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Exploration of Malay Language Acquisition and Learning Experience among Orang Asli Students

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Abstract. Orang Asli, the indigenous community in Malaysia, is among minority groups facing difficulties acquiring the Malay language as a second language. Poor achievement and lack of research on the secondary school level among indigenous students have motivated the inquisition for this study. Using an ethnographic case study research design, a qualitative research approach was used to explore indigenous students' Malay language acquisition and learning experience. A total of 13 participants were chosen by purposive sampling technique in this research, comprising eight Orang Asli students from the Temiar tribe, two teachers and three of the students' parents. To acquire an in-depth picture of the phenomena, the data was collected using observation methods, interviews, and field notes at the only secondary boarding school of indigenous people on the Malay Peninsula's west coast. The study findings were analysed using the continuous comparison method to identify the themes and subthemes involved. The findings revealed that the learning and acquisition of the Malay language as a second language were among the skills learned in school, just like any other subjects. This study shows that efforts to cultivate the use of the Malay language were found challenging due to the less conducive school and social environments for a second language acquisition process. Thus, this study contributes to a better understanding of indigenous students perceive their second language, which has implications for improving Malay language teaching and learning practices as a second language, particularly among the Orang Asli community in Malaysia.

Keywords: Malay language; second language acquisition; indigenous; experience; ethnographic case study

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1. Introduction

Malaysia is a plural society, and the Malay language has been elevated as the official and national language. It is the mother tongue for the Malays as native speakers and a second language for other ethnic groups, including Chinese, Indian and not to mention is indigenous people (Orang Asli) (Jumiya, 2014). Every ethnic group has its native language and culture. However, the Malay language served as the sole language of instruction in schools and universities. For native Malay language speakers, mastering this language does not account for many difficulties as it is mastered naturally. However, this situation is different for minority communities, the non-native speakers who consider it their second language. For these groups, the Malay language needs to be mastered through formal learning in schools, making some face trouble mastering it. The focus is often put on the Orang Asli community.

'Orang Asli' is an indigenous people of Peninsular Malaysia. The Malay language term translates to 'first people' or 'original people' (Muhammad Nazif, 2017). There are eighteen tribes of Orang Asli, and Temiar is one of the largest tribes of Orang Asli. Most Orang Asli reside in rural or secluded areas, typically left out of mainstream development, especially in education (Nordin et al., 2012). Therefore, it can be seen that the achievement in education among the Orang Asli communities has not yielded desired outcomes. Compared to pupils from other backgrounds, it was discovered that Orang Asli children lag considerably behind, accompanied by high dropout rates (Farah, 2011; Abdul Razaq & Zalizan, 2009; SUHAKAM, 2010; JAKOA, 2016; Wan Afizi et al., 2014; Norwaliza et al., 2014).

In the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 by the Ministry of Education Malaysia (2012), the dropout rate among Orang Asli students remained high. Only 30% of them completed secondary school, while the national average recorded 72%. According to the statistics for the passing rate of core subjects in the Primary School Achievement Test, also known as Ujian Pencapaian Sekolah Rendah (commonly abbreviated as UPSR), the national average recorded was 81%. However, the passing rate among Orang Asli primary schools was lower, at 61%. From that number, 35% of Orang Asli primary schools are in the low-performing school band (Bands 6 and 7). This record indicates that the high dropout rate among Orang Asli students causes low educational achievement. The achievement of Orang Asli students in Malaysia is underwhelming in almost all subjects. The lack of proficiency in the Malay language seems to be one of the main reasons contributing to the difficulty of understanding the language used by teachers (Wan Hafizi et al., 2014). This matter will escalate to the Malay language proficiency issues, a concern since this language is declared the national language of the country and the medium of instruction in public schools in Malaysia.

Based on the literature search, there is a lack of research on Malay as a second language related to how Orang Asli people perceive the language, especially in secondary schools. Previous studies are limited and focused more on Orang Asli students at the primary school level. However, there needs to be a continuum of research at the secondary school level to improve existing efforts. This study is

important to ensure that students finish their studies and take the Sijil Peperiksaan Malaysia (SPM) examination. Some previous findings show that the Orang Asli at the secondary school faces problems adapting to the education context (Sharifah et al., 2011). The 2019 news report from the Perak website portal stated that the dropout rate of secondary school students among the Orang Asli has increased in recent years. In 2014, it only recorded 36.3%, which increased to 40.01% in 2015, 42.43% in 2016, 42.90% in 2017 and 51.06% in 2018. These numbers prove that the problem of Orang Asli dropout at the secondary level has become more alarming, and there should be efforts to find the cause of this problem. Not many studies have been done to deepen and understand the difficulties Orang Asli students face in secondary school to graduate secondary school.

Based on the literature reviews and research findings on the low and poor schooling status of the Orang Asli indigenous students, the researcher felt the need to explore this group's second language acquisition and learning experiences since they are non-native speakers and not fluent in the Malay language. Moreover, exploring their acquisition of the Malay language and learning experiences will help improve their second language proficiency and learning abilities. Therefore, their experience acquiring and learning the Malay language is described through a qualitative lens.

1.1. Research Objective

This study is aimed to explore the experience of acquiring and learning the Malay language as a second language among Orang Asli Temiar students.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Malay Language as a Second Language

Malay language proficiency is essential because it is the primary tool in the teaching and learning process and a communication tool in Malaysia (Mohd Sharifudin 2019). It is common knowledge that the mastery of the Malay language as a second language among non-native speakers plays a critical role. The life of the plural society in Malaysia has demanded the Orang Asli community to master a language understood by every member of the society for communication (Abd & Karim, 2017). For communication, mastering the Malay language is essential to bridge the social gaps between the Orang Asli and outside communities (Mohd Sharifudin, 2019), allowing the community to trace the culture and civilisation of other ethnic groups and widening their view of the outside world. As such, the ability to master a second language by the Orang Asli community is a precious asset.

2.2. Background of Orang Asli Temiar

Anthologists introduced the term Orang Asli, and eighteen sub-tribes have been identified, comprising Negrito, Senoi and Proto-Malay (Carey, 1976; Nicholas, 2000; Burenhult & Majid, 2011). However, this study focused Temiar tribe, which is the second-largest tribe after the Senoi tribe. The village of the Temiar tribe is predominantly located on the hill slopes of the Titiwangsa Range in Perak, Pahang and Kelantan. When the Temiar tribal community opened settlement areas, they lived in longhouses for an extended period. After that, they lived

separately and together with their respective families. Their settlement areas are usually areas with abundant hardwood trees, such as Merbau trees. However, they do not build houses using wood (Mazlan et al. 2009). The Orang Asli are not a homogeneous group since each sub-group has its language and culture and considers itself distinct from others (Masron et al., 2013; JAKOA, 2011-2015; Musa, 2011). Linguistically, some northern Temiar Orang Asli communities (particularly the Senoi) speak Aslian languages, implying a historical connection between Orang Asli groups and the indigenous people of Burma, Thailand and Indo-China (Masron et al., 2013).

In terms of belief, the Orang Asli of Temiar is inseparable from animism belief. They believe that all entities are either visible or invisible by supernatural powers or spirits (Carey, 1976; Sharifah Zahhura et al., 2016). From the time of their ancestors, this community believes that the natural environment has numerous subtle beings and supernatural spirits. Based on the researcher's observation, it was found that the Temiar community in this study still adheres to their beliefs despite not living in their hometown. Obedience in maintaining these customs and beliefs, they try to follow what has been taught by their families. However, sometimes they have to adhere to the school rules.

2.3. Theoretical Foundation of The Study

Two main approaches founded this study, Stephen Krashen's (1985) five hypotheses of the Monitor Model and Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Krashen's (1985) hypotheses include the Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis, the Natural Order Hypothesis, the Monitor Hypothesis, the Input Hypothesis, and the Affective Hypothesis. The Learning-Acquisition Hypothesis describes the acquisition as an unconscious process, while learning is a conscious process that takes place in the classroom. The Monitor Hypothesis states that the information produced by the acquisition centre will be monitored. Changes will be made if it does not match the correct information. The Natural Order Hypothesis states that grammatical components of learning a new language have a natural order. The Input Hypothesis posits that if students are given access to easily understandable inputs, their learning will improve. Finally, the Affective Hypothesis states that a mental screen can be erased to prevent information from reaching the acquisition centre, slowing language acquisition (Du, 2009).

Aside from that, the ZPD concept is being used in this study to seek how the students' second language acquisition is perceived under the guidance of the adult. ZPD give perspective to the researcher to see where the students are at in terms of knowledge acquisition and learning. This theory informed the researcher to recognise the suitable teaching method/approach and establish the proper pedagogy for the students based on their distinctions, particularly their age levels if they are aware of these stages. In this matter, ZPD uses scaffolding to stimulate the students to perceive better the world around them (Sadia et al., 2021). Various perspectives can be linked to the way second language acquisition is developed. This is because theory and study in second languages began to evolve from a cognitively oriented perspective and expanded to a social orientation in essence.

There is a cognitively flowing perspective that sees second language acquisition as an individualistic mental process, functioning independently of the context and use of language. Other perspectives view second language acquisition as a process by looking at how a second language is acquired through interaction and used rationally, contingently, and according to context (Hamidah, 2012). This gives a new perspective to the researcher to take the cognitive and socio-cultural aspects of the Orang Asli in exploring their experience of mastering the Malay language as a second language.

According to the socio-cognitive approach to second language acquisition, children acquire language by interacting with more capable social members such as teachers, peers, family members and mentors (Sadia et al., 2021). The socio-cognitive approach also emphasises the fundamental interdependence and integration of cognitive and socio components of language acquisition. Putting it in another way, second language acquisition is a process that involves a child's cognitive and social environment.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study was designed to explore the experiences of the indigenous students using the qualitative ethnographic case study conducted for ten months. These months were school periods used to run a study throughout the year to explore their experiences in acquiring the Malay language as their second language. The chosen approaches are a combination of ethnographic and case studies, which mostly suit the objectives of this research. It provides a holistic and a stance in understanding the lived experience of the participants in a natural setting, as mentioned by Bogdan and Biklen (2007). In this study, patterns described through the rituals and social behaviours of a community were identified, such as their ideas and beliefs through their language and material activities (Fetterman, 2019).

3.2. Setting

The study was conducted at Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan (SMK) Bawong, Sungai Siput, Perak. This school is the only secondary school in Malaysia that enrolls students from the indigenous tribe of Temiar tribe. Usually, the Orang Asli community will assimilate with other majority races in school, especially in secondary school. However, the researcher chose this school to see precisely indigenous students perceive their second language in their comfortable community.

3.3. Participants

Eight participants were selected from Form 4 indigenous students from the Temiar tribe. Temiar tribe is one of the largest tribes of the indigenous communities in peninsular Malaysia. In this study, the researcher used pseudonyms to ensure the ethics of participants' confidentiality was guaranteed. In addition, data triangulation was made by involving two teachers and three of the students' parents as participants since they were also directly and indirectly contributors to the learning and acquisition of the Malay Language among

participants. The teacher participants were a Malay language teacher and a school counsellor.

Purposive sampling was performed based on the inclusion criteria (Marshall & Rossman, 2014) to guarantee that those picked had a good understanding of the issues being investigated (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The criteria set by the researcher were: Orang Asli students from the Temiar tribe who learn the Malay language as a second language, specifically; i) the participants should be in the same class as the researcher wants to control the bias as they received and learned the language from the same teacher; ii) the students need to be in the school since Form 1, and iii) the students are ready to participate in this study. The sample size was determined through data saturation (Kyngäs, 2020), which refers to a point where the responses become repetitious. Therefore, no further information can be collected by continuing the data collection.

3.4. Research Instruments and Data Analysis

This study collected data using semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and field notes. Using various data collection strategies allows researchers to triangulate data during the data analysis level while reinforcing the findings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). As permitted by the participants via consent form, their interviews were recorded for transcription purposes. For the duration of this study, the researcher acted as a 'visitor observer' as suggested by Miles et al. (2014). However, the role played by the researcher varies according to the situation. Sometimes, the researcher sat at a table with the participants, making indirect observations while assisting them in the ongoing teaching and learning. At other times, the researcher did not interfere with the teaching and learning process in the classroom for about 60 to 90 minutes. Both types of observations were either non-participatory or participatory observations; the researcher briefly noted all the findings that attracted the researcher's attention in the field notes. In addition, the researcher assumed the role as the main instrument by making observations during the researcher's involvement with study participants either in the classroom during teaching, outside the classroom during interview sessions or their involvement in activities outside the classroom. Most activities outside the classroom were when study participants were involved with school programs. Data collection was terminated after receiving repeated responses from the participants of the study, which imply that the data saturation point was achieved. The collected data were analysed qualitatively using Nvivo software. Themes and sub-themes were determined using the six steps of thematic analysis as suggested by Braun and Clark (2006).

4. Findings

The data from observations and individual semi-structured interviews were analysed thematically. The data were organised into two main themes, which are the (i) Language Development Activities, which can be seen in Table 1, and (ii) Self-Adjustment Conflict in Table 2.

4.1. Theme 1: Language Development Activities

The result showed that the indigenous students in this study experienced various ways of mastering the Malay language as a second language. Concerning second language proficiency, it refers to the way a speaker learns a second language and what they acquire naturally from the first language. To ensure that a speaker masters a second language, specific steps are followed to develop their language abilities. How they perceive the second language may differ from others. In this case, summary of the results of the eight participants who narrated their experiences in mastering the Malay language using different activities is seen in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Abstraction Results for Theme 1 Language Development Activities

Main Theme	Category	Sub-category
Theme1: Language Development Activities	Conscious Learning	Dependence on teachers
		Peer guidance
		Memorisation and drills
	Unconscious Acquisition	Language development through co-curricular activities
		Imitation and good association with teachers
		Social environment mixing

4.1.1. Conscious Learning

It was found that the participants perceived their language through conscious learning in a formal context in the classroom. The participants, the Orang Asli Temiar, are non-native speakers who use Malay as their second language. language development activities for the Malay language only occurred during school hours, either in the classroom or outside the classroom. In the background study conducted during school hours, the participants have gone through various experiences to develop their second language potential.

The main finding was that the students were highly dependent on the teacher while teaching and learning took place in the classroom. Based on the researcher's observation of Malay language teaching and learning activities in the classroom, it was discovered that the participants learned the Malay language through the tasks given with a high attitude toward dependence on their teachers. The participants could not complete the assigned tasks independently and required direct guidance from the teachers.

Through the researcher's observation during the teaching of essay writing, where the teacher taught the technique to construct the introductory paragraph, the teacher showed a clear demonstration of the writing technique on the whiteboard and guided the students on how to construct the paragraph (observation_11/7/2019). However, when the teacher assigned another assignment and asked participants to perform a group discussion, they failed to construct a satisfactory paragraph even though the teacher had provided the phrases to begin the sentence. During the given discussion time, the students were seen calling the teacher to their tables to ask about the given assignment. The

participants were found to be highly dependent on direct guidance from teachers for understanding and reviewing assigned assignments. It was found that the assignments could not be completed as they still needed ideas and sentences from the teacher (field note_11/7/2019). This observation was acknowledged by Teacher 1, stating that:

"They still expect the help of teachers greater than their efforts. If other students in other schools, the probability of the teacher's role is around 30-40% as a facilitator. Guide only. But here's the reverse. 70% are still teachers playing a role. Without expecting teachers, it means that it is quite difficult for us to develop their ability to speak orally and in writing."

The tendency of students to seek guidance from the teacher indicates the trust that they are trying to build not only to complete the assigned task but also to obtain information regarding the language learned. Teacher 1 said:

"... I try to minimise my role as a teacher. To give them independence. That's where I found it was not achieved. We have given info; hence, existing knowledge should already be there. We have repeatedly made practices, but when we gave them an assignment, they were still disturbed, stunted, affected in terms of time and so on. That's why I say that they still can't be let go. For students here, guidance should continue with a higher rate of teacher involvement than usual. "

The participants required a high level of teacher guidance even in topics taught by the teacher repeatedly. The same problem occurred when participants appeared confused and needed guidance from the teacher. To some extent, it affected the school's time allocated for teaching the Malay language.

On the other hand, this study found that Malay language learning among participants took place in the classroom through the guidance of their peers who were next to or close to them. In contrast, the teaching and learning process took place in the classroom. The participants have given their effort to ask questions to the friends they trusted more with the assumption that a friend with good academic performance would be able to give good answers and understanding to the questions asked. This was explained by the researcher's observation of Jerry, who was observed to change seats every time the Malay language lesson took place. When asked, Jerry replied:

What does Jerry do if he doesn't understand?

Ask a friend. Hilmi and Hairi always help.

I see Jerry sometimes sitting in the front and sometimes sitting in the back, why?

I like to sit in the front. Because it can be quick for me to get something.

Get what?

Able to learn (easy to understand). Hairi sat in front. I want to understand, I asked him. Hairi ... his brain is very genius. In all subjects. That's why I like sitting next to him. To ask, to get new knowledge. If it's wrong, it's hard, I asked. I don't understand, I asked him.

Also, the researchers found that participants tended and preferred to memorise new vocabularies that are considered high language to them. High language in this context carries the meaning of vocabulary that they rarely hear and use mainly in everyday use. Kelly said:

"Sometimes I don't know if the teacher uses high language. Like teacher Mat Nor, we don't understand how to use high language. I will memorise that word every night. But, the word he used, we don't understand what he means. It's hard when we only can listen to how the teacher uses it in the class but do not know how and when to use it. We only use it in essays because it sounds nice."

Based on the researcher's observation in the classroom, when the teacher delivers the teaching, the teacher ends the lesson with reinforcement exercises done in the classroom. Each student is provided with a worksheet in a file containing notes and Malay language exercises. Teachers use this file in teaching in the classroom by ensuring reinforcement exercises or drills are done together. This activity is done by reviewing the participants' work and ends with words of encouragement from the teacher. Through drills, teachers can reflect on teaching and provide direct guidance to students who face problems.

4.1.2. Unconscious Acquisition

The mastery of the Malay language of the Orang Asli Temiar students is also unconsciously developed through natural acquisition. Natural acquisition is the process of acquiring a language that takes place outside the classroom through the speaker's stimulation with the surrounding. Co-curricular activities are activities held to provide opportunities for Orang Asli Temiar students to develop their language potential. However, it is insufficient to assist the participants in being on par with native speakers. Still, it helps develop the participants' confidence in using the language. It is as said by Teacher 1:

"Kelly comes from an angle when she was involved as an MC. In terms of pronunciation, her intonation was getting more and more steady. In terms of the courage to face the audience as well, the feeling of nervousness, embarrassment is getting thinner. There is courage, there is seriousness, confidence, it seems that they have become more daring to use language in front of the audience."

The participants also acquired the Malay language by imitating what was said by the teacher and practising the use of the Malay language daily. The participants used this method since primary school. In addition, imitation through association with teachers can make the acquisition of the Malay language as naturally as possible. Teacher 2 said if students can get along well with teachers, this can break the barrier that prevents Orang Asli Temiar from using the Malay language. If they associate closely with the teacher, this will give them an advantage. They usually imitate what they hear and see. As he said:

"If they are friendly, they are close, they have a chat to joke, for all sorts of things. And that's where I finally saw there was a contribution to their language abilities. Compared to the embarrassment that is still thickening, when asked one or two questions, answering using one or two words is quite difficult."

Temiar Orang Asli has an inherent shy nature, and teachers are hoped to erode their shyness. Therefore, the students would answer questions, carry on the discussion, and give their opinions. This situation seems normal if in a regular school. However, it is difficult in a situation with the full presence of Orang Asli. When communicating with Orang Asli students, it is difficult to get feedback to encourage communication. However, suppose students can communicate by giving their own opinions. In that case, this situation can yield a positive development as hoped by the teachers in the school.

Other than that, interacting with the social surrounding is an opportunity for students to acquire the Malay language indirectly or naturally without involving formal learning about the laws of grammar. This happens with the attitude of experimentation and the desire of the participants to use the language. Language without use will surely be buried. A language needs a form of reinforcement through its use in daily communication. One of the ways to use it is through communicating with other speakers in the social environment. In the context of this study, the environment means using the Malay Language in schools.

The participants tried to communicate using the Malay Language with friends at school or in the village. However, it was found that the communication took place was in the form of trial and not a serious form of training to learn better or master the Malay Language. Communication using Malay language for participants was intended to joke to liven up the atmosphere of conversation, as said by the following participants:

"I like to talk like that. With friends. That friend is the same, likes to gossip. It's just try-try, sometimes I try to talk to my family and they will laugh. Do some pick-up line and the love it. Something fun about it."
[Shakila_SRI]

4.2. Theme 2: Self-Adjustment Conflict

Based on the findings, when the participants narrated their experiences in mastering the Malay language as a second language, they revealed that they faced conflicts in adjusting to school. This conflict is a dilemma faced by the participants in their efforts to develop their Malay language proficiency. Through the narration given by the participants, the researcher made a category classification into four categories, as shown in Table 2 below:

Table 2. Abstraction Results for Theme 2 Self-Adjustment Conflict

Theme	Category
Theme 2: Self-Adjustment Conflict	Emotional disorders
	Language barrier
	The negative stigma of the community
	Bound by exam-oriented

4.2.1. Emotional disorders

Based on data from interviews with participants, it was found that they faced emotional disturbances in adjusting to learning in school. Due to their instincts to love nature, the participants stated that they felt disrupted in learning due to longing for the atmosphere in their hometown. Usually, they are free to do activities close to nature, making the participants feel emotional when away from their hometown. This is as stated by Kelly:

"... in each subject, I am less focused. Because of a lot of playing. I kept thinking about my hometown. The thought of going to friends' houses, making me want to go back and get myself in the river. Want to jump into the river. I miss that so much." [Kelly_SRI]

When their emotions are disturbed, they become less motivated to study in school, thus going through things that are against school rules. Based on an interview with Teacher 2, she said that the emotional disturbance due to longing for their hometown made them return to their hometown on their own despite the distance. He recounted that:

have they ever run away from the school?

They have. The very beginning. Students arrived safely. They will ride anyone. The natives said that it is unique, they become brave, they can follow anyone who wants to go up (the village is uphill). For them, the surrounding villagers are their people to be reckoned with. [Teacher 2_SRI]

Therefore, the school has implemented various initiatives to overcome this problem. Based on the researcher's observation, the school implies various initiatives by setting up a gazebo that influences Orang Asli culture, namely 'Balai Sewang', to make them feel they belong at school. The interesting part is the construction of the 'Balai Sewang', which has elements of Orang Asli culture, a collaboration by the Parents and Teachers Association (PIBG) of the school involving parents of Orang Asli students who attend the school. Without expecting a wage in the form of money, parents work hard to prepare the 'Balai Sewang' for the convenience of their children. All these initiatives were implemented to ensure that the emotions of Orang Asli students are in the best condition to receive an education in school. The school also built a fishpond as a place for them to protect fish and a foster garden for students to cultivate. For each of these activities, the Orang Asli Temiar students are guided by certain teachers to ensure that they understand the real purpose of the initiatives undertaken by the school.

4.2.2. Language barrier

The participants said they faced barriers due to their mother tongue, the Temiar language. Participants admitted that they had an idea to write but lacked in the selection of appropriate vocabulary to use, as stated by Daus:

"In doing an essay for example. I want to make that sentence. There are many ideas, but I want to make that sentence... difficult. I'm stuck to find the words."

According to the participants, the major problem in essay writing is finding a suitable vocabulary. This is because they often face problems constructing sentences due to the lack of Malay language vocabulary, making them want to use their mother tongue. The participants admitted that they like writing in the Malay language. However, they are plagued by their poor Malay language vocabulary knowledge, making sentence construction difficult. In sentence construction skills, participants narrated that they took more time due to disruption in finding suitable vocabulary. The ability to find a suitable Malay language vocabulary cannot happen individually. It has become common for teachers who teach the Malay language to participants to use group discussions in writing essays. This was confirmed by the following Teacher 1:

"They are not impossible but rather slow. For whatever reason, because among other things, they are still bound by their mother tongue. This means that we see for ourselves in group activities, discussions, pairs and so on... they are still tied in terms of the use of their mother tongue more than the Malay language. Even though we have given a reminder, but they remain. It is difficult to free themselves to use the Malay language completely."

The dilemma faced by Orang Asli students was due to their reluctance to cultivate the use of the Malay language in schools, even in the context of teaching and learning in the classroom. This presents a great challenge to teachers to ensure that each verse constructed is grammatically correct.

4.2.3. Negative stigma of the community

Based on the findings of this study, participants also experienced conflict in adjustment due to the negative stigma of society that has a profound effect on them. This was due to the prejudice of the outside community towards the Orang Asli community that is behind the currents of modernity. The participants described their experiences of being often ridiculed, humiliated, and marginalised due to different physical characteristics and lifestyles from other societies. This experience was narrated by the participants of the current study, respectively, in the old school, which is a mixed school with students of various races. The following participant acknowledged this by Kelly:

Sometimes they say we're dirty, rotten. It's like we do not take a shower. If we passed in front of people's dorms, they would say ish... ..you guys so out people! (while thinly driven away).

Many people still do not open their eyes to these Orang Asli children. The scepticism of the outside community towards this community also occurs towards the school as the school is a school with a full population of Orang Asli. Therefore, it is possible that this conflict could disrupt their efforts to study in schools, the place for them to master the Malay language as a second language. This is likely due to the low self-esteem of Orang Asli adolescents in the school associated with the negative stigma they received from the outside community. However, participants felt comfortable with their current school making them more comfortable not mixing with the outside community.

4.2.4. Bound by exam-oriented

In addition, based on interviews with participants, the researchers found that participants felt bound by the examination orientation that is often emphasised in students faced by other schools. For example, Temiar Orang Asli students face problems when their efforts to learn Malay language, which requires new learning, are a form of skill that needs to be mastered from time to time. Yet, at the same time, they have to follow a certain exam format. In this case, for the participants, mastering the Malay language as a language to communicate daily is not difficult. However, Malay language proficiency is often measured through students' achievement in examinations. Therefore, the stipulations that need to be complied with based on the examination format make them feel burdened to master the Malay language. This is as stated by the following participant Hilmi:

"It's hard for us to make that cover. Want to draw a conclusion. Conclusion because I want to tell a story. Got to enter the proverb, the discourse marker. That's why it's hard to answer."

In writing each paragraph of an essay, some elements are needed to ensure that students can get good marks. Unfortunately, this makes the participants burdened as each element is a new thing that needs to be learned and understood. Suggestion

5. Discussion

This study found that overall, the mastery of Malay language as a second language among Orang Asli students from the Temiar tribe did not depend on their cognitive ability alone, as the speakers' social interaction with the social environment also influences the increase in their language proficiency. As discussed earlier, participants have repeatedly said that they improve their linguistic ability by learning it 'in school', meaning through formal learning of the Malay language system and structure in the classroom. However, informal acquisition's importance also significantly influenced their Malay language mastery, in line with the Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis by Krashen (1985).

Based on the data obtained, the language development activities described by the Orang Asli Temiar students in mastering the Malay language are through learning about the rules and structure of language in the classroom context, which is a conscious learning process. In this case, the learning process was focused on the formation of native speakers by training them to use the Malay language as native speakers. Based on the findings of this study, the study participants thought that to master Malay language, they needed to memorise and do a lot of drills so that the Malay language could be used in the right context. However, it was stated by Zulkifley (2011) that second language speakers, through enrichment learning, could develop language skills to form professionally styled language users.

In addition, the findings of this study demonstrated that almost all participants in this study narrated their experience of mastering the Malay language through participation in activities in the classroom. Their inclination was more towards the type of discussion-type activity. They preferred peer discussion as classmates

and with their teachers. In other words, activities such as conversation, problem-solving in groups, problem discussion and working in pairs or small groups were the most preferred ways of learning a second language. This is because the common practices of Orang Asli life in groups in real life make them prefer the way of learning through group discussion.

These findings also coincide with Vygotsky's view of Sociocultural Theory, asserting that active learning through discussion encourages collaborative interaction and creates a social space where adolescents help each other in resolving cultural situations and confusion as well as problems in language learning (Lantolf, 2000; Vygotsky, 1962; Lantolf & Thorne, 2007). This is termed ZPD, where learning takes place with the guidance of teachers and more skilled individuals. The emphasis given in this idea lies on the higher cognitive function where participants interact meaningfully with teachers as skilled individuals. At the same time, peers are more capable of developing their language skills and social skills appropriate to a particular culture. However, the researchers found that the level of dependence of the participants on the teacher was very high, making the participants on ZPD for a long time. This was acknowledged by the teachers involved with the study participants, who acknowledged that close guidance is needed in each time of learning despite repetitive learning that occurred. This will make it difficult for the participants to reach a proficient level in using the language learned.

In addition to the learning process, the study participants' language proficiency was also enhanced through informal acquisition through social interaction in communication and socialisation outside the classroom. The findings of this study showed that the ability of Orang Asli Temiar students to use the Malay language is evident because of their involvement in activities outside the classroom, especially active involvement in co-curricular activities. Furthermore, through the social interaction of Orang Asli Temiar students in the form of informal and non-learning that requires high focus, the language ability of the participants was found to improve from time to time. This was developed through the interaction between the participants with teachers, who are mostly Malay in the school.

This study has found that the role of the social environment impacted the increase in self-confidence of Orang Asli Temiar students to use the Malay language. What makes the study school different from other mainstream schools is its social environment. SMK Bawong is a school with a social community built to provide a positive learning environment for the Orang Asli community when they no longer have to compete with other races to stand out. From one perspective, it seems to marginalise these minority communities due to differences in Orang Asli's sociocultural practices that are different from other communities; yet, it operates under the same applicable policies and curriculum as other mainstream schools. This was seen to remove various social constraints reported in previous studies, such as power, gender and race, from the learning environment by providing equal resources and opportunities for second language learning. This study found that the study school environment with the capacity of all Orang Asli students, especially from the same tribe, allowed them to be more confident when

there was no competition between Orang Asli with the outside community from other mainstream schools. Here, they have the same opportunity to cultivate the use of the Malay language daily at school.

6. Conclusion and Implications

Based on the findings, the participants mastered the Malay language through conscious learning, which can be developed through teacher-student learning in the classroom. Other than that, informants also absorb the Malay language unconsciously through acquisition within their surroundings developed outside the classroom. This research has provided insight into how these young indigenous secondary students perceive their second language. This research suggests that a second language is acquired naturally by the interactions with their surroundings. The language input would come from their teachers, friends, parents, siblings, other adults, and other sources in their environment, which would help develop the students' understanding of the structure of the Malay language.

This study has significant implications, especially for teachers' teaching practices. Moreover, this study also expands our understanding of how Orang Asli students at the secondary level perceived their second language and how to encourage students to think about improving the pedagogical practice in second language teaching. This study also shows a need for more studies on the construction of modules that emphasise the implementation of second language acquisition. This output hopes to add more insights to the less-explored area of indigenous children, specifically among secondary students, in teaching approaches employed by second language teachers. Malay language as a second language is supposedly not to be learned by tedious drills that necessitate cognitive ability. It can be simply learned if students use the language naturally with others, particularly their peers. This might be accomplished by giving the students as many opportunities to use the language as possible, such as group work and role-playing, which will increase the children's confidence in using the language. As a result, and because this was a qualitative study with a few instances, a quantitative follow-up study to examine if the findings can be applied to other groups is recommended.

7. References

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