

Cultural and Linguistic Reconnoitre of the Traditional Rhythmic Quatrains (*Mukun*) among Malays in Sarawak

Penelitian Budaya dan Linguistik terhadap Pantun Berirama Tradisional (Mukun) dalam Kalangan Masyarakat Melayu di Sarawak

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ABSTRACT

This ethnolinguistic study examines the linguistic context of *bermukun*, a traditional musical dance and rhythmic quatrains performance among the Malays of Sarawak. The cultural linguistic framework of the rhythmic quatrains (*pantun* or *mukun*) emphasises the dynamic relationship between language utilisation and cultural identity. This paper seeks to elucidate how language mirrors and shapes the cultural identity of Malays in Sarawak through a thorough examination of textual sources utilising the critical discourse analysis (CDA) paradigm. Three hundred sixty-seven *mukun* were extracted from *bermukun*-related publications to examine metaphors, idiomatic expressions, and narrative frameworks in *mukun*, explore the socio-cultural values inherent in these linguistic elements, and evaluate the influence of linguistic choices on the preservation and transmission of cultural identity. The findings indicate that *mukun* is abundant in metaphorical language, reflecting entrenched cultural values and social conventions. The employment of colloquial terms and conventional tales illustrates the Malay community's collective memories and historical experiences. Moreover, this paper delineates linguistic patterns exclusive to *mukun*, underscoring its distinctive position within the wider linguistic context of Sarawak. These discoveries highlight *mukun*'s significance as a crucial cultural repository and stress the necessity for continuous preservation efforts to sustain its linguistic and cultural history.

Keywords: traditional quatrains; mukun; cultural identity; linguistic patterns; indigenous knowledge

ABSTRAK

Kajian etnolinguistik ini meneliti konteks linguistik bermukun, sebuah tarian muzik tradisional dan persembahan berbalas pantun berirama dalam kalangan masyarakat Melayu di Sarawak. Kerangka linguistik budaya pantun (*mukun*) menekankan hubungan dinamik antara penggunaan bahasa dan identiti budaya. Makalah ini bertujuan untuk menjelaskan bagaimana bahasa mencerminkan dan membentuk identiti budaya Melayu di Sarawak melalui penilitian menyeluruh terhadap sumber teks menggunakan paradigma analisis wacana kritikal (CDA). 367 *mukun* telah diekstrak daripada penerbitan berkaitan *bermukun* untuk meneliti metafora, ungkapan idiomatik, dan rangka naratif dalam *mukun*, meneroka nilai-nilai sosio-budaya yang terdapat dalam elemen linguistik ini, dan menilai pengaruh pilihan linguistik terhadap pemeliharaan dan penyebaran identiti budaya. Penemuan penelitian menunjukkan bahawa *mukun* kaya dengan bahasa kiasan, mencerminkan nilai-nilai budaya yang mendalam dan konvensi sosial. Penggunaan istilah kolokial dan cerita konvensional menggambarkan ingatan kolektif dan pengalaman sejarah kehidupan masyarakat Melayu. Tambahan pula, makalah ini menggambarkan corak linguistik yang eksklusif kepada *mukun*, menekankan kedudukan uniknya dalam konteks linguistik yang lebih luas di Sarawak. Penemuan-penemuan ini menekankan kepentingan *mukun* sebagai

repositori budaya yang penting dan menekankan keperluan untuk usaha pemeliharaan berterusan bagi mengekalkan sejarah linguistik dan budaya mukun.

Kata Kunci: pantun tradisional; mukun; identiti budaya; corak linguistik; pengetahuan asal

INTRODUCTION

Indigenous knowledge denotes the understanding that local communities possess regarding nature and human existence, together with the values, judgements, and ethics that have evolved over years of experience and social engagement. Indigenous knowledge, referred to as traditional wisdom or traditional ecological understanding, comprises a cohesive collection of observations, innovations, practices, and beliefs that foster sustainability (Rozaimie 2024; Rozaimie, Tom & Jalil) and ethical stewardship of natural and cultural resources via human-environment interactions (Bruchac 2014; James-Williamson, Dolphy & Parker. 2024). The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) delineated the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), specifically the agenda for sustainable development aimed at rendering cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable; with particular emphasis on SDG goal 11(4), which explicitly articulates a commendable initiative to safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage (UNESCO 2001).

On 18 May 2001, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) proclaimed the UNESCO Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity. This proclamation acknowledges and safeguards various global culture manifestations, including theatre, music, folklore, and rituals. Intangible cultural heritage refers to “the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills, along with the instruments, objects, artefacts, and cultural spaces linked to them that communities, groups, and, in certain instances, individuals acknowledge as integral to their cultural heritage” (UNESCO 2001). Conservation initiatives are essential for safeguarding endangered intangible cultures for future generations (Prott 1998).

The erosion of intangible culture is supplanted by the modernity and simplicity of contemporary living. Particularly, linguistics is the essential component of social interaction and cultural exchange among community members. Indigenous knowledge can be conveyed in written and oral

forms, both formally and informally, within familial and communal contexts via social interactions, oral traditions, rituals, storytelling, and various other methods. Additional issues in etymological research encompass the significance of indigenous linguistics as cultural conduits and the necessity for language advocates to concentrate on strategies, resources, and motivation for preservation objectives (Reyhner 1999). Methodologically, oral tradition serves as a notably potent medium of expression in peripheral art. The creation of compelling literary works, such as rhythmic quatrains, songs, folklore, chants, and mantras, is integral to the nature and associated phenomena of sacred rituals. These forms of indigenous literary works are transmitted through memorisation and/or satire exclusively to designated inheritors, as written representations are deemed taboo (Rozaimie, Tom & Jalil 2023).

Ultimately, the oral legacy in modern knowledge, recognised as historical languages, artwork, and many types of artistic material culture, was exclusively available in museums, local archives, or library collections. This dilemma caused cultures to overlook history, neglect genuine cultural features, and dismiss old practices. For instance, contemporary artistic works supported with modern infotainment and social media are extensively utilised to supplant traditional intellectual works notwithstanding ethnolinguistic sustainable initiatives aimed at enhancing public consciousness regarding preserving local wisdom and indigenous knowledge. Scholars (Prieto et al. 2024) contend that written cultural legacy is frequently perceived merely as literary works embedded in historical context. Therefore, to prevent flawed social judgements, it is crucial to include aesthetic principles while seeking to understand the truth about the group and their indigenous cultural artefacts.

Language constitutes the core of indigenous identity, with linguistic landscapes providing a profound means of comprehending the interplay between language, culture, and identity among communities. This ethnolinguistic study emphasises the necessity of understanding and conserving indigenous languages, particularly among the Malay community in Sarawak, Malaysia, due to

their substantial contribution to the cultural and linguistic history of the community. Specifically, this paper examines the rhythmic quatrains within the traditional musical performance of *bermukun* among the Malays in Sarawak.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The examination of ethnolinguistic landscapes offers a crucial framework for comprehending the complex interplay between language, culture, and identity within a particular society. The *bermukun* serves as an attractive cultural representation of Malay society in Sarawak. *Mukun* is a multi-sensory oral tradition that integrates rhythmic drumming, singing, and dance with the recitation of *pantun* (Malay's rhythmic quatrains). The *bermukun* performance comprises three elements: percussion music (*gendang*), *mukun*, and dancing (*nopeng*).

This paper foresees that *bermukun* resembles *dondang sayang*, a historic Malay musical form of performance that reflects the local cultural identity of the Malacca state in Malaysia. It is traditionally practiced within the Malay, Baba Nyonya, Chitty, and Portuguese communities. During a *dondang sayang* performance, the male (*baba*) and female (*nyonya*) singers engage in spontaneous *pantun*. The singing is typically accompanied by a violin, Malay *rebana* drums, and a *tetawak* (gong), often enhanced by other instruments like accordions, flutes, or another violin. In *bermukun*, the female percussionists (referred to as *seh gendang*) are positioned behind a fabric barrier and perform *gendang* while engaging in spontaneous exchange of *mukun* with the male dancers (while *nopeng* (dancing) normally in duo), all complemented by violin accompaniment to amplify the performance's impact, as illustrated in Figure 1.



FIGURE 1. *Bermukun* performance (Source: Lindom 2022)

Foremost, *bermukun* advocates social cohesion within Sarawak's Malay community and functions as a cultural expression in which participants embrace *mukun* to convey moral ideals, emotions, and communal concepts. The term "music genre" denotes a certain style or category of music, including pop, jazz, country, and others. The genre in *bermukun* pertains to the beat of the percussion (*gendang*) and violinist, specifically including *Samsuddin*, *Laila Majnun*, *Endong Anak*, *Serampang Laut*, *Bercerai Kasih*, *Tanjung Api*, *Bunga Tanjung*, and *Hujan Panas*. Moreover, in the context of music, a song typically denotes lyrics performed as a solo, duet, or ensemble. Re-emphasized, *mukun* in *bermukun*

are performed spontaneously in alternation between a male dancer and a female percussionist (*seh gendang*). The theme of *mukun* varies according to the occasion. Historically, most of the *seh gendang* and male dancers were adolescents who aided the wedding host. Consequently, the themes of love and ridicule are favoured for the *bermukun* session.

Particularly, *bermukun* is revealed to be not just a musical performance, but rather the most intellectually challenging, particularly for male dancers. Participants must possess a comprehensive understanding of crafting spontaneous *mukun* with the correct form. In general, the established format of Malay quatrains is recognised as *berjual-beli*

pantun (literally translated as selling-buying of quatrains). The ‘selling’ or questioner interrogative form of rhythmic quatrain explicitly articulates the goal of enquiring about a subject. The other counterpart will effectively ‘be buying’ or answer by addressing and articulating the concept or responding to the inquiry similarly in the style of a rhythmic quatrain. As stated by Ali (1994), each verse adheres to a requisite rhythmic pattern of A-B-A-B, facilitating the creation of distinctive quatrains in the rhythmic quatrains (*pantun*) genre. Every single line comprises 4 to 6 words, comprising 8 to 12 syllables. Each verse must include a ‘hint/clue/indication’ (imagery, literary expression, symbolism, coded message) followed by the ‘meaning’ (intended message). Illustration of traditional quatrains from the rhythmic quatrains of *mukun* (Yusuf 2024):

Question:

Mintak mukun diberik mukun, [A] (When you ask for a *mukun*, I’ll deliver a *mukun*)

Mukun kamek berisi beras, [B] (My *mukun* contains rice)

Mintak pantun diberik pantun, [A] (You ask for quatrain; I’ll give you quatrain)

Pantun kamek mintak dibalas, [B] (My quatrain needs to be answered)

Answer:

Mukun kitak berisi beras, [A] (Your *mukun* contains rice)

Mari diletak di atas dulang, [B] (Please place them onto the tray)

Pantun kitak pastiku balas, [A] (Your quatrain will certainly be replied to)

Kalau kalah ekot ku pulang, [B] (If you lose, follow me home)

Specific factors, including capital, respect, reputation, and prestige, ought to serve as a frame for recognition (Rozaimie 2024) to ensure the continued relevance of ethnolinguistic knowledge (Wahid 2014). The preservation and replication of culture are examined across multiple social strata, encompassing the individual, family, community, and religious groups. Aside from its evident role, language functions as the principal vehicle for cultural transmission; nonetheless, the particular linguistic mechanisms—such as metaphors and idiomatic expressions—within *bermukun* contexts are still inadequately explored. This paper addresses the disparity by offering an extensive review of *mukun* among Malays in Sarawak utilising

Conceptual Metaphor examination. Specifically, this paper unveils how the Sarawakian Malay community’s language choices actively shape and sustain their cultural identity by mapping concrete source domains (nature, fishing, daily life) onto abstract target domains (love, religion, ethics). This paper is designed to highlight the enactment of tradition and the cultural acceptance in numerous domains for the preservation of intangible aspects, despite the contemporary prominence of *bermukun* performances.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Flashing into specific areas of the ethnolinguistic, delicate rhythmic quatrains have an ability to evoke emotions, inspire wonder, and/or inspire readers/listeners to action. According to Arcilla Jr. (2024), poets from varied cultures have historically harnessed verse to reflect on universal themes such as mortality, justice, and human experiences, affirming rhythmic quatrains’ role as both a narrative force and a societal barometer. Furthermore, rhythmic quatrains’ archival value as a historical record is illuminated, capturing the spirit of different ages and contributing to the collective societal understanding (Arcilla Jr. 2024) and being beneficial for knowledge sustainability, especially in the fields of culture, politics, and education (Suprpto et al. 2024). Hence, rhythmic quatrains are recognised as an enduring vehicle for exploring and challenging social dynamics, immortalising the collective human psyche in rhythmic form.

Studies on ethnolinguistics offer a vivid avenue for understanding the relationship between language, culture, and identity within specific communities. Indigenous language understanding and preservation is a critical aspect of maintaining cultural heritage, particularly for minority and indigenous communities (Lonardi 2022). Specifically, preserving the aboriginal art and the indigenous knowledge, including their linguistic components, is essential for sustaining cultural heritage. It encapsulates valuable cultural knowledge and social values that are at risk of being lost if the language and practices are not actively maintained. The spontaneous exchanges of the *mukun*, frequently characterised by light-hearted teasing or courting, underscore the performers’ improvisational prowess and cultural acumen, notwithstanding dialectical and other language influences. The interaction through such events entertains and reinforces social bonds

and cultural identity within the community (Reeves & Plets 2015).

Studies in linguistics (e.g. Wu, Silver & Zhang 2023) highlight that language choices in public and semi-public contexts reflect broader social, political, and cultural trends. Scholars (e.g. Wahid 2014) personifying the nature of the ethnolinguistic as a force beyond human control, while Wu, Silver & Zhang (2023) and Arcilla Jr. (2024) reflect and concern about the Anthropocene, climate change, and ecological collapse. A genre of *mukun* generally includes rhythmic quatrains that emphasise the environment, empathy towards all living creatures, and providing a voice to nature and its natural processes. Furthermore, scholars (Bila & Ivanova 2020; Braun & Clarke 2021; Byrne 2022) contended that discourse on sociocultural elements provides some significant implications towards linguistic patterns. Hence, the linguistic aspect, especially dialect and ways of daily life of the time, helps to construct and convey the messages in *mukun* and portray aesthetic sociocultural identity (including values and social norms) among Malay society in Sarawak.

The aesthetic of *mukun* as explained from the ethnography of communication (EoC) perspective focuses on how language is traditionally used within the context of social and cultural settings to create meaning (Hymes 1974). Particularly, a SPEAKING (Setting/Scene, Participants, Ends, Act Sequence, Key, Instrumentalities, Norms, and Genre) model of sociolinguistics highlights that effective speaking requires knowing the social and cultural rules, not just a language structure, especially grammar (Ray, Biswas & Bengal 2011). Valerio (2022) and Riley (2007) argued that ethnolinguistic identity favours certain linguistic styles, thereby shaping the “key” (tone) of intercultural interactions and serving as a tool for social cohesion (Suyitno et al. 2026). In the context of endangered languages and cultural tourism ecosystems, ethnolinguistic revitalisation of EoC, documenting “communicative acts” within traditional rituals, is more effective for identity preservation than standard dictionary-making, as it captures the “symbolic capital” necessary for community sovereignty (Hakim, Hidayat & Jusrianto 2025) and ability to navigate the unspoken “norms” (Aldossari 2023).

Additionally, the *mukun* crafted reflected a literary piece using rhyming metaphor spontaneously in expressing the affection, cognitive, or behavioural encryption. Particularly, four of the

most employed themes that would be narratively explored in the *mukun* include love, religion, mockery, and advice (Abang Muhi 2014; Ibrahim 2022; Juki 2018; Samat et al. 2023; Wahid 2014). The love theme is often depicted with a blend of nature metaphors and everyday life whereby the *bermukun* is traditionally performed during the wedding event. Metaphor is a cognitive process where one conceptual domain is understood from the other’s point of view. The metaphor used in composing *mukun* conveys deep-rooted values, not just decorative ones, but fundamentally demonstrates how the Malays conceptualise their ways of life. The conceptual metaphor theory (CMT) from linguistic anthropology provides explanatory foundation on utilizing the language as a primary cognitive mechanism for structuring their cultural and social reality (Kövecses 2016). Scholars (Zou et al. 2025) argued that understanding metaphors in intercultural contexts is crucial when ethnolinguistic competence entails mastering these “metaphorical keys” to improve perception and conceptualisation (Eskandari, Khatin-Zadeh & Banaruee 2025) and to prevent intercultural stereotyping and misinterpretation (Rozaimie 2018). Ethnolinguistics specifically examines the interplay between language and culture. Thus, from this viewpoint, the CMT employed in the metaphor analyses of this paper transcends the human body; it encompasses how the physical environment, social institutions, and cultural histories shape our conceptualisation of the world.

Consequently, *bermukun* serves as a medium for cultural transmission, safeguarding the socio-cultural dynamics and historical settings of the Malays in Sarawak throughout generations. The performative aspect of *mukun* employs linguistic choices to establish and portray a unique cultural identity, notwithstanding contemporary modernisation. Despite modernity’s simplicity of life, this paper underlines the significance of the linguistic characteristics of *mukun* in reflecting and shaping the cultural identity of the Malays in Sarawak. It is essential for today’s generation to comprehend the narrative of the *mukun* through its metaphors, idiomatic expressions, and narrative structure for cultural preservation and revitalisation. Hence, this study aims to investigate the narrative structure of the traditional *mukun*, the socio-cultural value that is incorporated in the traditional quatrain of the *mukun*, and the impact that language choice has on the Malay culture in Sarawak.

METHOD

This ethnolinguistic paper primarily seeks to explore the linguistic features of *mukun* texts and their significance in reflecting and shaping the cultural identity of the Malays in Sarawak. In principle, this paper does not attempt to establish a substantive theory, examine a theoretical framework or hypothesis, or generalise the fundamental understanding of the linguistic characteristics. Instead, this paper seeks to preserve our grasp of the diminishing traditional understanding of socio-ecocultural (Rozaimie 2018) elements that were expressed in the *mukun*. It is essential for regaining the traditional/indigenous knowledge and/or practices to improve understanding of social development for future reference.

The discourse analysis is methodically sound to systematically examine textual data for narrative structure, socio-cultural values, patterns, themes, and meanings (Bila & Ivanova 2020; Braun & Clarke 2021; Vears & Gillam 2022) within the *mukun* text and materials. This analysis was conducted to examine linguistic features within records of *mukun* that have been rendered in the *bermukun* performance. This paper employs a discourse analysis centred on the narrative structure and socio-cultural values represented in the phrases (verse) of quatrains within the social setting of *bermukun*. The linguistic structure narrated in the *mukun* is examined to discern underlying latent meanings and themes within the textual data (Hsieh & Shannon 2005), with certain phrases and the complexity of the narrative structure (articulated in Sarawak's Malay dialect) being particularly simplified among younger generation.

The textual data has been extracted from *mukun* records in publications related to *bermukun*. Initially, 367 instances of *mukun* text were extracted from relevant materials, as detailed in Table 1 and Table 2, which will be presented later in the socio-cultural value of the findings and discussion section. The *mukun* is categorised thematically based on the objectives of this paper, which examines metaphors, idiomatic expressions, and narrative frameworks in *mukun*, explores the socio-cultural values inherent in these linguistic elements, and evaluates the influence of linguistic choices on the preservation and transmission of cultural identity. Ethically, although the analysis of published texts frequently circumvents the conventional Institutional Review Board (IRB) mandates for human-subject research,

it does not exempt the researcher from ethical accountability. This study safeguards ownership by ensuring proper citation and reference and refraining from imposing theoretical frameworks that may unjustly pathologies or distort the aforementioned authors.

Although the *mukun* are traditionally expressed spontaneously in *bermukun* performance, the use of textual data (records) is meaningful that reflect and reinforce the cultural values and social structures among Malays in Sarawak. Furthermore, some of the recorded *bermukun* performances also referred (YouTube channel: SarawakFM 2024; TVS Entertainment 2024; UKAS Channel 2022) to understand on how those *mukun* are expressed in the rhythmic and spontaneous form, and the linguistic aspects used today. Thus, by analysing the records of *mukun* text and recent *bermukun* performance, it provides a suspicion about linguistic structure that possibly evolved accordingly to environmental and socio-cultural changes over time.

Specifically, each linguistic feature is classified according to the use of metaphors, idiomatic expressions, and narrative structures within the texts. The rhythmic quatrains of *mukun*'s phrases (stanza) are coded accordingly to the theme (namely as nature metaphors, social norms, moral teachings, and community values). Example of metaphor: *sepuloh tahun lautan terbakar*, (For ten years, the ocean has been burning), describing the length of waiting would be coded as nature metaphors. The coding process in organising the textual data into meaningful categories is important that reflect specific linguistic features (Terry & Hayfield 2020). Additionally, an iterative process of coding and recoding (Hsieh & Shannon 2005) helps to improve the reliability and validity of the theme development.

Next, the interpretive analysis (Byrne 2022) of the textual data involves examining the coded data to uncover the socio-ecocultural meanings to identify the linguistic structure-related elements. An interpretive analysis goes beyond surface-level description to explore the deeper significance of linguistic (words and phrases) choices in the past compared to today's scenarios and any related issues to it. It considers the context in which the texts were created and performed, the intended audience, cultural and historical background of the Malay society in Sarawak, and the use and intended meaning of the analysed *mukun* according to the local dialect in their daily conversation.

In ethnolinguistic research, discourse analysis (DA) holds a vital role. In contrast to content analysis, which frequently quantifies text to derive conclusions, discourse analysis primarily focuses on the mechanisms and motivations underlying language use. It enquires into the role of language in particular circumstances to execute activities, shape identities, and exert power (Gee 2014). Central to nearly all varieties of discourse analysis are the epistemology of social constructivism (Berger & Luckmann 1966). Positivist methodologies on language frequently regard words as reflections of an objective external world. Conversely, DA asserts that our comprehension of reality is formed through conversation. Specifically, the model for Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) posits that discourse is both socially constitutive and socially conditioned (Fairclough 1992). Hence, the analysis of *mukun* is essential for comprehending the underlying socio-cultural behaviours, defining relationships, and determining what is deemed “true” or “normal” within the socio-cultural context of Malays in Sarawak. It expressly seeks to reveal ideological biases and inequitable power dynamics concealed within quotidian language, as shown in the linked publication concerning the *mukun* in this study.

The socio-cultural significance of constructing *mukun* is largely contingent upon context. Firstly, DA posits that a statement detached from its speaker, audience, historical context, and cultural background is fundamentally devoid of meaning. Secondly, the intertextuality of DA implies that no text exists independently. All speech relies on, responds to, and modifies preceding discourses. Texts consist of explicit and tacit allusions to other texts (Fairclough 1992). Thirdly, DA asserts that speech constitutes action, as seen by *mukun*'s reference to the language of action. Utterances are activities (such as promising, threatening, or declaring) that yield concrete effects in the physical realm. Theoretically, the discourse analyst posits that language serves as a domain for active production and negotiation. DA elucidates the interplay between text, context, and power, offering scholars an essential framework for comprehending how social reality is articulated. Hence, the model for CDA proposed by Fairclough (1989, 1995) was utilised in this paper, comprising three interrelated analytical processes associated with three related dimensions of discourse. The three stages include: (1) text analysis (description), (2) processing analysis (interpretation), and (3) social analysis (explanation).

Moreover, a six-step process for formulating the discourse analysis of ethnolinguistic (Bila & Ivanova 2020; Braun & Clarke 2021; Byrne 2022) encompasses familiarisation, coding, theme generation, theme review, theme definition and naming, and documentation, implemented to mitigate confirmation bias concerns. The data analysis comprises narrative structure, socio-cultural value, and the impact of linguistic choice in accordance with the study's objectives. Additionally, the coding, sorting, and categorisation of the textual data were facilitated by employing NVivo version 12 software for the construction and execution of the study. Technically, NVivo does not do data analysis; the author serves as the analytical engine. NVivo functions as a sophisticated organisational platform that improves the rigour, transparency, and efficiency of the technique. Initially, during the coding phase, the retrieved *mukun* are methodically labelled according to the three previously described themes, with NVivo digitising and optimising this historically laborious procedure involving pen and highlighter. It involves digital annotation in which textual data is examined, certain indications (quatrain of *mukun*) are highlighted, and then dragged and dropped into predefined “Codes”. Employing simultaneous coding grounded in a predetermined theme, NVivo autonomously monitors and establishes a transparent scientific trail that bolsters the study's trustworthiness. Secondly, sorting the data entails the organization of raw files and their accompanying information to facilitate straightforward comparisons. The instances are categorised based on the specified themes using the sorting tool. Upon establishing categories, NVivo facilitates the immediate organization and comparison of the coded data according to these features (defined themes). The analytical method entails categorising and thematically generating data by grouping particular codes to create broader perspectives. NVivo offers structural tools through hierarchical coding trees to elucidate how the tabulated data correspond to the assigned topics. In particular for this paper, for example, the daily occupations of fishing, farming, and crafts exemplify diligence and patience, requiring talent, timing, and persistence. By centralising these inductive capabilities, NVivo prevents the author from being inundated by the extensive text, facilitating a more profound and systematic exploration of the theoretical implications of the data. The following section demonstrates the encryption of the linguistic structure of rhythmic quatrains of *mukun*.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Highlighted, it is reiterated that the primary objective of this paper is to investigate the linguistic features of *mukun*'s compositions and how they reflect and shape the Malays' cultural identity in Sarawak. Specifically, this paper aims to identify narrative structures through examining metaphors, idiomatic expressions, and narrative frameworks in *mukun*, exploring the socio-cultural values inherent in these linguistic elements and evaluating the influence of linguistic choices on the preservation and transmission of cultural identity. Fairclough's three stages of discourse analysis (1989, 1995) and the six-step formulation of discourse analysis (Bila & Ivanova 2020; Braun & Clarke 2021; Byrne 2022) have aligned the analyses in this paper with three designated themes: narrative structure, socio-cultural value, and the impact of language choice.

NARRATIVE STRUCTURES

The texts prominently feature four prevalent themes for narrative exploration in the *mukun*: love, religion, mocking, and advice or guidance. In traditional *mukun*, love is frequently illustrated through a combination of environmental metaphors and daily experiences. For example, likening a lover to a lovely flower or employing natural aspects such as rivers and mountains to represent the strength and persistence of love are prevalent motifs. These metaphors augment the aesthetic allure of the *mukun* and anchor the feelings in a familiar context for the listener. An essential aspect of the love theme in *mukun* is its association with cultural practices and social conventions. Love is depicted as an emotion intricately connected to communal values and familial expectations. Many rhythmic quatrains of *mukun* exemplify traditional courtship practices in which professions of love are articulated with respect and decorum. The love theme in *mukun* aligns with the societal emphasis on decency and honour, since love essentially refers to the intense feeling of profound affection.

First, the narrative structure of *mukun* frequently adheres to a cyclical pattern that reflects the repeated and perpetual essence of the love theme. The introductory lines generally establish the setting with a vivid depiction, succeeded by the articulation of affection or yearning, and culminating in a moral or philosophical reflection. This structure imparts a rhythmic and melodic essence to the

mukun, reinforcing the concepts of continuity and timelessness in love. The ethical aspects of love are a significant theme in the rhythmic quatrains of *mukun*. Juki (2018) emphasised that the *mukun* underscore the importance of virtues like civility and good manners in love relationships. Love is depicted as ethical conduct and reciprocal respect, embodying the shared moral principles of society. The *mukun* themed around love is depicted as follows:

Menangkap beludu di Ulu Belaga, (Catching catfish in upstream Belaga)

Pemuda iban pegi nginti, (The Iban youth is coming)

Iboh dijanji angin syorga, (Don't promise the wind of paradise)

Kami berkorban ternanti-nanti. (We sacrifice while waiting)

According to the requisite rhythmic pattern (A-B-A-B) of Malay quatrains, the first verses figuratively depict efforts and endeavours in a remote, albeit distant, locale in Sarawak. In numerous cultures, fishing serves as a metaphor for diligence and patience, necessitating skill, timing, and tenacity. It implies engaging in a challenging endeavour potentially distant from one's home. The third verse serves as a figurative caution against formulating extravagant and unrealistic commitments. The "winds of paradise" represent illusory aspirations or unattainable expectations. This metaphor illustrates a widespread warning against deception and underscores the significance of integrity. Meanwhile, the second verse is interpreted as an idiomatic expression signifying preparedness and enthusiasm. The reference to "pemuda Iban" highlights a sense of pride and cultural identification, emphasising the proactive and anticipatory qualities of the youth within the community. The fourth verse illustrates an idiomatic term that conveys enduring patience and self-sacrifice. It underscores a social ethos of anticipation and optimism amid continuous sacrifices, illustrating collective endurance and tenacity. Particularly, the structure of this quatrain follows a narrative progression that is typical in traditional *mukun* where each verse builds upon the previous to convey a deeper message. The narrative can be broken down as opening scene, introduction of character, central message and resolution or reflection. The opening scene of "*Menangkap beludu di Ulu Belaga*" sets the scene with a vivid image of fishing upstream, symbolizing

a challenging endeavour (i.e. fishing in the heavy water flow upstream of the river). The “*Pemuda iban pegi nginti*” verse implies motion and expectation toward the protagonist. The underlying message of *Iboh dijanji angin syorga* conveys a fundamental admonition by highlighting the futility of deceitful promises. However, the resolution stated on the “*Kami berkorban ternanti-nanti*” verse culminates in a contemplation of the sacrifices endured during the waiting period (perhaps waiting for the soul mate), emphasising themes of patience and resilience.

Secondly, the religious theme is often observed through metaphors and figurative allusions that resonate with the audience’s spiritual and cultural understanding. Nature metaphors, including light and guidance, often represent divine presence and spiritual illumination. References to the “light of guidance” or “divine illumination” frequently symbolise the function of faith in navigating life’s challenges. Typically, Malay quatrains narratives are structured to first establish a spiritual or moral framework, followed by a thematic exploration of religious tenets, culminating in a didactic reflection. This formalized progression facilitates a rhythmic cadence, enhancing the mnemonic retention of the religious message within the oral tradition. The cyclical nature of the narrative reinforces the timelessness of spiritual truths and the perpetual relevance of religious teachings. Religious themes in *Mukun* frequently highlight moral qualities and ethical behaviour, reflecting the values that society derives from religious teachings. The *mukun* emphasise the significance of civility, respect, and good manners, which are fundamental to the community’s moral framework. By including these principles into the narrative, the Malay quatrains function as both moral guidance and a reminder of the community’s religious origins. Moreover, the inclusion of religious idioms and expressions in *mukun* underscores the amalgamation of faith into quotidian existence. The verses selected regarding God’s will, divine mercy, and spiritual blessings are frequently utilised to demonstrate how religious beliefs infiltrate diverse facets of life, from individual behaviour to communal endeavours. Ibrahim’s (2022) work on the philosophical and value-oriented aspects of *mukun* identified religion as a central feature, alongside patriotism and social ideals. The *mukun* themed around religion is exemplified as follows:

Kenyalang nama bangunan, (Kenyalang is the name of the building)

Di Jalan Badruddin di kota Kuching, (located on Badruddin Street in the city of Kuching)

Waima dipuja menggugah pegangan, (Even if worshipped, it stirs the grip)

Tapi ad-Din sikhlah runcing. (But the faith is not fade)

The opening verse of this quatrain, “Kenyalang,” was picked as a metaphor for freedom and beauty. Kenyalang is the official state symbol and mascot of Sarawak, precisely denoting the Rhinoceros Hornbill (*Buceros rhinoceros*). In Sarawak’s local indigenous cultures, the hornbill bird represents longevity, spiritual dedication, and resilience in the face of life’s challenges. The designation of a building as Kenyalang implies that it represents cultural or spiritual significance through its symbolic cultural identity attributes. The third verse, “stirs the grip,” constitutes a metaphor for obstacles or temptations that test an individual’s beliefs or principles. The stipulations “worshipped” or “revered” suggest that a deeply esteemed desire may nonetheless jeopardise one’s perseverance. The phrase “*menggugah pegangan*” in the third verse is an idiomatic assertion that literally signifies a person’s steadfast and tenacious attitude when confronted with life’s challenges. This situation embodies the general human experience of confronting challenges that evaluate one’s beliefs. Meanwhile, the second verse primarily establishes the setting by referencing a specific location, which functions as an idiomatic term that anchors the narrative in a tangible and relevant context. This verse suggests connection to a particular cultural and geographical environment, fostering a sense of place and identity. The fourth verse presents a metaphor that juxtaposes the steadfastness of faith with the possible volatility or danger of other factors. Factually, “runcing” denotes something sharp, pointed, or thin, which figuratively signifies a risky or hazardous situation. The assertion that faith does not easily wane underscores the resilience and constancy of religious convictions in the face of external adversities and pressures.

Mockery is another significant third theme incorporated in the traditional *mukun*. It is frequently defined by amusing banter and clever observations that expose deeper truths or social critiques. Mockery is intended not to injure but to amuse and gently critique behaviours or societal conventions which frequently employs metaphors

and idiomatic expressions to convey the intended message. For instance, likening a boastful individual to a cacophonous rooster or a sluggish worker to a lethargic buffalo effectively conveys the message in a humorous and culturally relevant way. These metaphors are influential as they leverage shared experiences and insights, rendering the ridicule relatable and comprehensible. Elements of mockery in traditional Malay culture are subtly constructed, necessitating profound contemplation to grasp the true significance of the message conveyed through *mukun*, which employs simile-based metaphorical imagery. Gradually, mockery enhances audience engagement in *bermukun* performances through humour and sarcasm, making the messages more memorable and persuasive. The *mukun* characterised by mockery theme is illustrated as follows:

Ke Kampung Sinjan dengan Nek Cik, (Going to Kampung Sinjan with Auntie)

Ngisik minyak terus ke pasar, (Fuelling petrol direct to the market)

Kitak kedak perauk kecil, (You are alike a small boat)

Banyak agik perahu besar. (Many more big boats.)

The narrative structure of the mockery theme begins with the initial two lines establishing the setting and characters, situating the tale within a particular context (place) and depicting an action (refuelling and proceeding to the market). The second verse serves as an idiomatic term denoting readiness and intent. It denotes the implementation of pragmatic measures to attain an objective, epitomising efficacy and straightforwardness in endeavours. The idiomatic assertion regarding refuelling and proceeding to the market implies an emphasis on readiness and intentional action, which are esteemed qualities within the society. In the third verse, “small boat” serves as a metaphor for an individual’s perceived insignificance or humility relative to others. It implies a sense of humility or a perception of being eclipsed by more significant, conspicuous entities, similar to a little boat amidst larger ships. Consequently, the last verse serves as a metaphor that underscores the existence of those who possess more significance or authority. This suggests the existence of superior entities, underscoring the importance of humility and the acknowledgement of one’s position within a broader framework. The third and fourth verses poignantly convey the conflict and introspection of “you are

like a small boat” versus “many more large boats.” This dramatic rhyme explicitly illustrates a form of rejection; use the metaphor of boats to express feelings of humility and acknowledgement of one’s relative standing. On the other hand, the mocking of the small vessel amidst larger ones signifies humility and an acknowledgement of one’s position within a broader society.

The fourth theme of giving advice embedded in the traditional *mukun* signifies that poetic expressions encapsulate the essence of counsel by mirroring the cultural and moral norms nurtured among Malays in Sarawak. The narrative assessment of advice in the *mukun* underscores the need of recognising blessings, promoting social cohesion, and strengthening communal bonds. It is frequently conveyed through striking analogies and symbolic imagery. Nature metaphors, including the blossoming of flowers and the bounty of harvests, are frequently employed to represent prosperity and benefits received. These natural elements act as concrete manifestations of abstract gifts, rendering sentiments of gratitude more relatable and sincere. It may depict the allure of a flourishing garden as a metaphor for the counsel imparted to an individual or group. The narrative structure of advice in these *mukun* generally adopts a contemplative and grateful tone. The introductory phrase frequently establishes the context by depicting a scenario or occurrence that elicits thankfulness, such as a bountiful harvest or a communal festivity. The following lines examine thoughts of gratitude and recognition for individuals who have provided guidance. This arrangement amplifies the emotional profundity of the rhythmic quatrains and guarantees the message of appreciation is distinctly articulated. It underscores the significance of mutual assistance and acknowledgement of each other’s contributions to cultivate unity and collaboration within the community. This cultural practice of offering counsel serves to reinforce social connections and promote harmony within the community.

Di Sebauh pergi ngintu, (In Sebauh, went to lead ritual)

Ngintu di rumah Ngah Rita, (Ritual venue at Ngah Rita’s house)

Kita perlu nyaga waktu, (We need to be valuing time)

Jangan waktu nyaga kita. (Don’t let time guard us.)

The narrative structure of this *mukun* adheres to a logical development that constructs a cohesive and significant message. The initial two verses establish the context by depicting social visits, anchoring the tale in identifiable locales and activities that resonate with the listener. The idiomatic word “*pergi ngintu*” commonly denotes paying a social call or visit, particularly during festivals such as Gawai, the harvest festival celebrated by the Dayak community in Sarawak. It signifies a cultural practice of sustaining relationships and social connections through visits and personal contact. The colloquial term in the second line underscores the idea of social visits and the significance of community and familial bonds, particularly among Sarawakians. The explicit reference to an individual’s residence enhances the personal dimension by emphasising the significance attributed to interpersonal relationships and hospitality. In the third verse, time is figuratively shown as a valuable entity that requires safeguarding. This metaphor underscores

the significance of prudent time management and awareness of its utilisation. It posits that time is a precious commodity necessitating meticulous consideration. Thus, the final line implies that time ought not to govern us. We ought to adopt a proactive approach to its management. This metaphor underscores the peril of passivity and permitting time to govern our actions, instead of asserting control over our schedules and lives. The message and reflection of the third and fourth verses convey a contemplative insight regarding the need of time management, employing metaphors to underscore the necessity for proactive governance of one’s time.

SOCIO-CULTURAL VALUES

The discourse analyses of the socio-cultural value have been derived from records of *mukun* in the selected publication related to *bermukun*, as outlined in Table 1.

TABLE 1. Selected Systematic Literature Review on Socio-cultural Values of Mukun

No	Title	Author	Findings
1	<i>Mukun Sayang Sarawak</i>	Zaini (2010)	Divided the <i>mukun</i> into eleven elements namely general, linguistics, art and culture, attitude, humour, religion, celebratory, mockery, farewell, gratitude, and love.
2	<i>Mukun Sarawak Tanda Kasih Kesetiaan Sejati</i>	Abang Muhi (2014)	Collected 2441 <i>mukun</i> on the patriotic theme “50th Sarawak Independence”
3	The Performance Development and Changes of the Structure in Traditional Gendang Melayu Sarawak	Wahid (2014)	Studied the changes in the performance structure over time by emphasizing the importance of passing the tradition from generation to generation to ensure its survival
4	<i>Pemikiran Etika dalam Mukun Melayu Sarawak</i>	Juki (2018)	Emphasised the ethical themes in traditional rhythmic quatrains were courtesy and good manners to focus on ethical thinking by shaping good character and behaviour to reflect the collective moral values of the society.
5	<i>Keunikan Budaya Melayu Mukun Sarawak</i>	Abd Aziz et al. (2022)	Stated the traditional <i>mukun</i> is at risk of disappearing among the younger generation as they are more inclined to embrace foreign cultures.
6	<i>Falsafah Dan Nilai Dalam Mukun Melayu Sarawak</i>	Ibrahim (2022)	Focused on three main values of religious values, patriotism, and social virtues based on the themes of religion, nation, and community.
7	<i>‘Bergendang’ and Its Spatial Use in Traditional Sarawak Malay House</i>	Samat (2023)	<i>Mukun</i> differs spatially in early and later houses along the Sarawak River, reflecting social status

The analysis of *mukun* offers substantial understanding of its cultural, ethical, and social significance among Malays in Sarawak. Zaini's (2010) thorough description of rhythmic quatrains themes and Abang Muhi's (2014) substantial compilation of *mukun* and *bermukun* traditional performances emphasise the literary complexity and historical significance of these traditions, highlighting their role in maintaining and transmitting a cultural legacy. Zaini's (2010) work classifies the components of *mukun* into eleven distinct themes: general, linguistics, art and culture, attitude, humour, religion, celebratory, ridicule, farewell, thanks, and love. This classification illustrates the complex character of these creative expressions, demonstrating their capacity to embody a diverse array of human experiences and cultural values. Abang Muhi (2014) enhances this understanding by creating 2,441 rhythmic quatrains designed upon Sarawak's 50th Independence, which includes 105 six-line rhythmic quatrains. This comprehensive collection functions as a repository of Sarawak's oral traditions, safeguarding the linguistic and cultural heritage for posterity. The concentration on the national celebration of independent-themed *mukun* underscores its role in fostering patriotism, national identity, and historical consciousness.

Wahid (2014) analyses the progression of *mukun*'s performance framework throughout time, highlighting the significance of transmitting the tradition across generations to guarantee its continuity. This study emphasises the necessity of reconciling tradition with innovation to preserve cultural significance. Likewise, Samat et al.'s (2023) spatial examination of *bermukun* performances in traditional Malay households along the Sarawak River illustrates the adaptation of these cultural practices to evolving physical and social contexts. Ancient studies highlight the adaptability of ancient traditions, illustrating their preservation and modification to retain relevance in modern society.

Juki's (2018) study examines the ethical themes included in traditional *mukun*, including respect and good manners, which embody the collective moral ideals of the society. These ethical issues are essential for social cohesiveness and moral education within the community. Ibrahim's (2022) analysis of fundamental cultural values, including religious beliefs, patriotism, and social virtue,

elucidates how traditional *mukun* functions as both entertainment and a mechanism for enforcing social norms and values. These findings underscore the essential function of *mukun* in fostering ethical conduct and societal cohesion.

Despite the cultural diversity and resilience of these customs, Abd Aziz & Jubli (2022) point out that the younger generation's predilection for contemporary and foreign influences poses a serious threat to cultural preservation. Cultural erosion denotes the progressive decline of traditional cultural features, which may transpire when subsequent generations preferentially adopt modern or frequently foreign cultural practices in lieu of their indigenous heritage. Scholars (Abd Aziz & Jubli 2022; Rozaimie, Tom & Jalil 2023) indicate that the younger generation in Sarawak is more attracted to contemporary entertainment forms, jeopardising the preservation and continuity of traditional activities such as *bermukun*. This alteration in cultural inclinations may create a disconnection between the youth and their cultural heritage, eventually culminating in the erosion of these distinctive cultural expressions over time.

The findings of this discourse analysis emphasise the urgent necessity for focused cultural preservation initiatives to involve youth and cultivate an appreciation for traditional arts. Educational initiatives, workshops, and community activities are vital for cultivating an awareness and respect of *bermukun* (*Gendang Melayu Sarawak*) among younger generations. This paper emphasises the literary richness and historical profundity of these traditions, their adaptation and evolution, and their contribution to fostering ethical conduct and social cohesiveness. The issue of cultural loss among the youth necessitates proactive preservation initiatives. By harmonising tradition with innovation and involving youth through focused cultural initiatives, Sarawak ensures the preservation and vibrancy of its abundant cultural heritage for future generations.

IMPACT OF LINGUISTIC CHOICES

In addition to the *mukun*-related publication included in Table 1, supplementary *bermukun*-related texts are listed in Table 2 for discourse analyses about the impact of linguistic selection in curated *mukun*.

TABLE 2. Supplementary textual sources for content analyses about the impact of linguistic selection of *mukun*.

No	Title	Author
1	<i>Sejarah Gendang Melayu Sarawak di Kampung Sejaie dalam aspek Bermukun dan Bertandak.</i>	Yusuf (2024)
7	The Performance Development and Changes of the Structure in Traditional <i>Gendang Melayu Sarawak</i> .	Wahid (2014)
9	<i>Bermukun dalam Tradisi Masyarakat Sarawak.</i>	Pelet et al. (2024)
10	<i>Pantun Mukun Melayu Sarawak: Satu Kajian Kias Dan Ibarat.</i>	Jahari (2012)
11	A Profile of Sarawak Malays.	Abang Yusuf (2005)
12	<i>Adat perkahwinan orang Melayu Sarawak (2nd ed.).</i>	Abang Yusuf (2008)
14	<i>Gendang Melayu Sarawak: Perbandingan Dulu dan Kini.</i>	Ali (1994)
15	The study of Sarawak Malay in context.	Collins (2002)
16	Glimpses of Malay Life in Sarawak.	Daud (1999)
17	<i>Gendang Melayu Sarawak: Satu kajian Atas Proses Pembuatan, Fungsi dan Konteks Bergendang.</i>	Hassan (2012)
18	<i>Komunikasi Sosial dalam Kalangan Etnik di Lembangan Sadong: Gendang Melayu Sarawak.</i>	Kechot, Aman & Shahidi (2017)
19	Kajian Budaya Bergendang di Kalangan Orang Melayu Sarawak. Institut Perguruan Batu Lintang, Kuching.	Yu (2010)

Mukun and *bermukun* represent a vital cultural identity that embodies the values, beliefs, and social standards of the Malays of Sarawak as emphasized by scholars (Kechot, Aman & Shahidi 2017; Narawi, Ismail & Lee 2020; Pelet et al. 2024). The linguistic selections in these traditional musical art forms are deliberate and fulfil multiple purposes, including the preservation of cultural history, the transmission of ethical and moral precepts, and the promotion of communal togetherness. The influence of these linguistic selections in *mukun* underscores their significance in preserving the cultural identity of the community.

The fundamental effect of linguistic choices in *mukun* is the preservation of cultural memory and identity. The utilisation of traditional Malay language, idioms, and expressions sustains the language's vitality and relevance. Studies (Ali 1994; Hassan 2012; Jahari 2012; Kechot, Aman & Shahidi 2017; Wahid 2014; Yu 2010; Zaini 2010) shared the belief that *mukun* comprises eleven elements of intended message: general, linguistics, art and culture, attitude, humour, religion, celebratory, mockery, farewell, gratitude, and love. It illustrates the extensive range of issues encompassed by these rhythmic quatrains of *mukun*. Each theme employs certain linguistic selections that reflect the community's historical and cultural environment. Furthermore, Juki (2018) underscored that traditional *mukun* frequently emphasise themes of civility, propriety, and ethical purity. These values

are intricately embedded in the essence of the *mukun* through meticulously chosen words and phrases that align with the community's ethical principles.

Mukun is crucial in fostering communal commonality. The utilisation of regional dialects and community allusions fosters a sense of belonging and collective identity among the audience. Wahid (2014) emphasises that *mukun*'s performance structure has remained pertinent by adjusting to modern circumstances while retaining its fundamental components. The community aspect of the performances, utilising metaphors and idiomatic language derived from collective experiences, reinforces social relationships. References to specific locations cultivate a sense of community and belonging. These linguistic selections affirm that *mukun* constitutes both an artistic expression and a communal activity that unites individuals. *Mukun* is crucial in fostering communal cohesion. The utilisation of regional dialects and communal allusions fosters a sense of belonging and collective identity among the audience. Scholars (Jahari 2012; Pelet et al. 2024; Wahid 2014) emphasised that the evolution of *mukun*'s performance structure has retained its significance by adapting to modern circumstances while safeguarding its fundamental components. The community aspect of the *bermukun* performances, utilising metaphors and idiomatic language derived from collective experiences, reinforces social relationships. References to

specific locations cultivate a sense of community and belonging. These linguistic selections affirm that *mukun* constitutes both an artistic expression and a collective activity that unites individuals.

A notable effect of language selections in *mukun* is the equilibrium between tradition and innovation. Jahari (2012), Hassan (2012), and Samat et al. (2023) indicated that the spatial use of *mukun* in traditional Malay dwellings signifies alterations in social status and physical ailments across time. Likewise, the vocabulary of traditional *mukun* has progressed to integrate contemporary components while preserving its traditional foundations. By integrating modern and traditional linguistic components, *mukun* retains its relevance for contemporary audiences. This adaptability is essential for the tradition's continuation, enabling the *mukun* to connect with younger generations. The incorporation of modern references and linguistic changes enables *mukun* to captivate new audiences while maintaining its cultural essence.

The educational significance of *mukun* is a crucial element shaped by linguistic selections. The *mukun* utilises traditional metaphors, idioms, and story frameworks as an educational instrument to impart legacy, language, and values to new generations. Educational programs and workshops concentrating on these linguistic features can foster a profound appreciation for the art form and promote active engagement in its preservation. The lessons and moral values in *mukun* are readily comprehensible and memorable, rendering them ideal educational instruments.

CONCLUSION

The review of prior literature reveals that rhythmic quatrains, or *mukun*, provide an intricate linguistic context that both embodies and influences the cultural identity of Malays in Sarawak. This paper synthesises how particular linguistic choices serve as essential reservoirs of communal heritage and moral education through the application of conceptual metaphor theory and linguistic anthropology. This paper finds that the effectiveness of *mukun* as a cultural instrument is rooted in its methodical source-to-target mappings. The findings indicate that performers of *bermukun* anchor abstract societal values in the tangible, lived experiences and environment of the Malays in Sarawak, encompassing ethical endeavour, spiritual adherence, and social harmony. Ethical pursuits align with the domains of perseverance and proactive

agency, underscoring the imperative of diligence and accountability. From the standpoint of spiritual commitment, *mukun* corresponds to the constancy of faith (*ad-Din*), ensuring that religious principles are regarded as fundamental and unyielding. Simultaneously, the social harmony concepts of *mukun* manifest in the realms of humility and social cohesion, enabling individuals to manoeuvre their status within the society through fun yet significant ridicule.

This paper examined the influence on cultural identity and preservation, highlighting the narrative structure of *mukun*, which extends beyond mere amusement due to its cyclical and rhythmic attributes, functioning as instructional tools. These structures embody communal memories, historical experiences, and ethical principles such as civility and decorum, which are vital for preserving the community's moral integrity. Nevertheless, the *mukun* highlights a significant conflict between tradition and modernisation. *Mukun* has demonstrated notable adaptation by integrating modern technologies and formal environments; nonetheless, it confronts considerable threats of cultural degradation among the youth. The reduction in prolonged performances and the transition to contemporary entertainment modalities highlight a pressing necessity for renewed preservation initiatives.

The findings significantly indicate that the conventional *mukun* embodies the life and originality of the socio-cultural existence of Malays in Sarawak, particularly in the past, and is essential for future references and analyses, especially concerning political, economic, and other socio-cultural dimensions of life. This paper contributes to the ethnolinguistic study by examining metaphorical language in *bermukun*, highlighting ingrained cultural values and social practices, as other related publications only focus on musical performance. This research delineates language patterns unique to *mukun*, highlighting its distinctive role within the broader linguistic landscape of Sarawak, which is crucial for future generations to learn in order to preserve certain ethnolinguistic characteristics, particularly among Malays in Sarawak. This article underscores *mukun*'s importance as a vital cultural reservoir and emphasises the need for ongoing preservation efforts to maintain its language and cultural heritage. This initiative aligns with UNESCO's SDG objective 11(4), which clearly delineates a laudable endeavour to protect the world's cultural and heritage (UNESCO 2001).

The study advocates for innovative engagement to preserve and enhance oral tradition, recommending that future research investigate techniques to render traditional arts more attractive to contemporary youth through technology and educational integration. Secondly, it is imperative to examine *mukun* from holistic perspectives by integrating sociology, the scientific study of human society and social behaviour, with anthropology, the thorough investigation of humanity that includes biology, culture, language, and history, to deepen the understanding of how traditional arts influence modern social systems. Finally, it is essential to perform a substantial comparison examination, as studies with analogous regional traditions may provide deeper insights into the universal principles of cultural preservation. The *mukun* and *bermukun* traditions among Malays in Sarawak serve as a fundamental medium for cultural transmission. By preserving the integrity of its metaphorical mappings while adjusting to modern situations, the Malays in Sarawak can sustain their distinctive cultural and linguistic heritage for future generations.

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