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THE EFFECT OF CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING MATERIALS ON MOTIVATION, SELF- EFFICACY, ENGAGEMENT AND SPEAKING PERFORMANCE OF EFL STUDENTS IN MULTICULTURAL CLASSROOMS OF KARAKALPAKSTAN

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Abstract: The article presents the results of a mixed-methods quasi-experimental study of the effect of culturally responsive teaching (CRT) materials on the intrinsic motivation, speaking self-efficacy, engagement and speaking performance of multicultural EFL students. The study involved 92 second-year students of Karakalpak State University representing six ethnic groups. The experimental group ($n = 46$) studied with a package of 30 CRT-adapted lessons in the Integrated Skills course for 15 weeks, while the control group ($n = 46$) followed the standard syllabus. Compared with the control group, the experimental group showed significantly greater gains in intrinsic motivation ($d = 0.84$), speaking self-efficacy ($d = 0.47$), engagement ($d = 0.66$) and speaking performance ($d = 0.94$). Qualitative data from interviews, reflective diaries and classroom observations explain these gains through cultural validation, growing confidence and a psychologically safe classroom climate.

Keywords: culturally responsive teaching, EFL, multicultural classroom, intrinsic motivation, speaking self-efficacy, student engagement, speaking performance, Karakalpakstan.

Introduction (Literature Review)

Classrooms in higher education are becoming increasingly diverse in terms of culture and language, and this diversity requires teachers to rethink the materials they use. Traditional EFL materials tend to present the culture of English-speaking countries or a generic “global” culture, and they rarely reflect the lived experience of learners. As a result, many students do not see themselves in what they study, which can reduce motivation, participation and achievement [3].

Culturally responsive pedagogy offers an alternative. G. Ladson-Billings described culturally relevant pedagogy as teaching that develops students’ academic success and cultural competence at the same time [6], and G. Gay defined culturally responsive teaching as using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences and frames of reference of diverse students to make learning more relevant and effective for them [3]. A.M. Villegas and T. Lucas emphasised that teachers should treat students’ cultural backgrounds as a resource rather than a problem [9], while Z.

Hammond showed how culturally responsive practices build the trust and cognitive engagement that learning requires [4].

Culturally responsive materials are closely linked to several learner variables. According to self-determination theory, intrinsic motivation grows when learners' needs for autonomy, competence and relatedness are satisfied [8]. A. Bandura's theory of self-efficacy explains how mastery experiences and the observation of peers strengthen a learner's belief in his or her own abilities [1], and engagement is understood as a multidimensional construct that includes behavioural, cognitive, emotional and social participation [7]. Materials that validate students' identities can therefore be expected to support motivation, confidence and engagement, which in turn contribute to achievement.

The Republic of Karakalpakstan is a particularly relevant setting for such research. Karakalpak, Uzbek, Kazakh, Turkmen and other students study together in the same groups, and most of them are bilingual or trilingual. However, empirical studies of CRT materials in EFL classrooms in Central Asia remain scarce, and the effect of such materials on speaking skills has not been examined experimentally in this context.

The **aim** of the study was to determine the effect of CRT materials on the intrinsic motivation, speaking self-efficacy, engagement and speaking performance of students in multicultural EFL classrooms. It was hypothesised that the experimental group would show greater gains than the control group in all four outcomes.

Materials and Methods

Design and participants. The study used a quasi-experimental pre-test/post-test design with a control group, complemented by qualitative methods. Participants were 92 second-year undergraduate students of the English Language and Literature programme at Karakalpak State University (80 female and 12 male; aged 18–22, $M = 19.7$). They represented six ethnic groups: Karakalpak (53.3%), Uzbek (25.0%), Kazakh (17.4%), Turkmen, Kyrgyz and Russian; 89.1% of them described themselves as bilingual or trilingual. All participants had B2 level according to institutional placement testing. Six intact groups were assigned to the experimental condition (three groups, $n = 46$) or the control condition (three groups, $n = 46$), because random assignment of individual students was not possible within the fixed timetable. At baseline, 89% of students reported that they had never or rarely studied English through materials related to their own culture.

Intervention. For the experimental group, the 30 units (A1–A30) of the departmental Integrated Skills course were redesigned according to CRT principles using the ADDIE model (analysis, design, development, implementation, evaluation). The official sequence of units and topics was kept, but generic content was replaced with material based on students' own cultures: family traditions, celebrations such as Hayit and Navruz, proverbs, cultural symbols and values. Monologic presentation tasks were turned into intercultural discussions, debates, role-plays and group projects, and simple CALL tools (Padlet, Mentimeter, Google Forms) were used for cultural mapping and anonymous polling. Each lesson lasted

80 minutes, and the intervention continued for 15 weeks. Two external experts evaluated ten of the lessons on a five-point scale and rated them highly (overall mean 4.53; cultural representation and authenticity 4.67). The control group studied the same units with the standard materials.

Instruments. Intrinsic motivation was measured with a 9-item scale, speaking self-efficacy with a 10-item scale and engagement with a 24-item scale covering academic, cognitive, emotional and social engagement (all on 7-point Likert scales). Reliability was good to excellent (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.80\text{--}0.93$). Speaking performance was assessed with a culturally oriented speaking task and an analytic rubric (0–100 points) by two independent raters (ICC = 0.89). Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews (15 students per group), reflective diaries of the experimental group, classroom observations, open-ended student feedback and the instructor's lesson logs.

Data analysis. Quantitative data were analysed in SPSS 28.0. Baseline equivalence and between-group differences in gain scores (post-test minus pre-test) were tested with independent-samples t-tests, and within-group change with paired t-tests ($\alpha = 0.05$); effect sizes were expressed as Cohen's d [2]. Qualitative data were coded thematically and triangulated across the five sources.

Results

The groups did not differ significantly on any measure at pre-test (all $p > 0.36$). The main quantitative results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Pre-test and post-test results of the experimental (E) and control (C) groups

Outcome	Group	Pre-test M (SD)	Post-test M (SD)	Gain	Gain difference
Intrinsic motivation (1–7)	E	4.29 (0.94)	4.87 (0.84)	0.59	$t = 4.05, p < 0.001, d = 0.84$
	C	4.13 (0.75)	4.21 (0.91)	0.08	
Speaking self-efficacy (1–7)	E	3.87 (0.77)	4.41 (0.75)	0.54	$t = 2.25, p = 0.027, d = 0.47$
	C	4.02 (0.96)	4.26 (0.99)	0.23	
Engagement (1–7)	E	3.95 (0.84)	4.41 (0.77)	0.46	$t = 3.15, p = 0.002, d = 0.66$
	C	4.10 (0.88)	4.19 (0.91)	0.09	
Speaking performance (0–100)	E	67.89 (11.87)	76.41 (10.52)	8.52	$t = 4.50, p < 0.001, d = 0.94$
	C	68.35 (12.42)	71.17 (11.98)	2.83	

Intrinsic motivation increased significantly in the experimental group ($t(45) = 6.56, p < 0.001$), whereas the change in the control group was not significant ($p = 0.330$). The difference in gains between the groups was large ($d = 0.84$).

Speaking self-efficacy increased in both groups, but the gain of the experimental group was more than twice that of the control group, and the difference between the groups was of medium size ($d = 0.47$).

Engagement increased significantly only in the experimental group ($t(45) = 5.37, p < 0.001$). The effect appeared in all four dimensions: academic ($d = 0.58$), cognitive ($d = 0.61$), emotional ($d = 0.69$) and social engagement ($d = 0.54$).

Speaking performance improved in both groups, but the gain of the experimental group (8.52 points) was three times that of the control group (2.83 points), which corresponds to a large effect ($d = 0.94$). The results did not change materially when three possibly careless respondents were excluded or when ANCOVA with the pre-test as a covariate was used, and students at low, medium and high initial levels benefited alike. In the experimental group, gains in motivation correlated with gains in self-efficacy ($r = 0.52$), engagement ($r = 0.58$) and speaking performance ($r = 0.44$).

The **qualitative data** revealed five themes that were confirmed across all sources: (1) cultural validation and recognition of identity; (2) the gradual development of confidence; (3) a safe classroom climate; (4) personally meaningful content; and (5) the development of critical intercultural thinking. In post-intervention interviews, 67% of experimental-group students said that they felt their identity was recognised in the materials. One student noted: "It was the first time when I realized that I could describe my identity, not just to get things done with English." Observers recorded that students from minority groups who had been reserved at the beginning of the course began to volunteer and ask questions when topics connected with family and traditions were discussed. The diaries showed a consistent path over 15 weeks, from shyness and difficulty to gradual participation and, finally, to confidence and critical cultural awareness.

These findings confirm all three hypotheses. All four effect sizes are well above the 0.20 level that is considered meaningful for educational interventions [5], and the qualitative data show that the gains were produced by a change in the learning atmosphere and not only by new content.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The study shows that culturally responsive teaching materials significantly increase the intrinsic motivation, speaking self-efficacy, engagement and speaking performance of students in multicultural EFL classrooms of Karakalpakstan. When students' cultures become part of the lesson content, students feel recognised and safe, speak more willingly and achieve better results. On the basis of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. EFL teachers in multicultural groups should adapt existing course materials by including students' traditions, values, proverbs and personal experiences, while keeping the official syllabus and CEFR B2 requirements.
2. Monologic speaking tasks should be replaced with intercultural discussions, debates, role-plays and projects in which students compare their cultures respectfully.
3. Simple digital tools such as Padlet and Mentimeter can be used to make every culture in the group visible and to reduce speaking anxiety.

4. CRT should be implemented for at least one semester, with constant scaffolding by the teacher, since the qualitative data show that confidence develops gradually.

5. Training in culturally responsive materials design should be included in pre-service and in-service teacher education programmes.

The study has limitations: the groups were intact and not randomly assigned, the sample came from a single university, and long-term effects were not measured. Future studies should include delayed post-tests and other universities and regions of Uzbekistan.

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