

The Development Framework and Uses of the Thematic Modules in Teaching and Learning Primary School Skills

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Abstract

To uphold education in Malaysia, especially Malay language education, and enhance the ability of Malay language skills at the primary level, a reform in teaching and learning Malay language education at the primary level is required. Language teaching strategies use a variety of principles, techniques, and approaches to meet the concept of integration in the National Philosophy of Education. The thematic approach is an approach that will be taught through the topics or themes selected following the time, place, and interest in moving a teaching and learning process as a vehicle and medium to gain knowledge, skills, and values translated into language teaching through listening and speaking skills, reading, and writing. Various issues related to learning language skills include teacher teaching capabilities, the quality of teaching in the classroom, and applying lesson plans. The framework is based on the modified instruction design steps from the ADDIE model, consisting of the need for analysis, the design and development phase, and the implementation and evaluation phase. Overall, this framework explains the steps that need to be implemented to develop and evaluate the usability of the thematic module aimed at improving the Malay language learning strategy among primary school students in listening, reading, speaking, and writing.

Keywords: Malay language education, language learning strategies, ADDIE model, thematics approach

1. Introduction

Malay language education is transformed when the Primary School Standard Curriculum (KSSR) is introduced starting in year one in 2013 and the KSSR Review begins in 2017. KSSR replaces the Primary School Integrated Curriculum (KBSR), which is implemented in stages in all primary schools in the national education system, including national-type schools and national schools. The KSSR draught aims to enable students to speak the language and to communicate to meet their needs and to gain knowledge, skills, information, values, ideas, and social relationships in daily life (MOE 2017).

The effectiveness of teacher teaching and success in achieving learning objectives in the classroom are closely related to the nature of responsibility as well as being equipped with strong knowledge to effectively apply teaching practises. The teaching strategies used are related to the knowledge, skills, and teaching practises of teachers in the classroom. Teaching practises refer to teaching approaches, methods, and techniques (Ayob, A. & Mohamad, K. 2012; Ragbir Kaur (2012), which are related to knowledge and skills. Teachers play a role by delivering knowledge through a variety of Malay language learning activities.

The teaching and learning process (T&L) can be triggered by ideas and is based on the modules developed. This is agreed upon by Oxford (2002), who says that teaching and learning can be changed through such methods. The development of modules is important to build the confidence of teachers who are not able to teach the strategy to students (Kamarul Shukri and Embi, 2010). According to Kamarul Shukri and Embi (2010), teachers will not be able to teach these strategies to their students until they are confident in the results and accuracy of the results. In this regard, the development and usability framework are discussed to build this thematic learning module designed to help teachers teach various Malay language skills and provide meaningful knowledge to students.

2. Primary School Malay Education

Malay is the official language, or the national language, and is the language of communication used for social relations among the Malaysian community. In the context of education, the Malay language serves as the medium of knowledge in schools, as described in the Education Act of 1961. The goals of the primary school curriculum are formulated to enable students to speak the language and communicate to meet their needs, acquire knowledge, skills, information, values, and ideas, and develop social relations in daily life (MOE 2020). Therefore, Malay language education is very important for all students so that they master language skills they can apply in real life. In addition, Malay language learning enables students to master a wide range of knowledge and skills at the same time.

In line with the holistic and integrated Malaysia National Philosophy of Education, it is the foundation of the education system by applying language learning through the application of the concept of unity. Therefore, the process of learning in the classroom needs to be consistent with the requirements of Malay language learning, where the Malay language curriculum can enrich and master the language of the student based on the function of language in life.

According to Samion and Awang (2017), the emphasis on education can change the quality of life, and good education can produce wise human civilization in making decisions and organising life. The impact of the learning process is that it is able to build its own understanding and knowledge based on existing knowledge and experience (Rusman 2020). Thus, students can feel the relevance of the content of the lessons obtained in school.

The teaching strategies based on the thematic approach set by the Ministry of Education (MoE) Malaysia are curriculum management and learning through a selected theme or topic in line with the time, place, interest, background, and level of student development. The MOE has set some aspects involved in the themed teaching approach: the use of a general theme across the field of learning; the selection of themes based on student level; specific situations or current events; interrelated with existing experiences and new experiences gained systematically; extension and strengthening of knowledge; and finally, the ranking from simple to difficult and general to more specific (MOE 2017). The same is true of thematic learning models that focus on knowledge and experience and integrate various subjects. However, the primary school curriculum is focused on the modular approach used in classroom learning. Although the primary school textbook has been formulated and organised with a variety of learning materials and activities following the theme.

In line with student needs in language skills as well as student knowledge, experience, and skills, thematic learning needs to be applied in the primary school T&L to ensure that the language skills process is more effective. The application of language skills in Malay language learning includes listening, speaking, writing, and reading skills (Ali 2016) with fun teaching methods (Melvina, 2018) that hone language skills simultaneously (Nazir and Shamsudin 2016). At the same time, the application of thematic learning in the Malay language T&L is not something new but is also described in the DSKP as one of the Malay language learning approaches, the thematic approach. Thematic learning can incorporate a variety of subjects in Malay language learning to develop new knowledge and build contextual experiences that make learning meaningful (Ahmadi and Amri 2014), as well as the integration of language skills in T&L activities.

3. Issues in Primary School Malay Language Education

Child development and learning need to be seen through the theories that clearly state that learning through real experiences gives children many benefits in terms of knowledge and thinking skills. Not many teachers are able to translate theory into classroom practise, even though they have learned it. Learning needs that apply thematic or themed learning can enhance the knowledge and experience of children, as emphasised by psychologists such as Jean Piaget, Semanovich Vygotsky, and Jerome Bruner. This is in line with the focus of the Malay language in KSSR, ensuring that students can enrich vocabulary, enhance language understanding, master language, and communicate effectively to convey their ideas and information in a variety of learning situations (Nazir *et al.*, 2018).

The next issue is about the needs and capabilities of teachers' teaching in terms of teaching,

pedagogical skills, and teaching practises. Improvement in the quality of teachers in T&L is crucial to enhancing student knowledge and skills. (Rashidah 2020). Some teachers are more comfortable with traditional teaching practises such as chalk and talk than bilateral teaching methods, as suggested by MOE because they think that changing teaching is difficult and inappropriate for them (Hassan and Mahamod, 2019).

The issue that teachers face is the difficulty of conveying teaching effectively to students. The quality of the teacher determines the success of the pupils, involving the teaching practises of the teacher and the pedagogical method in the classroom, as the successful and effective teacher has a deep competence in the field or subject (Hassan and Mahamod, 2019; Mahamod 2014). Lai, Chin, and Chew (2017) explain that teaching techniques are very important to ensure that students achieve their learning objectives. Through structured learning based on themes, students are able to solve problems that teachers build based on thematic learning activities that integrate various subjects.

After researching some of the issues with which I am concerned, I found that there are issues associated with the quality of teacher teaching in the classroom. Following the report of Nazir and Quality Assurance (AKEPT) (2019), the quality of teaching by Malaysian teachers is reported to be less encouraging. In 2018, AKEPT conducted a qualitative study of teacher teaching practises. From the observation of 125 teachers at 18%, or synthesising information at 15%. If so, students who are unable to master the core intellectual skills such as literacy and numeracy, as well, have the opportunity to succeed in rapid economic change and today's global community (AKEPT MOE, 2019).

After examining some of the issues that were concerned about the teaching method of teachers and applying RPH in the Malay language T&L, the thematic module was developed based on the development and usability framework to assist teachers in the T&L process in the classroom. The development of this module is important given that in the study of 15 schools across Malaysia, it was found that only 12% of the lessons are delivered to high standards, which is to implement more of the best pedagogical practises, while another 38% are to satisfactory standards. On the other hand, 50% of the observations in the study showed that the teaching delivered was unsatisfactory (AKEPT MOE, 2019).

Issues in teaching and learning Malay involve the process of integrating Malay language skills that require high teachers' skills in organising T&L activities that are in line with learning standards and learning objectives. In addition, student learning and skills need to be in line with learning objectives and learning activities. This requires high knowledge of teachers' pedagogy and content and various T&L strategies. According to Karnain (2020) and Nahar and Rahman (2018), teachers need to have the knowledge to implement various T&L strategies that influence the quality of student learning.

In the context of classroom teaching and learning, various approaches, methods, techniques, and strategies used by teachers are a necessity to ensure that student learning mastery is effectively achieved. Therefore, every approach, method, technique, and strategy in the teaching and learning process should be effective for students so that learning can be clearly accepted. Therefore, teachers need to ensure that the strategies and methods of teaching used

are attractive and effective in the classroom, especially for students with different levels of development (Rusman, 2020). Therefore, a teacher needs to have the skills to teach a variety of students by using a variety of teaching strategies to ensure that learning objectives are achieved.

Based on the issues raised, the question is: how can primary school students be helped to improve Malay language learning techniques and enable them to master Malay language skills properly? Therefore, more practical teaching methods need to be introduced to help primary school students master the Malay language more easily and efficiently. This is important because the failure of primary school students to master Malay language skills can affect their mastery of learning in the classroom, and social skills in the real world cannot be practised properly.

4. Language Learning Strategies

Language Learning Strategies (LLS) play an important role in the Malay language learning process in the classroom to achieve the curriculum's goals. LLS uses a variety of principles, techniques, and approaches to meet the concept of integration in the National Philosophy of Education. LLS plays an important role in the room where its implementation is related to behaviour, steps, operations, or techniques used to help students master, store, and use the knowledge learned while learning a language (Oxford 1990; Wharton 2000). This is explained by Cohen (1999), who argues that LLS is a clear behaviour and mind that students use with a clear goal aimed at improving knowledge and understanding of the target language. Meanwhile, Embi (2000) explains that LLS is a specific step or action taken by students to facilitate the acquisition, storage, recall, and use of information to make learning easier, faster, and fun, build self-esteem, be active, and make it easy to move to a new environment.

There are individual differences in learning and mastering a language that is influenced by various factors in the learning process (Abkahorn, 2008). According to Chamot (1993) and Oxford & Nyikos (1989), language learning strategies are a factor that began to focus research. This is also approved by Cook (2001), Ehrman, and Oxford (2003), who state that LLS-related research can change the teaching and learning process to be more effective. According to Tarone (1983) and McLaughlin (1987), the language acquisition module consisted of three factors, namely language learning strategies, production strategies, and communication strategies, but Ellis (1994), in his studies on the process of language acquisition, has given LLS priority as an element in the career framework. Therefore, mastery of the Malay language is very important for students to meet the needs of real-life skills and applications. Therefore, learning strategies need to be mastered by teachers so that students can apply their learning in real life.

Literature analysis on LLS shows that the use of LLS has a positive impact on student learning and mastery of the language. The findings of several LLS studies have found that excellent language students are more efficient and use LLS more when learning languages than weak language students (Bruen 2001; Wharton 2000; Mahamod, 2004). In fact, there are several

other LLS studies (Logan & Moore 2004; Rivera-Mills & Plonsky, 2007; Woodrow, 2005) that found that LLS is easy to transfer and teach to other language students; the strategies used by excellent language students are shown to be weak language students. This means that weak students are able to enhance their proficiency in the language they learn through training using excellent language learning strategies. One of the language learning strategies, especially in the Malay language, is the use of thematic approaches. The thematic approach is a certain learning strategy contained in the comprehensive Malay language curriculum.

5. Learning Malay Thematically

Thematic learning is an integrated method of learning for students in the classroom (Trianto 2013) based on certain themes that are contextual to the real world of students. Meanwhile, learning Malay through thematic learning can incorporate subjects, skills, and knowledge into the teaching and learning process in the classroom. Mamat *et al.*, (2005) explain that thematic learning is a requirement in today's learning: first, the thematic approach shapes old-fashioned (teacher-centered) paradigm changes; second, thematic learning is a learning approach that can be tailored to the development and tendencies of various school students; third, the thematic approach is able to incorporate various perspectives and be interdisciplinary in understanding a particular theme that helps students think in a lot of directions; fourth, the thematic approach encourages students to understand real and contextual discourse; Fifth, the thematic approach demands the application of varying learning methods. Therefore, the themes contained in the Malay language curriculum can be thoroughly implemented using thematic approaches that can produce students who are knowledgeable, skilled, and self-learned.

Malay language learning through thematic learning can be developed to achieve learning goals that meet the needs of students and for many other purposes. Directly, thematic learning can enhance the understanding of the concepts learned more meaningfully. In addition, the thematic approach can develop knowledge and skills by using and utilising the information received (Prastowo, 2019). Therefore, students will be positive about learning that meets their needs in knowledge and life and creates high social skills. Positive learning effects can enhance high learning desire and increase your interest in exploring knowledge through the learning process.

Thematic learning has an advantage over conventional learning. According to Rusman (2020), there are six excellences in thematic learning compared to conventional learning: the first is experience and activities relevant to the development and needs of students; the Second, is the implementation of learning activities based on student interest and needs; the third, learning activities that are more meaningful and effective for students; fourth, helping to develop student thinking skills; fifth, providing pragmatic learning activities that fit the problems of daily life; and sixth, developing student social skills such as cooperation, tolerance, and communication. Thus, the thematic learning process provides students with mastery of learning objectives while providing them with real-life experiences. Therefore, a systematic learning process through effective learning strategies can be holistic for students.

6. Module Development and Usability Framework

This framework is essentially built to ensure that the thematic modules in the teaching and learning of Malay language skills (Thematic modules T&L MLS) are as smooth as planned. Various steps are identified consisting of two main components, namely intruding design and thematic modules, in teaching and learning Malay language skills.

This framework is essentially built to ensure that the thematic modules in the teaching and learning of the primary school skills developed can be implemented smoothly as planned. The identified steps consist of two main components, namely intrusion design and thematic modules in teaching and learning primary school skills. The components of the instruction design are phases that show the methods that need to be followed in the entire implementation process of developing and evaluating the usefulness of the module. Meanwhile, the components of the thematic module in teaching and learning primary Malay language skills include items that are the source of the basic information needed to build and evaluate the usefulness of the modules based on the phases set out in the instruction design. Instruction design within the conceptual framework is modified from the ADDIE Model (Gagne *et al.* 2005), which consists of three phases: the need analysis phase, the design phase, the development phase, the implementation phase, and the evaluation phase. Qualitative data collection is used in three main phases based on the Addie model. Different methodologies are used in each phase for data collection purposes.

In the context of this study framework, there are three phases used in the study process, and each phase has different objectives and methodologies. Siraj *et al.*, (2020) state that the product development process in the design and development of modules involves several phases, and each phase uses different methodologies for data collection purposes. Therefore, the development and usability framework of this mode uses the concept of ADDIE model, involving three main phases reported, and the research process is not carried out simultaneously but in phase sequence.

According to Klein (2014), the development and usability of modules that use the design and development study forms include studies whose conclusions can be generalised and contextualised. The advantage is that it can provide the basis and indication of the development of research in similar fields, although the study summary is a derivative of certain projects and contexts. This framework is best used to solve complex educational problems and develop knowledge.

Therefore, the process of developing the module in this study was systematically conducted and reported in three main phases for more planned and organised research. In this framework, the study methodology is designed and developed based on the objectives of the study phase. Therefore, each phase of the study has the study participants, the location of the study, the data collection methods, the instruments, and different data analyses.

6.1 The Needs Analysis Phase

The first phase is to analyse the need that determines the selection of information sources that are fundamental to the module. This phase is carried out to identify the target audience and

development requirements of the module. The main target is the primary school teacher who teaches Malay language skills. The identification of this target is important as the modules developed will be used by primary school teachers as a thematic language teaching and learning module. The information obtained at this level is used as a guide to the formation of the Malay language teaching and learning strategies in the modules developed, as well as the basics of the need to develop the module. The information obtained is used to determine the appropriateness of teachers teaching thematics based on primary school skills according to the Primary School Standard Curriculum (KSSR).

A needs analysis was done to identify the causes of the common problems (Morisson *et al.* , 2011; Branch 2009; Gagne *et al.*, 2005) and do something to solve them (Reinbold, 2013). The information obtained from the needs analysis is very useful in determining the type of teaching that meets the teacher's needs and determining the content of the module in the development phase. Gagne *et al.*, (2005) explain the need for analysis phases to provide important information in the design and development of intruding materials for the next phase. Siraj *et al.* (2020) Describe the need for an analysis of the requirements to determine and identify the module requirements to be produced before the module is developed and evaluated in the next phase.

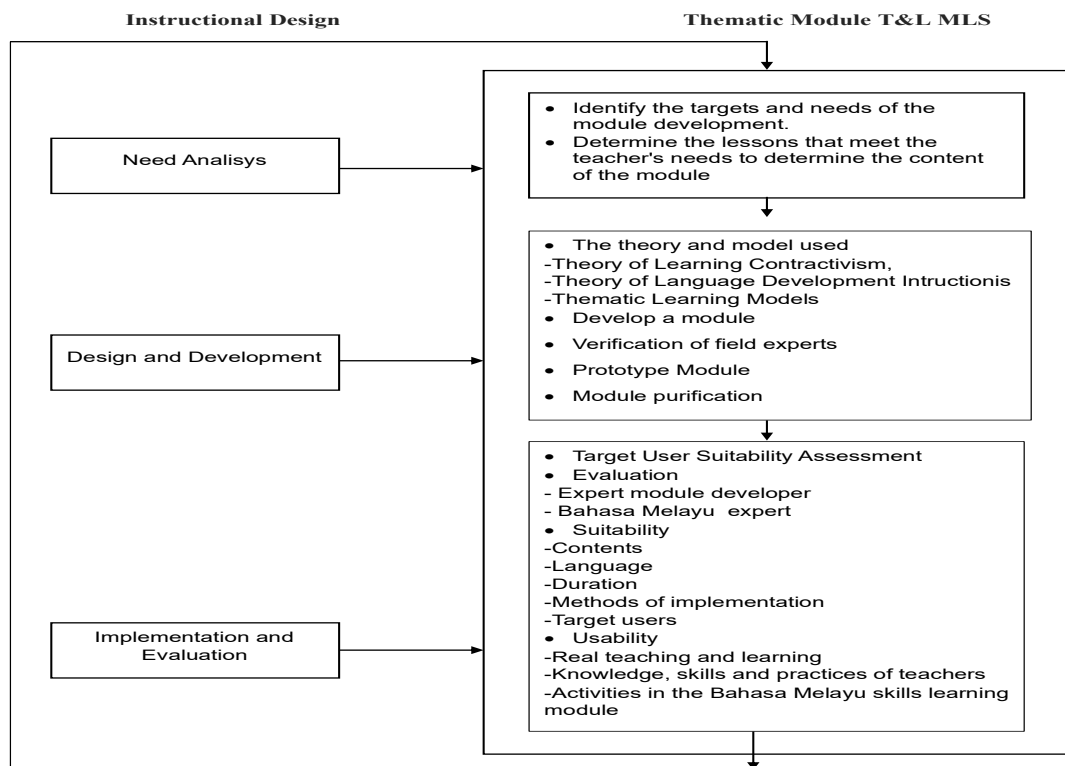


Figure 1. Development Framework and Use of Thematic Modules in Teaching and Learning Primary School Skills, Modified from the ADDIE Model (Gagne et al. 2005)

During the analysis phase, semi-structured interview methods are used to obtain qualitative data. A structured, semi-structured interview protocol containing interview questions to obtain data that can answer the study objectives. In this framework, 10 primary school teachers were selected as study participants from different schools to interview. This is in line with Van Den Akker's (1999) statement that respondents in the development study are usually smaller than the selection of respondents in other studies.

6.2 Module Design and Development Phase

The design and development phase are implemented after the need analysis phase, which is a source of information or backbone planning in the process of designing the module. This phase involves the details of the activities that need to be carried out in the process of designing the module so that the modules developed meet the learning objectives as desired. The design phase provides a problem-solving proposal for the problems raised. Therefore, this phase is considered the most critical in the production of the product, as stated by Van Den Akker (1999), (a) a product, whether a model, curriculum, and so on, is very related to education, (b) the development and construction of a product have scientific and practical value for education as well as through the theories that can be backed up, and (c) the design and development of a product are capable of strengthening and developing teaching and learning practises in education.

Key activities in the design and development phase of this module are based on the theory and model consisting of (a) the theory of learning constructivism, (b) the theory of interactional language development, and (c) thematic learning models. Designing and developing a process of teaching and learning based on the Malay language curriculum is one of the most important processes in designing and developing modules, as the teaching patterns can be determined by users. These theories and models are closely related to the teaching and learning strategies of the Malay language that use the thematic approach taught to students. Theory of Learning: Constructivism Piaget (1962), the theory of the development of Vygotsky interactions (1978), and the thematic learning models developed by Trianto (2010) were applied to explain the teaching and learning strategies of the Malay language. The results (1) focused on student mental processes while accessing, acquiring, acquiring, processing, and reusing the knowledge or information learned, as well as (2) emphasised the role of interaction between individuals or groups and the role of teachers in the student learning process. Rickey and Klein (2007) stated that these theories are widely used in the development and study of knowledge-based instruction materials.

The design and development phase are part of the process of research and development, which involves the process of preparing intruding materials. This development phase looks at the preparation of instructional materials that will be used in classroom learning (Gagne *et al.*, 2005; Reinbold, 2013). The specialist will ensure the accuracy of the content of the modules developed in this phase, and the draught module will be evaluated by the expert. This is clearly stated by Karnain (2020), in which the development phase involves the determination of draught preparation, types of learning activities, content review, and module purification. This phase involves the objective of the study, which is to develop and evaluate the content of the

thematic T&L module for primary school skills.

This second phase is a development process that involves three stages: (a) the preparation of a module draught; (b) expert review; and (c) the validity of the module content. This phase involves formative evaluation, which involves assessing the content of the module to determine its weaknesses and make improvements to the modules produced. Therefore, the preparation of a draught module to meet this purpose is based on four main sources: (a) requirements analysis data; (b) theory and model (c) Literature Study, and (d) Curriculum Review The draught module is produced in seven steps: (a) designing and designing modules; (b) determining the objective of the module; (c) writing and developing the content of the module; (d) selecting themes; (e) developing specific activities and objectives for each activity; (f) developing student assessment materials; and (g) providing the module layout.

The draft module is produced because the module is still raw and has not been reviewed and evaluated. Expert reviews involve reviewing the draught module by field experts to find out the strengths and weaknesses of the module. Usually, this review is performed in the early stages of formative assessment during the content of the module at the raw level (Richey and Klein 2007). Gagne *et al.* (2005) explained that one of the activities in the process of intruding materials was an expert assessment of the field to see the accuracy of the content of the module after the draught module was produced.

Morisson *et al.* (2011) and Tessmer (1993) stated that expert reviews are a form of intrinsic assessment to evaluate traction materials in terms of content accuracy and technical quality. In addition, expert evaluation of the variety of suggestions provided can help the researcher make improvements to modules. Therefore, the suggestions provided by experts can enrich the contents of the module, in which field experts are individuals with knowledge, expertise, and experience in certain fields. This is explained by Van Der Akker (1999): experts make modules more robust based on meaningful suggestions and rich information provided.

The development and use of this module used expert reviews involving eight field experts who are study participants to review the accuracy of the content of the modules produced. The selected experts are individuals with knowledge of theory and practicality that makes them specialise in the materials they are developing.

6.3 Implementation and Evaluation Phase

The third phase of the development and usability of this module is the implementation and evaluation phase, which occurs after the module is certified for its content resolution as well as through the purification process in the design and development phases. In the phase of implementation and evaluation, modules are tested for their usability based on implementation and evaluation in real classroom teaching and learning situations. Gagne *et al.* (2005) stated that there are two types of additional implementation and evaluation phases: (a) while the material is still in the process of development, known as a pilot test or field test, and (b) evaluation after the material is completed.

In the implementation and evaluation phases, there are three objectives of the study: (a) evaluating the usability of modules in actual teaching and learning; (b) evaluating modules of

teacher knowledge, skills, and practises after using modules; and (c) evaluating the usability of activities in modules that help primary school students learn Malay language skills.

A qualitative approach was used in this study in the implementation and evaluation phases to answer all three research questions. To obtain qualitative data, the methods used in this study are teacher observation, teacher interview, teacher reflection, student observation, and student interview. The methods of observation in this study will use a video recorder to record T&L observations in the classroom. Tessmer (1993) states that video recording and observation are useful methods of collection to see how intruding materials are used in the process of intruding material development. This is reinforced by Branch's (2009) statement that qualitative data can be obtained to obtain information about students studying in the target group. Observations and interviews used in qualitative studies are commonly used methods (Nolan et al. 2013).

Module development is a teaching and learning module. Therefore, data collection in this phase is necessary to meet the objectives of the group of study participants, including teachers and primary school students. Two teachers will be selected for the implementation of this study who will implement the T&L in the actual classroom, both from different schools. The selection of both teachers is intended to be based on the criteria of the teacher implementing the curriculum. Richey and Klein (2007), Siraj *et al.* (2020), and Tessmer (1993) stated that the selection of the best subjects in field testing is a truly interesting subject with the full desire to try new teaching methods without the need for other goals such as ensuring that their teaching needs to be successful or otherwise.

The study participants also involved students selected for the purpose of the MOE primary school, where the student was taught by the teacher selected in this study. This study will select four students after using modules in the two selected schools. Here, the module usability assessment will use two students from each different class to obtain research data. According to Tessmer (1993), the assessment involving children as the subject of the study is usually small, and not all students in the classes can be subjected to it.

Overall, the framework is built in the form of a three-phase cycle that connects one phase to the next. The process in each phase can be repeated if the findings obtained from the evaluation phase indicate that the modules developed are not in accordance with the objectives and goals set. Figure 1 describes the framework discussed.

7. Conclusion

Malay language education among primary school students is important to ensure high language proficiency. In addition, learning the Malay language can enhance the knowledge, skills, and values learned by primary school students. In addition, the study of the development and usability of the thematic modules in Malay language skills is expected to help explain the methods that can be used as an alternative to enhancing the Malay language learning strategy. Through the thematic approach, a potential language teaching strategy is optimally applied to ensure that the teaching and learning process is more effective, dynamic, and fun.

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Mr. Zainuddin Wahono was responsible for the study design, data collection and revision. Prof. Dr. Zamri Mahamod drafted the manuscript. Ts. Dr. M. Khalid M. Nasir revised the manuscript. All authors provided ideas in writing the manuscript, reviewed and approved the final

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