THE INTEGRATION OF CULTURAL ELEMENTS IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASSROOMS: A CASE STUDY OF SELECTED ORANG ASLI SCHOOLS IN PAHANG, MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT

Background and Purpose: This study examined the challenges faced by the Orang Asli students from the Jah Hut tribe and their reactions towards the integration of their cultural elements in learning the English language at two Orang Asli schools in Temerloh, Pahang, Malaysia. It also sought to investigate students’ and teachers’ motivation in learning and teaching the subject.

Methodology: This critical qualitative inquiry employed a case study approach employing semi-structured interviews and non-participant classroom observations. A total of 14 participants were selected through purposive sampling technique, which consisted of ten Orang Asli students, three Orang Asli teachers, and one Malay teacher from two Orang Asli’s schools in Temerloh district.

Findings: The findings indicated that integrating the Orang Asli’s own culture into the English lessons had captivated their interest immensely. The most motivating and stimulating lessons were centred around cultural celebrations, the use of the native language, cooking the Orang Asli delicacies, and parading and explaining their outfits and costumes. Teachers responded to the importance of Culturally Responsive Teaching strategies’ acceptance and use in the classrooms regardless of the composition of the students. Similarly, they felt that the knowledge of understanding the cultures of others is critical as
it allows one to understand the struggles, and slowly develop a sense of appreciation towards differences.

**Contribution:** The study highlights pertinent information regarding the issue of a ‘one size fits all curriculum’, especially in the teaching of the English language with the diversity of people in Malaysia. It also provides suggestions on classroom teaching strategies for multicultural classrooms. It also adds input to the existing literature on the integration of cultural elements in the teaching of the English language to the *Orang Asli* students.

**Keywords:** Integration, culturally responsive teaching, *Orang Asli*, *Jah Hut*, ESL classrooms, cultural elements, indigenous pedagogy, English language curriculum.


**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Malaysia, a developing country in the Southeast Asian Region has moved towards providing better education for her multicultural and multireligious citizens. The government puts its best efforts into ensuring showgoers receive the best education possible. Several frameworks have been implemented in the education system since her independence in 1957. Sivalingam (2021) clarified that the education system in Malaysia has had experienced various reforms since 1824, and the schooling system started to be structured during British occupation. Despite these ongoing reforms, it was reported that the Indigenous communities, the *Orang Asli* or *Orang Asal* (the original peoples) are still adapting to everchanging curricula. It is stated in the Malaysian Educational Report that the contents of the curricula would encompass all knowledge, skills, norms, values and, most importantly cultural elements and beliefs. However, many have attested that the curriculum did not cater to the needs of the indigenous communities (Wong & Abdillah, 2018).

For the *Orang Asli* students, their adaptation towards the learning process is more challenging than other students as they have limited access to resources, restrictive geographical conditions, and their worldview on education. Nevertheless, Amir (2019) reported that eventually many parents are sending their children to schools, as some have realised that while they stick to their age-old traditions, the world around them is evolving, thus the need for education. Kamaruddin (2018) discovered that only 2062 out of 3200 *Orang Asli*
children remained in school until the end of Secondary Five all over peninsula Malaysia. He stated that the difference between the number of *Orang Asli* students who enrolled in primary school as compared to secondary school was significantly high which showed that many were unobservant towards advancement in education and only completed primary education.

For the disadvantaged population, particularly the indigenous community, they are believed to have progressively lagged far behind in many aspects, especially in education. One of the many significant challenges for educators is the development of curricula and teaching and learning approaches for the *Orang Asli* children. Standardised curricula and examinations in Malaysia’s education system segregate them much further. The system diminishes the significance of schooling for the *Orang Asli* children by requiring them to learn unfamiliar socio-cultural aspects of the majority and sit for examinations that test knowledge they are not interested in acquiring. They hold their culture dear to them, and these are not reflected in the curriculum. Notwithstanding the evidence, teaching methods and approaches should accommodate the needs of the indigenous communities.

Thus, the main goal of the present study is to examine the extent to which the integration of the *Orang Asli*’s cultural elements into English language teaching can positively motivate teachers and students in teaching and learning the language. Specifically, the study focuses on the challenges faced by the *Orang Asli* students in English language classrooms, the best way to integrate cultural elements into English language teaching, and the teachers’ perceived actions when they need to incorporate students’ cultural backgrounds in their lessons. The findings of this study are hoped to contribute to developing the *Orang Asli* curriculum, especially in English Language Teaching.

Despite the ongoing reforms in the English curriculum, it is found that the *Orang Asli* communities are still adapting to the current curricula which are Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Rendah (KSSR) for primary school and Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Menengah (KSSM) for secondary school. It is stated in the *Definisi Kurikulum Kebangsaan* (National Curriculum Definition) that these curricula would encompass all knowledge, skills, norms, and most importantly cultural elements and beliefs. However, the current curricula seem to fall short at catering to the needs of *Orang Asli* students (Wong & Abdillah, 2018) as it requires localisation of context, content and materials to entice the youngsters to stay in school.

For the *Orang Asli* students, their adaptation towards the learning process is harder as compared to other students as they have limited access to different means of learning and their attitudes towards attending schools are likely less than positive. Furthermore, they may also face different challenges as some of their parents do not see the relevance of schooling.
Nevertheless, some Orang Asli are already involved in the industrial workforce. Following the development of their community within the society, they gradually realised the importance of education for their children. Amir (2019) reported that many parents are sending their children to classes or to schools, as they are slowly grasping the reality that while they stick to their age-old traditions, the world around them is evolving.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Culture and Language Learning

The concept of culture is unique and complex because every society exhibits its own perceived cultures, unspoken and unconscious rules. Clothes, food, music, and language are considered as the most visible customs in society. Unspoken rules in courtesy and modesty are also a part of the culture. Deep culture additionally consists of intense emotional actions, for instance, attitudes toward their elders or problem-solving roles and ethics. As people see the world differently, the cultures of every society in this world are also varied. Therefore, understanding culture can help people establish relationships with people from different cultural norms.

Orang Asli or Orang Asal (lit. Original People) in Peninsula Malaysia are ethnic minorities who hold their unique languages, knowledge systems and beliefs and own invaluable knowledge of natural resources management (Masron, Masami, & Ismail, 2013). They further explained that Orang Asli upheld their diverse development ideas based on their traditional values, visions, needs and priorities.

In Peninsula Malaysia, the Orang Asli was the earliest population which existed more than 5,000 years ago. Masron et al. (2013) further elaborated that most of them were thought to have come from China and Tibet, having followed migration routes through Southeast Asia's mainland before settling in Peninsula Malaysia and the Indonesian archipelago. With the migration, they brought with them their customs, beliefs, language and culture.

Correspondingly, language is paramount in any culture. Alshenqeeti (2020) mentioned that culture and language are interrelated, intertwined and interdependent aspects of social life. Language learning, although plausible, would be difficult without embedding culture be it the target language culture or the local culture of the community. In Malaysia, besides Malay, the Chinese and Indians formed a larger percentage of the racial divide. The Orang Asli (although are split up into hundreds of small tribal groups), only accounts to about 0.7% of the population. Teaching English to the ESL learners is believed to be challenging to many language teachers due to these diverse cultural and multilingual backgrounds. Since the English language is a compulsory subject taught in schools, it is meant to help students to communicate and use the
language in formal or non-formal interactions. However, the Orang Asli students are believed to have very little interest in the subject resulting in problems such as being absent, lacking motivation, disinterestedness, or failing in the subject.

These increasing problems in the teaching and learning of English among the Orang Asli students had sparked researchers’ interest. A plethora of research has been carried out to find solutions to this issue. One of the alternatives that may be suitable for English teaching is infusing the Orang Asli cultural elements in the teaching and learning process. However, in Malaysia, there is a paucity of literature on the usage of cultural integration in the English class among the Orang Asli community.

Furthermore, standardised curriculum and examination are deemed the most equitable methods of ensuring equity in an examination-oriented system such as Malaysia’s education system. On the other hand, the system diminishes the significance of schooling for Orang Asli’s children by requiring them to learn unfamiliar things and sit for examinations that test the knowledge they have not acquired or are not interested in acquiring.

Past research indicated that the English language is considered foreign to the Orang Asli students (Ganapathy et al., 2022). Ganapathy et al. (2022) stated, ‘the Orang Asli rarely use English in their daily lives and are categorised as English as a foreign language (EFL) learners’ (p. 88). There is another factor that affects the perception of foreign language learning. English is not only alien to the Orang Asli students but also the language of the colonials. This indoctrination of the master and the colonised has been ingrained in the minds of the indigenous communities. In addition, they still practised their exclusive customs and maintain the social, cultural, economic and political characteristics including their language which are distinctive from the dominant societies they live in (Masron et al., 2013).

The major challenge of this issue may be that the indigenous students eventually hold onto the essential importance of their traditional customs, especially language. Masron et al. (2013) further explained that, indigenous people hold their diverse values and customs to obtain recognition of their identities and to protect and sustain their collective physical and cultural traditions.

2.2 The Jah Hut Tribe
Ja means People, and Hut-Forest, literally means people of the forest. They are a fragment of bigger tribal communities in the Senoi clan (the largest group of Indigenous people in Malaysia) and are believed to have originated from the Minangkabau people of Pagar Ruyung.
in Sumatera, Indonesia. Their language, dated back from the Austro-Asia language, is part of Mon-Khmer language.

There are currently more than 5000 Ja hut people in Jerantut and Temerloh, the state of Pahang in Malaysia, and the number is still growing. Generally, the Jah Hut people do not place much value on education and skill development. They depend on the forest for income. However, due to industrialisation, many took the opportunity to seek employment away from the forests. Many are unskilled and earned a living by doing odd jobs. Thus, their employment is sporadic, unreliable, and often takes works far from home.

The Ja Huts maintained and practiced their values inherited and learned from their ancestors. The Orang Asli’s concepts of giving, empathy for others, and a sense of community are particularly important. Malaysians should be inspired by the concepts and values that are cherished by these Orang Asli. Bonta (2017) revealed that the Orang Asli cherished their historical and spiritual connections to their lands. If the government takes their traditional lands away from them, they lose their identities, which affects their mental and social well-being.

2.3 English as a Second Language in Malaysia

English is a compulsory subject for all Malaysian students. In 1970, the country introduced and implemented the National Education Policy which was based on the Razak and Rahman Talib reports. The Rahman Talib report highlighted the fact that bilingual (Malay language and English) medium of instructions in schools were to be used with the hope that it would help unite the different races in Malaysia (Darmi & Albion, 2013). However, in 1983 the English language as the medium of instruction was phased out which left the Malay language as an exclusive medium of instruction. Nevertheless, English is still regarded as an important second language taught in schools and became part of the curriculum for both, primary and secondary schools.

2.4 Issues in the English Language Curriculum

Yong (2010) claimed that placing a high priority on formal evaluation to pass classroom assessments and government examinations, most Malaysian educational institutions conduced superficial learning. She found that Malaysian students preferred tests and examinations to assignments. Furthermore, she added that most of the students wanted good grades, which forced them to focus solely on passing examinations to earn a place in tertiary education. They perceived good grades in tertiary education, as a ticket to a good career after graduation. Owing to that, little attention was given to developing their socio-cultural skills such as getting
involved in community engagement for the disadvantaged, especially the Orang Asli or taking up another language, for that matter.

The *Orang Asli* has a unique language, knowledge system and beliefs. To reiterate, English is a foreign language for them, as the Malay language comes second or third depending on their localities. In addition, they still practice their exclusive customs and maintain the social, cultural, economic and political characteristics, including their language, which are distinctive from the dominant societies they live in. It is just unfortunate that the school curricula do not include these rich cultures in the English language curriculum as the newly introduced CEFR curriculum and books adopted Western-based content.

### 2.5 Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT)

According to Goe, Bell, and Little (2008), effective teachers do not only provide subject matter instruction or focus on measuring student achievement, but they also 1) hold high expectations for all students, 2) contribute to positive academic and development of classrooms and school, 3) use diverse resources, and 4) collaborate with colleagues, administrators, parents, and education professionals. To positively contribute to students’ academic development, teachers must be sensitive and responsive to their students’ cultural backgrounds. According to Wah and Nasri (2019), CRT has gradually gained attention as an alternative to enhance academic achievement since the last two decades.

In addition, Ebersole et al. (2016) suggested alternatives for teachers on how to re-conceptualise culture-based subjects to help them not only at improving their teaching activities but also to deepen their perspectives. The findings suggested that in order to re-conceptualise culture-based subjects, teachers and educators must look at these three themes: the activities done in culturally responsive lessons, the usage of culturally responsive teaching as a perspective, and the characters of a culturally responsive educator.

Wah and Nasri (2019) discussed positive improvements towards students’ learning using culturally responsive pedagogy. They affirmed that Culturally Responsive Pedagogy did influence the students’ involvement in their academic achievement positively. Additionally, Idrus (2014) claimed that CRT strategies enable teachers to embed values and encourage students to appreciate others around them.

Based on these studies, it can be concluded that CRT can serve as an alternative for teachers to re-conceptualise their culture-based subjects and help them improve their teaching activities especially in the implementation of the curricula. However, little is known on how CRT can influence the teaching of English among the *Orang Asli* students.
2.6 The Orang Asli Curriculum

The Ministry of Education Malaysia announced in the Malaysian Educational Development Plan 2013-2025 that a specific curriculum known as (Kurikulum Asli and Penan (KAP) would be introduced to Orang Asli and Penan pupils replacing the traditional curriculum and pedagogy that were commonly used in Orang Asli schools. Abdul Razaq and Zalizan (2009) and Norwaliza and Ramlee (2015) argued that the standard curriculum KBSR and KBSM and methodology may not be suitable for indigenous students. Indigenous pedagogy has not been included in the curricula of teacher education programmes in Malaysia’s teacher training institutes and universities. As a result, practically all school teachers may be viewed as inadequate to educate and care for Orang Asli students. Wan and Idrus (2021) reported that most of their respondents mentioned their first ever experience teaching in an Orang Asli community and meeting Orang Asli students as ‘terrifying’ and ‘frightening’. The findings showed that they were not prepared of what to expect and were not familiar with the education issues and cultures of the Orang Asli.

It is fundamentally understood that teachers need to set a good example by being culturally sensitive to their students. Having teachers from the same community would be an advantage. However, the scarcity of Asli-born teachers has exacerbated the problem. KAP aims to improve the quality of education for Orang Asli students and establish a comprehensive educational landscape in their settlements to ensure education for all. However, to date, no significant changes have been reported to happen.

Abdullah et al. (2013) discovered that the current English curriculum used for the Orang Asli students could not attract their interest during lessons. The language education standard used among the indigenous ethnic in Malaysia was considerably low. They also found that the lessons were unsuccessful at garnering students’ interest, and the problem was commonly due to the commitment given by the teachers during their learning process.

In support of CRT, Norwaliza and Ramlee (2015) were convinced that there was a dire need for schools to improve the curriculum used for the indigenous community. In the same vein, Abdul Wahab et al. (2020) mentioned five elements that are needed to be considered in an indigenous school curriculum, namely music, medicines and herbs, tools for hunting, handicrafts, and forestry. The study confirmed that the elements used gradually helped the community to sustain their lives in the forest and guide the policymakers who are responsible for the primary schools’ syllabus for the Orang Asli community.
Creativity in teaching through the indigenous pedagogy, the framework used for Orang Asli students, the construction of the forest school framework and the inculcation of Orang Asli’s cultural elements could possibly be the platform for reform in their curricula.

2.7 Student Motivation
Student motivation begins with students’ inclination to partake in the learning process. They may seem to be equally motivated to perform a task, but the sources of their motivation may differ. A motivated student may undertake an activity “for its own sake, for the enjoyment it provides, the learning it permits, or the feelings of accomplishment it evokes” (Lepper, 1988, p. 292).

An unmotivated student performs “to obtain some reward or avoid some punishment external to the activity itself,” (Lepper, 1988, p. 292) for instance, grades or teacher approval. Marshall (1987) defined motivation as the meaningfulness, value, and benefits of academic tasks to the learner whether or not they are interested. On the other hand, motivation in learning according to Ames (1992) ‘is characterised by long-term, quality involvement in learning and commitment to the process of learning’ (p. 261).

Chen and Yang (2017) used CRT as a motivation tool in their study. Prior to the study, ESL students were said to show negative interest in the English language. The outcome of the study indicated that the CRT pedagogy had successfully increased participation in the classroom regularly.

Unquestionably, motivation enhancement cannot be equated with the total number of changes in behaviours rather the ways in which students view their engagement in learning.

3.0 RESEARCH DESIGN
Critical qualitative inquiry through a case study approach employing semi-structured interviews and classroom observations was used. Critical Qualitative Research challenges modernist orientations toward research by using social theory, designs, and research practices that emerge from critical questions like Who/what is heard? Who/what is silenced? Who is privileged? Who is disqualified? (Steinberg & Cannella, 2012).

According to Mackey and Gass (2015), case studies, on the other hand, are designed to give a comprehensive overview of language learning or usage in a specific demographic and situation. It provides thorough descriptions and observations of a specific group of learners in their specific learning settings. It fits the goal of this research which is to identify the extent to
which the use of cultural elements has positive effects on students’ motivation in learning the English language.

3.1 Methods
Semi-structured interviews and classroom observations were conducted to gather data from the respondents. Four classroom observations were conducted. Form 3 students were chosen and were required to take part in reading lessons. Reading texts were carefully chosen by the teachers, which included the cultural practices of indigenous communities around the world. The teachers had at least eight years of exposure to English language teaching experience.

The non-participant observations by the researchers did not turn out to be successful at the beginning as the students were aware of outsiders in their classrooms. They were extremely shy and reclusive. However, after being conciliated by their teachers, they relented albeit wary and concerned. It was obvious by their facial expressions. Observation protocol was used as different researcher was allocate different classes to observe. Notes from the observation from all the researchers were assembled and analysed.

The observations on the reading lessons took place in the classrooms where all the students were given selected texts under the theme of People and Culture. Teachers were also free to use their own texts. The topics of the lesson were about Circumcision Ceremony, Dance Rituals, Food and ensembles in the Jah Hut tribe. The researchers observed the reactions of the students towards the text and their teachers as they were reading to gauge their participation in the activities. Only one observation for each teacher was carried out, resulting in a total of four observations. There were three researchers involved.

3.2 Respondents and Setting
SMK Kuala Krau and SMK Penderas in Temerloh, Pahang were chosen as they make up of predominately indigenous students’ population. These schools housed more than 95% of the Orang Asli students. A total of 14 participants were selected for the semi-structured interviews, which consisted of ten Orang Asli students, three Orang Asli teachers, and one Malay teacher (refer to Tables 1 and 2 below for the detailed information on the respondents). Permission to conduct the study were granted by the State Education Sector and schools’ principals. Verbal consent were obtained from the participants. Thematic analysis was carried out following Braun and Clarke (2021).
### Table 1: Students’ detailed information *All are Ja Huts*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Tribe</th>
<th>School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S1</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Ja Hut</td>
<td>SMKKK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S2</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Ja Hut</td>
<td>SMKKK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S3</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Ja Hut</td>
<td>SMKKK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S4</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Ja Hut</td>
<td>SMKKK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S5</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Ja Hut</td>
<td>SMKKK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S6</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Ja Hut</td>
<td>SMKKK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S7</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Ja Hut</td>
<td>SMKP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S8</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Ja Hut</td>
<td>SMKP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S9</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Ja Hut</td>
<td>SMKP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S10</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Ja Hut</td>
<td>SMKP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 4.0 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

#### Table 2: Teachers’ detailed information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Tribe</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>TESL/NO</th>
<th>Teaching Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T1</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Ja Hut</td>
<td>SMKKK</td>
<td>TESL</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T2</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Temiar</td>
<td>SMKKK</td>
<td>Sports</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T3</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Semai</td>
<td>SMKP</td>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T4</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Malay</td>
<td>SMKP</td>
<td>TESL</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results and discussion revolved around five themes which were derived from the analysis both from semi-structured interviews with the teachers and the students and the non-participant observations. Coding, categorising and labelling were done rigorously to ensure the themes are precisely what they represented. The themes are as follows:

- Perception of Students and Teachers on teaching and learning the English language.
- The use of *Orang Asli* Culture in the classrooms
- Teachers’ challenges in teaching the English language
- Students’ and Teachers’ motivation
- Culturally Responsive Teaching
4.1 Orang Asli Students’ and Teachers’ Perceptions towards Learning and Teaching the English Language

To reiterate, there were 10 Jah Hut students interviewed. All were in Form 3. Firstly, seven out of 10 said that English is a difficult subject and that this was the least interesting subject. Among the reasons given were; uninterested, the language was too difficult, they did not understand any English, and they could not relate to the content of the book. As S4 stated, ‘Saya tak faham apa aitu Halloween tapi orang kami percaya kepada hantu.. (smile) (I don’t understand what Halloween is, but we believe in spirits) (S4: 28). Others said that they were always scared and had no confidence in the English class. S1 said “Nak bercakap tapi tak confident” (I want to speak (English), but I am not confident) (S1: 25).

The three students who stated that English is interesting and fun are the children of the teachers teaching in the same school. S2 and S3 mentioned that they like learning English because they can learn a new language. Meanwhile, S8 said that she liked English class because she understood the language and that she watched a lot of English movies at home. She also stated that English is an international language.

It is not a surprise when teachers agreed with what most of the students mentioned that the syllabus is way too difficult for the students to grasp. Often time teachers had to adapt their teaching styles, the language and the materials used with the students. T4, who is the most experienced teacher, said that ‘Over the years, I have come to believe that the only way to get through to these children is to speak their language, I now can speak basic Ja Hut’ (T4: 98). She continued, ‘although I have a degree in TESL, I was really struggling to teach English in this school at the beginning. I did not speak any English for the first 6 months’ (T4: 105).

The notes from the observations carried out by the researchers highlighted different scenarios. The researchers were in agreement that most of the students seemed extremely shy and refused to have any communication with them. However, with a little coaxing and pacifying from the teachers, they began to show their interests towards the subject and at times they were believed to have forgotten about the observers’ existence. As Researcher 1 put it, ‘I did not expect the students to warm up to me after being mollified by the teacher (T10). They looked like they were enjoying the lesson on circumcision. They were struggling to read, but that did not hamper their understanding after some explanations and guidance from the teachers. The teacher was hilarious and often used a few foreign words that I did not understand. Perhaps it’s the Jah Hut language (Researcher 2).

Against the backdrop of reluctance and disinterest in the English lessons reported from the semi structured interview, the observations painted a different picture. It can be said that
teachers’ creativity is the key to students’ motivation and interest in the classrooms (Fan & Cai, 2022; Huriyah, 2019; Johnson, 2017) This was confirmed by Huriyah (2019) in her study in which she mentioned:

A teacher’s creativity is important in instilling the students’ motivation to learn. The teachers must strive to improve their ability and their skill to search and find a new one or combine some techniques of teaching English in order to make the teaching and learning process enjoyable for the students… (p.239).

4.2 The Use of Ja Hut’s Cultural Materials During Lessons

The students were asked about what they felt when their teachers brought in new materials to class. Below are some of the excerpts of their surprise reactions:

Table 3: Integration of Ja Hut Cultural elements. *The actual transcripts were in Malay

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How do you feel when your teachers integrate the Ja Hut cultural elements during your English lesson?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S5 The teacher is very committed. I like the new her! I was pleasantly surprise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S7 I feel appreciated and it gave me more motivation to learn. I could see that my friends were equally attracted to the lesson and they were more active.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S8 It makes me feel that I matter to the teacher. My sense of belonging deepens, and I am proud of my cultures, instead of being ashamed of them. I don't need to make or change myself or my friends to be 'Malays', instead I can proudly call myself 'Orang Asli' or 'Orang Asal'.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S10 It blew my mind totally. I did not expect that my teacher would discuss something that is very close to our hearts. I can’t wait to tell my mother!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the four responses above, needless to say that the students were pleasantly surprised by the change of materials used by their teachers. It looked like they really appreciated the teachers’ effort to motivate the students to at least ‘like’ their English lessons. S2 lamented ‘I hope it stays this way so that I will come to class everyday’ (S2: 45). S5 also agreed ‘I could stay in school all day (chuckled)’ (S5:72). The observation notes from the researchers were congruent to the students’ behaviour and acceptance to the materials used.
In relation to the above, Byram et al. (2002, as cited in Alshenqeeti, 2020) explained that there is a need to teach and introduce the foreign language with a representation of the target culture in order to help students enhance their language knowledge and use it within their original setting. It is also widely accepted that the non-English speaking countries have slowly integrated their local culture into the English Language Teaching (ELT) due to the fact that it helps the language learners to acquire foreign languages and to avoid creating unnecessary obstacles for them to be successful language learners.

4.3 Students' expectations on the types of Cultural Elements introduced in English Lessons

Below are some of the elements mentioned by the students that they wanted to have in their English class.

Table 4: Students’ feedback on types of cultural elements that should be integrated in English lesson

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Feedback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S1</td>
<td>Teach about other cultures (Indian, Malay, Orang Asli)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S3</td>
<td>Teach about other cultures (dancing, cooking, marriage ceremony)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S7</td>
<td>language, food, clothes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S8</td>
<td>games, marriage, clothes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S10</td>
<td>celebrations, festival, hunting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the responses given by the respondents above, it is apparent that they were suggesting some cultural elements that are related to their tribal practices, which may be suitable for the English lesson. In his feedback, S3 mentioned that all the cultural elements especially celebrations such as the Sewang dance and marriage ceremonies should be learned by all. S1 expressed her surprise when the researcher approached the class teacher and proposed the use of cultural integration during in the lesson because she has never experienced such meaningful lesson before from other teachers.

S10 on the other hand mentioned about the hunting practices which is now fading away in their culture. He too felt appreciated when his teacher brought in articles about hunter and hunting during their lesson.
From the responses, it can be concluded that perhaps almost all the students gave similar suggestions, which are to use other elements of culture in English class such as dancing, marriage, celebration, food, clothes, games, and language. In the researchers’ observation notes, the words ‘enjoy and enjoyment’ were mentioned several times. This could mean that the suggestions made by the students on the cultural elements they wanted to have in the lessons are based on things that they enjoyed the most and can be shared with their community. The findings are in harmony with Abdul Wahab et al. (2020) when they found the Orang Asli community suggested five different elements to be incorporated into pedagogy which are music, medicines and herbs, tools for hunting, handicrafts, and forestry. All these items are very much related to their daily lives.

4.4 Motivation and the Integration of Cultural Elements into English Language Teaching

Despite being nervous during the English class, many students mentioned that they were more motivated to learn the English language with the integration of cultural elements into the lesson. The students could have more straightforwardly provided ample evidence on how cultural integration affected their motivation, especially when they were conscious of speaking another language, thus making them feel doubtful about what they were saying, they looked contented. This could be seen when the teacher integrated students’ cultural elements (such as hunting) in the lessons, they showed more interest in learning and willingly shared their cultural practices with the class. Therefore, it can be said that it is crucial for a teacher to realise students’ inclinations and interests and be responsive towards what their Orang Asli students need in the English classroom. Even though the curriculum does not integrate cultural elements of Orang Asli, teachers should embed those elements into their teaching to further promote positive attitudes of their Orang Asli students. The observations note clearly mentioned that the students’ spirit was high and they seemed to love their lessons on the different types of food prepared by the Jah Hut community.

According to Nita Sari (2017), learning a language through the cultural elements in the class will give the students reasons for them to study the target language. She further added that this way will not only develop the learners’ curiosity but will also enhance their motivation. Sugirin, Sudartini, and Nurhayati (2011) explained that “only through introducing and developing understanding of the culture of the target language will a language learner be able to function properly in the target language” (p. 235). Additionally, they mentioned that there are two aims in language teaching first one is to teach students how to learn a language and second one is to raise a level of understanding towards language and culture.
4.5 Teachers’ Perception on the Integration of Cultural Elements in English Language

To introduce the principle of culturally responsive education in the learning-teaching procedures, it is important to consider the educators’ perception on this approach and to find out whether it is convenient to use it in daily learning. Rostami (2016) further added that ‘some teachers may have some reservations regarding the inclusion of culture in language classrooms’ (p. 1062).

All four teachers gave quite similar responses when asked if they have integrated cultural elements in their classroom. All of them agreed and they had different situations where they had integrated several cultural elements into the lesson. However, when asked if they have used the Culturally Responsive Teaching approach in their lessons, they seemed puzzled as they were not familiar with the term. When explained, they agreed that they somehow integrated culture in their lessons by making comparisons to the cultures of the majority, the Malays.

T1 responded by saying that the best way to get the students to be interested is to have cross curricular elements by incorporating cross-curricular topics in the daily lessons. ‘It is best way to treat the students equally despite their lacked of knowledge of the world outside their village’ (T1: 112). T3 said ‘I think I have been doing that all along’ (T3: 99).

Overall, the teachers gave positive remarks and feedback on how the students responded when the teachers integrated the cultural elements in their classes. T2 claimed that her students were filled with excitement, and it helped them to interact with each other better. Meanwhile, T3 reported that by integrating students’ culture, her students gave positive reactions, and they gave their full cooperation during the class. Hence, it helped them to have meaningful relations and fostered a good relationship with their friends in the class.

However, this contradicts, what Love-Kelly (2020) found in her study in that she stated that the teachers had problems while implementing this pedagogy (CRT and the integration of cultural elements) due to time constraints for the content scheduling and various learning alternatives in the learning process. This can be remedied if teachers are carefully prepared for the task. There is a need for specific courses related to indigenous pedagogy and psycho-social make up of indigenous communities. These courses can help trainee teachers develop their personality and increase their responsiveness towards other cultures.

Although this study meant to shed light on the importance of integrating culture in language learning and teaching, the findings are still not adequate to cover all the needs of students of other Orang Asli. The findings also demystify the needs of non-indigenous teachers to receive practice to deliver their lessons to indigenous students properly in order to attract
them and eventually to have positive attitudes towards the subjects learned particularly English. The main outcome of this study is to have relevant authorities to re-examine the curriculum and pedagogical practices used in teaching Orang Asli students in Malaysia. It is strongly hoped that a CRT approach would be widely implemented at all schools with or without Orang Asli students.

5.0 CONCLUSION

The integration of cultural elements was a hit with the Ja Hut students as well as teachers. They agreed that it actually gave appreciation to their culture and that they were very proud of it. The teachers’ apprehension was high about the lesson ahead since students enjoyed the classes with the integration of cultural elements as well as values.

Similarly, being culturally responsive has shown many benefits, such as sparking interest in students to learn the second, third or other languages and increasing their motivation which later will lead to better performance in English as a second language. Morrell (2008) claimed that CRT had positively influenced secondary English language learners’ engagement and academic achievement when the teacher included cultural elements from the students’ cultures in the class. They showed a greater interest in learning to the extent that they were brave enough to speak up and share about their culture during the lesson. As a result, it may be stated that the teacher must be aware of their students’ inclinations and interests, as well as attentive to what their Orang Asli students require in the English classroom.

Despite the fact that the curriculum does not incorporate Orang Asli cultural elements, teachers should proceed doing so in their instructions to further develop good attitudes among their Orang Asli learners. They also mentioned that a teacher who integrates students’ cultures in lessons is a committed educator. This is because the teacher is responsive towards students’ cultures and make them feel appreciated thus increase their motivation to learn more and be more active in class.

To achieve the objectives of the new pedagogical approach and curriculum, new training programmes for the teachers need to be devised. Pre-service teachers should be well-trained and given proper training in order to be responsive to their students’ inclinations and interests. By capitalising students’ culture in the lesson, it is hoped that it will attract more Orang Asli students to finish school with good grades, to reduce dropouts and to give them hope to further their studies to the next level.
REFERENCES


