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 integrating 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, using semi-structured interviews and non-participant classroom observations. A total of 14 participants were selected through the purposive sampling technique, which consisted of ten *Orang Asli* students, three *Orang Asli* teachers, and one Malay teacher from two *Orang Asli* schools in Temerloh district.

Findings: The findings indicated that integrating the *Orang Asli*'s culture into the English lessons had captivated their interest immensely. The most motivating and stimulating lessons were centred around cultural celebrations, using 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 teaching the English language to 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 integrating cultural elements in teaching 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 its 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 had experienced various reforms since 1824, and the schooling system started to be structured during the 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 that of other students as they have limited access to resources, restrictive geographical conditions, and a worldview on education. Nevertheless, Amir (2019) reported that 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 compared to secondary school was significantly high, which showed that many were unobservant towards advancement in education and only completed primary education.

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 of catering to the needs of *Orang Asli* students (Wong & Abdillah, 2018) as they require 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 than that of 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 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 and unspoken and unconscious rules. Clothes, food, music, and language are considered the most visible customs in society. Unspoken rules of courtesy and modesty are also a part of the culture. Deep culture additionally consists of intense emotional actions, such as attitudes toward their elders or problem-solving roles and ethics. As people see the world differently, every society's cultures vary. 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 with 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 to exist 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 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. Although plausible, language learning would be difficult without embedding culture, be it the target language culture or the community's local culture. In Malaysia, besides Malay, the Chinese and Indians formed a larger percentage of the racial divide. *The Orang Asli* (although they are split up into hundreds of small tribal groups) only account for about 0.7% of the population.

Teaching English to the ESL learners is considered 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 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.

These increasing problems in teaching and learning English among the *Orang Asli* students have sparked researchers' interest. A plethora of research has been conducted 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 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). Another factor affecting the perception of foreign language learning is that English is alien to the *Orang Asli* students and the colonials' language. 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 maintained the social, cultural, economic and political characteristics, including their language, which are distinctive from their dominant societies (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 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). They 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 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 value education and skill development much. 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 earn a living by doing odd jobs. Thus, their employment is sporadic, unreliable, and often takes work far from home.

The Ja Huts maintained and practised the 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 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 based on the Razak and Rahman Talib reports. The Rahman Talib report highlighted that bilingual (Malay language and English) mediums of instruction 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 has become 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 conduct superficial learning. She found that Malaysian students preferred tests and examinations to assignments. Furthermore, she added that most students wanted good grades, forcing 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 their dominant societies. It is 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. Teachers must be sensitive and responsive to their students' cultural backgrounds to positively contribute to their academic development. According to Wah and Nasri (2019), CRT has gradually gained attention as an alternative to enhance academic achievement in the last two decades.

In addition, Ebersole et al. (2016) suggested alternatives for teachers to re-conceptualise culture-based subjects to help them not only improve their teaching activities but also deepen their perspectives. The findings suggested that 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 positively influenced students' involvement in their academic achievement. Additionally, Idrus (2014) claimed that CRT strategies enable teachers to embed values and encourage students to appreciate others around them.

Based on these studies, 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 about how CRT can influence the teaching of English among *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 of 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 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 for 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 need 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 sustain their lives in the forest and guide the policymakers 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 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 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, l988, 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 motivational tool in their study. Before the study, ESL students were said to show negative interest in the English language. The study's outcome indicated that the CRT pedagogy had regularly increased classroom participation.

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

3.0 RESEARCH DESIGN

Critical qualitative inquiry was conducted through a case study approach employing semi-structured interviews and classroom observations. 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 required to participate in reading lessons. The teachers carefully chose reading texts, which included the cultural practices of indigenous communities worldwide. 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 researchers allocated different classes to observe. Notes from the observations 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 texts. The lesson topics were about the Circumcision Ceremony, Dance Rituals, Food and ensembles in the *Jah Hut* tribe. The researchers observed the students' reactions towards the text and their teachers as they read to gauge their participation in the activities. Only one observation for each teacher was carried out, resulting in 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 comprise a predominately Indigenous student 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 detailed information on the respondents). Permission to conduct the study was granted by the State Education Sector and schools' principals. Verbal consent was obtained from the participants. Thematic analysis was carried out following Braun and Clarke (2021).

Table 1: Students' detailed information *All are *Ja Huts*

Students	Gender	Tribe	School
S1	M	Ja Hut	SMKKK
S2	M	Ja Hut	SMKKK
S3	M	Ja Hut	SMKKK
S4	F	Ja Hut	SMKKK
S5	F	Ja Hut	SMKKK
S6	M	Ja Hut	SMKKK
S7	M	Ja Hut	SMKP
S8	F	Ja Hut	SMKP
S9	F	Ja Hut	SMKP
S10	M	Ja Hut	SMKP

4.0 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Table 2: Teachers' detailed information

Teachers	Gender	Tribe	School	TESL/NON TESL	Teaching Experience
T1	M	Ja Hut	SMKKK	TESL	8
T2	M	Temiar	SMKKK	Sports Science	8
T3	M	Semai	SMKP	Geography	8
T4	F	Malay	SMKP	TESL	10

The results and discussion revolved around five themes derived from the analysis of 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 were 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, 10 *Jah Hut* students were 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. The reasons given were that they were uninterested, the language was too difficult, they did not understand any English, and they could not relate to the book's content. 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 watched many English movies at home. She also stated that English is an international language.

It is unsurprising when teachers agree with what most students mentioned: the syllabus is way too difficult for the students to grasp. Often, teachers had to adapt their teaching styles, the language, and the materials they used with the students. T4, who is the most experienced teacher, said '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 spoke no English for the first 6 months' (T4: 105).

The notes from the observations carried out by the researchers highlighted different scenarios. The researchers agreed 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 interest in 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 teacher explanations and guidance. The teacher was hilarious and often used a few foreign words 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 what they felt when their teachers brought 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*

	How do you feel when your teachers integrate the Ja Hut cultural elements during your English lesson?
S5	The teacher is very committed. I like the new her! I was pleasantly surprise.
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.
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'*.
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!

From the four responses above, needless to say, 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 I will come to class every day' (S2: 45). S5 also agreed, 'I could stay in school all day (chuckled)' (S5:72). The observation notes from the researchers were congruent with the students' behaviour and acceptance of 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 a foreign language with a representation of the target culture to help students enhance their language knowledge and use it within their original setting. It is also widely accepted that non-English speaking countries have slowly integrated their local culture into English Language Teaching (ELT) due to the fact that it helps language learners acquire foreign languages and avoid creating unnecessary obstacles for them to be successful language learners.

4.3 Students' expectations of 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

Respondents	Feedback
S1	Teach about other cultures (Indian, Malay, *Orang Asli*)
S3	Teach about other cultures (dancing, cooking, marriage ceremony)
S7	language, food, clothes
S8	games, marriage, clothes
S10	celebrations, festival, hunting

From the responses given by the respondents above, it is apparent that they were suggesting some cultural elements 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 using cultural integration during the lesson because she had never experienced such a meaningful lesson before from other teachers.

S10, on the other hand, mentioned the hunting practices, which are now fading away in their culture. He, too, felt appreciated when his teacher brought in articles about hunting 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. The researchers' observation notes mentioned the words 'enjoy and enjoyment' 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 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: 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) into the lessons; they showed more interest in learning and willingly shared their cultural practices with the class. Therefore, it can be said that a teacher must 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 the positive attitudes of their *Orang Asli* students. The observations clearly revealed 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 will not only develop the learners' curiosity but also enhance their motivation. Sugirin, Sudartini, and Nurhayati (2011) explained that "only through introducing and developing an 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. The first one is to teach students how to learn a language, and the second one is to raise a level of understanding towards language and culture.

4.5 Teachers' Perception of the Integration of Cultural Elements in the English Language

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

All four teachers responded similarly when asked if they have integrated cultural elements into their classroom. All of them agreed and had different situations where they integrated several cultural elements into the lesson. However, when asked if they used the Culturally Responsive Teaching approach in their lessons, they seemed puzzled as they were unfamiliar with the term. When explained, they agreed that they had somehow integrated culture into their lessons by comparing the cultures of the majority, the Malays.

T1 responded that the best way to get the students interested is to have cross-curricular elements by incorporating cross-curricular topics in the daily lessons. "It is best to treat the students equally despite their lack 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 they integrated the cultural elements into 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 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. She stated that the teachers had problems implementing this pedagogy (CRT and integrating 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 the psycho-social makeup of Indigenous communities. These courses can help trainee teachers develop their personalities and increase their responsiveness towards other cultures.

Although this study is meant to shed light on the importance of integrating culture in language learning and teaching, the findings are still inadequate in covering all the needs of students of other *Orang Asli*. The findings also demystify the need for non-indigenous teachers to receive practice in delivering their lessons to Indigenous students properly 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 re-examine the curriculum and pedagogical practices used in teaching *Orang Asli* students in Malaysia. It is hoped that a CRT approach will be widely implemented at all schools with or without *Orang Asli* students.

5.0 CONCLUSION

Integrating cultural elements was a hit with the *Ja Hut* students and teachers. They agreed that it appreciated 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 and values.

Similarly, being culturally responsive has shown many benefits, such as sparking interest in students learning 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 and attentive to what their *Orang Asli* students require in the English classroom.

Even though the curriculum does not incorporate *Orang Asli* cultural elements, teachers should proceed to do 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 makes them feel appreciated, thus increasing 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 to be responsive to their students' inclinations and interests. By capitalising on students' culture in the lesson, it is hoped that it will attract more *Orang Asli* students to finish school with good grades, reduce dropouts and give them hope to further their studies to the next level.

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