

Bidayuh Heritage Language Playschools and Kindergartens in Sarawak

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Abstract

Although written documentation of Sarawak indigenous languages are on-going, so far only Iban has been offered as an elective subject in primary and secondary schools in Sarawak. Bidayuh has only been introduced in a number of preschools as the language of instruction. The study examined the reception of teachers and parents to Bidayuh Heritage Language playschools (taska) and kindergartens (tadika) in Sarawak. The data were collected from interviews with four teachers and 13 parents in Kampung Benuk and Sinjok. Since the establishment of the playschool and kindergarten in Kampung Benuk, 96 and 100 children respectively have received their early education in Bidayuh. As for Sinjok, 54 children have been educated in the playschool and 80 children in the kindergarten. The teachers affirmed the usefulness of the Bidayuh heritage language playschools and kindergartens in learning numeracy, literacy, cultural heritage and social skills. The parents concurred with the teachers on these positive aspects. In addition, they also reported that their children also developed confidence in socialising with other children and teachers and obtained spiritual input. The parents also felt that the Bidayuh heritage language playschools and kindergartens had helped their children to excel academically in primary school, and they were also able to help their children in their school work because of the use of Bidayuh in the early stage of their education. The study showed the importance of continuing with the the Bidayuh heritage language playschools and kindergartens amidst concerns of declining enrolment.

Keywords: Bidayuh, heritage language, playschool, kindergarten, Sarawak