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Research Paper

Language Shaming on YouTube: Linguistic Features, Themes, and Social Implications

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Abstract

Language shaming is a prevalent issue in Malaysia, particularly in the online sphere, where English language speakers often face targeted discrimination due to linguistic imperialism and misconceptions. This study aimed to identify the linguistic features and themes underlying language shaming practices and assess the awareness of Malaysian adults and YouTube users regarding this issue. The study combined content analysis of 240 YouTube comments exported using YouTube API and a survey of 100 respondents using qualitative and quantitative approaches. The statements were categorized based on speech acts by Searle and were, further, classified according to Rezvan et al.'s (2018) 5 types of Internet harassment. Findings reveal a significant number of statements classified as expressive speech acts, primarily falling into categories such as intellectual harassment, followed by racial harassment, appearance-related harassment, and political harassment. The analysis also uncovers instances of offensive language shaming directed at public figures in YouTube comments, whereas responses from the survey revealed that a number of Malaysians engage in shaming other YouTube users using derogatory terms and phrases. The study suggests that promoting awareness and a sense of responsibility among Malaysians can help overcome this social issue. Addressing language shaming can create a more inclusive society and prevent individuals from being marginalized based on their language proficiency.

Keywords: Language Shaming; Speech Act Theory; Internet Harassment; YouTube; Linguistic Imperialism.

1. Introduction

Social media has revolutionized the way we communicate, connect, and share information. Thanks to technological advancements, platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter have become an integral part of our daily lives, especially for digital natives—young people who have grown up with technology. The numbers are staggering; 93.3% of Malaysian Internet users have social media accounts, and the trend is only increasing (Statistics Department of Malaysia, 2020). The appeal of social media lies in its ability to break down barriers and connect people from all corners of the world, facilitating knowledge exchange and idea sharing. However, with great power comes great responsibility, and the dark side of social media may manifest in the form of cyberbullying.

Cyberbullying, as defined by Feijio et al. (2021), is a form of bullying that takes place using digital means, such as social media. Unfortunately, the rise in social media users has also been accompanied by an increase in cyberbullying cases. This is concerning as cyberbullying can have severe mental health implications for victims, leading to depression, anxiety, and even suicide (Shahidatul et al., 2020). Moreover, cyberbullying is challenging to address as the anonymity feature of social media platforms allows perpetrators to hide their identities, leading them to believe they are not responsible for their actions (Baccarella et al., 2018; Shahidatul et al., 2020). While social media have transformed the way we communicate, it is essential to recognize the negative impact it can have. As cyberbullying becomes increasingly prevalent, it is crucial to address this issue and protect the well-being of social media users.

Sharma (2014) states that the YouTube platform has become a discursive platform² for cyberbullying practices. Instead of focusing on the content of the video, in general, the comment sections have become a battlefield for Internet users to harass others or individuals who appeared in the video publicly. Sharma (2014) points out the simplicity and



speed of creating new YouTube accounts, which can be misused for harassment. This ease of account creation enables users to engage in language shaming by quickly sourcing videos from various platforms for negative purposes. Language shaming, which this study considers as part of cyberbullying practices, is a rising phenomenon that thrives on the YouTube platform (Piller, 2017; Sharma, 2014; Tan, 2019). Fundamentally, it is a practice that demeans and disparages an individual's way of using a language (Piller, 2017). Language shaming on YouTube often targets individuals because of their language use, including elements such as accents, pronunciations, grammar, and lack of vocabulary knowledge (Nguyen, 2019; Sharma, 2014). Baccarella et al. (2018) describe cyberbullying practices ranging from masquerading as someone on social media, Internet trolling, spreading fake news, and privacy abuse. In addition, Smith et al. (2008) also point out that a new form of cyberbullying may emerge in tandem with the advancement of technology. Furthermore, cyberbullying by harassing an individual for their lack of English competency is known as language shaming (Piller, 2017). She defines language shaming as a practice that derides particular ways of using language. This phenomenon often occurs among individuals who speak a nonstandard variety of a language, such as speaking accented English, lacking grammar competency, and lack of vocabulary. Piller (2017) observes that language shaming can harm not only the targeted individuals but also observers and the perpetrators. Such practices can lead to decreased self-esteem among those shamed, particularly affecting their confidence in using English and potentially deterring them from engaging in English communication.

In recent years, the widespread use of social media in Malaysia has brought with it the unfortunate rise of cyberbullying. With the anonymity that the Internet provides, offenders are able to attack individuals without fear of recognition, leading to devastating consequences for their victims. Research has shown that cyberbullying victims are at risk of developing depression, and in extreme cases, suicide (Beng & Hua, 2019). Cyberbullying often involves the use of derogatory and hurtful language towards individuals, with motivations ranging from a desire for anonymity, a lack of empathy for the victims, and the pursuit of personal pleasure through harassing others. The issue of cyberbullying is particularly severe in Malaysia, where individuals who lack English proficiency often face language shaming on social media platforms such as YouTube (Tan, 2019). Iconic Malaysians, including athletes, celebrities, and politicians, have become frequent targets of such harassment due to their visibility in the media. Despite the prevalence of language shaming on the Internet, it has received relatively little attention in sociolinguistic studies, particularly in the Malaysian context where empirical research on the topic is scarce (Piller, 2017; Shahidatul et al., 2020). To promote a healthy online community, civil society in Malaysia must be made aware of the implications of language shaming practices. As such, this study seeks to develop a better understanding of language shaming by examining its linguistic features and themes and exploring the perspectives of Malaysian YouTube users on this important social issue. Specifically, this study will address the following questions:

1. What linguistic features and themes are commonly used in language shaming practices on YouTube in Malaysia?
2. How do Malaysians perceive language shaming on social media, particularly on the YouTube platform?
3. What are the implications of language shaming practices for individuals and society in Malaysia?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Technology and Social Media

As we continue to advance technologically, it is no surprise that traditional writing methods have been replaced with digital devices. From computers to mobile phones, digital writing has become the norm in our modern era (Dingli & Seychell, 2015). For those who grew up immersed in technology, being comfortable with modern information technologies and gadgets is second nature, earning them the moniker of 'Digital Natives' (Prensky, 2001; Sadiku et al., 2017). In Malaysia, social media has become an integral part of people's lives, with a staggering 93.3% of Internet users having social media accounts as of December 2020 (Statistics Department of Malaysia, 2020). With platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, TikTok, Twitter, and YouTube, individuals can reconnect with old acquaintances and share photos and videos with ease (Baccarella et al., 2018; Shahzadi & Kausar, 2021). Social media has transformed the way we communicate and share information, breaking down barriers and connecting people from all corners of the world.

Although social media has facilitated communication and connected people from different parts of the world, it has also created a space for negative experiences such as cyberbullying and language shaming (Baccarella et al., 2018; Shahidatul et al., 2020). In this study, language shaming is defined as the act of denigrating a person's language ability through demeaning and degrading words towards someone who is perceived to lack language proficiency, particularly in English (Piller, 2017). This practice is prevalent on social media, where the anonymity of the offenders provides them with a sense of security, making them fearless in committing such acts (Baccarella et al., 2018; Shahidatul et al., 2020). YouTube has become a platform for language shaming, as commenting on videos is easy and fast, thanks to the technological advancements that enable instantaneous communication (Nguyen, 2019; Sharma, 2014).

This research investigated language shaming practices on YouTube and explored the linguistic features and themes of language shaming in English and Malay. It also aimed to understand Malaysian YouTube users' perspectives on language shaming and their awareness of this social issue. By conducting this study, we hope to increase awareness and create a supportive environment on social media platforms by addressing language shaming practices.

2.2. Cyberbullying and Language Shaming

The proliferation of social media platforms has contributed to a corresponding increase in cyberbullying cases (Baccarella et al., 2018; Marciotto & Miranda 2022; Shahidatul et al., 2020). Feijóo et al. (2021) characterize cyberbullying as a type of bullying executed via technological means, with distinct features when compared to traditional bullying. The most distinguishing feature of cyberbullying is its anonymity, which allows perpetrators to hide behind their screens and create anonymous accounts to attack victims (Baccarella et al., 2018). These attacks include masquerading as someone on social media, Internet trolling, spreading fake news, and violating privacy (Baccarella et al., 2018). Rezvan et al. (2018) studied Internet harassment and created a tweet corpus with five forms of harassment content, including sexual, racial, appearance-related, intellectual, and political. They also developed a lexicon of offensive words specific to each type of content. However, the distinctive nature of language, which can be manipulated using two languages simultaneously or represented in symbols such as emoticons, emojis, abbreviations, and Internet slang, makes it difficult for researchers to detect potentially harmful words or phrases (Rezvan et al., 2018).

Language shaming, which this study considers as one form of cyberbullying, is defined as the derision or disparagement of particular ways of using language. It is a form of online harassment that individuals who are deemed nonproficient in English can experience (Piller, 2017). Language shaming falls within the broader category of cyberbullying, which encompasses various forms of online harassment. It shares common characteristics with other cyberbullying behaviors, such as anonymity, power imbalances, and psychological harm inflicted on the victims. Language shaming can cause significant emotional distress, feelings of inferiority, and low self-esteem, similar to other cyberbullying experiences (Piller, 2017; Sharma, 2014). Speakers of nonstandard varieties often experience this linguistic attack because their language usage is perceived as sloppy, ignorant, or backward (Porrás, 2022). Language shaming occurs because of language ideology that favors native-like accents of English, with some scholars referring to this ideology as native-speakerism (Porrás, 2022; Tan, 2017). For instance, in the Philippines, speaking nonstandard English is referred to as 'Carabao English' (Porrás, 2022). Lippi-Green (2012) found that individuals who speak accented English in the United States experience language shaming, particularly individuals who do not speak English as their native language. Her research shows that nonstandard English is often viewed as inferior to standard English, which is widely associated with the Anglo-Western world. Similarly, in Singapore, the government enforces language shaming towards Singaporean English speakers, also known as Singlish (Young, 2017). The government initiated the Speak Good English Movement in the year 2000 to promote the use of internationally accepted, standardized English. However, the SGEM policy has been controversial and largely unsuccessful (Young, 2017).

When nonnative English speakers are subjected to language shaming, it can have a profound impact on their ability to communicate effectively. In fact, according to Porrás (2022), individuals who experience language shaming often feel inhibited and self-conscious, which can make it incredibly difficult for them to express themselves in English. Liyanage and Canagarajah (2019) echo this sentiment, pointing out that those who have been shamed may feel humiliated and less motivated to use English due to their fear of being shamed again. What's even more troubling is that language shaming seems to be an all-too-common occurrence in societies that hold native-speakerism in high regard. Despite the negative effects it can have on individuals, there has been little effort to address this social issue. As Tan (2019) notes, in Malaysia, for example, some individuals are so accustomed to language shaming that they may not even be aware of how

harmful their behavior can be. This research uncovered language shaming examples through words like "disgrace," "disgusting," and "shameful" from post #22, and insults to intelligence in "What a clown ... She should have invested in brains programming rather than below neck" from post #33. Additionally, the use of profanity such as "fucker" in post #210 showcases a direct, aggressive attack, all contributing to a harmful online environment. By shining a light on this problem and working to create a more inclusive environment, nonnative speakers can be encouraged to feel more at ease when communicating in English, helping to break down the barriers that language shaming creates.

2.3. YouTube as a Discursive Platform for Language Shaming Practices

In recent years, YouTube has become a breeding ground for language shaming and cyberbullying, as highlighted by various scholars in their research. According to Sharma (2014), YouTube has become a discursive platform for language shaming practices, where users reproduce and critique dominant ideologies of race and language. Leppänen and Häkkinen (2012) also point out that YouTube offers participatory opportunities and identity repertoires to its users, making it an intriguing site for studying language identities and ideologies. This dynamic has been observed in cases such as the Nepali Minister of Health and Development's speech at the UN and the previous Miss Vietnam's English proficiency, both of which were subjected to ridicule and criticism on YouTube.

Nguyen's (2019) research on the language shaming of Miss Vietnam further highlights the anonymity factor that contributes to cyberbullying on YouTube. Many perpetrators of language shaming are emboldened by the fact that they can hide behind fake accounts and leave hateful comments without fear of consequences. This is made easier by the fact that anyone can create a YouTube account for free without any authorization from the platform. Baccarella et al. (2018) also note this issue, stating that the ease of account creation on YouTube is often exploited by cyberbullies who create multiple fake accounts to spread their hate.

Moreover, Sharma (2014) highlights the fact that YouTube's unique feature of entextualization, which allows discourse to be extracted from its original context and re-inserted into a new context, contributes to the problem of language shaming. Videos are often uploaded with controversial titles to attract views, and the discourse is then changed to become a platform for language shaming. Lingam and Aripin (2016) further emphasize the view that YouTube's comment section is a platform for hate speech and online abuse, as not all comments received by the video uploader are constructive feedback. The anonymity feature of YouTube offers various advantages, but it also facilitates users in creating accounts to post negative comments without revealing their true identity (Aiken & Waller 2000; Backgrounder, 2023; Levmore & Nussbaum 2010). Overall, the issue of language shaming and cyberbullying on YouTube is a complex problem that requires attention from both YouTube and its users.

2.4. Theoretical Framework of the Study

To address our research objectives, this study adopted Rezvan et al.'s (2018) framework, which outlines five categories of Internet harassment: sexual, racial, appearance-related, intellectual, and political, as depicted in Table 1. While language shaming traditionally might be expected to focus on perceived 'errors', accents, or unconventional expressions, our data reveals that, in practice, shamers often invoke broader themes of harassment. Specifically, when individuals are targeted for their language on platforms like YouTube, their appearance, political affiliation, and gender, among others, are frequently co-opted into the shaming process by the harassers. By applying Rezvan et al.'s framework, we aim to comprehensively capture the multifaceted nature of language shaming as observed in the Malaysian context on YouTube, indicating that it is not restricted merely to linguistic facets but extends to other personal attributes:

Table 1. *Typology of Internet Harassment (Rezvan et al., 2018).*

| | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Sexual Harassment | It normally affects sexuality and often aims at females. The harasser might denote a victim's sex organs with slang or depict sexual relations with slang. |
| Racial Harassment | It directs the victim's race and ethnicity qualities such as color, country, culture, faith and religion. |
| Appearance-Related Harassment | It is associated with body appearances such as hair style and looks. Fat shaming and body shaming are among its disparaging subtypes |
| Intellectual Harassment | It involves intellectual power or the merits of a person's judgment. Level of formal education and grammar are among its varieties. However, the victims may in fact be intellectually gifted. |
| Political Harassment | It concerns political views, and typical victims are mostly politicians and politically active individuals. |

The classification of speech acts plays a pivotal role in facilitating effective human communication, and it serves as a valuable tool for the researcher to determine the various types of harassment prevalent in language shaming practices. In this study, we adopted Searle's (1969) taxonomy, which encompasses five fundamental categories of speech acts. These categories are as follows: i) assertives, ii) directives, iii) commissives, iv) expressives, and v) Declaratives, as illustrated in Table 2. Classifying YouTube comments into these acts allows us to determine both the overt message and its intended function. This is crucial for identifying harassment, as it goes beyond the surface message to reveal underlying intentions, whether they are to assert, command, express, or declare.

Assertive speech acts express specific notions, propositions, or beliefs to the addressee, demonstrating a commitment to the conveyed information. For example, saying "I am at the office" is an assertive speech act. Directive speech acts prompt the addressee to take a specific action without requiring reciprocity. For instance, "Call me" is a directive speech act. Commissive speech acts involve commitments to future actions, such as "I will meet you at 3." Expressive speech acts express psychological states or emotions, like saying "I hate this kind of food." Declarative speech acts encompass effective and verdictive speech acts. Effective speech acts can impact institutional situations, such as a boss saying "You're fired!" verdictive speech acts involve judgments made by individuals with authority, like a referee calling "Offside!" despite a goal being scored:

Table 2. *Types of Speech acts*

| Speech Act | Properties of Speech Act | Examples |
|------------|---|---|
| Assertive | Statements of fact, getting the viewer to form or attend to a belief | “At the library,” “I have class until 5 today,” “I’m at the outside,” |
| Directive | The sender uses this to get the receiver to do something (i.e. a command) | “Call me,” “Pick me up at 8,” “Call her now” |
| Commissive | The sender commits himself to do something | “I’ll be back at 3,” “I’ll meet you at 7,” “I’m going to the gym later” |
| Expressive | Sender expresses feeling towards the receiver | “I hate this weather,” “School sucks,” “I love Fridays” |
| Effective | To change an institutional state of affairs | “You’re fired,” “Play ball,” “Chapter at 7 or you’re fined” |
| Verdictive | To determine what is the case in an institution | “I find him innocent,” “Goal!” |

Figure 1 provides a theoretical framework diagram to help readers visualize the combinations of the two theoretical frameworks used in this study as well as how the data would be obtained using the analytic approach.

Figure 1 shows how the study synthesizes two theoretical frameworks for analyzing the data. The process involves a combined analysis of YouTube comments and survey data, categorized according to Speech Act theory. A particular emphasis is placed on identifying insulting remarks—an expression within the category of expressive speech acts. These are further examined through the lens of the five identified types of Internet Harassment: sexual, racial, appearance-related, intellectual, and political. Integrating these two theoretical frameworks enabled the researcher to categorize the various themes of language shaming and uncover the underlying motivations for such behavior among Malaysians on the Internet.

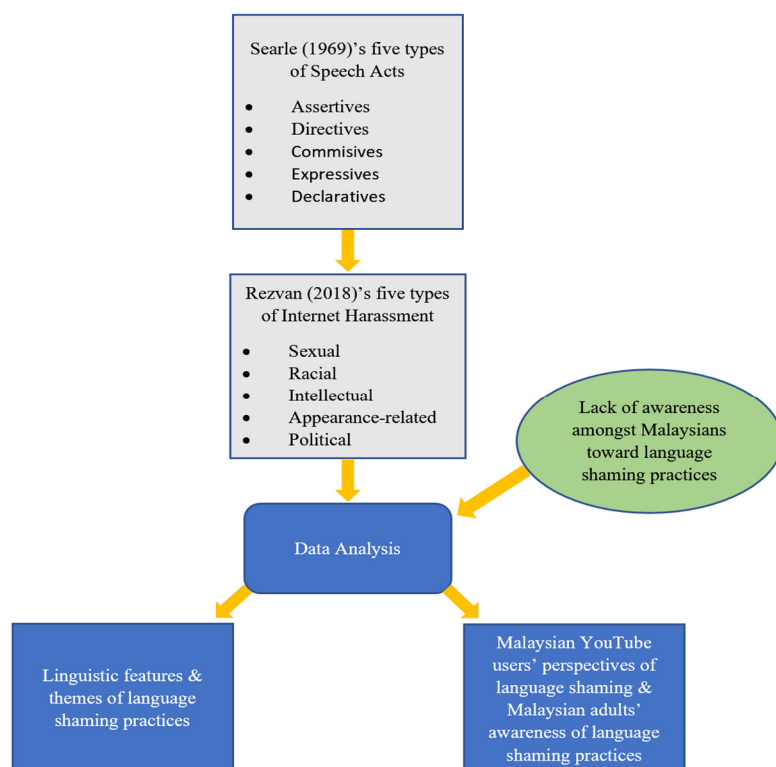


Figure 1. Theoretical Framework of the Study

3. Methodology

A mixed-method approach was used to investigate the prevalence of language shaming practices in Malaysia and their impact on individuals. The study involved content analysis of YouTube comments and an online survey to explore Malaysian adults' awareness of this issue. This investigation analyzed the discourse surrounding Malaysian Ministers' speeches in English on YouTube, employing content analysis to systematically categorize users' comments for themes of language shaming. To enrich the analysis, a survey of 100 individuals was conducted. By investigating both user comments and survey responses, the study identified key linguistic indicators of language shaming and the underlying attitudes towards such behavior. The incorporation of both qualitative (language analysis) and quantitative (survey data) methodologies facilitated a triangulation of findings. Content analysis, in this context, involved a detailed coding process that breaks down text into manageable categories based on specific themes, which, for this study, revolved around instances and perceptions of language shaming.

The first video clip which forms the target for our research into responses is of a Malaysian minister delivering a speech on television. The video became viral after a Malaysian singer posted a TikTok clip, pointing out the minister's mispronunciation of "doubt." This clip was extracted from a longer speech at the 59th UN Social Development Commission in New York. The original TikTok was closed to comments due to negative feedback, but it was later reposted on YouTube by Mstar, attracting 418 comments and highlighting the issue of language shaming. The second video features a former Malaysian Minister of Home Affairs speaking in English in Monaco, which drew online criticism for his pronunciation rather than the speech's content.

The comments provided insight into public perception of nonstandard English among public figures like politicians. Comments were collected from YouTube using API software, which organizes them by time of posting in an Excel spreadsheet and includes special features like emojis. Out of 477 comments downloaded between January and April 2022, 240 primary comments—excluding threaded replies—were chosen for analysis. The selection was limited to comments in English or a mix of English and Bahasa Melayu, omitting any in other languages. Furthermore, once extracted, these comments were sorted into relevant themes using deductive coding. Deductive coding utilizes a top-down approach, applying preselected codes to data and allowing for the coding framework to be adapted as the analysis

progresses (Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019). This flexibility permits the introduction of new codes to capture emerging themes not initially anticipated. Such an approach ensures a thorough examination of data and is responsive to emerging patterns. For this study, YouTube comments were systematically exported to Microsoft Excel and analyzed through a coding process, that combines two theoretical frameworks for in-depth analysis.

The analysis proceeded in two distinct stages: initially, comments were categorized according to speech act categories, as shown in Figure 2:

| D | E |
|--|---|
| 5 types of Speech Act | Comment |
| Expressive (insulting) | Next time, YB can teach her how to slim down. Don't be fat like her until nobody wants her. She's already old but she doesn't have a husband yet.... wakakaka. |
| Expressive (insulting) | Hai Adibah if you wanna correct someone's English pronunciation, you should have done it at school not by embarassing someone. You're a big fat liar. Pity that you're not beautiful. |
| Expressive (insulting) | Adibah needs to teach English to the minister but however she needs to learn how to slim down from the Minister. Hahaha |
| Expressive (insulting) | Please dm her how....to get ideal weight..... |
| | Adibah noor english translate :- |
| | Is Katak Air |
| Expressive (insulting) | Same isn't it .. 😏😏😏 |
| Expressive (insulting) | The singer must be jealous of her because she isn't slim yet. |
| Expressive (insulting) | The other day when Mat Sabu gave his speech, this singer didn't even bother to teach pronunciation. It was even worse! This must be a jealous case because she Rina Harun is already slim. 😏😏 |
| Expressive (insulting) | Eventhough it was a small mistake but she made a big fuss about it..phuii as if she was good!...it's better to be concerned over those who are not proficient in Malay. |
| Expressive (Insulting) and Directives (advising) | Good intention to teach but in the wrong place. The minister must felt ashamed. Dgn d viral kan lg. Better call her and open a class at home or in her office ... |
| Expressive (insulting) | U're clever but stupid |
| Expressive (insulting) | Did the minister really go to the U.S for her degree? |
| Expressive (insulting) | Oh My English..! 😏 |

Figure 2. First Coding Phase

The second coding stage shown in Figure 3 involves categorizing statements into five types of Internet Harassment which are sexual, racial, appearance-related, intellectual, and political harassment. Emerging themes outside of the aforementioned categories were also analyzed:

| C | D | E |
|--------------------------------|--|---|
| 5 types of Internet Harassment | 5 types of Speech Act | Comment |
| Appearance-related harassment | Expressive (insulting) | Next time, YB can teach her how to slim down. Don't be fat like her until nobody wants her. She's already old but she doesn't have a husband yet.... wakakaka. |
| Appearance-related harassment | Expressive (insulting) | Hai Adibah if you wanna correct someone's English pronunciation, you should have done it at school not by embarassing someone. You're a big fat liar. Pity that you're not beautiful. |
| Appearance-related harassment | Expressive (insulting) | Adibah needs to teach English to the minister but however she needs to learn how to slim down from the Minister. Hahaha |
| Appearance-related harassment | Expressive (insulting) | Please dm her how....to get ideal weight..... |
| | | Adibah noor english translate :- |
| | | Is Katak Air |
| Appearance-related harassment | Expressive (insulting) | Same isn't it .. 😏😏😏 |
| Appearance-related harassment | Expressive (insulting) | The singer must be jealous of her because she isn't slim yet. |
| Appearance-related harassment | Expressive (insulting) | The other day when Mat Sabu gave his speech, this singer didn't even bother to teach pronunciation. It was even worse! This must be a jealous case because she Rina Harun is already slim. 😏😏 |
| Politeness | Expressive (Insulting) + Directives (Advising) | Eventhough it was a small mistake but she made a big fuss about it..phuii as if she was good!...it's better to be concerned over those who are not proficient in Malay. |

Figure 3. Second Coding Phase

The deductive method allows for the incorporation of emerging themes beyond these categories, showcasing the flexibility of the deductive coding approach. Descriptive statistics were used to visually represent the frequency of language shaming themes, providing a clear and comprehensible presentation of the data for straightforward analysis (Rowley, 2014). The study also conducted an online survey through Google Forms to identify the linguistic features and themes of language shaming practices, as well as to explore Malaysian adults' awareness of this issue. The snowball sampling approach was used to distribute the questionnaires. To qualify as respondents in this research, individuals needed to be active users of the YouTube platform, irrespective of whether they posted videos or engaged through comments. This approach was selected due to the substantial number of YouTube users in Malaysia, focusing specifically on exploring language shaming practices within the Malaysian YouTube context. The questionnaire used in this study, titled *Cyberbullying Through Intellect* (Shahidatul et al., 2020), was adapted, ensuring its reliability and validity aligned with the research objectives. The questionnaire aimed to capture the participants' perceptions of language shaming practices and comprised two parts: Part A encompassing demographic questions, and Part B consisting of open-ended questions, where the participants shared the words or phrases they had encountered in shaming experiences. The utilization of open-ended questions in Part B facilitated the collection of comprehensive insights, allowing respondents to freely express their views on language shaming practices (Rowley, 2014). It should be noted that survey candidates had to be active users of the YouTube platform to qualify as respondents. Ethical considerations, including anonymity, informed consent, and privacy, were carefully considered throughout the research process. Combining the YouTube comments and questionnaire responses, a total of 390 statements were obtained.

Overall, the findings contribute to a better understanding of this social issue, which can inform policy and educational interventions to address language shaming practices in Malaysia. The study also demonstrates the value of using mixed-method approaches in investigating complex social issues, which allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the issue at hand.

4. Results and Discussion

This section presents a comprehensive analysis of the findings and implications of the investigation. The first part focuses on common linguistic features and themes of language shaming practices. The second part of the discussion examines the findings from the content analysis of YouTube comments. The third part presents the findings from the online survey, exploring Malaysian adults' awareness of language shaming practices and their impact. The discussion that follows provides insights into the implications of these findings for policy and educational interventions, as well as the limitations of the study and suggestions for future research.

4.1 Statistical Analysis of Language Shaming Themes

This subsection provides an overview of the findings, comprising a total of 390 statements derived from both YouTube comments and questionnaire responses. These statements have been categorized according to the five types of Internet Harassments and the five types of Speech acts. Table 3 presents statistical information pertaining to language shaming themes:

Table 3. *Statistics of Linguistic Features of Language Shaming Practices*

| Rezvan's Five Types of Internet Harassment (2018) | Speech Acts Theory by Searle (1969) | | | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|-----------|------------|------------|-------------|
| | Assertive | Directive | Commissive | Expressive | Declarative |
| i. Sexual | 0 | 0 | 0 | | 0 |
| ii. Racial | 0 | 0 | 0 | 17 | 0 |
| iii. Appearance | 0 | 0 | 0 | 17 | 0 |
| iv. Intellectual | 0 | 0 | 0 | 181 | 0 |
| v. Political | 0 | 0 | 0 | 30 | 0 |
| Emerging Themes | | | | | |
| vi. Politeness in Correcting Someone's Mistake in the Malaysian Culture | | 9 | | | |
| vii. Pronunciation Awareness | 15 | | | 38 | |
| viii. Language Ideology | 17 | | | | |
| ix. Lack of Awareness | 10 | | | | |
| Total | 42 | 9 | 0 | 290 | 0 |
| 341 statements (a balance of 49 comments fall under unaccounted statements) | | | | | |

The analysis reveals several significant findings. The most prevalent category among the statements is Intellectual harassment, with a total of 181 instances. Following closely is the Pronunciation Awareness theme, comprising 38 statements. Political Harassment is the third most prominent theme, with 30 statements. Notably, three categories, namely Racial Harassment, Appearance-Related Harassment, and Language Ideology, share an equal number of statements, each containing 17 instances. Further analysis of the speech acts reveals that the majority of statements fall under the Expressive speech act, totaling 290 instances. Within this category, the statements predominantly consist of Insulting remarks, followed by Compliments directed at the singer and expressions of Thankfulness towards the singer for raising awareness about pronunciation. The assertive speech act category encompasses 32 statements, focusing on challenges related to pronunciation and debates surrounding the role of Malay and English in Malaysia. Additionally, 9 statements fall under the directive speech act, criticizing the singer for publicly correcting Minister A's pronunciation. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that 49 statements could not be classified under any specific theme, indicating unaccounted perspectives within the data (examples in section 4.2).

4.2 Linguistic Features of Language Shaming Practice

In this section, we will be discussing common linguistic features that contribute to language shaming practices. These features were identified by analyzing the data and include as shown in Table 4 which provides a brief overview of the linguistic data:

Table 4. *Statistics of Linguistic Features of Language Shaming Practices*

| Category | Frequency | Percentage |
|--|-----------|------------|
| a) Code-switching and Code-Mixing | 75 | 19.2% |
| b) Onomatopoeia and Interjection | 30 | 7.69% |
| c) Netspeak Features (Abbreviation, Acronyms, and Initialisms) | 88 | 22.5% |
| d) Use of Visuals (Emoji, Emoticons and .gif) | 121 | 31% |
| e) Pragmatic Particle 'lah' | 15 | 3.84% |

Out of 390 statements after combining the YouTube comments and the questionnaire responses, 75 of them (19.2%) were found to include either code-switching or code-mixing. Table 5 displays some examples of such statements:

Table 5. *Code-Switching and Code-Mixing*

| Post Number | YouTube Comments/Questionnaire Responses |
|-------------|--|
| #136 | She's a Malaysian minister so of course she speaks Malay better than her English. <i>Semua orang kan buat silap.</i> |
| #159 | Maybe the minister <i>tu "tersasul"</i> . 😊 |
| #215 | If we asked him to repeat his speech, he'll <i>cakap Jawa pulak</i> ... |
| #254 | "better speak Malay, <i>cakap English pun berterabur</i> ." |
| #267 | " <i>tak payah try hard speak English kalau tak reti sebut</i> " |
| #274 | "stop speaking, your English <i>teruk</i> . <i>It's just bad</i> " |

Table 5 shows examples of code-switching and code-mixing used in the data. For instance, in post #136, the statement "*semua orang kan buat silap*" (everybody makes mistakes) includes code-switching between Malay and English. In post #159, the phrase "*tersasul*" (a slip of the tongue) also involves code-switching. Post #215 states "*cakap Jawa pulak*" (speaks Jawa instead), while post #254 says "*cakap English pun berterabur*" (speaks ungrammatical English). Post #267 suggests "*tak payah try hard speak English kalau tak reti sebut*" (don't try too hard to speak English if you can't pronounce), and post #274 uses "*teruk*" (horrible) followed by "*It's just bad*" in English through code-switching to emphasize the statement.

Malaysians frequently use code-switching and code-mixing during conversations to add more emphasis to their arguments or opinions (Philip et al., 2021). Bilingual or multilingual speakers may choose this option to persuade others by drawing attention to the code-switching practice. Moreover, code-switching is a marker of identity for Malaysians and has become part of their cultural schemata (Tan et al., 2018). As such, code-switching and code-mixing in Malaysia can indicate social groups and signify Malaysian identity. It is essential to note that language practices in a particular geographical area often reflect the identity and culture of the speakers themselves. Therefore, code-switching and code-mixing among Malaysians may provide insights into their cultural background and social identity (Tan et al., 2018).

We present examples of statements that utilize the linguistic features of Onomatopoeia or Interjection in the data. Out of all statements analyzed, 30 (7.69%) were found to use this feature, and a few examples are displayed in Table 6:

Table 6. *Use of Onomatopoeia or Interjection*

| Post Number | YouTube Comments/Questionnaire Responses |
|-------------|--|
| #32 | Adibah Noor.... <i>hahaha</i> I'm sure after this many Ministers are scared to speak in English in front of the camera. <i>Hahaha</i> |
| #40 | <i>Hooray</i> Malaysia Menteri Boleh 🤗 |
| #209 | Which version of English was he using? Too many sebutan that I didn't understand. 2,3x I repeat ² still couldn't understand <i>hehehe</i> |
| #264 | <i>Hahaha</i> funny the way you utter the word. If got angmoh (white people) sure they laugh one. |
| #296 | "This sad bitch speaks poor English <i>hahaha</i> ." |
| #371 | "Wow! She's so bad at speaking English!" |

Table 6 lists instances of onomatopoeia and interjection in comments that imply language shaming. Repeated expressions such as 'hahaha' or 'hehehe' noted in posts #32, #209, #264, and #371, typically signify laughter in online communication and, within the context of these posts, serve to ridicule the English language proficiency of others. The interjection 'hooray' in post #40, while generally denoting celebration, is employed sarcastically to deride a speaker. Moreover, the use of 'Wow!' in post #371, which conventionally indicates surprise, is repurposed here to mock rather than marvel at someone's command of English. These examples demonstrate that onomatopoeia and interjections, while harmless in many contexts, can be used as tools of language shaming in online discourse. This observation underlines the subtle ways in which language can be manipulated to shame individuals, a phenomenon that may not be readily apparent but is pervasive in online interactions.

The analysis identifies netspeak elements in 22.5% of the examined statements, highlighting their frequent use in online discourse. These features include abbreviations, acronyms, and initialisms, which stem from the need for concise communication in digital forums (Crystal, 2001). While their link to language shaming is not inherently evident, their presence reflects the evolving nature of informal online language. Table 7 below illustrates examples of netspeak features including abbreviations, acronyms, and initialisms found in the study.

Table 7. *Use of Netspeak Features (Abbreviations, Acronyms, and Initialisms)*

| Category | Post Number | YouTube Comments/Questionnaire Responses |
|----------------------|-------------|--|
| Abbreviation | #119 | English is not our native <i>lg.</i> so let it be <i>la</i> as long as ppl understand it. When I was abroad I spoke Australian English <i>tunggang langgang</i> (messy) but nobody laughed at me. |
| Abbreviation | #128 | Nobody's perfect and everybody makes mistakes. We may repeat the same mistake <i>bcz</i> we don't realise it. |
| Initialism & Acronym | #288 | In the form of sarcasm. e.g. the issue on 'ceiling' word on the Internet based on <i>YB</i> Minister of Health's tweet. He tweeted on the 'ceiling price' for <i>COVID-19</i> 's self-test kit. A Twitter user corrected him saying it's 'selling price' and not 'ceiling price.' The Internet's sensation on the issues was immense. I think people used to mock him for being too 'confident' of correcting others with the words like 'funny' or 'dummy.' |
| Initialism | #331 | Your English's terrible, better speak in <i>B.M.</i> |

Zaemah et al.'s (2013) study highlights the prevalence of netspeak, code-switching, and onomatopoeia among Malaysian students in online forums. Netspeak features are embraced for their efficiency and adaptability, reflecting the users' comfort with digital communication norms. However, it is important to note that such linguistic choices are not inherently shaming. The intent and context of the message are the true indicators of language shaming, which involves negative judgments or comments about someone's language proficiency. Thus, while abbreviations like 'lg.' for 'language', 'bcz' for 'because', or acronyms like 'YB' (Yang Berhormat) and 'BM' (Bahasa Melayu) are common online, they alone do not constitute language shaming unless used in a derogatory manner.

Out of the total of 390 statements analyzed, 121 statements included visuals. Among these visuals, the most frequently used types were as follows: i) The thumbs down emoji '👎' appeared 18 times, ii) The face with tears emoji '😭' was used 17 times, iii) The ROFL (Rolling on the floor) emoji '🤣' was present in 13 statements, iv) The grinning squinting face emoji '😏' was employed 10 times, v) The middle finger emoji '👉' (commonly known as the "fuck"

emoji) also had a frequency of 10 instances. These statistics highlight the observation that Internet users often incorporate visuals, such as emoticons, emojis, and gifs, as integral components of language shaming practices. These visuals contribute to the overall entertainment value by injecting humor into the communication process.

Next, we move on to the discussion of the Pragmatic particle '*lah*', a suffix widely used by Malaysians to add various connotations to their speech, like affirmation or exasperation. For example, '*No lah*' can express frustration, whereas '*Ok lah*' indicates agreement. In this dataset, '*lah*' appeared in 15 out of 390 youtube comments and questionnaire responses (3.84%) as a linguistic element in language shaming, as shown in Table 8. The meaning of this three-letter word can vary depending on the context, and it may serve as an affirmation, dismissal, exasperation, or exclamation. For instance, in the phrase "*No lah, I told you I didn't do that,*" the word '*lah*' expresses exasperation, while in a brief statement like '*Ok lah,*' it conveys an affirmative meaning. Out of 390, there are 15 statements (3.84%) that used the suffix '*lah*' as part of the linguistic strategy in language shaming practices which will be shown in Table 8:

Table 8. *Pragmatic Particle 'lah'*

| Post Number | YouTube Comments/Questionnaire Responses |
|-------------|---|
| #91 | Adibah Noor is excellent with her English undoubtedly, jgn pelik <i>lah</i> if she can teach the Minister |
| #118 | Language doesnt define intelligence <i>lah</i> . Stop the hatred, I'm worried many would follow this kind of thinking. 😊 |
| #126 | Malay tongue... Of course got Malay accent <i>lah</i> ... |
| #160 | It's fine because it's in English. If Bahasa Melayu then susah <i>lah</i> . |
| #256 | <i>Laaa</i> I thought my English is bad, but how come this Minister is even worse? I feel like learning Arabic so I can grab the Prime Minister position. |
| #266 | This kind of people can be minister ...means Malaysia kaput already <i>la</i> ...boleh land |

Table 8 displays the usage of the pragmatic particle '*lah*' in the statements. This distinctive feature is used exclusively by Malaysian English (Manglish) speakers, as evidenced by the 15 statements in this category. Manglish is a colloquial term referring to Malaysian English, which is a basilect version of Standard Malaysian English. The language is frequently used in informal contexts, although some speakers may use it due to their lack of proficiency in the language (Tan et al., 2018). As noted by Li et al. (2016), the pragmatic particle '*lah*' is a common feature used by Manglish speakers to emphasize a statement, reiterate it, or persuade others. Therefore, the data presented here suggest that the use of '*lah*' serves pragmatic functions while also signifying the speaker's Malaysian identity. This finding is in line with Li et al.'s (2016) conclusions. The data presented reinforces the notion that '*lah*' is a distinct feature that Manglish speakers intentionally utilize to signify their Malaysian identity and to convey their intended meaning more effectively.

4.3. Language Shaming Themes and Internet Harassment Types

In this analysis, we identified five primary themes within the context of online harassment: sexual, racial, intellectual, appearance-based, and political. The data show a common use of pejorative terms, with intellectual harassment being the most common, comprising 181 statements. These were mainly classified as expressive speech acts of insult, aiming to belittle or humiliate the subject. Commentary targeting a political figure, despite their likelihood of not engaging directly with the comments, contributes to a hostile online environment and can influence public opinion. Political harassment followed with 30 statements, while racial and appearance-related harassment was noted in 17 statements each. Sexual harassment was the least observed, with a count of 7 statements. These statistics underscore the widespread and multifaceted nature of online harassment, emphasizing the need for strategies to counter such behavior.

In one instance illustrating language shaming, a Malaysian singer's TikTok video, which corrected the English pronunciation of a Malaysian Minister, was shared. Although the original post was removed, it was re-uploaded by MStar, a Malaysian news agency and was met with a barrage of negative commentary regarding the Minister's English proficiency. Notably, while a portion of the comments endorsed the singer's actions, a significant number levied criticism against her, often employing disparaging language. Additionally, a subset of responses disapproved of the public method of correction, proposing that a private, more discreet approach would have been preferable. A second video features a former Malaysian Minister of Home Affairs speaking in English during an event in Monaco. Here, the focus of Malaysian

netizens' critique was on his pronunciation rather than the speech's content, reflecting a preoccupation with language proficiency over substantive dialogue.

Language shaming is visible through insulting remarks toward individuals who lack English competency and fail to adhere to society's expectations owing to the native-speakerism ideology held by societies (Tan, 2017; Porras, 2022). Furthermore, Azman et al. (2020) state that swearing words are used to express anger, dissatisfaction, and pain. Nevertheless, it carries the risk of being identified as rude and could cause tensions in communication. In the data, there were several recurring words and phrases used by Malaysians in expressing their dissatisfaction with either the Malaysian singer or the Ministers. For example, words that pertain to intellectual-related harassment such as '*dumb*,' '*foolish*,' and '*stupid*,' and words that pertain to appearance-related harassment such as '*fat*' and '*ugly*.' Such words and phrases are considered harsh and impolite to be used in conversations. The use of derogatory words or phrases can bring shame to an individual and is contrary to Malaysian culture, which values politeness in social interactions (Azman et al., 2020; Izadi 2022; Porras, 2022; Tan, 2017).

4.4. Malaysians' Perspectives on Language Shaming Practices

In the context of language shaming practices in Malaysia, this study uncovered a range of perspectives among Malaysians regarding the appropriateness of correcting others' language use in public. Out of the 62 comments analyzed on a YouTube video of a singer correcting Minister A's pronunciation, nine comments criticized the singer for publicly shaming the Minister. These comments expressed a belief in the importance of correcting others without causing embarrassment, in accordance with the notion of politeness discussed by Azman et al. (2020). On the other hand, 53 comments fell under the theme of pronunciation awareness, with 38 comments expressing gratitude to the singer for raising awareness about correct pronunciation and 15 comments highlighting the challenges faced by nonnative speakers in pronouncing English words. These comments suggest that there may be a lack of exposure to correct pronunciation in Malaysia, and that individuals may benefit from greater awareness and education on this topic. However, the study also found that some Malaysians associate English language proficiency with native-speakerism ideology. This was evidenced by statements that shamed others for their lack of English proficiency and considered it embarrassing if one failed to speak English. Such beliefs appear to stem from the expectation that individuals should speak English like a native speaker, as postulated by Tan (2019), and the risk of being shamed is higher if one fails to meet this expectation. Meanwhile, some YouTube comments highlighted the marginalization of the Malay language in Malaysian society, with more individuals switching to English. These comments emphasized the importance of being proficient in Malay and suggested that communicating in Malay was preferable to English. However, the choice of English over Malay may be perceived as an act of betrayal, as the Malay language is seen as the mother tongue of all Malaysians. This highlights the complex interplay between language, identity, and social norms in Malaysia.

Overall, the findings suggest a lack of awareness among Malaysians toward language shaming practices. Whereas some comments reflect a belief in the importance of politeness and respect in correcting others' language use, others highlight the prevalence of native-speakerism ideology and the importance of maintaining one's national identity through language use. These findings have implications for language education and social policies aimed at promoting linguistic diversity and inclusivity in Malaysia. The researcher identified four emerging themes based on the data findings: 4.4.1) politeness norms when correcting others in Malaysian culture, 4.4.2) heightened awareness of pronunciation, 4.4.3) language ideology, and 4.4.4) lack of awareness of language shaming practices.

4.4.1. Politeness Norms When Correcting Others in Malaysian Culture

Among the 240 YouTube comments analyzed, 9 comments (3.75%) were written in the directive (advice) speech act and fall under this category.

Table 9. *Politeness Norms When Correcting Others in Malaysian Culture*

| Post Number | YouTube Comments |
|-------------|--|
| #129 | Why keep attacking Rina Harun? Last time was bcuz of different case. There r many who can't pronounce well so_don't keep highlighting her mistakes only, <i>even if u make a video u shouldn't mention her name.</i> for me it's impolite. |

| | |
|------|--|
| #130 | If u want to correct the pronunciation, it's not wrong, but plz <i>don't need to tag or use that person's mistakes to teach others especially in public, you're just embarrassing her in public</i> If u were in her shoes, how would u feel? |
| #131 | Good this is all knowledge for us but <i>please don't make it public..</i> you're only making her feel embarrassed. Why don't you learn Islam instead,,learn how to cover your aurat. We are Malay, we have our own adat resam to correct people's mistake don't we. Apologies if my comment is hurtful. |
| #133 | The way you corrected her was wrong, <i>we have our own way of correcting others right. No need to jatuhkan reputasi dia..</i> Another thing it's not a big mistake. If we look at the person who corrected, she doesn't wear tudung. Oops sorry I have to point out. |
| #137 | She had the guts to correct the minister publicly! <i>Better if it's done personally, no need to be public.</i> I know you're teaching the netizens but please don't mention the Minister's name. The minister must felt so much shame. |

For example, post #129 suggests that the singer should not mention the Minister's name even if she makes a video correcting her pronunciation. Similarly, posts #130, #131, and #137 also criticized the singer's actions. In contrast, post #133 mentions the importance of not publicly shaming someone and using appropriate language when correcting others. This comment highlights the perceived impoliteness of publicly correcting someone's mistakes and its potential to damage their reputation. Therefore, albeit the numbers might be small with just 9 YouTube comments analyzed reveal that publicly pointing out someone's mistakes is considered inappropriate in Malaysian culture. Despite the limited count of only 9 YouTube comments, it remains crucial to address the issue at hand. The analysis of these comments highlights the fact that publicly highlighting someone's errors is deemed inappropriate within Malaysian culture as it may harm their reputation. This is particularly relevant in the case of the minister, who is a well-known figure in Malaysia, and whose proficiency in English may impact her reputation as a minister.

Azman et al. (2020) discuss the concept of impoliteness in Malaysian society and how publicly humiliating someone may threaten their positive face. The YouTube comments as shown in Table 9 suggest that it would have been more appropriate for the singer to correct the Minister privately, rather than publicly. This explains why the comments are written in the directive speech act, which is intended to advise the celebrity singer to correct someone privately. These comments may also serve a broader purpose. They appear to address the onlookers, implicitly outlining the norms valued by the commenter and appealing for solidarity with others who share the same views. However, no statements in the questionnaire responses were found concerning the topic of politeness in correcting others. In conclusion, the comments analyzed show that publicly correcting someone's mistakes is considered impolite in Malaysian culture, and it is suggested to provide corrections privately. The potential damage to a person's reputation is highlighted, particularly in the case of public figures such as the minister. These findings have important implications for how Malaysians communicate and how language is used to convey politeness and respect.

4.4.2 Heightened Awareness of Pronunciation

Among the 240 YouTube comments analyzed, 53 (22.08%) expressed gratitude towards the singer for raising awareness about pronunciation and acknowledging the difficulty of pronouncing English words. For instance, post #62 stated, "*apparently all this while I pronounced the word 'doubt' wrongly,*" followed by post #63, which stated, "*I believe the correction made was honest and sincere and it was just to educate us, not to mock or insult YB.*" Post #64 expressed, "*so apparently I salah sebut! All these while I sebut doubt but now I realize it was wrong!*" Post #101 mentioned, "*America has made a lot of their spelling in their dictionary. English is already confusing.*" Finally, post #102 questioned the unconventional spelling of some English words, suggesting that it contributes to the difficulty in pronouncing them. The comments indicate that not all of them aimed to shame the Minister's English proficiency. Instead, they emphasize the significance of learning how to pronounce correctly. Additionally, some comments acknowledge the challenges nonnative English speakers face in pronouncing English words accurately, as pronunciation errors could be influenced by their native language (Bello et al 2020).

4.4.3 Language Ideology

The content analysis of 240 YouTube comments reveals a strong language ideology favoring Malay over English in Malaysia. Comment #108 exemplifies this, questioning the choice of English for official discourse - "*Why do our Ministers speak in English and not Malay*". Post #111, "*I think it's better if we just uphold the Bahasa Malaysia language,*" argues for the primacy of Bahasa Malaysia, reinforcing its status as the national language. Posts #113 "*It should be the*

national language itself that needs to be mastered and perfected” and #115 “*More embarrassing if you stay in Malaysia but can't speak Malay*” echo this sentiment, advocating for proficiency in Malay as a foundational linguistic skill. Post #121 “*remember our national language is Malay!*” further accentuates the importance of Malay for national identity, urging against its marginalization. These comments reflect a perspective among some Malaysians who regard mastery of the national language as a marker of cultural and national integrity, potentially more critical than English proficiency. Indeed, past educational policies did prioritize English, especially up to the 1970s, when secondary education was predominantly English-medium. This historical context ensured a wide English-speaking population, even as Malay remained the lingua franca in homes and local communities.

However, subsequent policy shifts have repositioned English as a subject rather than the medium of instruction, aiming to strengthen the status of Malay language (Yamat et al. 2014). Currently, the Malaysian education system does emphasize Bahasa Malaysia, particularly following these changes, while also recognizing the importance of English as a global lingua franca (Rahman & Singh 2021). The government and educational authorities continue to grapple with balancing these linguistic priorities, aiming to foster bilingual or multilingual proficiency among Malaysians to maintain both national identity and global competitiveness.

4.4.4 Lack of Awareness

Ten responses acknowledged having engaged in language shaming on the Internet due to a lack of awareness of this social issue. For example, in response #381, the respondent admitted to shaming a friend in retaliation, stating, “*my friend shamed me first.*” Similarly, response #382 stated, “*I was immature before,*” and acknowledged harassing friends who used incorrect English vocabulary. Respondent #384 admitted to being a bully in an online game, mocking other gamers who misspelled English words. Additionally, responses #385 and #386 shared that they had been cyberbullied during their teenage years, citing a lack of understanding of politeness on the Internet. These responses shed light on the need for education and awareness-raising around cyberbullying and language shaming to prevent such harmful behaviors in the future.

5. Conclusion

This study suggests that language shaming, particularly regarding English proficiency, is an observable phenomenon in Malaysia, as evidenced by online interactions. Whereas the sample size may be limited, the comments analyzed indicate a tendency for critiquing language skills among Internet users, which could point to broader social attitudes towards English language use in the country. Further research with a larger sample size could provide more definitive conclusions about the prevalence of language shaming in Malaysia. The study identifies five themes of Internet harassment, with language shaming falling under intellectual and appearance-related harassment. Malaysians associate English language proficiency with native-speakerism ideology, leading to the shaming of those who do not speak English well. The study also identifies five distinct features used in language shaming practices, with visuals being the most common, followed by netspeak, code-switching and code-mixing, Onomatopoeia, and Interjections, and the Pragmatic particle ‘*lah.*’ The use of visuals, including emoticons, emojis, and gifs, was often combined with derogatory words or phrases to convey emotions or reactions. Malaysians were found to be proficient in using unique word forms, sentence structures, and expressions prevalent in netspeak features. Code-switching and code-mixing were commonly used to emphasize points, express sarcasm, or replace English vocabulary. Onomatopoeia and Interjections were also frequently used, with laughter used to downplay insults. The use of the Pragmatic particle ‘*lah.*’ was another distinct feature of Malaysian English, commonly used to emphasize, reiterate, or persuade others.

The study also finds that Malaysians lack awareness of language shaming practices, and there is a need to raise awareness to reduce instances of language shaming. Future research could investigate how language shaming affects individuals' mental health and self-esteem and explore interventions to reduce instances of language shaming. Additionally, future studies could examine how language shaming varies across different social media platforms and the role of education in reducing instances of language shaming. The implications of this study are that policymakers and educators need to emphasize the importance of linguistic diversity and raise awareness of the harms of language shaming. Educators can encourage students to embrace their linguistic identities and provide support to those who have experienced language shaming. Additionally, policymakers can implement policies that promote linguistic diversity and discourage language shaming practices. In conclusion, the study highlights the need to promote linguistic diversity and raise

awareness of the harms of language shaming among Malaysians. It is essential to recognize that language proficiency does not determine intelligence or worth and that individuals should be respected for their linguistic identities.

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Information on Informed Consent or any Data Privacy Statements

This research adhered to ethical guidelines, including obtaining informed consent from all the participants and implementing data privacy statements to protect the participants' confidentiality. Additionally, the de-anonymization of participant data was conducted to ensure transparency and accountability in data handling procedures.

Author Contributions

Muhammad Syafiq Zulkifli conceptualized the study, conducted data collection and analysis, and drafted the manuscript. Dr. Kesumawati A. Bakar supervised the research process, provided guidance and expertise, and critically reviewed the manuscript. Both authors contributed to the manuscript revision and approved the final version for submission.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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