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Integrating Culturally Responsive Teaching in EFL Classrooms

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Abstract
This study aimed to explore the effectiveness and challenges in integrating Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. CRT had been recognized as an effective approach to addressing the diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds of learners in EFL classrooms. However, integrating CRT strategies in language teaching remained a challenge due to curriculum constraints, teacher preparedness, and classroom dynamics. This study used a mixed-methods approach, applying both qualitative and quantitative methods with a case study design. The participants included EFL teachers and learners. Data were collected through Google Forms, semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis related to teaching practices. This study involved 27 EFL students and 2 teachers using a mixed-methods approach, including pre- and post-tests, interviews, and observations. Quantitative results analyzed via paired-sample t-tests showed significant improvement (p = 0.001) in language proficiency after implementing CRT. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to identify patterns regarding effectiveness and thematic analysis to explore the challenges of implementing CRT in EFL classrooms.
Keywords: Culturally Responsive Teaching, English as Foreign Language, Classrooms, Effectiveness, Challenge

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1.Introduction

Indonesia is home to many different cultures, making multicultural education essential for students and teachers. Teachers need to understand various cultures to better connect with students and support their learning (Cherng & Davis, 2019). This study focuses on a multicultural classroom in Samarinda, Indonesia, involving students from various ethnic backgrounds and teachers familiar with CRT. In EFL classrooms, multicultural education is especially important because English comes from a culture different from that of Indonesian teachers and students. Besides teaching English, educators must also be aware of different cultures to create an inclusive learning environment (Diem & Abdullah, 2020). Multicultural education helps ensure that all students regardless of gender, ability, ethnicity, or language have equal learning opportunities (Smolen & Oswald, 2010). As English continues to grow as

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a global language, its role in connecting people across cultures becomes even more significant. It is not only a tool for communication but also a bridge that carries cultural values and perspectives (Stec, 2014). This highlights the need for EFL classrooms to go beyond traditional teaching methods that focus solely on grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. Instead, educators must integrate cultural understanding into language learning to make it more inclusive and effective for students from diverse backgrounds (Matthews & López, 2019).

The emergence of CRT aims to overcome these limitations by making cultural diversity an important part of language learning. Banks (2014) explains that multicultural education has five important parts, called dimensions, to help schools become more fairs and welcoming for all students. The first part is content integration, which means teachers include stories, examples, and information from many different cultures in their lessons, so students can learn about the world in a more complete way. The second part is called the knowledge construction process. This helps students think about how culture and background can affect what we believe to be true, like how history is told or how problems are solved. The third part is prejudice reduction, which focuses on helping students become more open-minded and respectful toward people from other backgrounds. The fourth part is equity pedagogy, where teachers change how they teach so that every student, no matter their background, has a good chance to succeed in school. The last part is called empowering school culture and social structure, which means the whole school should create a positive environment where everyone is treated fairly and has the same opportunities. CRT cannot be learned by chance. It must be taught in schools and classrooms that respect students' diverse cultures and are connected to university programs focused on helping students in underserved urban schools. Therefore, teacher education programs need to work closely with urban schools and teachers to better prepare future teachers to use culturally responsive practices (Olson & Rao, 2016). Teachers should be active in the process to keep cultural diversity alive and spread the idea of equality. Because teachers have to do their best for all students, not just for some students. However, based on Karatas and Oral (2015), many teachers feel they are not fully ready to use Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) in their classrooms. They often feel unsure and focus more on the majority culture instead of including the diverse cultures of their students.

This teaching approach understands that language and culture are closely connected and that culture plays a big role in how people learn, understand, and use a language (Baker & Nelson, 2005). Multiculturalism in EFL learning brings together different languages, cultures, and perspectives, promoting understanding and communication (Alsubaie, 2015). Since language

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and culture are closely connected, EFL classrooms become dynamic spaces where students explore various cultural norms while improving their English skills (Bayley & Villarreal, 2018). Multilingualism plays a key role in this process, encouraging learners to appreciate their diverse linguistic backgrounds (Kirss et al., 2021; Walworth et al., 2021). As global connections grow, experts like David Crystal support a plurilingual approach, emphasizing the importance of multiple languages in learning(Romanenko et al., 2020; Ull, 2020). Including multicultural perspectives in teaching allows EFL educators to help students develop language and cultural skills, preparing them for a globalized world with confidence, respect, and empathy (Molema, 2024).

In Indonesia research revealed that the students face difficulties with language, cultural differences, and familiarity with specific topics and their classroom learning process (Nurbatra & Masyhud, 2022).Interestingly, the students had difficulty in the learning process, resulting from the fact that they were not familiar with the common language (Bahasa Indonesia) and different teaching approaches. These are important because CRT can help students learn better in EFL classrooms. Knowing how well it works, the challenges teachers face, and their opinions can help improve teaching strategies. This study aims to make language learning more inclusive and culturally aware. The following are the research questions are how effective is Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) in enhancing student learning outcomes in EFL classrooms, what are the key challenges faced by EFL teachers in implementing Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) and how do EFL teachers perceive the integration of Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) in their instructional practices.

This study contributes to the existing body of literature by exploring how Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) enhances learning in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom. While many studies have examined the importance of teaching culture in EFL contexts, this research builds on the findings of Irfan Saninur Azis et al., (2024), which demonstrate how CRT and diverse learning methods increase student enjoyment and engagement by connecting lessons to students' cultural backgrounds. Additionally, the study addresses the challenges identified by Rohmani & Andriyanti (2022), such as selecting appropriate cultural content and balancing local and foreign cultures, providing a deeper understanding of the complexities involved in implementing CRT. The research advances theoretical discussions on CRT and offers empirical evidence of its impact on student engagement and language proficiency, thereby enriching the literature on culturally responsive pedagogy in EFL education.

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2. Method

This study adopted a mixed-methods research design to comprehensively investigate the effectiveness of Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) in improving student learning outcomes and to explore the perceptions and challenges faced by EFL teachers in implementing CRT strategies. Quantitative data will be collected through the administration of pre-tests and post-tests, which measured students' progress in key language skills, including reading comprehension, writing, and oral proficiency. The pre-test will be conducted prior to the implementation of CRT-based instruction, while the post-test will be administered after the instructional period to assess any improvement in students' performance. CRT, what benefits they see in using it, how easy it is to apply in the classroom, and how effective they think it is for teaching language. Based on number one in the research questions, a quantitative approach will be used, as it focuses on measuring student performance through test scores. In contrast, numbers two and three in the research questions will be addressed using qualitative methods, as they aim to explore teachers' experiences, opinions, and perspectives, typically gathered through interviews or open-ended responses. This study combines both types of data through a mixed-methods approach to gain measurable results and deeper insights into the use of CRT in EFL classrooms. The data will be collected from students in the same class to ensure consistency and comparability. In addition, a structured questionnaire was given to teachers to understand their views on using CRT in their teaching. The questionnaire had multiple-choice and Likert-scale questions that asked about how well teachers know CRT, what benefits they see in using it, how easy it is to apply in the classroom, and how effective they think it is for teaching language.

2.1 Participants

This study involved EFL teachers and students in a multicultural classroom setting. The participants included two English teachers who had previously implemented Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) strategies and 27 students from one of the schools in Samarinda, Kalimantan Timur, with diverse cultural backgrounds. These teachers were selected based on their experience with CRT methods, while the students came from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds to ensure a broad perspective on learning effectiveness. The qualitative data collection for teachers involved interviews and questionnaires, while the student data were collected through quantitative methods using a pre-test and post-test. The pre-test and post-test consisted of multiple-choice questions to measure student learning outcomes.

2.2 Instruments

This study employed a mixed-methods approach using a pre-test and post-test, semi-structured interviews, and a questionnaire. The questionnaire examined several key aspects of how teachers perceived Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT). It inquired about their teaching experience, their understanding of CRT, the benefits they perceived, and the challenges they faced when using it. It also explored how they believed CRT differed from traditional teaching methods. These questions helped to provide insight into how teachers thought about and applied CRT in teaching English as a foreign language. To assess student progress, a pre-test and post-test were administered before and after CRT-based instruction, measuring key language skills such as reading comprehension, writing, and oral proficiency. The test items were validated through expert review to ensure alignment with CRT

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principles and the EFL curriculum. To ensure the quality of the instruments used in this study, particularly the pre-test and post-test, a validation process was carried out through expert review. The validation involved experts in the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching who had experience in implementing Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT).

To explore the challenges teachers faced in implementing CRT, semi-structured interviews were conducted, allowing participants to share their experiences, difficulties, and strategies for overcoming obstacles. The semi-structured interviews consisted of five questions, which were designed to explore the experiences, understanding, and perceptions of English teachers regarding Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT). These questions covered the following areas: (1) teaching experience, to understand the participants' backgrounds; (2) definitions and understanding of CRT; (3) perceived benefits of CRT in the classroom; (4) challenges in applying CRT; and (5) differences between CRT and traditional teaching methods. The questions were adapted from the works of Ebersole et al. (2015), Muhammad (2022) and Darmastuti et al. (2024), ensuring that each item is grounded in relevant CRT literature.

The open-ended nature of the interviews provided in-depth insights into contextual barriers and facilitators affecting CRT adoption. Additionally, a structured questionnaire was distributed to examine teachers' perceptions of CRT integration in their instructional practices. The questionnaire included closed-ended and Likert-scale items that assessed familiarity with CRT principles, perceived benefits, ease of implementation, and overall effectiveness in language teaching. The study used purposive sampling to select participants, with a focus on English teachers who had knowledge or classroom experience with CRT. This method helped collect useful and relevant responses for the study's purpose. The structured questionnaire also supported the study by examining how teachers viewed CRT in their lessons.

2.3 Data Analysis

The quantitative data from the pre-test and post-test were analyzed using a paired-sample t-test in SPSS to determine whether the differences in student performance before and after CRT-based instruction were statistically significant. The paired-sample t-test was chosen because it compares the same group of students before and after the CRT intervention. This test helps to show whether the improvement in scores was meaningful and not just due to chance. It was suitable for this study since the same students took both the pre-test and post-test. The questionnaire data, which included closed-ended and Likert-scale responses, were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics in SPSS to identify trends and correlations in teachers' perceptions of CRT integration. Mean scores, standard deviations, and frequency distributions were calculated to summarize responses, while correlation and regression analyses were applied to explore potential relationships between CRT familiarity, perceived benefits, and ease of implementation. For the qualitative data, thematic analysis was conducted on the semi-structured interview transcripts to identify recurring themes related to the challenges of implementing CRT in EFL classrooms. The data were coded and categorized to uncover patterns in teachers' experiences, difficulties, and strategies for overcoming obstacles. This approach ensured a comprehensive understanding of the contextual factors influencing CRT adoption.

3.   Findings and Discussions

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The quantitative data from the pre-test and post-test were analyzed using a paired-sample t-test in SPSS to determine whether the differences in student performance before and after CRT-based instruction were statistically significant. The questionnaire data, which included closed-ended and Likert-scale responses, were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics in SPSS to identify trends and correlations in teachers' perceptions of CRT integration.

3.1 CRT and Its Impact on EFL Learning Outcomes

Table 1. Pre-test and Post-test

Statistic	Pre-test	Post-test
Mean	67.41	88.89
N	27	27
Std. Deviation	27.82	16.95
Std. Error Mean	5.35	3.26

This table provides a descriptive overview of the pre-test and post-test scores. It includes the mean scores, number of respondents (N), standard deviation, and standard error of the mean for both measurements. The post-test mean (88.89) is noticeably higher than the pre-test mean (67.41), suggesting an improvement in performance following the intervention. Additionally, the standard deviation is lower in the post-test, indicating less variability in scores among participants after the intervention.

Table 1. Statistical Test

Statistical Test	Number
Paired Samples Correlation (r)	0.149
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.459
Mean Difference	-21.48
Std. Deviation of Difference	30.34
t	-3.678
df	26
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.001

This table presents the results of the paired samples t-test used to evaluate whether the difference between pre-test and post-test scores is statistically significant. The correlation value ($r = 0.149$) and its significance level ($p = 0.459$) show that there is no strong relationship between the two sets of scores. However, the mean difference of -21.48, with a t-value of -3.678 and a significance value of 0.001, indicates that the difference in means is statistically significant. Therefore, the intervention led to a measurable and reliable improvement in scores.

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led to a measurable and reliable improvement in scores. The analysis revealed a significant improvement in mean scores, from 67.41 to 88.89, suggesting that CRT contributed to increased student achievement. Although the correlation between pre- and post-test scores was low (r = 0.149), the difference in means was statistically significant (p = 0.001). This confirms that the CRT intervention had a measurable and positive effect on language learning outcomes. In addition, the improvement in scores was especially clear in two important language skills: reading comprehension and writing. Based on classroom observations, students were more interested when reading materials were related to their own culture, such as local stories or real-life issues in their communities. For writing activities, although the students did not write themselves, I used the whiteboard to write culturally familiar examples, phrases, and sentences during the lesson. This helped students better understand writing structures and vocabulary in a context they recognized. It suggests that even teacher-led writing can support learning when the content is culturally relevant.

3.2 Challenges in Implementing CRT

One big challenge in using Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) in EFL classrooms is the school environment. Many teachers teach large classes, which makes it hard to get to know every student personally (Karatas & Oral, 2015). One teacher shared, *"One major challenge is the large number of students, which makes it difficult to build strong personal connections with each one"* (Participant 1, personal communication, 2025). CRT works best when teachers understand their students' cultures and use that knowledge in lessons, but this is hard to do with so many students. Another problem is the fixed curriculum. Teachers must follow strict lesson plans that don't allow space for cultural content (Halim, 2021). As the teacher explained, *"Traditional teaching often follows a fixed curriculum that may not relate to students' lives or interests, especially in diverse, multilingual classrooms"* (D. Nanda, personal communication, 2025). This means they can't adjust the lessons to match students' experiences.

Lack of teaching materials is also a common issue. Many schools don't provide books, pictures, or videos that show different cultures (Hoa & Vien, 2019).The teacher said, *"Limited resources, such as lack of culturally relevant books, visuals, or technology, make it harder to design personalized, engaging lessons"* (Participant 1, personal communication, 2025). Without these materials, it's difficult to make learning fun, meaningful, and inclusive. According to Banks (2014) multicultural teaching should be supported by the school, but this support is not always available. To make CRT successful, schools need to give teachers more freedom, better materials, and stronger support (Olson & Rao, 2016). Another challenge is that many teachers are not trained well in CRT. Some may understand the concept, but they don't feel confident to use it in class (Olson & Rao, 2016). This is often because CRT was not part of their training. (Karatas & Oral, 2015). Even experienced teachers sometimes depend too much on textbooks, which rarely show local cultures or stories. One teacher mentioned, *"Textbooks rarely show different cultures or include local stories and examples"* (Participant 1, personal communication, 2025). Also, planning CRT lessons takes extra time and effort, and many teachers are already very busy (Halim, 2021).Schools and universities

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should offer training and workshops to help teachers learn how to use CRT in practical ways (Muhammad, 2022). Teachers also need chances to share ideas with others and get support (Darmastuti et al., 2024).

Besides problems with teachers and schools, many students also face challenges. Some students feel shy and lack confidence in speaking English, especially when the lesson content doesn't relate to their culture (Rahaman Nafijur Rahaman & Rahaman, 2024). If students don't see themselves in the lesson, they may feel disconnected and not want to take part in class. One teacher shared, *"Even students with low English skills begin to participate more when they see that their voice matters"* (Participant 1, personal communication, 2025). According to Banks (2014) students learn better when they feel that their culture is respected. CRT supports this by using students' own stories, traditions, and interests in lessons (Irfan Saninur Azis et al. (2024). But to do this well, teachers need training and resources. Without that, student participation stays low. As Deiniatur & Hasanah (2024) explained, CRT is not just about teaching language, it is also about helping students feel safe, respected, and confident in the classroom. In conclusion, CRT can make EFL classrooms more inclusive and effective, but to work well, it needs support. Teachers must be trained, schools need to provide resources, and students need to feel included. When all these parts come together, CRT can really help students succeed.

While this study talks about the importance of culture in learning, it does not explain in detail how different cultures are used in the classroom. In the lesson, I used the Indonesian folktale "*The Story of Bawang Merah dan Bawang Putih*". Even though the story is not from Samarinda, it was chosen because it is well-known and has a moral message that all students can understand. Using this familiar story helped students connect with the material more easily. However, the study could be stronger by showing more examples of how the students' own local cultures are included in the lessons. Adding more cultural variety in future lessons would help make learning more inclusive and meaningful for all students.

3.3   Teachers' Perceptions of CRT

Section	Question	Response	Score	Mean Score (per Section)
Teacher Background and CRT Principles	Q4. I actively integrate students' cultural backgrounds into my teaching materials.	Often	3	3.0
Perceived Benefits	Q5. CRT increases student engagement in my classroom.	Agree	3	3.0

Perceived Benefits	Q6. CRT increases student engagement in my classroom.	Agree	3	3.0
Perceived Benefits	Q7. Do you feel that your school supports CRT implementation?	Agree	3	3.0
CRT effectiveness	Q10. Overall, CRT helps students improve their English skills.	Strongly Agree	3	3.0
CRT effectiveness	Q11. CRT makes the class more positive and improves how students work together.	Strongly Agree	3	3.0
CRT effectiveness	Q12. I want to continue using CRT in my future teaching.	Agree	3	3.0

The teacher's perception of Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) appears generally positive based on both the questionnaire responses and interview results. In the questionnaire, under the section "Teacher Background and CRT Principles," the teacher selected "Often" for the statement "I actively integrate students' cultural backgrounds into my teaching materials," which corresponds to a score of 3.0 out of 4.0. This suggests that she regularly includes cultural elements in her lessons, although not always. During the interview, she demonstrated a strong understanding of CRT, stating that it helps students feel respected and motivated, particularly when their cultural identity is acknowledged in the classroom. She also emphasized that CRT builds trust and improves participation, especially for students with lower English proficiency. However, the difference between her beliefs and the frequency of CRT application indicates a gap between theory and practice. This may be due to real classroom challenges such as large student numbers, limited time, and a lack of diverse teaching materials. Therefore, even though the teacher supports CRT and understands its value, external factors may limit her ability to fully implement it in daily instruction. This highlights the need for stronger institutional support and better resources to help teachers consistently apply CRT strategies in their classrooms.

In Section 2: Perceived Benefits, the teacher responded "Agree" to both key items: (1) "CRT

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increases student engagement in my classroom" and (2) "CRT helps students better understand the English lessons more easily." Both responses scored 3, resulting in a section mean of 3.0. This indicates that the teacher believes CRT improves student participation and comprehension, particularly when lessons are made more culturally relevant. In Section 3: Ease of Implementation, the teacher also selected "Agree" for the statement: "Do you feel that your school supports CRT implementation?" With a score of 3, this suggests a moderate level of support from the institution. While it shows that some encouragement exists, it may not be consistent or extensive. This is crucial to note, especially when considering broader teacher experiences from interviews, which often highlight challenges such as limited time, resources, and training. In Section 4: CRT Effectiveness, the teacher gave "Strongly Agree" responses to two statements: (1"Overall, CRT helps students improve their English skills" and (2) "CRT makes the class more positive and improves how students work together" each receiving a score of 4. For the statement "I want to continue using CRT in my future teaching," the teacher answered "Agree" (score of 3). The average mean score for this section is 3.3, reflecting strong confidence in CRT's positive classroom impact and a clear intention to keep using it.

The overall consistency of scores across all sections, primarily between 3.0 to 4.0 and suggests that the teacher both values CRT and experiences moderate support in its application. While the questionnaire responses reflected a positive perception of Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT), classroom observation offered a clearer view of how CRT impacted students. During the lesson, the use of culturally familiar reading materials helped students better understand the content. Because the reading task was based on a story, students appeared more engaged and were able to answer the multiple-choice questions more quickly and with greater confidence. These changes in student behavior and comprehension would not have been visible through questionnaire data alone. This shows that observation is important to support and validate the findings from surveys.

However, the responses also hint at practical barriers that may limit full implementation. Although the teacher showed strong support for Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) in both the interview and questionnaire, there is a gap between what she believes and what actually happens in the classroom. In the interview, the teacher said that CRT means connecting lessons to students' cultures, languages, and experiences to make learning more meaningful. She also said that when students feel respected, they are more confident and willing to participate, even if their English skills are low. However, in the questionnaire, when asked if she "actively integrates students' cultural backgrounds into teaching materials," the teacher only answered "Often," not "Always." This shows that while she believes in CRT, she may not always be able to use it fully in her teaching. This may be because of challenges like limited time, resources, or a strict curriculum. This difference between what teachers believe and what they can actually do in class is important to understand when evaluating how CRT works in practice. This finding aligns with research from (Halim, 2021; Karatas & Oral, 2015) who reported that while teachers often recognize the value of CRT, they face real-world obstacles such as curriculum demands and insufficient materials. In conclusion, the results highlight a balance between belief and practice: the teacher is motivated and

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sees the benefit of CRT but may need greater institutional support, access to culturally relevant resources, and targeted training to implement it more effectively.

3.4 Discussion

The discussion section of this study aims to interpret and connect the findings with existing theories and previous research related to CRT in EFL classrooms. The significant improvement in students' post-test scores indicates that CRT enhances learning outcomes by engaging students through culturally relevant content. This finding is consistent with the work of Irfan Saninur Azis et al (2024), Rahaman Nafijur Rahaman & Rahaman (2024), and Banks, (2014), who all argue that acknowledging students' cultural identities within the classroom fosters motivation and deeper understanding. The data from this study affirms that CRT is an effective pedagogical approach that not only improves language proficiency but also promotes inclusive education in multicultural environments.

At the same time, this study reveals the ongoing challenges teachers face in applying CRT, such as large class sizes, rigid curricula, limited access to relevant materials, and insufficient institutional support. These obstacles mirror the issues raised by Karatas & Oral (2015), Halim (2021) and Hoa & Vien, (2019), who emphasize the structural and systemic limitations that hinder full implementation of CRT in classroom settings. Teacher perceptions gathered through interviews and questionnaires reinforce the notion that while educators support CRT in principle, practical constraints limit their ability to fully realize its potential in daily practice. The integration of both quantitative and qualitative data offers a comprehensive view of how CRT operates in the Indonesian EFL context. It highlights the need for teacher training programs that focus on CRT application, along with policy reform that supports flexible and inclusive curriculum design. These findings provide valuable insights for education stakeholders seeking to enhance teaching practices and support culturally diverse learners in language education.

These findings are consistent with the broader literature on CRT, which emphasizes the benefits of culturally relevant pedagogy in promoting engagement, equity, and academic success Irfan Saninur Azis et al (2024), Rahaman Nafijur Rahaman & Rahaman (2024), and Banks, (2014). The results provide empirical support for the inclusion of CRT principles in EFL classrooms, particularly in culturally diverse contexts such as Indonesia. Validating the impact of CRT through quantitative data, this study contributes to both theoretical and practical advancements in multicultural language education.

The implementation of Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) in EFL classrooms faces several significant challenges, as revealed through both interview and questionnaire data in this study. One of the most frequently cited obstacles is the large number of students in a single class, which limits the teacher's ability to build meaningful connections with each individual and to personalize lessons based on students' diverse cultural backgrounds. This finding resonates with Karatas and Oral (2015), who noted that teachers often struggle to incorporate CRT due to rigid curriculum structures and high student-teacher ratios. Another key challenge is the limited availability of culturally relevant teaching resources, such as books, visuals, or digital content, making it difficult for teachers to design lessons that are both inclusive and engaging.

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Students' low confidence and motivation in using English create barriers to participation, particularly when learners feel disconnected from the learning content. Teachers in this study shared that while CRT has the potential to foster a more inclusive classroom environment, its successful implementation requires extra effort, creativity, and time factors that are often constrained by heavy workloads and insufficient institutional support. These difficulties are consistent with findings by Halim (2020) and Rahaman (2024), which highlight systemic barriers in integrating CRT within the Indonesian educational context. Teachers also expressed a need for ongoing training and practical guidance in applying CRT strategies effectively. Without adequate support structures and resources, the full potential of CRT in improving student engagement and achievement remains difficult to realize.

Nevertheless, teachers in this study generally demonstrated a strong and positive understanding of Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) and its role in enhancing student engagement and learning outcomes in EFL classrooms. Based on the interview data, teachers defined CRT as an approach that connects lesson content to students' cultural backgrounds, personal experiences, and fostering a classroom environment where learners feel acknowledged, respected, and motivated to participate. This perception aligns with and (Muhammad, 2022), who emphasize that teachers who adopt CRT often prioritize student-centered learning and cultural inclusion as a foundation for meaningful instruction.

Moreover, the participating teachers perceived CRT not only as a pedagogical strategy, but also as a means to promote social-emotional growth, particularly for students with low English proficiency. Teachers reported that when students see their identities reflected in the classroom, they gain confidence and become more willing to engage. This supports findings by Darmastuti et al (2024),who noted that CRT encourages greater student involvement and classroom interaction through culturally relevant materials. In the questionnaire, teachers agreed that CRT contributes to a more positive classroom environment, improves communication, and helps bridge gaps between students' home cultures and academic expectations.

However, despite their positive perceptions, some teachers expressed the need for further training and institutional support to fully implement CRT. This reflects concerns raised by Olson & Rao (2016), who argue that teacher education programs must be intentionally designed to prepare educators for culturally diverse classrooms. Overall, the findings suggest that EFL teachers view CRT as an effective and necessary approach in multicultural classrooms, provided they are given the resources and autonomy to implement it meaningfully.

3.5 Effectiveness of CRT in Improving Student Learning Outcomes

The results of this study demonstrate that the implementation of Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) significantly improved student learning outcomes. The quantitative analysis revealed a marked increase in mean scores from the pre-test (67.41) to the post-test (88.89), with a statistically significant difference ($p = 0.001$). This supports the findings of Irfan Saninur Azis et al (2024), who reported that the use of CRT strategies led to an increased level of student engagement and motivation in learning English. Similar to the work of Rahaman (2024), which highlights how CRT improves classroom participation, this study confirms that integrating students' cultural backgrounds into lessons can foster more active and meaningful learning experiences. While this study mainly focuses on the teacher's perspective,

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input from students is also important to understand the real impact of Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT). During classroom observation and teaching, the teacher asked 2–3 students whether they found the lesson easier to understand. All of them said that they understood the material better and found it easier to answer the questions. They explained that this was because the reading and questions were based on a folktale they already knew. This shows that when students are familiar with the cultural content used in the lesson, they feel more confident and engaged. Including more student voices in future studies would give a clearer and more complete picture of how CRT affects learning from the students' point of view. In line with Banks (2014), CRT in this context enabled students to connect their cultural identities with academic content, thus promoting academic achievement. Moreover, Matthews & López (2019),also argued that incorporating heritage culture into learning leads to better academic results, particularly for marginalized students. The findings of this study echo this insight, providing evidence that CRT is not only a tool for inclusion but also for measurable academic improvement.

3.6 Implementation Challenges

Despite its effectiveness, the implementation of CRT in EFL classrooms was not without challenges. Interview and questionnaire data revealed several key issues such as large class sizes, insufficient culturally relevant resources, and limited teacher training. These findings mirror Karatas and Oral (2015), who noted that many teachers feel unprepared to deliver CRT effectively due to systemic constraints and a lack of institutional support. Halim (2021) also highlighted the school curriculum in Indonesia often lack flexibility, making it difficult for teachers to integrate students' cultural contexts meaningfully. Furthermore, the observed lack of student motivation and confidence, especially in expressing themselves in English, echoes the challenges noted by Olson & Rao (2016), who stressed the importance of training programs that help teachers build trust and inclusivity. The inconsistency in curriculum structure and resource availability across schools, as discussed by Hoa & Vien (2019), teachers rely too much on textbooks and don't have enough time or resources to bring in cultural content. These problems show that more support and training are needed to help teachers apply CRT in real classrooms.

3.7 Implications for Practice and Future Research

The findings of this study give useful suggestions for teaching and future research. First, the measurable improvement in student outcomes highlights the need for greater adoption of CRT in multicultural classrooms. As Banks (2014)and argue, content integration and equity pedagogy should be central to EFL curricula to ensure inclusivity and relevance. Furthermore, this study reinforces the recommendation by (Muhammad, 2022) that teacher preparation programs must be redesigned to provide training in culturally responsive strategies. Given the practical constraints faced by educators, future research should focus on developing context-specific CRT models that are adaptable to Indonesian classrooms, as suggested by Darmastuti et al. (2024). It is also essential to explore long-term impacts of CRT on language retention, intercultural communication, and critical thinking skills, as proposed by Bayley & Villarreal (2018).Future studies could incorporate classroom observations and longitudinal assessments to capture a more nuanced understanding of CRT's impact over time. Lastly,

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institutional collaboration between teacher training institutes, curriculum developers, school teacher training centers, and curriculum makers should work together to help teachers use CRT successfully in English classes.

4. Conclusion

This study explored how Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) can improve learning in English as a (EFL) classrooms in Indonesia. Using a mix of tests, questionnaires, and interviews, the research showed that CRT helps students learn better and participate more in class. After CRT was applied, student scores improved significantly, showing that connecting lessons to students' cultural backgrounds makes learning more meaningful and effective. The study also found some challenges in using CRT. Teachers often face large classes, limited teaching materials that reflect students' cultures, and a lack of specific training on how to apply CRT in practice. Although teachers generally support CRT and understand its value, these problems make it hard to fully use CRT in the classroom. This shows a gap between what teachers know about CRT and what they can actually do. Overall, this research adds useful insights into how CRT can be applied in Indonesian EFL classrooms. It highlights the need for better support from schools, more flexible curricula, and improved teacher training. Future research can look at how CRT works over a longer period of time and how students themselves experience it. These steps are important to help make education more inclusive and effective for all learners.

5. References

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