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Using Educational Videos to Spark Learning Interest among Orang Asli Students

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Abstract

This article explores how the integration of educational videos can enhance learning interest among Orang Asli students in Malaysia. Drawing on recent initiatives and research, it highlights how culturally responsive video content, visual storytelling, and digital engagement strategies can bridge educational gaps and foster motivation in indigenous learners.

Keywords: Educational Videos, Learning Motivation, Orang Asli Education

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1.0 Introduction

Orang Asli students in rural and forested areas of Peninsular Malaysia face persistent educational challenges, including high dropout rates, inadequate school facilities, and curricula that overlook their culture. In 2022, their secondary school dropout rate was 4.65%, far above the national average of 0.99%, underscoring deep inequities in access and retention (Youganeparan, 2025). These disparities are compounded by geographic isolation, limited transportation, and economic hardship, which restrict consistent school attendance and access to digital learning tools (Kamsin & Khalid, 2023). Furthermore, the mainstream curriculum often fails to reflect indigenous knowledge systems, leading to disengagement and a sense of alienation among Orang Asli learners (Othman, 2022; Yussoff et al., 2025). As Malaysia strives toward the Sustainable Development Goal of "Education for All," there is an urgent need to rethink pedagogical strategies and embrace culturally responsive approaches that honor the lived experiences and linguistic diversity of Orang Asli communities (Othman, 2022). These challenges include geographic isolation, socioeconomic marginalization, linguistic diversity, and limited exposure to formal schooling environments (Kamsin & Khalid, 2023). While national efforts have sought to improve infrastructure, teacher deployment, and curriculum inclusivity, according to (Othman, 2022), many Orang Asli learners continue to experience a disconnect between mainstream pedagogical approaches and their lived realities.

Sparking genuine interest in learning is a matter of fairness, driving motivation, persistence, and deeper understanding. For Orang Asli learners, whose knowledge is shared through stories and community life, traditional classrooms may feel distant. Educational videos, created with cultural sensitivity, can bridge gaps by making lessons relatable, affirming identity, and sparking curiosity. Grounded in multimedia theory, they turn passive learning into active participation, fostering engagement, belonging, and meaningful experiences.

1.1. Aim / Purpose of the Study

To explore how culturally responsive educational videos can improve engagement, motivation, and learning among Orang Asli students in Peninsular Malaysia, while addressing challenges such as dropout rates, limited resources, and curricula that neglect indigenous knowledge.

1.2. Objectives of the Study

1. Assess how multimedia approaches can spark interest and persistence in learning among Orang Asli learners.
2. Examine how culturally sensitive videos can affirm indigenous identity and reduce alienation in mainstream classrooms.
3. Evaluate the potential of these tools to improve access, retention, and equity by aligning content with Orang Asli experiences, languages, and storytelling traditions.

2.0 Literature Review

Despite Malaysia's commitment to the Sustainable Development Goal of "Education for All," Orang Asli learners remain structurally marginalized. Policy initiatives to improve infrastructure, teacher deployment, and curriculum inclusivity often fail to address deeper cultural and epistemological dissonances. Othman (2022) notes that while access has improved, the curriculum remains monocultural and linguistically homogenized, privileging Malay-centric narratives while sidelining indigenous knowledge. This reflects Bourdieu's (1977) concept of symbolic violence, where dominant cultural capital is legitimized and indigenous epistemologies devalued. Deficit discourses labeling Orang Asli learners as "at-risk" echo Freire's (1970) critique of the banking model, while Ladson-Billings' (1995) culturally responsive pedagogy emphasizes affirming identity and integrating lived experiences. Mayer's CTML (2021) highlights dual-channel learning, enriching culturally responsive pedagogy.

Challenges are multifaceted. Geographic isolation hinders attendance, with communities lacking transport, infrastructure, and amenities (Panchadcharam & Saludin, 2025). Socioeconomic marginalization -poverty, food insecurity, limited parental education—further constrains engagement. Linguistic diversity, once cultural richness, is treated as a barrier; the dominance of Bahasa Malaysia and English, coupled with absent mother tongue education, alienates learners (Kamsin & Khalid, 2023). This exclusion impedes comprehension and undermines identity. Many students enter school without foundational literacy or socialization, leading to early failure, low motivation, and dropout. In 2022, 4.65% of Orang Asli students failed to complete secondary school, compared to 0.99% nationally (Youghanesparan, 2025). Programs like Duta Guru and Teach for Malaysia have expanded teacher deployment, but the 2022 Impact Report shows many lack cultural competence.

This persistent disconnect calls for rethinking educational design. Scholars advocate culturally sustaining pedagogies that center indigenous epistemologies, community participation, and holistic development (Kamsin & Khalid, 2023). Such approaches emphasize co-constructing knowledge, integrating local languages and oral traditions, and validating indigenous ways of knowing within the curriculum. Teacher education must move beyond tokenistic multiculturalism to cultivate reflexivity, empathy, and justice. Without structural and pedagogical transformation, national efforts risk reproducing inequities, leaving Orang Asli learners at the margins of Malaysia's educational aspirations.

3.0 Methodology

This study uses a qualitative case study approach to examine the gap between Malaysia's mainstream curriculum and the real-life experiences of Orang Asli learners. Guided by interpretivist thinking, it explores how indigenous students experience schooling and how culturally responsive teaching can improve engagement, identity, and learning outcomes.

3.1. Sampling and Participants

This study employed purposive sampling to ensure participants were directly relevant to the research focus. A total of 8–10 participants were selected:

1. Students (4–5): Orang Asli secondary school learners, balanced by gender and grade level, representing varied attendance patterns and experiences with the mainstream curriculum.
2. Teachers (2–3): Educators directly teaching Orang Asli students, with variation in teaching experience and subject specialization.
3. Administrators/community representatives (2): School leaders or community figures with knowledge of educational practices and cultural expectations.

3.2. Selection Criteria

Participants were chosen based on:

1. Direct involvement in Orang Asli education (students enrolled, teachers assigned, administrators/community engaged).

2. Ability to provide insights into the gap between mainstream curriculum and Orang Asli learners' lived experiences.
3. Diversity of perspectives across gender, grade levels, teaching experience, and community roles.
4. Accessibility and willingness to participate in interviews.
5. Contextual variation where possible, including participants from schools with differing levels of remoteness and resources.

3.1 Research Design

This case study explores teaching practices in Orang Asli schools, focusing on curriculum, interactions, and community values. Building on Othman (2022) and Kamsin & Khalid (2023), it highlights classroom-level pedagogy and community-driven curriculum adaptations in indigenous contexts.

3.2 Data Collection

Data were collected through three methods: semi-structured interviews with teachers, school leaders, and community members on curriculum and engagement; classroom observations of teaching, language use, and cultural references; and document analysis of lesson plans, materials, and policies for indigenous knowledge integration. Participants were purposively selected from two Orang Asli-majority schools in Kelantan to ensure diverse roles and linguistic backgrounds. Ethical approval and informed consent were obtained.

3.3 Research Procedures

The study followed clear steps to ensure rigor. Ethical approval was obtained, and permission was granted by school authorities and community leaders. Participants were purposively sampled, including 4 - 5 Orang Asli students, 2 - 3 teachers, and 2 administrators or community representatives. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. Interviews examined curriculum and teaching, observations captured classroom practices and cultural references, and documents such as lesson plans and policies were reviewed for indigenous knowledge integration. All data were transcribed, organized, and thematically analyzed using Atlas.ti, combining inductive codes from participant narratives with deductive codes guided by culturally sustaining pedagogy, socio-cognitive theory, and the Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning. Credibility was enhanced through triangulation and member checking, while reflexive journaling ensured transparency and acknowledged researcher positionality.

3.4 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was employed to identify recurring patterns and tensions across the data. Coding was conducted using both inductive and deductive approaches. Inductive codes emerged from participant narratives, allowing insights to surface organically from the lived experiences of Orang Asli educators and community members. Deductive coding was guided by theoretical constructs such as culturally sustaining pedagogy (Kamsin and Khalid, 2023), socio-cognitive theory, and the principles of the Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning (CTML). Atlas.ti software was used to manage, organize, and systematically analyze the qualitative data.

Atlas.ti software was selected to manage, organize, and systematically analyze the qualitative data due to its robust capabilities in handling complex, multi-layered textual information. As a tool specifically designed for qualitative research, Atlas.ti supports both inductive and deductive coding processes, enabling the researcher to identify emergent themes while also applying theoretical constructs such as culturally sustaining pedagogy, socio-cognitive theory, and CTML principles. Its intuitive interface and advanced visualization features such as code co-occurrence tables, network views, and semantic mapping, facilitated deeper interpretive analysis and theory-building. Moreover, Atlas.ti's ability to link codes across interviews, observations, and documents allowed for rigorous triangulation and pattern recognition across data sources. This made it particularly suitable for a case study exploring the subtler pedagogical experiences of Orang Asli learners, where cultural, linguistic, and contextual factors intersect. The software's compatibility with memorizing and audit trail documentation also enhanced the transparency and trustworthiness of the analytic process.

3.5 Methodological Positioning of Tan (2024)

While Tan (2024) does not present a formal empirical study, her policy commentary offers valuable programmatic insights from the Orang Asli Education Programme (OAEP). Drawing on field-level reflections and stakeholder feedback, Tan advocates for co-designed, community-driven curriculum reform and teacher training rooted in indigenous epistemologies. Her interpretive synthesis complements this study's empirical orientation by providing a praxis-informed lens on culturally responsive education. As such, Tan's work is integrated as a secondary source that enriches the conceptual framing and supports the rationale for community-based pedagogical reform.

3.6 Trustworthiness and Reflexivity

To ensure credibility and trustworthiness, the study will employ triangulation across data sources and member checking with participants. Reflexive journaling will be maintained throughout the research process to account for the researcher's positionality as a TESL educator and scholar committed to equity and cultural sensitivity. This reflexivity is essential given the historical marginalization of Orang Asli communities and the ethical imperative to conduct research that affirms their agency and knowledge systems.

4.0 Findings

Thematic analysis of interviews, classroom observations, and document reviews revealed three interrelated themes that illuminate the pedagogical disconnect experienced by Orang Asli learners: (1) Curricular Misalignment and Cultural Erasure, (2) Language as a Barrier

and a Bridge, and (3) Teacher Agency and the Limits of Structural Reform. These themes reflect the complex interplay between systemic constraints, pedagogical practices, and indigenous learners' lived realities.

4.1 Curricular Misalignment and Cultural Erasure

Participants A and B noted that the national curriculum lacks Orang Asli knowledge, history, and cultural values. Teachers and community members were concerned that its focus on standardized, urban-centric content made learning feel distant and alienating. Document analysis showed few references to indigenous contexts, with most examples drawn from Malay or Western settings. One teacher shared, "Our students don't see themselves in the textbooks. They feel like outsiders in their own classroom." This lack of representation led to student disengagement, as school felt disconnected from their daily lives and community knowledge.

4.2 Language as a Barrier and a Bridge

Linguistic diversity was seen as both a challenge and a strength. Many Orang Asli students start school speaking only their indigenous languages, while Bahasa Malaysia is used for instruction. This gap often caused confusion and low participation, especially in early years. Some teachers used Semai or Temiar words alongside Malay to help students understand and feel recognized. These strategies, though not supported by policy, came from teachers' cultural awareness and connection to the community. As one teacher said, "When I use their language, their eyes light up. It's like I'm saying, 'I see you.'" This highlights the need for multilingual teaching that values students' languages and identities.

4.3 Teacher Agency and the Limits of Structural Reform

National programs like DLP and Duta Guru aim to improve teacher quality in rural areas, but participants felt these efforts often lacked cultural relevance. Many teachers said they were not trained to teach in Orang Asli communities. Still, some showed initiative by adapting lessons to include local stories and community mapping. These creative efforts helped connect learning to students' lives but were often isolated and unsupported due to strict curriculum rules and limited backing. This highlights a key tension between top-down reforms and the need for grassroots, culturally informed teaching approaches.

5.0 Discussion

5.1 Curricular Misalignment and Cultural Erasure

Many Orang Asli learners feel disconnected from a national curriculum that ignores their cultural knowledge, histories, and values. This exclusion reflects deep-rooted epistemic violence within Malaysia's education system. Although policies support Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4, the curriculum still centers dominant Malay and Western perspectives, sidelining indigenous worldviews and reinforcing deficit-based assumptions (Othman, 2022).

This misalignment is not just a teaching flaw, it is a structural form of exclusion that places Orang Asli students on the margins of national identity. Document analysis and participant accounts show that textbooks and lesson plans lack culturally relevant content, making school feel alien and unwelcoming. Factors like remote locations, poverty, and language barriers worsen this disconnect, leading to disengagement and early academic failure (Panchadcharam & Saludin, 2025; Kamsin & Khalid, 2023).

One teacher noted that "students feel like outsiders in their own classroom," highlighting the emotional and cognitive harm caused by curricular erasure. Programs like Duta Guru and Teach for Malaysia aim to improve teacher quality, but they often fall short in preparing educators to work effectively with Orang Asli communities (Teach for Malaysia, 2022).

To move forward, Malaysia needs a shift toward culturally sustaining pedagogy - one that values indigenous knowledge, involves community voices, and redefines success beyond test scores (Kamsin & Khalid, 2023). Without this change, national reforms may continue to reproduce the very inequalities they seek to eliminate, leaving Orang Asli learners invisible and excluded.

5.2 Language as a Barrier and a Bridge

Linguistic diversity among Orang Asli learners is both a challenge and a strength in Malaysia's education system. Although inclusivity is promoted under Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4, schooling remains dominated by Bahasa Malaysia and English, leaving little space for indigenous languages. Many Orang Asli students enter school speaking only their native dialects, creating a gap between home and school literacy. This often results in silence, confusion, and low participation, reflecting Kamsin & Khalid's (2023) concern that indigenous languages are treated as barriers rather than assets.

The absence of mother tongue-based education affects comprehension and undermines cultural identity, reinforcing the perception that students are linguistically weak instead of rich in knowledge (Othman, 2022). Some teachers practice translanguaging by blending Semai or Temiar words into lessons, showing cultural empathy and helping students feel valued. As one teacher noted, "When I use their language, their eyes light up," illustrating how language can build trust and support learning.

However, these practices are rare and lack policy support. Without proper training, resources, and curriculum reform, they remain fragile. This underscores the urgent need for a multilingual policy that respects indigenous languages and fosters inclusive learning. Without such change, Orang Asli students will continue to be marginalized in a system that claims to serve all.

5.3 Teacher Agency and the Limits of Structural Reform

Teachers in Orang Asli communities often feel underprepared, yet they show creativity and resilience in adapting their teaching. This reflects a tension between top-down reforms and the need for bottom-up, culturally rooted approaches. National programs like DLP and Duta Guru aim to improve teacher quality, but their impact is uneven, especially in indigenous settings where cultural understanding is crucial but often overlooked (Teach for Malaysia, 2022). Othman (2022) critiques Malaysia's curriculum for being monocultural and language-centered, privileging dominant Malay narratives while ignoring indigenous knowledge. Some teachers resist this by using local folktales and community mapping to make lessons more meaningful, but these efforts remain isolated and unsupported due to rigid curriculum rules and institutional barriers.

Without systemic support, culturally responsive teaching remains fragile, reinforcing perceptions of Orang Asli students as "at-risk" rather than culturally rich. Reform efforts that focus only on infrastructure and teacher placement miss the deeper issue: how teaching and learning are shaped by culture and identity. As Kamsin & Khalid (2023) argue, real change requires methods that center indigenous knowledge, involve communities, and support holistic development. While teachers' efforts are admirable, they cannot substitute for structural reform. Without integrating cultural awareness into teacher training and curriculum design, Malaysia risks continuing the exclusion of Orang Asli learners from its educational goals.

6.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

This study highlights several areas where future research can strengthen understanding and guide reforms in Orang Asli education. A key priority is longitudinal research that tracks learner outcomes over time, showing how culturally sustaining pedagogy, mother tongue instruction, and community-driven schooling affect retention, achievement, and identity development. Comparative case studies across Orang Asli groups and other indigenous communities in Southeast Asia would also reveal shared challenges and unique contexts, situating Orang Asli education within broader debates on equity.

Teacher education and professional development are another focus. Future studies should examine how indigenous epistemologies, multilingual strategies, and culturally responsive pedagogy can be embedded in training programs, including mentorship models that support teachers in indigenous contexts. Research on language policy is also needed to explore how multilingual education can be implemented in Orang Asli schools, with attention to translanguaging practices, the role of indigenous languages in comprehension, and the impact of mother tongue instruction on literacy.

Community-driven schooling models also warrant exploration, particularly how partnerships with families and elders and place-based learning rooted in local knowledge enhance engagement and cultural affirmation. At the policy level, studies should analyze how national programs such as DLP and Duta Guru align with indigenous schooling realities. Finally, future research should assess how culturally tailored educational videos, and digital tools can support Orang Asli learners, especially in rural areas with limited access.

Together, these directions will provide stronger evidence for curriculum reform, advance theories of culturally sustaining pedagogy and multilingual education, and contribute practical models for teacher training, community engagement, and digital innovation.

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Paper Contributed to Related Field of Study

This study makes a valuable contribution to TESL, Indigenous Education, Curriculum Studies, qualitative research, and educational policy. By centering Orang Asli voices, it shows how culturally responsive teaching can support learners in linguistically diverse and marginalized settings.

In TESL, the study challenges conventional methods by integrating indigenous languages like Semai and Temiar into English lessons. These translanguaging practices help students understand better and feel proud of their identity, expanding TESL beyond urban, monolingual contexts.

In Indigenous Education, it highlights how teachers use local stories and community mapping to make learning meaningful. These practices resist monocultural curricula and affirm indigenous knowledge, contributing to calls for educational justice.

In Curriculum Studies, the research critiques top-down reforms like DLP and Duta Guru for overlooking cultural realities. It advocates for curriculum design that includes indigenous voices, histories, and ecological wisdom.

Methodologically, the study uses a qualitative, context-sensitive approach through interviews, observations, and document analysis. Atlas.ti software supports rigorous and transparent data analysis.

For policy and practice, it offers practical recommendations, such as multilingual teaching, culturally responsive teacher training, and community-based schooling - to make education more inclusive.

Overall, the study bridges theory and practice, promoting an education system that empowers Orang Asli learners as knowledge creators and agents of change.

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