

## **Shared Arabic and Sanskrit Loanwords Beneficial for Teaching Malay Vocabulary to Nepali Speakers**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Sanskrit and Arabic are the first and second largest donor languages to the Malay language respectively. From a vocabulary survey of 30 Malay words of Arabic and Sanskrit origins, this study examined the utility of a comparing Malay loanwords and their Nepali equivalent in teaching Malay to Nepali speakers. The participants were 25 Nepali speakers working in Kuala Lumpur. They averaged 23.16 correct answers and learned 11.32 new vocabulary items. At a 5% confidence level, a significant difference was found between the participants' scores before and after the presentation of the equivalent Nepali words ( $p = 0.000$ ). This study concluded that presenting Arabic and Sanskrit loanwords in Malay and their related Nepali equivalent could assist Nepali speakers in learning Malay.

*Keywords:* Sanskrit, Arabic, loanwords, Malay, cognates

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Nepali Workers in Malaysia**

There were approximately 700,000 Nepali workers in Malaysia in 2015 (Awale, 2016b) stated, most of whom worked

as security guards, factory workers, or plantation workers. Awale (2016a) reported that 3,000 Nepali workers have died in Malaysia since 2004. The major reasons for their deaths were overworking under extreme temperatures and mental pressure aggravated by communication problems with their Malaysian superiors because they were not proficient in Malay.

It has been suggested that legal and political measures be taken to improve their working environments. Additionally, for foreign workers to live comfortably in another country, some knowledge of the

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local language is essential. In Kuala Lumpur and other major Malaysian cities, English is the medium of communication between Nepali workers and their colleagues and superiors. However, basic competency in Malay is beneficial when communicating with other people who have limited English proficiency. Basic command of the Malay language entails learning several hundred words and simple grammar which are used by many non-native speakers (including ethnic Chinese and Indians) and foreigners for daily communication.

Valithern (2014, p. 2) found that lack of proficiency in Malay among Nepali workers is causing not only common communication problems with their Malaysian superiors but also serious in workplace safety issues such as at construction sites. He suggests that Malay language proficiency would reduce misunderstanding and hence, accidents at workplace. Between Nepali and Malay vocabularies, cognate words such as the Nepali word for [roti:] (bread) and its Malay equivalent *roti* share the highest degree of similarity. Therefore, the Malay cognates are the easiest category of vocabulary for Nepali workers who learn Malay for general and vocational purposes. The shared vocabularies between Nepali and Malay will assist them in improving their proficiency in the Malay language. This could foster a more comfortable and collaborative environment for the Nepali speakers and strengthen economic and cultural relationships between Malaysia and Nepal.

### **Arabic as a Donor Language to Malay and Nepali**

The Malay language belongs to the Austronesian family of languages (Crystal, 2010, p. 328). The basic word orders of Arabic, Malay, and Nepali are one of the most differentiated features of these languages. In modern written Arabic, verb, subject, and object (VSO) is a common word order of verbal sentences for indefinite subjects (Badawi et al., 2016, p. 348). In Malay, subject-verb-object (SVO) is the basic word order, while Nepali and other Sanskrit-based languages such as Hindi follow the order of subject-object-verb (SOV) (Liaw, 2007, p. 199; Delacy & Joshi, 2014, p. 7).

Watson-Andaya and Andaya (1982, p. 14) had earlier pointed out that many Sanskrit-origin words had been included in Old Malay in the seventh century because of the cultural and economic influence of the Indian subcontinent. In the 15th century, several Malay kings in the Malay Peninsula had accepted Islam (p. 53). As Islam was mainly practised in Arabic, thousands of Arabic words were adopted into Malay language over the following centuries. Jones, Grijns and de Vries (2007) found that Arabic was the second-largest donor language to the Malay vocabulary after Sanskrit.

Richards (1995) examined the history of the Mughal Empire that ruled over a part of the Indian subcontinent between 1526 and 1720 and found that “overall cultural and

religious climate of sixteenth-century India was more open and tolerant to change [than in the 17<sup>th</sup> century]” (p. 34). As the Muslim-ruled empire expanded in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, Sanskrit-based languages in the northern part of the Indian subcontinent, such as today’s Hindi and Urdu, and other close languages, such as Nepali, inevitably borrowed many Arabic words, such as [mawsam] (“season, weather”), which correspond to *musim* (“season”) in Malay.

Therefore, knowledge of such Arabic loanwords could assist the Nepalis in learning basic Malay vocabulary. This study seeks to elucidate the benefits of providing examples of Nepali words of Sanskrit and Arabic origins when teaching Malay to Nepali speakers in Malaysia.

In this paper, Nepali and Arabic words are transliterated into a slightly simplified International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). The IPA is used for two main reasons: The a) precise pronunciation of words and short vowels using Nepali (Devanagari) script and Arabic alphabet are not possible; b) many readers of this article may not be able

to read Nepali or Arabic. Further, as the voiced pharyngeal fricative and the sign of pharyngealisation that follows a consonant appears garbled on some computers, these are simplified as [‘] in this paper, and the glottal stop is simplified as [’]. In addition, the symbol indicating a long vowel is simplified as [:] and voiceless and voiced palato-alveolar fricatives are simplified as [š] and [ž]. Cowan (1994), an Arabic–English dictionary, was the primary reference for Arabic in this study.

**The Shared Vocabularies of Arabic and Sanskrit Origins**

Table 1 provides five examples of Arabic-origin words that appear in both Malay and Nepali. In Malay, the long vowels in Arabic have been shortened, and the diphthong [aw] in Arabic [mawsim] simplified to [u]. Regardless of these changes, the Malay and Nepali words in Table 1 still retain phonetic and semantic similarities, although the Nepali word [mawsam] has a broader meaning than its Malay equivalent.

Table 1  
*Examples of shared Malay and Nepali words of Arabic origin*

Malay (with the Original Arabic)	Nepali Equivalents
dunia (“world”) < Arabic [dunia:]	[dunia:] (“world”)
faedah (“benefit”) < Arabic [fa:’ida]	[fa:’ida:] (“benefit”)
musim (“season”) < Arabic [mawsim]	[mawsam] (“season, weather”)
tarikh (“date”) < Arabic [ta:ri:x]	[ta:rikh]/[ta:rix] (“date”)
umur (“age”) < Arabic [‘umr]	[umer] (“age”)

*Source* of English translations: Cowan (1994) and Harper Collins (2005)

Table 2 provides five examples of Sanskrit-origin words in Malay and Nepali. The Nepali word [kã:tš] (“glass”) stems from the Sanskrit [ka:tša]. The corresponding Malay word kaca, pronounced [katšə], retains the original sound except for the shortened and weakened vowels (Jones et al., 2007, p. 138). In addition, aspirated consonants such as [tʰ] are indicated by the symbol [ʰ]. For example, the Nepali [pratʰam] and Malay *pertama* both stem from the Sanskrit [pratʰama] (Jones et al., 2007, p. 241). In Malay, the distinction between the aspirated and unaspirated consonants has now disappeared.

In some loanwords in Malay, the original [a] sound has changed to an [ə] (schwa), spelled with an e. Examples include *pertama* (“first”) from the Sanskrit [pratʰama] with an identical meaning, and the Malay *kerana* (“because”) from the Sanskrit [ka:rana] (“reason”). In the first pair, the syllable [pra], comprising a double consonant [pr] in Sanskrit, is changed in Malay to the syllable [pə]. In addition, all the Malay words in Table 2 still maintain a final *a* sound (usually pronounced [ə]) from Sanskrit, which has disappeared in Nepali and other contemporary Sanskrit-based languages such as Hindi.

Table 2  
Examples of shared Malay and Nepali words of Sanskrit origin

kaca (“glass”)	[kã:tš] (“glass”) < Sanskrit [ka:tša]
pertama (“first”)	[pratham] (“first”) < Sanskrit [prathama]
suara (“voice”)	[swar] (“voice”) < Sanskrit [svara]
suria (“sun”)	[su:rja] (“sun”) (same as in Sanskrit)
utara (“north”)	[uttar] (“north”) < Sanskrit [uttara]

Source of English translations: Verma & Sahai (2003) and Hawkins (2011)

## Hypothesis and Objectives

**The hypothesis of this study.** An explicit presentation of Arabic- and Sanskrit-origin Malay words that include one or more simplified consonants or vowels and their Nepali equivalents could assist Nepalis in learning Malay.

**The objective of this study.** To examine the benefits of explicitly presenting Arabic- and Sanskrit-origin Malay words containing one or more modified consonants or vowels and

their Nepali equivalents in expanding Malay vocabulary among Nepali speakers.

Using this method, the learners may effectively speak and write in Malay in the workplace with Malay-speaking colleagues and superiors. Cognate words shared between Malay and Nepali are limited. In general, the meanings of Sanskrit-origin Malay words such as *bahagia* (“happy”) from the Sanskrit [bʰa:gja] (“luck, fate”) have been shifted more than those of Arabic-origin Malay words. Frequently

used Arabic-origin Nepali words, such as [sa:bun] (soap), [ta:rik<sup>h</sup>] (date), and [umer] (age), have meanings which are almost identical to their Malay equivalents. For the Nepalis knowing only several hundred Malay words, the existence of cognates between the shared vocabularies with such high frequency may be more important than the number of shared cognates in the Malay vocabulary. If we include shared cognates with different frequencies between the two languages, such as the Nepali [hawa:] (“air”) and the Malay *hawa* (“air”), the number of Arabic-origin Malay words that can be demonstrated through this method will exceed 100.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Characteristics of Arabic Loanwords in Malay

Jones, Grijns, and de Vries (2007), an etymological dictionary of Indonesian and Malay, contains thousands of loanwords from Sanskrit, Arabic, and other languages. The principal differences in pronunciation between the original and loanword forms are as follows: long vowels in Sanskrit and Arabic have been shortened in Malay, double consonants in the original words have been simplified in Malay, and the voiceless uvular stop [q] in Arabic corresponds to the [k] in Malay, for example, *baki* (“remainder, balance”) from the Arabic [ba:qi:] (“remainder”).

Many studies have been conducted on Arabic loanwords in Malay. For example, Uni (2015) examined the usefulness of

Arabic-origin Malay words in assisting Arabic-speaking university students to learn basic Malay. However, Uni’s (2015) research focused only on Malay words of Arabic origin, but did not discuss any vocabulary of Sanskrit origin. Abdul Jabar (2004) examined the phonetic differences between Arabic words and their pronunciation by Malay-speaking students. Ahmad and Jalaluddin (2012) explored the major factors behind the phonetic simplification of Malay nouns and verbs. However, none of these studies explored the utility of presenting Malay words of Arabic and Sanskrit origins when teaching Malay as a foreign language.

### Benefits of “Cognates” in Learners’ First Language and Target Language

Ringbom (2007, p. 73) highlighted the benefits of cognates, defined as “historically related, formally similar words, whose meanings may be identical, similar, or partly different,” when teaching and learning foreign languages. Lightbown and Spada (2006) also believed that cognate words in the target language that had partly different pronunciations could be explicitly demonstrated because learners are not always conscious of the similarities between their first language and the target language (p. 99). Such cognates are, for example, the English noun *cost* and its French equivalent *coût* [ku], which originated from a Latin verb meaning “stand at a price” (Stevenson & Waite, 2011, p. 323).

These studies affirmed the benefits of utilising cross-linguistic similarities regarding cognates to teach a foreign

language, especially when there were phonetic and semantic similarities between the learners' first language and the target language.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

### **Participants**

All participants were native speakers of the Nepali language and were working as security guards in a 30-storey condominium in Kuala Lumpur. Their religion was Hinduism, practiced by approximately 81% of the total population of Nepal (Central Bureau of Statistics of Nepal, 2014, p. 18). The Muslims constitute 4% of the total population of Nepal. All participants frequently used English and Hindi, the national language of India, to communicate with non-Nepalis. All of them had not completed any Malay language studies in a language school or other institution. Twenty out of 25 participants had completed five years of primary education and further five years of lower secondary education in Nepal. These 20 possessed the Nepalese School Leaving Certificate that officially proved their education as lower secondary level. The other five participants had dropped out of secondary education. However, their educational level appeared to be sufficient for them to understand the English used in the questionnaire. At the time of the survey, all the participants had been working for more than one year as security guards in a condominium and shopping mall.

The author of this study held a brief session with the 25 participants to explain the objectives of the survey which was

followed by the distribution of the first page of the questionnaire. They were given approximately 15 minutes to complete the first page before receiving the second page for which an additional 15 minutes was allowed. The questionnaire was presented in English but contained Malay and Nepali words. On the first page, only Malay words were included and, on the second page, Malay and Nepali words were shown with their original spellings.

After the participants had finished answering the check sheet on Page 1 of the questionnaire and the multiple-choice questions on 30 loanwords in Malay on Page 2, each participant's correct answers and newly learned words were counted. The average numbers of the correct answers on Pages 1 and 2 were analysed using a t-test to determine the benefits of presenting these Malay loanwords and the Nepali equivalents when teaching Malay vocabulary. The "newly learned words" in this study referred to words that were unknown from Page 1 of the survey but were understood after the participants had read the Nepali forms presented beside each Malay word on Page 2 of the survey as shown in Table 3 of this article. No additional treatment was given.

### **Questionnaire**

The multiple-choice vocabulary survey included 14 Arabic and 16 Sanskrit Malay loanwords. With a few exceptions such as "mosque" and "remainder," English words used as the correct answers on Page 2 of the questionnaire were from the 3000 most frequently used words according to the



*Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary* (Hornby, 2010). Therefore, the selection of words taught and tested here was appropriate for beginners of Malay as a foreign language. The pronunciation of the 30 Malay words still retained many features of the original Arabic and Sanskrit forms, although one or more Malay consonants or vowels may have changed over time. For example, the Malay word *sabun* (“soap”; pronounced [sabun]), originating from Arabic [s‘a:bu:n] (“soap”), includes a simplified *s* sound and shortened vowels. Phonetic changes are mainly observed in consonants in Malay loanwords because nine of the Arabic single consonants and more than 10 of the Sanskrit single consonants do not exist in Malay. Therefore, this study mainly focused on the influence of the phonetic differences in the consonants between the Malay loanwords of Arabic and Sanskrit origins and their related Nepali equivalent.

The questionnaire had two pages. Page 1 was a simple check sheet used for the verification of the participants’ previous knowledge of the listed Malay

words. On this page, 30 Malay loanwords were presented with a yes/no column. If participants thought they knew the meaning of the Malay words, they checked “yes” and wrote the primary meaning in the blank space. If they encountered an unknown word, they simply checked “no.” On Page 2, the 30 words were accompanied by the Nepali equivalents and multiple-choice questions, from which the participants had to choose the most appropriate meaning for each Malay word from the four options provided. For example, the options on Page 2 for the Malay *dunia* (“world”) were “region,” “society,” “world,” and “community.” Even if the participants correctly identified and defined a word on Page 1, that answer was not considered correct if they had selected an incorrect answer on Page 2. The Nepali equivalent for each Malay word was shown alongside to assist participants in guessing the correct meanings of the Malay words. The questionnaire did not provide any instructions on the phonetic and semantic changes for the listed words.

Table 3  
Example from page 1 of the questionnaire

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*Do you know the meaning of the following Malay words? Please check “YES” or “NO.” If yes, please write the main meaning of the word in English in the blank space.*

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asli	(NO/YES) (	)
bahagia	(NO/YES) (	)
bahasa	(NO/YES) (	)
baki	(NO/YES) (	)
cahaya	(NO/YES) (	)
cuti	(NO/YES) (	)
dunia	(NO/YES) (	)

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Table 4  
Example of questions on page 2 of the questionnaire

(In this table, the Nepali equivalents shown in parentheses were transliterated using a modified IPA.)  
Please check the most appropriate meaning for the following Malay words. The Nepali words related to the listed Malay words are written in parentheses.

asli ([asli:])	1. original	2. early	3. old	4. new
bahagia ([bha:gja])	1. sad	2. happy	3. grateful	4. angry
bahasa ([bha:ša:])	1. talk	2. dialect	3. language	4. speech
baki ([bā:ki:])	1. stop	2. remainder	3. result	4. stay
cahaya ([tšahakilo])	1. light	2. beam	3. laser	4. ray
cuti ([tšhutti:])	1. festival	2. absence	3. freedom	4. holiday
dunia ([dunia:])	1. region	2. society	3. world	4. community

### Survey Vocabulary

**Consonants.** A number of the consonants in these 30 words have changed from their original forms in the Malay language. The voiced pharyngeal fricative [ʕ] in Arabic that precedes a vowel disappears when adopted by Malay and Nepali. The Arabic word [ʕumr] (“age, life”) corresponds with *umur* in Malay and [umer] in Nepali. Many Sanskrit-based words and their contemporary forms in Nepali have retroflex consonants such as the retroflex [ɖ] sound in [roti:] (“bread”) and [topi:] (“cap”); however, in Malay, these have been simplified to *roti* (“bread”) and *topi* (“hat”).

The voiceless uvular stop [q] in Arabic usually corresponds to a [k] in Malay and Nepali. For example, the Arabic [ba:qi:] (“remainder”) eq is *baki* (“remainder, balance”) in Malay and [bā:ki:] (also pronounced [ba:ki:]) (“remainder”) in Nepali. There is a simplification of double consonants in Malay, such as in *utara* (“north”) that was derived from the Sanskrit

[uttara] (“north”) with the Nepali equivalent being [uttar].

**Vowels.** In Malay, multiple consonants rarely appear in syllable codas. Arabic loanwords therefore include epenthetic vowels, usually an additional [a], to break up such consonant sequences. For example, the Arabic [sʕabr] (“patience”) became the Malay *sabar* (“patient”). In addition, some long vowels in Arabic and Sanskrit have become simplified and shortened in Malay such as the Arabic [sʕa:bu:n] (“soap”) has become *sabun* (“soap”) in Malay and the Sanskrit [swa:mi:] (“owner”) has become *suami* (“husband”).

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The average number of correct answers after the presentation of the Nepali equivalent words was 23.16/30 and was 11.32 for the newly learned words. Table 5 shows the number of correct answers on Pages 1 and 2 for the participants, who are labelled N1 through N25.



Table 5  
Numbers of correct answers on page 1 (top row) and page 2 (bottom row)

N1	N2	N3	N4	N5	N6	N7	N8	N9	N10	N11	N12	N13	N14	N15	N16	N17	N18	N19	N20	N21	N22	N23	N24	N25
5	6	6	7	8	8	8	9	10	10	10	10	10	11	11	11	12	12	13	13	13	14	14	15	19
28	24	27	26	21	22	26	23	19	22	24	26	27	22	23	24	24	27	23	24	26	24	26	25	27

Correlations between the test scores before and after the participants were given the Nepali equivalents were statistically analysed. At a 5% confidence level, a significant difference was found between the before and after performances ( $p = 0.000$ ). Table 6 presents the statistical results. The  $t$ -value was 6.439.

Table 6  
Results of the  $t$ -Test

	Total Numbers of Correct Answers on Page 2	Total Numbers of Words Known before the Presentation of Nepali Words on Page 2
Total Scores	579	296
$p$ -Value	0.000*	
$t$ -Value	6.439	
$Df$	23	

Table 7 shows the 12 most newly learned Malay words. The number of participants who recognised the correct meaning of the listed Malay words after the demonstration of the Nepali equivalents ranged from 13 (for *pasar*) to 25 (for *cahaya*). After the presentation of the Nepali words on Page 2 of the questionnaire, all 25 participants selected the most appropriate answers for *cahaya* (“light”), *jawapan* (“reply”), *pertama* (“first”), and *suara* (“voice”). The second, third, and fourth words contained endings ([an] or [a]) that did not occur in the Nepali equivalents [dʒawa:p<sup>h</sup>], [prat<sup>h</sup>am], and [swar]; however, these differences did not appear to affect the respondents’ understanding.

Differences between the voiced and unvoiced consonants confused only one participant: the *Malay* pasar (“market”), which originates from the Arabic and Persian [ba:za:r] (“bazaar, market”), has unvoiced [p] and [s] sounds, which are voiced in the Nepali [ba:dža:r]. Twenty respondents correctly identified *kaca* (“glass”) and *musim* (“season”). The former Malay word and its Nepali equivalent [kã:tš] (“glass”) stem from the Sanskrit [ka:tša] (Jones et al., 2007, p. 138); however, the nasalised long vowel [ã:] in Nepali hindered only five participants’ understanding. The Malay *musim* (“season”) corresponds to the

Nepali [mawsam] (“season, weather”). The semantic difference negatively affected five respondents.

The Malay *faedah* and its Nepali equivalent [fa:’ida:] share the meaning “benefit” and maintain phonetic similarities, but the incorrect options in the questionnaire such as “interest” and “success” were selected by six people. Likewise, *baki* (“remainder, balance”) and the Nepali [bã:ki:]/[ba:ki:] share the meaning of “remainder” and retain phonetic similarities; the incorrect options “stay” and “result,” however, were selected by seven participants.

Table 7  
Twelve most newly learned Malay words

Malay	Relevant Nepali Words	Numbers of Correct Answers on Pages 1 and 2 ( $n = 25$ )
<i>cahaya</i> (“light”)	[tšahakilo] (“bright”)	0 (25)
<i>pertama</i> (“first”)	[pratham] (“first”)	3 (25)
<i>suara</i> (“voice”)	[swar] (“voice”)	3 (25)
<i>jawapan</i> (“reply”)	[džawa:ph] (“reply”)	5 (25)
<i>pasar</i> (“market”)	[ba:dža:r] (“market”)	11 (24)
<i>suria</i> (“sun”)	[su:rja] (“sun”)	12 (24)
<i>asli</i> (“original”)	[asli:] (“genuine”)	6 (23)
<i>kaca</i> (“glass”)	[kã:tš] (“glass”)	5 (20)
<i>musim</i> (“season”)	[mawsam] (“season, weather”)	0 (20)
<i>faedah</i> (“benefit”)	[fa:’ida:] (“benefit”)	5 (19)
<i>baki</i> (“remainder, balance”)	[bã:ki:]/[ba:ki:] (“remainder”)	4 (18)
<i>utara</i> (“north”)	[uttar] (“north”)	3 (18)

Table 8 presents the results from the other 11 words correctly identified by most participants. Phonetic similarities retained in the Malay and Nepali words in Table 8 would have been the primary reason for

the high percentage of correct answers. Shortened vowels in Malay, such as in *cuti* from [tš<sup>h</sup>utti:] and *suami* from [swa:mi:], did not negatively affect the participants’ recognition of the correct meanings. The

Malay *suami* (“husband”) and Nepali [swa:mi:] (“owner”) share less semantic similarities; however, 16 participants indicated that they knew the correct meaning in Malay on the Page 1 check sheet, and all

25 participants selected the correct answer on Page 2. The Malay *dunia* (“world”) was correctly identified by 11 and 19 participants respectively, before and after the presentation of their Nepali equivalent.

Table 8  
The other eleven words correctly identified by most participants

Malay	Nepali Equivalent	Number of Correct Answers on Pages 1 and 2 (n = 25)
<i>cuti</i> (“holiday, leave”)	[tʃhutti:] (“holiday”)	25 (25)
<i>roti</i> (“bread”)	[roti:] (“bread”)	20 (25)
<i>guru</i> (“teacher”)	[guru] (“master”)	23 (25)
<i>umur</i> (“age, life”)	[umer] (“age”)	18 (25)
<i>suami</i> (“husband”)	[swa:mi:] (“owner”)	16 (25)
<i>bahasa</i> (“language”)	[bha:ʃa:] (“language”)	23 (24)
<i>sabun</i> (“soap”)	[sa:bun] (“soap”)	18 (24)
<i>tarikh</i> (“date”)	[ta:rikh]/[ta:rix] (“date”)	16 (24)
<i>dunia</i> (“world”)	[dunia:] (“world”)	11 (19)
<i>maaf</i> (“forgiveness, sorry”)	[ma:f]/[ma:ph] (“forgiveness”)	17 (18)
<i>topi</i> (“hat”)	[topi:] (“cap”)	12 (16)

Table 9 shows the seven words most infrequently identified by the participants. The meaning of *wakil* (“agent, representative”) was correctly identified by only 9 out of 25 participants; most participants chose “chief” as the correct definition as this may have appeared to be close in meaning to its Nepali equivalent [waki:l] (“lawyer”). The Malay *bahagia* (“happy”) was correctly recognised by 12 out of 25 participants; most participants who chose an incorrect answer selected “grateful.” Most of the latter respondents said they were more familiar with *gembira* (“glad, happy”) than *bahagia* as a Malay word equivalent to “happy.” Thirteen respondents selected the correct meaning of

the Malay *perdana* (“prime”) whose Nepali equivalent [praɖʰa:n] has an almost identical meaning; most participants who failed to correctly identify the word’s meaning chose “powerful” as the definition. *Jaya* (“success”) was correctly identified by 14 participants; the incorrect meanings “joy,” “happiness,” and “luck” were chosen by the other 11 participants.

The Malay *masjid* and its Nepali equivalent [masdʒid] share the meaning “mosque”; however, only 15 out of 25 respondents correctly guessed the meaning. Since the Muslim Nepalese constitute only 4% of the total population of Nepal, the Hindu majority are unlikely to have any significant exposure to Nepali words related

to Islam. The Malay *kerana* (“because”) (“reason”) share less phonetic and semantic similarities than the other listed pairs, but it was correctly recognised by 17 participants. This word and its Nepali equivalent [ka:ran] was only confusing for eight participants.

Table 9  
Seven least recognised Malay words

Malay	Relevant Nepali Words	Numbers of Correct Answers on Pages 1 and 2 ( $n = 25$ )
<i>wakil</i> (“agent, representative”)	[waki:l] (“lawyer”)	1 (9)
<i>bahagia</i> (“happy”)	[bha:gja] (“luck, fate”)	0 (12)
<i>perdana</i> (“prime”)	[pradha:n] (“prime”)	0 (13)
<i>jaya</i> (“success, victory”)	[džaj] (“victory”)	0 (14)
<i>masjid</i> (“mosque”)	[masdžid] (“mosque”)	9 (15)
<i>sah</i> (“valid”)	[sahi:] (“true”)	0 (16)
<i>kerana</i> (“because”)	[ka:ran] (“reason”)	0 (17)

## CONCLUSION

The present study has examined the benefits of a comparative presentation of Arabic- and Sanskrit-origin Malay words and their Nepali equivalents in teaching Malay to Nepali speakers in Malaysia. The participants completed a 30 Malay loanword vocabulary survey in which they were required to choose the correct meaning. They provided an average of 23.16 correct answers and learned 11.32 new words. A significant difference was found between the scores before and after the demonstration of the Nepali equivalents ( $p = 0.000$ ). From these results, it could be concluded that the introduction of Arabic- and Sanskrit-origin Malay words and their Nepali equivalents could benefit those teaching Malay vocabulary to Nepali speakers.

The findings of this study point to the benefits of comparative demonstration of Malay words and their Nepali equivalents, such as *kaca* (“glass”) with the Nepali [kã:tš] (“glass”), *musim* (“season”) with its equivalent [mawsam] (“season, weather”), and *pertama* (“first”) with the Nepali [prat<sup>h</sup>am] (“first”). However, the results also suggested that Malay words, such as *wakil* (“agent, representative”) with its Nepali [waki:l] (“lawyer”) would be better presented as loanwords having very different meanings from the original.

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