

Empowering the LG120 Curriculum through the Integration of a Third Language Based on Melaka's Socioeconomic Framework

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ABSTRACT

This conceptual paper discusses in depth the strategic necessity of offering a choice of various third languages, specifically Mandarin, Arabic, Japanese, Korean, and German within the curriculum structure of the Diploma in English for Professional Communication (LG120) program, focusing on the socioeconomic environment of the state of Melaka. In the era of globalization and the rapid growth of regional service industries, conventional bilingual proficiency is increasingly challenged to meet the expectations of modern employers. Melaka, as a UNESCO World Heritage state, an international tourism hub, a high-tech manufacturing investment zone, and a strategic maritime logistics hub, demands communication graduates who possess high cross-cultural competency. Drawing on a conceptual approach methodology and supported by a synthesized selection of ten primary academic sources distilled from a broader thematic cluster of scholarly literature, this paper reviews the literature to uncover the impact of third-language proficiency on graduate employability. The discussion highlights a hybrid implementation model combining formal elective courses, stackable micro-credentials, and recent national higher education policy mandates promoting digital and hybrid learning. The paper concludes that integrating these languages serves as an essential catalyst in producing first-class human capital.

Keywords: English Curriculum, Third Language, Melaka, Socioeconomic Framework,

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

The 21st-century global labor market landscape is undergoing a radical transformation, driven by rapid technological advancements, regional economic integration, and cross-border workforce mobility; indeed, the World Economic Forum (2023) estimates that 44% of workers' core skills will be disrupted within five years as modern automation and economic restructuring take hold. Within the context of higher education in Malaysia, the Diploma in English for Professional Communication (LG120) program is specifically designed to produce graduates skilled in emceeing, corporate writing, public relations, and strategic communication. However, current economic realities demand a more comprehensive paradigm shift.

In the state of Melaka, the dynamic local ecosystem is defined by diverse global dimensions, including the influx of international tourists, investments in East Asian multinational industrial zones (Japan and Korea), major trade collaborations with China, international Islamic economic networks with the Middle East (Arab) (Saja, 2024), and the presence of European engineering industries, particularly from Germany in the state's primary industrial parks. Proficiency in English and Malay alone is frequently insufficient when engaging with corporate investors, international engineers, diplomatic delegations, and tourists who prioritize communication in their native languages.

Furthermore, aligned with contemporary national higher education directives specifically the Ministry of Higher Education's policy initiatives encouraging flexible, technology-driven, and hybrid educational delivery models, universities are urged to leverage digital ecosystems. Therefore, this conceptual paper aims to examine in detail the rationalization, selection justification for these five major languages, pedagogical implications, and a balanced hybrid curriculum implementation framework integrated with modern policy guidelines for offering them within the LG120 program in Melaka.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology used in this writing is based on a conceptual paper approach (Jaakkola, 2020; MacInnis, 2011), where its main focus is the construction of analytical arguments, synthesis of ideas, and integration of existing theories without involving empirical primary data collection such as questionnaires or field interviews. This approach is reinforced through the systematic grouping and thematic synthesis of ten core literature sources derived from an extended spectrum of fifty-five academic references encompassing indexed journal articles, master's theses, and official higher education policy guidelines examining the relationship between multilingual proficiency, hybrid learning integration, and graduate employability (Clement & Murugavel, 2018; Jackson, 2016; Tomlinson, 2017).

The development process of this paper was carried out through several key phases, starting with a theoretical construct analysis to review literature related to cross-cultural communication theory (Byram, 1997; Gudykunst, 2005), third language acquisition theory (Makoni, 2012; Jessner, 2008), and higher education curriculum design models (Biggs & Tang, 2007; Knight & Yorke, 2004). Next, the synthesis phase integrated institutional and national policy data on flexible and hybrid learning frameworks (Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia [MoHE], 2023; MQA, 2021). Finally, the conceptual argument deduction phase interpreted and translated the secondary data into the specific context of the LG120 program in the state of Melaka, subsequently producing a logical, critical, and relevant hybrid implementation framework for the current socioeconomic landscape (State Economic Planning Unit of Melaka, 2023).

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEMATIC SYNTHESIS

Table 1. Thematic Synthesis Based on Domain

Domain	Author(s) & Year	Core Variables / Focus	Synthesized Theoretical Function
Domain 1: Economic, Cognitive & Employability Capital	Ginsburgh & Weber (2020)	Economics of Language & Language Capital	Conceptualizes language as human capital that yields market value and financial premiums for graduates.
	Jessner (2008)	Neurocognitive Flexibility & Metalinguistics	Demonstrates that third language (L3) acquisition enhances cognitive flexibility and complex problem-solving strategies.
	Tomlinson (2017)	Graduate Employability Capital	Positions language proficiency as a dynamic resource to meet evolving global labor market demands.
	Byram (1997)	Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC)	Establishes that cross-cultural interaction capacity enables rapid adaptation in multinational work environments.
Domain 2: Tourism Industry &	Yan et al. (2025)	Multilingual Workforce in Heritage Tourism	Highlights multilingualism as a critical operational asset in heritage destinations (e.g., Melaka) to bridge international communication gaps.

Private Sector Demand	Bakar et al. (2007)	Employer Expectations & Recruitment Criteria	Confirms that private-sector employers consistently prioritize third-language fluency in recruitment advertisements.
	Zainuddin et al. (2019)	Graduate Employability & L3 Competence	Demonstrates that local undergraduates with L3 proficiency exhibit higher confidence and marketability in global roles.
Domain 3: Curriculum Structure, Policy & Hybrid Learning	OECD (2020)	Curriculum Overload & Structural Challenges	Warns against curriculum overload caused by unstrategic course addition.
	MoHE (2023)	Flexible Education & Hybrid Learning Integration	Mandates the expansion of technology-enabled flexible and hybrid learning structures across Malaysian higher education institutions.
	MQA (2021)	Micro-credentials & Soft-Skill Competencies	Provides the regulatory framework for integrating accredited skill modules to enhance graduate soft skills.

Table 1 shows a comprehensive literature review of ten core academic sources encompassing journals, policy reports, and master's theses synthesized from a broader literature base of fifty-five references significantly demonstrating the importance of multi-linguaging. From the perspective of the tourism and hospitality sector, Yan et al. (2025) emphasize that employers in heritage cities like Melaka place a high priority on multilingual workers to minimize communication barriers with international tourists from various regions. In terms of graduate employability, possessing additional language skills and cross-cultural communication competence allows graduates to adapt more effectively to modern workforce demands and international job markets (Byram, 1997; Tomlinson, 2017; Zainuddin et al., 2019). From a cognitive standpoint, Jessner (2008) explains that acquiring a third language enhances metalinguistic awareness and neurocognitive flexibility, thereby improving problem-solving abilities and communication strategies in complex environments.

Academic structural challenges often arise regarding curriculum overload if additional courses are introduced without careful planning (OECD, 2020). However, this can be managed through a balanced, multi-layered curriculum design combining formal core/elective courses, flexible micro-credential modules, and technology-driven hybrid learning models officially endorsed by national education policies (MoHE, 2023; MQA, 2021). Supporting this view, empirical studies on language capital highlight the economic value of foreign languages as symbolic assets that increase a graduate's market value (Ginsburgh & Weber, 2020), while research on employer perspectives demonstrates that job advertisements frequently list third-language fluency as a priority criterion (Bakar et al., 2007).

Conceptual Synthesis Model

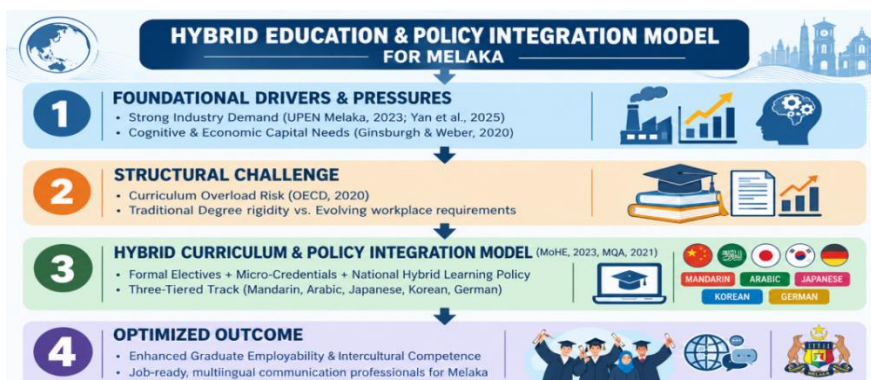


Figure 1: Hybrid Education & Policy Integration Model for Melaka

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Figure 1 outlines the strategic blueprint for upgrading the LG120 program, mapping out a clear step-by-step path from real-world economic pressures to high-impact career outcomes. It starts by acknowledging the strong industry demand and foreign investments across Melaka, which directly trigger the need for a modern, language-ready workforce. Instead of overwhelming students with traditional, credit-heavy classes which risks severe curriculum overload the model leverages national flexible education policies to seamlessly blend core electives with stackable digital badges across five target languages. Ultimately, this smart, policy-driven approach produces culturally agile, job-ready communication professionals who are tailor-fitted to meet the needs of Melaka's growing heritage tourism and multinational industrial sectors.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the systematic synthesis of scholarly sources, optimizing an elective third-language pathway (Mandarin, Arabic, Japanese, Korean, and German) within the LG120 program aligns directly with the theoretical frameworks of graduate employability and linguistic capital (Halik Bassah & Mohd Noor, 2023; Knight & Yorke, 2004). This strategic selection is conceptually grounded in the economic structure and FDI orientation of Melaka on Table 2.

Table 2. Justification for Third Language

Third Language	Key Industrial Sectors	Strategic Justification & Impact on Employability	Literature Sources
Mandarin	Mass & Heritage Tourism, Trade & Corporate Investment, International Hospitality	Optimizes Melaka's economic returns from China's vast tourist and corporate investor market, giving graduates a competitive edge.	Tourism Malaysia (2024); UPEN Melaka (2023)
Arabic	Muslim-Friendly Tourism (MFTH) & Luxury Hospitality	Supports the burgeoning Muslim-friendly tourism segments in Melaka, aligning linguistic capability with cultural diplomacy.	Yan et al. (2025)
Japanese	High-Tech Multinational Manufacturing & Corporate Enterprises	Serves as high-value economic capital driven by multinational manufacturing plants and corporate investments in Melaka.	Badaruddin & Che Omar (2024); UPEN Melaka (2023)
Korean	Multinational Manufacturing, Technology Supply Chains & FDI	Acts as strategic linguistic capital aligned with expanding East Asian corporate investments in Melaka industrial zones.	UPEN Melaka (2023)
German	European Engineering & Multinational Supply Chains	Reduces international communication barriers in European corporate networks while boosting operational efficiency and mobility.	Feely & Harzing (2003, 2008)

This matrix maps how acquiring strategic third-language competencies drives graduate employability within Melaka's core industrial sectors. Rather than treating language acquisition as an isolated humanities skill, the framework positions foreign language proficiency as economic and linguistic capital directly tied to regional development goals.

Strategic Sector Alignment

1. Mandarin: Targets China's immense outbound tourism and direct foreign investment markets. Competence in Mandarin directly services Melaka's heritage tourism, international hospitality, corporate trade corridors, or tour guide like Bukit Senggeh (Tourism Malaysia, 2024; UPEN Melaka, 2023).
2. Arabic: Capitalizes on the rapid growth of Muslim-Friendly Tourism (MFTH) and high-end niche hospitality. Arabic acquisition acts as a tool for cultural diplomacy and trust-building within premium Islamic market segments (Yan et al., 2025).
3. Japanese: Functions as high-value human capital tailored to Melaka's long-standing high-tech multinational manufacturing zones and corporate joint ventures (Badaruddin & Che Omar, 2024; UPEN Melaka, 2023).
4. Korean: Integrates regional graduates directly into expanding East Asian technology supply chains and foreign direct investment (FDI) industrial hubs across the state (UPEN Melaka, 2023).
5. German: Serves specialized European engineering networks and supply chain logistics by mitigating language barriers, facilitating international technology transfer, and improving cross-border operational efficiency (Feely & Harzing, 2003, 2008).

Academic Context & Application

The strategic alignment between foreign language acquisition and regional industrial needs demonstrates that third-language proficiency operates as critical economic capital within Melaka's labor market. As detailed in the framework, tailored language competencies directly target the state's dominant economic pillars. Mandarin and Arabic competencies strengthen Melaka's positioning in global trade, heritage commerce, and Muslim-Friendly Tourism (MFTH) by converting cultural diplomacy into direct commercial gains (Tourism Malaysia, 2024; Yan et al., 2025). Concurrently, proficiency in Japanese, Korean, and German addresses operational friction within advanced manufacturing, foreign direct investment hubs, and high-tech supply chains (Badaruddin & Che Omar, 2024; Feely & Harzing, 2003, 2008; UPEN Melaka, 2023). Aligning higher education curricula with these specific linguistic requirements enhances graduate employability while reinforcing Melaka's competitive edge in attracting target foreign investment.

The Proposed Hybrid Curriculum Implementation Framework for LG120

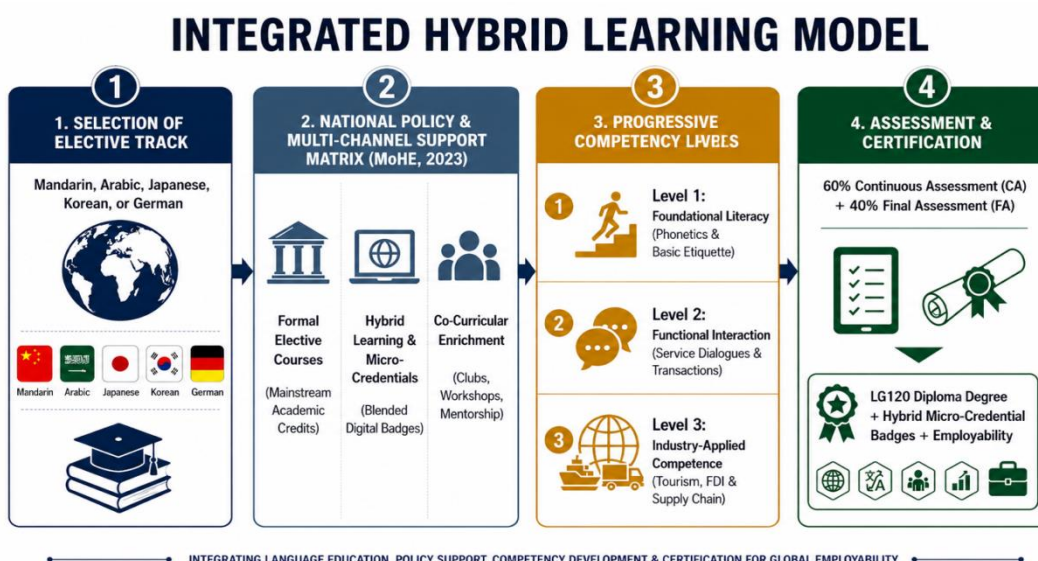


Figure 2: Integrated Hybrid Learning Model

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Figure 2 shows the Integrated Hybrid Learning Model. To avoid over-reliance on a single delivery mode and mitigate the threat of curriculum overload (OECD, 2020), this framework leverages MoHE (2023) hybrid learning directives across three supportive channels:

1. Formal Elective Course Channel (Mainstream Academic Credit): Structured academic pathway for institutional elective slots.
2. Stackable Micro-Credential & Hybrid Learning Channel (Flexible Digital Badges): Bite-sized digital modules targeting specific competencies without inflating core credit hours.
3. Co-Curricular Enrichment Channel (Supportive Non-Credit): Practical reinforcement through cultural immersion clubs and emceeding workshops.

The structural progression operates across three levels: Level 1 (Foundational Literacy), Level 2 (Functional Interaction), and Level 3 (Industry-Specific Applied Competence). Quality assurance is maintained via 60% Continuous Assessment (CA) and 40% Final Assessment (FA).

CONCLUSION AND STRATEGIC CAREER ALIGNMENT

Conclusion

The Diploma in English for Professional Communication (LG120) program in Melaka is not just an academic credential; it functions as a vital strategic engine directly wired into the state's economic evolution. Melaka's economic identity has rapidly expanded beyond traditional boundaries, driven by a powerful mix of UNESCO heritage tourism, high-tech manufacturing parks, maritime logistics, and aggressive Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). In such a dynamic ecosystem, standard bilingualism in English and Malay is no longer enough to secure a top-tier competitive edge. By integrating a third language specifically Mandarin, Arabic, Japanese, Korean, or German into the curriculum, LG120 effectively elevates its graduates from typical job seekers into high-value, culturally agile professionals who can step straight into the workforce and drive regional growth from day one.

Industry & Internship Pathways for Graduates

This strategic language alignment opens up immediate, high-impact career and internship pathways tailored to Melaka's key economic sectors:

1. Corporate Communications and Public Relations Officers: Graduates stepping into these roles can utilize German or Mandarin to manage delicate investor relations, draft multinational press briefs, and interface smoothly with foreign corporate boards.
2. Hospitality and Heritage Tourism Experience Officers: In the hospitality sector, high-end resorts and heritage hubs require professionals fluent in Arabic or Mandarin to offer bespoke, culturally nuanced services to high-yield travelers from the Middle East and East Asia.
3. International Supply Chain and Procurement Specialists: Within industrial zones like Ayer Keroh and Batu Berendam, specialists proficient in Japanese or Korean become indispensable bridges between local operations and global headquarters, eliminating expensive communication friction.
4. Digital Content Creators and Translators: Skilled communicators in Mandarin or Korean can localize marketing campaigns to project Melaka's local heritage and commercial brands onto the global stage.
5. FDI Marketing and Investor Relations Executives: Professionals leveraging German or Japanese can directly engage international trade delegations during high-stakes investment pitches with foreign economic agencies.

Limitations and Future Directions

1. Limitations of the Study:

While this framework offers a robust solution for Melaka, its deliberate focus on the state's specific socioeconomic profile represents the primary limitation of the current paper. Melaka's unique blend of heritage tourism and specialized manufacturing creates a distinct set of linguistic demands that may not directly mirror other regions.

2. Future Research Directions:

To build upon this foundation, future research should expand this conceptual framework to neighboring states, customizing the third-language integration model to match different regional economic drivers such as adapting it for Johor's cross-border financial and logistics hub under Iskandar Malaysia, or aligning it with Negeri Sembilan's expanding industrial and biotechnology corridors.

Authorship & Originality

During the preparation of this work, the authors utilized [Gemini] solely for the purpose of language translation and initial text refinement. Following the use of this tool, the authors reviewed, edited, and verified all translated content to ensure academic accuracy and contextual appropriateness. The authors take full responsibility for the final content and originality of the manuscript, and confirm that all analyses, and intellectual contributions presented herein are the original work of the authors.

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