



Exploring Culturally Responsive Teaching Practices in English Language Teaching at High Schools in Banten Province: Perceptions, Strategies, Challenges, and Opportunities

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi implementasi pengajaran responsif budaya (CRT) dalam pengajaran bahasa Inggris (ELT) di Banten, Indonesia, wilayah yang kaya akan keragaman budaya. Tiga pertanyaan utama penelitian ini adalah persepsi guru, strategi yang digunakan, dan tantangan yang dihadapi dalam menerapkan CRT. Penelitian ini menggunakan kombinasi observasi kelas, wawancara semi-terstruktur, dan analisis dokumen sebagai bagian dari pendekatan etnopedagogik kualitatif. Temuan mengungkapkan bahwa beberapa guru secara aktif memasukkan budaya siswa ke dalam pengajaran mereka, sementara yang lain menghadapi tantangan karena keterbatasan sumber daya dan fokus pada tes standar. Terdapat kesenjangan antara sumber daya yang tersedia dan tujuan responsif budaya yang dinyatakan dalam analisis dokumen. Materi kurikulum dan rencana pelajaran sebagian besar bersifat nasional atau bahkan berpusat pada Barat, sehingga sulit untuk mengintegrasikan budaya Banten yang kaya. Terlepas dari tantangan ini, para guru menyatakan keinginan untuk mendapatkan pelatihan dan dukungan lebih lanjut dalam CRT. Penelitian ini menyarankan beberapa area untuk perbaikan, termasuk mengembangkan kurikulum yang responsif budaya yang menggabungkan konteks lokal dan menyediakan sumber daya yang relevan secara budaya bagi guru. Dengan menerapkan prinsip-prinsip CRT dan mengatasi keterbatasan sumber daya saat ini, ELT dapat disesuaikan untuk lebih memenuhi kebutuhan siswa dan mempromosikan lingkungan belajar yang lebih efektif dan inklusif.

Kata Kunci: etnopedagogi, pengajaran responsive budaya, keragaman budaya, pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris.

Abstract

This study explores the practice of Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) in English Language Teaching (ELT) within Banten's unique cultural context, Indonesia. The research is guided by three main questions: teacher perceptions, employed strategies, and challenges in implementing CRT. Employing a qualitative ethnopedagogical approach, the study utilizes semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. Findings reveal a nuanced landscape of CRT implementation. While some teachers actively integrate student cultures others face challenges due to limited resources and a standardized testing focus. Document analysis exposed a discrepancy between the stated goal of cultural responsiveness and the resources available. Lesson plans and instructional materials were found to be predominantly national or even Western-centric, limiting opportunities to integrate the rich cultural tapestry of Banten. This research underscores the potential of CRT to create inclusive and engaging ELT practices for Banten's diverse student body. It identifies areas for improvement, such as curriculum development incorporating local contexts and providing teachers with readily available, culturally relevant resources. By embracing CRT principles and addressing the current resource gap, ELT classrooms can be transformed to serve student needs better, fostering a more inclusive and effective learning environment.

Keywords: culturally responsive teaching, cultural diversity, ELT practices, ethnopedagogy, language education.

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INTRODUCTION

The field of ELT is evolving rapidly to accommodate a more diverse student population. This diversity brings both opportunities and challenges for teachers. CRT is a critical pedagogical framework to address these complexities (Gay, 2013; Paris, 2012). By acknowledging and integrating students' cultural backgrounds into the learning process, CRT fosters a more inclusive and effective educational environment (Bozda, 2015; T. C. Howard, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1995a). Furthermore, ethnopedagogy, which focuses on understanding students' cultural backgrounds and integrating them into teaching strategies, has also become important in language education. Teachers can establish meaningful connections with students and tailor instruction to meet their diverse needs by adopting these frameworks. Embracing these frameworks will be crucial for promoting equity and excellence in language education. Banten province, located on the western tip of Java Island, Indonesia, has a diverse cultural legacy. This diversity offers both advantages and difficulties for English language instruction. English has grown in significance for access to higher education and global opportunities. Yet, it is challenging to make English language teaching relevant to the many cultural backgrounds of students.

CRT is an educational approach that recognizes the importance of including students' cultural references in all aspects of learning (Gay, 2015; T. C. Howard, 2003). This pedagogical framework improves engagement, understanding, and academic achievement among students from diverse cultural backgrounds. CRT in ELT practices involves integrating students' cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and frames of reference to make learning more relevant and effective (Mahfuzah, 2023). By integrating students' cultural origins into the curriculum, teachers can establish a learning environment that is more inclusive and egalitarian. Studies have demonstrated that students exhibit higher interest and motivation toward learning when they see their identities and experiences in the educational content. Moreover, CRT helps verify students' identities and encounters, resulting in heightened self-confidence and academic achievement. To effectively incorporate CRT into ELT practices, teachers must demonstrate a willingness to modify their instructional approaches and resources to accommodate the varied needs of their learners. This may include multicultural literature, employing culturally relevant examples in lessons, and facilitating opportunities for students to share their cultural perspectives.

CRT, as promoted by scholars (Paris, 2012; Zorba, 2020), aims to recognize and integrate students' cultural knowledge, experiences, and viewpoints into learning English. This approach strives to establish a more inclusive and engaging learning environment that enables students to connect English with their cultural backgrounds. Culturally responsive teaching in ELT incorporates ethnopedagogical approaches that recognize the significance of local knowledge in student education. By incorporating indigenous knowledge systems into English language teaching, teachers can establish connections between students' cultural heritage and the language being taught, promoting deeper comprehension and involvement (Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy: A Needed Change in Stance, Terminology, and Practice on JSTOR, n.d.; Ladson-Billings, 1995b; Sleeter, 2012).

Understanding teachers' perceptions of CRT is crucial for successful integration into ELT strategies. Prior research has investigated teachers' views on CRT, showing a variety of opinions, from wholehearted acceptance to hesitant doubt (Idrus et al., 2023; Wesley & Ma, n.d.). Furthermore, integrating students' cultural backgrounds into English language lessons is a complex task that requires innovative strategies. Literature reviews reveal various models and approaches, such as using culturally relevant material and activities, that have made ELT more inclusive (T. Howard & Terry, 2011). In addition, implementing CRT in ELT practices is not without challenges. Teachers often encounter obstacles such as a lack of resources, institutional support, or knowledge of effectively integrating cultural diversity into teaching practices (Yu, 2020; Khe & Thomas, 2007). Despite these challenges, teachers must continue exploring ways to incorporate

CRT into ELT to create a more inclusive and captivating learning atmosphere for all students. By embracing diversity and acknowledging the importance of cultural backgrounds in language acquisition, teachers can help students feel more connected to the material and motivated to learn. Teachers can overcome barriers and make strides toward a more inclusive English language teaching experience with dedication and perseverance.

Research on applying CRT within the specific context of Indonesian ELT Practices remains limited. This is particularly concerning regions like Banten, where a rich tapestry of cultures exists within the student body. As (Gay & Kirkland, 2003) emphasizes, "ignoring students' cultural knowledge and experiences ... can be detrimental to their learning". This study gap requires a more profound comprehension of how teachers in Banten view and apply CRT techniques in their classrooms, which is essential due to the growing cultural variety in classrooms globally. With the evolving demographics of educational institutions, there is a critical requirement for teaching methods that are inclusive and culturally sensitive. There is an urgent need to explore the potential of CRT in Banten's ELT classrooms.. Unearthing current practices and challenges will pave the way for developing more culturally responsive pedagogies. This study aims to contribute to this crucial conversation by investigating teachers' perceptions, implementation strategies, and the opportunities and obstacles they encounter in integrating CRT into their ELT practices. This study contributes to the understanding of CRT implementation in ELT in culturally diverse regions like Banten, Indonesia. Its findings can inform future research and practice to promote more effective and inclusive ELT practices that cater to the diverse needs of students.

METHOD

The study employs a qualitative research method to deeply understand the nuances of CRT as experienced and implemented by English teachers. This method enables a thorough examination of teachers' viewpoints, tactics, and obstacles, offering profound insights into the intricacies of culturally responsive teaching in many classroom environments. Furthermore, a case study design investigates CRT practices within Banten schools. This design is chosen for its ability to explore complex phenomena within their real-life context, making it particularly suitable for examining the intricacies of culturally responsive teaching strategies and challenges faced by English teachers (Alua et al., 2022). The participants of this study include a purposive sample of ten English teachers from various schools in Banten who have experience with or an interest in culturally responsive teaching. The selection criteria ensure a broad representation of teaching levels and school environments to capture various perspectives and experiences.

Data is collected through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. Semi-structured interviews are conducted with each participant to gather in-depth information about their perceptions, strategies, and experiences with CRT. Classroom observations are conducted to witness and record the implementation of CRT practices. Document analysis is used to complement the findings from interviews and observations. Document analysis is utilized to supplement the results obtained from interviews and observations. The documents examined consist of curriculum materials such as curriculum guides, subject-specific materials, sample lesson plans, and teacher resources, including textbooks, teacher manuals, or supplementary materials. Data analysis follows a thematic analysis method, where data from interviews, observations, and documents is coded and categorized into themes related to teachers' perceptions, strategies, and challenges in culturally responsive teaching. This method enables the identification of recurring patterns and distinctive observations within the gathered data, aiding in thoroughly comprehending the topic. This study is expected to offer significant insights on adopting culturally responsive teaching in Banten schools, shedding light on effective strategies and addressing potential challenges to enhance educational practices for diverse student populations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This study reveals the perceptions, strategies, and challenges associated with CRT among teachers in Banten schools, particularly within ELT practices. Several key themes emerged through a detailed analysis of interview responses, classroom observations, and document reviews, highlighting the multifaceted nature of CRT implementation in educational settings.

Teachers' Perceptions of Culturally Responsive Teaching

Teachers generally perceive CRT as a crucial component of effective instruction, recognizing its potential to create inclusive and engaging learning environments. Many teachers emphasized the importance of acknowledging and integrating students' cultural backgrounds into teaching practices to enhance learning outcomes and foster a sense of belonging among students. Below are the outcomes of the interviews:

1. Experiences Teaching English in High Schools

- *"I've been teaching English for over 15 years, and I've always been passionate about helping students from diverse backgrounds succeed in language learning."*
- *"I believe that English is an essential skill for students in today's globalized world, and I'm committed to creating a classroom environment where all students feel valued and respected."*

2. Awareness and Understanding of CRT

- *"I've heard the term 'Culturally Responsive Teaching' before, but I wasn't fully aware of what it meant until recently."*
- *"I understand CRT to be about recognizing and appreciating the cultural backgrounds of my students and incorporating those backgrounds into my teaching."*

3. Importance of CRT in ELT

- *"CRT is essential in ELT because it helps students connect the language they are learning to their own lives and experiences."*
- *"CRT can help to create a more inclusive and equitable learning environment for all students, regardless of their cultural background."*

The findings suggest that teachers in this study generally have a positive perception of the importance of CRT within the context of ELT. They recognize its potential to foster inclusivity, increase engagement, and enhance learning outcomes by bridging connections between the English language and students' cultural identities. However, there is potential for additional professional growth to improve the comprehension and utilization of CRT practice.

Strategies Employed for Culturally Responsive Teaching

The study revealed that teachers utilize several key strategies to implement CRT practices. One main strategy involves integrating cultural content directly into their lessons. Teachers recognize the importance of reflecting their students' diverse cultural backgrounds within the curriculum. Teachers make their lessons more relatable by including materials, examples, and themes that resonate with students' lived experiences and enhance overall engagement with the subject matter. Additionally, teachers were willing to adapt their teaching methods to ensure they were inclusive and accommodating of different learning styles and cultural perspectives. This often involves moving from traditional lecture-based formats to more collaborative and interactive activities. These activities promote student-centred learning and create spaces where diverse viewpoints and experiences are valued and respected. Finally, the study found that teachers actively promote cultural awareness and appreciation among their students. This is not limited to simply acknowledging

diversity but involves carefully designed discussions and activities emphasizing cultural differences' inherent value. Creating a classroom atmosphere that encourages students to explore and appreciate their own and others' cultures helps teachers establish a crucial sense of belonging and respect necessary for effective learning. Below are the outcomes of the interviews:

1. Integrating Students' Cultural Backgrounds

- *"I try to integrate students' cultural backgrounds into my lessons by using examples from their communities and experiences."*
- *"I encourage students to share their cultural knowledge and traditions with the class, which helps to foster a sense of mutual respect and understanding."*

2. Concrete Examples of CRT Implementation

- *"For example, when teaching about food, I have students bring traditional dishes from their cultures to share with the class."*
- *"I also use music, art, and literature from different cultures to help students learn English vocabulary and grammar."*

3. Benefits of CRT for Students

- *"I've seen firsthand how CRT can benefit students by boosting their confidence, motivation, and engagement in English language learning."*
- *"Students who feel connected to the curriculum are more likely to succeed, and CRT can help to create that connection."*

In addition, observations revealed a mixed landscape in integrating local cultural knowledge within ELT classrooms. While some teachers skillfully incorporated elements like Bantenese folktales, songs, and traditions into their lessons, others demonstrated minimal use of such cultural references. There was potential for enhancing the promotion of students' active sharing of their cultural knowledge and language. Moreover, most teachers employed various strategies to accommodate diverse learning styles and backgrounds. Cooperative learning, project-based work, and audio-visual media were observed, although their effectiveness and frequency varied. Many classrooms fostered collaborative learning environments and respect for cultural differences. However, opportunities to empower students as agents of positive change within their community, a significant aspect of CRT, appeared less frequently. Skilled teachers established meaningful links between English language principles and the specific cultural environment, making learning more relevant for students.

Challenges and Opportunities Faced in Implementing Culturally Responsive Teaching

Despite the recognized importance of CRT, teachers encounter several barriers when trying to practice. Limited resources, including a lack of culturally diverse teaching materials, make it challenging to integrate CRT strategies fully. Additionally, teachers may feel constrained by a rigid curriculum and the pressure of standardized testing, leaving little room for the flexibility CRT often demands. Teachers also indicated a need for specific professional development opportunities centred on CRT to enhance their confidence and proficiency in implementing it effectively in their classrooms. Here are the extracts from the interview:

1. Challenges in Implementing CRT

- *"One of the biggest challenges I face is the lack of resources and training on CRT."*
- *"It can also be difficult to find culturally appropriate materials aligned with the curriculum."*

2. Overcoming Challenges

- "I try to overcome these challenges by collaborating with other teachers and seeking professional development opportunities on CRT."

- "I also use my creativity and knowledge of my students' cultures to develop my teaching materials."

3. Opportunities for Developing and Strengthening CRT

- "There is a great opportunity to develop and strengthen CRT in ELT by providing more teacher training and support."

- "We must also develop more culturally appropriate curriculum materials and resources."

The findings from these interviews emphasize CRT's significance in ELT and its potential benefits for students. However, the interviews also reveal that there are several challenges that teachers face in implementing CRT. To address these challenges, there is a need for more teacher training, support, and resources. With a more significant commitment to CRT, we can create more inclusive and equitable learning environments for all students in Banten high schools.

Observations showed a positive correlation between implementing CRT practices and student interaction and motivation. Student engagement and enthusiasm levels were noticeably higher in classrooms where teachers effectively integrated CRT strategies. The classes promoted a strong feeling of community and cultural awareness, fostering an environment where kids felt comfortable expressing themselves and sharing their thoughts. While respect for cultural differences was generally evident among students, its depth appeared to be influenced by the teacher's approach to CRT. Learning environments exhibited varying degrees of CRT support. Some classrooms demonstrated a welcoming atmosphere with decorations representing local cultures, while others were more generic. Though most teachers displayed positive attitudes towards diversity, some seemed to lack in-depth cultural competency training. Classrooms were generally found to be secure and welcoming; however, there is an opportunity for enhancement to guarantee that all students feel thoroughly appreciated and included.

The document analysis offered insight into how CRT principles were reflected in official documents within the ten Banten high schools. While school mission statements often highlighted diversity and inclusivity, these lacked concrete strategies for achieving these goals in ELT practices. Similarly, Curriculum materials focused on standardized learning outcomes and provided little direction on integrating students' cultural backgrounds. A closer look at teacher-prepared lesson plans revealed a continuation of this trend. Textbooks and instructional materials were the main basis for lesson planning, typically focusing on Western-centric content and offering little chances to include the local Banten context. The lack of readily available material reinforced this culturally relevant material specifically designed to support CRT in ELT. Teacher manuals also focused heavily on preparing students for standardized tests, offering limited guidance on adapting pre-made lesson plans to cater to diverse learning styles or cultural backgrounds. These findings suggest a gap between the stated commitment to diversity and the practical resources available to support teachers in implementing CRT principles within their classrooms. While some teachers might possess the skills and initiative to adapt lesson plans to integrate cultural elements, the lack of readily available resources and official support creates challenges for the widespread implementation of CRT practices.

Discussion

The findings suggest that while teachers are committed to implementing culturally responsive teaching, systemic barriers and resource limitations pose significant challenges. However, the study also highlights the innovative strategies teachers employ to overcome these obstacles and enhance the educational experiences of their students. Culturally responsive teaching in ELT practices supports language acquisition and fosters a deeper understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity among students.

The teachers' enthusiasm for CRT aligns with broader literature emphasizing the perceived importance of culturally responsive practices among teachers (Affolter, 2017; Bonner et al., 2017). However, the varied levels of understanding of CRT, particularly evident in the disconnect between positive intent and inconsistent classroom implementation, highlight a need for more targeted professional development. This aligns with (Rychly & Graves, 2012) call for focused training that helps teachers translate CRT's theoretical underpinnings into actionable classroom strategies. Interviews revealed that many teachers grasp the 'why' of CRT but struggle with the specific 'how' of implementation, suggesting a need for training that provides concrete methodologies and examples. The implementation process can be complex and requires ongoing support and resources.

Teachers must have access to continuous professional development opportunities that offer practical strategies for effectively implementing Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) in the classroom. This training should provide concrete examples and resources to support teachers in translating their understanding of CRT into actionable practices (Hew & Brush, 2007; *Toward a Conceptual Framework of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy: An Overview of the Conceptual and Theoretical Literature on JSTOR*, n.d.). Additionally, administrators should prioritize creating a supportive environment that encourages teachers to experiment with new approaches and seek additional support when needed. By investing in targeted professional development and fostering a culture of continuous learning, schools can bridge the gap between positive intentions and effective implementation of CRT principles.

The study identified a promising range of strategies teachers employ, demonstrating adaptability and creativity in integrating cultural content and promoting respect for diversity. The use of local folktales, in particular, resonates with research on the power of culturally relevant narratives in language learning (Haven, 2007; Nunan & Choi, 2010; Selfe & Hawisher, 2004). More research is needed to determine if teachers with specific CRT training use a more comprehensive range of strategies than teachers who rely mostly on their cultural awareness. This could help shape the content and structure of this kind of professional development. Understanding the impact of CRT training on teaching practices is crucial for creating effective and inclusive learning environments. By conducting further research in this area, we can better support teachers' efforts to incorporate diverse cultural perspectives into their curriculum. This will benefit students from different backgrounds and help promote a more equitable and respectful society.

The challenges highlighted by teachers are prevalent themes in CRT literature. The lack of resources and training echoes concerns about systemic barriers to equitable implementation (Affolter, 2017; Sleeter, 2012). Similarly, constraints imposed by rigid curricula present a significant obstacle, suggesting the need for policy-level reconsideration alongside teacher support (Starker & Fitchett, 2013). The questionnaire data reinforces these findings, with high percentages of teachers indicating these as primary challenges. However, the collaborative attitude in interviews suggests a foundation for overcoming these barriers through shared resource development and peer-supported learning.

However, the collaborative attitude in interviews suggests a foundation for overcoming these barriers through shared resource development and peer-supported learning (Murphy, 2019; Onur Bodur et al., 2000). Through formalizing teacher collaboration time for CRT-focused resource creation or establishing district-wide resource banks, policy-level support could powerfully leverage the enthusiasm and creativity seen in these Banten teachers. By providing structured time and resources for teachers to collaborate and share ideas, schools can tap into the potential of their teachers to create innovative solutions to address the barriers faced in implementing CRT. Additionally, establishing district-wide resource banks could ensure that best practices and effective strategies are shared across schools, maximizing the impact of teacher collaboration. With the proper support and infrastructure in place, Banten teachers have the potential to make significant strides in advancing CRT in their classrooms and communities.

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CONCLUSION

The study explores the implementation of CRT in ELT in high schools in Banten. Teachers' understanding of CRT and strategies varied, with some incorporating local cultural elements while others focused less on culturally specific content. The study also highlighted the challenge of limited resources and specialized training in CRT, with teachers expressing concerns about balancing cultural sensitivity with the demands of the English curriculum. Despite these challenges, teachers demonstrated a solid commitment to CRT principles, expressing a desire to create inclusive classrooms. Investing in additional teacher training, developing more culturally relevant resources, and actively promoting CRT as a core pedagogical approach presents significant opportunities for future improvement. This research highlights the potential of CRT to transform ELT practices within Banten, leading to enhanced learning outcomes and a more equitable English language learning experience for all students. Recommendations for strengthening cultural inclusivity and diversity in language education include teachers undergoing training on culturally responsive teaching methods, policymakers prioritizing initiatives promoting cultural inclusivity, and researchers continuing to study the impact of culturally responsive teaching on student outcomes and academic performance.

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