

Project: Malay Heritage in SG

Written Report 2020

Group 4-040

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Abstract

Every day, as Singapore citizens, we recite the National Pledge with pride and dignity, because we see it as an embodiment of the values we strive to achieve in Singapore society. One line states that as a society, we have mutual respect and understanding for each other, “regardless of race, language or religion”. From this, we know it to be indeed true that in Singapore, racial harmony and mutual understanding are principles we view paramount.

Living in a multiracial society, it is key for Singaporeans to have a level of respect and understanding. However, in the status quo many students do not possess such a mindset. As such, our resource aims to educate them about different cultures in Singapore, with our target audience being the Lower Secondary students in Hwa Chong Institution who currently do have Basic / Conversational Malay classes in their curriculum.

Introduction

While Singapore is a peaceful democracy, we have observed that often there are misunderstandings between races, both in the form of a lack of exposure to such cultures, and stereotypes that subtly influence the way we view others. There have been cases in Singapore where there are racist stereotypes, such that “Malays are lazy, uneducated, drug peddlers or glue-sniffers”. There have also been cases of racial tensions, such as the 2012 saga of an NTUC Assistant Director being sacked due to her racist remarks regarding Malay Weddings on Facebook.

As students of a predominantly Chinese school with a strong Chinese culture, it is important to be educated about such nuances, and cultivate a sense of respect to other

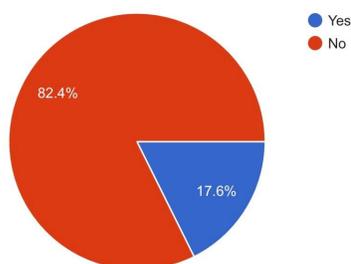
cultures. This is especially given the fact that for most of us, we do not have much exposure to it and may not know how to react to it. In our survey, most people had the least exposure to the Malay culture and found that most stereotypes in society were targeted towards the Malay community. Our geographical location next to Malaysia and the large percentage of Malays that live in Singapore today highlights the importance of our ability to understand and appreciate the Malay Community. Hence, we chose to focus our project on explaining the rich Malay culture & heritage in Singapore.

Literature Review

In February, we conducted a survey to gather statistics on people's understanding of the Malay culture, as well as their attitudes towards this. This also served as a litmus test as to whether current resources, such as online learning packages were sufficient.

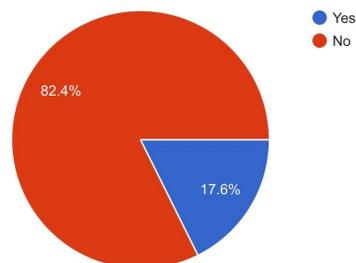
In your opinion, are there enough current resources available to you for the study of the Malay Heritage in Singapore?

68 responses



In your opinion, are the current resources available to you on Malay Heritage in Singapore easily accessible to you?

68 responses

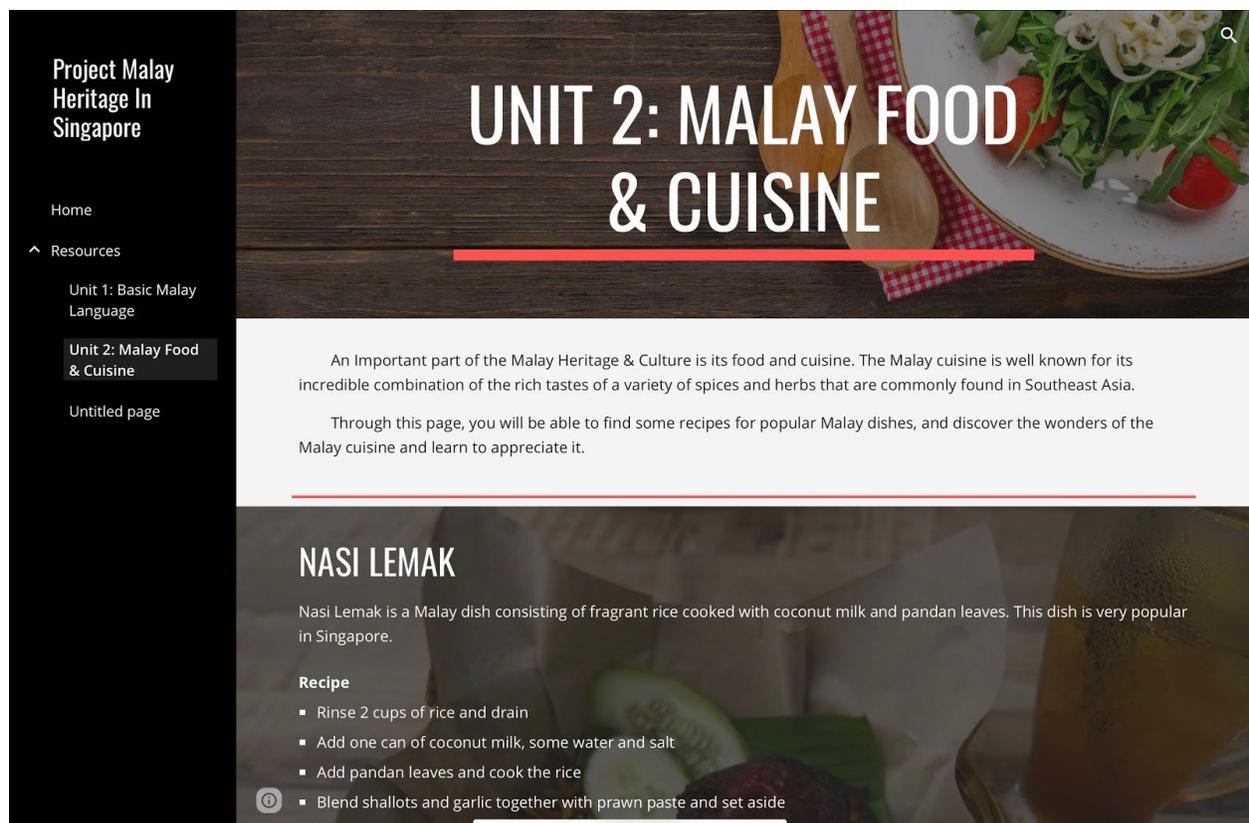


Based on the above results, we came to the conclusion that current resources were insufficient and not very accessible to the student population.

We then wanted to have an idea as to how much HCI students were exposed to Malay culture and heritage -- quizzing them on their understanding of basic Malay cultures, beliefs and practises. More than 66% (that is, two thirds) of the respondents had little to no exposure or experience with such cultures. Thus, we concluded that there is a “gap” present amongst students in this aspect, that needs to be filled up.

Our resource package is three-fold:

1. Detailed Notes & Worksheets on the topics (vetted and used by the Malay Special Programme, or MSP for short)
2. Instagram page to reach out to the youth population
3. An online resource in the form of a website, so that our package is easily accessible



The screenshot shows a website interface for 'Project Malay Heritage In Singapore'. The main header area features a dark wood background with a plate of fresh salad and a wooden spoon. The title 'UNIT 2: MALAY FOOD & CUISINE' is prominently displayed in white. Below the title, there is a red horizontal line. The content area contains two paragraphs of text. The first paragraph states: 'An Important part of the Malay Heritage & Culture is its food and cuisine. The Malay cuisine is well known for its incredible combination of the rich tastes of a variety of spices and herbs that are commonly found in Southeast Asia.' The second paragraph says: 'Through this page, you will be able to find some recipes for popular Malay dishes, and discover the wonders of the Malay cuisine and learn to appreciate it.' Below this is another red horizontal line. The next section is titled 'NASI LEMAK' and includes a description: 'Nasi Lemak is a Malay dish consisting of fragrant rice cooked with coconut milk and pandan leaves. This dish is very popular in Singapore.' Underneath is a 'Recipe' section with a list of steps: 'Rinse 2 cups of rice and drain', 'Add one can of coconut milk, some water and salt', 'Add pandan leaves and cook the rice', and 'Blend shallots and garlic together with prawn paste and set aside'. The website has a dark sidebar on the left with navigation links: 'Home', 'Resources', 'Unit 1: Basic Malay Language', 'Unit 2: Malay Food & Cuisine' (highlighted), and 'Untitled page'. A search icon is visible in the top right corner of the main content area.

Project Malay Heritage In Singapore

Home

Resources

Unit 1: Basic Malay Language

Unit 2: Malay Food & Cuisine

Untitled page

UNIT 2: MALAY FOOD & CUISINE

An Important part of the Malay Heritage & Culture is its food and cuisine. The Malay cuisine is well known for its incredible combination of the rich tastes of a variety of spices and herbs that are commonly found in Southeast Asia.

Through this page, you will be able to find some recipes for popular Malay dishes, and discover the wonders of the Malay cuisine and learn to appreciate it.

NASI LEMAK

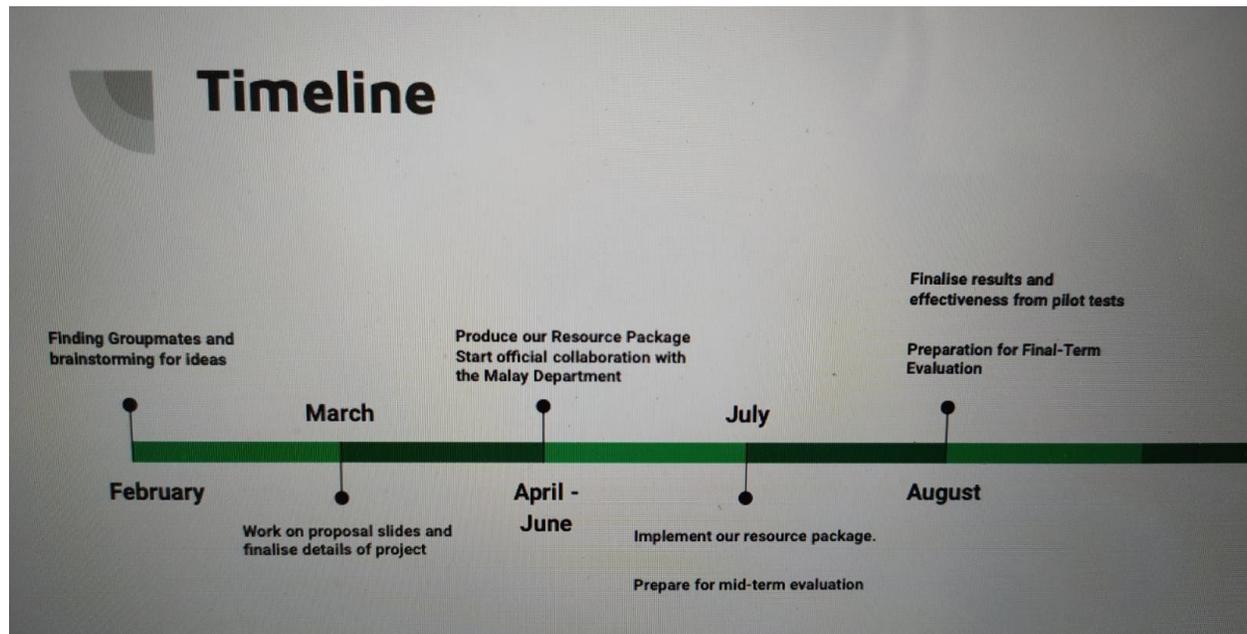
Nasi Lemak is a Malay dish consisting of fragrant rice cooked with coconut milk and pandan leaves. This dish is very popular in Singapore.

Recipe

- Rinse 2 cups of rice and drain
- Add one can of coconut milk, some water and salt
- Add pandan leaves and cook the rice
- Blend shallots and garlic together with prawn paste and set aside

Methodology

Initially, we set this as our timeline in formulating the resource and executing the plan (this can also be found in our Proposal Evaluation Slides).



However, due to the COVID-19 situation we had to modify our methodology, both our timeline & the execution of our project such as the pilot tests.

From March to July, we formulated the resource, including the website, notes & updating our Instagram accounts. As we were unable to, for instance, visit Malay heritage sites & museums, we edited the scope of our resource package. Instead of focusing more on the culture itself, we chose to spend more time researching and compiling our resource on both the Malay Language and correcting stereotypes regarding the Malay Community. We selected these two broad areas to expand on as we felt that these are the most important things to address in our package. Since the aim of our project is to help students cultivate a sense of understanding and respect towards the Malay Community, we believe that addressing stereotypes is paramount in

achieving that outcome. Compared to the Malay heritage and culture, which students can learn about if they visit various websites or centres, the Malay Language is generally harder to learn about. Students also may be unable to be exposed to the Malay Language much, as there aren't, well, heritage sites or centres regarding that, are there? As such, we decided to focus on the Malay Language as well. Of course, in our resource we did cover other parts of the rich culture and heritage of the Malay Community, albeit placing a larger emphasis on the Malay Language and correcting stereotypes.

The research process involved researching through various platforms and mediums, understanding the direction the research should be going by working together with the Malay Department in Hwa Chong Institution, and trying to find out more about the culture through talking to, and getting a better insight from, Malays living in Singapore. All of this was presented in the form of notes, quizzes and also uploaded on our website. Apart from that, we also frequently posted fun facts and nuggets of information on our Instagram page -- It's even followed by the National Heritage Board!

Regarding the pilot test, we were ultimately unable to implement our resource in the Malay Special Programme (MSP) and the Lower Secondary Conversational Malay classes again due to the unforeseen circumstances caused by the coronavirus. As such, our worksheets and notes were not used in the curriculum, which definitely was difficult for us since our target audience are the Lower Secondary. However, they have been vetted and approved by the teachers-in-charge, who feel that the resource is helpful, informative and well-crafted.

Outcome & Discussion

Our desired outcome is that our resources can be used by the Malay Department to aid students in their journey with the Malay Language and Culture. Our resource is a very basic guide on the Malay language and thus it is not for the higher level students in the

MSP, but we hope those secondary one students who just started in the MSP program and secondary two students who have Malay lessons in their curriculum can use our resource to acquire more knowledge on the language and culture they are learning, and cultivate understanding and respect towards it.

In retrospect, our project could have definitely have been improved in terms of depth -- perhaps we could have gone deeper into explaining the nuances regarding the culture & traditions of the Malay Culture. At the same time, due to the current COVID-19 situation, we were not able to conduct any large-scale pilot tests. We were also unable to visit heritage centers or experience most of these Malay cultures on our own, as many of our plans were disrupted by the Circuit Breaker measures. However, as a whole given the circumstances, we did our best in creating the resource based on our capacities.

Conclusion

Project Malay Heritage in SG has been an enjoyable albeit challenging project to work on. However through this project we were able to learn more about the Malay culture, traditions, and how to appreciate it more. Through this project we were also able to develop our teamwork and communication as a team to accomplish the difficult tasks, especially because we weren't able to meet up to do work and had to use various platforms to "meet up" virtually. The hectic schedules needed to firm up the project, the changes made to adapt to the COVID-19 situation, and the rigorous process certainly weren't easy, but suffice to say as a team we worked well together.

References

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