent with and fits the learning approach proposed in Forms 4 and 5 of the Malay Language of the Malay Secondary School Standard Curriculum, which is an inquiry-based learning. Inquiry-based learning is a teaching and learning approach that focuses on students. Using the inquiry approach, students have to explore and analyze what they learn systematically, critically, and analytically and further make some conclusions successfully on all the questions that emerge, complete with strong and convincing evidence. Teachers only play the role of the guide and observer of the learning process through the question-and-answer activity. Verifying the facts, making conclusions, being open,

and focusing on the hypothesis to be tested are characteristics of inquiry-based learning (MoE Malaysia, 2018). The question is, how is an inquiry-based learning implemented in the teaching of proverbs to serve as guidance for teachers, and how is this method instilled among students? To answer these questions, this study attempts to identify the proverb learning approach that is appropriate to the content requirements of the Malay Language of the Secondary School Standard Curriculum. Jalaluddin (2014) has developed the inquisitive semantics approach based on exploration and inquiry to analyze the meanings of proverbs in further detail and subsequently reached the philosophy and intellect of the Malays. The method of analyzing the meanings of proverbs using the inquisitive semantics framework involves three levels of processing, namely script semantics, semantics resonance, and inquisitive semantics. After the script semantics and semantics resonance are used as the basis in the meaning analysis, an assumption is made, and another analysis towards completion of the meaning making should be done. The highest level in the effort to analyze meaning more profoundly requires hidden instinctive interpretations behind the written and implied meanings.

The concept of inquisitive semantics leans on the principle of inquiry or the spirit of curiosity. The questions of “why” are posed until the actual meanings of the proverbs studied are unraveled and the origins are known, at the same time revealing the intellect of the native speakers. Besides the script, data, theory, and cognition in the process of analyzing meaning, inquisitive semantics also highlights the beauty of the language, culture, philosophy, and intellect of the speakers who are said to reflect on the wisdom of Malay thinking (Jalaluddin, 2014).

Furthermore, inquisitive semantics not only functions to unravel the meanings of the proverbs to the point that it discovers the philosophy and the intellect of the Malays but it is also regarded to be able to highlight the knowledge that transcends the border of linguistic knowledge. The approach used in the inquisitive semantics is not limited to only the linguistic field but also transcends the borders of language, such as history, science, geography, religion, and so on (Daud, 2018a, 2018b; Subet & Nasir, 2019). The characteristics of multidisciplinary learning found in the framework of inquisitive semantics share similarities with the teaching and learning strategies in the Malay Secondary School Curriculum Standard, which is the effort to integrate the diversity of knowledge in the process of teaching and learning known as the cross-curricular element. The cross-curricular element is an element of added value instilled in the teaching and learning process other than those dictated in the content standard and learning

standards. This element is inculcated, aiming to consolidate the skills and integrity of the human capital envisioned, as well as to address the current and future challenges.

Although the inquisitive semantics study framework remains in the field of linguistics and has been used extensively by linguists to analyze meaning, this study takes the view that the inquisitive semantics can also be advantageous and expanded in the learning of proverbs in secondary schools. Through the literature review, previous studies adopted the inquisitive semantics approach mostly lean on the linguistics field that proverbs analyzes based on environmental images such as animals and plants. For example, the study done by Daud (2018a) analyzed Malay proverbs with the element of *aves*, such as duck, bird, and chicken, which is connected with the concept of ‘*rizq*’ (sustenance), and Daud (2018b) who studied the reason for choosing the lexical ‘chicken’ and ‘fox’ in the Malay proverbs. In addition, the work by Daud and Subet (2019) looked into proverbs with the image of a ‘goose’ related to human attitude and behavior in an implicit way. Next, the study by Murthy and Subet (2019, 2020) aimed to identify the implicit meaning behind the Tamil proverbs with the images of frogs and elephants and to examine the influence of its culture and common sense in the Indian community. In the study by Daud et al. (2021), an analysis was carried out on Malay proverbs containing the image of crows, which is said to bring a negative connotation to the Malay community. Daud and Subet (2022) conducted a study aiming to explore the selection of the ‘chicken’ as the image to refer to precaution, wasteful acts, and acts of betrayal among the Malays in the past.

In addition, using animal-themed proverbs, previous scholars had also looked into plant-themed proverbs. An example is the study carried out by Murthy et al. (2019), who analyzed the reason for selecting ‘black pepper’ in Tamil proverbs. The inquisitive semantics also gained the attention of Indonesian scholars such as the one by Kinanti and Rachman (2019), who explained the influence of ‘paddy’ on the Indonesians through its proverbs. The study by Kasdan and Nopiah (2021) also chose paddy-themed proverbs, but the literature aimed to delve into the philosophy and common sense of the Malays through proverbs of that theme. Next, the study by Sabarudin and Rosly (2021) was done to identify the element of flowers contained in Malay proverbs, which suggests the concept of beauty.

Apart from proverbs that carry elements of animals and plants, some studies used other subjects as their study data, for instance, one by Nopiah et al. (2018) that concentrated on proverbs with food as their element- the ones showing the influence of cold (banana) and hot (meat) in communicating the influence of emotions. The study by Mohamed and

Jalaluddin (2018) looked into the abstract meaning of proverbs with 'salt' as their element, related to the meaning of 'humiliation' due to the fact that the value is cheap and it can melt easily. Some studies focused on the element of Malay architecture, Zaini and Jalaluddin (2019) examined proverbs with the image of 'stairs,' which are seen to as significance in various aspects of Malay lifestyle. Another study by Jonteng et al. (2021) analyzed the proverbs with body parts as their theme, which is the symbol of hands in the Malay proverbs. Last but not least, the study by Saimon and Rashid (2022) showed the concept of leadership in Malay proverbs, which relates to leaders, leadership styles, and the people led, which brings the message of positive reprimand.

To sum up, most previous scholars used the inquisitive semantic study framework to analyze the meaning of the proverbs that focuses on the element of the environment. Apart from that, the studies carried out were based on the linguistic field that aimed to examine the linguistic phenomenon and behavior in understanding the implicit meaning. Therefore, this study seeks to diversify the variation of the Malay proverbs and the inquisitive semantics by analyzing proverbs with the theme 'education.' This is based on the fact that the analysis on proverbs with different domains or themes will produce different values and lessons, and give the opportunity to the researcher to explore, construct and expand new knowledge.

Based the literature review aforementioned, the number of studies that used inquisitive semantics as the proverb learning method at the school level is still scarce. Despite the fact that there were studies that combined the inquisitive semantics approach into the teaching and learning of language as done by Bujang and Subet (2021, 2022a, 2022b), this study did not use the proverbs data but focused more on the other elements of artistic language such as poetry, rhyme, and poem. Meanwhile, the study conducted by Md Nasir and Subet (2018) and Subet and Md Nasir (2019) used proverb data based on the themes obtained from proverbs dictionary, which is proverbs that lean on matters of life, such as family and human luck. The proverb data found in the work by Md Nasir and Subet (2018) and Subet and Md Nasir (2019) was also taken from old data, in the *Malay Language* textbook under the Secondary School Integrated Curriculum (1989-2017) which was then replaced with the Secondary School Curriculum Standard in 2017. The Malay Language of the Secondary School Standard Curriculum of Forms 4 and 5 introduced in 2018 whereas the Form 4 of the Malay Language textbook was published in 2019 and Form 5 of the Malay Language textbook published in 2021. Thus, there should be a detailed study on expanding and improving the existing materials by using the latest data. With this in mind, this study aims to identify the inquisitive semantic approach as an alternative

method for the teaching and learning of proverbs at secondary school level based on the inquiry-based learning strategy proposed in the Malay Language of the Secondary School Standard Curriculum. Proverbs with the theme 'education' were obtained from the Standardized Malay Language Secondary School Curriculum under the thematic approach, as this theme is regard to be more similar to the content of language learning at the secondary school level. The learning strategy proposed in the Standardized Malay Language Secondary School Curriculum was also used in this study, in which a thematic approach is adopted in the process of teaching and learning language.

Next, a comprehensive discussion was also prepared in this study, where it integrates a diverse range of knowledge fields encompassing the education field, language studies such as pragmatics and semantics, and research that transcends the knowledge discipline in the process of analyzing the meanings of proverbs. From the literature review using inquisitive semantics as their basis, the inquisitive semantics approach is considered to be able to be implemented in the education field as a method of teaching and learning proverbs. Nonetheless, this study did not involve teaching and learning activity in the classrooms, as this study serves as a preliminary study on the inquisitive semantics approach as the proverb learning method at the secondary school level in Malaysia. The outcome of this study is expected to be able to prepare a teaching guideline of the proverbs of the Malay Language teachers to be instilled in their students in the process of exploring and understanding the true meanings of the proverbs.

METHOD

This study was fully qualitative with the relational analysis method known as the semantics analysis to study the relationship between meaningful concepts (Darusalam & Hussin, 2018). This method was chosen as it was appropriate with the aim of the study to see the suitability of the relationship between the concept of the proverb learning strategy based on inquiry proposed in the Forms 4 and 5 of the Malay Language of the Malay Secondary School Standard Curriculum with the inquisitive semantics approach.

A purposive sampling technique was employed in this study. The data were obtained from a list of Malay proverbs in Forms 4 and 5 of the Malay Language textbooks issued by the Ministry of Education Malaysia (2018). As this study was in the form of relational analysis (semantics) based on the corpus data involving a close observation of the meanings of the proverbs, supported by the data from *Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka* (the Board of Language and Library) corpus database, which was the *Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka* Malay

Correspondence Reference Center and also the *Malay Concordance Project (MCP)* in obtaining the meanings of the linguistic items. According to Ismail (2019), corpus data was the language data that collects language in the verbal and written forms, and was stored in printed and digital forms. The corpus data encompassed multiple fields of study to help the study to obtain the actual sample of the language gathered based on human lives every day.

Next, the study identified and collected Malay proverbs based on meaning association with the theme 'education' obtained from a list of themes under the thematic approach in the Malay Language of the Malay Secondary School Standard Curriculum document. A total of nine proverbs with the theme 'education' were identified in the data cluster. The proverbs chosen to be clustered under this particular theme are those that have a meaning association with the word 'education' ('*pendidikan*') itself, such as 'educate' ('*mendidik*'), 'education' ('*didikan*'), 'knowledge' ('*ilmu*'), 'learn' ('*belajar*'), and 'lesson' ('*pelajaran*'). Proverbs with the theme 'Pendidikan' or 'Education' were chosen due to the existing connection between the theme and the learning content in Forms 4 and 5 of the Malay Language textbooks. For example, the title of Theme 2 in Form 4 of the Malay Language textbook is '*Insan Terdidik, Negara Sejahtera*' (Educated

Human, Prosperous Country). In contrast, Theme 5 in Form 5 of the Malay Language textbook is '*Pendidikan untuk Semua*' (Education For All). These titles are perceived to have some similarities with the theme 'education' selected for this study. The justification for the study to categorize proverbs based on the theme was that it could help to suit the study scope and conduct the data analysis in a more focused and controlled manner.

Next, having successfully gathered the data, the study mapped and coded the data as displayed in Table 1. However, for the data analysis, only two proverbs at the top position were analyzed and discussed., the proverbs with the data codes PB1 and PB2. In line with the study methodology that employed a fully qualitative approach and purposive sampling, a small data size between one and seven was sufficient to be analyzed in this qualitative study depending on the sampling criteria to fulfill and the study objective to achieve (Darusalam & Hussin, 2018; Liamputtong, 2014). After the data had been determined, there was the data analysis process, in which the meanings of the proverbs were analyzed using the inquisitive semantics study framework and the cross-reference framework (Kempson, 1986), served as a sub-concept in the Relevance Theory (Sperber & Wilson, 1986; 1995). Table 1 exhibits the theme and the proverb data used in this study.

Table 1
Education-themed proverb data

Data code	Malay Proverb	Meaning
PB1	<i>Hendak belajar berenang dapatkan itik, hendak belajar memanjat dapatkan tupai</i> (If you want to learn to swim, get a duck, if you want to learn to climb, get a squirrel)	If we want to learn something, we need to learn from someone who has an expertise in that particular field
PB2	<i>Melentur buluh biarlah dari rebungunya</i> (Let the bamboo bend from its shoot)	It is good to educate a child from young, as when they get older it would no longer be fruitful
PB3	<i>Hanya jauhari mengenal manikam</i> (Only the jeweler knows the bead)	Only the wise will know the fine nature of knowledge
PB4	<i>Ilmu itu pelita hidup</i> (Knowledge is the candle of life)	Knowledge serves as the guidance for one to make wise decisions
PB5	<i>Bawa resmi padi, makin berisi makin tunduk</i> (Be like the rice stalk, it bends lower as it is laden with ripening grains)	The more the knowledge or the higher the position, the humble a person is
PB6	<i>Membaca jambatan ilmu</i> (Reading is the bridge of knowledge)	Knowledge is gained from the reading culture
PB7	<i>Belum tahu di masin garam, belum tahu di pedas lada</i> (You don't know how salty the salt is, you don't know how hot the chilli is)	You do not have enough experience/knowledge
PB8	<i>Bagaimana acuan begitulah kuihnya</i> (The kuih follows the mold)	A child will take after the values or behaviours of his or her parents
PB9	<i>Lubuk akal tepian ilmu</i> (The depth is the mind, the edge is the knowledge)	A person who has vast knowledge

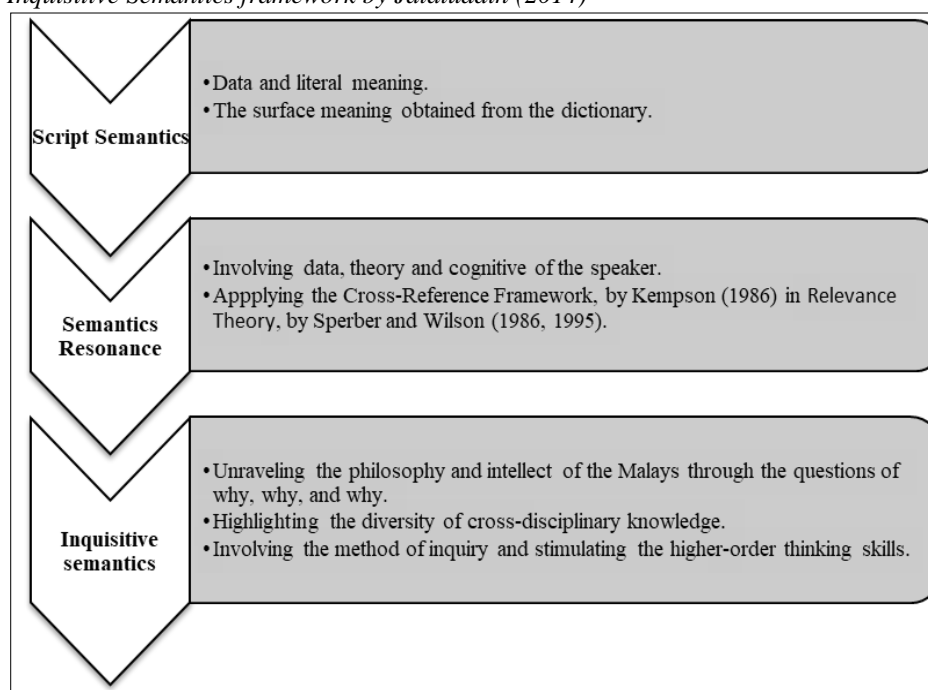
Data Analysis

With the content analysis design, the collected data were analyzed inductively to understand the study phenomenon comprehensively (Wellington, 2000; Ibrahim, 2017). Every proverb selected as the study

data based on the specific domain was analyzed descriptively using the inquisitive semantics study framework by Jalaluddin (2014). Figure 1 shows the inquisitive semantics study framework used in this study for the data analysis method.

Figure 1

Inquisitive Semantics framework by Jalaluddin (2014)



Referring to Figure 1, the inquisitive semantics study framework involves three levels of analysis. Level one is called the script semantics, which only involves the surface meaning. The surface meaning was intuitively given by the Malay community long ago, which was then recorded in proverb dictionaries. The surface meaning of the proverbs can be referred to in proverb dictionaries published in the Malay community. The surface meaning is also known as the dictionary meaning.

After explaining the meanings of the proverbs through the stage of script semantics, the next analysis was conducted by connecting the meanings of the proverbs with the theory, data, and cognitive of the speakers, as well as the relationship from the aspect of linguistics, shown through linguistic evidence. The analysis at this second stage is named semantics resonance, and it was conducted using examples of utterances in the actual contexts. The utterances used in this study were taken from two main resources of the corpus data, one produced from the Malay Literature Reference Center online, on the website <http://prpmv1.dbp.gov.my/> and another cited from the content of Forms 4 and 5 of the Malay Language textbooks.

The data analysis at this stage was carried out by applying the Cross-reference Framework by Kempson (1986). The cross-reference framework is an approach in the field of pragmatics under the Relevance Theory (TR) introduced by Sperber and Wilson (1986), which was later updated in 1995, such as context, cognitive effects, and processing efforts. The “context” is the unlimited assumptions that are translated into the mental or thoughts of the listener based on the experiences they have

undergone in interpreting a particular utterance (Jalaluddin, 1990, 1992). The “cognitive effects” involve the interactions that occur when the listeners try to interpret the utterance delivered by the speaker (Jalaluddin, 1990, 1992). As an utterance is delivered, the listener will gather, in his or her mind, several early assumptions. However, if the utterance delivered is misunderstood or misinterpreted by the listener as it is inconsistent with the context of delivery, then there will be problems in communication, and there will emerge a lot of questions or issues (Jalaluddin, 1992; Ibrahim & Usman, 2021). It can be associated with the effort in processing information, known as the processing cost. According to Jalaluddin (1992), the “processing efforts” relate to the level of difficulty for a listener to understand what is being said by the speaker. If the listener is able to easily understand the utterance delivered by the speaker, the processing cost is low. However, if the listener has a problem understanding the speaker, as it will create questions, the processing cost is high. An utterance is regarded as lacking in relevance if it involves a high processing cost.

The cross-reference framework, in essence, is used to analyze an utterance that does not have any antecedent. The antecedent is any extra information needed to interpret the actual meaning of the utterance delivered. However, it is not found in the explicit content or the visual idea of the sentence. Thus, in this vein, an additional premise would be necessary. This additional premise can be obtained from sentences established in the context of the utterance to help the reader or the listener interpret the actual meaning that is to be communicated

(Daud, 2019; Jalaluddin & Shah, 2009). According to Mansor and Jalaluddin (2015), the cross-reference framework will help the reader or the listener to connect the second sentence and the first sentence when they are interpreting the utterance appropriately to the context of the sentence and the meaning intended by the speaker. Next, the proverb meaning analysis at the third level adopts the inquisitive semantic approach. At this third level, the analysis is done in further detail to unravel the philosophy and the intellect of the Malays by debating over the use of a certain image or subject found in the utterance in the proverb. Based on the source obtained from the data, theory, and cognition, the researcher needs to raise some questions until the justification is established as to why the lexical is selected to be used in the proverb utterance. This is to ensure that the meaning of the proverb can be understood profoundly to the root level so that the way of thinking and the wisdom of the Malays in the olden days can be revealed (Jalaluddin, 2014).

The inquisitive semantics approach was selected in this study as an alternative method to learning proverbs due to the fact that, through the literature review conducted, this approach is said to be able to stimulate higher-order thinking skills, such as analyzing and evaluating, that it is inquiry-based

learning, that it transcends various disciplines (multi-discipline) and it nurtures the thinking toward understanding the actual context of the proverbs (philosophy and common sense) (Daud & Subet, 2019; Murthy & Subet, 2020; Nasir & Subet, 2018; Subet & Nasir, 2019).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Proverb Meaning Analysis with the Theme of 'Education': PB1 Data

Proverb: *Hendak belajar berenang dapatkan itik, hendak belajar memanjat dapatkan tupai* (If you want to learn to swim, get a duck, if you want to learn to climb, get a squirrel)

Level 1: Script Semantics

The proverb '*Hendak belajar berenang dapatkan itik, hendak belajar memanjat dapatkan tupai*' (If you want to learn to swim, get a duck, if you want to learn to climb, get a squirrel) has its actual meaning, 'If we want to learn something, we need to learn from someone whose expertise is in that particular field.' PB1 proverb is classified under the theme 'education' due to its meaning association with the lexical word 'learn' or '*belajar*.' At this stage of script semantics, only the surface meaning is put forth, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Meaning Analysis at Script Semantics Level

Proverb	Surface Meaning
PB1: <i>Hendak belajar berenang dapatkan itik, hendak belajar memanjat dapatkan tupai</i>	If we want to learn something, we need to learn from someone who has an expertise in that particular field
(If you want to learn to swim, get a duck, if you want to learn to climb, get a squirrel)	

With reference to Table 2, the surface meaning of this proverb is obtained by referring to dictionaries of proverbs has been published by certified organizations or by referring to the Malay Literature Reference Center, *Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka*, or *Pusat Rujukan Persuratan Melayu*, *Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka* online, using the website <http://prpmv1.dbp.gov.my/>. The analysis at this Level 1 is named script semantics. At this stage, only the surface meaning is established. 'Surface meaning' here means the meaning obtained from the proverb dictionary given through Malay intuitions.

Script semantics is the equivalent meaning that only provides the literal meaning, and it is not elaborated in more detail. However, the meanings of the proverbs at this surface level are regarded as being unable to demonstrate the association between the language, cognition, and intellect of the Malays (Jalaluddin, 2014).

Level 2: Semantics Resonance

The following figure 2 shows the data analysis for the semantics resonance level]. Referring to the example of the utterance given below, the study carried out a cross-referencing process for sentences in the utterance with the proverb. This analytical process was done by placing a broken line (---) showing that there is an association between the meaning of the cross-reference between the proverb and the context of the sentence delivered. The symbol of the triangle with the apex pointing downward (▼) shows the sentences that indicate having linguistic evidence referring to the concept related to the proverb. For the symbol of the triangle with the apex pointing upward (▲), it refers to the subject of the study for analysis, which is Malay proverbs used in the utterance. This kind of cross-reference method was used to analyze every data at a semantics resonance level.

Figure 2

The data analysis for the semantics resonance level

Peribahasa Melayu ada mengatakan, *hendak belajar berenang, dapatkan itik, hendak belajar memanjat, dapatkan tupai* . Sehubungan dengan itu, Kelab Renang dan Rekreasi Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Seri Jaya telah mengadakan <u>Kursus Asas Berenang</u> di bawah <u>bimbingan Profesor Madya Dr. Tengku Fadilah binti Tengku Kamalden</u> , Pensyarah, Fakulti Pengajian Pendidikan, Universiti Putra Malaysia <u>yang merupakan bekas perenang negara</u> .

(Source: Form 4 of the Malay Language Textbook, page 8)

Based on the sample of the utterance proposed, the first sentence is the proverb used, which is “*hendak belajar berenang, dapatkan itik, hendak belajar memanjat, dapatkan tupai*” (if you want to learn to swim, you get a duck, if you want to learn to climb, you get a squirrel). This proverb carries the meaning that ‘if we want to learn something, we need to learn from someone who has the expertise in the area or field’. In essence, the second sentence in the utterance has already explained the meaning of the proverb in an explicit manner.

By using cross-reference framework, the phrase ‘*Kursus Asas Berenang*’ (*Basic Swimming Course*) can be cross-referenced with the proverb utterance, which is ‘*hendak belajar berenang*’ (wanting to learn to swim). In the context of this phrase ‘*Kursus Asas Berenang*’, the main goal, is undoubtedly, to ‘learn to swim’ for members of Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Seri Jaya Swimming and Recreation Club. Next, the phrase ‘*bimbingan Profesor Madya Dr. Tengku Fadilah binti Tengku Kamalden...yang merupakan bekas perenang negara*’ (guided by Professor Madya Dr Tengku Fadilah binti Tengku Kamalden...who was a former national swimmer), is an utterance with an antecedent characteristic and it can be cross-referenced with the proverb utterance of ‘*dapatkan itik*’ (get a duck). The utterance from this second sentence plays the role of an additional premise that forms the context and the cognitive effects based on the listener’s background and an assumption. In the utterance of the second sentence, the individual stated is one who used to be an international level swimming athlete who had represented the country. As a former national swimmer, surely the individual has accomplished a lot of success as her accolades and the title must have placed her as someone who has all the experience and have high expertise in the swimming field. In the context of the utterance, this proverb is essentially not difficult to interpret because in the second sentence, additional information has already been supplied to the listener to understand the content of use for this proverb based on the meaning of the script. With the application of the cross-reference framework and appropriate references, it is easy for the listener to relate the literal meaning of the proverb used in this

utterance, which is ‘If we want to learn something, we need to learn from someone who has an expertise in that particular field’.

Nonetheless, the meaning of this proverb cannot be restricted only by looking into the skills or the knowledge stated, which is ‘swimming’ or ‘climbing’. This is due to the fact that the lexical ‘*berenang*’ (swimming) and ‘*memanjat*’ (climbing) used in this proverb are only metaphorical and carry another meaning that connotatively refers to any knowledge or skill that is to be learned. The images of ‘*itik*’ (duck) and ‘*tupai*’ (squirrel) are used, on the other hand, to signify ‘people who are experts in their fields’ referring to the skills that the individuals respectively have.

Looking into the analysis that has been done, to understand the meaning of the proverb in the utterance, it does not require high processing cost. This is because, the process of interpreting the meanings of proverbs using cross-reference framework has created a good cognitive effect by both the listener and the speaker, based on the emerging early assumptions through the associations they made between the first and the second sentence. Thus, it is evident that the application of cross-reference framework at the semantics resonance level has helped readers understand the implied, metaphorical meanings of the proverbs by accounting for the data, theory, and cognitive. The process of meaning analysis at this semantics resonance level has a lot of flaws and is still unable to dig deeper into the philosophy and intellect of the native speakers (Jalaluddin, 2014). Thus, there is another meaning analysis stage required to connect the language, the culture, the cognitive and at the same time reflect the intellect of the Malays; it is the meaning analysis using the inquisitive semantics approach.

Level 3: Inquisitive Semantics

By using the proverb ‘*Hendak belajar berenang dapatkan itik, hendak belajar memanjat dapatkan tupai*’ (If you want to learn to swim, get a duck, if you want to learn to climb, get a squirrel) as an example, the implicit meaning of this proverb was analyzed using the inquisitive semantics perspective to unravel the Malay philosophy and common sense.

The proverb which means 'If we want to learn something, we need to learn from someone who has an expertise in that particular field' is categorized under the domain of education in this study as the meaning contains elements of advice focusing on the process of getting the knowledge or skill in learning. From the stance of the inquisitive semantics, it needs to question this- why did the societies years ago take the images of animals such as 'duck' and 'squirrel' as the subjects of this proverb, instead of other animals?

Duck is a common name for several species of water animals in the family of *Anatidae*. The scientific name for duck is *Anas Platyrhynchos*. Duck is an aquatic bird whose size tends to be smaller than several of its family members such as a goose. Ducks can be found in fresh water and salt water as ducks are water lovers. Animals comprised in this group *aves* have flat and wide beaks they use to find worms in the mud (Akmal & Sutedja, 2022).

Fitting the name given to this animal, which is the water bird, ducks are great swimmers and divers to find food in the water such as small fishes, insects and also aquatic plants. Other than that, ducks also have a variation of diets such as small amphibia, worms, and small mollusks. Ducks prefer to spend their time in the water instead of on the land. Their small size, strong body shape, and their fully isolated and closely woven feathers enable the fine feathers on their skin to stay dry, and so it influences their swift movements and maneuvering while swimming, be it on the surface or in the water. Ducks also have wide, webbed feet that help them swim and dive well, and they are able to move swiftly to cross the water. Ducks can be seen in various colors on the feathers, such as brown, yellow, grey, black, and white depending on their species (Ramlan, 2021a).

The next question that needs to be answered is, why is 'squirrel' matched with 'duck' in this proverb? If we refer to the elaboration above, ducks can be seen as the champion in the water as they have an advantage in terms of their great swimming and diving abilities. Unlike the squirrel or scientifically named as *Sciuridae*, its greatness can be seen in its fast movements when it climbs trees and jumps in the air. Squirrels can be categorized as a wild animal, although there are squirrels who become pets to humans. The habitat for the wild squirrels or specifically tree squirrels is in the forest as squirrels make the trees mature to build nests as their habitat. Squirrels are a type of a small mammal, with their bodies long and with their fine furs of brown, black, white or red. This small animal has a pair of big eyes under their ears and by the side of their head, giving them the advantage of seeing more widely. This plus point is exploited by the squirrels to detect their prey and predators more easily. Squirrels have four feet, where the front ones

function as hands that help them hold their food (Ramlan, 2021b).

Squirrels have the ability to climb and jump as they have strong feet and claws to grip and cling onto the trees. With their small size, squirrels can climb very fast and jump very well on the tree branches. Adult squirrels can normally jump up to 3 meters, in one go. To support their body when they do the jump, the layers on both their hands will expand when they climb, and they will appear as if they are about to fly (Ramlan, 2021b).

Referring to the elaboration given based on the facts about 'duck' and 'squirrel', clearly both the images of the animals used in this proverb provide an accurate reference to explain the meaning of the proverb. Upon close observation of this proverb, 'If we want to learn something, we need to learn from someone who has an expertise in that particular field', it explains the situation that when seeking knowledge, everyone is advised to choose the right, and the skilled, teacher, in the field they are pursuing. This is because, in the Quran, there is evidence explaining about the need to seek for knowledge with experts, as found in surah An-Nahl verse 43. Allah SWT, dictates,

(O Muhammad), whenever We raised any Messengers before you, they were no other than human beings; (except that) to them We sent revelation. So ask those who possess knowledge if you do not know. (QS An-Nahl verse 43).

It is clearly stated that if someone wishes to learn, he or she needs to do so from someone who has the knowledge or who has the expertise in the particular field. This is very much demanded in Islam- to seek for knowledge from people who are experts in the given field. The selection of teachers that is in line with the skills that one needs to learn, is essential to prevent any misunderstanding of the knowledge imparted.

Despite that, there is another issue that needs to be raised, which is why did the Malays years ago combined the two animal images such as 'duck' and 'squirrel' in this proverb? Why not only the duck or the squirrel? This is explained this way- that one who has the expertise in science or political field may not necessarily have the knowledge of Quranic interpretations. The same goes for someone in the field of law- he or she may not have the knowledge in the field of hadiths, and vice versa (Leman, 2017). An individual can become an expert in the field they learn, but at the same time do not know anything about other fields. This is the reason why the proverb places two images of animals in the utterance, as it shows the different knowledge between the 'duck' and the 'squirrel'. Automatically, the combination of the two images in this proverb has explained the meaning, that if one is to learn something, they need to learn it from someone who is knowledgeable in that field.

Thus, based on the elaboration and interpretation using the inquisitive semantics approach, it is clear that the proverb '*Hendak belajar berenang, dapatkan itik, hendak belajar memanjat dapatkan tupai*' (If you want to learn to swim, get a duck, if you want to learn to climb, get a squirrel) has proven the wisdom of thinking of the Malays in the olden days. The Malay society back then had a very close observation of the matters of life that happened around them. Although they have instilled two elements of the fauna in this proverb to serve as symbols, by using inquisitive semantics, they have successfully explained the meaning of this proverb to the deeper level and unraveled the diverse branches of knowledge. Not limited to the study of the language itself through the analysis using the inquisitive semantics, this study also manages to highlight knowledge related to zoology

which is about 'duck' and 'squirrel', and also issues related to the pursuit of knowledge, through the perspective of Islam.

Proverb Meaning Analysis with the Theme of 'education': PB2 Data

Proverb: *Melentur buluh biarlah dari rebungnya* (Let the bamboo bend from its shoot)

Level 1: Script Semantics

The proverb '*Melentur buluh biarlah dari rebungnya*' (Let the bamboo bend from its shoot) carries the meaning 'It is good to educate a child from young, as when they get older, it would no longer be fruitful'. PB2 proverb was classified under the theme 'education' as the meaning is associated with the lexical word 'educate' or '*mendidik*'. At this stage of script semantics, only the surface meaning is put forth as shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Meaning analysis: Script Semantics Level

Proverb	Surface Meaning
PB2: <i>Melentur buluh biarlah dari rebungnya</i> (Let the bamboo bend from its shoot)	It is good to educate a child from young, as when they get older it would no longer be fruitful

Level 2: Semantics Resonance

The use of the images, 'bamboo' and 'shoot' in this proverb has an implied educational communication underlying the utterance delivered. This proverb shows the traditional Malay societies' philosophy of observing their environment and surroundings, which bending the bamboo to form the shape they want should be done when the bamboo is still in shoots. At this young stage, shoots are easy to bend and form, as the structure is still soft. The bamboo shoots indirectly depict 'young children' whose behavior and morality can still be shaped and molded by parents, before they become hardened, like 'the bamboo', and finally cannot be bent any longer. Based on the lexical '*melentur*' (bending) in the proverb, *Kamus Dewan* (Main Dictionary, 2015)

defines it as 'bending or curving (like the stem of the bamboo, drying lines that are loose) that is easy to do but it will not break easily, like the rope, wire, and others. Thus, in the context of this proverb, it literally explains that when the shoots of the bamboos are still soft and moldable akin to children who are still young and small, and can be educated by the parents the way they want. According to the Relevance Theory context, the proverb '*melentur buluh biarlah daripada rebungnya*' (let the bamboo bend from its shoot) is not difficult to interpret as it has an antecedent that enables the proverb to be understood, despite its implicit nature. This can be proven through the corpus data taken from the Corpus Database of *Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka* as seen below in the figure 3.

Figure 3

Corpus Database of Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka

Walau apapun, adalah lebih baik <u>ibu bapa sendiri memberi tumpuan yang lebih</u>	
kepada anak-anak mereka <u>khususnya ketika anak-anak mereka sudah mula</u>	
<u>mengenal erti kemodenan.</u> Bak kata pepatah, *** melentur buluh biarlah	
daripada rebungnya***.	

(Source: prpm.dbp.gov.my)

Referring to the corpus data above, it clearly shows that this proverb is very good at educational matters, when the lexical of '*ibu bapa*' (parents) and '*anak-anak*' (children) are used together with the proverb '*melentur buluh biarlah daripada*

rebungnya' (let the bamboo bend from its shoot). From the cross-reference perspective, the use of the object 'bamboo' is an additional premise that can be understood as children who have already grown, whereas the object 'shoot' can be cross-referenced

with the lexical 'children who just recognize the meaning of modernity', of those who are still young and can still be shaped by their parents. Through linguistic evidence, the cognitive explanation is able to connect the use of this proverb through contrasting objects, such as 'hard' and 'soft' and the meaning that is to be conveyed, through the context of sentence that the listener can understand.

Level 3: Inquisitive Semantics

The implied meaning in the proverb '*Melentur buluh biarlah daripada rebungnya*' or 'Let the bamboo bend from its shoot' according to the inquisitive semantics has, in fact, a very deep meaning to be studied. Examining the meaning of the proverb should not only look into the literal meaning and the cognitive aspect alone, but also it has to be seen instinctively or intuitively to dig deeper into the philosophy and intellect behind the use of various objects and images in the proverbs (Jalaluddin, 2014). Thus, the study asked this question: what was the justification for Malays years ago in comparing the objects of 'bamboo' and 'bamboo shoots' in this proverb? This proverb is often used to metaphorically advise the parents out there to shape and educate their children from a very young age. Based on the proverb, a question that needs to arise is that why is 'bamboo' or 'bamboos' expressed as children who have grown, and 'bamboo shoots' are compared to children who are still young? To answer this question, the inquisitive semantics elaborates on the language phenomenon that is to be delivered by the native speakers of this proverb.

Bamboos come from the group of *monocotyledons* from the family of *Gramineae* under the family of weeds. Bamboos grows in places with a moderate climate, which is semi-tropical. They can be obtained in 2 forms of growth which is *monopodial* (single trunk) and *simpodial* (in grove). All the bamboos in Malaysia are comprised in the *simpodial* group (Jabatan Perhutanan Semenanjung Malaysia, 2016). Bamboos are known as a plant that is structurally cylindrical, long and hollow inside, with some columns and stumps in between. The leaves are tapered and long, as well as coarse and prickly. Mature bamboos are resilient like concrete and can stand pressure up to 4 tonnes. Due to its hard structure, bamboo serve as an alternative non-wood material that is able to replace wood in the construction industry. Bamboos are also stronger than wood, as the fiber arrangements in the bamboo are very close and compact. The compact fiber structure makes the resilience higher compared to wood, and even the use of bamboos in the construction process is very much encouraged since this plant is very environmentally friendly. Bamboos also last long as they can reach up to 100 years old. (Junus, 2014).

Other than that, bamboos have many usages. Some of the products originated from bamboos and can be seen in the market are bamboo mat, bamboo food cover, bamboo furniture and musical instruments, and many others. Bamboos are also planted as part of the landscape in public recreational gardens and individual premises. Despite the fact that bamboos have many usages and benefits to humans, this study does not discuss the advantages of bamboos in detail. This is because the image of 'bamboo' used in this proverb has an implicit meaning that highlights the characteristic of 'hardness' for the bamboo to be associated with the characteristic of humans, which is 'stubborn'. The hard trait mentioned in this proverb is then compared to the soft trait of the bamboo shoots to show the difference between the two objects.

'shoot', or bamboo shoots refers to the young shoots that grow from the root of the bamboo and emerge from the bamboo grove. Bamboo shoots have their use among most of the societies in Asia such as Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines and China as their food source under the category of vegetables. The shoots can be eaten in a lot of ways, such as serving as '*ulam-ulaman*' or a traditional vegetable-based side dish, or an additional ingredients in other dishes. The bamboo shoots can be extracted already when the height reaches 20 centimeters and the diameter measures around seven centimeters. If the age of the bamboo shoot exceeds two months old, the shoot can no longer be taken for consumption as it becomes a young, hardened bamboo (Hosnan, 2014).

With the structure and characteristics of the bamboo and the bamboo shoot, it is no wonder that the old Malay societies used both these images to deliver a metaphorical message to parents about family life in children's education. The act of '*melentur*' or 'bending' in this proverb is motivated by the word '*didikan*' or 'education' which is regarded as the efforts of the parents to mold their children's morality and personality the way they wish. This metaphor really suits the role and the duties of the parents who are responsible in educating their children from young because as they have reached puberty and adulthood, their personality may be difficult to be 'molded' or shaped. The reference to the trait of the young shoot of a bamboo was made to the children who are still young and innocent, still very easy to 'bend' or shape, but parents need to have the knowledge to carry their responsibility in educating as the tasks of shaping a person would require the right method and technique. Without skills and knowledge, sometimes the *bamboo shoots* that are to be bent will break as they are still young and soft. This is why bamboo shoots have to be bent before they turn into bamboos because by then the task of 'bending' will be no easy task as the bamboos have become

hardened. Even if they are bent, the bamboo will retract to be in their natural state.

The proverb '*Melentur buluh biarlah daripada rebungnya*' (Let the bamboo bend from its shoot) is seen to show the wisdom of the Malays who wish to deliver the metaphors implicitly. Although 'the bamboo shoots' and the 'bamboos' originate from the same plant, there are points of differences between the two objects which is that bamboos have 'hard' characteristic, whereas bamboos shoots are softer. This is due to the factor of 'time' in the process of forming these characteristics. The same thing happens in the process of forming children's personalities which is the factor of age and time. The lackadaisical attitude in educating children when they are still young will definitely leave some negative consequences. There are some parents who assume that their children are still young and would give absolute freedom to them to do anything they like. When they get older, the parents will regret it when the children can no longer be molded and educated as it would already be too late.

The same thing happens to the bamboo shoots whereby when they are already more than two months old, the shoots will be bamboos and they will physically be hard, and thus, can no longer be bent. The study of the meaning of the proverb '*Melentur buluh biarlah daripada rebungnya*' (Let the bamboo bend from its shoot) using the inquisitive semantics study framework has been capable of delving into the philosophy and intellect of the native speakers of this proverb. As a whole, the interpretation of the meaning of this proverb not only explains the language phenomenon, but also instils various elements of knowledge that are characteristically multi-disciplinary. This study not only gets to explain about the philosophy and intellect among the formation of proverb through the linguistic perspective, but also sheds light on the knowledge related to the botany studies on bamboo plant.

Based on the meaning analyzes of the the proverbs '*Hendak belajar berenang dapatkan itik, hendak belajar memanjat dapatkan tupai*' (If you want to learn to swim, get a duck, if you want to learn to climb, get a squirrel) and '*Melentur buluh biarlah dari rebungnya*' (Let the bamboo bend from its shoot) using the inquisitive semantics approach, clearly the inquisitive semantics approach is able to be integrated with the teaching and learning of proverbs that can be utilized in the education field. Through this study outcome, the inquisitive semantics approach serves as the guidance by teachers as an alternative approach to the teaching of language arts especially proverbs to make the learning content more holistic (Amrullah et al., 2022). Through the inquisitive semantics analysis, the meaning of proverbs can be understood in various contexts that can be used by students in the language learning process. Through this study

outcome, the inquiry-based learning application is essentially capable of stimulating high-order thinking skills among students if they get adequate guidance from their teachers. If previously the meanings of the proverbs were only understood at the surface level, with the right method such as the inquisitive semantics approach, this helps students to delve into the actual meanings of the proverbs more profoundly. This finding is also supported by the study by Bujang and Subet (2021, 2022a, 2022b) who stated that the application of the inquisitive semantics approach in the teaching and learning of language arts helps stimulate higher-order thinking skills among students.

Also, through the inquisitive semantics, the proverb learning content can also be taught in stages following the students' higher-order thinking skills and cognitive based on the Bloom Taxonomy Hierarchy (Anderson et al., 2000). Starting from the knowledge of the dictionary meaning, this is followed by applying and understanding the meanings of the proverbs in the sentence context based on the meaning delivered through the utterances of native speakers. The final stage is the stage of analyzing the meanings of the proverbs using the inquisitive semantics, which is re-evaluating the aspect of the image or subject selection in the proverbs and finally, students are able to create new discoveries and knowledge and understand and appreciate Malay literary works (Jalaluddin, 2014).

The analysis outcome on the meanings of proverbs in this study has successfully highlighted the diversity of knowledge that transcends discipline or known as Element Across Curriculum in the Malay Secondary School Standard Curriculum. These findings are consistent with the study by Daud (2018a; 2018b) and Subet and Nasir (2019) who shared the view that the inquisitive semantics study is able to highlight the diversity of knowledge across disciplines in the data analysis outcome of the proverb meanings. This is not limited to the study of language alone; through the meaning analysis of the proverb '*Hendak belajar berenang dapatkan itik, hendak belajar memanjat dapatkan tupai*' (If you want to learn to swim, get a duck, if you want to learn to climb, get a squirrel) using the inquisitive semantics approach, this study has successfully shed light on the knowledge related to animals such as duck and squirrel, which is animals used in this proverb and the perspective of learning according to Islam. Apart from that, the meaning of the proverb '*Melentur buluh biarlah dari rebungnya*' (Let the bamboo bend from its shoot), this study also successfully highlights the knowledge of botany related to the bamboo plant and the reason for the bamboo to be selected in this proverb by the Malay community years ago.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study suggest that the application of the inquisitive semantics study framework to analyze the meanings of the proverbs is essentially unlimited, not only in the field of linguistics. Inquisitive semantics can also benefit Malay Language teachers as an alternative to the method of teaching and learning proverbs at school. The inquisitive semantics approach is considered in line with inquiry-based learning proposed as a learning strategy in the Malay Language of the Malay Secondary School Standard Curriculum. Consistent with the function of the inquisitive semantics itself, which is to explore into proverbs and their meanings to a deeper level and subsequently, to unravel the philosophy and intellect underlying the creation of the said proverbs. The method of learning proverbs based on this kind of inquiry is seen to be able to make the process of learning proverbs more meaningful. Other than the fact that it can be used to understand the meanings of the proverbs in a more abstract way, the inquisitive semantics also succeeds in showing the diversity of knowledge that transcends the study of the language itself.

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