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Exploring the Lived Experiences of English Teachers Implementing Culturally Responsive Pedagogy in Diverse Classrooms: A Phenomenological Inquiry

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A R T I C L E I N F O

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A B S T R A C T

This study explored the lived experiences of English teachers in implementing Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP) in diverse secondary classrooms. Specifically, it examined teachers' experiences, challenges, and strategies in fostering inclusive learning environments. Using a qualitative phenomenological design, data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with five English teachers from different secondary schools and analyzed using Colaizzi's method. Findings revealed that teachers adapted instruction to address students' diverse cultural, linguistic, and learning needs through flexible and inclusive practices. However, challenges such as limited instructional materials, time constraints, language barriers, and insufficient CRP training were encountered. The study highlights the need for institutional support, culturally relevant resources, and continuous professional development to strengthen CRP implementation

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INTRODUCTION

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP) has become an essential approach in addressing the diverse cultural, linguistic, and educational needs of learners. As classrooms become increasingly diverse, teachers are expected to create inclusive learning environments that recognize and value students' cultural identities. However, implementing culturally responsive practices remains challenging. Samuels (2018) noted that although educators acknowledge the importance of cultural responsiveness, many struggle due to limited training and institutional support. Similarly, Gay (2018) emphasized that culturally responsive teaching requires significant pedagogical adjustments to balance cultural relevance with academic expectations. International studies further highlight the value of CRP. Harrison and Sellwood (2016) found that integrating Indigenous perspectives in Australian classrooms strengthened teacher–student relationships and improved learning outcomes, while Boison and Burke (2025) reported that culturally responsive teaching promotes inclusion and equity in Canada's multicultural and multilingual learning environments.

In the Philippines, Salgado et al. (2024) found that CRP improved students' communication skills and fostered inclusive classrooms, while Mangila and Paculaba (2020) observed that although teachers frequently practiced culturally responsive strategies, challenges remained in fully implementing multidimensional approaches. Moreover, the concept of "paghubad" discussed in the work of Cruz, as presented by Estremera (2025), illustrates how teaching in the Mindanao context involves interpretation, cultural understanding, and responsiveness to learners' diverse backgrounds. Despite these contributions, existing studies have focused largely on student outcomes, instructional practices, and theoretical perspectives, leaving limited understanding of the lived experiences of English teachers who implement CRP in diverse classrooms. This gap highlights the need for a phenomenological inquiry that captures teachers' personal experiences, challenges, and coping strategies in applying culturally responsive pedagogy.

This study contributes to knowledge enrichment by providing contextspecific insights from English teachers in selected public secondary schools in Mindanao, where cultural and linguistic diversity shapes classroom experiences. By exploring teachers' lived experiences, the study offers a deeper understanding of how culturally responsive pedagogy is implemented in practice and how educators navigate the challenges associated with diverse learning environments. Specifically, the study sought to understand the experiences of English teachers in implementing Culturally Responsive Pedagogy in diverse classrooms, the challenges they encounter in practicing culturally responsive teaching, and the coping strategies they employ to foster inclusive and culturally responsive learning environments.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study is anchored on Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (CSP) developed by Paris and Alim (2017). CSP emphasizes the preservation and promotion of students' cultural identities, languages, and practices within the educational process. The theory views cultural and linguistic diversity as assets that should be sustained rather than replaced by dominant cultural norms. In diverse classrooms, CSP encourages teachers to create learning environments that value and affirm students' cultural backgrounds. This theory guides the study in understanding how English teachers implement Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP) while supporting students' cultural identities and fostering inclusive learning environments.

Translanguaging Theory

The study is also supported by Translanguaging Theory developed by García and Wei (2018). This theory explains that multilingual learners use their entire linguistic repertoire to communicate, understand, and construct meaning. Rather than treating languages as separate systems, translanguaging recognizes the flexible use of multiple languages as a valuable learning resource. In the context of this study, the theory helps explain how English teachers address linguistic diversity by allowing students to draw from their native languages and cultural experiences to enhance learning, participation, and comprehension.

Culturally Responsive Teaching Theory

This study further draws on Geneva Gay's (2018) Culturally Responsive Teaching Theory. The theory emphasizes the use of students' cultural knowledge, experiences, and perspectives as foundations for effective teaching and learning. It promotes instructional practices that recognize diversity, encourage inclusion, and support equitable educational opportunities. This theory is relevant to the study because it provides a framework for examining how English teachers adapt their teaching strategies, classroom practices, and learning activities to meet the needs of culturally diverse learners and create meaningful learning experiences.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological research design to explore the lived experiences of English teachers in implementing Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP) in diverse classrooms. The study focused on understanding the participants' experiences, challenges encountered, and coping strategies used in culturally diverse learning environments.

The participants consisted of five (5) English teachers from selected secondary schools in Maguindanao del Norte, chosen through purposive sampling based on their experience in implementing Culturally Responsive Pedagogy and having at least two years of teaching experience.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews using a validated interview guide. The responses were audio-recorded with the participants' consent, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed using Colaizzi's descriptive

phenomenological method, which involved identifying significant statements, coding, clustering themes, and developing interpretations of the participants' experiences. Ethical standards were observed by ensuring voluntary participation, informed consent, and confidentiality of all participants.

RESEARCH RESULT

This section presents the findings of the study based on the data gathered from the participants regarding their lived experiences in implementing Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP) in diverse classrooms. The analysis focused on identifying common experiences, challenges, and strategies used by English teachers in responding to cultural, linguistic, and academic diversity among learners. The interview data were carefully reviewed, coded, and analyzed using Colaizzi's phenomenological method to identify significant statements and develop themes that represent the participants' shared experiences.

The analysis involved examining participants' responses, grouping similar ideas, and organizing them into meaningful themes. Through this process, several themes emerged that reflect English teachers' experiences in implementing culturally responsive pedagogy, the challenges they encounter in diverse classroom settings, and the strategies they employ to foster inclusive learning environments. The findings are presented according to the research questions and supported by selected participant statements that provide direct evidence of the identified themes.

1. Experiences of English Teachers in Implementing Culturally Responsive Pedagogy in Diverse Classrooms

The findings revealed that English teachers experience teaching in culturally, linguistically, and academically diverse classrooms. Participants described their classrooms as heterogeneous learning environments where students possess different cultural backgrounds, languages, beliefs, and learning abilities. To address these differences, teachers emphasized the importance of flexibility and adaptability in their instructional practices. They continuously adjusted teaching methods, classroom activities, and communication strategies to accommodate learners' diverse needs.

The findings also showed that language adaptation plays an important role in implementing culturally responsive pedagogy. Teachers reported translating lessons into Filipino and local dialects when necessary to improve students' understanding and participation. In addition, participants highlighted the importance of cultural respect and inclusivity in classroom instruction. They intentionally acknowledged students' cultural backgrounds, encouraged respect for diversity, and created opportunities for learners to share their cultural experiences during classroom activities. These practices contributed to the development of supportive and inclusive learning environments where students felt valued and respected.

2. Challenges Encountered by English Teachers in Implementing Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

The findings revealed that English teachers encounter several challenges in implementing culturally responsive pedagogy. One of the most common challenges identified by the participants was the lack of culturally relevant instructional materials and learning resources. Teachers expressed difficulty in locating materials that accurately represent students' cultural backgrounds and local contexts. This limitation affected their ability to fully integrate cultural perspectives into classroom instruction.

Participants also reported time constraints as a challenge in developing culturally responsive learning activities. The demands of lesson preparation, classroom instruction, and administrative responsibilities often limited opportunities to design contextualized learning experiences. Language barriers were likewise identified as a challenge, particularly when students possessed different levels of language proficiency and came from various linguistic backgrounds. In addition, teachers experienced difficulties in managing cultural differences and ensuring that all learners felt included and respected within the classroom. Some participants also emphasized the need for additional professional development opportunities to strengthen their knowledge and skills in culturally responsive teaching.

3. Strategies Used by English Teachers to Foster a Culturally Responsive Learning Environment

Despite these challenges, the findings showed that English teachers employ various strategies to create culturally responsive and inclusive classrooms. Participants reported using appropriate teaching approaches that encourage student participation and accommodate different learning styles. They also utilized multilingual instruction to support learners with varying language backgrounds and improve comprehension.

Another strategy identified in the findings was cultural integration. Teachers incorporated students' cultural experiences, traditions, and perspectives into classroom discussions, learning activities, and performance tasks. This allowed learners to connect classroom lessons with their own cultural identities and experiences. Participants also emphasized the importance of collaborative and community-based learning. Group activities and communityrelated tasks were frequently used to encourage interaction, cooperation, and appreciation of cultural diversity among students.

Furthermore, the findings revealed that technology and multimedia resources were used to enhance learning experiences and increase student engagement. Teachers utilized visual materials, digital resources, presentations, and other technological tools to make lessons more accessible, relevant, and meaningful to diverse learners.

Overall, the findings of the study indicate that implementing Culturally Responsive Pedagogy requires English teachers to continuously adapt their instructional practices to meet the needs of culturally diverse learners. Although challenges related to resources, language differences, time limitations, and

professional preparation exist, teachers actively employ various strategies to create inclusive learning environments that promote participation, respect, and meaningful learning experiences for all students.

DISCUSSION

This study explored the lived experiences of English teachers in implementing Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP) in diverse classrooms. The findings revealed that teachers worked with learners from different cultural, linguistic, and educational backgrounds, requiring them to adopt flexible and inclusive teaching practices. These findings suggest that effective implementation of CRP depends on teachers' ability to recognize diversity and adapt instruction to meet the needs of all learners.

One of the major findings of the study was the importance of flexibility and adaptability in teaching diverse learners. Teachers adjusted their instructional approaches, classroom activities, and communication strategies to accommodate students' varying cultural backgrounds, language proficiencies, and learning needs. This finding supports Gay (2018), who emphasized that culturally responsive teaching requires educators to modify instructional practices based on students' cultural experiences and backgrounds. By adapting their teaching methods, teachers were able to create more inclusive learning environments that encouraged participation and engagement among diverse learners.

The findings also revealed that language adaptation served as an important strategy in implementing culturally responsive pedagogy. Teachers frequently translated lessons into Filipino and local dialects to improve students' understanding and participation. This finding aligns with García and Wei (2018), who argued that multilingual practices support learners' comprehension by allowing them to utilize their linguistic resources during the learning process. For English teachers, language adaptation helped bridge communication gaps and enabled students from different linguistic backgrounds to engage more actively in classroom discussions.

Another significant finding was the importance of cultural respect and inclusion in the classroom. Teachers intentionally integrated students' cultural backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives into classroom activities to create a learning environment where all learners felt valued and respected. This finding supports Paris and Alim's (2017) Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy, which emphasizes recognizing and sustaining students' cultural identities within educational settings. Similarly, Salgado et al. (2024) found that culturally responsive practices promote inclusion and strengthen students' engagement in learning.

Despite these positive practices, teachers encountered several challenges in implementing culturally responsive pedagogy. One of the most common challenges involved the lack of culturally relevant instructional materials. Teachers experienced difficulty finding learning resources that reflected students' cultural experiences and local contexts. This finding supports Gay (2018), who noted that culturally responsive teaching requires instructional

materials that represent learners' diverse identities and experiences. The limited availability of such resources may reduce teachers' ability to fully contextualize lessons and promote meaningful learning.

Time constraints also emerged as a challenge in implementing CRP. Teachers reported that lesson preparation, administrative responsibilities, and other school-related tasks limited their ability to design culturally responsive learning activities. This finding is consistent with Karki et al. (2024) and Hunter and Nguyen (2022), who found that excessive workloads reduce teachers' opportunities to prepare responsive and engaging instruction. As a result, teachers often struggled to balance curriculum requirements with the demands of culturally responsive teaching.

Language barriers and cultural differences further complicated the implementation of CRP. Teachers encountered difficulties when students possessed varying levels of language proficiency or held differing cultural perspectives that sometimes resulted in misunderstandings. This finding supports Cummins (2017), who emphasized that linguistic diversity may affect participation and comprehension when appropriate support is lacking. Likewise, Banks (2016) argued that multicultural education requires teachers to actively promote respect and understanding among learners from different cultural backgrounds.

To address these challenges, teachers adopted various strategies that fostered culturally responsive learning environments. These included the use of communicative and inquiry-based teaching approaches, multilingual instruction, cultural integration, collaborative learning, and technologyenhanced instruction. Such strategies encouraged participation, strengthened comprehension, and promoted cultural understanding among learners. These findings support previous studies emphasizing the effectiveness of studentcentered and culturally responsive teaching practices in enhancing engagement and meaningful learning experiences.

The findings also highlighted the importance of collaboration, continuous learning, and professional development in strengthening teachers' capacity to implement culturally responsive pedagogy. Teachers expressed the need for additional training and institutional support to improve their understanding of cultural diversity and inclusive teaching practices. This finding aligns with Cantrell et al. (2022) and Pasternak et al. (2023), who emphasized that ongoing professional development enhances teachers' confidence and effectiveness in implementing culturally responsive instruction.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that while implementing culturally responsive pedagogy presents several challenges, English teachers remain committed to creating inclusive and meaningful learning environments for diverse learners. The study underscores the importance of providing adequate instructional resources, professional development opportunities, and institutional support to strengthen the implementation of culturally responsive pedagogy in diverse classroom settings.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that English teachers implementing culturally responsive pedagogy in diverse classrooms encounter learners with varied academic abilities, linguistic backgrounds, and cultural identities. This diversity requires teachers to exercise flexibility and adaptability in their instructional practices to ensure that learning remains inclusive, relevant, and meaningful for all students. The study further reveals that teachers employ culturally responsive strategies such as language adaptation, differentiated instruction, and the integration of students' cultural backgrounds into classroom instruction, which help create supportive learning environments where students feel respected, valued, and encouraged to participate actively in the learning process. However, teachers also face challenges such as limited instructional materials, time constraints, and the complexity of addressing diverse learner needs and cultural differences within the classroom. Despite these challenges, teachers demonstrate resilience by adopting coping strategies including communicative and inquiry-based teaching approaches, multilingual instruction, collaborative learning activities, and the use of technology and multimedia resources, which enable them to effectively address diversity and promote inclusive education.

It is recommended that teachers continue to strengthen the implementation of culturally responsive pedagogy by consistently applying differentiated instruction, language adaptation, and culturally relevant teaching strategies to better address the needs of diverse learners. Schools may also provide adequate instructional materials and conduct training or professional development programs focused on culturally responsive teaching to further enhance teachers' skills and competencies. In addition, the integration of technology and multilingual resources should be encouraged to support interactive and inclusive learning experiences. Furthermore, teachers should continuously provide constructive feedback and foster a supportive classroom environment to improve students' confidence and participation. Future researchers may also explore further applications of culturally responsive pedagogy in other subject areas and educational contexts to deepen understanding of its effectiveness.

ADVANCED RESEARCH

This study was limited to five English teachers from selected public secondary schools and focused exclusively on their lived experiences in implementing Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP). Consequently, the findings may not fully capture the experiences of English teachers across different educational contexts. In addition, the study was confined to participants' perspectives and did not incorporate the views of students, school administrators, or other educational stakeholders.

Future research may extend this inquiry by involving a larger and more diverse sample of participants from various schools, regions, or educational levels. Further studies may also examine students' perspectives and investigate the influence of culturally responsive pedagogy on student engagement, academic achievement, and inclusive classroom practices. Such investigations may contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the implementation and impact of culturally responsive pedagogy in diverse learning environments.

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