

Level of Knowledge, Readiness and Practice of Speaking Malay Language among Indigenous People

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To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBS/v13-i3/16407> DOI:10.6007/IJARBS/v13-i3/16407

Published Date: 05 March 2023

Abstract

This study aims to examine the level of knowledge, readiness and practice of the Malay language among the Orang Asli community. The study involved 80 Orang Asli people living in the rural areas of Kuala Lipis and Cameron Highlands in Pahang. The design of the study is a quantitative survey method involving data collection through questionnaires related to their level of knowledge of the Malay language and readiness to speak, in addition, the practice of Malay language when communicating based on Environmental Theory developed by (Bronfenbrenner, 1917). Descriptive analysis method was used by the researcher to show the frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation. The findings of the study found that the level of knowledge of the Orang Asli community related to the Malay language is at a moderate level with a score ($M = 2.73$). While the level of readiness to speak Malay was at a low level with a score ($M = 2.30$) and the practice of communicating using Malay was also at a low level with a score ($M = 1.84$). The findings of the study found that the average level of knowledge of the Orang Asli community on the Malay language show their awareness of the existence of the Malay language as an intermediate language, but still limited in terms of readiness and practice of using the Malay language in communication. The implications of this study can increase the awareness of the new generation of the Orang Asli community about the importance of the Malay language.

Keywords: Knowledge, Readiness, Practice, Malay Language, Indigenous People Community

Introduction

The indigenous people or better known as the Orang Asli people in Peninsular Malaysia were the first people to inhabit the land of Malaysia (Haliza, 2010). This statement is in line with the opinion of Norwaliza (2014) who states that Malaya has been inhabited by the Orang Asli community which consists of various tribes. While Zalizan et al (2009) also said that since the 8th century, the Orang Asli community has set foot in Malaya and their number began to grow

and increase throughout the year until it reached 178,197 people (JAKOA, 2017). Now, the Orang Asli community is no longer foreign and is more known by other communities than before.

There are several main groups or clusters of the Orang Asli community that inhabit several states in Peninsular Malaysia. According to Abdul and Zalizan (2009), Senoi, Proto Malay and Negrito are the main groups of the Orang Asli community in Malaysia. They added that each cluster is represented by 18 specific tribes such as the Semai, Temiar, Jan Hut, Che Wong, Mah Meri and Semaq Beri tribes which are Senoi clusters. While the Proto Malay cluster consists of Temuan, Semelai, Jakun, Kanaq, Orang Kuala, Orang Seletar tribes. The Negrito group consists of the Kensiu, Kintak, Jahai, Lanoh, Mendring and Bateq tribes. Meanwhile, each of these tribes also has their own mother tongue, even though they are from the same group which is the Orang Asli community.

Malaysia is a country known as a country that inhabited by various groups of people since 1946 with the dominant races such as Malays, Chinese and Indians (Ho, 2009). Amy et al (2018) added that for almost six decades, Malaysia has been inhabited by a mixed society of various groups such as Chinese Malays and Indians and even other communities such as the Melanau, Kadazan, Iban, Orang Asli, Bidayuh and so on. Multiracial communities in Malaysia make Malaysia a unique country that is able to unite in various aspects including culture, religion, ethnicity and language. Element such as language enable to unite Malaysians with the declaration of Malay Language as the official language through the government announcement in Article 152 of the Federal Constitution which explains the role and function of the Malay Language as the national language (Mohd et al., 2021).

Language is one of the elements that unite Malaysians who are made up of various religious, cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Because Malaysians are made up of various backgrounds, there are many languages used to represent their respective races. This diversity is not an obstacle for Malaysians to unite especially through the language as the medium of communication when communicating. However, there is no denying that there are a small number of Malaysians who like to communicate using their mother tongue or English language, thus causing the Malay language to continue to be marginalized. While Fariza et al. (2018) explains that Malay is the language of choice for professional management as a step to strengthen the Malay language.

Background

Malay Language is an intermediate language that is not only used to communicate among Malaysians, but it is also used formally in matters involving government and private agencies. Based on the history of the country, the government has gazetted the Malay language as the national and official language of the federation as stated in Article 152 (1) of the Federal Constitution 1957 (Sharifah, 2014). The government has gazetted the matter as a step to dignify the Malay language by encouraging all Malaysians to communicate using the Malay language whether in official business or otherwise. The government also proved that through a good mastery of the Malay language, it is able to increase the unity and peace of a country made up of various races (Jaafar, 2008). So, how important is the skill of speaking the Malay language to be mastered by every level of society in Malaysia in line with the efforts that have been implemented by the government.

Malay language skills include listening, speaking and writing skills. These three skills need to be mastered by every layer of society. They are not only the backbone of the Malay Language, but also the foundation for the mastery of the standard Malay Language. According

to Nora'azian and Fadzilah (2018), the Malay language skills need to be mastered since the school time and it is compulsory for each student to pass it during examination. The government through the Malaysian Ministry of Education has planned and enacted a suitable curriculum to empower the Malay language speaking skills. This effort is not only done in the early stage of schooling but it is a continuous effort up to the secondary school and higher education level. Basically, this effort aims to ensure that all levels of society in Malaysia are able to speak Malay well. A good speaker in the Malay language needs to master oral skills well, that is, skills that emphasize the principles of listening and speaking in the Malay language.

However, the low level of awareness in the community still ignores the government's recommendations to empower the Malay language. Some people prefer to communicate in a foreign language such as English language better than in Malay language. This situation is worrying if it is not dealt with, as it will become part of Malaysian culture later. The worries are not only on the foreign language, but also the preference of some people who choose to speak in their own mother tongue and this has made it difficult to communicate in the Malay language. Consequently, their self-confidence getting lower as they are unable to communicate in Malay language. This study was conducted to review and identify in detail the level of knowledge, readiness and practices among the Orang Asli community in the usage of Malay language. The study focused on the group of Orang Asli community, which driven by their preferred lifestyle to live in remote areas and less socializing with other communities.

Statement of Problem

The Orang Asli community consists of various tribes have their own mother tongue. Although they are from the same group, there are certain terms or words that are different. This situation requires them to communicate with other languages such as Malay language. If they do not master the Malay language well, it will make it difficult for them to communicate later. Therefore, a study related to the level of knowledge, readiness and practice of speaking the Malay language needs to be done in order to be able to see the extent to which the community groups have mastered the Malay language well. Although Malaysia is progressing and developing rapidly, there is still a group of people who are more comfortable with the lifestyle they have inherited for a long time (Abdul and Zalizan, 2009). This situation causes them to not socialize with other communities in addition of being unable to develop knowledge including Malay language skills among them.

The Orang Asli people who still live in the rural areas do not get complete facilities like other people in the city or peri-urban areas. This situation occurs as a result of the government's limited ability in terms of high costs to provide the same facilities or infrastructure as in urban and rural areas (Vivien W.C et al., 2019). This situation at the same time causes those in the interior to remain in the area, do not mix with other communities and always communicate only in their mother tongue. In other words, the community group is not only affected in terms of quality of life, but they are also unable to develop language skills. If they start mix with other communities, they will start to receive reformation including mastering the skill of speaking Malay language.

According to Jaafar (2008), the process of strengthening the Malay language has gone through various challenges such as mastery of the mother tongue is more prominent among Malaysians. He added that Malaysians are more inclined to communicate using their mother tongue because it is easier and faster to convey any information. In line with this opinion is the finding of Nora'azian and Fadzilah's study (2018) which states that the articulation tools

of native speakers have become accustomed to and trained so that they are less comfortable to speak in Malay. This statement is relevant to the situation of the Orang Asli community who are living in the rural area. In other words, studies related to Malay speaking practices among the Orang Asli community need to be detailed in order to help responsible parties such as the Orang Asli Development Department (JAKOA) to plan and organize suitable programs for the community in an effort to improve their Malay speaking practices. In addition, it can prepare the Orang Asli community to speak well in the Malay language especially if they migrate to other places be it for work or further their studies in a new place that requires them to communicate in the Malay language.

Research Objective

This study was conducted to determine three main points that were focused on the knowledge, readiness and practices of the Orang Asli community related to the Malay language. Specifically, this study aims to:

1. Identify the level of knowledge of the Orang Asli community towards the Malay language.
2. Identify the level of readiness of the Orang Asli community to speak Malay.
3. Identify the level of practice of the Orang Asli community in speaking using the Malay language.

Theoretical Framework

Learning theory is the basis for the acquisition of knowledge that is obtained either directly or indirectly. According to Adibah (2002), learning theory supports an individual to increase knowledge and experience ,systematically or otherwise. Similar opinion was made by Aminuddin (2017) who said that learning is a planned process that can be improved in various ways either through attitude, level of acceptance of thinking and the environment. Learning theory can be divided into four main sections, namely behaviorist, cognitive, social and humanistic. In addition, Environmental Theory and Experience Theory are also part of the learning theory that is also used in a study. The theories are a process for an individual's learning in any knowledge, including language learning among the Orang Asli community.

The environmental theory pioneered by Urie Bronfenbrenner (1917) explains that the environment influences the development of an individual. The development that takes place in an individual is a result of interaction activities with the environment of the individual involved so that it can influence knowledge, thinking, acceptance and delivery. In other words, the environmental theory also emphasizes the principle that the environment is a stimulus that can shape an individual's skills to learn or improve knowledge including the capabilities of the Orang Asli community related to the Malay language. In other words, the interaction of the environment of the Orang Asli community can be developed through five principles suggested by (Bronfenbrenner, 1917).

The five principles are (i) microsystem, (ii) mesosystem, (iii) ecosystem, (iv) macrosystem and (v) chronosystem. Figure 1 briefly explains the relationship between the five principles emphasized by Urie Bronfenbrenner (1917) with the knowledge, willingness and practice of speaking Malay of the Orang Asli community. The principles in the Environmental Theory can be linked directly to the knowledge, willingness and practice of speaking the Malay language of the Orang Asli because it involves the environment of the Orang Asli which is far from the life of other communities. The principles that emphasize these elements of the environment can drive the ability of the Orang Asli community to be more

open and accepting other languages including Malay language as a mastered language other than their mother tongue.

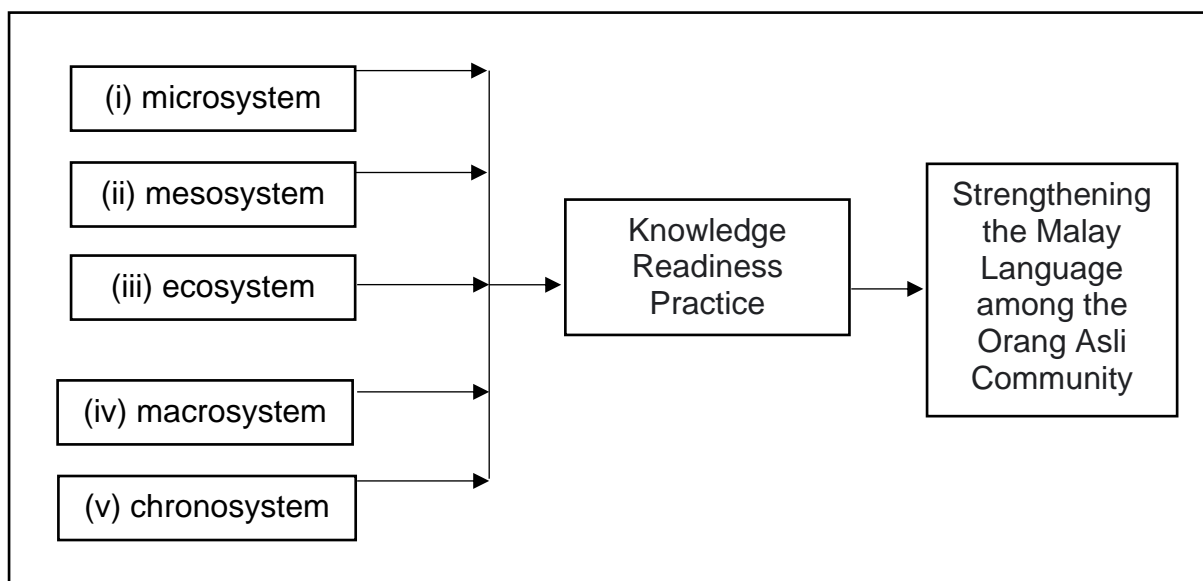


Figure 1: Urie Bronfenbrenner's Environmental Theory Framework (1917)

Based on diagram 1, the microsystem functions as an interaction process that involves the closest environment to the Orang Asli community to interact as much as possible, especially with family, friends and neighbors from various language backgrounds. The interaction process is a more universal process of life development because the environment has greater influence on the behavior of an individual including their language ability. A study by Naughtori (2005) found that environmental factors have a direct impact on all aspects of an individual's development. Parallel to that findings is the findings of the study by Amir et al. (2018) who found that the sentimental element of the environment is very synonymous with the Orang Asli community because they still hold to the belief of taking care of the environment including the forest and the people around them for a more peaceful and happy life (Mohamad and Muammar, 2021).

The mesosystem is the relationship between microsystems and other microsystems. Each microsystem can influence the interaction and development of other microsystems. For example, the actions of a community in the Orang Asli environment can influence a person's behavior and personality, whether it is a negative or positive behavior. In other words, the more interaction between the Orang Asli community and the other communities will affect their level of knowledge, willingness and ability to speak using Malay language as Haliza Abdul Rahman's study (2018) found the nature of openness among the Orang Asli community today has shown positive development.

The Ecosystem principle on the other hand refers to a language learning process that does not involve an individual directly. An ecosystem is a situation involving experiences with the environment that does not involve a specific individual, but, every decision made within that environment affects someone who is involved with certain society. In other words, the experiences of others will influence other individuals to speak a certain language. For example, the enforcement of using Malay language as the medium of instruction will

indirectly affect a person's social development when they communicate with other communities or deal with certain agencies (Mohamad, 2019).

The fourth principle emphasized in Environmental Theory is the macrosystem. Macrosystem emphasizes aspects of the development of each individual are influenced by the norms, values and practices in the society. For example, among the Orang Asli community who are still retain their belief in traditional medicine, i.e. the Orang Asli shaman, rather than getting treatment in a hospital (Ramle, 1993). In line with that, Abdul (2009) found that the parents of the Orang Asli community were still conservative and considered education is unimportant. Hence, the environment of the Orang Asli community needs to be given attention by certain parties because every norms, values and practices can have an impact on their ability to improve knowledge, readiness and practice of speaking Malay language.

The fifth principle in Environmental Theory is the chronosystem which details changes occurring in a certain period of time as the development of each individual. For example, today's society is more exposed to the technological boom compared to previous society. In other words, environmental changes can affect individual development from various aspects including language, education, interests and so on. Although the environment of the Orang Asli community is far inland (Marzuki, 2010), the findings of the study by Zuriatun et al (2009) found that the Orang Asli community began to show changes in terms of culture when their lives and settlements began to be exposed to ecotourism activities.

Environmental Theory can help improve the knowledge, willingness and practice of the Orang Asli community to use the Malay language as a language that is not foreign to them. The principle of interaction and relationship with the environment can have a positive impact on their language development than a negative one. Although the findings of Md et al. (2010) found that the Orang Asli community is difficult to cooperate, especially involving the interaction process as the shyness nature is still thicken among them, but, the principles in the Environmental Theory are able to stimulate their Malay speaking skills because the emphasis on the aspect of interaction and relationship with the environment.

In contrast to the findings of the study by Mohamad and Muammar (2021) who explained that the Orang Asli community, especially the Temiar tribe, had begun to adapt to the environment when they started migrating and opening new settlements closer to other communities. They added that even though their lives are still tied to the beliefs of their ancestors, some aspects have started to change in terms of socializing, the dance culture of sewang which used to be performed for medical purposes but has now become part of the entertainment element in their culture. Obviously, the change of the Orang Asli community is also influenced by the better environment compared to life far in the interior. So, the choice of Environmental Theory is very relevant to the research done.

Methodology

The next discussion discusses the elements underlying the research methodology. Among them are sub-headings related to study design, population and sampling, study instruments and study implementation procedures in more detail and focus.

Research design

Descriptive survey research is the research design used in carrying out this study. The selection of this survey method is influenced by several factors such as it can be explained with numbers and measurements (Mohd, 2004) in addition to being described descriptively based on the findings of the study. Noriani (2013) explained that the survey method is a method synonymous with both quantitative and qualitative research strategies. Therefore, a

survey study with a descriptive explanation in addition to an explanation through numbers and measurements is used by the researcher in explaining the findings of the study.

In line with that, Chua (2011) explained that survey research is the most popular research to get public response because it is a method of (i) comprehensive use, (ii) easier handling, (iii) quick data collection, (iv)) large sample size, (v) direct information and (vi) ability of data to be generalized. In the meantime, time constraints are also a factor in the selection of this survey-based method in addition to the use of questionnaire instruments that are more suitable to be administered in rural areas that are far from the study field.

Population and Sampling

Abdul and Mohd (1993) explained that the recruitment of all individuals in a population is the usage of the target population (Fraenkel and Norman, 1996) while sampling is a method to obtain data for the purpose of solving problems without using the entire population (Ghazali and Sufean, 2016). The sampling selected as respondents in this study involves six Orang Asli villages around Pos Titom, Pos Senderut and Pos Lenjang in Kuala Lipis including Pos Telanak and Pos Lemoi in Cameron Highlands, Pahang. A total of 80 respondents were selected from villagers from the study location representing the study population.

Noraini (2013) explained that survey research involving data collection from the population for the purpose of understanding a certain situation with a minimum of 80 selected respondents is sufficient. The selection of 80 respondents in this study was also determined according to the recommendations of Krejcie and Morgan (1970) who explained that the determination of the sample size is based on the population. Due to the location of the study is in a rural area, the estimated population of the study that inhabits an area or village is between 80 to 100 people. So, the selected sample can represent the population of the Orang Asli community in the village area in each study location by using simple random sampling which is more fair to the population (Ghazali and Sufean, 2016).

Study Instrument

A set of questionnaires was fully utilised in the study. The researcher used a five-point Likert scale to find out the level of knowledge of the willingness and practice of the Orang Asli community to speak using the Malay language. According to Mohd (2004), the Likert scale has a high reliability value in addition to respondents being able to choose the most accurate answer. The set of questionnaires is divided into four parts that have been reviewed by instrument experts from every aspect such as the appropriateness of the questions, the determination of the scale and the statements used to represent each scale. Part A is related to the demographics of the respondents by emphasizing the elements of gender, age, level of education and occupation. The four elements can be analyzed descriptively by the researcher by triangulating the data with the level of knowledge, willingness and practice of the respondents in using the Malay language. While Part B contains eight questions related to the respondent's level of knowledge related to the Malay language. Part C also contains eight questions related to the readiness of the Orang Asli to speak in Malay language. Part D is a question related to the practice of speaking Malay language among the respondents. However, the Likert scale is used only on the set of questions in parts B, C and D with the statement of the scale being different for each part for the purpose of discussing the research findings in a descriptive manner. Therefore, for the purpose of coordinating the questionnaire distributed to the respondents, the researcher coordinated the scale statement by referring to scale 1 as strongly disagree while scale 5 strongly agree as in Table 1.

Table 1
Likert Scale Statements

SCALE	STATEMENT
STRONGLY DISAGREE	1
DISAGREE	2
UNCERTAIN	3
AGREE	4
STRONGLY AGREE	5

Implementation Procedures

This survey study requires a systematic and rigorous implementation procedure to ensure that the research findings obtained are reliable. Several work processes are carried out throughout the implementation of the study. Among them are, (i) state the purpose of the study, (ii) identify the source, (iii) identify the population, (iv) determine the size, (v) study method, (vi) preparation of instruments, (vii) data analysis and (viii) generalize research findings (Chua, 2011). The researcher has listed the purpose of the study by building research questions including building suitable instruments and resources to be used throughout the study. Population identification is also done by obtaining the exact number of each population in the study location to determine the appropriate sample size to use. The choice of method is determined by taking into account the researcher's time constraints, the location of the study and the large number of respondents. The instruments distributed to the respondents were also constructed taking into account the limited ability of the respondents to answer a large number of questions. So, eight questions for each part of the questionnaire are sufficient to obtain research findings for the purpose of analysis and generalization by the researcher.

The survey implementation procedure needs to be detailed to ensure that the data collection procedure for the method is done systematically. The determination of the procedure for the implementation of this study is also to ensure that there is no dropout or leakage of information throughout the study. A summary of the study implementation procedure can be broken down as in figure 2.

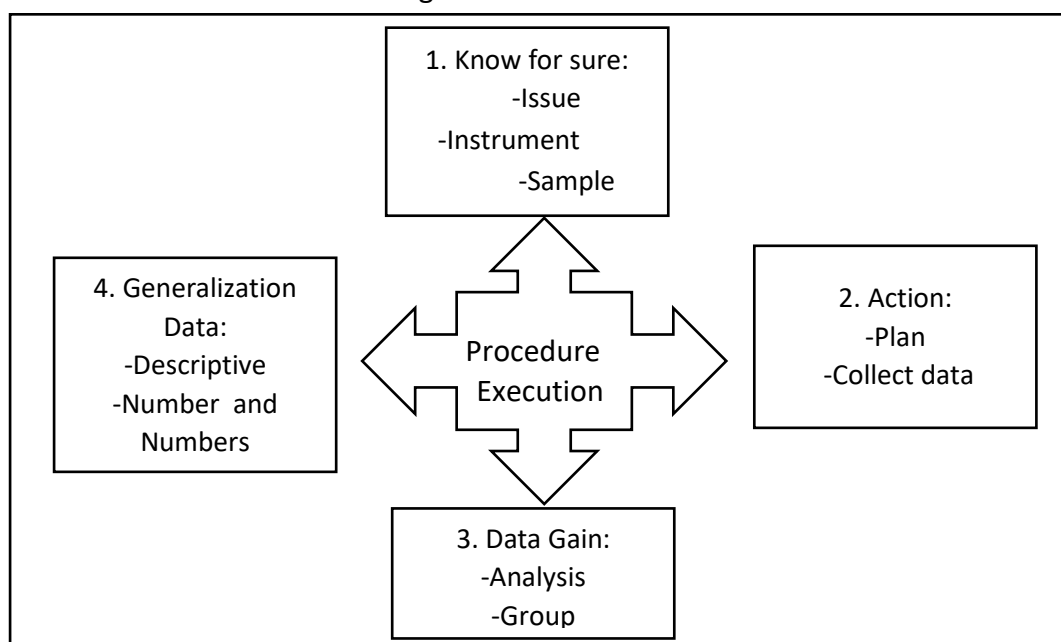


Figure 2: Study Implementation Structure

Data Analysis

The Statistical Packages for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23.0 software was used to analyze the data quantitatively in the findings of this study. According to Norhayati (2012), SPSS software is software that is able to generate a lot of data more easily and efficiently compared to manual methods or old software systems. Descriptive and inferential methods are also used by analyzing the percentage, frequency, mean and standard deviation of the study findings. This data display is translated in the form of a table to ensure that it can be referred to in a more systematic and orderly manner. The mean value is interpreted based on the study scale of the Education Policy Planning and Research Division (KPM, 1998) by setting a score of 1.0 to 1.8 as very low, a score of 1.9 to 2.6 as low, a score of 2.7 to 3.4 as moderate, a score of 3.5 to 4.2 as high while a score of 4.3 to 5.0 very high as in table 2.

Table 2

Mean Score and Interpretation

MEAN SCORE	INTERPRETATION
1.0 – 1.8	VERY LOW
1.9 – 2.6	LOW
2.7 – 3.4	MODERATE
3.5 – 4.2	HIGH
4.3 – 5.0	VERY HIGH

(Source: Education Policy Planning and Research Division, MoE 1998)

After the questionnaire scores were analysed, the researcher compiled and grouped the score data into three main levels, namely a score of 1.00 to 2.66 for the low category, a score of 2.67 to 3.66 for medium and 3.67 for a high level (Jamil, 2002). The purpose is to facilitate the process of data display and descriptive research by the researcher. Table 3 shows the mean scores and interpretations that have been grouped

Table 3

Mean Score and Interpretation

MEAN SCORE	INTERPRETATION
1.00 – 2.66	LOW
2.67 – 3.66	MODERATE
3.67 – 5.00	HIGH

(Source: Jamil, 2002)

Findings

The following discussion explain in detail four main points related the findings of the study. Among them is the demographics of the respondents which explain the background of the respondents involved in the study. In addition, the data findings for each research objective will also be displayed separately according to the three research objectives, namely (i) the level of knowledge of the Orang Asli community towards the Malay language, (ii) the level of readiness of the Orang Asli community towards the Malay language and (iii) the level of practice of the Orang Asli community Asli speaking using the Malay language. The findings of the data that have been analyzed are displayed in the form of a table with a simple but thorough explanation so that it is neater and more organized to facilitate reading and understanding related to the field studied in this study.

Demographics of Respondents

The study respondents consisted of 80 people from the Orang Asli community from 20 villages around Pos Titom, Pos Lenjang and Pos Senderut in Kuala Lipis district as well as Pos Telanok and Pos Lemoi in Cameron Highlands district. Most of the residents in the post area live in the hinterland which takes about one to two hours to travel from the nearest town. The limited number of villagers around 80 to 100 people in the population has caused the researcher to use only 80 respondents to represent the population from each village. Table 3 explains in detail the demographics of the respondents that have been analyzed from the study questionnaire.

Table 3

Demographic analysis of study respondents

Demographic	Characteristics	Frequency	Percent (%)
Gender	Male	29	36.25
	Female	51	63.75
Age	20 – 23 years	20	25.00
	24 – 27 years	14	17.50
	28 – 31 years	10	12.50
	32 years and above	36	45.00
Education Level	No Schooling	5	06.25
	Primary School	21	26.25
	Secondary School	47	58.75
	IPT	7	08.75
Occupation	No Working	39	48.75
	Self-employed	33	41.25
	Public/Private employees	8	10.00

The findings of the study found that the number of female respondents is more than male respondents which is 63.75% representing women with a frequency of 51 while male respondents are 36.25% with 29 frequencies. There are 45.00% more respondents aged 32 and above compared to respondents aged 31 and below. The background of the education level of the study respondents is also no less important to be analyzed for the purpose of strengthening the study's findings. Respondents who did not go to school, i.e. did not complete primary school, was the lowest at 6.25% compared to respondents who had a better level of education, which was 26.25% for primary school education, 58.75% successfully completed secondary school education while 8.75% completed higher education. The respondents' jobs were also analyzed in order to find out the level of usability of the Malay language with their jobs. Respondents who do not work with a value of 48.75% are more than respondents who are self-employed or work in the public or private sector. Because the location of the study is in the rural areas, most respondents who do not work are made up of female respondents who are housewives. Based on the demographics of the respondents, the data findings correspond to the focus of the study.

Research Question 1: The level of knowledge of the Orang Asli community towards language Malay.

The level of knowledge about something is an initial impression to a person related to what he knows. Basic knowledge is the driving force for an individual's ability and inclination to explore something. The knowledge possessed by an individual can not only be obtained through formal situations, but experience is also a part of the process of forming knowledge. Section B in the questionnaire has asked eight questions to survey and evaluate the level of knowledge of the Orang Asli community related to the Malay language. Based on table 4, it was found that the level of knowledge of the Orang Asli community is still low regarding the Malay language with a mean value of 2.61 and a standard deviation of 1.52.

Table 4

Level of Knowledge of the Malay language

No.	Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	Knowledge Level
1	I know the existence of the Malay community in Malaysia.	3.96	1.29	High
2	I used to study Malay subjects at school.	4.01	1.27	High
3	I know the importance of using Malay	1.98	0.95	Low
4	I know the characteristics of the Malay language	1.86	0.71	Low
5	I know the terms in Malay	2.16	1.14	Low
6	I know the existence of Malay language being used as a medium of instruction	1.86	1.05	Low
7	I know how to identify the differences between Malay terms and other languages	2.25	1.24	Low
8	I know how to use Malay well	2.86	4.56	Medium
Overall Mean		2.61	1.52	Low

However, the knowledge of the Orang Asli community about the existence of the Malay community in Malaysia is high with a mean value of 3.96 and a standard deviation of 1.29. In the meantime, they also have the knowledge and experience of learning Malay subjects when they were in school with a mean value of 4.01 and a standard deviation of 1.27. The level of knowledge of respondents who know how to use the Malay language well is moderate with a mean value of 2.86 and a standard deviation of 4.56. However, knowledge about the characteristics of the Malay language and knowing about the existence of the Malay language as a medium of instruction is the lowest with a mean value of 1.86 and a standard deviation value of 0.71 for the item knowing the characteristics of the Malay language and 1.05 for the item knowing the existence of the Malay language as intermediate language. Respondents' knowledge about the importance of using Malay is also low with a mean value of 1.98 and a standard deviation value of 0.95. The items know and understand the terms in the Malay language and the items know the difference between Malay terms and other languages, respectively mean values of 2.16 and 2.86 with standard deviation values of 1.14 and 1.24.

Research Question 2: The level of readiness of the Orang Asli community to speak up Malay.

The level of readiness of an individual to do something is not only based on the existing knowledge in him but also, ability and desire also need to go hand in hand. The readiness possessed by the respondents to speak in Malay was identified through the questionnaire in Part C. Eight questions to survey and evaluate the level of readiness of the Orang Asli community to speak in Malay. Based on table 5, it was found that the level of readiness of the Orang Asli community to speak Malay is still low with a mean value of 2.30 and a standard deviation of 1.23.

Table 5

Level of Readiness of Orang Asli to speak Malay

No	Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level of Readiness
1	I like listening to songs in Malay	2.21	1.22	Low
2	I like listening to the radio in Malay	2.16	1.21	Low
3	I like to read books in Malay	1.81	1.05	Low
4	I like to read current issues on social media in Malay	1.91	1.14	Low
5	I like watching TV shows in Malay	2.17	1.16	Low
6	I make settings on the phone using Malay	2.92	1.44	Medium
7	I can understand terms in Malay	2.58	1.30	Low
8	I can understand speech in Malay	2.66	1.38	Low
Overall Mean		2.30	1.23	Low

The lowest readiness level in table 5 with a mean value of 1.81 and a standard deviation value of 1.05 is for the item of liking to read books in Malay. In addition, the item likes to read current issues on social media in Malay is also low with a mean reading of 1.91 and a standard deviation of 1.14. Likewise with other items such as likes to listen to songs in Malay, likes to listen to the radio in Malay, likes to watch television shows in Malay, can understand Malay terms and can understand Malay speech is also low with a mean value of 2.21 respectively, 2.16, 2.17, 2.58 and 2.66. Nevertheless, there is one item that shows a moderate level of readiness among the respondents, which is the item of making Malay language settings on mobile phones with a mean value of 2.92 and a standard deviation value of 1.44.

Research Question 3: The level of practice of the Orang Asli community in speaking using Malay

The level of an individual's practice can be measured in various ways either directly through the behavior practiced or through a questionnaire as conducted in this study. The respondent's practice level of speaking in Malay was identified through the questionnaire in Part D. Eight questions to survey and evaluate the level of readiness of the Orang Asli community to speak in Malay. Based on table 6, the level of practice of the Orang Asli community in speaking Malay is low with a mean value of 1.84 and a standard deviation of 0.84.

Table 6

Level of Practice of the Orang Asli community speaking in Malay

No	Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level of Practice
1	I interact with family members using Malay	1.12	0.34	Low
2	I interact with other tribes by using the Malay language	1.96	1.19	Low
3	I interact with my children and siblings when completing school work using Malay	1.66	0.90	Low
4	I interact online using Malay (Whatsapp and so on)	1.88	0.72	Low
5	I write using Malay when uploading statuses and replying to comments on social media	1.75	0.92	Low
6	I interact at the service counter using Malay	2.96	1.36	Medium
7	I interact more often by using Malay	1.68	0.62	Low
8	I interact more confidently by using Malay	1.73	0.72	Low
Overall Mean		1.84	0.84	Low

The findings of the study found that the level of the respondents' practice of speaking in Malay was low, showing that almost all items were at a low level. Among them the item "I interact with family members using Malay" with the lowest mean of 1.12 and standard deviation of 0.34. In addition, the item "I interact with my children and siblings when completing school work in Malay" and the item "I interact more often using Malay" respectively with a mean value of 1.66 and 1.68 and a standard deviation of 0.90 and 0.62. While for the item "I interact more confidently using Malay", the item "I write using Malay when uploading statuses and replying to comments on social media", the item "I interact on social media using Malay (Whatsapp and so on)" and the item "I interact with other ethnic groups by using the Malay language" respectively with mean values of 1.73, 1.75, 1.88 and 1.96. However, there is an item at a moderate practice level with a mean value of 2.96 and a standard deviation of 1.36 for the item "I interact at the service counter using Malay". Based on the analysis of the three sections of the questionnaire, it can be concluded that the level of respondents' practice of using Malay when interacting is the lowest, which is the average mean value of 1.84 compared to the average mean level of knowledge of 2.61 and the level of readiness of 2.30.

Discussion

This descriptive discussion will detail the three main objectives based on the findings of the research data that has been analyzed earlier. A discussion made critically by examining and strengthening the findings of studies related to the knowledge, readiness and practice of a group of people towards the Malay language. According to Nazir (1998), systematic research and data collection activities require descriptive argumentation to prove the facts, relationships and nature of a phenomenon being studied. In line with that, Whitney (1960) said descriptive methods can help researchers explain facts with accurate interpretations and describe research to strengthen conclusions and ideas (Sugiyono, 2005). The discussion of this study will focus on three main objectives in addition to the discussion on the demographics of the respondents.

Demographics of Respondents

The number of female respondents is more than the male who are involved in the study which explains that more women live in the study area than men who choose to work outside. The age of the respondents who are still young in the range of 20 to 31 years also proves that they are a new generation who inherited the practices of their community ancestors but still have good education (Mohd et al., 2018). The age range reflects the findings of the study which are more reliable because the average respondent around the categorized age has an educational background, experience of attending schools outside the area of residence and has experience of living with other communities. This discussion is further strengthened by the demographic findings of respondents who have a good level of education by completing secondary education including completing studies at the higher education level such as pre, certificate, diploma and degree. This is in line with the principles of Microsystems in Environmental Theory which emphasizes that the interaction process is the closest environment to an individual. In this context, the Orang Asli community no longer lives only in their own group, in fact, their educational status has made it clear that their environment is also exposed to other communities, especially the Malay community when they receive education up to the level of higher education. Although the percentage of respondents who do not go to school is very much a result of not being interested and not getting support to go to school from their parents (Mohamad & Abdul, 2009), however, the principle of Mesosystem is still able to influence the Malay language skills of the Orang Asli community. The mesosystem principle explains that the relationship between microsystems and other microsystems can influence the interaction of an individual. In other words, the influence of the Malay language brought by several residents who are educated outside their area is able to influence the local community to change, learn and improve their ability to use the Malay language much better.

In addition, there are also respondents who did not successfully finish primary school because they thought the lessons were boring, did not help them to continue living and were not relevant to the lifestyle they inherited (Mohamad, 2019). Even so, the level of education of the respondents shows that the questionnaires answered are still reliable because many respondents are not illiterate, who cannot answer the questions well to the extent that they need to be guided including being influenced by others to answer the research questionnaire. Meanwhile, the number of respondents who are self-employed and have work experience or are still working in the public or private sector is also large. This situation proves that they do not only live and grow up in their own community, but also have the experience of living together with other communities (Mohd & Nor, 2009) as well as affecting their knowledge, willingness and practice of using the Malay language. To ensure that the Malay Language is well practiced among the Orang Asli community, those who have exposed, and experience living within the Malay community and frequently converse and use the Malay Language should be the role model and motive their people to keep on learning as well as using the language in their daily life. This will help them in future when they pursue their study to the higher level or whenever they start their career which requires them to use the Malay Language more often.

Knowledge level

Knowledge is the basis of an action and change made by an individual. According to Norayu (2012), knowledge of the basics of the Malay language is a stepping stone that forms a unity through language. The opinion is in line with the findings of Fariza et al (2018) who explained

that knowledge is the basis of Malay language practice among Malaysians. Therefore, knowledge of the Malay language is not something that should be taken lightly by all levels of society even if they live in rural areas. Noor and Nor (2019) argued that it is the community's responsibility to know and practice the use of the national language, which is the Malay language that has been gazetted in the constitution. They added that strengthening is the basis of the knowledge possessed by every Malaysian citizen in improving the ability to speak using the Malay language.

Nevertheless, the findings of the research show that the level of knowledge related to the Malay language among the Orang Asli community is still low even though they are Malaysian citizens. Having said that, they are also aware of the existence of the Malay community and have studied the Malay language when they were in school, as proven through the findings of the high knowledge category. In other words, the Orang Asli community is not an isolated community even though they live in the interior, but they have knowledge about those two things. However, their level of knowledge is very low on the importance of using the Malay language in their daily life and they have no knowledge about the characteristics of the Malay language. In fact, the terms used in the Malay language also seem to be foreign to them while they admit to having studied Malay subjects at school.

The ecosystem principle in Environmental Theory states that language learning is a situation that involves the aspect of experience to improve language ability. So, even the Orang Asli community is not isolated from other communities, the experience that they have is not being utilized to form a more cohesive knowledge related to the Malay language. The situation is more worrying as they are unaware of the existence of Malay language as the medium of instruction as stated in Article 152 (1) of the Federal Constitution 1957 (Sharifah, 2014). If their level of basic knowledge is so low, it is certain that they are unable to identify difference terms used in Malay language and other languages such as their mother tongue.

The low level of knowledge also reflects the attitude of responsibility among the Orang Asli community regarding community living practices. Whereas Malaysia is a pluralistic country inhabited by various races and religions and it is part of our responsibility to know about the practices and cultures of other communities to ensure that we respect each other. The study conducted by Fatimi and Mohd (2006) explained that the diversity of culture including language and religious beliefs does not only need to be believed by a particular tribe that practices it, rather, Malaysians from other races also need to have a little knowledge so as not to do things that can hurt the feeling as if to adopt the customs, practices, culture and language of other nations so as to cause conflict between races in Malaysia. Therefore, low knowledge of the Malay language can also create a less peaceful atmosphere, especially if other races in Malaysia are unable to use the Malay language well while being recognized as Malaysian citizens. Knowledge of the Malay language is part of the responsibility of Malaysians regardless of race and religion because it is part of the country's constitution. Therefore, the proper usage of the Malay language among citizens should be emphasised as it will facilitate peace and harmony among society. Apart from duty of teachers in school, parents must also take responsibility onto their children and train them to use correct Malay language. This will indirectly help to place the Malay language at par with other language on the world.

Level of Readiness

The analysis of the study found that the level of readiness of the Orang Asli community to use Malay language is also still low. Although the Orang Asli community is progressing and

growing (Mohd & Nor, 2009), they are still comfortable communicating in their own language, especially those living in rural areas (Abdul, 2009). The low level of readiness has limit their communication so that they become hesitate to converse with other communities using Malay language. The strong sense of inferiority also causes them not to be ready to use the Malay language, at the same time causing them to be more confident in communicating, especially answering other people's questions by giving answers using their mother tongue. According to Ma'rof and Sarjit (2008), the low self-esteem and shyness that are still prevalent among the Orang Asli community makes them more comfortable to answer other people's questions in their mother tongue as well as using body language.

It is undeniable that the importance of preserving the mother tongue of the Orang Asli is part of government's commitment and thus creating a radio channel I with an intermediate medium of the Orang Asli language through the Asyik.fm. This situation gives them the option to choose the radio channel because it is closer to the community and it is easy for them to understand any information conveyed through the radio. However, the limited resources of reading materials with the intermediate medium of their mother tongue have caused the Orang Asli community unable to apply the practice of reading even if the books are written in Malay language including the current issues on social media. This situation clearly illustrates the willingness of the Orang Asli to use the Malay language when communicating is still influenced by their mother tongue (Juli, 2016). This is in line with the principle of the macrosystem in the Environmental theory which stating that the development of an individual's language is influenced by the norms, values and practices of the local community so that it is difficult for them to make changes.

The same is the case with the choice of television programs that are preferred by the Orang Asli community, more directed towards programs that use an intermediate medium that is easy to understand, so they do not like to watch television programs in the Malay language. However, the Orang Asli community uses Malay when making settings on the phone. This situation gives an impression that the macrosystem principle in Environmental Theory is able to some extent to influence the practice of speaking Malay in the Orang Asli community with the practice of setting up the Malay language so that it ultimately has an impact in terms of their knowledge and readiness later. This finding is proven by the medium level mean among respondents who use Malay as the phone setting compared to other items that have a low level mean. There should be more opportunities provided to the Orang Asli community so that they can use Malay language widely without any hesitation. The school and related authorities should therefore plan and organize event that suit the Orang Asli community where they can practice their knowledge of the Malay language freely. Finally, the understanding of Malay terms and speech of the Orang Asli community is also disrupted as a result of the low level of readiness to use the Malay language.

Level of Practice

The practices of the Orang Asli community are still tied to the beliefs inherited from their ancestors, causing most of them to choose to live in the interior instead of migrating to more comfortable areas (Abdul & Zalizan, 2009). This practice is not only affects their lives, but it also affects the Malay language skills among the Orang Asli community whereas the indigenous people in Sarawak like to use Malay when communicating in their community even though they are more skilled and knowledgeable in using their mother tongue (Ilangko et al., 2014) in line with the principle of chronosystem in Environmental Theory which assumes that aspects of change occur in a certain period of time according to the

development or passage of time. In other words, when there are enough exposure, emphasis and monitoring, the practice of speaking Malay among the Orang Asli community can be formed in certain period. However, the situation is the opposite when the Orang Asli community prefers to use their mother tongue when they are with family members including when helping children or siblings completing their schoolwork. In fact, when communicating with other Orang Asli people from other tribes, they also like to speak in their respective mother tongues because they think they understand each other even though there are slight differences in phonetics and terms used.

Obviously, the Orang Asli community prefer to use their mother tongue when interacting compared to Malay language because on average they use their mother tongue when interacting on social media including uploading status and replying to comments on Facebook, WhatsApp and other social media. However, the situation is different when the Orang Asli community is at service counters such as in the bank, post offices, petrol stations and other counters by choosing the Malay language. The Orang Asli community speak more often using their mother tongue than the Malay language because it is not only a feeling of inferiority or lack of confidence in their ability to speak but also, every question they ask using their mother tongue gets a response from the other community by answering every question or conversation they have causing them to think that other people can understand the terms or sentences they used when interacting.

It can be concluded that the Orang Asli community is more confident to speak using their mother tongue than the Malay language, despite getting a perfect education and are directly exposed to Malay language subjects when they are at school. At the same time, the Orang Asli community that is increasingly open to mix with other communities such as the Malay community is still not fully prepared to practice the practices that were not inherited from their ancestors (Seow et al., 2015) including the practice of speaking in the Malay language except when they are in a situation that requires them to use the Malay language, especially when dealing with government offices, private agencies and certain individuals who do not have experience communicating with them. The principles underlying the Environmental Theory as expressed by Urie Bronfenbrenner (1917) are able to have an impact on the strengthening of the Malay language of the Orang Asli community.

Conclusion

The Malay language is not a foreign language in Malaysia, but in fact, it is also developing in Asian regions such as Brunei, Singapore and Indonesia because there are Malay ancestral communities that inhabit those countries (Ku Hasnita et al., 2013). While Sharifah (2014) stated that the Malaysian government has gazetted Malay as the national and official language of the federation as stated in Article 152 (1) of the Federal Constitution 1957 including making Malay Language a compulsory subject in school. This effort is further proven by requiring students to pass Malay language subject at the Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) level including History subject to enable them to obtain an SPM certificate. It is clear that these efforts are aimed at instilling and fostering the spirit of love for the Malay language among Malaysians as well as safeguarding the ancestors of the Malay language.

Therefore, all Malaysians must have a sense of responsibility to dignify the Malay language in various ways including increasing knowledge related to the Malay language. After having a solid knowledge of the Malay language, we are ready to use the language and practice it by speaking in the Malay language. This does not mean to deny the function of the mother tongue, however, the responsibility to dignify the Malay language is part of the

collective responsibility of Malaysians to help the government's efforts in dignifying the Malay language at the international level. According to Norayu (2014), the racial unity can be formed through the language used in the interaction among diverse society that it can help the effort of the government to strengthen the unity to prevent from racial division among Malaysians.

All parties must mobilize synergy to increase the status of Malay Language as an official language in all daily affairs, in addition to its main status as the national language. Let's not become human beings who immerse themselves in the modernization by giving importance to foreign languages and the mother tongue alone, and on the contrary, ignore the ability of the Malay language to bring us to the eyes of the world. There is a Malay proverb that says, "*Yang kurik itu kendi, yang merah itu saga, yang elok itu budi, yang indah itu bahasa*" which literally means *good language and attitude produce great personality*. Not skilled in the use of Malay language as an intermediate language not only can cause problems in daily communication among Malaysians, but this will also cause disagreements between the multiple races in our country. Therefore, all parties must join hands and work together in re-establishing the Malay language as an intermediate language among Malaysians.

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