

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Students' Perception toward Malay Quatrain

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ABSTRACT

Malay quatrain is one of the many genres of Malay literature. It was introduced long time ago in order to deliver messages and to form a means of communication among people in the olden days. Malay quatrain was first introduced in Malaysia and has been taught to students at schools and further, it is used until now. Since the globalization of Malay language and literature throughout the world, Malay quatrain was introduced to students at universities that preferred to offer the course. Hence, the objectives of the study were to identify the students' perception towards Malay quatrain and to discuss their opinions on Malay quatrain. The samples of the study were 16 male and 12 female subjects from two Malay literature classes. The subjects have been exposed to Malay literature genres from previous semesters. The subjects were given a set of questionnaires which consisted of questions on their perceptions towards Malay quatrain. The subjects were also interviewed on their opinions of Malay quatrain. The results of the study revealed that the majority of the subjects agreed that Malay quatrain has deep meaning, values, and suitability, and was also best learnt by using media technology. The data from the interview supported these findings. It is hoped that future studies will focus on the ability of Korean subjects to write Malay quatrain by utilizing the Korean culture.

Key words: Malay quatrain, Korean students, perception, Malay literature.

Introduction

Malay quatrain has been used among Malay communities from generation to generation. It is one of the many Malay literature genres; it is also one of the subjects in primary and secondary schools. Students can also pursue Malay literature at the university, and Malay quatrain is one of the major subjects. Malay quatrain was not only studied in Malaysia but also at universities, that offered the course, all over the world. The dissemination of Malay quatrain among students at the university was encouraged and accepted among people who love literature. People use the quatrain to send messages, in the opening and closing speeches, and to express their views, opinions, love, respect, and etc. (Normaliza Abd Rahim and Nik Ismail Harun, 2011; Mohd Rosli Saluddin, 2007; Francois-Rene, 1988; Zaaba, 1965; Winstedt, 1969). According to Muhammad Haji Salleh (1977), the quatrain was created by the Malays in order to send messages and express their heart content; for instance, while sitting alone, a person was able to express his/her feelings through a quatrain. Malay quatrain is a valuable expression of a person to another and is very much appreciated (Normaliza Abd Rahim, Siti Nur Aliaa Roslan and Siti Aisah Yusuf, 2011; Harun Mat Piah, 1989).

Zaaba (1965: 218) postulates that the word 'pantun' (quatrain) was used by people with the meaning of like, resemble, and figurative. Quatrain resembles the mind of the Malay community. According to Winstedt (1969), quatrain is traditional Malay poetry from oral treasure. Mohd Taib Osman (1996:2) states that quatrain is one of the communication tools in social context and also in the culture artifacts. Accordingly, Zaaba (1965) explains that quatrain basically consists of four lines that stand on its own and has schema rhyme *abab*. The first two lines are the mirror, whilst the other two lines are the content of the quatrain. Occasionally, the mirror showed an image or nature, whereas the content referred to humans. The messages were abstract and at times, underlying messages about feelings, thoughts, and life were present. Besides the four lines of quatrain, there were also two lines, six lines, and eight lines, in the form of a connection between the quatrains. It is normal to have Malay quatrain at formal events; the four lines quatrains were used to present information. Zaaba (1965) postulates that the quatrain provides satisfaction in relaying the messages. Further, the language use is suitable

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and shows the inner self of a person. Normaliza Abd Rahim *et al.*, (2011) state that the dissemination of the quatrain could also be in the form of books, magazines, and software. Abdullah Hassan, Aripin Said, Ainon Mohd. (2005), and Abdul Latiff Abu Bakar and Mohd Rosli Saludin (2004) agree with Normaliza Abd Rahim *et al.*, (2011) and add that Malay quatrain will be read and appreciated by readers and listeners in all forms and methods. In addition, the positive feedback among the community towards the Malay quatrain has given the opportunity for other students from all over the world in order to learn the quatrain, and at the same time, to understand the Malay culture and thought.

A study by Hashim Musa, Normahdiah Sheik Said, and Rozita Che Rodi dan Siti Sarah Ab Karim (2012) revealed that the social personality trait among the Malay heritage is sown in the kindness of heart, and embodied in actions, character, courtesy, value, norm, thinking, and the knowledge. Old Malay poetry was a linguistic form modified rhythmically; rhythmic with diction, which touches the hearts, can be reminded and remembered for a long time (Hashim Musa, 2008). Normaliza Abd Rahim and Nik Ismail harun (2011) postulate that poetry's beauty from old Malay poetry was more attractive in terms of selection, word usage, and symbolism, and the meaning also possesses messages with good value. Hashim Musa *et al.*, (2012) postulate that in the beginning of oral Malay language, poetry has played a major role in revealing the cleverness of the Malays since centuries ago. For example, Malay sayings, proverbs, and quatrains consist of lines that are full of meanings and at the same time, use a rhythm that suits the listeners.

On the other hand, Malay quatrain was also a problem among youngsters and teenagers where they felt that learning Malay quatrain would make them feel like living in the old days. Youngster and teenagers would use words from the old days and this had made them reluctant to learn or further pursue the learning of the genre. The negative feelings, as in not being modern if they use the Malay quatrain, have attracted researchers to examine the reasons and to motivate them to learn the genre. A study by Adnan Isenin, Zalinda Sakari dan Suraya Abdul Jalil (2010) was conducted with a group of respondents from a Malay community in order to find out their thoughts on the quatrain. The thoughts include the Malay culture and philosophy that concentrate on the mind of the Malays in Malaysia. This study focused on the traditional quatrains, which consist of advice, and the best way of teaching and giving awareness and sense in life. The findings of the study revealed that the communities involved were recapped on the traditional quatrain and the respondents were content with the understanding of the quatrain. Another study by Normaliza Abd Rahim *et al.*, (2011) revealed that by introducing Malay quatrain software, it would allow for an exposure of traditional and modern quatrain to students at primary schools. The subjects involved were students in the Year 3 class (nine year old subjects). At the end of the program, the subjects were given software consisting of Malay quatrains program and exercises. The subjects involved were content with the software and had high confidence in reading and understanding the quatrain. The subjects did not complain or utter any negative statements pertaining to being old fashioned or living in the old days when trying out the Malay quatrain program. Saidatul Nornis Mahali's (2010) study revealed that Malay quatrain was a medium to inculcate the Malay culture among communities. Here, the study has helped in terms of revealing and exposing the Malay culture to the community. Hence, there was a lack of research done among youngsters and teenagers on their perception toward the Malay quatrain.

Therefore, based on the literature review and problems on perceiving negative thoughts about Malay quatrain, this study has two objectives; to identify the Korean students' perception towards Malay quatrain and to discuss the subjects' opinion on Malay quatrain.

Methodology:

All subjects from the two classes participated in the study. The samples of the study consisted of 16 male and 12 female subjects from two Malay language classes at *Hankuk University of Foreign Studies* in Korea. The subjects were aged from 20 to 27 years. The subjects were exposed to Malay quatrain for three semesters. The subjects were given a set of questionnaires, which consisted of 9 questions of perception towards Malay quatrain. The questions used the *Likert* scale as in *Strongly Agree, Agree, Undecided, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree*. The subjects were also interviewed on their perception, views, and opinions toward Malay quatrain. The questionnaires were collected and the data was analyzed by using percentages and discussions, according to the theme of the questionnaire: Malay quatrain and its meaning, Malay quatrain and its values, and Malay quatrain and its suitability.

Results and Discussion

Malay Quatrain and Its Meaning:

According to Table 1 below, the majority of the subjects strongly agreed and agreed that the Malay quatrain consisted of a meaning. The subjects stated the Malay quatrains were understandable (Item 1) since the subjects were able to understand each Malay quatrain that they had learnt. 15 male subjects and 10 female subjects

(89%) stated that they understood the Malay quatrain, which were presented to them previously. They also stated that the Malay quatrain had given them the opportunity to understand the Malay culture as to being somewhat similar to their culture in Korea. The culture, similar to respect toward parents, grandparents, elders, showed that they would speak in a low and respectful voice. Also, they made sure that the words that they uttered toward their parents and elders would be appropriate and respectful. Besides this, the subjects stated that the Malay quatrains that were understandable were Malay quatrains which consisted of advice, love, respect, care, and environment. On the other hand, the minority of the subjects (6 males and 2 females) disagreed that the Malay quatrain was understandable. The subjects stated that some of the quatrains needed discussion and explanation from the group members and lecturer since the subjects were unsure of the meaning.

Table 1: Malay Quatrain and its Meaning.

Table 1. Malay Quatrain and its meaning.			
Male n=16	Female n=12	Total N=28	
(Item 1) It is understandable	15	10	25
(Item 2) It has underlying messages	12	11	23
(Item 3) It consists of proverbs	14	11	25

Item 2 (Table 1 above) showed that the majority of the subjects stated that the Malay quatrain consisted of underlying messages. 12 male and 11 female subjects (82%) strongly agreed and agreed that the Malay quatrains contain messages for adults, teenagers, and children. The subjects stated that the underlying messages should be understood by the readers in order for the quatrain to be viable. The subjects also mentioned that the Malay quatrain should be discussed for its meanings through a small group discussion. This was suggested by the subjects because as they stated to discuss, they were able to obtain ideas of the underlying meanings, and further, they were able to realize that there were different views from other group members. The subjects also stated that the underlying meanings in the Malay quatrain would help them to understand the new Malay sentences and vocabulary. This way they will increase their Malay vocabulary. On the other hand, the minority of the subjects (4 males and 1 female) disagreed that the Malay quatrain consisted of underlying messages. The subjects stated that since they understood the quatrain instantly, they presumed that there were no underlying messages.

Item 3 (Table 1 above) showed that the majority of the subjects perceived that the Malay quatrain consisted of proverbs. 14 male and 11 female subjects (89%) strongly agreed and agreed that the Malay quatrains contain proverbs. The subjects stated that the proverbs referred to the environment as well as to things or living things that they were familiar with. The subjects also stated that the proverbs have helped them to visualize the message and relate it to their understanding of the Malay quatrain. This way, the Malay quatrain, which consisted of proverbs, has helped them to learn proverbs in the Malay world, which are also similar to the Korean culture. For instance, the subjects stated,

(Air dicincang tidak akan putus)

Water cannot be cut, and blood is thicker than water.

(Kalau menggenggam bara biar sampai jadi abu)

Something is worth doing that is worth doing well. If you choose to hold a burning ember in your hand, hold fast until it turns to ashes.

The examples by the subjects above showed that they understood the Malay proverbs in the Malay quatrain. The meanings of the Malay proverbs were related to their daily lives. Thus, the use of the Malay quatrain has helped them to learn within the Malay language learning process. Example 1 showed that 'Water cannot be cut,' which is also logically reasonable since water cannot be cut with anything. Therefore, in the Malay proverbs, it was related to the relationship within family members. The subjects suggested that family members will understand one another no matter what happened, and this implies to the culture in Korea. Example 2 above showed that 'Something is worth doing that is worth doing well'. The subject stated that anything that one person started doing; he/she has to finish it till the end. This also had implications to the daily lives of a student; since they had already registered and enrolled in the university, they had to finish and study till the end. On the other hand, a minority of the subjects (2 males and 1 female) disagreed that Malay quatrain consisted of proverbs. This was because the subjects had thought that the Malay proverb in the quatrain was another style of writing in the Malay language and not as proverbs. Most importantly, the subjects understood the content of the Malay quatrain.

The results for Table 1 above obviously showed that the majority of the subjects perceived that the Malay quatrain consisted of understandable meaning, underlying meaning, and proverbs. The results revealed that the majority of the subjects strongly agreed and agreed on the quality of the Malay quatrains.

Malay Quatrain and its Values:

According to Table 2 below, majority of the subjects perceived that Malay quatrain consisted of values. Item 4 (Table 2) below showed that all of the subjects, 16 male and 12 female subjects, (100%) stated that Malay quatrain has moral values. This identifies that the subjects understood the moral values in the quatrain. The subjects also gave examples of moral values in the Malay quatrain from what they learned.

Respect towards parents

Respect towards elders

Respect towards teachers

Respect towards friends

Care towards family members

Care towards the special needs

Care towards the environment

Sincerity

Modest

Truthful

Ed note: Highlight below- Please confirm change.

The moral values listed above, stated by the subjects, showed that the subjects agreed with the fact that moral values could also be in the form of Malay quatrain. The moral values were understood by the subjects, and Malay quatrain is one way to disseminate the moral values to others. The subjects also agreed that the moral values had provided the understanding of the values and ways to practice them at all times. This way, the Malay quatrain has given the subjects the opportunity and chance to be respectful, caring, sincere, modest, and truthful toward others.

Table 2: Malay quatrain and its values.

Male n=16	Female n=12	Total N=28		
(Item 4) It consists of moral values	16	12	28	
(Item 5) It consists of aesthetic values	14	11	25	
(Item 6) It consists of love values	13	10	23	

Item 5 (Table 2) above showed that majority of the subjects (14 males and 11 females- 89%) strongly agreed and agreed that Malay quatrain consisted of aesthetic values. The subjects understood the quatrain and agreed that the aesthetic values were understandable. The subjects gave examples of aesthetic values, such as artistic quality, beauty, beauty as a value, or aspect of worth. The subjects also stated that by having aesthetic values in Malay quatrain, they would appreciate nature more; for example, the existence of a serene environment would make a person to have a beautiful heart with calmness and peace. The subjects also stated that the aesthetic value in Malay quatrain is one way to express and disseminate the values to others, and it would be appropriate to understand the content of the values. Another example given by the subjects was the aesthetic value as in beauty in a person. They stated that beauty does not always mean that a person is beautiful on the outside, but the aesthetic value of beauty includes the beauty on the inside where a person should be sincere and good toward others. On the other hand, a minority of the subjects (2 males and 1 female) disagreed with the statement that the Malay quatrain consisted of aesthetic values. The subjects stated that the Malay quatrain was for the love of the environment and to appreciate the environment. The subjects also stated that the values in the Malay quatrain were for love of nature, which meant that it did not refer toward aesthetic values.

Item 6 (Table 2) above showed that majority of the subjects strongly agreed and agreed that Malay quatrain consisted of love values. 14 male and 11 female subjects (89%) agreed that the love values were suitable in the form of quatrain. This way, it can be read by people from all ages. The subjects gave examples of love values in Malay quatrain such as,

Love toward family members

Love toward people

Love toward animals

Love toward belongings

Love toward environment

Love toward job

From the above examples of love values in Malay quatrain, the subjects were able to identify the types of love in the quatrain. Each quatrain was referred to different people, and the love values were dedicated to a

specific person. The subjects agreed that love values were favorites among them, particularly love values toward people. Since the subjects were aged between 20 to 27 years, they were hoping to meet a nice and good person to love. The subjects seemed to like Malay quatrain with love values toward people since they could dream and imagine a special person who they could fall in love with. On the other hand, a minority of the subjects (3 males and 2 females) disagreed that the Malay quatrain was in the form of love values. They stated that the Malay quatrain could also be in the form of values other than love values to be read by others.

Malay Quatrain and Its Suitability:

According to Table 3 below, majority of the subjects strongly agreed and agreed that Malay quatrain suits everyone who reads it. Item 7 (Table 2) below showed that 16 male and 12 female subjects (100%) agreed that Malay quatrain is a favorite among the females. This was true since female subjects totally agreed with the statement. They also stated that Malay quatrain would give them a feeling of sentimental values and romance. The subjects gave examples of the content of the quatrain as follows:

The quatrain will let me imagine my dream man.

The quatrain will let me have a romantic feeling with a future boyfriend.

The quatrain will show me the perfect man in my life.

The quatrain will show me the value of a true man.

The examples above showed that the subjects would love to have a quatrain about their dream man. They could feel the romance in the quatrain and moreover, the satisfaction in the meaning of the quatrain made them feel content. On the other hand, the female subjects also stated that Malay quatrain had made them realize the quality of life in terms of being sincere, faithful, and confident. They stated that a person should have all the qualities in order to have a good life. The male subjects agreed that the quatrain would be suitable for females since female are more modest and serious about their future. The male subjects also stated that they also preferred the Malay quatrain since it gave them the courage to speak up to others and gain confidence in stating their opinions about the quatrain.

Table 3: Malay quatrain and its Suitability

Male n=16	Female n=12	Total N=28		
(Item 7) It is favorites among the females	16	12		28
(Item 8) It is suitable for all ages	14	11		25
(Item 9) It is for formal occasions	13	10		23

Item 8 (Table 3) above showed that majority of the subjects strongly agreed and agreed that Malay quatrain is suitable for all ages. 14 male and 11 female subjects (89%) agreed that the quatrain can be read and understood by all ages. The subjects also stated that the quatrain will be suitable based on the word choice and the level of difficulty of the language used. For example, according to the subjects, if the quatrain is for children, the difficulty of language used in the quatrain will be much simpler compared to the language used for adults. The subjects gave examples of quatrain for children as follows;

(Kura-kura dalam perahu,

Pura-pura tak tahu).

Tortoise in the boat,

Pretend not to know.

(Banyak udang banyak garam,

Banyak orang banyak ragam).

Loads of shrimps, loads of salt,

Load of people, loads of attitude.

The examples of Malay quatrain, given by the subjects above, showed that the word choice and language used were simpler and suitable for children. This was true since children understood the content for both the quatrain as shown above. There were no difficult words and the subjects were able to relate the quatrain with their everyday lives. On the other hand, only a minority of the subjects (2 males and 1 female) disagreed that the Malay quatrains were suitable for females. This was because the subjects stated that males also used the quatrain to send romantic messages to their girlfriends. They also stated that by using the Malay quatrain, they were able to write nice words and become attractive among girls.

Item 9 (Table 3) above showed that majority of the subjects strongly agreed and agreed that Malay quatrains were suitable in a formal occasion. 13 male and 10 female subjects (82%) stated that the Malay quatrains were used in formal occasions, such as weddings, speeches, talks, and at the beginning and end of competitions. The subjects were exposed to programs that consisted of Malay quatrains during their students' life in the university, where they organized the events for the faculty. The subjects prepared Malay quatrains for the opening and ending speeches, and they also prepared quatrains when they commented on speakers' speeches. The subjects stated that the Malay quatrain was one way of relaying messages to the audience and it was likable among them. The subjects gave examples of the quatrain for formal occasions as follows:

*(Bawah batang ada keli
Batang rebah menumpu tanah
Cadangan dibentang jelas sekali
Terima kasih, syabas dan tahniah).*

*Under the log was the catfish,
The log fell on the ground,
The proposal was presented successfully,
Thank you, well done and congratulation.*

*(Kuning emas masakanya padi
Mawar merah dalam jambangan
Terima kasih daun keladi
Budi tuan jadi kenangan).*

*Golden yellow paddy,
Red roses in stalk,
Thank you so much,
You will be remembered.*

The two examples of Malay quatrain above showed that the quatrain can be used in a formal occasion. The first example was used to thank and congratulate someone in a presentation, whereas the second example was to thank the person who helped them. The quatrain was shared and read to the audience in order to show their gratefulness toward the person. Only a minority of the subjects (3 males and 2 females) disagreed that the quatrain is suitable for formal occasions. When asked, the subjects stated that the quatrain could also be used toward friends and family members in order to relay the messages. The subjects also stated that the quatrain can be understood by everyone so therefore, the quatrain can also be used to send messages. On the other hand, the messages were in the form of text messages in mobile phones and in e-mails.

The results above has shown that a majority of the subjects strongly agreed and agreed with the Malay quatrain and its meaning, Malay quatrain and its values, and Malay quatrain and its suitability. This study also showed that a majority of male and female subjects agreed that Malay quatrain was understandable (89%), consisted of underlying messages (82%) and proverbs (89%). Besides that, a majority of the subjects agreed that Malay quatrain consisted of moral (100%), aesthetic (89%), and love (89%) values. On the other hand, a majority of the subjects perceived that the Malay quatrain was favorites among females (100%), suitable for all ages (89%), and for formal occasions (82%). The findings of Normaliza Abd Rahim *et al.*, (2011) and Normaliza Abd Rahim and Nik Ismail Harun (2011) supported the findings of this study in which Malay quatrain consisted of underlying messages and was suitable for all ages. The findings of Hashim Musa *et al.*, (2012) also supported the findings of this study in which the inclusion of moral values, aesthetic values, and love values in Malay quatrain will increase the good values in a person.

Conclusion:

Although there were only 28 subjects in the study, all of the subjects participated in the study. Therefore, this study implicates students at universities in Korea who are willing to pursue the Malay language as their major. The results above showed that a majority of the subjects involved strongly agreed and agreed that the Malay quatrain is a subject that everyone can learn. Further, Malay quatrain reflected Malay culture, views, and ways to inculcate the values of life. It is hoped that a future study will concentrate on the writing of Malay quatrain among Korean learners.

Acknowledgement

This work was supported by Hankuk University of Foreign Studies Research Fund of 2012

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