

Probability problems geared to local environment and culture: a Malaysian perspective.

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In an introduction course in probability, the indiscriminate use of probability problems and examples as found in existing English text-books may make Malaysian students shy away from the course. Quite often in order to make the text interesting, these Western text-books contain problems and examples drawn from the everyday life of a Western society; i.e., the problems are real-life situational problems. These problems are culturally oriented problems. There are certain aspects of Western environment and culture that are totally alien to Malaysian students who have to:

- i) grapple with probability concepts, and
  - ii) try to figure out what the unfamiliar situation is about.
- The student is thus given a two-fold task. It seems only reasonable to try to eliminate "unfamiliar situations" in a problem.

Foreign culturally- and environmentally- based problems and examples are unsuitable for Malaysian students. Technical examples of probability applications (e.g. in computing manufacturing, physical sciences, genetics, and technology), geometric problems, urn problems, coin and dice tossing problems are appropriate for Malaysian students. Games of chance and real-life situational examples with local flavour are useful to make the course interesting. Well-phrased, may be well-illustrated and easily understood though unfamiliar or not commonly encountered situational problems may also be suitable for Malaysian students.

Note. This is a summary of a paper presented at the Second International Conference on Teaching of Statistics, University of Victoria, BC, Canada. 11-16 August 1986.