

**Culturally Responsive Teaching In
Thai Classroom Settings:
A Perspective From Indonesian
Educators**

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Abstract

A culturally responsive teaching approach is best applied in classes where students have different cultural backgrounds. This research aims to find out how culturally responsive teaching in Thai classroom settings: a perspective from Indonesian educators. Therefore, this research methodology used a qualitative research strategy with the interview method as the main data collection technique. This research used semi-structured interviews, accepting three Indonesian teachers who had experience teaching in Thailand. This research also aims to determine the implementation and dynamics of culturally sensitive practices in Thai classrooms with special reference to the process of cultural assimilation in learning institutions. So from the results of this research, the researchers found 5 categories, namely: a. Teaching Experience in Thailand and its distinct difference from other countries. b. Integration of Thai Cultural Aspects in Teaching. c. Challenges in Implementing Culturally Responsive Approach. d. Student Response to Culturally Responsive Teaching Approach. e. Suggestions or Recommendations for Other Teachers. The findings of this research are useful for educational practitioners and stakeholders as well as researchers who have a desire to teach thoughtfully in the context of Thai culture or other similar cultural environments.

Keywords

Culturally Responsive Teaching, Multicultural Education, Students Reaction, Teaching Challenges, Teacher Collaboration, Teaching Experience, Thailand.

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INTRODUCTION

Education is a critical factor in preparing young people for the future and a democratic, culturally responsive teaching approach is useful in fostering students' and students' success. As (Bank, 2019) said, teaching that is responsive to cultural diversity in the classroom has a crucial role in creating an inclusive and empowering learning environment. When it comes to the Thai context, as a country that has diverse cultures and subcultures it poses a large task in the process of learning. In response to this, Indonesian educators working in Thailand share their prior knowledge, perceptions, and perspectives on the principle of culturally relevant instruction. The main objective of this study is to understand and establish the view of Indonesian educators who are currently teaching in Thailand and how they can employ culturally appropriate teaching practices in various settings. According to Paris, D., & Alim (2017), in this book, teaching practices that build on and enhance students' cultural perspectives, integrate multicultural elements in curricula, increase representation of culturally diverse students, and connect teaching methodologies to principles of social justice are discussed (Ermawati et al., 2024). Through sharing the insights on cultural sustainability and justice in this book, educators can use this resource to design effective learning environments. Thus, alongside exploring the authors' perceptions and experiences of practicing culturally responsive teaching in Thailand, this study reveals a vast body of cross-cultural wisdom that may enhance educational practice beyond Thailand. This is what Caingcoy (2023) said on current culture/first language strategies and practices of current educational settings as related to inclusive school processes for all students emphasizing cultural and linguistic diversities. In this case, it gives a theoretical framework analysis of culturally responsive pedagogy that covers ideas, hypotheses, and patterns in culturally responsive pedagogy and how it can be placed into use in various educational settings. From the educators' standpoint of Indonesia, it

is believed that this study will help enrich the knowledge on how the quality of inclusive education in Thailand and globally can be improved.

The evidence presented in this research suggests that Indonesian educators who teach in Thailand come with helpful experiences from their culture. Thus, it can be possible to apply research based on culturally responsive teaching that was developed in Indonesia to the context of Thailand where they are taught Prachagool & Nuangchalerm (2021). Thus, in this case, the reader can observe not only the practical significance of this adaptation for the analyzed situation in the context of Thailand but also the contribution of this work to the development of global knowledge regarding the need for cultural sensitivity and humanization of learning environments. This study is significant because it shows how results gathered from one cultural context should be compared to those of another to understand best practices when it comes to the education of students of diverse cultural backgrounds (Sardi et al., 2017). Analyzing two activities of students in two culturally different countries shows us that no matter what cultural context we are in, some principles can be embraced in attempts to enhance culture in the classrooms. According to (Howard & Howard, 2019) it is important to understand the role of race and culture in learning in American schools, with a focus on ways to achieve achievement through approaches that take into account student diversity. This encourages the development of more empowering educational policies and practices, as well as strengthening global understanding of the essence of cultural inclusion to create a truly inclusive and empowering learning environment. This is what Bank (2019) said in his book presenting a comprehensive study of multicultural education issues and perspectives. With contributions from leading scholars, this book addresses key topics such as diversity, equity, and social justice in education, providing valuable insights for educators committed to fostering inclusivity and cultural responsiveness.” Gay (2018) in his book *Culturally Responsive Teaching* provides a comprehensive overview of theory, research, and practice in this field. Drawing on the latest scholarship, this book offers practical guidance for educators seeking to create inclusive learning environments that respect and affirm the cultural identities of all students. As also stated by Lisa (2006) in her book, she reveals the cultural conflicts that arise in school classes, as well as ways to overcome these challenges through a culturally responsive educational approach.

In addition, this would also be beneficial in enriching the cross-cultural understanding of educational work, as well as the lessons and concerns of Indonesian educators. These educators graduated from a country with a diverse cultural background and therefore they could be agents that help foster cultural responsiveness and inclusion in education in Thailand. Therefore, this research not only advances where the subject of this article is articulated, of culturally responsive teaching implementation in the Thai context but opens up potential for cross-national research partnerships or cross-fostering opportunities of knowledge among educators across the international continuum to strengthen inclusive education. This is based on the opinion of Ladson-Billings (1995) who discusses the important concept of a culturally responsive teaching approach, underscoring the need to adapt teaching practices to students' cultural backgrounds to increase their engagement and achievement in the classroom. Likewise, what was said by Morris, P. et al. (2023) that cultural competency is important in higher education, especially in increasingly diverse contexts, and provides practical guidance for engaging culturally diverse students, faculty, and administrators.

Thus, this research is not only a first step in deepening the understanding of culturally responsive teaching in Thai classrooms through the perspective of Indonesian educators but also inspires further efforts in developing educational practices that accommodate cultural diversity throughout the world (Kalsum et al., 2023). Through cross-cultural collaboration and the exchange of experiences, we can strengthen the foundation for an education that is not only culturally inclusive but also relevant and meaningful for every individual involved in the learning process. Villegas & Lucas (2002) argue that exploring innovative approaches to prepare teachers for culturally responsive practices. Through case studies, curriculum redesign, and critical reflection, this book offers practical strategies for reconceptualizing teacher education programs to better meet the diverse needs of students and society. The opinion from Wayne (2012).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Culturally responsive teaching (CRT) is an educational paradigm that takes into consideration the ethical identity of the learners as well as their environment. Culturally responsive teaching has been introduced by scholars like Geneva Gay and Gloria Ladson-Billings as a teaching methodology that seeks to maintain the cultural relevance and equity of students' education in the classroom with the purpose of improving

students' learning experience and effectiveness Gay (2018), and Ladson-Billings (1995). These are; cultural competence, high expectations, and consciousness. Cultural relevance on the other hand relates to a teacher's capacity to appreciate and manage his or her relationships with students with diverse cultural backgrounds. It entails constant practice and acquisition of knowledge bearing in mind different cultures not to harbor any prejudice or prejudices Villegas & Lucas (2002). Thus, high expectations can be considered to be another important tenet of culturally responsive teaching. It is very important that teachers embrace the principle of high expectations for students and this is irrespective of the cultural origin of the learner. Such beliefs in students may push them to higher academic performance as pointed out by Ladson-Billings in her work. Furthermore, culturally responsive teaching also values the aspect of critical self-reflection by raising students' awareness of inequity issues. On this level, by promoting students' critical thought and mine, educators can help students become constructors of their reality and agents of change in society, that is advocates of social justice Barros (2020). Various studies have indicated that kids who undergo culturally responsive teaching sessions are bound to transform for the better in terms of performance results, especially black students. For example, Aronson & Laughter (2016) observed that the implementation of culturally responsive teaching activities positively impacted several indexes of learners' learning processes and academic achievement in different subject areas. Such positive outcomes have been argued to stem from the social home-school cultural match that enhances students' relevance and belongingness at school Howard & Howard (2019).

In practice, culturally responsive teaching comprises the following tactics multicultural content in teaching curricula, the incidence of culturally realistic examples and teaching and learning aids, and learners' cultural modes of learning. Five instructional methods that are frequently incorporated with culturally responsive teaching are, for instance, cooperative learning, storytelling, and project-based learning (Gay, 2018). Nevertheless, deploying culturally responsive teaching is not always straightforward. Teacher training, professional development, and administrative support are major elements of a school that need to be modified to battle the problem. Some of the challenges that teachers encounter when seeking to implement culturally responsive teaching include: When it comes to the implementation of culturally responsive

teaching, lack of training, lack of resources as well as resistance to change are some of the barriers that educators are likely to encounter Sleeter (2011). Hence, it becomes paramount for culturally responsive teaching practices to be supported, worked on jointly, and encouraged through policy over an extended period of time to succeed in schools.

Culturally responsive teaching originated from the premise that students' cultural backgrounds ought to be incorporated into the classroom for a more effective and efficient learning process that would lead to better student performance in their studies while at the same time creating a more comfortable learning environment to accommodate the diverse races in school. Scholars, like Gay (2002) and Ladson-Billings (1995), were pointing out the need for cultural relevance, critical perspective, and the students' cultural resources. Multiculturalism seems to be vivid in the education system of Thailand in regards to ethnic and language diversities. Newer research has explored the possibility of using culturally responsive teaching to decrease cultural determinative and improve student achievement for ethnic minority students in Thailand Charoensilp (2024). These studies show that the implementation of students' culture into classroom augments students learning and improves achievement.

Educators from Indonesia can help identify efficient ways of adopting culturally responsive teaching in Thai classes since they are also diverse in cultural background. Several themes emerge from their perspectives: Several themes emerge from their perspectives: a. Cultural Awareness and Sensitivity: Some of the recommendations made by Indonesian educators include an enhancement of the Thai teachers' appreciation of the cultural diversity of their students. This includes consistent work experience and skill enhancement in cultural relations. b. Curriculum Integration: To sum up, it is stated that real and authentic culturally responsive teaching can only be achieved if and only if multicultural content is included in curricula. Teachers in Indonesia recommend teaching culturally diverse content and instances that students go through daily. c. Language and Communication: Culturally responsive teaching may not work as planned because of the different languages spoken by faculty and students. Most of the educators from Indonesian society encourage the use of the students' first languages within the classroom to enhance understanding and communication. d. Community Involvement: Those institutions should involve families and communities

of learners to have proper culturally responsive teaching. Focusing on Indonesian culture, the educators stressed the importance of positive cooperation between schools and communities for the students' cultural affirmation. e. Challenges and Solutions: The following are some of the challenges that hinder the use of culturally responsive teaching in Thai classrooms: Some educators do not understand the concept of culturally responsive teaching and hence opposition to implementing it, and insufficient resources Priyambodo et al. (2023). They include teacher training, support groups, and multicultural teaching resources as viable methods of tackling these problems as suggested by Indonesian educators. This paper has found culturally responsive teaching to be a promising approach for increasing and improving outcomes in Thai classes. Information from Indonesian teachers shows that cultural relevance, curriculum infusion, and adoption of the community model are essential for culturally responsive teaching applications. The analysis of the challenges has shown that their counteraction through specific approaches can contribute to the change in educational conditions and make them more tolerant in Thailand.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research utilized a qualitative research design with the interview method as the primary data collection instrument. Creswell (2017) said qualitative research is described as a method of investigating phenomena to determine their conceptions by particular people or groups concerning social or human issues. This was a field study, where the researcher was the principal tool for data collection capturing data in words and picture form and analyzing it inductively to generate themes and patterns.

There were three Indonesian teachers, who had previously taught in Thailand, and the researchers got in touch with them through in-depth or semi-structured interviews. The first procedure focused on identifying participants who satisfied inclusion criteria which included teaching experience and their ability the use of culturally sensitive approach. Face-to-face or online interviews meant that the researchers could pose various questions to the teachers and gain detailed information about the teachers' experience, perceptions, and practice. The questions are intended to focus on areas of culturally responsible education, such as the learner's multicultural student population and specific intervention approaches applied in the classroom. Through an interview strategy, this research seeks to acquire improved knowledge of how culturally

appropriate pedagogy ideas are put into practice and modified by Indonesian teachers in Thai class settings. Data collection through interviews was carried out from 5 April to 20 April, 2024.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The data obtained by researchers is data from interviews with 3 teachers or educational staff who have taught in Thailand. The data found by researchers contained 5 categories, namely: a. Teaching Experience in Thailand and its distinct difference from other countries. b. Integration of Thai Cultural Aspects in Teaching. c. Challenges in Implementing a Culturally Responsive Approach. d. Student Response to Culturally Responsive Teaching Approach. e. Suggestions or Recommendations for Other Teachers. For more details, it will be discussed one by one below based on the respondent data that researchers have found.

a. Teaching Experience in Thailand and its distinct difference from other countries

In this section, Indonesian teachers who have experience teaching in Thailand can see that their teaching experience in Thailand provides a variety of perceptions. Some believe that the teaching and learning system in Thailand has no special differences from Indonesia or other Asian countries. Then, some indicate that the teaching experience in Thailand is considered full of challenges but also fun, with the main differences being the language and culture that are different from other countries. Some describe the experience of teaching in Thailand as enriching a different culture and environment, especially in terms of adapting to language differences and social norms in the classroom. This is supported by the statement of Meltareza & Poedjadi (2024) that differences in communication ethics influence the way we convey criticism and feedback. Accent and intonation play an important role in understanding the message, and differences in Thai and Indonesian pronunciation can be a major challenge. This can be seen from the respondents, namely: *a. From the experience I have gained, there is no particular difference in the teaching and learning system in Thailand, it is not much different from the way of teaching and learning in Indonesia, and I think it is not much different from countries in Asia. b. My experience teaching in Thailand can be said to be full of challenges but also fun. What differentiates Thailand from other countries is that it has a different language and culture, of course. And c. The experience of teaching in Thailand enabled me, especially in terms of adapting to a*

culturally and linguistically different environment. The differences mainly lie in the language and social norms in the classroom which are different from what I experienced in Indonesia. Therefore, this shows the complexity of teaching experiences in different environments, which educators need to understand well to increase the effectiveness of their teaching in a new country.

b. *Integration of Thai Cultural Aspects in Teaching*

In this section, teaching in Thailand, especially for foreign nationals, poses its challenges because of the striking language and cultural differences. One initial strategy that can be done is to understand Thai, which has significant differences from other languages. Additionally, to integrate aspects of Thai culture into teaching, it is important to choose learning materials that reflect daily life and local Thai traditions. Introducing students to local tourist attractions and customs can also be a way to interest them and build connections with local culture. In this way, students will be more involved in the learning process and better understand the cultural context around them. Overall, the integration of Thai culture into teaching provides an opportunity to create a more diverse and inclusive learning environment, where students can learn about local culture while improving their skills in the Thai language. This can be seen from the respondents' statements, namely: *a. Especially for foreign nationals, the initial strategy that can be done is to learn to understand Thai, which we can see is a very different language and a little difficult for ordinary people to understand. b. The way I integrate it is that I try to know some of the vocabulary that I will always use in class so that my students get the gist of my explanation because not all students have the same English skills. Apart from that, the strategy that I apply is to provide material about tourist attractions or customs that exist there so that they are interested in telling stories because they have them c. I integrate aspects of Thai culture into my teaching by selecting learning materials that cover daily life and local Thai traditions. I also often invite students to discuss Thai culture and how it influences the way they learn.* From this, it can be seen that the integration of Thai culture into teaching not only increases students' understanding of local culture but also increases their involvement in the overall learning process.

c. Challenges in Implementing a Culturally Responsive Approach

In this section, the experience of teaching in Thailand is a unique experience for educators, especially when they have to deal with diverse local cultures. One aspect that influences teaching is cultural diversity in teaching areas, especially those where the majority of the population is Muslim and borders Malaysia. This provides its dynamics in the teaching process, where the use of Malay often facilitates communication between teachers and students. However, there are also challenges in ensuring students' understanding of learning material, especially in the context of diverse student languages and abilities. This can be seen from the respondents' statements, namely: *a. Because the culture there, especially the teaching area, is predominantly Muslim and the people are on the Malaysian border and most can understand Malay, I feel it is not that difficult to apply the approach. b. The main challenge is how students understand the essence of the explanation I convey by trying to combine English and Thai. Apart from that, students also have low English skills so the teacher has to be more extra in teaching. c. The main challenge I face is understanding the nuances of different local cultures and how they affect the way students learn and interact in the classroom. I am constantly learning and adapting to make my teaching more effective and relevant to students.* This therefore shows that teaching in Thailand not only presents challenges in terms of language but also in understanding the nuances of different local cultures. This is relevant to what was said by Yulaichah et al. (2024) implementation of differentiated learning at Anuban Khon Kaen School, Thailand, which aims to create an inclusive and dynamic environment for students with a structured approach and the use of technology to be responsive to students' individual needs. Teachers continually strive to adapt to make their teaching more effective and relevant to students. By combining various strategies, such as the use of Thai and English, teachers try to ensure that students can understand the core learning material and are actively involved in the learning process.

d. Student Response to Culturally Responsive Teaching Approach

In this section, it can be seen that students' responses to culturally responsive teaching approaches are very positive. The teachers observed that the students showed great activity and curiosity about Indonesian culture, and showed ease in learning new things such as regional languages and the national anthem. This shows that a culturally responsive teaching approach can attract students' interest and increase their

involvement in the learning process. *a. I am very happy because on average the students are active and have great curiosity to always ask about the culture in Indonesia and it is not difficult for them to learn new things, such as asking about regional languages in Indonesia and the Indonesian national anthem. b. Student responses to culturally responsive teaching approaches appear to be more interesting compared to conventional teaching methods. c. Thai students respond well to culturally responsive teaching approaches. They are more engaged and motivated to learn because they feel valued and heard in class.* Therefore, this shows that culturally responsive teaching approaches in Thailand receive positive responses from students. They show great activity and curiosity about Indonesian culture and show ease in learning new things such as regional languages and the national anthem. This indicates that cultural integration in learning can significantly increase student engagement and motivation. So it can be said that a culturally responsive approach has great potential to create an inclusive and supportive learning environment for students in Thailand or similar cultural contexts.

e. Suggestions or Recommendations for Other Teachers

In this section, it can be seen that these teachers provide valuable suggestions for other teachers who want to develop skills in teaching culturally responsively. These suggestions cover a wide range of strategies, from being actively involved in the local community to learning Thai and understanding the culture and students' in-depth needs. This shows the importance of paying attention to cultural aspects in teaching in different environments. This can be seen from the respondents' statements, namely: *a. My advice to other teachers who want to develop skills in teaching culturally responsively in Thailand or similar cultural contexts is to actively engage in the local community, learn Thai, and always take the time to deeply understand the culture and students' needs. b. My advice is to learn more about the language and see the cultural situation in Thailand via YouTube and others. The teaching and learning procedures are not much different from what we study, just be in-depth and prepare thoroughly. c. My advice to other teachers who want to develop their teaching skills in other countries is to try to know the culture of the country they are going to and know a little about the language they use so that later they can help in the teaching process.* So developing skills in teaching culturally responsive to Thailand or a similar cultural context requires a

commitment to learning and adapting to new environments. Active involvement in the local community, learning the local language, and understanding the culture and needs of students are the keys to success in creating an inclusive and effective learning environment. Therefore, teachers who want to develop their skills in teaching in other countries need to pay attention to these suggestions to improve the quality of their teaching. As stated by Meltareza & Poedjadi (2024) in their research, they emphasize the importance of understanding culture, appropriate ways of communicating and analyzing communication barriers such as ethical differences, accents, communication context, nonverbal norms, and perceptions of hierarchy.

CONCLUSION

In connection with interviews carried out with three respondents from Indonesia who are teachers with experience of teaching in Thailand, conclusions are made that have an impact on Thailand as a country that offers cultural diversification as well as a different environment. Indonesian classroom settings or culture differ greatly from Thailand in the way the teachers interact with the students and vice versa. However, all of them mentioned that the situation of teaching and learning in Thailand appeared to be not significantly different from Indonesia or other Asian countries. Another noticeable curriculum issue is the modeling of Thai culture into the school curriculum and in particular about choosing materials to use in lessons to reflect the reality of Thai life and popular customs. These difficulties were mentioned by the respondents as the main obstacles and the solutions were presented in the form of comprehending the local culture and more importantly the local language. However, the effects of the culturally responsive teaching approaches that have been incorporated into educating learners have elicited positive results from the side of the learners in terms of responsive learning. The teachers were satisfied because the students were very eager to learn, especially, something about Indonesian culture and different new things. To other teachers who would like to improve their cultural sensitivity and adaptation to teaching in Thailand, respondents recommend that the teachers immerse themselves in the culture, learn the country's language, and always dedicate time to discovering the culture and students' requirements, foremost. Therefore, the findings of this study contribute to the construction of the idea of culturally sensitive teaching strategies in

Thailand and comparable cultural environments and emphasize the necessity of thorough comprehension of the local culture and suitable application of the approaches.

This paper therefore presents a major value to education by advocating for a framework for cultural sensitivity training for Indonesian teachers teaching in Thailand, as an approach to enhancing cultural consciousness and infusion into teaching. Thus, this study points to the need for infusing multicultural elements into lesson plans and helping learners rely on their first language as a way of enhancing comprehension. Moreover, this research focuses on education and especially, on the role of communities in education, and offers some ideas for successful school-community relations. The production of tasks and strategies in initiating the teaching that responds to the learners' variability generates insights for policymakers and educators. Last but not least, integration of the findings into the existing body of literature in comparative education and demonstrating how culturally responsive instruction can be implemented in another Asian context- Indonesia and Thailand.

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