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## ATTITUDES TOWARDS BIDAYUH LANGUAGE KINDERGARTENS IN SARAWAK, MALAYSIA

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**Abstract:** *Currently the indigenous languages used as the medium of instruction in public schools in Malaysia are Iban in Sarawak, KadazanDusun in Sabah, and Semai in West Malaysia. While the medium of instruction in kindergartens is not as strictly regulated as the medium of instruction in public schools, the demand for kindergartens using indigenous languages need to be high enough for the programme to be sustainable. There are presently some Bidayuh playschools and preschools established by the Dayak Bidayuh National Association in Sarawak. The study examined attitudes towards Bidayuh language kindergartens among the Bidayuh community in Sarawak, Malaysia. Questionnaire data were obtained from 61 Bidayuh who originated from the Kuching and Kota Samarahan districts. Results showed mixed responses to the prospect of setting up kindergartens using Bidayuh as the medium of instruction but a majority were in support. The participants believed that Bidayuh language kindergartens would provide opportunities for children to learn Bidayuh language and culture, and good moral values. However, 41% of the participants disagreed that it should be for the purpose of providing higher quality education. There were some concerns on the selection of the Bidayuh variety to use as the medium of instruction, curriculum and logistics which indicate the tremendous challenges faced by mother tongue-based kindergartens.*

**Keywords:** Bidayuh, kindergarten, mother tongue-based education, indigenous language, culture.