

# Teaching Malay Language Communication among Orang Asli Children: Issues and Challenges

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## ABSTRACT

Orang Asli children often face significant barriers in learning Malay communication skills due to limited exposure to the language in their home and community environments. This study aims to explore the challenges encountered by preschool teachers in teaching Malay communication to Orang Asli children. The qualitative study focuses on the teaching and learning process of the Malay Language communication in several Orang Asli schools in Pahang. A total of five Orang Asli preschool teachers were selected as participants through purposive sampling. The researchers collected data through interviews and analyzed it using a thematic approach. To ensure the validity and reliability of the study, the researchers employed an audit trail verification method. The researchers employed an audit trail verification method. The findings reveal three main challenges: limited access to learning resources, cultural differences in teaching materials, and the need for pedagogical approaches that suit the cultural backgrounds of Orang Asli children. Despite these challenges, preschool teachers have adapted using available resources and methods to effectively interact and communicate with the children. This study emphasizes the importance of teaching strategies that are culturally relevant to the Orang Asli community. Improving preschool teachers' skills in teaching Malay communication can enhance literacy outcomes for Orang Asli children. The implications of this study highlight the need for policy adjustments to support more effective Malay language education in the Orang Asli context.

**Keywords:** Malay Language Communication, Teaching, Orang Asli Children, Preschool Teacher, Issues and Challenges.

## INTRODUCTION

In today's globalizing world, effective communication in the Malay language is essential for preschool children, including those from the Orang Asli communities in Malaysia. In line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (United Nations 2024), specifically SDG4 on quality education, it is crucial to ensure that every child, regardless of background, has access to quality and relevant education. Furthermore, within the context of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (IR 4.0) (Policy, 2019), individuals can compete in an increasingly technology-driven and digitalized world through effective language mastery and communication skills.

From the past until today, Orang Asli children have faced several obstacles in acquiring communication skills in the Malay Language (Siti Nurleha et al., 2024). One factor contributing to the challenges of learning Malay is the limited exposure to the language within Orang Asli communities and their environments (Azwanhanum & Shahidi A. Hamid, 2022). A national curriculum for kindergartens or preschools has been established by the Ministry, which includes six primary components: Language and Communication, Cognitive Development, Spiritual and Moral, Socio-Emotional Development, Physical Development, and Creativity and Aesthetics (Bahagian Pembangunan Kurikulum, 2017).

The education disparity that Orang Asli children experience is a problem that the Malaysian government has recognized and is addressing with a number of laws and initiatives. The education gap has not been closed entirely, despite some progress being made (Wan Ya Shin & Russalina, 2021).

The dropout, absenteeism, and low academic achievement among Orang Asli at the preschool and primary school levels have triggered various initiatives. However, the academic achievements of Orang Asli children are still not aligned with national progress (Sharifah Md Nor et al., 2016). Every child has the right to an education at birth (Duel Dahl, 2015). However, despite assistance from the government and various agencies, the issue persists, as many Orang Asli children continue to underperform and show a lack of engagement in school. Among the factors contributing to their isolation are geographical location, negative societal perceptions, low literacy rates, and the insular attitude of the Orang Asli community, which often makes access to education an ongoing issue (Syazwan & Shahrom, 2024).

This study aims to examine the challenges faced by preschool teachers of Orang Asli children in teaching the Malay Language communication in Pahang. This is due to Pahang having the largest population of Orang Asli communities in the country (Sharifah Md Nor et al., 2016). Using a qualitative approach and case study design, this research examines the teaching and learning process in several Orang Asli schools in Kuala Lipis, Pahang. Involving five Orang Asli teachers as participants, data were collected through interviews and analyzed using a thematic method.

The findings from this study indicate that three main issues require attention, including very limited access to educational resources, cultural incompatibility of instructional material, and the urgent need for pedagogical strategies that are aligned with the cultural backgrounds of the children. This study also emphasizes the need for policies to enable more effective Malay language instruction within the framework of Orang Asli education, in line with the goals of IR4.0 and the SDGs. By addressing these barriers, it is hoped that preschool teachers will be able to teach Malay communication more effectively, improving the literacy levels of Orang Asli children.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Previous studies have shown that linguistic and cultural differences between their native tongues and Malay are the primary cause of the challenges encountered by Orang Asli children in learning Malay, particularly in reading, writing, and communication skills.

A study Sawalludin et al., (2020) focuses on key issues in education for the Orang Asli community in Malaysia. There are two main obstacles in this case: first, the community's lack of understanding of the value of education, and the difficulty in reaching school due to remote locations. The lack of formal education among parents also negatively affects children's academic motivation, and limited facilities and infrastructure, including poor roads and insufficient transportation, pose challenges for children to attend school. Therefore, improving access to school must begin with raising community awareness of education and enhancing literacy among Orang Asli children.

In Abdul Samat et al. (2022), the results show that this strategy has a number of advantages, including enhanced communication, engagement, and innovation. Nevertheless, obstacles included a dearth of formal teacher training to employ theatre in Orang Asli contexts and problems keeping children's attention because of their limited exposure to traditional classroom settings. The study highlights the necessity for different teaching approaches that take into account the cognitive and cultural requirements of children who are Orang Asli.

A study conducted by Ahmad et al., (2022) explored the factors that contribute to Orang Asli children's success in education. Strong community and family support, the availability of nearby schools, and the provision of transport services by governmental organizations like JAKOA are all important success factors. On the other hand, obstacles including poverty, resource scarcity, and village isolation impede the success of education.

Explores various outreach programs designed to enhance literacy skills among Orang Asli children while simultaneously developing teachers' competencies in culturally appropriate pedagogies. The authors emphasize that Wahab & Mustapha (2015) and Abdullah (2022) discovered that Orang Asli children struggled to comprehend because some had not yet become proficient in the Malay language and used their mother tongue. Teachers also face challenges in explaining concepts to Orang Asli children in ways that are easily understood.

The Malaysian government's dropout prevention measures to alleviate the educational inequalities experienced by Orang Asli children are the main topic of this article. The authors point out that there are still major issues, such as a shortage of trained teachers willing to work in distant schools and poor infrastructure, even with rising enrolment rates. Three primary issues are identified by the study: the need for pedagogical approaches that are specific to the cultural backgrounds of Orang Asli children, cultural incompatibilities in teaching resources, and restricted access to learning materials. Results show that in order to effectively improve literacy results, good interventions need to take these characteristics into account (Shuhidan et al., 2024).

Particular focus will be directed towards disadvantaged children, including those in remote regions, Orang Asli children, individuals from diverse ethnic backgrounds, and children with special needs, to ensure that all groups are included in development initiatives (Sharifah Md Nor et al., 2016). Overall, the article advocates for sustained efforts to align educational policies with the specific requirements of Orang Asli children to enhance Orang Asli literacy rates and overall educational success.

## METHODOLOGY

The research design serves as an action plan for how this study was conducted. It acts as a framework for the researcher to collect and analyze data relevant to the research objectives. The design implemented is grounded in a qualitative approach (Merriam, 2009). This study employs qualitative methods, utilizing interviews and documentation to gather both primary and secondary data for the study goals. Primary data was collected through an online survey administered to five preschool teachers who instruct Orang Asli children in the Malay Language Communication, in Kuala Lipis, Pahang. This approach was chosen to gather insights into the challenges encountered and the use of Malay in teaching and learning processes for Orang Asli children. Secondary data was collected through documentation methods, including content analysis of printed resources such as books, journals, and proceedings. This method aims to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the research to be conducted.

Fig. 1 Interview Session Between the Researcher and Preschool Teachers of Orang Asli Students in Indigenous Schools in Malaysia



Fig. 2 The Author with Orang Asli Children in Teaching Malay Language Communication



Fig. 1 shows an Interview Session Between the Researcher and Preschool Teachers of Orang Asli Children in Indigenous Schools in Malaysia. Meanwhile, Fig. 2 shows the Author with Orang Asli Children in Teaching Malay Language Communication.

### Instrument

This is a qualitative study, with data collected through interviews. Respondents were chosen through purposive sampling, a method where selection is intentionally focused. Also known as judgment sampling, purposive sampling allows respondents to be chosen based on the researcher's knowledge and the specific objectives of the study. Interviews were selected as the data collection instrument due to the small respondent group, consisting of the five preschool teachers who teach Malay Language Communication to Orang Asli children. Data from the interviews will be transcribed verbatim. This study utilizes carefully selected respondents, and data validity is ensured through the *Audit Trail* method (data validation).

### Challenges And Experiences

Education holds an important role in empowering and improving the socioeconomic status of the Orang Asli community in Malaysia. However, Orang Asli children continue to face significant challenges in the mainstream education system, as evidenced by high dropout rates, low academic achievement, and disengagement from school. In the context of Orang Asli education in Malaysia, issues related to learning disengagement and low achievement among Orang Asli children in primary education persist. Weaknesses and gaps identified in the prior studies have driven ongoing improvements in Orang Asli's education.

Limited proficiency in the Malay language appears to be a primary factor making it challenging for children to comprehend the language by teachers (Awang et al., 2022). This issue can lead to problems with the Malay language skills, which is concerning because Malay is the national language and the primary language of instruction in Malaysian public schools (Azwahanum et al., 2022). A study by Sharifah et al., (2016) examined the challenges faced by Orang Asli children in mastering two additional languages, which is Malay and English, found that this is a significant challenge for them, particularly due to their remote living conditions, limited school facilities, and differences in cultural and social needs. Additionally, the standardized education system, with the formal curriculum and exams, makes providing equal educational opportunities highly difficult for Orang Asli children.

Research conducted by Sawalludin et al., (2020) showed that several factors contribute to their low academic performance, with one major issue being the lack of awareness about the importance of education among the Orang Asli community. Therefore, to improve the quality of their education, it is essential to examine the



challenges they face. Another problem is their limited access to nearby schools. As a minority group, the Orang Asli have faced marginalization for many years. Education is essential to alleviate poverty and enhance the quality of life. Without tackling these challenges, achieving progress will remain difficult.

On the other hand, the school is working to reduce dropout rates among the Orang Asli community by motivating children and stressing the significance of education for their future. However, these efforts encounter obstacles stemming from cultural factors, peer pressure, and limited engagement from parents and the community. Studies by Azwahanum & Shahidi, (2022) showed that attempts to promote the use of the Malay language proved challenging due to school and social environments that are less supportive of second acquisition.

In the Abdul Samat et al., (2022) study, many disadvantaged children opt to leave school or choose not to attend. Instead of going to school, they often start working at a young age to support themselves. Orang Asli children require skilled teachers who can make lessons engaging and meaningful, along with school administrators who possess the vision and foresight to foster a positive school culture and climate (Sharifah Md Nor et al., 2016). Education is mandatory for all children at the age of six, which includes preschool level, to ensure Orang Asli children have the right to access quality education.

The other challenge is language barriers, humility, shyness, and the fear of embarrassment, which also limit the direct involvement of Orang Asli parents with the school (Awang et al., 2022). The main challenge for teachers who teach Orang Asli children is to instill a love of learning among them.

The findings from Awang indicate that the four themes causing school absenteeism are children's attitudes, peer influence, the attraction of social ecology, and the parents' complacency. The learning culture inspired by Orang Asli children is one that is practical and relevant to their way of life. The learning culture aspired by Orang Asli children is practical learning that is relevant to their way of life, including six main activities carried out during school absenteeism: gathering forest products, hunting, helping the family, fishing, farming, and socializing (Awang et al. 2022).

Based on research by Sawalludin et al., (2020) the lack of proper infrastructure is a challenge for the settlement and serves as an obstacle to enhancing the quality of education for Orang Asli children, the limited access to roads, timely delivery of educational resources, such as textbooks and teaching materials, is challenging, causing delays in the progression of the lesson. The children lack motivation to engage with educational initiatives due to their culture, which does not prioritize the value of education. They feel at ease, believing they are already in a 'comfort zone' (Peter Obeng and Opoku, 2022).

According to Sharifah Md Nor et al., (2016) based on their study, the analysis reveals that language, educational materials, and educational tools are important approaches to integrating Orang Asli knowledge into the national education system. The factors such as culture, school location, poverty, pedagogy, as well as syllabus content pose challenges for preschool teachers in teaching Malay language communication among Orang Asli children.

According to the findings of the study, Sawalludin et al., (2020) emphasized that an approach recognizing "cultural differences" and taking cultural variations within the education system into account is a crucial solution to address this issue for the Orang Asli community. In this way, the Orang Asli can experience the mainstream education system without facing pressure, discrimination, or isolation.

Orang Asli are a minority community. The main issue within their community is awareness of education, and another factor is access to nearby educational institutions. To enhance their quality of life, education is the primary pathway to success (Sawalludin et al., 2020). The attitude of Orang Asli children is indifferent, reluctant to attend school, and unwilling to interact with classmates from other communities. They rely entirely on the government for education matters, assuming that all school expenses are fully covered by the government (Awang et al., 2022).

The Orang Asli's strong community bonds reduce children's motivation to attend school. They feel more comfortable staying within their community and are uneasy mingling with others. Limited class participation and fear outside their community affect their learning. Orang Asli children see their parents as role models and view the forest as essential to life. Parents often support them skipping school, believing their lives will be affected if children attend (Kamaruddin et al., 2019);(Awang et al., 2022).

Through the findings of this study, the researcher can conclude that there are three main challenges in teaching Malay to Orang Asli children. There is limited access to learning and teaching resources, cultural differences between the community life and materials and curriculum, and the need for pedagogical approaches that align with the cultural backgrounds of Orang Asli children. Despite these challenges, teachers have adapted using available resources and methods to interact and communicate effectively with their students.

Children who struggle with reading, counting, and foundational 3M skills (reading, writing, and counting) at the preschool level are at risk of dropping out and facing challenges in pursuing further education and careers (Abdullah, 2022).

Table I Interview Questions With Preschool Teachers About Malay Language Communication Among Orang Asli Children No

Question	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C	Teacher D	Teacher E
1. What are the main challenges faced by preschool teachers in teaching the Malay language to Orang Asli children?	<b>Teacher A:</b> "One of the biggest challenges is that the kids don't understand Malay because they're used to speaking their mother tongue at home."	<b>Teacher B:</b> "I have a hard time because there aren't enough teaching materials that fit with the culture of the Orang Asli kids."	<b>Teacher C:</b> "These kids often skip school because they need to help their families at home, so it's tough for me to teach Malay in class."	<b>Teacher D:</b> "The shyness and low self-esteem of the Orang Asli kids make it hard for them to interact in Malay during class."	<b>Teacher E:</b> "The differences in culture and social background make it difficult for me to teach effectively because they are transitioning from home to school."
2. Is teaching Malay Language Communication difficult for them to learn?	<b>Teacher A:</b> "Yes, because their strong use of their mother tongue makes them not interested in learning Malay in preschool."	<b>Teacher B:</b> "The kids often get caught between two languages, which confuses them and makes it hard for them to pay attention in class."	<b>Teacher C:</b> "Their life experiences are different from other children, so they don't really understand the learning rules at school with Malay Language instructions."	<b>Teacher D:</b> "They really value their traditions and culture, which makes them less willing to use Malay in classroom."	<b>Teacher E:</b> "They think their mother tongue is more important than Malay, and that affects their motivation to learn."
3. What types of teaching materials or resources are most suitable for teaching the Malay language to Orang Asli children?	<b>Teacher A:</b> "Materials that reflect their culture, like folk tales and traditional songs, are really effective."	<b>Teacher B:</b> "I believe that using forest products related to their culture can help them understand concepts in Malay better."	<b>Teacher C:</b> "Introduce to them digital resources, like videos and educational apps, which can really capture their interest in learning but are limited to internet access in the forest."	<b>Teacher D:</b> "Providing interactive and practical teaching aids is important for their learning and repetition."	<b>Teacher E:</b> "I think easily accessible materials in the environment, like stones, grass, sand, will help them in their studies because it relates to their life."

4. How did Orang Asli children communicate in Malay Language while circle time every morning?	<b>Teacher A:</b> "Every morning, the kids say 'Selamat sejahtera!' to teacher and friends. I ask them how they feel, and they tell me in Malay. It's nice to hear them share!"	<b>Teacher B:</b> "I ask the children about the weather. I say, 'Hari ini cuaca apa?' They respond, saying things like, 'Cuaca panas' or 'Hujan.' It helps them practice speaking."	<b>Teacher C:</b> "We play a game during circle time. I ask them to talk about their favorite toy in Malay. They really enjoy sharing and practicing!"	<b>Teacher D:</b> "I read a story in Malay. After that, I ask questions like, 'Siapa yang suka cerita ini?' The kids answer in Malay, and it's fun to see them talk about the story."	<b>Teacher E:</b> "I ask them open questions, like 'Apa kamu buat di luar?' They answer each other in Malay, and it helps them feel comfortable talking."
5. Do you know that they can achieve the lesson in KSPK to Orang Asli Children?	<b>Teacher A:</b> "The KSPK lessons are designed to be fun and engaging to all preschool children in Malaysia, but the teacher need to be more creative to suit with orang Asli children"	<b>Teacher B:</b> "When the lessons are related to their lives and backgrounds, they understand better and enjoy learning."	<b>Teacher C:</b> "With the right support and resources, Orang Asli children can use KSPK syllabus but in the other way of teaching and material aids."	<b>Teacher D:</b> "I see the kids can learn at their lessons when we use activities suitable with their level."	<b>Teacher E:</b> "If we keep motivating them and making learning fun, and do some repetition that they can remember."
6. What teaching strategies do you think are most effective in helping Orang Asli children master the Malay language?	<b>Teacher A:</b> "I think using simple stories. When we read fun stories in Malay, the kids get excited and learn new words."	<b>Teacher B:</b> " <b>Games</b> are great! I use games that involve speaking in Malay. The kids have fun and practice their language without feeling pressured."	<b>Teacher C:</b> "I like to use <b>songs</b> . Singing in Malay helps them remember words and phrases better. They enjoy it so much!"	<b>Teacher D:</b> " <b>Visual aids</b> like pictures and flashcards work well. When I show them real objects in their environment, they can connect the words to what they see."	<b>Teacher E:</b> " <b>Group activities</b> are important too. When the kids work together and talk in Malay, they learn from each other and build confidence."
7. Does the Tunjang Komunikasi Bahasa Melayu lesson help you teach the children correctly?	<b>Teacher A:</b> "Yes, the Tunjang Komunikasi Bahasa Melayu lesson helps teacher a lot! It gives me clear ideas on how to teach them the language in a fun way although need to plan suit to their level."	<b>Teacher B:</b> "The lessons show me different activities I can use. It makes the kids learn Malay and having fun and attract them to come to school every day."	<b>Teacher C:</b> "Definitely! The lesson gives me good tips on how to explain things. But, I can see the children excited and having fun learn Bahasa Melayu at their level."	<b>Teacher D:</b> "Yes, it really helps. The Tunjang Komunikasi lessons include songs and stories that make learning Malay exciting for the kids."	<b>Teacher E:</b> "Of course! With the lessons, I feel more confident teaching them. The kids are engaged and enjoy learning Malay."

## FINDINGS

Orang Asli Children in Malaysia also faced additional challenges in learning the Malay Language because they have a different social background compared to other children. This disparity has a significant effect on the education of Orang Asli children, as their culture and society are not represented in the curriculum. Although the curriculum and syllabus were developed for a broader children's demographic, the knowledge and experiences of Orang Asli children vary greatly from those of their Malaysian counterparts.

Based on Table 1 above, for Question 1, the preschool Teacher A's response regarding challenges in teaching the Malay Language to Orang Asli children reveals several key issues. The language barrier is significant, as many children primarily speak their mother tongue at home, limiting their Malay proficiency. This aligns with research (Chin, 2021) that stated a child's first language affects their ability to acquire a second language. Additionally, Teacher B said, the lack of culturally relevant teaching materials hinders engagement and effective learning (Peter Obeng and Opoku, 2022). In contrast, Teacher C is about the attendance issues, which further complicate learning, as children often miss school to help their family, impacting their exposure to the Malay Language. Psychological barriers like shyness and low self-esteem (Sharifah *et al.*, 2016). Teacher D said that previous active class participation is essential for language practice. Lastly, cultural transition difficulties from Teacher E tell create disconnects between home and school environments. These insights highlight the need for targeted educational strategies that address linguistic and cultural factors to improve Malay language among Orang Asli children.

From Table 1 above, for Question 2, the preschool teacher's responses regarding the difficulty of teaching Malay Language Communication to Orang Asli children reveal several challenges. Teacher A said that the strong preference for their mother tongue reduces interest in learning Malay, which is a significant barrier. Meanwhile, Teacher B mentions that children's focus in class is affected, and they become confused due to language confusion when they struggle between two languages. This aligns with research (Chin, 2021) showing that bilingualism can lead to cognitive overload and confusion. Teacher C notes that different life experiences reveal a gap between home and school, leading to a lack of understanding of school rules related to Malay instruction. Teacher D emphasizes that a strong attachment to their traditions and culture makes children less inclined to use Malay, as they are closely tied to their original culture, complicating language learning. Lastly, Teacher E mentions that children view their mother tongue as more important than Malay, which reduces their motivation to learn. These insights highlight the need for culturally responsive teaching strategies to enhance engagement in Malay Language learning among Orang Asli children.

According to the data in Table 1 above, the analysis of preschool teachers' responses regarding suitable teaching materials for Orang Asli children highlights several effective resources. Teacher A emphasizes that culturally reflective materials, such as folk tales and traditional sewang songs, can enhance engagement in teaching and learning within the community, particularly in communication in the Malay Language (Peter Obeng & Opoku, 2022). Teacher B suggests using forest products related to their culture to help children grasp the concept more effectively. Teacher C supports the use of digital resources, like videos and educational apps, to capture children's interest in language, but is limited to the internet resources available in the forest. Teacher D stresses the importance of interaction and practical teaching aids, along with the repetition technique to reinforce learning. Finally, Teacher E believes that easily accessible materials from their environments, such as soil, stones, grass, and sand, can be used as teaching aids to make learning more relatable and effective. Collectively, these insights suggest that incorporating culturally relevant and interactive resources can significantly improve Malay language instruction for Orang Asli children.

Referring to Table 1 above, the analysis of preschool teachers' responses during circle time regarding how Orang Asli children communicate in the Malay Language that encourages language use. Teacher A mentioned that children greet

*"Selamat sejahtera!"* ( Hello).

And share their feeling in Malay slowly, fostering a welcoming environment for communication. Teacher B notes the children by asking about the weather today, prompting responses like

*"cuaca panas"* or *"hujan"* ("hot weather" or "raining").



It can help them practice using the Malay Language. Meanwhile, Teacher C incorporates a game where children discuss their favourite toys in Malay, making learning enjoyable and interactive. On the other hand, Teacher D reads simple stories in the Malay Language and follows up with questions for the children, such as:

*“siapa suka cerita ini?”* (“who like this story?”).

Allowing children to express their thoughts about the story. Finally, Teacher E uses open questions such as:

*“apa kamu buat diluar?”* (“what are you doing outside”).

To encourage dialogue among children, helping them feel comfortable speaking in Malay. Although the children may forget what is taught today, at least the teachers are making efforts with strategies and approaches suited to their lives. Collectively, all the strategies create an engaging atmosphere that promotes the use of the Malay Language during circle time.

The analysis can be performed using the data from Table 1 above. The preschool teachers' responses regarding the achievement of *Kurikulum Standard Prasekolah Kebangsaan* (KSPK) lessons by Orang Asli children indicate that with appropriate adaptations, success is possible. Teacher A notes that while the curriculum is designed to be engaging for all preschoolers, teachers must be creative in their approach to suit Orang Asli children. Meanwhile, Teacher B mentions that when lessons are related to the children's lives and backgrounds, understanding and enjoyment increase. Teacher C emphasizes that even though they have limited access to resources and materials, with the right support and resources, the KSPK syllabus can be effectively utilized through alternative teaching methods and materials. Teacher D observes that children can learn when activities are tailored to their developmental level. Lastly, Teacher E highlights the importance of motivation, positive reinforcement, and making learning enjoyable, along with repetition to aid retention. Together, these insights suggest that a flexible and culturally responsive approach can enable Orang Asli children to achieve the KSPK at least at the 4+ age.

Based on Table 1 above, the analysis of preschool teachers' responses regarding effective teaching strategies for helping Orang Asli children interested in the Malay language reveals several impactful methods. So, Teacher A suggests that using simple short stories engages children and helps them learn new vocabulary in an exciting way. Teacher B advocates for games that encourage speaking in Malay, allowing children to practice without feeling pressure. Teacher C mentioned the effectiveness of *sewang* song, noting that singing in Malay aids memory retention and is enjoyable for the children. Meanwhile, Teacher D highlights the use of visual aids, such as pictures and flashcards, and the real objects in their environment, which helps children connect images to words. Finally, Teacher E points out the importance of group activities, where collaborative learning fosters communication in Malay and builds confidence among peers. Collectively, these strategies underscore the importance of interactive and enjoyable methods in facilitating language among Orang Asli children.

According to the data in Table 1, preschool teachers' responses regarding the effectiveness of the *Tunjang Komunikasi Bahasa Melayu* lesson in teaching children reveal its significant benefits. Teacher A confirms that the lesson provides clear ideas for teaching Malay in an engaging manner, although it requires adaptation to suit children's levels. Orang Asli achievement and proficiency levels are much lower compared to those of other children. Therefore, teachers adjust to a 4+ age level for those who are 6 years old. Teacher B appreciates the variety of activities offered, which make learning fun and encourage daily school attendance. Teacher C agrees that the lesson offers valuable tips for explaining concepts, noting that children are excited and enjoy learning at their own pace. In contrast, Teacher D highlights that the inclusion of songs and stories in the lessons makes e-learning Malay Language enjoyable for the children. Certainly, the singing of folk songs is beneficial for children's language development. Therefore, preschool teachers should be encouraged to integrate this practice into their lessons (Peter Obeng, John Brewu, 2022). Finally, Teacher E expresses increased confidence in teaching, as the lessons keep children engaged and motivated to learn Malay. Overall, these insights indicate that the *Tunjang Komunikasi Bahasa Melayu* lesson is a valuable resource for enhancing language instruction among preschoolers.

In contrast to the current situation, based on findings from interviews with Orang Asli preschool teachers in Table 1, it was found that Orang Asli children learning Malay language communication face difficulties in

pronouncing words, understanding simple sentences, and following simple instructions in Malay during morning circle activities. This is because they are still influenced by their native languages due to the transition process from home to preschool. This situation also applies to Orang Asli children who are unable to speak Malay fluently and only socialize within their own community. This leads to forgetting and a lack of fluency in Malay while in the preschool classroom. Such cultural practices become a barrier for teachers, as children tend to easily forget what they have learned.

Teaching Malay Language Communication to Orang Asli children is quite challenging, as shown in Table 1 on page 9 below (Awang *et al.*, 2022), which states that this issue exists because Orang Asli children are affected by their native language. When teachers teach Malay, but the children do not practice it at home or with friends, it causes them to face obstacles due to the differences between their mother tongue and the Malay language. Besides language barriers, there are also constraints in terms of teaching and learning resources. Most Orang Asli schools are located in remote areas, making it difficult to access and obtain teaching materials, which requires time and long distances. The culture and customs of the Orang Asli, which are closely connected to nature, do not align with the teaching methods based on KSPK from Bahagian Pembangunan Kurikulum (2017), causing preschool teachers to be more creative in using teaching materials from the surrounding environment for use in Malay Language Communication classes.

In addition, Orang Asli parents and children consider Malay Language Communication to be unimportant in their lives in the forest. This stereotype indirectly gives the impression that there is no necessity to master the Malay language, and Orang Asli shows a lack of initiative in learning it. It was found that the low self-esteem, shy, passive attitude of the Orang Asli, a lack of desire to engage with peers, also contributes to their minimal exposure to Malay Language and culture during preschool (Wook, Nordin, and Hassan, 2022). Orang Asli children require a pedagogical approach that aligns with their own cultural background and customs, which can attract their motivation to learn the Malay language.

## CONCLUSION

In Malaysia, preschool education aims to ensure that children in the country have access to facilities and opportunities to acquire the knowledge and skills they need according to their age, which is between four and six years old. This aspiration is in line with SDG4 on quality education, ensuring that every child, irrespective of their background, has access to quality and relevant education. Additionally, within the framework of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (IR 4.0), language mastery and communication are key to ensuring individuals can compete in an increasingly technology-driven and digital world. The environment in which the children are raised, the significant influence of the mother tongue, and the cultural disconnect in teaching materials all contribute to the understanding and practice of the Malay language. This situation necessitates the creativity and innovation of preschool teachers to foster a conducive learning atmosphere, given the constraints of space and time. Techniques and teaching methods should be tailored to the children's cognitive levels, and importantly, the consistent use of the Malay Language in the classroom can enhance the language proficiency of preschoolers. Therefore, it is crucial for all parties to collaborate in promoting Malay as a "language of knowledge" among Orang Asli preschoolers. Hence, a collaborative effort from all stakeholders is necessary to strengthen the incorporation of the Malay language in early childhood education, ensuring its continued relevance in Malaysia's cultural and educational landscape while elevating the culture of the Orang Asli community to the global stage.

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