

**Linguistic Cultural Responses for English Teaching
Strategies by Iraqi learners**

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Abstract

This paper investigates culturally responsive teaching strategies regarding English instruction in diverse Iraqi classrooms. Since Iraq has a mosaic of cultural and linguistic backgrounds, this study emphasizes the necessity of assisting students' cultural contexts as a way to enrich their learning achievement. It explores (CRT) techniques originated in Geneva Gay's CRT (2010) model. This study situates Gay's framework in the Iraqi context, focusing on how culturally responsive teaching principles can enhance English language learning by analyzing various strategies. These strategies can be demonstrated as the incorporation of culturally relevant literature, comparisons with native language equivalents, and context-based vocabulary. In this regard, it presents practical approaches by which educators can foster a supportive and productive classroom atmosphere. The anticipated findings from this current analysis argue that culturally responsive practices have psycholinguistic effect on learners through increasing engagement, anxiety reduction in language, and enhancing English language development among Iraqi students.

Keywords: Culture, CRT, Curriculum, Gay's Strategies, Iraqi learners.

الاستجابات الثقافية اللغوية لاستراتيجيات تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية لدى المتعلمين العراقيين

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المخلص

أهداف الدراسة: تستعرض هذه الورقة استراتيجيات التعليم المستجيب ثقافياً في تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية داخل الفصول الدراسية العراقية المتنوعة. وبما أن العراق يتمتع بتنوع ثقافي ولغوي، فإن هذه الدراسة تركز على ضرورة مساعدة الطلاب في التكيف مع سياقاتهم الثقافية كوسيلة لتعزيز تحصيلهم التعليمي. منهجية الدراسة: تستكشف الدراسة تقنيات التعليم المستجيب ثقافياً المستمدة من نموذج جينيفا جي (2010). وتضع الدراسة إطار عمل جي في السياق العراقي، مع التركيز على كيفية تعزيز مبادئ التعليم المستجيب ثقافياً لتعلم اللغة الإنجليزية من خلال تحليل استراتيجيات متنوعة. يمكن تجسيد هذه الاستراتيجيات من خلال دمج الأدب ذي الصلة ثقافياً، وإجراء مقارنات مع معادلات اللغة الأم، واستخدام المفردات المبنية على السياق. وفي هذا السياق، تقدم الدراسة عدة طرائق يمكن من خلالها للمعلمين خلق جو دراسي داعم ومنمّج. النتائج والتوصيات: تشير النتائج المتوقعة من هذه التحليل إلى أن الممارسات المستجيبة ثقافياً لها تأثير نفسي لغوي على المتعلمين من خلال زيادة التفاعل، وتقليل القلق في اللغة، وتعزيز تطوير اللغة الإنجليزية بين الطلاب العراقيين. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، ينبغي تدريب المعلمين على استراتيجيات التعليم المستجيب ثقافياً لمساعدة المتعلمين في التكيف مع احتياجاتهم الثقافية والنفسية اللغوية المختلفة من خلال ضمان تقييم عادل لتطورهم.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الثقافة، التعليم المستجيب ثقافياً (CRT)، المنهج الدراسي، استراتيجيات جي، المتعلمون العراقيون.

1. Introduction

A crucial aim in language education is to support the individuality of students' linguistic heritages, cultural backgrounds, ethnic identities, and life experiences. This process is fostering a shared culture centred- Values and practices in traditional schools. According to Gay (2018, p. 22), Culture is one of the important determinants of the student success process. With this term comes the intense focus on culturally relevant teaching strategies. Culturally relevant teaching is now an important focal point in education which has been followed by improved ventures for students' success. In Iraq, many classrooms are comprised of students who speak Arabic, Kurdish, Turkmen, or other minority languages as their first language. The CRT framework, by adopting Gay's (2010) model, provides one way to connect students to EFL content that is often heavily dominated by a Eurocentric and thus alien cultural worldview.

This approach is specifically important in (EFL) classrooms in Iraq because learners often come from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds. Culturally responsive teaching does not stop at coming across with the content; it also puts an emphasis on understanding and integrating students' cultural knowledge into instructional practices. It is because such engagement psycho-linguistically upholds students' identities, hence, certainly adopting learning to be relevant in relation to their life experiences.

1.1. Literature Review

Many scholars studied (CRT) to emphasize the culture's impact on the success of educational process. Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995, p. 469) emphasizes the significance of integrating (CRT) strategies, as using a careful selected instructional materials and diverse teaching modalities, to enhance critical thinking among students. She argues that these strategies, when implemented thoughtfully, not only promote cognitive development improving teachers' awareness of classroom social dynamics allows them to establish more fair and inclusive learning environments. Consequently, increasing the likelihood that students will receive a better education. In the context of Iraqi classrooms, where linguistic and cultural differences often create significant barriers to learning, the adoption of CRT can play a crucial role in linking students' cultural identities with their learning opportunities. By addressing these disparities, CRT helps ensure that students' cultural backgrounds are recognized and valued, leading to a more inclusive and effective educational experience.

By focusing on equity and cultural inclusivity, educators can break down systemic barriers that have historically served diverse student identities. Sonia Nieto (2017, p. 85) sights the significance of embracing CRT practices, particularly for Iraqi English as a Foreign Language (EFL) educators. She asserts that teachers should celebrate cultural diversity and actively strengthen connections between students' lived experiences and the actual curriculum. By facilitating discussions on new norms, beliefs, languages, and ideas, educators can help students navigate and comprehend

cultural differences. These types of conversations are displayed psycho-linguistically to create opportunities for intercultural understanding, promoting mutual respect among students from varied backgrounds. In the Iraqi context, where students come from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, such approaches are essential for building bridges of comprehension to develop them academically and socially.

The socio-political history of Iraq adds yet another layer of complexity to the educational landscape. Decades of conflict, displacement, and social and economic disparities have created profound gaps in access to quality education. UNESCO (2020, p. 45) emphasizes that culturally responsive teaching (CRT) goes beyond being just an instructional method and is, in fact, a vital approach to addressing systemic inequities in education. In particular, CRT is vital for supporting students from displaced or minority communities, who often have limited exposure to formal schooling or the English language. Such students face unique challenges in the classroom, and CRT offers a framework for meeting their needs by recognizing and integrating their cultural contexts into the learning process. This approach is especially relevant in post-conflict settings, like Iraq, where displacement and limited access to quality education have created significant barriers to academic success. The adoption of CRT in these environments can help bridge these gaps, offering a path to educational equity by providing culturally relevant support tailored to the needs of these students.

Django Paris and Samy Alim (2017, p. 58) argue that, in post-conflict environments, it is essential to rebuild institutional capacities that facilitate communication and collaboration between diverse social groups. The approach they suggest, fosters intercultural understanding, which can have a broader impact on both the immediate educational context and the larger community, influencing social institutions and promoting greater cohesion. Their perspective is particularly relevant for the Iraqi context, where the socio-political landscape has been marked by conflict and displacement, making the establishment of these intergroup dialogues crucial for long-term educational and social stability. James Banks (2015, p. 103) asserts that culturally responsive pedagogical theories and practices play a crucial role in helping students from diverse ethno-cultural backgrounds connect to the broader world. By fostering an environment of equality, mutual respect, and the recognition of multifaceted social identities contribute to the development of students' understanding of their place in the global context. This perspective is particularly significant in the context of post-conflict environments like Iraq, where promoting inclusivity and respect for diverse identities is essential for creating an equitable and supportive educational experience

This paper examines methods to implement and integrate CRT strategies into Iraqi EFL classrooms to enhance student engagement, academic achievement, and promote fairness in education. The study of such strategies as integrating culturally-relevant materials, creating collaborative learning environments, and building strong teacher-student relationships. These strategies will give providers a working tool kit to

help with providing instruction in culturally- and linguistically-diverse teaching situations.

1.2. Culture

Peter Jarvis (2006, p.56) refers to this concept as information, expertise, perspectives, beliefs, morals, and sentiments that human beings have enriched the biological base. Humans can exist by acquiring knowledge about culture, which is a social phenomenon since people share knowledge, it enables us to advance rapidly as a civilization. Xiaoyan Yang & Dong Chen (2017, p. 79) have suggested that teachers must be aware of, comprehend, and respect many cultures to assist students in accomplishing and developing their education. Adult learners must be aware of and appreciative of the varied backgrounds of their classmates and, if they are instructors, their students.

Culture increases student's motivation by adopting CRT that indicates in regard on behalf of variation, involvement of all learners' motivation, the creation of a secure, accepting, as well as consideration of learning environment, educational procedures that transcend disciplines and cultures, and the incorporation of practices that respond to culture into all fields of study (Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 1995 qtd in Chen & Yang, 2017, p. 79).

1.3. Culturally Responsive Teaching

CRT is described by Gay (2010, p.106) as “using the cultural characteristics, experiences, perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively”. Culturally responsive teaching (CRT) stems from the idea that mainstream education upholds white values and norms as its primary standard of authority. Jennifer Chandler and Erica Wiborg (2020, p. 714) describe "whiteness norms" as consistent patterns of behaviour that inherently favour white individuals. This education system, rooted in white norms, fails to support many diverse students, including Indigenous learners, by prioritizing Western ways of understanding and being. Unfortunately, this has led to the emergence of achievement gaps between white and coloured students. Jessica Madiratta (2024: 36) states that (CRT) has emerged as a field of study aimed at fostering equitable and transformative educational environments for diverse learners. Its development has been significantly shaped by Geneva Gay (2002, 2010, 2018) and supported by numerous other scholars and activists, including Au (1993), Delpit (1995), Levine (2003), Ladson-Billings (1994), Moll & Gonzalez (2004), and Nieto (2013).

This will be elaborated in the present paper on the ways in which the general philosophies of CRT link with the epistemologies in the domain of Indigenous education. Some Indigenous scholars employ CRT in their research on Indigenous education (Au, 2009; Klug, 2012; Nicol et al., 2020; Pete, 2017). There are various scholarly studies within indigenous education that reflects upon the respect CRT has gained from Indigenous children and youth and many aspects of indigenous

epistemology correlate to CRT. Throughout this discourse, it is very important to review Native American history to understand how CRT resonates with indigenous epistemologies in education; through each territory across Canada and United States, nurturing assimilation of Indigenous people into Western Culture was of utmost interest to their respective governments (Klug, 2012; Sinclair 2007; Goulet & Goulet, 2014 qtd., in Madiratta, 2024: 37). In Saskatchewan, the residential school system has left a profoundly negative legacy for Indigenous communities, with lasting intergenerational effects on Indigenous students and their families in the province's public schools are the assimilation of Indigenous families into a White Society and the eradication of any background of student culture (Rico, 2013 qtd., in Madiratta, 2024: 37). CRT, in contrast to the assimilationist process of Whiteness, would still enable the teacher to introduce his student's culture in the classroom.

1.4. Designing Culturally Relevant Curricula

Classrooms often implement one of three types of curricula, each offering a distinct opportunity to promote cultural diversity. The first type is the official curriculum, which consists of lesson plans approved by educational authorities and guided by policies. These are typically based on materials adopted from state education standards, professional organizations, national committees, or local districts. Despite progress in addressing cultural and ethnic diversity, these curricular texts remain imperfect (Wade, 1993, as qtd., in Gay, 2002, p. 108).

Culturally aware educators can evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of these lesson plans and materials, making adjustments to enhance their effectiveness. Key aspects they consider include the quantity, accuracy, difficulty, organization, objectives, diversity, relevance, and creativity of narrative texts, visuals, activities, examples, and sources. To overcome the challenges of culturally sensitive teaching, teachers need a thorough understanding of the existing barriers. The second type of curriculum used in schools is the symbolic curriculum, which includes images, icons, slogans, awards, celebrations, and other artefacts that convey knowledge, skills, values, and morals to students. Examples of symbolic curricula include bulletin board displays, portraits of influential figures, commercial books, and posted declarations of social etiquette, norms, and moral principles standards as well as fulfilment tokens (Gay, 2002, p. 108).

The third curriculum is essential for culturally sensitive teaching which is called the societal curriculum, as named by Cortés (1991, 1995, and 2000). This refers to the perceptions, beliefs, and information about ethnic groups that are presented in the media. Movies, newspapers, periodicals, and television broadcasts do not merely convey amusement or authentic information; they generate knowledge (Cortés, 1995) and participate in ideological manipulation (Spring, 1992), because the material they provide reflects and communicates specific political, social, racial, and cultural principles, information, and advocacies. For many learners, their only exposure to ethnic diversity comes from the media; for others, television programs have a greater impact and are more memorable than academic lessons (Gay, 2002, p. 109).

1.5. Culturally Responsive Teaching Model

It is described as utilizing the distinctive cultural features, viewpoints, and experiences of ethnically diverse students as a means of improving the instructional process. It is based on the proposition that academic competencies and knowledge are more personally significant, appealing to students' interests, and easier to learn when they are situated within their life experiences and frameworks of reference (Gay, 2010, p. 31). Therefore, when learners from diverse ethnic backgrounds are educated using approaches that incorporate their own cultural and experiential perspectives, their academic performance will advance. (Au & Kawakami, 1994; Foster, 1995; Gay, 2000; Hollins, 1996; Kleinfeld, 1975; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995 qtd., in Gay, 2002, p. 106).

The particular elements of this teaching methodology are grounded in research findings, theoretical assertions, real-world experiences, and personal narratives from educators who have studied and worked with under achieving Native American, Asian, African, and Latino learners (Gay, 2002, p.106).

1.6. Gay's Strategies for Culturally Responsive Teaching

According to Gay (2018, p. 23) students' achievement capacity would never be completely fulfilled when the process of teaching and learning is decontextualized from their ethnicities and cultures. Many educators highlight the misunderstanding of Laotians, Vietnamese, African Americans, Native Americans, and immigrant groups. Educators may unconsciously insult students' cultural heritage in the education process. To solve this problem, perfect teaching should be free of cultural barriers. So, effective teaching is achieved by appreciating each student's unique differences, rather than focusing on their colour, nationality, culture, or gender. Without knowing the learners, it is impossible to appreciate and support their uniqueness. Learners' racial identification and cultural socialization are tightly connected to their individuality. So, teachers must be aware of both the similarities and distinctions between them in order to protect students' individuality, which is their major priority (Gay, 2018, p.23).

Gay (2018, pp. 23-24) refers to the syndrome of deficit by stating that too many teachers justify the inability of students of colour to succeed in school to their lack of resources. This type of thinking is exemplified by some of the specific justifications offered for why Navajo students perform badly academically. The administrators found that all of the reasons for school failure have been prevalent in a particular school where 48% of learners are Navajo, and one out of every four Navajos drops out before graduating. These included minimal parental involvement in the educational process, insufficient parental abilities, inadequate houses and prior preparation, and low self-esteem.

It becomes increasingly clear that academic success, racial identity, and cultural background, specifically culture and cognition is closely related. An educational process based on multicultural involvement, experiences, and perspectives also has the potential to bring about transformation. Therefore, these communications, along with

the associated data regarding their source, focus, power, and direction, suggest the need for a paradigm shift in the educational approach used with European, non-American, and non-middle-class learners in U.S. schools (Gay, p 2018, p. 25).

Positive encounters and images of different races and cultures are constantly presented to students. They are encouraged to broaden their knowledge and skill sets while simultaneously gaining knowledge about and celebrating their own identities and potential, as well as those of others. All of this takes place in a welcoming, encouraging, affirming, and enlightening classroom environment, where the use of culturally diverse referents in instruction is frequent. This form of teaching enables students from all ethnic backgrounds to achieve high levels of success in many different areas (Gay, 2018, p. 42).

It is requested of the students to think abstractly, analytically, deeply, and transformative about the problems, concepts, and claims they come across. In light of ethnic and cultural variety, their teacher asks them to "consider" what this concept implies (Gay, 2018, p.37). Cultural socialization has a significant effect on the expressive forms and content of intellectual perspectives and ways of thinking, making it culturally encoded. To effectively instruct ethnically diverse students, teachers must be qualified to understand these codes (Cazden, John, & Hymes, 1985 qtd., in Gay, 2002, pp. 110-111).

Differences in ethnic communication styles have various effects on culturally responsive teaching. Recognizing the intellectual needs, capabilities, and skills of ethnically diverse students is crucial to prevent the disrespect of cultural values in educational communication. It is also important to teach these students how to use code-shifting style, which enables them to interact with different people in various contexts and for different purposes. Thus, a key component of culturally responsive education is multicultural communication skill (Gay, 2002, p. 112).

For students who are not accustomed to this form of communication, the interactions of these speakers may seem narrative, with thought processes appearing cyclical. This method of interaction seems rambling, fragmented, and as though the speaker never finishes one thought before moving on to the next (Gay, 2000, p. 96). For instance, a storytelling teaching approach is highly compatible with a topic-chaining interaction approach. Mutual coaching and collaborative educational arrangements are ideally suited to the collective cultural framework of Native American, Asian, African, and Latino American communities (Gay, 2000; Spring, 1995 qtd., in Gay, 2002, p.112).

1.6.1. Cultural Proficiency

It is important to comprehend the cultural and language backgrounds of pupils in Iraq's various classrooms. To establish inclusive learning environments, Gay (2010, p. 33) has highlighted that teachers must become culturally trained by identifying the customs, pasts, and communication styles of their students. To convey relevance and

confidence, teachers can, for example, include cultural allusions or the students' native tongues in English classes.

1.6.2. Culturally Appropriate Curriculum

To make learning relevant and comprehensible, Gay (2010, p. 45) has argued for a curriculum that takes into account the learner's varied cultural identities. English teachers have the opportunity to help students comprehend the value of English in their own contexts through integrating texts and materials into their lessons that reflect regional customs or refer to societal concerns that are relevant to Iraq, such as peace building or unification.

1.6.3. High Standards for Every Student

In post-conflict environments like Iraq, educators have to eliminate misconceptions and hold all pupils to high standards. Gay (2010, p. 55) claims that developing confidence in each student's potential promotes resilience and academic performance, especially for oppressed groups. Generally, guaranteeing the students' achievement of their objectives is done when Iraqi educators offer individualized guidance.

1.6.4. Techniques for Communication across Cultures

Understanding and adjusting to the cultural communication styles of students are crucial. Understanding cultural cues, both spoken and unspoken, is essential for effective teaching (Gay, 2010, p. 78). Iraqi students' preference for productive discussions in teams over individual tasks is important for instructors to promote involvement and interaction.

1.6.5. Social Fairness and Authority

According to Gay (2010, p.89), culturally sensitive teaching encourages critical thinking and provides learners ability to confront social injustices. Learners in Iraq can use language as a means for advocacy and change by participating in English sessions that promote discussions on issues like justice, human rights and community reconstruction.

1.6.6. Establishing a Learning Community

Developing a sense of solidarity and cooperation is extremely useful in post-conflict Iraqi environments. According to Gay (2010, p. 102), supporting a classroom community where respect and confidence are valued is essential. Moreover, learners from various cultural backgrounds could collaborate and establish partnerships through collaborative assignments and cross-cultural interaction.

1.6.7. Culturally Appropriate Environments

Gay (2010, p. 120) has promoted examinations that do not rely exclusively on standardized tests but also students' cultural expectations and learning methods. Iraqi English instructors give students a chance to demonstrate their knowledge in culturally

appropriate manners by using different evaluations such as talks, narratives, and imaginative tasks. The English teaching methods in Iraq can tackle the difficulties of diversity in language and culture while advancing fairness and inclusion by utilizing Gay's 2010 CRT model. In a post-conflict community, these strategies improve academic achievement, social cohesiveness, and individual agency.

By confirming the identities of learners and observations, Gay's model emphasizes that adding culturally relevant content improves participation (Gay, 2010, p. 45). It is essential to highlight that within the Iraqi educational system, a variety of cultural representation aids the students' engagement with the subject matter.

1.7. English Foreign Language Challenges

Teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in teaching in Iraq faces distinct challenges due to the country's linguistic diversity, cultural complexity, and post-conflict context. Incorporating culturally responsive teaching (CRT) strategies helps address these issues effectively. Below are key challenges and explanations of how CRT strategies align to address them;

1.7.1. Linguistic Diversity and Multilingual Contexts

Challenge Iraqi classrooms include students speaking various languages, such as Arabic, Kurdish, Turkmen, and Assyrian. This diversity creates difficulties in standardizing English instruction across linguistic groups. Solution: culturally responsive teaching helps understanding of students' linguistic backgrounds to design lessons that build on their prior knowledge (Gay, 2010, p. 33). For instance, teachers can incorporate students' native languages that encourage students to connect English with their native languages, enhancing comprehension and engagement.

1.7.2. Cultural Disconnect in Curriculum

Challenge English textbooks are usually based on Western cultures that may not appeal to Iraqi students or seem irrelevant to their lives. Solution: CRT insists that culturally relevant content must be added to the curriculum (Gay, 2010, p. 45). The teachers in Iraq can incorporate local contexts, such as Iraqi traditions, history, and currently relevant social issues, in English classes. For instance, the reading and writing exercises could discuss topics such as Iraqi folklore or narratives of peace building.

1.7.3. Experiencing Conflict Trauma in Students and Socioeconomic Challenges

Challenge Many Iraqi students endure economic hardships and psychological traumas as a result of unending conflict over the years. Such challenges hinder motivation to learn English. Solution: this culturally responsive strategy emphasizes supportive, inclusive environments (Gay, 2010, p. 78). Teachers may adopt

collaborative learning activities to provide students with supportive experiences that foster trust while providing a sense of belonging and safety.

1.7.4. Teacher Preparedness and Training

The lack of in-service training in culturally responsive curriculum adaptation has left many EFL teachers in Iraq unable to address the diverse needs of their students. Solution: Providing professional development opportunities focused on CRT will equip teachers with strategies to tailor their teaching to the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of their students (Gay, 2010, p. 102). Training workshops can envisage teachers adapting lesson plans and assessment methods in accordance with CRT principles.

1.7.5. Stereotypes and Bias

Challenge Students from marginalized communities in Iraq may be negatively stereotyped or discriminated against, thereby inhibiting the expectations set for them by their teachers or peers. Solution: CRT proposes high academic expectations for all students, regardless of their race, ethnicity, or culture differences (Gay, 2010, p. 55). Formative assessment is underway, followed by positive reinforcement to reach the aforementioned prospect of equal academic access for each student.

1.7.6. Inappropriate Assessments

Challenges Standardized assessments generally lack consideration for Iraqi students' cultural norms and learning styles and are thus unable to accurately measure their faculties. Solutions: Gay (2010, p.120) has advised alternative assessments to capture the students' cultural contexts. Oral storytelling, project-based learning, and creative writing can amplify the students' authentic expressions in evaluation by the teachers in Iraq.

1.8. Cultural Diversity

Culturally responsive teaching acknowledges the importance of students' cultural backgrounds in influencing their learning experiences. In the context of Iraqi classrooms, where cultural diversity is a defining feature, culturally responsive English teaching strategies must be embedded to encourage inclusivity and provide room for effectiveness in learning environments. Another successful strategy consists of inserting culturally relevant content into English lessons. These might, for instance, include Iraqi folklore, literature, and contemporary social contexts, which are designed to be resonant with students. This form of teaching enhances students' engagement besides cultivating cultural pride and identity in them. A further aspect to consider would be building and respecting the language backgrounds of the students. Many of the Iraqi students emerge as bilingual or multilingual and speak Arabic, Kurdish, or Turkmen besides English. Code-switching can be permitted, leveraging the diversity of the languages spoken, where teachers could find parallels between English and their native language, aiding comprehension and memory retention (Ofelia Garcia & Li Wei, 2014, p. 120).

A key step in developing the teacher-student relationship understands how varying cultural notions, values, and expectations combine in the development of a culture that values a student's lived experiences (Nieto, 2010, p.85). For example, recognition of collectivist values in the Iraqi culture can guide teachers to set their group activities with respect to the students' social dynamics. Another best practice is to incorporate collaborative learning methods. Cooperative student activities can instil mutual respect and understanding while they enhance their English proficiency by enabling perspectives sharing and learning from one another (Banks, 2015, p.103). This strategy is especially helpful in heterogeneous Iraqi classrooms wherein students coming from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds represent very different view-points.

Lastly, Professional development of teachers is significant. Culturally responsive teaching workshops and training possibly provide teachers with the knowledge and skills needed to effectively address cultural diversity (Tyrone Howard, 2010 :45). Giving teachers the opportunity to consider the role their biases may play in the instructional practices they put into motion could improve the inclusivity of Iraqi classrooms. Culturally responsive ESL teaching is holistic in addressing the cultural diversity of the Iraqi classroom. The multiple culturally relevant content, accompanied by respect for language differences, spirit of relationship and cooperation, may add to the learning environment wherein strengthening will see all children empowered as learners.

2. Methodology

The focus of the current investigation is the usage of the culturally responsive teaching strategies by non-native learners in post conflict Iraqi environments. The data were collected from learners at English department in the University of Baghdad, College of Education for Women. Thus, a qualitative method was adopted in this study because it relies on non-numerical data, such as texts, cultural, and linguistic expressions to explore the intended meanings by communicators. Regarding the model, Gay (2010) is the adopted model of analysis of this research. The researchers selected seven cultural expressions to be communicated by females' students since they are foreign learners of English language.

2.1. Participants

Twelve Iraqi English students from the University of Baghdad, College of Education for Women, first stage, participated in Gay's strategies. Regarding the gender, all participants are females. They were born and living in Iraq to show the effect of cultural diversity on their learning; they are learning a language with a different culture.

The students were asked to engage in interaction, including proverbs, to show the psycholinguistic and pragmatic effects of the cultural dimension on their speech. Moreover, the study aimed to examine the impact of cultural proficiency, solidarity,

critical thinking, style-shifting, storytelling, and cultural contextualization on their understanding of the topics explored

2.2. Procedure of the Study

In this study, the researcher invited students to participate in interactions involving figurative language (e.g., proverbs) to examine the impact of cultural dimensions and culturally appropriate curricula on their speech fluency. The interactions were conducted via social media platforms, particularly Telegram, and included images. Seven cultural expressions with specific propositions were employed to emphasize the importance of cultural proficiency in speech conceptualization. The students used fragmented speech rather than narrative structures due to their status as beginner-level learners in the first stage.

3. Data Analysis and Discussion

The researchers provided six samples of student interactions that include cultural expressions, along with tables to clarify the results. The first table is the types and frequency of using culturally responsive teaching strategies whereas the second table is the Factors influencing the conceptualization of proverbs

Sample (1)

A: Why are you so sad

B: My ex died yesterday

A: but you broke up five years now

A: yes, but I didn't know that he was going to die. if I knew I wouldn't fought with him. Even so he was a good guy. I miss him so much

B: well "**absence makes the heart grow fonder**"

A: How the heart supposed to grow? It's not a human

B: oh no, I mean when you lose someone and you had issues with him in the past, even so you'll miss him because he meant something to you

A: yes, that's true

This interaction takes place between two female students, in which a metaphoric proverb is used. A misunderstanding is triggered in this interaction, as the proverb **absence makes the heart grow fonder**, in the fifth turn, carries a culturally specific meaning. This cultural expression has a hidden implication that requires familiarity with English culture. The speaker (A) presumes that the mentioned proverb is familiar to speaker (B), as it was taught by their teacher. According to Gay's model (2010), the contextualization of ethnicities and the use of a culturally appropriate curriculum support individual differences, reduce anxiety, and enhance language development.

Moreover, cultural socialization is closely connected to individuality. Speaker (B) relies on context-based vocabulary to understand the intended meaning of the proverb.

Sample (2)

A: Hello Maryiam, how are you?

B: Hi Nabaa, Im fine and you?

A: Since you are fine, I'm also fine.+

B: Thank you my dear♥♥♥

A: Can you come with me for a walk?

B: I can't, I have alot of work

A: In a short example he says:“*Jack of all deals, the master is nothing*”

B: What! What do you mean what is the relationship between Mr. Al-Gharib in business and picnic, are you going with a stranger? I don't understand you

A: No, it is like and it means that with all these works, you must lose one

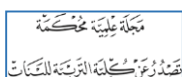
B: You mean "*Whoever deals with many tasks, fails to master anything from them*"

A: Yes exactly

This interaction occurred between two female colleagues of the same first stage at English department. It highly reflects the impact of cultural dimension on their interaction throughout their speech style which is indicated in the third turn of speech (*since you are fine, I'm also fine*). Moreover, the seventh turn (*Jack of all deals, the master is nothing*) also reflects social dimension impact as it carries connotative meaning which is a proverb sense. As long as it is a foreign proverb, according to Gay's model, it demands background knowledge of the figurative language. The second interlocutor depends on the co-text-based vocabulary in the ninth turn to get the implied meaning. Moreover, the strategy of critical thinking is aroused by the addressee through utilizing a meaningful concept in the tenth turn (*whoever deals with many tasks fails to master any of them*) which conveys a similar meaning to the given proverb. These three Gay's strategies (2010): familiarity with cultural background, contextualization of culture, and arousing abstract thinking are psycho-linguistically used to solve the problem in this interaction. Gay suggests that the educational process should be based on multicultural involvement to bring about transformation. He also states that culturally responsive teaching encourages critical thinking as language is used to change by participants in English sessions.

Sample (3)

A: Hi manat



B: Hi mina

A: How are you?

B: I'm not feeling well actually, I think I'm catching a cold. I really hate getting sick

A: You know what they say, “***an apple a day keeps the doctor away.***”

B: Seriously? You think an apple could've stopped this?

A: Not literally. Its more about keeping up good habits, like eating well, so you don't get sick in the first place.

B: Oh, I get it now. It's like the idea of “***prevention is better than cure***”

A: Exactly. Taking care of yourself daily means fewer trips to the doctor later

B: Lesson learned. Next time, I'll focus on staying ahead of it.

A: Very well

This communication took place between two female students at the first stage. It demonstrates the influence of Gay's strategies (2010): learners' cultural perspectives, cultural proficiency, respect for other cultures, contextualization of culture, and shifts in learning styles on their communication by adopting a culturally relevant curriculum, in which the subjects covered include diverse cultural heritages. Regarding this multicultural interaction, the fifth turn “***an apple a day keeps the doctor away***” conveys an intended meaning through figurative language, which requires background knowledge of its connotative meaning. Moreover, the misunderstanding is psycholinguistically resolved through context-based vocabulary in the seventh turn, along with a code-switching style to Arabic in the eighth turn, where an Arabic proverb (***prevention is better than cure***) is used, as this interaction is culturally encoded. Therefore, teaching through students' cultural perspectives improves academic performance. Incorporating diverse viewpoints and cultural knowledge psycholinguistically fosters solidarity in post-conflict Iraqi environments.

Sample (4)

A: Hello dear Nebras, how are you? PM

B: Hello Nada I am fine thank God

A: How are your Studies? Do you organize your time well?

B: I'm are not good at organizing my time or memorizing my lesson well

A: ‘***When the shepherd is absent, the sheep go astray***’.

B: what is the relationship of the sponsor to the study?

A: This proverb suggests that without leadership or guidance, a group can become disorganized or lost. If you had 2 different contexts in mind, feel free to elaborate, and I'll assist! learn how to organize your time wisely to get more done in the time you have.

B: I did not understand thank you

A: Ok

B: OK

This interaction occurred between two female students, in which a misunderstanding is psycho-linguistically triggered in the fifth turn (*when the shepherd is absent, the sheep go astray*). The misunderstanding arises because this is figurative language carrying a specific meaning that cannot be interpreted literally. This interaction demonstrates that the addressee is not culturally socialized, as the proverb is used in both Arabic and foreign cultures with the same intended sense. To resolve this misconception, Gay (2010) suggests that a culturally appropriate curriculum improves academic success by integrating materials into English lessons that reflect societal concerns. Furthermore, a cultural proficiency strategy (i.e., language background and cultural allusions) enables students to broaden their knowledge and skills regarding their identities and those of others by promoting positive images of different races and understanding cultural codes relying on context.

Sample (5)

A: Hello dear Maryam How are you

B: Fine thank God how about you?

A: fine Thank you

B: How about your studies?

A: It's really difficult

B: You can do it, “*you can't do an omelet without breaking eggs*”

A: I don't understand you What is the relationship between eggs and the difficulty of life?

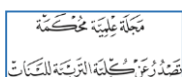
B: I mean success can't be achieved by one who doesn't face challenges

A: oh! I got it

I'm sorry I didn't understand

B: It's OK dear

A: Thanks, my dear



This interaction took place between two colleagues at the first stage in which the sixth turn includes a proverb (*you can't do an omelet without breaking the eggs*) which has no denotative sense since it is culturally associated one. Gay (2010) suggests three strategies to solve this misconception: culture contextualization, culturally appropriate curriculum, and cultural proficiency. There is no direct connection between what is said and what is communicated, so the addressee needs context to continue the interaction in the eighth turn. It is also noticed that highly educated students face less challenges in deciding the accurate assumption as they are encountered with material, they taught in the classroom which enhance cultural dimension by studying the figurative language (i.e. proverbs). Moreover, proverb improves the strategy of information sharing of the cultural heritages.

Sample (6)

A: Hello dear Nada, how are you?

B: Hello dear Narjes, I'm good, what about you?

A: Fine, thank you

B: What about your studies?

A: It is difficult, studying is very difficult and time is short.

B: *"Time is like a sword, if you don't cut it, it cuts you"*

A: I don't understand what the sword has to do with studying

B: The analogy with the sword: The sword symbolizes sharpness and speed, which means that time passes quickly and waits for no one.

The saying suggests that working quickly and hard is the way to control time before it controls us.

A: Sorry, I didn't understand. Thank you.

Two female students of the first stage participated in this communication, during which the addresser utilized a metaphoric proverb in the sixth turn *"Time is like a sword, if you don't cut it, it cuts you"* that is shared between two cultures_ foreign and Arabic. Hence, the addressee could not recognize the sense of that proverb indicating a lack of cultural familiarity. Gay (2010) states that cultural proficiency, contextualization of culture, and solidarity among individuals are important strategies for resolving psycholinguistic misunderstanding. The addresser utilized her background knowledge to interpret the intended meaning. Moreover, cooperation among participants builds confidence and fosters a learning community for academic success.

Table (1) Types and Frequency of CRT strategies

The CRT strategies	The Frequency
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Cultural proficiency	5
Style shifting to Arabic Equivalents	1
Confidence and Solidarity	2
Contextualization of culture	5
Culturally appropriate curriculum	3
Critical thinking	1
Storytelling	0

Table (2) Factors influencing the conceptualization of proverbs

Student's Academic Performance	Number	The Origin of the Proverbs	Number
Outstanding	6	Iraqi culture	1
Poor performance	6	Foreign culture	6

4. Conclusion

The research aimed to determine the efficacy of culturally responsive teaching techniques in Iraqi English classrooms as a Foreign Language, emphasizing the necessity of cultural and psycho-linguistic inclusion in language education. It is concluded that Culturally responsive teaching fosters educators' individuality by appreciating their language legacies and cultural backgrounds, combining educational procedures with their cultural experiences, guaranteeing the relevance of the educational process, and considering the psycholinguistic factors. A multicultural educational approach is adopted to make change in learning experiences by considering cultural diversity which supports students' individuality and acknowledges their uniqueness. For that reason, Gay's (2010) model is adopted that enabling educators to fill the gap between English as a foreign language content and educators' cultural contexts.

The study illuminated how misunderstandings regularly materialize owing to unfamiliarity with unfamiliar proverbs from other cultures, signifying a need for culturally situated educational materials. Moreover, strategies for example code-switching, vocabulary- based context, cultural contextualization, analysing assumptions critically were discovered to be helpful in bridging cultural gaps, facilitating improved comprehension, strengthening engagement, reducing anxiety, and helping students to communicate in many different contexts. So, pushing for culturally relevant curricula and communication strategies allows educators to enhance students' language proficiency and learning realities.

The researchers found that, high-achieving students benefited more than lower achievers from culturally integrated teaching, thus suggesting that CRT strategies ought to vary with respect to achievement levels. However, all strategies were used except the storytelling strategy as the speech was fragmented rather than narrative one.

Throughout tracing the current study, the suggested recommendations are:

1. The teacher should incorporate Iraqi culture, proverbs, and history into English classes because they are more relatable and easier to understand. To do that, social issues, local literature, and traditions should be provided in English textbooks to actively engage the learners.
2. Educators should be trained in CRT strategies to help accommodate different cultural and psycho-linguistic needs by ensuring fair assessment of the learners' progress through conducting workshops on culturally responsive assessment techniques.
3. Strengthening abstract concepts and evaluative thinking in which teachers enable students to analyse intercultural communication by means of discussions and debates. Generally, students need to be cross-culturally reflective and thoughtful, especially on existing cultural phenomena in English and compare with concepts from the Arabic culture.

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Appendix:

