



BRIDGING CULTURES IN THE CLASSROOM: HOW CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING ELEVATES SPEAKING SKILL

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to find out how bridging cultures in the classroom: how culturally responsive teaching elevates speaking skill. In this study, the researchers employed a case study as the research approach, accordingly the researchers had to categorize the collected data into different themes or group them into themes after recognizing them. The data used in this paper was collected through interviews that were conducted with 5 students from different cultural backgrounds in learning speaking, while the lecturer adopted culturally responsive teaching. Then the researchers found 4 important aspects in this research, namely: 1. Increased Participation and Motivation 2. Connection with the Material 3. Increased Self-Confidence 4. Perceptions about Learning Speaking. This approach also offers the students more opportunities to present their cultural experiences and thus, the levels of concern and passion among the participants will rise. Students feel a form of belonging therefore the content discussed in class is easy to grasp when the culture is taken into consideration. The colleges also gain the recognition and appreciation of their culture to further enhance student confidence in speaking in class. Moreover, this approach shifts the attitude of students regarding speaking skill acquisition and makes them more inclined to do so by responding to cultural practice. Based on the results of the study, it is evident that the enhancement of culturally sensitive teaching practices not only helps in enhancing the student's speaking ability but also delivers a more meaningful learning process through appreciating the culture in which learning is drawn. Thus, culturally responsive teaching decreases class and educational establishment students' stress due to cultural rejection and increases students' comfort. It not only fosters academic advancements, but it also helps to enhance their cultural background. Therefore, learning comes along with privilege.

Keywords: Culturally Responsive Teaching, Speaking Skill Development, Cultural Connection, Classroom Inclusion, and Teaching Strategies.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In this modern era, cultural diversity in learning institutions has become a trend in society due to the mobility of people throughout the world. This diversity makes it a challenge and at the same time provides opportunities for educators especially when dealing with language acquisition. Because learning to speak is a need that can be met throughout a person's life cycle and because culture plays an important role in the development of language skills, students' speaking skills can be influenced by their culture. This paper presents culturally responsive teaching (CRT) as an important approach that can help overcome these challenges and this is suitable with the title of this research namely: How Bridging Cultures in the Classroom: How Culturally Responsive Teaching Elevates Speaking Skill. Cultural references can be used in





an organization to create a more accommodating environment for its students through the use of culturally responsive teaching, as discussed in this paper, to improve their speaking proficiency. Culturally relevant pedagogy, as defined by Ladson-Billings (2014), is the concept of serving students' cultures and using these values in their learning processes. We also reflect this aspect by not only embracing but also celebrating the various cultures from which students come. When looking at how culturally responsive teaching can be applied to the learning process, particularly in terms of speaking language skills, it can be noted that this approach may be effective in the context of understanding specific cultural differences, preventing misunderstandings, and guiding learners towards the areas they need to focus on when learning a language new. Concepts such as speaking are known to be among the most difficult in language acquisition because they are completely interactive, requiring processing as well as production in a real-time environment. Conventional learning approaches in the classroom may not fully encompass students' cultural practices, which in turn may result in students' lack of interest and lowered levels of self-esteem. On the other hand, includes theories that turn learning into a more meaningful process by connecting new information to students' culture, which makes them more inclined to learn and contribute.

Culturally responsive teaching can apply different methods that may provide students with more beneficial approaches to the development of their speaking skills. This strategy lies in the inclusion of culturally relevant content interference into the curriculum and the learning process. For instance, the teacher can be aware of the cultural background of the students to minimize chances of bias arising within the process of passing information or to have to comprehend that a particular set of methods is appropriate for the students. In addition to that, it enriches the students' self-confidence through the aspect of feeling valued and understood. There is evidence that suggests that when a cultural perspective toward learning for students is adopted it gives a positive adaptation towards motivation and participation of students in the teaching-learning process which enhances the mastery of speaking skills Gay (2018). As a result, the use of culturally responsive teaching not only aims at eliminating cultural disparity in the teaching and learning environment but also allows students to achieve the best results that could be attained in the process of learning a second language.

Culturally responsive teaching also focuses on aspects that concern the class setting to enhance students' learning outcomes. When the learning environment is sensitive to cultural practices and values, then this will foster the development of an environment that is harmonious,





thus facilitating the engagement of learners in the learning-teaching process. According to Hammond (2015), students from culturally relevant classrooms enjoy higher concerns and academic performance due to the valuing and support displayed to them in such learning environments. Villegas & Lucas (2002) said teachers must be equipped with a deep understanding of the influence of culture on learning and apply culturally relevant teaching principles to support student diversity. In the context of teaching, the culturally responsive teaching approach insists on teaching aids that will depict the diversity of students, and teaching styles that cater to all the students, thus fostering the feeling and urge of the students to learn. Furthermore, the impact of culturally responsive teaching is significant in cultivating the favorable attitude of the students and their intercultural sensitivity. These are competencies not only that enable them to succeed academically, but also essential in terms of readiness in the global and diverse workplace that they will encounter in the future. By embracing culturally responsive teaching, students are encouraged to embrace that cultures are different from each other and that they should be able to interact and work with people from different cultures. This is aligned with the views of Banks (2015) who holds the belief that cultural apprehension in education is important for turning students into effective, high-level global citizens.

In addition to the appraisal feature, culturally responsive teaching influences the social and emotional quadrants of students. This means that, by being aware of, or, valuing and promoting students' cultural diversity, tutors can therefore foster more positive interpersonal dynamics. In conclusion, culturally responsive teaching is an important information and versatile pedagogy in today's learning environment. In this case, by including students' values in the curriculum and teaching approach, culturally responsive teaching not only contributes to a more efficient way of addressing all the problems that affect students when they learn to master speaking skills but also improves their speaking skills, motivation, engagement, and positively influences their psycho-emotional state. This based on Reskyani et al. (2024) said culturally responsive teaching in speaking learning not only helps students become more proficient speakers, but also promotes empathy, mutual respect, and cultural awareness, and helps students contribute to an increasingly diverse and connected world. This approach also enables students to become polite and highly competitive producers in international markets by enabling them to communicate and collaborate effectively and efficiently as a team in a society that is becoming one international and diversified world. In this context, educational institutions need to adopt culturally responsive teaching as a way of delivering learning because the adoption of technology coupled with





improved learning environments, not only facilitates education but also encourages a culture of acceptance of cultural diversity among students.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Definition and Concept of Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT)

Culturally responsive teaching has been defined as the practice of teaching and learning that values, reflects, and actively promotes the student's and teachers' cultural backgrounds and experiences. Culturally responsive teaching seeks to fit education into a multicultural framework where students' cultural identity, language, and experience are recognized and incorporated into education. In the view of Geneva Gay an expert in this area, culturally responsive teaching employs cultural differences, features, as well as outlooks as a formative tool to enhance the teaching strategy Gay (2021). Culturally responsive teaching on the other hand has prescribed certain expectations of teachers, where they need to make their teaching material meaningful to the student's culture besides applying various teaching techniques that fit the learning capability of students Ladson Billings (1995). Moreover, culturally responsive teaching entails the development of professional communication between teacher and students, establishing rapport within the classroom as well as stimulating students to participate through real-life application of what is learned within the classroom Hammond (2015). This also involves making assessments biased and culture-free, where all the students should be given an equal opportunity and similar cultural backgrounds to do as many things as possible Banks (2015). Instead, culturally responsive teaching enhances the learning results not only in academic settings but also enriches the students' cultural consciousness and offers equality of educational opportunities (Paris, D., & Alim, 2017).

2.2. The Role of Culture in Language Learning

Consequently, understanding the influence of culture in language acquisition has profound connotations to the concerns of the culturally responsive teaching (CRT) approach. Thus, not only does culture provide a model for constructing personal self-identity, but it also defines the environment that exists in the use of language. Through the integration of cultural aspects in language learning and teaching, educators can make learners embrace whatever teaching is being displayed in class as well as foster more participation from language learning activities. Culture is another aspect that ensures that students undergo real-life exposure by





helping students act in a variety of communication contexts or scenarios. Moreover, the development of an extended culture dimension enables students to obtain more in-depth knowledge of the structural, semantic, and pragmatic properties of language. Sources that underpin this concept include Gay (2015) and Kozleski (2010) on culturally responsive teaching which recognizes cultural characteristics and perspectives in teaching/learning processes and Ladson Billings (1995) on the "Concept of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy" which extols the significance of culturally relevant pedagogy in enhancing student achievement.

2.3. Application of CRT in Teaching Speaking Skills

Teaching speaking skills through a culturally responsive teaching approach legitimizes students' cultural participation in the teaching and learning process to improve the learning environment. In this case, culturally responsive teaching principles can help teachers utilize the culture that students bring to the classroom, which may help increase student motivation when learning. This is supported by Reskyani (2024) speaking is the ability to speak a language to convey ideas and information orally and the importance of correcting Thai students' intonation errors in speaking English, especially in rising and falling intonation, to improve their speaking ability effectively so that the learning process runs well and Reskyani et al. (2024) said culturally responsive teaching is an important approach in improving students' speaking skills by paying attention to students' cultural diversity and backgrounds. For example in language classes, teachers can illustrate the context and use everyday stories, examples, or problems that students face from their cultural background so that they are in a position to relate what they are taught to their lives Gay (2021). It implies that when familiar contexts within a culture are taught, this can help students become more comfortable when speaking and engaging in classroom discussions. Culturally responsive teaching has a positive impact on students' speaking skills: By including aspects of cultural diversity in the teaching process, culturally responsive teaching significantly improves students' speaking skills and enriches their interactional communication skills by making them more authentic. This approach also exemplifies the application of strategies in learning that depict cultural sensitivity as a response to students' original learning patterns, thereby improving teaching skills and learning outcomes (Hammond, 2015), (Ladson Billings, 1995).

2.4. Benefits of CRT for Developing Speaking Skills





Culturally sensitive teaching has a significant role in enhancing the fluency of students, particularly those learners who come from different cultural backgrounds. In turn, due to programmed cultural responsiveness and understanding of students' backgrounds, culturally responsive teaching helps to establish a friendly learning environment that enhances students' self-confidence in speaking Gay (2018). By this method, students do not feel worthless and helpless but rather they have the sense of being valued and this makes them express their ideas in a manner that is very vital when it comes to the development of critical and creative speaking skills as postulated by Ladson Billings (1995). Moreover, culturally responsive teaching gives the opportunity to use teaching aids and approaches that are culturally meaningful to students and hence make learning more realistic or realistic based on student's cultural experiences and social realities hence making the learning more meaningful Hammond (2015). This not only enhances their knowledge but also helps to develop skills that allow them to communicate with people of different levels Gay (2018). Therefore use of culturally responsive teaching enables students improve their speaking skills through a technique that acknowledges diversity and focuses on the learning process Hammond (2015).

3. METHOD

In accomplishing this research, the researchers used a qualitative research design with an emphasis on a case study approach. According to Yin (2018), a case study is an empirical research method that investigates phenomena in real-life contexts, using multiple data sources for validity and systematic analysis, Kimberly & Goods (2019) said a case study is a research approach that allows researchers to understand in depth complex phenomena in real-life contexts, especially in the field of education. In this study, the experience of students with cultures from different origins learning in speaking courses that implement the culturally responsive teaching approach is the concern. Five participants were selected for this research; they include five students from a speaking class in a higher learning institution who come from five different cultural backgrounds: Buginese, Malay, Banggai, Papuan, and Javanese. Then in this research, the participant selection was conducted through purposive sampling to enhance representation of the various cultures to enhance representation of the various cultures. In the current study, data was collected from five students from cross-cultural backgrounds in a semi-structured interview. Face-to-face interviews were conducted to gain primary information about their working experience, observation, and self-estimate of the change and effect of





implementing culturally responsive teaching on enhancing their speaking skills. In conducting interviews, the researchers employed the thematic analysis method for analysis. Rozali, (2022) said thematic analysis is a technique for analyzing data in qualitative research that looks for significant themes or patterns in the data that has been gathered. This method is aimed at describing, in detail, how the culturally responsive teaching approach can enhance the social skills of students, particularly in speaking. In the light of multicultural education, it is believed that given results of this study may be helpful for better organization of multicultural learning process.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Finding

In this research, the researchers obtained data from interviews with 5 students from different backgrounds from Buginese, Malay, Banggai, Papuan, and Javanese who were learning to speak where their lecturer applied a responsive approach in speaking classes. In interviews conducted by the researchers with the respondents, researchers found four important aspects, namely: 1. Increased Participation and Motivation 2. Connection with the Material 3. Increased Self-Confidence 4. Perceptions about Learning Speaking. The following is data obtained from interviews with 5 students at a university in Indonesia.

Table 1. Interview Data

NO	ASPECTS	
1	Increased Participation and Motivation	
2	Connection with the Material	
3	Increased Self-Confidence	
4	Perceptions about Learning Speaking	

4.2. Discussion

1. Increased Participation and Motivation

The culturally responsive teaching (CRT) learning approach has impacted students' engageability in speaking classes based on more self-talk about one's own culture, thus





enhancing students' motivation levels and learner comfort. Student 1 from Buginese culture said that it helped me to have more opportunities to discuss in front of the class talked about my cultural background and it motivated me more to speak in the speaking class. The students 2 from Malay culture also said I felt more comfortable speaking in class because this approach valued my culture and experiences in the context. Besides, the following excerpts from the interview revealed that students gained confidence and felt included because their culture was being embraced in class. Specifically, Student 3 from Banggai culture said, "It also allows me to assertively express my cultural perception and encounter thus makes me more engaged in speaking course." Next, the experiences of student 4 from Papuan culture affirmed that the culture being considered in class makes us more willing to speak up when our culture is appreciated. 'This approach helped alter the perception of how learning speaking was being approached particularly from the aspect of culture, which according to Student 5 from Javanese culture said I feel values for the differences in cultural background and motivated to learn and speak'.

This is supported by the use of material and activities that are culturally sensitive to the students and also contribute to the increased initiative of the students in speaking. Student 1 from the Buginese culture said, "Things that are related to society's Buginese culture make me more encouraged to learn and speak because I see how a cultural experience is valued in learning." Another student 2 from Malay culture also said I felt more involved and motivated when I observed that the materials taught were relevant to the Malay culture. The experience of student 3 from the Banggai culture said I felt valued and more participating in learning when the material used was from our culture. This is supported by Dörnyei (2001) in his book discusses various strategies for increasing student motivation in language classes, which can have a direct impact on increasing participation. Student 4, specifically from the Papuan culture also said I appreciated the use of material from our culture which encouraged us to talk and participate more in class. On the other hand, Student 5 from Javanese culture, reported to have increase motivate to learn and speak, when I realized that Javanese culture was appreciated in the classroom through the use of relevant material and exercises. This approach in general was effective in engaging the students and promoting their participation and learning in speaking lessons without undermining their culture and ways.





2. Connection with the Material

The strategy known as culturally responsive teaching (CRT) has been effective in the enhancement of students' relatedness in taking courses to regard socio-cultural aspects in the implementation of materials. Another benefit of multicultural education is the students themselves feel more and would understand better the topics being discussed when certain aspects of their cultures are considered. For instance, one of the participants from the Buginese culture mentioned that through the discussion of the traditional Buginese traditions, I got an opportunity to share some real stories, which in turn enriched me in terms of knowing about the subject. When asked Student 2 from Malay culture said that using material about Malay folk songs was easier for me because I could understand concepts being taught involving Malay culturally related aspects to it. In the same way, about the subject related to the Banggai culture, Student 3 of the Banggai culture said 'yes' for feeling related, and therefore the understanding of the topic has become a deeper one. Also, answering the question about the material used in learning speaking Student 4, belonging to the Papuan culture stated that the examples from the Papuan culture enriched the understanding of the topic because many students could find the relation to their own life. There was an analogous response from Student 5 from the Javanese culture when she mentioned that discussing the Javanese folklore in class enabled us to grasp the cultural background and the moral values embodied within it.

Also, the use of material and activities that have something to do with culture is a helpful strategy in boosting the learning participation of the students. Student 1 identified with the Buginese culture noted that the classroom made me more motivated to learn and speak because I saw the usefulness of the cultural experiences. As for the Malay culture, Student 2 described that I feels more encouraged and included when the content delivered concerns my culture. Student 3 I expressed my appreciation of the Banggai cultural values, when the materials selected reflect my values, I more inclined to the learning process. Positive experience 4 According to the students from Papuan culture, the use of material that is related to my culture enhanced me desire to speak and contribute to the class as I felt I belonged to that kind of learning. This is supported by Bransford et al. (2004) highlighted how learning that is relevant and connected to students' experiences can increase understanding and engagement. However, there was an improvement noted among the students in the aspect of motivation to learn or speak when other cultures were valued in the classroom, as evident in the experience of Student 5 from





Javanese culture who said in general this approach could positively be seen as having enhanced the students' engagement with the learning content and therefore the enriching learning process.

3. Increased Self-Confidence

The implementation of culturally responsive teaching practices affects the student's confidence levels in Speaking a lot. Students are made to contribute what they have learned to the cultural diversity around them so that they feel confident with the kind of experience they have gained. For example, Student 1 originating from Buginese culture noted that *I felt quite comfortable speaking in class after witnessing that my culture was valued, as well as the concept of multiculturalism as embraced by the learning process.* This also helps in providing the right atmosphere for students. As stated by student 5, mentioned that *I became more confident in speaking because this approach helped change my attitude towards the learning of speaking as a tedious process but rather exciting.* Young (1991) provides strategies to reduce language anxiety that can contribute to increasing students' self-confidence. In summary, this approach fosters a positive classroom climate to educate all students leading to greater confidence among them to speak.

4. Perceptions about Learning Speaking

Culturally responsive teaching has produced significant changes in students' views of learning to speak. Students receive higher appreciation because there is recognition and respect for their cultural background in the learning process. Another example, Student 1 who comes from the Buginese culture stated that "I feel there is more respect for me as an individual with a different cultural background". This shows the positive impact of the way we treat cultural diversity. Apart from that, this approach also changes students' perceptions of learning speaking to be more comprehensive. Not only do they see it as an effort to improve their language skills, but they also see it as an opportunity to understand and appreciate each other's culture. Student 2 from the Malay culture said, "For me, learning speaking is an opportunity to not only improve language skills but also understand each other's culture. This shows how important culturally responsive teaching is in making learning more meaningful. Student 3 from the Banggai culture added that this approach makes learning more meaningful because I can share my cultural experiences and views with my classmates. Student 4 the one from the Papuan culture said we have the opportunity to enrich each other with unique stories from each of our cultures. Overall,





the culturally responsive teaching approach to learning speaking helps students gain understanding and appreciation for various cultures. This was demonstrated by Student 5 from Javanese culture who stated, "For me, in learning speaking is not just about language, but also gives a deeper meaning learning of speaking, making it a rich and holistic experience." This is supported by Brown (2001) he discussed the principles of language learning which include students' perceptions of learning to speak and strategies that can be used to overcome obstacles.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1. Conclusion

Some evidence shows culturally responsive teaching (CRT) as a means of improving students' participation, interest, and fluency when speaking in the class. Bearing in mind that culture plays a crucial role in student learning, students are active in the lecture and more likely to contribute to the discussions. For instance, students from Buginese culture perceive or have higher motivation to speak in class because have frequent chances to talk about their cultural practices. As much as Indonesian students from Malay culture felt included and wanted when their cultural background was recognized in the learning environment. This also assists to boost the self-esteem of students; this makes most students feel capable of handling their tasks, or challenges that they experience in their day-to-day activities. Whenever students can see their culture explored and incorporated within learning content, they are more willing to participate in discussions within the classroom. Students from the Banggai culture explain that they perceive more involvement when speaking in courses or situations because they can convey their cultural perspectives and a colorized history. Similar to the Malay students, the students from Papuan culture noted that when the teacher introduced and embraced their culture in the classroom it encouraged them to contribute.

Besides, using material and activities that respond to students' culture also helps the teacher to encourage students to initiate more spoken English. Anything that engages students' culture makes them appreciate themselves more in class thus making them be motivated to learn and participate. According to the survey, the students of Buginese, Malay, Banggai, Papuan, and Javanese origin claimed that they felt more perking up and more involved in the learning process whenever using the assisting material related to their culture. This approach also leads to student perceptions regarding learning the speaking language. Others: It shows that the cultural background of the students is acknowledged and this may help in enhancing student morale to





learn. Cultural diversity Students from multicultural origins indicate the opportunity that learning speaking portrays as embracing a cultural aspect while learning also mastering a language. For instance, students from Malay culture reported that grasping sorts how to speak beg to not just enhance the means of communication but also learn about each other's cultures. Others from the Banggai culture argued that this approach allows students to understand learning more since they can express their cultural stand on certain issues to their peer group. So there is a benefit in embracing the culturally responsive teaching approach in learning speaking as it assists learners to appreciate different cultural practices. This does not only enhance learning as it instills more focus and dedication among the learners but also offers a broader experience for learning. Its embedded incorporation of the student culture into the learning process leads to a positive student climate, which fosters increased student self-confidence and engagement.

5.2. Suggestions

When culturally entering the curriculum to enhance speaking skills, include the students' diverse cultural beliefs. Promote the discussion of cultural practices, incorporate more minorities related items into the classroom, and have more multicultural celebrations. Using this approach increases students' interest, enthusiasm, and self-estimation in learning, thus improving the environment for learning.

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