

## LANGUAGE AS A SOURCE OF REJECTION: LOW LITERACY LEARNING AT ORANG RIMBA IN JAMBI PROVINCE

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### Abstract

Inappropriate use of language in communication makes literacy teaching difficult for Orang Rimba (hereinafter OR). Teachers must have good language skills and appropriate literacy teaching patterns. Based on data, very few teachers are interested in teaching OR groups due to regional, cultural, and natural aspects. The purpose of this research was to know the role of the local language in the delivery of literacy at school. The type of research was qualitative, using descriptive techniques. In collecting data, researchers used observation, interviews, and documentation. Furthermore, the data analysis technique was a descriptive technique that describes the conditions in the field as they are. The respondent who would be interviewed was 1 teacher. The observation area to be studied was *Pematang Kabau* village at *Bukit Dua Belas*. The findings were, first, the teacher who teach at school must be able to use OR Malay dialect because Indonesian or Jambi Malay dialect were quite difficult for them to understand. Second, the proper literacy teaching model was the direct learning model implemented for youth and children. Based on the findings above, it can be concluded that choosing the right language and good communication when teaching literacy at OR group must have their own strategy so that what is conveyed can be well received.

**Keywords:** Languange, Communication, Literacy Learning, Teaching Patterns, Orang Rimba

## INTRODUCTION

The *Orang Rimba* community (hereinafter OR) is a Malay ethnic community that lives in several areas, like in the oil palm plantation, the forests of *Bukit Dua Belas*, *Bukit Tiga Puluh*, some regencies in Jambi, and lives moving from one place to another. Actually, the government currently has allocated special residences for the OR community in Jambi province (Rozelin, 2022); (Rozelin & Fauzan, 2020); (Rozelin, 2016). The new relocation program for the OR community has many obstacles due to their habit of living accustomed to moving from one place to another, they feel more comfortable living in *Sudung*- the name of OR's home- compared to living in the house that was made by the government. In addition, living in housing made by the government meant that they had to leave the old community and join a new one. They

have to adapt to village life, such as opening new land, gardening, farming, and jobs that they have never done before. Apart from that, children also have to go to school so that their future will be better.

Education is needed in order to make the younger generation of OR not far behind other village children. Education can bring changes in someone's mindset, outlook on life, and better insights for OR. This is what encourages the government and NGOs in Jambi city to improve the standard of living of the OR community. In its implementation, this activity experienced several obstacles from both sides, from the teachers and also from OR children. This problem will be discussed in detail in this paper.

Education and poverty are a unit that are related and influence each other. For poor people, education is something that is out of their reach, so that many poor people do not experience proper education, this is caused by a lack of interest in learning, a lack of curiosity, and an environment that does not support them to get education (Nayangsari, 2022). The government must provide an understanding to the OR community that education is a very important thing for the future generation of OR. Education will be able to improve OR's standard of living, at least OR will not be easily deceived by other people for their interest.

Language is a communication tool and the most reliable vehicle of life together in a society (Mailani et al., 2022); (Annisa, 2020); (Suardi et al., 2019). People who use language as a tool that humans have received since they were born, so when they communicate, they will produce a consistent understanding and feedback that is mutually beneficial to one another. Malay is a language that is widely used in Sumatra, especially in Jambi. Jambi Province itself has various dialects of Malay. People who live in the Jambi city use the Malay Jambi dialect, while the community that will be studied uses Malay OR dialect. This difference caused language to be a source of resistance in the learning process.

Good communication comes from the placement of the right vocabulary, this communication does not only go one way but should be two-ways. Communication will

not be perfect if the language expressed is not accepted or understood by others. So, it can be said that communication is a conversation or interaction between individuals (Ubaidillah, 2016). Proper communication certainly cannot be separated from the use of language that is in accordance with the understanding of students in class. Communication is not limited to verbal language. Some experts argue that when there are several people together in a place, communication must occur. Even if they don't speak, this is another form of communication that can be expressed through body language, facial expressions, and non-linguistic sounds (e.g. mumbling or grumbling). Communication is a general term that refers to a more specific term, namely language. Communication is the transfer of a meaning through sounds, signs, body language, and symbols. Language is an ordered system of symbols to transfer that meaning. Thus, language is a modification of communication that includes a special symbol system that is understood and used by a group of individuals to communicate various ideas and information (Dhieni, 2014).

Literacy learning is an individual ability associated with reading, writing, and counting. Literacy ability is also related to the ability of individuals to solve the problems they face. Kern (2000) stated that literacy learning has characteristics like responding, revising, and reflecting. Responding involves both sides teachers and students. Students respond to assignments given by the teacher or to the texts they read. Likewise, the teacher responds to students' answers so that they can reach good expectations. Giving responses to the student's work is also quite important so that they know whether they have achieved what was expected or not. Revision includes various language activities. For example, in compiling an activity report, revisions can be carried out at the level of idea formulation, drafting process, and structured reports. Reflecting with regard to evaluating what has been done, what is seen, and what is felt when learning is carried out. More specifically, reflection can be divided into two points: from the point of view of receptive language (listening and reading) and the point of view of expressive language (speaking and writing).

The direct learning model is a learning model in which the teacher conveys directly to students (Oktavia, 2020); (Lisnawati & Ertinawati, 2019). Thus, this direct

learning model plays a very important role, because the main role in this learning model is the teacher, who must be active with students. In the delivery of this direct learning, that is usually applied, namely the lecture method. The direct learning model is a learning model that prioritizes mastery of concepts or changes in behavior seen from a deductive approach (Gunarto, 2013); (Siagian & Nurfitriyanti, 2015). This model explains the basics of scientific thinking at students so that in the learning process, participants learn more on their own way to develop creativity. Glaser in (Margono, 2015); (Rohani, 2010) stated that the teaching pattern has 4 main components, they were: IO (Instructional Objectives) or Teaching Objectives; EB (Entering/Entry Behavior) or Introduction of Students' Initial Ability; IP (Instructional Procedures) or the teaching/teaching process itself; and PA (Performance Assessment) or Assessment of achievement of teaching objectives. This research looks at the teaching process and teaching patterns related to the use of the OR language.

Based on an initial survey, the writers found that teachers who teach in the OR community still use the Jambi dialect, not the OR dialect, so that OR children have difficulty in understanding what is conveyed. So that, this writing tried to investigate how far language can influence the understanding of OR in learning literacy and what kind of learning models are suitable in teaching literacy to OR children.

## METHODOLOGY

This research used qualitative and descriptive methods, this research tried to understand the symptoms and phenomena experienced by research subjects by utilizing various natural methods (Sugiono, 2014). This research would be conducted in the village of Pematang Kabau, precisely in the oil palm plantation at *Bukit Duabelas*. According to Lincoln in Muhammad, qualitative research was multi-method in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. It means that qualitative research studies in their natural setting trying to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings that people bring to them. Techniques of data collection according to (Creswell, 2014); (Margono, 2015) were observation, interview, and documentation.

Here, the writer interviewed 5 children. The selected children are those who are currently studying at schools where the teachers are from the NGO community. This study used a purposive sampling technique in choosing respondents. After that, at data analysis, this study used descriptive technique. It was used to describe what language is easy for OR's children to understand in learning, as well as what literacy teaching patterns are appropriate so that the material presented can be well received. The main theory in this study is language and literacy teaching patterns.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the Indonesian dictionary, pattern is defined as a form of organizing activity programs. The teachers at school are the main sources in teaching something to students (Wulandari, 2010); (Sanjani, 2020); (Sopian, 2016). The function and role of the teacher is an inseparable unit. Teachers have the function and role of educating, teaching, guiding, and training. Same As with the task of the teacher, this function has different focuses. Education focuses on aspects of morality and student personality, guidance focuses on aspects of religious norms and norms of life, teaching focuses on teaching materials and science, and training focuses on life skills. Sukmadina (2008) stated that "Teaching patterns are tasks given to teachers or teaching staff to students by requiring students to take part in independent study lessons at home, study groups, or by studying textbooks". Meanwhile, the teacher has the role of learning manager or class manager, namely the teacher must have skills in managing classroom conditions. This skill is intended so that students can study in comfortable conditions. Teachers as class manager are also obliged to codify class when there is disruption in the learning process (Darmadi, 2015).

Learning to read and write is an activity that the OR generation must master. Increasing interaction with the outside community influences OR's perspective on education. They realize that formal education can be a tool to protect themselves, the forest, and their community. Often, OR is exploited by outsiders in land disputes or natural resource appropriation. OR often experiences defeat in fighting against environmental exploitation and customary land because they cannot read and do not understand Indonesian law. The existence of reading and writing programs like *Sokola*

*Rimba* greatly helps the younger generation whose literacy levels are very low. The *Sekola Rimba* activities are not continuous because they are related to funding. The teachers and facilitators visit them in the middle of the forest and adjust the teaching methods to their lifestyle. This makes the learning process more easily accepted.

Based on field data, the atmosphere of the OR educational environment is not limited to the classroom, but rather integrates with nature and daily life. Children learn in the *sudung* or in the open air. The teacher sits on the grass while writing on a mini whiteboard, and the children write in their respective books. In addition, the teacher also explains the values of politeness, customs, harmony with nature, and social solidarity. Overall, OR's attitude towards education today can be described as positive and adaptive. They no longer view school as a threat, but rather as a preparation to face the challenges of the times and to protect their cultural heritage and environment.

Interviews with several OR children, they struggled to tell when the teacher explaining something and when they were studying. It happened because the teachers used the Malay Jambi dialect and sometimes used the Indonesian language, while OR, in their daily activity, used the Malay OR dialect. The language used in communication and learning during the first meeting was Indonesian mixed with Jambi Malay. At the next meeting the teacher tried to use Jambi Malay, they hoped it would exist in the relationship between the teacher and students. When they explained how to read in Jambi Malay, some of the children understood it, and some did not. The dialect of OR in communicating were not the same with the Jambi people's dialect, so it could be concluded that OR understanding in the teaching materials delivered by the teacher was approximately 50%. Based on the results of the interviews below:

A : guru tu becakap pakai bahaso dio, kami dak paham. Kalo pakek bahaso kami, kami biso (Jambi Malay Languange)

**/That teacher talks wit his/her languange, we don't undesrtand. If he/she uses our languange, we undertood./ (English languange)**

*/guru tu becakap pakai beheso nye, kamia hopi tentu. Bilo pakai beheso kamia, kamia tentulah/. (OR Languange)*

Based on statement A above, it can be seen that OR children experience difficulties when the teacher explains literacy learning using the Jambi dialect. Jambi dialect and OR dialect is not the same. The difficulties faced by students in understanding language, both spoken and written, can have a significant impact on their learning levels across various subjects. Language ability is not just about speaking or reading, but also about processing, interpreting, and using information conveyed through words. If a student struggles with this aspect, their learning process will be severely hindered. One of the most immediate impacts is difficulty in understanding instructions from the teacher. If a student cannot understand what is being asked of them, they will struggle to start tasks, follow the lesson flow, or complete homework. The explanation of concepts given by the teacher in class will also become unclear, causing students to lose important foundational knowledge.

This situation can also be seen from the answers of child B and child C, who stated that they also did not understand what the teacher talked about.

B: kami dak ngerti (Jambi Malay Languange)

**/we don't understand/ (English languange)**

/kamia hopi ngerti/. (OR Languange)

Another student said that:

C: susah nian bahasonyo (Jambi Malay Languange)

**/very difficult her/his languange/ (English languange)**

*/susah bahaso nye/. (OR Languange)*

They might be able to read word by word fluently (decoding), but they are unable to grasp the overall meaning of the text, identify the main idea, or draw conclusions. This will affect learning in all subjects that require textbooks, reading materials, or story problems, such as science, social studies, or mathematics. Difficulties in language will also affect writing skills. Students may struggle to construct cohesive sentences or paragraphs, express ideas clearly, or use correct grammar. As a result, they may not be able to answer essay questions well or create structured reports, even though

they know the answers.

To make them understand what the teacher is saying, children usually ask BKSDA employees, who usually come to their area to control the forest, see the situation in the forest, or just to see the condition of the OR in the Bukit Duabelas area. The Bukit Duabelas area is an area that is included in a protected forest, including animals, trees, and OR who live in it. They will ask about lessons they have learned but still don't understand. Based on the data above, there are some questions that appear: if the teacher uses OR dialect, do they understand? Are they comfortable? The collected answers: they understand what the teacher teaches and what the teacher instructs. The teaching materials that delivered by the teacher can be well received. It can be concluded that language is no longer a subject of rejection, provided that the language employed is the local vernacular.

Students who struggle to understand language tend to have a more limited vocabulary. Vocabulary is the foundation for understanding more complex texts, without adequate vocabulary, students will struggle to comprehend increasingly specific and technical subject matter, such as scientific terms in biology or historical terms. Understanding language is closely related to critical thinking skills. To analyze information, evaluate arguments, and solve problems, students must be able to understand the context and nuances of the language used. Language difficulties can limit their ability to process information in depth, making it hard for them to think beyond what is directly stated. In addition to academic impacts, language difficulties can also affect students' confidence and social interactions. They may feel embarrassed or frustrated because they cannot follow the lessons or participate in group discussions. This can lead to anxiety, reluctance to participate in class, and even a decrease in motivation to learn.

In another case, the findings for problem number 2, which related to the learning model that is suitable in teaching literacy to OR children. The learning model is a direct learning model. This learning model emphasizes the activeness of teachers who explain learning to students. A direct teaching pattern that involves direct interaction between the teacher and students, in which the teacher plays an active role in front of students. In solving problems, students must be able to understand how they can solve a problem

that has been exemplified. This direct teaching pattern is specifically designed to support learning so that there is direct interaction between students and teacher in the learning process. Based on this theory, the teaching pattern applied by the teacher is a direct learning model. Besides that, the teaching pattern for the OR community is a teaching pattern that provides direct examples. The instructional approach for the OR community is the one that is suitable for that community.

The teacher explains how to read to OR children and asks the children to repeat what the teacher says. When they learn to write, the teacher writes letters of the alphabet on the small whiteboard, and then the children try to imitate them in their own books. The teacher and students sit together on the floor because there are no chairs, they usually study in OR's home. The teacher watches what the children write and guide, teaches them how to write letters correctly. If something is wrong in writing, the teacher helps the children so they can write well.

Apart from that, not all OR children can go to school well because they have to help their parents hunt animals in the forest or gardening. Sometimes when they study, they have to go home because their parents pick them up to hunt in the forest. The situations like this certainly make the learning system not work well. What is conveyed or taught by the teacher cannot be well received by students. Of course, this will disturb the learning atmosphere in the classroom, disturb the concentration of other students, and make OR children's enthusiasm for learning less good.

The learning environment is not an obstacle for OR children because they are used to living in the open nature. Facilities and infrastructure in learning are the second part, the main part is teachers and parents. The teacher's ability to explore and find appropriate methods in teaching children is the most important thing, especially language in communication of learning in the class, so that what is conveyed can be well received. Then, support from parents must be strong, not inviting children to hunt or garden during school hours, supporting children to study seriously, and giving them the opportunity to study longer when with their teachers or friends.

The direct learning model was first introduced by Siegfried Engelmann in 1968. According to him, this approach could help students learn and master lessons. Direct learning model that involves the teacher's active role in carrying out learning. Based on

the findings in the field, the authors believe that the direct learning model is the right learning model for OR children who still really need assistance.

## CONCLUSIONS

Based on the description in the analysis section, it can be concluded that the appropriate language will not become a language of rejection due to mutual understanding between both parties. Teachers who teach in remote areas or in specific communities must possess additional skills, such as proficiency in local languages and a basic understanding of Indonesian. Communication will be effective if both parties use the same language, so that what the teacher conveys can be well understood by the students. Next, the appropriate learning method in the OR environment is the direct learning model, where the teacher explains and the students listen while taking notes on what is being conveyed.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This research was field research assisted by several informants. Therefore, the authors would like to express their deepest gratitude and appreciation to all informants. The authors also expressed gratitude and high appreciation to the Chancellor of UIN Sulthan Thaha Saifuddin Jambi and all contributors who actively participated in this research. Hopefully, this research could provide positive benefits and contributions to the fields of linguistics and education. Recommendation for another researcher who wants to analyze the *Orang Rimba* community: could analyze the extent to which the government pays attention to employment and education.

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