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Overcoming Linguistic and Cultural Barriers in English Language Learning: An Exploration of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

## Article

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# Overcoming Linguistic and Cultural Barriers in English Language Learning: An Exploration of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

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## ABSTRACT

This study investigated the implementation and effectiveness of CRP in English language learning at Cebu Technological University-Tuburan Campus, addressing linguistic and cultural barriers for learners and explored diverse subcultures, including respondents' religion, family structure, socioeconomic status, and educational attainment. Employing a mixed-methods design, the research utilized surveys and pre-post-tests with thirty-three respondents, and interviews with six informants to gather data. Findings revealed a broad age range, a predominance of female participants, and a religiously influenced demographic. The pre-post-test results demonstrated a significant improvement in overall written communication competencies, highlighting a substantial improvement in the application of morphological concepts in writing essays, coupled with sustained high proficiency in grammar. A multiple regression analysis identifies the varying influences of demographic factors on test scores. Teachers perceived CRP as a catalyst for inclusive education, emphasizing customized approaches aligned with cultural backgrounds. Thus, CRP positively impacts language learning outcomes in diverse educational settings.

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Recommendations include implementing an action plan to enhance language proficiency and overcome linguistic and cultural barriers in English language learning. Findings contribute to a broader understanding of CRP's significant application in a culturally diverse educational context.

**KEYWORDS: Culturally Responsive Pedagogy, linguistic and cultural barriers, English language learners, subcultures, written communication**

## Introduction

In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the need to address linguistic and subcultural barriers to learning, particularly in the context of English language education. Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP) has emerged as a valuable approach to providing high-quality education that caters to the diverse subcultures within a single culture. CRP refers to teaching that is culturally sensitive involves utilizing the traditions, traits, experiences, and viewpoints of your students as a means of improving instruction in the classroom. This type of instruction fosters a sense of community and self-belonging among students from diverse backgrounds in academic settings, which increases their engagement and success (Will & Najarro, 2022).

The Philippines is a linguistically and culturally diverse country with numerous subcultures, each exhibiting variations in religion, family structure, socio-economic status, and education (McFarland, 2008). The influence of subcultures on students' identities, beliefs, and experiences is significant. Holland et al. (1998) argue that subcultures offer unique frameworks for individuals to navigate and make meaning within society, empowering educators to connect the classroom with students' lived experiences by acknowledging these subcultural influences. Cohen (1972) suggests that subcultures serve as protective mechanisms for marginalized individuals, fostering a supportive environment and shared identity. Similarly, Maffesoli (1996) views subcultures as social tribes, facilitating interpersonal relationships and social cohesion, as these groups develop unique symbols, rituals, and practices that reinforce belonging and shared values.

Subcultures also serve as sites of resistance and agency, allowing individuals to challenge dominant cultural norms. Hall and Jefferson (2017) argue that subcultures provide alternative spaces for marginalized individuals to express their identities and contest social inequalities. Culturally Responsive Pedagogy can acknowledge and validate these subcultural acts of resistance, fostering an inclusive learning environment that supports students in embracing their agency and advocating for social justice. Culturally Responsive Pedagogy plays a pivotal role in promoting educational equity and student success. Ladson-Billings (1995) underscores the importance of acknowledging and leveraging students' cultural assets and knowledge, leading to improved academic and socioemotional outcomes. Gay (2000) highlights that Culturally Responsive Pedagogy enhances student engagement, motivation, and a sense of belonging, particularly for historically marginalized students.

In addition, Gay (2018) emphasizes the significance of cultural competence, calling for educators to develop an understanding of their students' cultures, languages, and histories. Banks (2015)

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identifies the integration of multicultural perspectives throughout the curriculum as a crucial principle, enabling students to see themselves reflected in the content and fostering cross-cultural understanding. Moreover, Delpit (1995) emphasizes the need to promote critical consciousness and social justice, empowering students to critically analyze and challenge societal inequities. Likewise, Culturally Responsive Pedagogy incorporates students' cultural backgrounds by setting high expectations, promoting cultural proficiency, and fostering critical thinking (Dickson, Chun, & Fernandez, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Morrison, Robbins, & Rose, 2008). Teachers who are culturally responsive provide challenging curricula, support students, focus on strengths, and acknowledge accountability for their success.

Hence, by intentionally integrating subcultures into instructional practices, Culturally Responsive Pedagogy can foster student engagement, critical thinking, and a profound sense of belonging, enhancing the learning experience. Several studies have examined the application of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP) in various educational contexts. Orosco explored the use of CRP within special education for English language learners, highlighting evidence-based practices that can effectively support these students (Orosco, 2017). Roy investigated the benefits of CRP for culturally and linguistically diverse struggling readers in elementary schools, demonstrating that CRP strategies positively impacted the reading outcomes of these students (Roy, 2015).

A study conducted by Lalik (2020) focused on the implementation of CRP in the elementary classroom for English language learners, emphasizing the significance of culturally responsive teaching practices such as creating a supportive classroom environment and integrating students' cultural resources. Yildirim (2019) conducted a case study in a private language school in Turkey, highlighting the importance of adopting culturally responsive approaches in English language teaching.

While CRP has been extensively studied in various educational contexts, there is a lack of research on its implementation and effectiveness within the Philippine context, which is characterized by a multitude of subcultures. By examining the cultural backgrounds of the participants and their performance in written communication, particularly in applying the basic concepts of morphology in writing essays, as well as investigating teachers' perceptions of CRP, this study sought to contribute to the development of culturally sensitive and inclusive pedagogical practices (Gomez, 2021). Furthermore, by aligning with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions), and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals), this research aimed to foster equitable access to education, promote cultural sensitivity, and encourage collaboration among educational institutions and stakeholders in the pursuit of quality education for all (UNESCO, 2020).

This study on the implementation and effectiveness of CRP in English language learning at the Cebu Technological University-Tuburan Campus addressed the pressing need to embrace subcultural diversity within the larger Filipino culture, contributed to inclusive education practices, and supported the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Thus, the researcher aimed to explore the implementation and effectiveness of CRP in English language learning at the Cebu Technological University-Tuburan Campus through the student-respondents' pre and post test scores in written communication and teachers' perspective, and how cultural backgrounds affect students' performance, which becomes the basis for Continual Improvement Plan. Likewise, we

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aimed to shed light on the implementation and impact of CRP in English language learning at the Cebu Technological University-Tuburan Campus, fostering inclusive education and aligning with global sustainability goals, thus ensuring quality education, and reducing inequalities in the diverse Filipino subcultural landscape.

## Method

### Design

The study employed a modified mixed-methods design that combined quantitative-correlational and quasi-experimental and qualitative-phenomenological approaches to collect and analyze data on Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP). This approach is commonly used in research as it could provide detailed and comprehensive data to achieve research objectives and answer research questions. A quantitative-correlational analysis was used to examine the relationship between respondents' cultural background and writing performance. A modified quasi-experimental design was used to measure the effectiveness of CRP, which includes the non-random assignment of subjects to an experimental group and integrating CRP throughout the lesson plan. This was achieved by encouraging students to provide their personal understanding of the concept and its cultural significance, as well as accurately integrating the lesson. This approach highlighted the importance of understanding how different cultural perspectives enrich language learning experiences, allowing researchers to manipulate conditions in the teaching and learning process. Finally, qualitative phenomenology was used to explore the teachers' perceptions on the applicability of CRP in language learning.

### Participants

The study focused on a specific group within Cebu Technological University - Tuburan Campus, which includes first-year students enrolled in English Language Studies and teachers from the College of Arts and Sciences Department. The researchers chose thirty-three (33) student-respondents who participated in surveys and underwent pre, and post-tests related to the Morphology lesson. Additionally, the researchers selected six (6) teacher-informants for interviews. The decision on the number of informants was based on received suggestions and was aimed at enhancing data collection and the overall credibility of the study. A modified sampling technique was used to determine the student-respondents' sample size, while random sampling through the fishbowl technique was used for the teacher-informants. The varied demographic profile of the respondents, which resembles the existence of subcultures within the Cebuano-shared culture, was a key factor in the integration of CRP. The researchers ensured that the lessons and activities were culturally relevant and inclusive, considering the diverse backgrounds and experiences of the students.

### Instruments

To provide a comprehensive exploration of the effectiveness of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy in overcoming linguistic and cultural barriers in English language learning, the researcher employed several instruments that encompass surveys, pre-post-tests, and interviews. The survey

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instrument featured a structured questionnaire designed to collect information from a group of individuals by eliciting their responses to queries (Check and Schutt, 2011). Survey questionnaires were used to assess student-respondents' backgrounds; pre-post-tests measured language proficiency gains; and open-ended interviews qualitatively explored teacher-informants' nuanced perceptions and experiences.

*Data Analysis*

To analyze the collected data from the participants, the following statistical tools and research model were used: Simple Percentage was used to determine the demographic profile of the student-respondents; Weighted Mean was utilized to determine the average scores between the pre- and post-tests in the morphology lesson on written communication competency; Multiple Regression was used to determine the significant relationship between respondents' demographic profile and their pre-post-test scores; T-test was employed to determine if there is a significant mean difference between the pre- and post-test scores of the single experimental group; and Braun and Clarke (2019) Thematic Analysis Model was used to analyze the interview responses of the participants.

**Results and Discussion**

*Table 1.* Cultural Background of the Respondents

| Indicators | Data Results |
|---|:---:|
| Age | |
| 17 years old | 4 |
| 18 years old | 12 |
| 19 years old | 13 |
| 20 years old | 3 |
| 21 years old | 0 |
| 22 years old | 1 |
| Gender | |
| Male | 5 |
| Female | 28 |
| Religion | |
| Catholic | 27 |
| Protestant | 0 |
| Islam | 0 |
| Mormon | 1 |
| Seventh-day Adv. | 1 |
| Born-Again Chr. | 2 |
| No religion | 2 |
| Family Structure | |
| Nuclear family | 22 |
| Extended family | 5 |
| Single-parent family | 4 |

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| | |
|---|---|
| Blended family | 2 |
| **Socio-economic Status (Based on Social Classes in the Philippines by NEDA)** | |
| Poor | 15 |
| Low-income class (but not poor) | 12 |
| Lower middle-income class | 5 |
| Middle middle-income class | 1 |
| Upper middle-income class | 0 |
| Upper-income class (but not rich) | 0 |
| Rich | 0 |
| **Parents' Educational Attainment** | |
| Mother | |
| No formal education | 0 |
| Elementary school | 7 |
| High school | 12 |
| College/University | 14 |
| Postgraduate/Advanced Degree | 0 |
| Father | |
| No formal education | 2 |
| Elementary school | 10 |
| High school | 13 |
| College/University | 6 |
| Postgraduate/Advanced Degree | 2 |

As shown in Table 1, the majority of respondents are 19 years old, with females constituting the predominant gender category. Catholicism emerges as the dominant religious affiliation, and nuclear families are the most prevalent family structure. In terms of socio-economic status, the majority fall into the poor category. Regarding parental education, high school education is most common among fathers, while mothers tend to have attained college or university degrees.

This comprehensive overview provides insights into the cultural background of the respondents, shedding light on the existence of subcultures and diverse characteristics within the surveyed population. The recognition of these subcultural variances is pivotal in customizing pedagogical approaches that resonate with students' identities and promote equitable educational experiences (Ladson-Billings, 1995). These demographic indicators hold implications for understanding subcultures within the educational context and inform the application of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP) to create inclusive learning environments that honor students' diverse cultural backgrounds and experiences.

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*Table 2.* Pre and Post Test Scores

| Competencies | Weighted Mean (Pre-test) | Verbal Description (VD) | Weighted Mean (Post-test) | Verbal Description (VD) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Content and Relevance | 6.73 | VS | 8.46 | O |
| Organization and Structure | 7.88 | VS | 8.44 | O |
| Grammar | 8.11 | O | 9.07 | O |
| Vocabulary and Word Choice | 8.11 | O | 9.03 | O |
| Clarity and Coherence | 7.27 | VS | 8.82 | O |
| **TOTAL WEIGHTED SCORE** | **7.70** | **VS** | **8.79** | **O** |

**Legend:** *8.01-10.00 Outstanding (O); 6.01 - 8.00 Very Satisfactory (VS); 4.01 - 6.00 Satisfactory (S); 2.01 - 4.00 Fairly Satisfactory (FS); and 1.00 - 2.00 Unsatisfactory (U)*

Table 2 revealed that the pre-test results provide a comprehensive assessment of various writing competencies, indicating satisfactory performance in presenting information with room for improvement in deeper insights or relevance, as reflected by the content and relevance score of 6.73. Additionally, the well-structured essays with coherent flow of ideas, as denoted by the organization and structure score of 7.88, highlight areas of strength, while exceptional mastery in grammar (8.11) and vocabulary and word choice (8.11) significantly enhances writing quality. Despite receiving a very satisfactory rating, clarity, and coherence (7.27) suggest opportunities for enhancing absolute clarity. Overall, the weighted score of 7.70 reflects a solid baseline with areas for potential improvement. Conversely, the post-test results indicate notable improvements in the sample population's writing abilities, particularly in depth and relevance, as evidenced by the outstanding content and relevance rating (8.46). Moreover, significant progress in organization and structure (8.44), clarity and coherence (8.82), grammar (9.07), and vocabulary and word choice (9.03) underscore a sophisticated capacity for presenting information coherently and effectively.

The exceptional overall performance, depicted by the total weighted score of 8.79, validates the efficacy of the Culturally Responsive Pedagogy intervention in enhancing writing proficiency. However, the lower weighted means in some competencies verbally described as **VS** in the pretest suggest potential areas for culturally responsive interventions, warranting a more extended implementation of CRP to address specific challenges and ensure a substantial impact on students' performance. These findings underscore the importance of adopting pedagogical approaches that consider diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, fostering inclusive and effective learning environments (Ladson-Billings, 1995 and Sanger, 2020).

*Table 3.* Multiple Regression Analysis of the Relationship between Respondents' Cultural Background and Writing Performance

| | Coefficients | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | | | 95.0% Confidence Interval for B | |
| Model | B | Std. Error | Beta | t | Sig. | Lower Bound | Upper Bound |
| 1 (Constant) | -4.823 | 53.318 | | -.090 | .930 | -123.622 | 113.977 |
| Age | 3.415 | 2.526 | .350 | 1.352 | .206 | -2.214 | 9.043 |
| Gender | -3.936 | 7.412 | -.146 | -.531 | .607 | -20.452 | 12.579 |
| Religion | -1.197 | 7.140 | -.044 | -.168 | .870 | -17.104 | 14.711 |
| Family Structure | -7.653 | 7.943 | -.255 | -.964 | .358 | -25.350 | 10.044 |
| Socio Economic Status | 8.568 | 3.910 | .666 | 2.192 | .053 | -.143 | 17.279 |
| mother's Educational Attainment | .018 | 7.047 | .001 | .003 | .998 | -15.684 | 15.720 |
| Father's Educational Attainment | 16.595 | 7.225 | .737 | 2.297 | .044 | .496 | 32.695 |

a. Dependent Variable: average score

The analysis highlights several important implications for understanding and improving academic performance. First, age exhibits a moderate positive influence on average test scores, suggesting the need for age-sensitive educational approaches. The moderate positive influence of age on average test scores aligns with studies in California, where older students fare better academically than their younger, age-appropriate peers, emphasizing the need for age-sensitive educational approaches (La Paro & Pianta, 2000). Uphoff & Gilmore (1985) use research evidence about the relationship between age and achievement as well as other evidence to argue that the older and/or more mature students in a class fare better than younger classmates. However, this is in contrast to the recent findings of Wambugu and Emeke (2019) who found out that age does not influence academic performance. This heeds further exploration on the relationship between age and academic performance.

Second, a weak negative relationship between gender and scores indicates the presence of modest gender disparities, warranting targeted strategies for equitable academic outcomes. The identification of modest gender disparities is corroborated by a meta-analysis and a study in the United Kingdom, demonstrating a small but significant gender gap favoring girls in mathematics achievement and higher enrollment of girls in advanced science and mathematics courses (Else-Quest, Hyde, & Linn, 2010). According to Kappe & Van Der Flier (2012), "there are further examples of research exposing only a small difference between male and female students' academic performance", suggesting modest gender disparities in academic outcomes. In contrast, DeBerard et al. (2004), De Winter and Dodou (2011), Anierobi, (2019) and Abd Ghani et al. (2020)

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further showed no relationship at all between gender and academic achievement. This suggests that gender is not a consistent factor on academic success of students. This heeds further exploration of their relationship.

Third, while religion and family structure show statistically insignificant negative effects, exploring their nuanced socio-cultural aspects may reveal indirect influences. A study by Azumah, Samuel, & Onzaberigu (2018) highlights that the statistical analysis did not indicate significant direct effects of family structure on academic scores, warranting further exploration of their possible indirect influences. Furthermore, Butler-Barnes, Williams, & Chavous (2011) found that religiosity was not related to academic performance. They gave two possible reasons for not finding the expected positive relationship between these two variables: Firstly, they focused only on African-American males whilst other studies included both males and females. Secondly, they used students' self-reported average grades instead of student performances in standardized tests. This finding is contradicting to Sarchami et al. (2020) who revealed positive correlation between religiosity and academic performance, which calls for another investigation on their relationship.

Fourth, the strong positive relationship between socio-economic status and average scores underscores the necessity of targeted interventions to bridge socio-economic gaps in academic achievement. The necessity of targeted interventions to bridge socio-economic gaps, is supported by a meta-analysis and a study, revealing a strong positive relationship between socio-economic status and academic achievement and highlighting the challenges faced by students from low-income families (Duncan Kalil, Mogstad, & Rege, 2022 and Munir, Faiza, Jamal, Daud, & Iqbal, 2023). Dietrichson, Bøg, Filges, and Klint Jørgensen (2017), further emphasize "effective academic interventions for elementary and middle school students with low socioeconomic status" This study suggests an array of possibilities, from parent training programs to health interventions, role model interventions, and early childhood intervention programs, as possible means to increase the academic achievement of children with low socio-economic status.

Fifth, maternal educational attainment has a negligible effect, prompting further exploration of the maternal role in educational support. The negligible effect of maternal educational attainment prompts further exploration, supported by studies in the United States and the United Kingdom, indicating that mothers' involvement in education might supersede the impact of their educational attainment (Avvisati et al., 2011). Yu's (2023) findings refute this finding, indicating that mothers' educational attainment has a positive impact on the development of their children's cognitive, unique, and adaptability qualities, and drawing the conclusion that mothers with greater educational attainment can enhance their children's overall quality. This implies further exploration.

Finally, the significant impact of paternal educational attainment emphasizes the crucial role fathers play in fostering academic success, suggesting the potential benefits of initiatives encouraging paternal involvement and educational advancement. The significant impact of paternal educational attainment on academic success finds support in a meta-analysis and a study in the United States, underscoring the positive relationship between fathers' educational attainment and their children's academic achievement, emphasizing the crucial role of fathers in educational advancement (Avvisati et al., 2011, & Ahmad et al., 2023).

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The comprehensive analysis of demographic factors in relation to academic performance offers valuable insights with broad implications for educational strategies. Notably, acknowledging the moderately positive impact of age on test performance underscores the significance of tailoring teaching methods to different age groups. To rectify slight gender imbalances, it is essential to implement precise interventions ensuring fair academic outcomes. Although religion and family structure display statistically insignificant effects, probing into their socio-cultural intricacies may uncover subtle influences. The strong positive correlation between socio-economic status and academic scores underscores the pressing need for specific actions to diminish socio-economic disparities. The marginal effect of maternal educational attainment prompts a deeper investigation into the role of mothers in educational support. Conversely, the considerable influence of paternal educational attainment stresses the pivotal role fathers play in nurturing academic success, advocating for initiatives that encourage paternal engagement and educational progress. These collective discoveries underscore the necessity for nuanced and targeted educational approaches in navigating the diverse demographic factors influencing academic achievement.

*Table 4.* Significant Mean Gain of Pre-Post-Test Scores

| | | Paired Differences | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Paired Samples Test** | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | | | | |
| | | Mean | Std. Deviation | Error Mean | Lower | Upper | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) |
| Pair 1 | Post-Test Scores - Pre-test Scores | 14.303 | 12.105 | 2.107 | 10.011 | 18.595 | 6.788 | 32 | .000 |

The paired samples t-test results demonstrate a *significant improvement* in test scores following the implementation of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP), with an average increase of 14.303 points and a low standard error of the mean difference. The 95% confidence interval (10.011 to 18.595) excludes zero, confirming the positive impact of CRP. The t-value of 6.788 exceeds the critical value, and the extremely low p-value of .000 strongly supports the conclusion that the CRP intervention had a statistically significant and positive effect on the test scores. This aligns with previous studies by Gay (2018); Wah & Nasri (2019); and Ragoonaden & Muller (2017) which collectively highlight CRP's efficacy in improving academic achievement and fostering positive attitudes toward learning across diverse cultural backgrounds. Embracing CRP emerges not only as a means of boosting academic success but also as a transformative force in creating inclusive learning environments that celebrate cultural diversity and enhance student engagement.

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*Table 5.* Teachers' Perceptions on CRP

| | |
|---|---|
| **Theme 1** | Fostering Inclusive and Culturally Responsive Education |
| **Theme 2** | Culturally Responsive Pedagogy: Fostering Inclusivity, Engagement, and Effective Learning |
| **Theme 3** | Developing Cultural Competence and Building Strong Teacher-Student Relationships |
| **Theme 4** | Families and Communities are not involved in Education |
| **Theme 5** | Varied Assessment Methods and Differentiated Collaborative Learning Activities |
| **Theme 6** | Enhancing Writing Skills Through Feedback and Cultural Responsiveness |

Teachers perceive Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP) in language learning as a powerful tool for shaping an inclusive educational environment, emphasizing themes such as: fostering inclusive and culturally responsive education; culturally responsive pedagogy: fostering inclusivity, engagement, and effective learning; developing cultural competence and building strong teacher-student relationships; families and communities are not involved in education; varied assessment methods and differentiated collaborative learning activities; and enhancing writing skills through feedback and cultural responsiveness.

In the thematic discourse surrounding "Fostering Inclusive and Culturally Responsive Education," the overarching emphasis lies in recognizing the diverse cultural backgrounds of students and adapting educational strategies accordingly. Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP) emerges as a pivotal approach, advocating for customized education that addresses the specific requirements and perspectives of a diverse student body. Teachers express a commitment to modifying activities based on students' needs and cultural backgrounds, fostering inclusivity and respect within the classroom. Moreover, the principles embodied in the discussions related to inclusivity and respect for diverse viewpoints underscore the aspiration to cultivate an inclusive learning setting. Further enhancing the discourse, Informant 2 supplemented this by expressing:

> "I promote cultural diversity and inclusivity within the classroom by, again, allowing them to share and possibly asking them to participate and giving them like activities that would be able to express themselves and welcoming to all the different students with different backgrounds."

Building on this sentiment, interactive and inclusive classroom engagements play a pivotal role in fostering a sense of belonging and trust, facilitating an environment where students feel free to express their thoughts without apprehension of prejudice or exclusion. Akintayo et al. (2024) extols the significance of inclusion in education, stating that all students can learn to appreciate and comprehend diversity and equality through inclusive curricula. This assertion features the pivotal role of inclusive educational practices in advancing understanding and appreciation of diversity. In summary, the theme represents not merely a pedagogical approach but a fundamental principle that acknowledges the richness of diversity and promotes equitable learning experiences for all students. CRP, along with inclusivity and respect, assumes a significant role in realizing

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this objective, creating a classroom where every student's cultural background is valued and integrated into the learning process.

Within the theme of "Culturally Responsive Pedagogy: Fostering Inclusivity, Engagement, and Effective Learning," the focus is on creating an educational environment students from diverse cultural backgrounds feel welcomed, engaged, and empowered to learn effectively. Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP) plays a significant role in empowering students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by utilizing cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes. This impression aligns with the principles of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP) as described by Gay (2000 p. 106), who defines CRP as "an approach that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by utilizing cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes." This statement stresses the power of CRP in empowering students on multiple levels. Furthermore, the code "Encouraging participation and open communication" emphasizes the need for active student engagement in the learning process, aligning with Ladson-Billings' (1995) and Schaufeli et al. (2002) as cited in Fuertes et al. (2023) who both stated that students are probably more involved and committed in their own learning when they are in an environment where academic achievement is high. Additionally, Informant 2 underscores the importance of considering students' cultural backgrounds and learning styles in teaching methods, stating:

> "The first thing that I would do before I would decide what teaching method that I would use is that I will get to know my students first because that is very important. Because if we don't know the students, we will not be able to get or like to have the teaching method that would best fit them." They further added, "I am trying to, like, get an overview of what are the different cultural backgrounds that they have, and as well as the learning styles that they have, because students, some of them, they actually just learn by reading, or they want something that they can see, they learn best. So just by having that, I could somehow present a lesson using different teaching styles."

This highlights the necessity of adapting teaching approaches to align with students' diverse cultural backgrounds and learning preferences, thereby fostering inclusivity and engagement in the learning process.

The theme of "Developing Cultural Competence and Building Strong Teacher-Student Relationships" highlights the foundational role of understanding students on a deeper level, beyond their academic abilities. Moore (2021) emphasizes the crucial role of teachers in developing cultural competence and fostering strong relationships with students, highlighting the fundamental importance of nurturing an inclusive and culturally responsive educational environment. Similarly, informant 4 stresses the significance of teachers in students' lives, emphasizing that neglecting students' emotions can deter their engagement in school. Professing this, informant 4 states:

> "Well, it's really very arduous, I have to say, really very difficult because learning is sacrificed if you don't know your students. So, let's say the huge challenge is you need to get to know your students first. Okay. And be able to identify those suitable strategies to achieve learning. It's exactly learning; it's exactly the pinnacle of everything, everything that you do inside the classroom."

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Eden et al. (2024) further accentuates the need for educators to cultivate a culturally responsive school environment, reinforcing the imperative of developing cultural competence and fostering strong teacher-student relationships. However, challenges such as a lack of awareness or training in culturally responsive pedagogy and the complexity of designing culturally responsive lessons persist, necessitating ongoing efforts to address these obstacles and promote inclusivity and empathy within the learning space.

In discussing "Families and Communities are not involved in Education," the focus shifts to the importance of extending the educational partnership beyond the classroom to involve families and communities. As highlighted by scholars like Epstein et al. (2018), engaging families in their children's education can lead to improved academic performance, higher attendance rates, and a more positive school environment. Despite potential benefits, there is often reluctance to involve families due to privacy concerns or assumptions about their receptiveness. However, incorporating families and communities into education not only aligns with the principles of culturally responsive pedagogy but also enriches the educational experience for all students, emphasizing the need for educators to reconsider their approach to family and community engagement. Informant 1 even admitted this by saying,

> "Honestly, I have not tried involving families or communities 'kay lisod gud siya' (because it's really hard). And I think some students will feel 'nga chismosa mani si Miss' (that Miss is nosy) when you ask those things 'kay' (because) I think these are really personal."

This reflects the existing challenges and perceptions that hinder family and community involvement in education, underlining the necessity for educators to address these barriers and foster meaningful partnerships to support student success.

The theme of "Varied Assessment Methods and Differentiated Collaborative Learning Activities" underscores the necessity of accommodating students' diverse learning needs through a wide range of assessment methods and collaborative activities. Supporting this theme, Tomlinson highlights the significance of differentiated instruction in addressing students' individualities, advocating for diverse assessment techniques to allow students to demonstrate their comprehension in various ways (2017). This aligns with the theme's emphasis on integrating varied assessment methods, enabling teachers to gain insights into each student's unique learning needs. Additionally, Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory supports the idea of tailored collaborative learning activities by emphasizing the influence of social interactions and cultural contexts on learning. Collaborative activities that promote interaction among students from different backgrounds can enhance their comprehension of diverse perspectives and augment their cultural competence, further reinforcing the theme's focus on diversity in collaborative tasks linked to students' cultural heritage. A dedicated informant 4, who shared their valuable insights, pointed out:

> "It should be differentiated, and when you say differentiated, it caters to the individualities. Okay, for example, if you have students who are Muslims, of course, they do have different practices too, concerning religion, right? So, you have to look for some activities that cater to all the learners."

Additionally, informant 3 echoed these sentiments, articulating:

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> "It should be differentiated. So, it should be tailored to the needs of your students. 'Noh' [Cebuano expression] so, 'kasagaran baya naay like dili gud sila moiningles noh' (usually they don't really speak English), there was even a time I would allow my 'kuan' [Cebuano filler word], my students to speak Filipino, Tagalog 'noh' so, 'Filipino diay' (Filipino rather), I give them 'kuan' like what activity was that I asked him to make a role play. So, in this section I, I really enforce using English and in this particular section I just allow them whichever language they are comfortable to use 'noh'. So, if they think they are, they could express themselves very well 'noh' using Bisaya or Tagalog then they could use it, so I really, really see to it that my students can express themselves."

These insights show the necessity of differentiated approaches and tailored activities to cater to the diverse needs and cultural backgrounds of students, thus enhancing the effectiveness of collaborative learning experiences.

Finally, the thematic focus on "Enhancing Writing Skills Through Feedback and Cultural Responsiveness" emphasizes the importance of providing feedback tailored to individual students' needs and cultural backgrounds to improve their writing skills. Informant 2 reinforces this notion, affirming:

> "Yes, it improves their writing skills. Since they feel the inclusivity of the learning environment, they also write the things that they wanted to share without any hesitations or fear of being discriminated against or disrespected. In addition, as a teacher, it is crucial to be culturally responsive in order to guide or correct the students' written outputs in the most appropriate ways." Building on this perspective, informant 1 adds, "I also think that being responsive will help students improve their writing skills because you will be giving them enough feedback which they will use as, maybe, their kind of assessment for their performance."

These perspectives align with the insights of Obilor (2019), who asserts that feedback is a crucial factor influencing student achievement and should be timely, targeted, and actionable. Effective feedback, given in a culturally responsive manner, plays a significant role in guiding and refining students' written work, ultimately contributing to their development as writers and culturally competent individuals.

## Conclusion

From this study's findings, researchers conclude that the demographic profile of English language learners proves the existence of subcultures, revealing a complex interplay influencing language learning experiences. The sustained high proficiency in grammar signals potential strengths in instructional approaches, while significant relationships between demographic variables and test scores highlight the need for tailored strategies. The substantial improvement in test scores post-culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP) implementation emphasizes its efficacy. Teachers' perceptions underscore CRP's role in creating an inclusive environment, advocating for personalized education, cultural alignment, strong teacher-student relationships, increased family

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and community involvement, diverse assessments, and enhanced writing skills. These outcomes accentuate CRP's importance in improving language learning across diverse backgrounds. As education evolves, CRP's principles guide transformative practices, empowering learners and bridging linguistic and cultural divides.

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