



The impact of culturally responsive materials on student motivation and language learning outcomes

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ABSTRACT

English plays a vital role in education, communication, and career opportunities, particularly in countries like Indonesia, where it is taught as a foreign language (EFL). However, many students struggle with motivation and achieving effective learning outcomes. This study investigates the impact of Culturally Responsive Materials (CRM) on student motivation and English learning outcomes among EFL learners. CRM is designed to reflect students' cultural backgrounds, making learning more meaningful and engaging. The study addresses the need for inclusive teaching approaches and fills gaps in previous research that focused more on teaching strategies than on materials. Using a quasi-experimental method, 60 students from SMA Negeri 2 Loa Kulu were randomly assigned to either a control or experimental group. The control group used conventional materials, while the experimental group was taught using CRM. Motivation was measured with a customized questionnaire, and learning outcomes were assessed through quizzes. The findings revealed that students taught with CRM showed significantly higher motivation ($p = 0.034$) and improved learning outcomes ($p = 0.005$) compared to those in the control group. These results suggest that culturally relevant content not only enhances academic performance but also fosters emotional engagement and motivation in EFL contexts.

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ABSTRAK

Bahasa Inggris memiliki peran penting dalam pendidikan, komunikasi, dan karier, terutama di Indonesia di mana bahasa ini diajarkan sebagai bahasa asing (EFL). Namun, banyak siswa yang mengalami kesulitan dalam menjaga motivasi dan meraih hasil belajar yang optimal. Penelitian ini mengkaji pengaruh Materi Responsif Budaya (CRM) terhadap motivasi belajar dan hasil belajar bahasa Inggris pada siswa EFL. CRM dirancang untuk mencerminkan latar belakang budaya siswa, sehingga pembelajaran menjadi lebih relevan dan menarik. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kuasi-eksperimental dengan melibatkan 60 siswa dari SMA Negeri 2 Loa Kulu yang dibagi menjadi kelompok kontrol dan eksperimen. Kelompok kontrol menggunakan materi konvensional, sedangkan kelompok eksperimen diajarkan dengan CRM. Motivasi diukur menggunakan kuesioner, dan hasil belajar dievaluasi melalui kuis. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa siswa yang diajar dengan CRM memiliki motivasi belajar yang lebih tinggi ($p = 0,034$) dan hasil belajar yang lebih baik ($p = 0,005$) dibandingkan kelompok kontrol. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa materi yang relevan secara budaya tidak hanya meningkatkan kinerja akademik, tetapi juga mendorong keterlibatan emosional dan motivasi siswa dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris.

Kata Kunci: EFL; hasil belajar; motivasi; pendidikan inklusif; pengajaran responsif budaya

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INTRODUCTION

English has become a pivotal language in the current era of globalization, due to its crucial role in global communication, education, and technology (Utami & Wahyudin, 2022). English is taught from elementary school through college in Indonesia and is now required for graduation and employment, underscoring the growing need for students to achieve language proficiency in English in the face of fiercer international competition. Its function as a channel for information access and global communication further reinforces its status as an essential subject in the national curriculum (Amelia et al., 2022; Novanti & Suprayogi, 2021). In this regard, in addition to cognitive capacity, affective factors —particularly learning motivation —are crucial to the success of learning English as a foreign language (EFL).

One of the primary factors that determines successful language learning is motivation, a well-known concept. Motivation has a significant impact on students' academic English performance, especially in bilingual learning settings (Tai & Zhao, 2024). Motivation fosters not only academic success but also the growth of the learner's identity and active engagement in the classroom, especially in multicultural and multilingual settings. EFL learners who discover practical advantages and a feeling of inclusion in the English-speaking community also adopt a more positive attitude toward studying the language (Wappa & Gilanlioglu, 2024). Improving learner motivation has a significant impact on language learning outcomes (Seven, 2020). Culturally Responsive Teaching is one promising teaching strategy that has drawn increasing interest (CRT).

To boost motivation and engagement in the classroom, CRT emphasizes the importance of incorporating educational resources that reflect students' diverse cultural backgrounds (Idrus & Sohid, 2023). Culturally relevant resources enhance language learning outcomes, foster critical thinking, and enhance understanding, according to previous research. On the other hand, when students' cultural experiences and the information in the learning materials do not align, it might make it more complicated for them to grasp, lower their motivation, and have a poor impact on their academic achievement. Several investigations have looked into how CRT might inspire EFL students and foster a more welcoming environment in the classroom (Anyichie & Butler, 2023; Ibrahim et al., 2024; Yuliantari & Huda, 2023). Although this corpus of research is growing, most studies conducted so far, both domestically and internationally, have primarily focused on the strategies teachers employ to adopt CRT.

Analyzing how culturally responsive teaching (CRT) influences language learning outcomes and learning motivation in EFL contexts has received less attention, even though these studies have validated the motivating benefits of CRT. Furthermore, little is known about the effects of culturally responsive materials on students' real language outcomes and internal motivation. By examining the impact of culturally responsive instructional materials on language learning outcomes and learning motivation among EFL students in Indonesia, this study fills this knowledge vacuum. This study emphasizes the direct impact of instructional materials that align with students' cultural backgrounds, in contrast to previous research that focuses primarily on teaching tactics.

The following research issues are intended to be addressed by this study in light of the background and literature review mentioned: 1) How do culturally responsive materials influence students' motivation in EFL learning?; and 2) What impact do these materials have on students' language learning outcomes? Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate how the use of culturally responsive teaching materials affects students' motivation to learn and language acquisition outcomes in Indonesian EFL classrooms. It is anticipated that the results of this study will inform the development of more inclusive and effective language teaching methods, serving as a guide for educators, curriculum designers, and legislators in creating culturally appropriate pedagogical strategies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) and Culturally Responsive Materials (CRM)

The Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) approach focuses on equity and inclusivity in education, emphasizing that students' cultural identities play a significant role in their academic success and learning experiences. CRT seeks to bridge the cultural gap between educators and students while incorporating students' values, experiences, and cultural perspectives into the learning process (Abdalla & Moussa, 2024). Additionally, CRT addresses social, economic, and political challenges in education, such as racism, colonialism, and social injustice. As a result, education not only serves as a tool for academic skill development but also empowers students to maintain their cultural identity and practices (Paris, 2021). Enhancing student interest and involvement is one of CRT's main advantages. When students perceive that the curriculum reflects their cultural backgrounds, they feel more valued and develop a stronger emotional connection to the learning materials (Abdalla & Moussa, 2024).

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP), which emphasizes the significance of connecting students' cultural identities to the curriculum to guarantee that learning is both academically rewarding and socially empowering, is one of the major philosophies that have influenced CRT over time (Chang & Viesca, 2022; Ladson-Billings, 1995). CRT includes curriculum content adaptation, instructional materials, and assessment methods that reflect the cultural diversity within the student population, ensuring greater engagement and relevance in learning. Its implementation has been consistently demonstrated to improve student participation and academic success, especially among historically marginalized communities (Paris, 2021). CRT creates a more meaningful and effective learning environment by integrating students' cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and unique performance styles (Copeland-Solas & Kamalodeen, 2022). As part of CRT, Culturally Responsive Materials (CRM) refer to instructional resources designed to reflect students' values, experiences, and cultural identities, fostering a more inclusive and effective learning environment.

CRM bridges the gap between standardized curricula and students' cultural realities, enabling them to connect academic concepts with their daily lives (Boruah, 2022). CRM comprises three main dimensions: the Product Dimension, which incorporates cultural elements such as tourist attractions, traditional foods, and local arts into English learning texts— for example, descriptive texts can feature landmarks like Pagaruyung Palace and Jam Gudang to help students understand place descriptions within their cultural context; the Practice Dimension, which highlights traditions, customs, and social practices, such as the Taping

Tawara ritual in Malay weddings in Pontianak, serving as an authentic example in teaching invitation expressions; and the Perspective Dimension, which helps students understand how cultural values and beliefs influence language interactions, illustrated through folklore such as Malign Kundang and Batu Menangis, which are integrated into narrative texts to provide insights into different cultural perspectives (Azahary & Fatimah, 2024).

CRT and CRM are closely related in creating a more inclusive, meaningful, and culturally based learning environment. CRT serves as a pedagogical approach, while CRM is a practical application of CRT in instructional materials (Paris, 2021; Azahary & Fatimah, 2024). CRT not only focuses on how teachers deliver instruction but also on how learning materials can be adapted to be more relevant to students. Therefore, CRM plays a crucial role in implementing CRT in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms, particularly in Indonesia (Paris, 2021). Furthermore, the use of CRM in EFL classrooms, particularly in Indonesia, is highly beneficial. By incorporating cultural elements, such as local landmarks, traditions, and folklore, into lesson plans, teachers can bridge the gap between the standardized curriculum and the diverse cultural backgrounds of their students. This approach not only enriches students' learning experiences but also encourages them to appreciate both their own culture and the cultures of others. Therefore, the practical application of CRT through CRM plays a vital role in creating an educational environment that values cultural diversity, fosters inclusivity, and ultimately leads to improved academic success, especially for historically marginalized communities.

The Impact of CRT on Student Motivation in International Studies

Research conducted in various countries on Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) has demonstrated a significant impact on student motivation in learning English as a foreign language (EFL). Incorporating critical literacy approaches in EFL classrooms encourages students to engage in discussions actively and enhances their overall participation in the learning process (Ko, 2013). Additionally, dialogic interactions that foster critical thinking increase students' motivation to explore how language functions in different social contexts. Integrating CRT into English language instruction fosters a more inclusive learning environment, leading to higher student engagement and motivation. CRT allows students to take a more active role in learning by connecting instructional content with their cultural experiences (Abduvoxidova et al., 2025). CRT allows students to take a more active role in learning by connecting instructional content with their cultural experiences (Berlian & Huda, 2022).

Moreover, emphasizing cultural interaction and student involvement enhances their sense of value and belonging, further reinforcing their motivation to learn a foreign language. Culturally responsive teaching strategies have been shown to significantly enhance student motivation and engagement, particularly in classrooms with diverse student bodies (Aksiutina, 2017; Hernandez, 2022). Students in multicultural classrooms showed increased motivation when instructional materials and teaching methods were adapted to their life experiences and cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, a culturally responsive pedagogical approach strengthens students' sense of belonging, which in turn boosts their enthusiasm for learning English. Combining the Science of Reading approach with culturally responsive literacy practices significantly increased students' literacy motivation, particularly in areas

such as identity, critical thinking, and reading enjoyment (Anderson et al., 2025). This implies that more active student participation in literacy tasks can be facilitated by culturally suitable instructional materials.

Motivation in the context of teaching EFL was strongly correlated with culturally relevant instruction (Bećirović et al., 2022). The study, which employed a structural equation modeling approach, found that students' motivation to learn English was positively influenced by cooperative learning, which also enhanced their cultural intelligence. Additionally, it was discovered that EFL motivation was a strong predictor of students' academic achievement, meaning that the more motivated students are to study English, the better they will perform academically in the subject (Bećirović, 2023). Involving international students as co-creators in the design of the course enhanced their classroom engagement and addressed the demand for cultural diversity (Androsov & Zhang, 2023). Several variables, including academic preparedness, language skills, and attitudes toward cultural diversity, influenced students' active participation in multicultural learning settings. These conclusions are supported by a study conducted in Cyprus, which discovered a strong correlation between EFL motivation and students' identity building in multicultural and multilingual environments (Wappa & Gilanlioglu, 2024).

Variables like age, gender, and perceptions of the second language community significantly influenced motivation. Implying that language acquisition is a social as well as cognitive process that is closely related to self-representation and the desire to fit in with international communities. CRT-based instructional strategies contribute to a more inclusive learning environment, thereby improving student engagement and motivation in foreign language learning. A more engaging learning environment and increased students' confidence in speaking a foreign language are two benefits of recognizing students' cultural origins and incorporating their experiences into the curriculum. Furthermore, encouraging students to engage with the target language through culturally relevant learning resources is essential for developing their interest in intercultural communication.

The Effect of CRT on the Results of Language Learning in International Research

The effect of Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) on language learning outcomes in various situations has been the subject of numerous studies (Cruz et al., 2020). Students' language learning outcomes improved when they engaged in critical literacy practices that encouraged them to analyze texts concerning their personal experiences (Ko, 2013; Prada Arias et al., 2022). This approach was beneficial not only for high-achieving students but also for those with lower learning outcomes, as it provided a more meaningful context for language comprehension and learning. Including CRT into EFL training enhances students' language comprehension by tailoring the course content to their cultural contexts (Abduvoxidova et al., 2025). This method also fosters improved communication skills, particularly in fluency and sentence structure comprehension, while simultaneously promoting cultural awareness and cross-cultural competence. CRT strategies facilitate language acquisition by linking learning to students' cultural experiences (Oberg De La Garza, 2020).

The use of authentic, culturally relevant materials strengthens students' grasp of linguistic structures and enhances authentic communication in everyday life. Cooperative learning has a positive impact on the development of students' cultural intelligence and EFL motivation, ultimately affecting their academic performance (Bećirović et al., 2022). These results highlight the importance of employing collaborative learning techniques to enhance student learning outcomes, particularly in multicultural classrooms. A study in China examined how teaching reading strategies affected the reading comprehension, strategy use, motivation, and self-efficacy of EFL university students (Li et al., 2022). According to the quantitative data, students' motivation and self-efficacy did not change significantly; however, the interview findings suggested that they had favorable opinions of the training approach. This implies that learners' impressions of the educational process they undergo may influence their motivational responses, which can be context-dependent.

Learning Outcomes and Student Motivation in Indonesia: The Effect of CRT

Research in Indonesia on Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) has shown significant effects on student motivation and language learning outcomes in English language instruction. Integrating CRT into English instruction creates a more encouraging setting for learning, fostering active student engagement in the classroom. Furthermore, adapting instructional materials to align with students' cultural backgrounds enhances their understanding of linguistic concepts and strengthens their communicative competence in English (Yuliantari & Huda, 2023). These findings are further supported by evidence showing that the use of CRT in English language instruction significantly enhances students' motivation and engagement in understanding literary materials such as poetry and drama, while also improving speaking and collaborative skills and strengthening language learning outcomes in a culturally relevant context (Ibrahim et al., 2024).

Using culturally responsive teaching improved students' motivation as well as their engagement and cultural awareness in speaking lessons (Dollah & Basri, 2025). Despite some students' initial uneasiness stemming from their lack of cultural awareness, most said this method encouraged them to participate and share their thoughts. This approach cultivates a more meaningful and student-centered learning experience, in which students do not merely perceive English as a theoretical subject, but rather as a practical, communicative tool applicable to real-life situations. Therefore, research in Indonesia indicates that CRT serves as an effective pedagogical approach for improving the linguistic language outcome and motivation of students learning English. Beyond its academic benefits, CRT also plays a crucial role in promoting an inclusive learning environment, fostering students' confidence in communication, and strengthening their cultural awareness in diverse linguistic and social contexts.

METHODS

This study employed a quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental design, comprising two groups: a control group and an experimental group. A total of 60 students from Class X participated in the study, which was conducted at SMA Negeri 2 Loa Kulu, East Kalimantan. Class X-3 was designated as the experimental group, and Class X-2 was designated as the

control group. There were 30 students in each class, ages 16 to 17, with 10 males and 20 females. Purposive sampling was employed as the method, and students' preparedness to participate in the intervention and timetable compatibility served as the selection criteria.

A pre-test was administered to both groups at the beginning of the process to assess their initial motivation levels. While culturally responsive materials (CRM) tailored to the students' local culture and experiences were used to teach the experimental group, the control group was instructed using conventional English materials. One 90-minute session was used for the treatment. An interactive Kahoot quiz was utilized to evaluate students' English learning outcomes following the treatment, and a post-test was administered to gauge motivational improvements.

Table 1. The Questionnaire was Modified from the Student Motivation Scale

No.	Question Leading
1.	I prefer course material that really challenges me so I can learn new things.
2.	If I study in appropriate ways, then I will be able to learn the material in this course.
3.	I think I will be able to use what I learn in this course in other courses.
4.	I believe I will receive an excellent grade in this class.
5.	I am certain I can understand the most difficult material presented in the readings for this course.
6.	Getting a good grade in this class is the most satisfying thing for me right now.
7.	It is important for me to learn the course material in this class.
8.	I am confident I can learn the basic concepts taught in this course.
9.	If I can, I want to get better grades in this class than most of the other students.
10.	I am confident I can understand the most complex material presented by the instructor in this course.
11.	I am very interested in the content area of this course.
12.	If I try hard enough, then I will understand the course material.
13.	I am confident I can do an excellent job on the assignments and tests in this course.
14.	I expect to do well in this class.
15.	I think the course material in this class is useful for me to learn.

Source: Research, 2025

A learning result exam and a motivation questionnaire were the two tools used to gather data. The questionnaire, using a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5), was modified from the Student Motivation Scale. Based on **Table 1**, only 15 of the 31 items were chosen because they were pertinent and linguistically appropriate for high school students. Items that were linguistically complicated or conceptually redundant were eliminated to maintain content validity and clarity.

Table 2. Questions for Class Control

No.	Question Leading
1.	What is the main purpose of a procedural text?
2.	Which part explains the purpose of a procedural text?
3.	Which part of a procedural text explains the tools and materials needed?
4.	In a procedural text, what is an imperative verb?
5.	A sentence like "Cut the fabric into two pieces" is an example of?
6.	What is a chronological conjunction?
7.	Which of the following is NOT an example of a chronological conjunction?
8.	What is characteristic of the steps in a procedural text?
9.	Procedural texts often use bullet points or numbering to?
10.	What is the purpose of illustrations or images in procedural texts?

Source: Research, 2025

There were ten multiple-choice questions on the learning outcome test. The experimental group's questions were modified from the official textbook Bahasa Inggris SMA/SMK Kelas X (see **Table 1**), while the control group's questions were taken from Ruang Guru. SPSS version 30 was used for data analysis (see **Table 2**). The Mann-Whitney U test was used as a non-parametric substitute to identify statistically significant differences between the motivation and learning outcomes of the two groups, as the data did not meet the normality assumptions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Students' motivation to learn was assessed following the intervention, and the descriptive statistics are shown in the table below.

Table 3. Mean and Standard Deviation Student's Learning Motivation

No.	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
1.	Experiment	30	46.47	6.580
2.	Control	30	49.43	7.375

Source: Data were processed using SPSS version 30

Based on **Table 3**, the levels of learning motivation in the experimental and control groups were comparable at the start of the investigation. After the intervention, however, the experimental group, which received culturally relevant instruction, achieved a higher mean motivation score of 49.43 (SD = 7.375), while the control group got a mean score of 46.47 (SD = 6.580). This suggests that, although the two groups' initial motivation levels were similar, the group exposed to culturally relevant materials showed greater improvement. These results suggest that, compared to traditional teaching methods, culturally responsive training has a significant impact on improving students' motivation to study.

Table 4. Homogeneity Test and Mann-Whitney U Test Result For Students' Learning Motivation

No.	Test	Statistic (U/F)	Sig. (p-value)	Interpretation
1.	Levene's Test	.262	.851	Homogeneous ($p > 0.05$)
2.	Mann-Whitney U	306.500	0.34	Significant difference ($p < 0.05$)

Source: Data were processed using SPSS version 30

Levene's Test results (see **Table 4**) showed that the data exhibited homogeneous variances between groups, with a significance value of 0.851 ($p > 0.05$). The non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test was used to continue the research because the data did not satisfy the normality assumption. A significant difference was observed between the experimental and control groups, as indicated by a p-value of 0.034 ($p < 0.05$). When compared to traditional resources, this outcome implies that the usage of culturally relevant learning materials increased students' motivation to learn. Thus, in the context of studying English as a foreign language (EFL), it can be said that culturally relevant instruction greatly increases student motivation.

Effect of Culturally Responsive Materials on Students' Language Learning Outcomes

To observe changes and assess students' learning outcomes, the researcher administered a 10-item quiz to two groups. The experimental class and the control class. The control group used a procedural text from the Ruang Guru website. In contrast, the experimental class used culturally responsive material in the form of the legend Malin Kundang, found in the Bahasa Inggris SMA/SMK Grade X textbook.

Table 5. Descriptive and Result Mann-Whitney U For Student's Language Outcome

No.	Group	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean Rank	P-Value
1.	Experiment	30	2498	9331	6301.10	2439.360	36.83	0.005
2.	Control	30	766	7051	4516.57	1782.439	24.17	

Source: Data were processed using SPSS version 30

Based on **Table 5**, the control group's quiz scores ranged from 766 to 7051, with a mean of 4516.57 and a standard deviation of 1782.439. The experimental class, on the other hand, had scores ranging from 2,498 to 9,331, with a higher mean score of 6,301.10 and a standard deviation of 2,439.36. According to these descriptive data, students in the experimental class generally outperformed those in the control class on the quiz. Since the data did not meet the assumption of normality, a Mann-Whitney U test was performed to examine the variation in quiz performance further. The test revealed a significant difference between the two groups ($p = 0.005$, $p < 0.05$). The experimental group's mean rank was 36.83, whereas the control group's was 24.17. These findings support the notion that students who were exposed to culturally sensitive learning resources did better than those who were taught in a typical manner. Therefore, it can be assumed that the use of culturally sensitive materials significantly improved the language learning outcomes of the students.

Discussion

This study offers significant insights into the efficacy of Culturally Responsive Materials (CRMs) in promoting student motivation and enhancing learning outcomes in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. The statistical results demonstrate an affirmative change in both motivational and academic aspects among students subjected to CRM. Nevertheless, apart from the quantitative outcomes, the overarching implication is on the interaction of these materials with learners' cultural identity, sense of belonging, and engagement. Learning becomes more significant when instructional content reflects the cultural experiences of students. By demonstrating that content aligned with students' lived experiences leads to deeper engagement and more efficient learning, this study supports the theoretical framework.

Students were able to connect abstract linguistic ideas to authentic cultural narratives through the use of culturally embedded texts, thereby increasing their level of involvement and enhancing their cognitive processing. This result is consistent with earlier research highlighting the importance of culturally embedded literacy practices in fostering dialogic interaction and motivation, as well as the educational benefits of incorporating regional folklore and customs into English language instruction (Ko, 2013; Azhary & Fatimah, 2024). However, this research makes a unique contribution to the literature by putting the material itself at the center of analysis, in contrast to many previous studies that concentrated on instructor strategy (e.g., classroom conduct, teacher attitudes). When culturally relevant, the content serves as a motivator and a cognitive scaffold.

Additionally, the study diverges from previous research that has highlighted group interaction and cooperative learning as the primary mediators of motivation and performance (Bećirović et al., 2022). Even without focusing on cooperative forms, motivation and results were improved in this case, indicating that material relevance on its own can be a potent change agent, particularly in uniform classroom environments. It is interesting to note that, in addition to cultural familiarity, identity validation may also contribute to the motivating boost seen. Students feel more proud of their culture and experience less alienation when they believe it is worthy of academic study, which is common in EFL classrooms when foreign examples predominate. This supports the theory that culturally relevant literacy teaching increases students' emotional commitment to learning as well as their ability to acquire new skills (Anderson et al., 2025).

This study's unique finding is that CRM serves two purposes: it fosters a learning environment where students are more inclined to take academic risks and engage vocally, in addition to supporting language development through well-established vocabulary and structures. This result is significant in Indonesian classrooms, where culturally inappropriate content frequently causes students to feel anxious and disengaged. Furthermore, the study supports the concept of culturally sustaining pedagogy, which advocates for the ongoing affirmation and celebration of students' cultural practices in academic settings, going beyond simple inclusion (Paris, 2021).

The findings of this study align with this direction, particularly in the Indonesian context, where linguistic and ethnic diversity necessitate the use of regional teaching strategies. In conclusion, this study adds to the conversation by highlighting the instructional value of the content itself, which is sometimes overlooked in favor of teacher-centered CRT techniques.

It also emphasizes how culture serves as an active motivator and learning facilitator in addition to being content. These results provide compelling evidence that curriculum designers and teachers should prioritize the development of CRM to ensure inclusive, prosperous, and culturally sensitive English instruction.

Influence on Motivation

The implementation of Culturally Responsive Materials (CRM) in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction has shown a significant influence on enhancing students' learning motivation. In this study, students who received education utilizing culturally grounded materials displayed better levels of emotional involvement, confidence, and interest compared to those in the control group. This implies that resources steeped in local culture do more than merely enhance comprehension; they activate students' sense of identification, ownership, and pride. Motivation in language learning is not a static construct; it comprises a dynamic interplay of factors, including intrinsic interest, perceived relevance, self-efficacy, and the desire for achievement. When students see their cultural narratives, such as the legend of Malin Kundang or local practices, represented in the learning process, they feel acknowledged and validated. This finding correlates with research that culturally embedded literacy practices enhance classroom participation and learner enthusiasm through critical interaction with texts (Ko, 2013).

Culturally responsive literacy techniques in U.S. classrooms enhance students' enjoyment of learning, foster identity creation, and promote critical thinking (Anderson et al., 2025). When students perceive the learning content as significant to their lived experiences, they are more likely to engage profoundly, both emotionally and cognitively. This also supports the concept that language acquisition is not only about gaining grammar and vocabulary, but also about promoting meaningful communication anchored in one's context. Motivation is a central predictor of language acquisition performance (Seven, 2020). Motivation determines the extent to which students engage with tasks, endure through hurdles, and reflect on their progress. CRM plays a significant part in this process by giving content that is both personally relevant and emotionally resonant. It not only sustains students' interest but also develops a more substantial commitment to learning.

In line with this, EFL motivation is directly connected with cooperative learning and the development of cultural intelligence (Bećirović et al., 2022). While their study focused on group-based learning, the current research demonstrates that even without formal peer collaboration, motivation can be significantly enhanced by culturally relevant resources. This suggests that content relevance may serve as an independent motivational driver, particularly in relatively homogeneous classes where cultural familiarity is shared. The substantial association between EFL motivation and identity formation in multilingual and multicultural environments has also been underscored in previous research (Wappa & Gilanlioglu, 2024). Students who perceive their cultural identity represented in classroom practices have a stronger sense of belonging and are more willing to integrate with second-language communities.

In this study, CRM generated the same sense of inclusion by identifying students' cultural origins as valuable aspects of the learning process, rather than as extraneous additions. In

conclusion, the study's findings of enhanced motivation were long-lasting and substantial. It resulted from strong emotional bonds with the subject matter, the affirmation of students' identities, and the belief that learning English through culturally appropriate content was worthwhile. CRM turned out to be more than just a teaching tool; it was a transformative component that fostered self-assurance, involvement, and tenacity. These resources offer a powerful means of linking local cultural values with global language objectives in Indonesia's diverse educational landscape, thereby enhancing the inclusivity, effectiveness, and empowerment of EFL classes.

Influence on Learning Outcomes

In this study, the use of Culturally Responsive Materials (CRMs) significantly improved students' English language learning outcomes and increased their motivation. The experimental group outperformed the control group in terms of understanding, retention, and contextual application of linguistic concepts after being exposed to culturally integrated materials. This conclusion supports the broader body of research that indicates students are more likely to internalize and utilize linguistic structures when educational material is culturally relevant and meaningful. This improvement can be attributed in large part to the cognitive scaffolding that culturally appropriate materials offer. By interacting with well-known material, like the legend of Malin Kundang, students are not starting from scratch. They are already emotionally and contextually aware of the story so that they can concentrate more on the form and purpose of the language.

Critical literacy activities, especially those based on students' own experiences, promote deeper textual engagement and comprehension across a range of skill levels, as supported by the data (Ko, 2013). Using culturally responsive pedagogy in EFL classes improves students' comprehension of meaning, fluency, and sentence construction (Abduvoxidova et al., 2025). These abilities were also evident in the current study, as students who received instruction utilizing CRM showed improved vocabulary, grammatical usage, and procedural text forms. This shows that academic rigor is not compromised by culturally grounded training. Instead, it establishes pathways that make abstract language abilities concrete and significant. The state of mind that culturally relevant content elicits is another important component. Culturally sustaining education increases students' willingness to take academic chances while simultaneously validating their backgrounds (Paris, 2021). Students are more willing to undertake challenging assignments, participate in class discussions, and remember what they have learned when they feel emotionally secure and personally invested.

This study demonstrated that students in the experimental group were more confident in their ability to finish assignments and express their ideas. The growth of cultural intelligence and cooperative learning has also been connected to better EFL performance (Bećirović et al., 2022). This study supports the notion that cultural familiarity enhances cognitive engagement, even if it did not specifically address group-based tactics. The ability of students exposed to CRM to integrate new linguistic inputs with existing knowledge improved their performance and comprehension. Similar findings were observed in the Indonesian context, where localizing English materials to represent students' cultural backgrounds improved their communication skills and comprehension (Yuliantari & Huda, 2023). They found that when examples were taken from their cultural background, students were better able to produce

grammatically and contextually suitable statements. This demonstrates that CRM promotes both comprehension and effective language use.

Furthermore, this study's improvement in learning outcomes highlights a significant pedagogical implication: culturally relevant content promotes both academic success and inclusivity. CRM enhances the relationship between learner identity and linguistic competency rather than simplifying or diluting information. It enables students to view English as a valuable tool for communicating their realities, rather than as a remote and alien system. In summary, the beneficial effects of CRM on students' learning outcomes show that both the affective and cognitive learning domains are improved when instructional materials align with learners' cultural frameworks. To provide students with deeper, more useful language skills in a variety of EFL contexts, CRM should be viewed as both an academically successful and culturally inclusive technique.

Implications

The results of this study have several significant implications for teaching English as a foreign language (EFL), particularly in multicultural and multilingual contexts such as Indonesia. First, the study demonstrates that incorporating culturally relevant materials enhances learning outcomes and boosts student enthusiasm. As a result, curriculum designers should prioritize providing English learning resources that reflect the cultural contexts of their students. Second, the ability of Culturally Responsive Materials (CRM) to enhance learning's emotive and cognitive components implies that standardized or foreign-based information is no longer the only option for instructional strategies. Teachers and curriculum designers must instead see students' ethnic backgrounds as strengths rather than challenges. More meaningful, pleasurable, and contextually relevant learning environments are created by educational resources that are grounded in students' actual cultural experiences.

Third, these findings highlight the need for ongoing training for teachers in the application of Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) techniques and in creating context-responsive materials from a policy standpoint. Many teachers continue to rely primarily on national or international textbooks, which often fail to capture the full diversity of Indonesian culture. Teachers are better able to promote classroom engagement and raise academic achievement when they can modify their lesson plans to accommodate the diverse cultural identities of their students. Fourth, this study highlights the need for greater curriculum flexibility at the national level. To enable schools to integrate culturally relevant resources that align with the sociocultural traits of their students, educational policymakers should consider updating curriculum frameworks to accommodate local adjustments. A one-size-fits-all curriculum is no longer adequate in a country as diverse as Indonesia.

Ultimately, these results provide a solid foundation for future studies on CRM deployment in diverse settings and educational contexts. Future research could examine the creation of community-based learning models, cross-cultural EFL curricular frameworks, or digital learning platforms that are sensitive to cultural differences. The continuous innovation of teaching approaches that go beyond the transmission of academic information and promote student identity, pride, and agency would be supported by such initiatives. In summary, incorporating culturally responsive resources into EFL training is not only a successful

teaching method but also a revolutionary educational strategy that promotes equity, inclusivity, and cultural relevance. It validates students' cultural heritage as an important component of the classroom experience, giving them the confidence and purpose to participate more fully in their language learning journey.

CONCLUSION

Culturally Responsive Materials (CRM) have been proven to produce better outcomes compared to conventional teaching materials. Deeper involvement in the learning process, emotional engagement, and a sense of relevance can all be fostered by learning materials that are rooted in students' cultural backgrounds by honoring and incorporating their cultural identities. This method has been shown to significantly improve student achievement in the context of learning English. In addition to enhancing the cognitive benefits of culturally responsive instruction, using well-known cultural contexts, such as the legend of Malin Kundang, helps students comprehend and remember linguistic principles. CRM still has issues, though, especially with the scarcity of educational materials that take into account the varied cultural backgrounds of students. To solve this problem, educators, curriculum designers, and other stakeholders must collaborate continuously to provide learning resources that are relevant and contextually appropriate. Teachers may create more relevant, engaging, and inclusive learning experiences if they have access to this kind of support.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

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