

**INTEGRATING CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING STRATEGIES:
ENHANCING ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING IN A MULTICULTURAL
CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT**

**INTEGRAREA STRATEGIILOR DE PREDARE ADAPTATE LA CULTURĂ:
ÎMBUNĂTĂȚIREA ÎNVĂȚĂRII LIMBII ENGLEZE ÎNTR-UN MEDIU DE CLASĂ
MULTICULTURAL**

*Oxana GOLUBOVSKI, PhD, associate professor,
SPU „Ion Creanga” of Chisinau,
ORCID iD: 0000-0003-4759-171X
golubovschi.oxana@upsc.md*

*Robert ECKHART,
Fulbright Scholar, SPU „Ion Creanga” of Chisinau,
ORCID: 0000-0003-3997-0728
bobeckhart@gmail.com*

CZU: 37.026:811.111 DOI: 10.46727/c.03-04-11-2023.p181-188

Rezumat:

Acest articol analizează sarcina imperativă de integrare a strategiilor de predare pentru a ridica nivelul de învățare a limbii engleze în clasele cultural diverse. Acesta subliniază importanța spațiilor de învățare incluzive care promovează un sentiment de valoare, respect și acceptare pentru elevii care învață limba engleză. Scopul principal este de a crea un mediu în care diversitatea culturală este celebrată, barierele lingvistice sunt abordate în mod eficient, iar fiecare elev, indiferent de mediul său lingvistic și cultural, poate să se implice activ și să exceleze din punct de vedere academic și social. Predarea prin cultură ocupă un loc central, subliniind rolul său în recunoașterea și valorizarea backgroundului cultural al elevilor. Lucrarea subliniază rolul esențial al educatorilor în modificarea lecțiilor pentru a include elemente din trecutul cultural al elevilor, făcând experiența de învățare mai semnificativă și mai ușor de asimilat pentru elevii ce studiază limba engleză. Sunt prezentate strategii specifice, cum ar fi activități în perechi și în grup, centre de sprijin lingvistic, materiale vizuale și valorificarea diversității culturale. Pentru a aborda provocările cu care se confruntă elevii în medii multiculturale, articolul pledează pentru un sprijin adaptat, inclusiv o instruire lingvistică specifică, practici de predare adaptate la cultura, accesul la resurse și formarea profesorilor. Recunoscând și abordând aceste provocări, educatorii pot asigura integrarea cu succes a elevilor în mediul academic și social a clasei, promovând o educație pozitivă de sprijin.

Cuvinte-cheie: Elevii care învață limba engleză, predare adaptată la cultură (CRT), strategie, medii de învățare, predarea limbilor străine.

The main topic of the article, highlights the focus on integrating culturally responsive teaching strategies to enhance English language learning in diverse classrooms. Inclusive learning spaces aim to provide an atmosphere where ELLs feel valued, respected, and accepted, allowing them to participate actively and thrive both academically and socially. The objective is to create an environment where cultural diversity is celebrated, language barriers are addressed effectively, and every student, regardless of their linguistic and cultural background, can engage in the learning process with confidence and success. The focus is on fostering a sense of belongingness and ensuring that ELLs have equal opportunities to excel academically while embracing their cultural identity [7].

Culturally Responsive Teaching refers to a teaching approach that recognizes and values the cultural backgrounds of students. It involves integrating students' cultural references and experiences into the learning process to make education more relevant and effective for diverse student populations. Some highlights that can be mentioned to emphasize the importance of Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) in multicultural classrooms [8, p.16]:

Promoting Inclusivity: CRT fosters an inclusive classroom environment where students from diverse cultural backgrounds feel valued and respected. It recognizes and celebrates the uniqueness of each culture, promoting a sense of belonging among students.

Enhancing Student Engagement: By incorporating students' cultural references, experiences, and perspectives into the curriculum, CRT makes learning more relevant and engaging for students. When students see their cultures reflected in the classroom, they are more likely to actively participate and engage in the learning process.

Cultural Sensitivity: CRT encourages educators to be culturally sensitive and aware of the cultural norms, traditions, and values of their students. This awareness helps in avoiding cultural misunderstandings and ensures that teaching methods are respectful of diverse cultural backgrounds.

Effective Communication: Culturally responsive teaching strategies enhance communication between teachers and students. When educators understand the cultural context of their students, they can communicate more effectively, building trust and rapport in the classroom.

Academic Achievement: Research has shown that CRT positively impacts academic achievement, especially among students from minority and marginalized communities. When students feel culturally validated, they are more likely to excel academically and develop a positive attitude towards learning.

Preparing Students for a Global Society: In today's interconnected world, cultural competence is a valuable skill. CRT equips students with the knowledge and understanding of different cultures, preparing them to thrive in a global society where cross-cultural communication and collaboration are essential.

Reducing Stereotyping and Bias: CRT challenges stereotypes and biases by promoting a more accurate understanding of various cultures. It helps in breaking down misconceptions and prejudices, fostering a more respectful and tolerant classroom environment.

Culturally Relevant Curriculum: CRT encourages the development of a curriculum that reflects the diverse cultural heritage of students. This not only engages students but also validates their identities, creating a positive and empowering learning experience.

Building Empathy and Respect: By learning about different cultures, students develop empathy and respect for others' perspectives and experiences. This understanding promotes a harmonious classroom atmosphere where students appreciate diversity and learn from one another.

Preventing Cultural Dissonance: CRT helps in preventing cultural dissonance, where students might feel a disconnect between their home culture and the school environment. By bridging the gap between home culture and school culture, CRT ensures that students can navigate both worlds comfortably.

These highlights demonstrate the multifaceted benefits of integrating CRT in multicultural classrooms, emphasizing its role in creating a positive, engaging, and supportive learning environment for all students [1]. The importance of English language learning in diverse classrooms, emphasizing its role in fostering communication, understanding, and academic success among students from various cultural backgrounds.

Here is an overview of Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) strategies, highlighting the importance of incorporating culturally relevant curriculum materials, integrating students'

cultural experiences into lessons, and fostering culturally sensitive classroom interactions [6, p.36].

Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) is an approach that recognizes the importance of integrating students' cultural backgrounds into the learning process. It aims to create an inclusive and supportive classroom environment where all students, regardless of their cultural heritage, feel valued and engaged. Several key strategies are employed in CRT [6, p.37]:

Incorporating Culturally Relevant Curriculum Materials:

- Selection of Texts and Resources: Teachers choose textbooks, literature, and learning materials that reflect the diversity of cultures present in the classroom. These materials should include authors, characters, and stories from various cultural backgrounds.
- Multicultural Literature: Introducing students to literature from different cultures fosters empathy and understanding. Reading stories from diverse perspectives helps students appreciate the richness of different cultures and promotes a sense of inclusivity.

Integrating Students' Cultural Experiences into Lessons:

- Cultural Connections: Teachers encourage students to share their cultural traditions, customs, and experiences. Integrating students' personal narratives into lessons validates their identities and creates a sense of belonging.
- Cultural Show and Tell: Allowing students to bring in artifacts, clothing, or food items from their cultures promotes cultural exchange and understanding. It enables students to learn from one another and appreciate the diversity within the classroom.

Fostering Culturally Sensitive Classroom Interactions:

- Respectful Language Use: Teachers model and promote the use of respectful and inclusive language. They avoid stereotypes and derogatory terms, ensuring a positive and respectful atmosphere in the classroom.
- Cultural Celebrations: Acknowledging and celebrating cultural holidays and events from various backgrounds helps students feel valued. Teachers can incorporate culturally significant celebrations into the curriculum, fostering a sense of pride and understanding.

Differentiating Instruction:

- Varied Learning Styles: Recognizing that students from different cultures may have varied learning styles, CRT involves using diverse teaching methods, such as visual aids, hands-on activities, and collaborative learning, to cater to different learning preferences.
- Flexible Assessment Strategies: CRT recognizes that traditional assessment methods might not accurately capture the abilities of all students. Teachers employ varied assessment strategies, such as project-based assessments, oral presentations, and creative assignments, allowing students to demonstrate their understanding in multiple ways.

Building Cultural Awareness and Sensitivity Among Educators:

- Professional Development: Educators engage in professional development programs focused on cultural competence. Training sessions provide teachers with the knowledge and skills to create culturally responsive classrooms and address the diverse needs of their students.
 - Reflective Practice: Teachers engage in self-reflection, examining their own cultural biases and assumptions. This introspection helps educators become more aware of their perspectives, enabling them to approach teaching with cultural sensitivity.

By incorporating these strategies, culturally responsive teaching creates an inclusive and supportive learning environment where students' cultural backgrounds are valued, leading to enhanced engagement, understanding, and academic success among all learners.

Educators **MUST** be aware of their own cultural biases and developing cultural sensitivity to effectively implement culturally responsive teaching practices. Explain how educators can modify lessons to include elements from students' cultural backgrounds, making the learning experience more meaningful and relatable for ELLs. Modifying lessons to include elements from students' cultural backgrounds is a fundamental aspect of Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT).

Some specific strategies that create an inclusive environment where English Language Learners (ELLs) feel valued, respected, and included in classroom activities and discussions [7]:

Structured Pair and Group Activities: Organize activities that promote collaboration and interaction among students. Pair ELLs with proficient English speakers, allowing them to learn from their peers and participate actively in discussions.

Language Support Centers: Set up language support centers in the classroom equipped with bilingual dictionaries, visual aids, and language learning materials. ELLs can use these resources to enhance their language skills and participate confidently.

Visual Supports: Use visual aids, charts, and graphic organizers to supplement verbal instructions. Visual cues help ELLs understand complex concepts and instructions, ensuring they are included in classroom discussions and activities.

Modified Assignments: Provide modified assignments that align with ELLs' language proficiency levels. Adjust the complexity of tasks, allowing ELLs to engage meaningfully without feeling overwhelmed.

Peer Tutoring: Implement peer tutoring programs where proficient English speakers assist ELLs with their schoolwork. Peer tutoring promotes peer relationships and provides additional language support.

Culturally Relevant Materials: Integrate culturally relevant materials, literature, and examples into lessons. ELLs feel more engaged and included when they can relate to the content, fostering a sense of belonging.

Flexible Seating Arrangements: Arrange classroom seating to facilitate communication and interaction. Use a circle or U-shaped seating arrangement, enabling students to see each other during discussions and group activities.

Encouraging Home Language Use: Respect and encourage the use of students' home languages. Allowing ELLs to communicate in their native language, especially during brainstorming sessions, helps them express their ideas more effectively.

Regular Check-ins: Schedule regular one-on-one or small group check-ins with ELLs. Use this time to discuss their progress, address concerns, and provide additional support, making them feel valued and supported.

Scaffolded Instruction: Provide scaffolded instruction, breaking down complex tasks into manageable steps. This approach supports ELLs' comprehension and participation, ensuring they can actively engage in classroom activities.

Celebrating Diversity: Organize cultural awareness events, celebrations, or themed days that allow students to showcase their cultures. Celebrating diversity promotes understanding and acceptance, creating an inclusive atmosphere.

Interactive Learning Games: Incorporate interactive learning games and activities that encourage participation. Games like jeopardy, board games, and interactive quizzes engage ELLs while enhancing their language skills.

Clear and Simple Language: Use clear and straightforward language when giving instructions. Avoid jargon and complex sentences, ensuring that all students, including ELLs, can follow instructions and actively participate.

Positive Reinforcement: Provide positive reinforcement and praise for ELLs' contributions. Recognizing their efforts and achievements boosts their confidence and encourages active participation in classroom activities and discussions.

Collaborative Projects: Assign collaborative projects that require teamwork and cooperation. ELLs can contribute their unique perspectives, skills, and experiences, fostering a sense of pride and accomplishment within the group.

Implementing these strategies creates an inclusive and supportive learning environment where ELLs feel valued, respected, and fully included in classroom activities and discussions.

Language development occurs in several stages, including *listening, speaking, reading, and writing*. Educators play a crucial role in supporting English Language Learners (ELLs) at each stage of their language development. Here's how educators can provide support at each stage [7, p.73]:

Listening:

Stage Description: In the listening stage, ELLs focus on understanding spoken language, including sounds, words, phrases, and basic instructions.

Educator Support:

Clear Pronunciation: Educators should articulate words clearly and use simple sentence structures to enhance comprehension.

Visual Aids: Incorporate visual aids, gestures, and body language to reinforce verbal instructions, making it easier for ELLs to grasp concepts.

Listening Activities: Engage ELLs in listening activities such as audiobooks, podcasts, and songs. Encourage active listening through comprehension questions and discussions related to the audio content.

Speaking:

Stage Description: In the speaking stage, ELLs begin to produce spoken language, starting with basic words and phrases and gradually progressing to more complex sentences.

Educator Support:

Encouraging Participation: Create a supportive environment where ELLs feel comfortable speaking. Encourage them to share their thoughts, ideas, and experiences.

Modeling: Teachers should model correct pronunciation, intonation, and sentence structures. Encourage imitation and repetition to help ELLs practice speaking skills.

Interactive Activities: Plan interactive activities such as role-playing, discussions, and group conversations. These activities provide opportunities for ELLs to practice speaking in context.

Reading:

Stage Description: The reading stage involves recognizing and understanding written words, sentences, and texts. ELLs begin with basic vocabulary and progress to more complex reading materials.

Educator Support:

Phonics Instruction: Teach phonics and letter-sound relationships to help ELLs decode words. Focus on common phonetic patterns and provide practice with reading simple words.

Vocabulary Building: Introduce ELLs to a variety of vocabulary words. Use picture books, context clues, and word games to expand their vocabulary and enhance reading comprehension.

Guided Reading: Conduct guided reading sessions where educators work closely with small groups of ELLs. Provide support, ask questions, and discuss the reading material to improve comprehension skills.

Writing:

Stage Description: In the writing stage, ELLs start by forming letters and basic sentences, progressing to more complex writing tasks such as paragraphs and essays.

Educator Support:

Handwriting Practice: Offer handwriting practice to help ELLs develop fine motor skills and write legibly. Provide guidance on letter formation and spacing.

Modeling Writing: Model the writing process by demonstrating how to brainstorm ideas, organize thoughts, and revise writing. Provide templates and examples to support ELLs in structuring their writing.

Feedback and Revision: Provide constructive feedback on ELLs' writing assignments. Encourage them to revise their work, focusing on grammar, vocabulary, and organization. Offer praise for their efforts and improvements.

The use of educational apps, online resources, and multimedia tools that support language learning, providing interactive and engaging experiences for ELLs. There are numerous interactive language learning apps and online platforms designed to help English Language Learners (ELLs) improve their language skills. Here are some examples, along with their features and benefits [5, p.55]:

****1. Duolingo:**

Features: Duolingo offers interactive lessons and exercises in various languages, including English. It covers speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills. The app uses gamification elements, such as rewards and progress tracking, to keep learners engaged.

Benefits: Duolingo provides bite-sized lessons suitable for learners of different proficiency levels. It offers a user-friendly interface and is accessible on various devices, making it convenient for ELLs to practice English anytime, anywhere [5, p.56].

****2. Rosetta Stone:**

Features: Rosetta Stone offers immersive language learning experiences through interactive lessons, pronunciation practice, and real-life scenarios. It focuses on building conversational skills and language fluency.

Benefits: Rosetta Stone emphasizes language immersion, helping ELLs develop natural speaking and listening abilities. The platform provides personalized feedback and progress tracking, enabling learners to monitor their improvement over time.

****3. Babbel:**

Features: Babbel offers interactive lessons, grammar explanations, vocabulary exercises, and speech recognition technology. It emphasizes real-life conversations and cultural insights to enhance language learning.

Benefits: Babbel provides practical language skills that ELLs can apply in everyday situations. It offers structured courses tailored to learners' needs, enabling them to focus on specific topics and areas of language proficiency.

****4. *Busuu*:**

Features: Busuu offers language courses, interactive exercises, and personalized study plans. It includes speaking and writing practice, along with grammar and vocabulary lessons. The app also provides feedback from native speakers.

Benefits: Busuu offers a social learning aspect, allowing ELLs to interact with native speakers and receive feedback on their speaking and writing skills. The platform offers a well-rounded language learning experience with a focus on communication.

****5. *BBC Learning English*:**

Features: BBC Learning English provides videos, audio lessons, quizzes, and vocabulary exercises. It covers various language skills, including listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The platform offers news-based lessons and cultural insights.

Benefits: BBC Learning English offers authentic content from the BBC, making language learning relevant and engaging for ELLs. The platform covers a wide range of topics and provides resources suitable for learners at different proficiency levels.

****6. *HelloTalk*:**

Features: HelloTalk is a language exchange app that connects ELLs with native English speakers for language practice through text, voice messages, and video calls. It includes language correction and translation features.

Benefits: HelloTalk provides real-life language practice by connecting ELLs with native speakers for meaningful conversations. It offers a supportive community where learners can ask questions, receive feedback, and improve their language skills through authentic interactions.

These interactive language learning apps and platforms offer diverse features and benefits, catering to the needs of English Language Learners. ELLs can choose the platform that aligns with their learning preferences and goals, allowing them to enhance their language skills effectively and efficiently.

Several key points were discussed, highlighting the importance of integrating culturally responsive teaching strategies to enhance English language learning in multicultural classrooms. The challenges faced by English Language Learners (ELLs) in multicultural settings are diverse and can significantly impact their educational experience. It's essential to outline these challenges and emphasize the need for tailored support to address them effectively. Addressing the challenges faced by English Language Learners (ELLs) in multicultural settings requires tailored support, including targeted language instruction, culturally responsive teaching practices, access to resources, and teacher training. By recognizing these challenges and implementing appropriate interventions, educators can help ELLs overcome obstacles, ensuring their successful integration into the academic and social fabric of the classroom.

In summary, integrating culturally responsive teaching strategies in multicultural classrooms is essential for creating inclusive learning spaces where ELLs can thrive. By

recognizing cultural diversity, understanding the challenges faced by ELLs, and implementing tailored support and inclusive teaching methods, educators can enhance English language learning outcomes and promote a positive and supportive educational environment for all students.

Bibliografie/Referințe

1. GAY, G. *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice*. Teachers College Press, 2010. ISBN 978-0807750780
2. LADSON-BILLINGS, G. *The dreamkeepers: Successful teachers of African American children*. John Wiley & Sons, 1994. 196 p. ISBN-1-55542-668-9
3. VILLEGAS, A. M., & LUCAS, T. *Preparing culturally responsive teachers: Rethinking the curriculum*. Journal of Teacher Education, 2002, 53(1), 20-32
4. BANKS, J. A., & BANKS, C. A. M. *Multicultural education: Issues and perspectives*. John Wiley & Sons, 2010. 325 p. ISBN: 978-1-119-23874-4
5. HOLLINS, E. R. *Culture in school learning: Revealing the deep meaning*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1996. 176 p. ISBN-0-8058-2265-8
6. NIETO, S. *Language, culture, and teaching: Critical perspectives for a new century*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2002. 246 p. ISBN 9781138206151
7. IRVINE, J. J., & ARMENTO, B. J. *Culturally responsive teaching: Lesson planning for elementary and middle grades*. McGraw-Hill, 2001. ISBN 978-0072408874
8. HOWARD, T. C. *Why race and culture matter in schools: Closing the achievement gap in America's classrooms*. Teachers College Press, 2018. 208 p. ISBN-0-8077-5072-7
9. LEE, C. D. *Culture, literacy, and learning: Taking bloom in the midst of the whirlwind*. Teachers College Press, 2007. ISBN - 978-0807747483
10. NIETO, S., & BODE, P. *Affirming diversity: The sociopolitical context of multicultural education*. Pearson, 2012. ISBN 978-0134047232