

ORIGINAL ARTICLE



MJSSH
Muallim Journal of
Social Science and Humanities

EMBARKING ON A JOURNEY: UNRAVELING CULTURAL TAPESTRY IN THE REALM OF IN-SERVICE ENGLISH LANGUAGE INSTRUCTORS WITHIN A MALAYSIAN HIGHER EDUCATION HAVEN

Tanzima Sultana ¹; Mwana Ali Abdalla ²;
Mohamad Ridhuan Abdullah ^{*3}

¹ Department of Curriculum and Instruction, International Islamic University of Malaysia.

Email: tssamia@gmail.com

² Teacher Training & Coordination Division, Zanzibar Institute of Education (ZIE), Tanzania.

Email: mwana.abdalla@zie.go.tz

³ Department of Curriculum and Instruction, International Islamic University of Malaysia.

Email: ridhuanabdullah@iium.edu.my

*Corresponding author

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33306/mjssh/275>

Abstract

This study explores how English language instructors (ELIs) at a Malaysian international university comprehend cultural diversity, apply culturally responsive teaching in their classrooms, and align their practices with Banks's four levels of ethnic content integration. Through qualitative case analysis, we interviewed five seasoned ELIs, aiming to unravel the connection between their beliefs and teaching methods. Understanding teachers' perceptions is crucial for the successful implementation of multicultural education. Our inductive thematic analysis reveals that instructors at the selected university possess only a surface-level grasp of cultural diversity. Interestingly, their perception and incorporation of cultural diversity elements into ELIs don't align with Banks's model. Furthermore, teachers' beliefs are rooted in a color-evasive ideology, influencing their reflexivity and efforts to foster culturally responsive teaching. This study's findings offer valuable insights for refining teacher training programs, ensuring a more effective implementation of culturally responsive instruction in educational institutions characterized by diverse student populations.

Keywords: Cultural Diversity, Multicultural Education; Banks' Ethnic Integration Model, Teachers' Beliefs, Qualitative Case Study.

This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Non-Commercial 4.0 International License



Received 25th November 2023, revised 5th January 2024, accepted 27th January 2024

Introduction

The escalating forces of globalization and widespread migration worldwide have elevated the imperative of establishing educational environments that endorse equity and cultural pluralism, particularly in culturally diverse regions (Civitillo et al., 2019)¹. Scholars have persistently championed the cause of equity and cultural inclusivity in multicultural societies (Forrest et al., 2017²; Stewart, 2020³; Stunell, 2021⁴). It is widely recognized that teachers' underlying beliefs manifest in their teaching behavior and the educational settings they create. Extensive studies highlight the intricate and multi-layered nature of teachers' beliefs (Civitillo et al., 2019¹). Attempting to comprehend teachers' beliefs about cultural diversity in isolation can be counterproductive due to the inherent connection between conduct and environmental factors (Abacioglu et al., 2019⁵). We need to understand the necessity of investigating teachers' beliefs within the context of multicultural education and the practice of culturally responsive teaching (Banks, 2009⁶). This global research gap is particularly conspicuous in a multi-racial and culturally diverse country like Malaysia, which was the focal point of our empirical study. While educators significantly contribute to the internationalization of Malaysia's higher education system, existing research primarily delves into economic and socio-cultural aspects of diversity, specific Malaysian ethnicities (Malay, Chinese, and Indian), or the experiences of international students in Malaysia (Munusamy & Hashim, 2019⁷; Zain et al., 2017⁸ Wan & Chew, 2013⁹). Limited attention has been given to the educational motives of international students in Malaysia (Foo et al., 2016¹⁰), with previous studies focusing on local administrators or international students. To our knowledge, no study has explored how English teachers can enhance cultural diversity through their instructions, offering fulfilling multicultural experiences to international students, and by addressing the impact of integration.

Malaysia, renowned for its multi-ethnic composition, has a rich history of attracting a diverse population, including scholars, merchants, missionaries, and laborers, to its peninsula from various parts of the world (Koh & Harris, 2020¹¹). Notably, the education sector in Malaysia has witnessed a significant increase in the enrollment of international students in higher educational institutions in recent years. In the fiscal year 2019, approximately 135,000 international students were enrolled in both public and private higher educational institutions in Malaysia. This surge reflects a growing cultural diversity in the Malaysian education environment, aligning with the goals outlined in the Malaysian educational blueprint for higher education (2015-2025). The blueprint aims to elevate the number of international students enrolled in Malaysian institutions to 250,000 by 2025, emphasizing cultural diversity as one of the six major aspirations of the Malaysian education system (Suhaili et al., 2019¹²). Given these aspirations, it becomes imperative for Malaysian educators and decision-makers to prioritize the incorporation of culturally responsive instruction.

Motivated by this research gap, our study delves into teachers' perceptions of cultural diversity and the enactment of culturally responsive instruction within the classroom. We identify and assess the beliefs and attainment of cultural diversity by English language instructors (ELIs) in an international higher education setting. Comparing our findings to Banks' four levels of ethnic content integration (Banks, 2009⁶) reveals discrepancies between teachers' beliefs and practices. Banks' model recognized as seminal, provided a comprehensive guideline for integrating multicultural elements into instruction (Gorski, 2009¹³). Timely given the increasing importance of educators possessing appropriate skills in engaging cultural diversity, our study explores ELI practices within the classroom, aiming to inform the improvement of teacher development

programs by incorporating necessary remedial elements. The research findings serve as a guide for ELIs to ensure culturally responsive instructions.

Research Questions

We investigate the three following research questions:

- (1) What were the English Language Instructors' understanding of cultural diversity?
- (2) How did the instructors integrate elements of multicultural education during teaching?
- (3) How congruent were their understanding and integration of elements of cultural diversity with Banks' Four Levels of Integration of Ethnic Content?

Literature Review

This study has deployed Banks' (2009⁶) four levels of integration of ethnic content. We follow Gay's (2013) outline which specifies that for teachers there are mainly four references for multicultural education. Banks' theory is one of them. Gorski, (2009¹³) has acknowledged Banks' work as among the prominent scholarly works in this field. The main aspects of this model are briefly discussed below.

Banks' Four Levels of Ethnic Integration Model

The mainstream curriculum can be offensive when it ignores and undermines students' experiences and schematic understanding, particularly those of minority groups. Banks proposed a model aiming to ensure fair, equal, and just teaching and learning for all, discouraging the implementation of mainstream curriculum that could perpetuate racism, ethnocentrism, and harmful nationalism (Banks, 2009⁶). The mainstream curriculum may hinder minority learning experiences by neglecting the complexity and dynamics of their culture. Banks's model introduces four levels of ethnic content: the contribution approach (level 1), additive approach (level 2), transformation approach (level 3), and social action approach (level 4).

The contribution approach is the initial step, involving the inclusion of cultural artifacts or ethnic heroes in daily teaching. The additive approach adds content, concepts, themes, and perspectives of ethnic/cultural artifacts to the curriculum without altering its structure or dominant-centric criteria. This approach lacks effectiveness in promoting multicultural or diverse practices. In contrast, the transformation approach allows multiple ethnic perspectives into the curriculum, enabling students to compare them with mainstream perspectives and gain new insights. The social action approach empowers students to make decisions and take actions, contributing to the reduction of ethnic marginalization in society.

According to DomNwachukwu (2018¹⁴), the last two approaches can be effectively incorporated by creating cultural awareness and integrating cultural appreciation into the mainstream curriculum, including language and arts. This integration can be facilitated by universities, enabling teachers to teach multicultural awareness without struggling with their schedules.

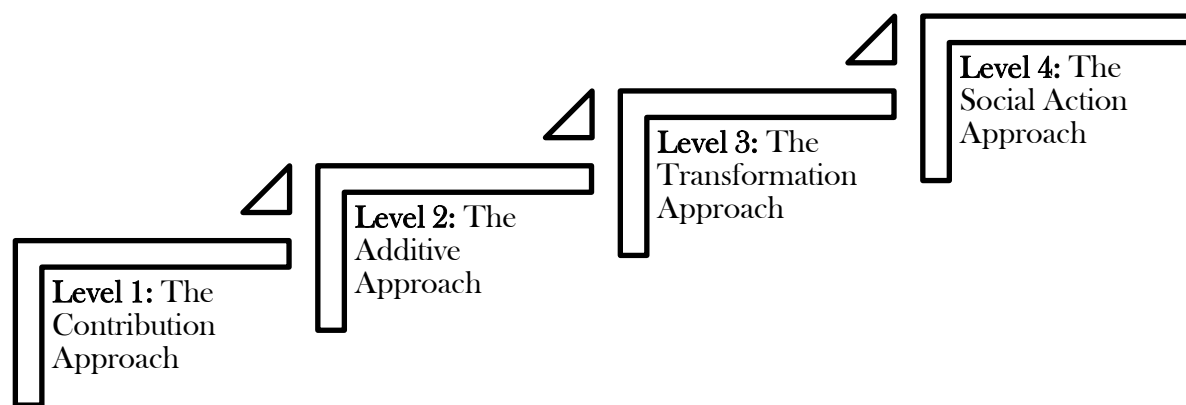


Figure 1: Banks Four level of Ethnic Integration Model

Civitillo et al., (2019¹) found a strong connection between teachers' beliefs and Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT), supporting Gay's (2013¹⁵) observation that teachers' beliefs shape their behavior. Beliefs and attitudes always come before and influence behaviors, emphasizing the importance of examining teacher beliefs before instructional actions (p. 49). Even when teachers share the same educational environment, their beliefs can differ, leading to varied responses in challenging situations. Studying the interplay between beliefs and practices is crucial for understanding how cultural diversity is supported in the classroom (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008¹⁶; Civitillo et al., 2019¹; Gay, 2013¹⁶; Walton et al., 2014¹⁷).

Cultural diversity is a complex concept encompassing differences in age, gender, race, nationality, and ability (Godfrey et al., 2020¹⁸). Schachner (2019¹⁹) defines it as a blend of cultural pluralism, equity, and inclusion, emphasizing the acknowledgment and celebration of differences by involving, recognizing and celebrating differences in human relationships within society or organizations. Gay (2010²¹) highlights the importance of culturally responsive teaching, which utilizes the cultural knowledge and experiences of ethnically diverse students to enhance learning relevance and effectiveness. Teaching to cultural diversity involves exposing students to accurate knowledge about different ethnic groups.

Embracing the strength of cultural diversity is the starting point for teaching culturally diverse students (Civitillo et al., 2018²²). In multicultural educational settings, such as international universities, increased interaction with diverse students through culturally responsive instruction can enhance academic and social outcomes (Ward & Kennedy, 1999²³). English Language Instructors (ELIs) equipped with cross-cultural communicative competence skills can effectively navigate differences in the classroom (Juang & Schachner, 2020²⁴).

Culturally responsive instruction in higher education raises awareness of complex social problems and fosters pedagogical approaches involving dialogue, experiential learning, reflection, social critique, and commitment to change (Hurtado, 2010²⁵). Holmgren and Jonsson (2013²⁶) note that culturally responsive instruction correlates with increased academic achievement and creativity, attributing this improvement to diverse perspectives that enhance problem-solving skills.

Aligning university policies with cultural diversity is crucial (Civitillo et al., 2019¹). Higher institutions play a pivotal role in improving societal cohesion by addressing students' multiple identities. Diversity is integral to universities achieving their intellectual missions (Jayakumar, 2008²⁷). Policies supporting cultural diversity offer significant benefits, challenging students' perspectives and hypotheses on various issues (Rubenstein, 2001²⁸).

English language instructors can potentially play a significant role in promoting suitable environment for creating and nurturing cultural diversity through their everyday classroom operations such as lesson planning, the reflective practices during the lecture, everyday interaction with students (Vieluf & Göbel, 2019²⁹). Instructors' everyday classroom operations are inextricably intertwined with how they conceptualize and perceive cultural diversity (Civitillo et al., 2019¹). Even though they are crowned with a position of advantage in bringing great changes in the way an institution treats and enacts culturally responsive instruction, they will not be able to yield great impact from their position if they are not equipped with proper understanding of cultural diversity. Therefore, to promote a classroom environment suitable for embracing and developing cultural diversity in the context of an international university, it is necessary to improve proper perspective and understanding of cultural diversity among the ELIs.

A lack of knowledge among educators in handling and supporting learners with multicultural diversity can have detrimental effects. To address this issue, researchers advocate for increased professional development programs for teachers, aiming to enhance their awareness and reflective pedagogy (Niemi & Hahl, 2019³⁰; Szelei et al., 2019³¹). Despite classrooms becoming more culturally diverse globally, teachers often struggle to adapt quickly. Thus, teachers from all backgrounds must undergo essential training to effectively interact in culturally diverse classrooms (Juang & Schachner, 2020³²). The importance of this training is underscored by the fact that teachers who are more aware of their biases and shortcomings are less likely to discriminate or hold prejudice against students. Correcting such behavior becomes challenging when teachers are unaware of their biases and shortcomings. The researchers also note that pre-service teachers who receive training are more conscious of their biases and mistakes, indicating that teachers' beliefs can be shaped with appropriate training.

Methodology

We adopted a case study approach, known for its effectiveness in uncovering nuanced details in qualitative research (Baxter & Jack, 2008³³). During interviews, participants shared their understanding, stories, and perspectives on cultural diversity. Through these narratives, we examined their experiences, identified reasons for confusion, and devised strategies to align their language instruction with Banks's cultural diversity framework. The choice of a case study was justified by the specific context of an international university (Miles & Huberman, 1984³⁴). Our study, using an instrumental case study design, aimed to gain insights for addressing cultural diversity issues within the framework of multicultural education (Stake, 1995³⁵), employing Banks' integration of ethnic content model.

The research unfolded at an "English Language Center" within an international university in Malaysia. This site was ideal because international students with limited English skills were required to attend compulsory remedial English classes for three hours per week throughout a long semester. This prerequisite ensured that students could pass the English Language proficiency

exam before pursuing their desired fields, leading to prolonged interactions between the selected interviewees, who were English teachers, and international students.

For the interview, we selected 5 English teachers (2 male and 3 female) using a purposive snowball technique. Chosen for their extensive teaching experience with international students exceeding 10 years, they provided a balanced representation of both male and female instructors, aged between 40 and 50 years. In this study, we referred to the male respondents as John and Yusof and the female respondents as Emma, Sarah, and Aysha. Table 1 highlights the demographics and characteristics of the participants.

Table 01:

Participants' demographics

Teachers' Names ^a	Gender	Age Range	Years of Experiences	Highest Credentials
John	Male	40-50	10	Ph.D.
Sarah	Female	40-50	10	Masters (ELS)
Yusof	Male	40-50	10	Ph.D.
Emma	Female	40-50	10	Masters (ELS)
Aysha	Female	40-50	10	Masters (ELS)

In the beginning of data collection procedure, the informants were sent emails asking for their consents. Each interviewee was interviewed twice for two hours each time. In total, interviews researchers have interviewed the selected teachers for 20 hours cumulatively.

The interviewed data had been analyzed using inductive and deductive thematic analysis. This helped us to enhance the rigor and transparency of the research process (Pearse, 2019³⁶). The interviews were recorded and transcribed. The transcribed interviews were rechecked to ensure accuracy. Then the transcribed interviews were coded. During the coding section we divided the code into two sections: codes from theory and emerging codes. The coded data was further categorized according to research question. We also dropped the unrelated codes and categories because we want to see the relevant categories that could connect to our research questions only. Similar codes were formed together to form the themes.

Result & Discussion

Teachers' Understanding of the Meaning of Diversity

Accepting Individual differences

The way English instructors view cultural diversity affects how they teach every day. When asked about their understanding of the term, most respondents gave similar answers. To them, cultural diversity means accepting differences in things like background, religion, culture, learning styles, and communication methods. However, some, like John and Sarah, had a more limited understanding, missing out on aspects like gender differences and sexual orientation.

^a The table consists of demographic of all five participants. Instead of participants' real name, pseudonym has been used. The table shows information about teachers' gender, age, years of experiences in teaching and credentials.

“I generally think that cultural diversity means that you come from different background as well as different religion. It is the way you learn, how you interact with people, how you share ideas and how you explain something”. (John)

“The differences in cultures, beliefs of people from different countries to me is what I can refer as cultural diversity” (Sarah)

Understanding Students’ Cultural Background

Some teachers emphasize the significance of understanding cultural diversity for a larger purpose beyond assisting students. Yusof, for instance, sees cultural diversity as a means to foster mutual dialogue, creating a supportive and open environment where teachers can gain a deeper understanding of students' diverse cultural backgrounds.

“In order to enhance harmonious learning environment, understanding cultural diversity is important, communicating to each other, to do group work, teacher will consider mixing the students regardless their differences”. (Yusof)

Colour-Evasive Ideology Influencing the Conceptualization of Cultural Diversity

Some respondents showed that their understanding of cultural diversity was based on a color-evasive ideology. John and Emma, for instance, believe that color-evasiveness is a part of cultural diversity, insisting that all cultures should be treated the same way. This perspective influences how they incorporate cultural diversity in their classrooms.

“that we achieve the objectives of our teaching and learning we have to understand what cultural diversity is, what causes cultural diversity, what are the effects and what the situation is? I think we can say we have to see all cultures in the same way”. (John)

“It means there is no culture which is better than others, my commitment to cultural diversity is to look all cultures as the same” (Emma)

To this Sarah adds that she accepted all the differences that exists among students to avoid judging them differently.

“I accept it as a fact, and don’t judge it, well in the classroom, I have a side of the local students and I have a side of the international students that is why I need to be more careful” (Sarah)

Maintaining Status Quo

Cultural diversity, to some of the lecturers, means to maintain the status quo and not to take any initiative to improve the integration of cultural diversity in the educational institutions. As John reiterates:

It’s already here, you see the cultures exist, our leaders try to maintain and to promote a good relationship among the workers and students, and students themselves make friends, it’s okay, no need to do anything”. (John)

Limiting Definition of Cultural Diversity Only into Language Differences

When asked about her understanding of cultural diversity, Sarah mentioned that differences in culture and beliefs of people from different cultures constitute cultural diversity. However, she specifically highlighted that, to her, cultural differences only refer to variations in language. This response from Sarah is concerning as it indicates not only a tendency towards color-evasion but also a limited comprehension of cultural diversity-

“Well, I see them as people, so what makes a country different is just a language, so how are you going to handle the language? Because it is an International University, and especially here in this place, for the language class, majority of students are non-Malaysian, so it is nothing to think about”. (Sarah)

Teachers’ Perception of the Effect of Diversity on Pedagogy

Cultural Diversity Is Mutually Beneficial for Teachers’ And Students

The respondents share a belief in the importance of teaching in a diverse classroom, seeing it as mutually beneficial for both teachers and students. They find it engaging for international students while also providing valuable insights and challenges for teaching and learning. For instance, Yusof, one of the lecturers, has emphasized the significance of diversity for both teachers and students.

“Teaching students with a diverse culture help us getting insight on what the problems of teaching and learning are. As a result, it challenges you, push you to read, you have to assess yourself, you have to be dynamic to the style and methods of teaching, more prepared, you have to read more, you have to make groups having different students from different cultures”. (Yusof) John believes that cultural diversity is an opportunity for the teachers to learn from the students.

“Therefore, having students from different countries will give us understanding of different cultures that we can use in the classrooms as a part of learning itself”. (John) Some of the respondents also believed that having a diverse classroom will assist students’ achievement and improvement in classroom. For example, Yusof extended his statement saying-

“I believe that the more the class has the students having different background the more the chance for them to do better. As a teacher, I have to understand what are the objectives of teaching and learning, in between pretest and posttest as a teacher, I believe that what you have on paper you can use them as a reference, but what is going on in the class you have to restructure your lesson what do you want to achieve for today”. (Yusof)

Emma shared her views that cultural diversity is not just a matter of teaching and learning, as it helps the students to learn tolerance and even the teachers to learn tolerance, understand various things in order to develop character. She narrated that:

“Education is a place to learn tolerance for others”. (Emma) Sarah relates the tolerance culture with opportunities to make a strong friendship, because cultural diversity has the elements of cultural and thoughts exchanged. She said:

“Not only students get benefits from the diversity but also teachers. For examples, a strong friendship is built between students themselves and even between students and teachers, the students’ cognitive ability improves from sharing ideas with diverse students who have different cognitive abilities, teachers get to know different techniques in teaching diverse students which bring an effective teaching, and the University becomes worldwide known.” (Sarah)

Constructing Supportive Pedagogical Environment

Our respondents perceived that in constructing supportive pedagogical environment, cultural diversity plays an important role. One of the respondents mentioned that:

“In order to enhance harmonious learning environment, understanding cultural diversity is important, communicating to each other, to do group work, teacher will consider mixing the students regardless their differences”. (Yusof)

Another respondent Aysha says:

“Cultural diversity should be a bridge in connecting a supportive classroom environment because teachers and students can be open minded accepting each other culture” (Aysha)

Teachers’ Effort to Integrate Cultural Diversity in Classroom

Equality For Unity and Solidarity

The respondents have mentioned that their attempt to integrate cultural diversity into teaching started with maintaining unity regardless of students’ differences.

“We want to maintain unity and solidarity in the classroom; we want to make all our students as a one group regardless their differences so as to get a good academic achievement for our students. We give them group work so that they can share their ideas and respect each other’s ideas accordingly. (Aysha)

John believes that maintaining cultural diversity in teaching could help students realizing that they are basically equal.

“Because we want to make our students realize that in this University, under the guidance of unity, all people are equal regardless their cultural differences” (John)

Avoidance of Prejudice

It is important to select topics of instruction carefully as some topics can initiate prejudice to certain culture, and carelessness needs to be avoided. Aysha said:

“When somebody prepares the curriculum, he should consider whether the topic is suitable for culturally diverse students and avoid topics which are sensitive to certain cultures”. (Aysha)

One of the goals of cultural diversity is to develop an inclusive environment in the process of instruction. One of the lecturers mentioned how she attempts to make the students feel included in her classroom:

“You try to make all students feel that they are included, so you modify the teaching from something to adapt to the circumstances” (Sarah)
One of the teachers reported that by remembering names and assigning tasks simply by uttering names might help to create an inclusive environment.

“One of the things I do is to learn everybody’s name that is really important, you can address them individually, inside the classroom, like Mary what do you think about this, try to give them something that they can do, try to include everyone” (Sarah)

Incorporating Different Types of Pedagogical Methods

To ensure culturally diverse academic environment, teachers have utilized different pedagogical methods and strategies. The teachers preferred methods that may help to increase interaction among the students.

“As a teacher I cannot rely on using one method or approach because this is the classroom that has cultural diversity so what I can do is to combine several approaches. One probably can use comparative learning, you put them in to small groups, and you know students from different countries sitting together, discussing something by using the language that we focus to introduce. I think I can combine several approaches or methods when we have this kind of students, we cannot use just one method”. (Yusof)

Some of the lecturers’ responses indicate that they prefer incorporating co-operative learning as a good strategy to maintain culturally diverse academic environment. Co-operative learning can help the lecturers create opportunity for diverse students work for accomplishing same goals. Both John and Yusof have reported that they prefer co-operative learning groups to promote cultural diversity in the instructional environment. For Example, Yusof mentioned,

“Cooperative learning is one of the strategies, for language classes-probably. We must follow their levels and we have to go stage by stage.”. (Yusof)

Language Barrier as A Challenge for Teaching in A Diverse Classroom

The respondent said that the most challenging aspect of teaching culturally diverse student is related to language barrier. This happens because English is not native for the students. ELIs have to invest more time and effort because the students’ learning pace slowed down. Sarah narrated.

“If you are able to know the common base it is easy to teach in the culturally diverse classrooms, but the challenges are that they have different languages as their mother tongue apart from English, in this regard, it is difficult to make them understand English language accordingly”. (Sarah)

Aysha said:

“To make them all aware about the instruction, sometimes they don’t understand why we conduct certain group activity and what is the relationship between the activities and passing their exams they don’t want to do the activity, but we actually want them to come with ideas, vocabularies and so on, so we have to explain to them and make follow-up for their activities” (Aysha)

Disciplinary Issues

Aysha believed that it is difficult to teach some international students if her instructions were being ignored by the students. She said:

“Yes, there might be some differences, but not really big, when I was teaching only Malaysian students they were easily controlled because they easily concentrated, but for multicultural students it is difficult as some students ignore my instructions, during the class they may use their hand phones while I’m teaching, I have to remind them again and again, so it is tougher”. (Aysha)

Table 02

Summary of research findings and comparison with Banks’ four-levels ethnic content.

Major Themes	Critical Themes	Evaluation from Bank’s Model
Understanding the meaning of Cultural Diversity	Accepting individual differences Understanding students ‘cultural backgrounds Reflection of Colour-Evasive Ideology, Diversity is the matter of language, Maintaining the status quo	Does not seem to fit with any of the Banks’ Ethnic Integration Content because of the idea to maintain the status quo. No conclusion can be derived as the definitions are general and not inclusive of gender, sexual orientation, etc.
Effect of Diversity on pedagogy	Mutually beneficial for teachers and students: tolerance, Constructing a supportive pedagogical environment	Supportive classroom and inclusivity provided by teachers should be level 3 or 4 of Ethnic Integration Content. According to Banks, level 3 focuses on the infusion of concepts learned from students’ history or backgrounds. Level 4 focuses on the empowerment of students to make decisions and actions from infused concepts that they have in level 3.
	Inclusivity	Approaches are blended from level 1 to level 4 of Ethnic Integration Content. At least now teachers have the ability to develop reflection/insight, and also aware that the students need help that could accommodate their context. ELI’s disposition towards teaching diverse students improves when they realize that they have to change from usual practices to support and accommodate diverse students’ learning needs. However, the explanation of a) supportive classroom, and b) inclusivity

<p>Teachers’ Enactment of Cultural Diversity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Equality for unity and solidarity › Different types of pedagogical method › Prejudice avoidance › Remembering students’ names › Language barriers as a challenge › Disciplinary issues 	<p>are limited to accepting and respecting students’ ideas only.</p> <p>Additive approach due to the existence of cooperative learning, students in cooperative learning can view concepts and perspectives from their own point of view. The ELI was probably tried to integrate students’ perspectives through cooperative learning.</p> <p>The challenges of diversity should not be limited to language barriers or disciplinary issues only. The integration process is incongruent with Banks’ model as their perception of diversity is limited to language and is seen as the reinforcement of stereotypes and misconceptions. Language barriers should be the opportunity to grow for a better improve ELI teaching disposition</p>
--	--

RQ1: How Did the ELIS Comprehend Cultural Diversity in A Context of Instructing in An International University?

The study revealed significant discrepancies in English Language Instructors' (ELIs) understanding and application of cultural diversity compared to Banks's standards. ELIs demonstrated a superficial understanding, leading to broad generalizations in their instruction sessions. This oversight bypassed the complex aspects of diversity, deviating from Banks's comprehensive definition.

ELIs' understanding lacked depth, as it did not consider how diverse students contribute rich experiences and perspectives to cross-cultural exchanges in the classroom. Their minimal explanation of cultural pluralism indicated a shallow comprehension of cultural diversity. Additionally, ELIs' beliefs emphasized treating all cultures equally, echoing a color-blind ideology. This perspective ignores the unique contexts of international students and perpetuates color-blind racism in the university.

Responses from ELIs suggested a belief in treating all students the same, neglecting the distinct challenges faced by international students. This color-blind ideology stems from principles of equality and inclusion but overlooks the importance of acknowledging and respecting cultural differences. This limited understanding affects how ELIs approach the instruction of international students, promoting assimilation rather than recognizing the value of cultural diversity. Critics of equality and inclusion principles argue for cultural pluralism, which recognizes and respects the differences among groups, considering them valuable resources. Cultural pluralism does not favor one culture over another, allowing students to reinforce their identities positively. Embracing multiple cultures in a multicultural context enhances creativity and fosters a culturally responsive environment for diverse students.

RQ2: How Did the Instructors Integrate Elements of Multicultural Education During Teaching?

The research findings underscore teachers' efforts to incorporate cultural diversity into their instruction. Respondents reported implementing various pedagogical methods, such as cooperative and comparative learning, to enhance interaction among students and promote cultural diversity in the educational environment (Jabeen, 2019³⁷).

However, the inclusive efforts mentioned by the respondents should extend beyond adapting teaching methods. Inclusive pedagogy involves principles such as fostering a growth mindset, examining power dynamics in the classroom, transparency, flexibility, and encouraging self-reflection (Jacquart et al., 2019³⁸). Unfortunately, teachers' good intentions to maintain equity and inclusivity, when ignoring individual differences, reflect a color-evasive ideology that primarily benefits the majority (Jabeen, 2019³⁷).

Teachers' lack of discourse on power, privilege, and difference indicates a deficiency in texts or materials aiming to diversify university cultural perspectives. The respondents also noted that teachers overlooked the inherent diversity among students, negatively impacting students' identity construction by missing crucial historical and cultural elements from their country of origin (Chinh, 2013³⁹).

Vieluf and Göbel (2019²⁹) emphasized the importance of acknowledging and integrating cultural content in language teaching. The failure to recognize culturally diverse students in terms of differences and experiences may lead to unsuccessful learning experiences (Vieluf & Göbel, 2019²⁹). Moreover, teachers' perception directly affects minority students' academic performance, motivation, and self-confidence (Brenick et al., 2019⁴⁰). Inclusive pedagogy, should focus on including a greater diversity of children by considering various aspects of teaching, learning, curriculum, and policy. Reports from Sarah indicated that teachers' practice of inclusivity, such as remembering names, fell short of being significant and aligned with cultural diversity, appearing more as routine tasks for teachers.

Rather than ignoring cultural differences, teachers should strive to understand diverse students' cultural expectations and reflect them in their instruction. Failure to address diversity issues may lead to prejudices and conflicting experiences and values between ELIs and students (Kirk & Durant, 2010⁴¹). Teachers' efforts to make instruction prejudice-free should involve increased engagement with students to identify cultural expectations and minimize prejudice (Abacioglu et al., 2019⁵).

RQ3: How Consistent are ELIS' Understanding and Integration of Cultural Diversity with Banks' Four Level of Integration of Ethnic Content?

Banks suggests integrating various levels of ethnic content to create a functional culturally diverse educational environment. However, the research indicates that English Language Instructors (ELIs) predominantly focus on a generalized form of cultural diversity, failing to address even the fundamental Level-1 integration of ethnic content. Sarah's response highlights that efforts to integrate cultural diversity often revolve around mere "attempts at adaptation," neglecting the need for a more nuanced approach in a diverse classroom.

In teaching within diverse settings, ELIs should go beyond adapting to students by considering their ethnic backgrounds and cultural perspectives. The research does not reveal a clear understanding or implementation of Banks' Level 1, which involves knowing national heroes or understanding national holidays, crucial for bridging cultural gaps. ELIs seem to lack in-depth knowledge about the cultures of international students, possibly stemming from a broader deficiency in intercultural awareness and multicultural education importance.

It is widely recognized that teachers with inadequate intercultural knowledge are less likely to integrate it into their teaching practices (Civitillo et al., 2017⁴²). Practical guidelines and scholarly recommendations stress the necessity of integrating cultural content into language instruction (Vieluf & Göbel, 2019²⁹). Unfortunately, in this case, minority students are virtually absent from the curriculum, and there is a lack of recognition of the need to distinguish between different cultures by ELIs and administrators. While there is no evidence of objectification, the oversight in recognizing and including different cultures in the curriculum highlights a significant gap. The inability for student groups or societies to engage in curriculum design further complicates the practical integration of cultural and ethnic identity into the educational framework.

Implication and Conclusion

The study conducted at a selected international university in Malaysia reveals two significant issues related to English Language Instructors' (ELIs) understanding of cultural diversity. Firstly, ELIs exhibit a superficial grasp of cultural diversity. Secondly, their perception aligns with color-evasiveness, where they believe in treating all students the same way as part of cultural diversity. Participants' understanding of culturally responsive teaching tends to simplify it as "treating all people alike" (Gillborn, 2019⁴³), reflecting a color-blind perspective.

Moreover, the research identifies deficiencies in the teaching materials used for instructing international students. These issues demand immediate attention to prevent adverse consequences on students' teaching and learning experiences. Vieluf and Göbel (2019²⁹) caution against detrimental educational outcomes if cultural elements are not integrated into the language curriculum. Hence, a careful examination of the curriculum is necessary to identify opportunities for including significant cultural and historical elements (Mazur, 2010²⁰).

Despite the participants expressing a belief in cultural diversity to support student learning, they highlight the need for core curriculum changes in English language instruction. The university must provide proper training for instructors to comprehend the deeper and all-encompassing meaning of cultural diversity, aligning with the broader understanding in the field of multicultural education. Additionally, incorporating culturally responsive leaders in the institution is crucial to ensure adequate teacher training, appropriate curriculum changes, and the creation of a learning environment that embraces cultural diversity.

Limitations

This study also has some limitations. Teachers' self-report was the primary source of data for this research. As McDonald, (2008⁴⁴) mentioned, one is not fully aware of one's own limitation and biases. So, the authors acknowledge that self-reports are subject to self-enhancing bias. To mitigate

this limitation, the respondents were made aware prior to the interviews that all interviews will be reported anonymously. Future studies can focus on collecting data from multiple sources.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

References:

1. Civitillo, S., Juang, L. P., Badra, M., & Schachner, M. K. (2019). The interplay between culturally responsive teaching, cultural diversity beliefs, and self-reflection: A multiple case study. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 77, 341-351.
2. Forrest, J., Lean, G., & Dunn, K. (2017). Attitudes of classroom teachers to cultural diversity and multicultural education in country New South Wales, Australia. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 42(5), 2.
3. Stewart, M. T. (2020). Multicultural Education: A Qualitative Case Study to Examine Alignment of Preservice Training to Classroom Practice (Doctoral dissertation, Northcentral University).
4. Stunell, K. (2020). Supporting student-teachers in the multicultural classroom. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 1-17.
5. Abacioglu, C. S., Zee, M., Hanna, F., Soeterik, I. M., Fischer, A. H., & Volman, M. (2019). Practice what you preach: The moderating role of teacher attitudes on the relationship between prejudice reduction and student engagement. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 86, 102887. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2019.102887>
6. Banks, J. A. (2009). Diversity and citizenship education in multicultural nations*. *Multicultural Education Review*, 1(1), 1-28.
7. Munusamy, M. M., & Hashim, A. (2019). Internationalization of Higher Education In Malaysia: Insights From Higher Education Administrators. *AEI Insights*, 21.
8. Zain, N. M., Aspah, V., Abdullah, N., & Ebrahimi, M. (2017). Challenges and evolution of higher education in Malaysia. *UMRAN-International Journal of Islamic and Civilizational Studies*, 4(1-1).
9. Wan, C., & Chew, P. Y. G. (2013). Cultural knowledge, category label, and social connections: Components of cultural identity in the global, multicultural context. *Asian Journal of Social Psychology*, 16(4), 247-259.
10. Foo, C. C., Ismail, R., & Lim, H. E. (2016). Retaining international students for advanced degree in Malaysia: Quality matters. *Jurnal Ekonomi Malaysia*, 50(1), 133-144.
11. Koh, S. Y., & Harris, A. (2020). Multicultural reflexivity: university students negotiating 'pockets' and 'strings' of multiculturalism in Malaysia. *Children's Geographies*, 1-14.
12. Suhaili, S., Mahat, H., Hashim, M., Saleh, Y., Nayan, N., & Lukmanulhakim, N. N. (2019). Multicultural Education: Cultural Space among Public University Students in Malaysia. *International Journal of Asian Social Science*, 9(6), 370-378.
13. Gorski, P. C. (2009). What we're teaching teachers: An analysis of multicultural teacher education coursework syllabi. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 25(2), 309-318.
14. DomNwachukwu, C. S. (2018). *The Theory and Practice of Multicultural Education: A Focus on the K-12 Educational Setting*. Rowman & Littlefield.

15. Gay, G. (2013). Teaching to and through cultural diversity. *Curriculum inquiry*, 43(1), 48-70.
16. Castagno, A. E., & Brayboy, B. M. J. (2008). Culturally responsive schooling for Indigenous youth: A review of the literature. *Review of educational research*, 78(4), 941-993.
17. Walton, J., Priest, N., Kowal, E., White, F., Brickwood, K., Fox, B., & Paradies, Y. (2014). Talking culture? Egalitarianism, color-blindness and racism in Australian elementary schools. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 39, 112-122.
18. Godfrey, M., Kim, J., Eluère, M., & Eys, M. (2020). Diversity in cultural diversity research: a scoping review. *International Review of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 13(1), 128-146.
19. Schachner, M. K. (2019). From equality and inclusion to cultural pluralism—Evolution and effects of cultural diversity perspectives in schools. *European Journal of Developmental Psychology*, 16(1), 1-17.
20. Mazur, B. (2010). Cultural Diversity in Organizational Theory and Practice. *Journal of Intercultural Management*, 2(2), 5–15. Retrieved from: <http://joim.pl/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/2-2-Cultural-Diversity-in-Organisational-Theory-and-Practice.pdf>
21. Gay, G. (2010). Acting on beliefs in teacher education for cultural diversity. *Journal of teacher education*, 61(1-2), 143-152.
22. Civitillo, S., Juang, L. P., & Schachner, M. K. (2018). Challenging beliefs about cultural diversity in education: A synthesis and critical review of trainings with pre-service teachers. *Educational Research Review*, 24, 67-83.
23. Ward, C., & Kennedy, A. (1999). The measurement of sociocultural adaptation. *International journal of Intercultural Relations*. 23(4), 659-677.
24. Juang, L. P., & Schachner, M. K. (2020). Cultural diversity, migration and education. *International Journal of Psychology*, 55(5), 695-701.
25. Hurtado, A. (2010). *Multiple lenses: Multicultural feminist theory*. In H. Landrine & N. F. Russo (Eds.), *Handbook of diversity in feminist psychology* (p. 29–54). Springer Publishing Company.
26. Holmgren, D., & Jonsson, A., (2013). Cultural diversity in organizations. A study on the view and management on cultural diversity. [Master Thesis, Umeå School of Business and Economics]
27. Jayakumar, U. (2008). Can higher education meet the needs of an increasingly diverse and global society? Campus diversity and cross-cultural workforce competencies. *Harvard Educational Review*, 78(4), 615-651.
28. Rubenstein, R. E. (2001). Basic human needs: The next steps in theory development. *International Journal of peace studies*, 6(1), 51-58.
29. Vieluf, S., & Göbel, K. (2019). Making intercultural learning in EFL lessons interesting—The role of teaching processes and individual learning prerequisites and their interactions. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 79, 1-16.
30. Niemi, P.M., & Hahl, K. (2019). Reproducing, disrupting and reforming understanding of cultural diversity: theorizing future subject teachers’ pedagogical reflections. *Teaching education*, 30 (3), 319-336.
31. Szelei, N., Tinoca, L., & Pinho, A. S. (2019). Rethinking ‘cultural activities’: An examination of how teachers utilised student voice as a pedagogical tool in multicultural schools. *Teaching and teacher education*, 79, 176-187.
32. Juang, L. P., & Schachner, M. K. (2020). Cultural diversity, migration and education. *International Journal of Psychology*, 55(5), 695-701.
33. Baxter, P., & Jack, S. (2008). Qualitative Case Study Methodology: Study Design and Implementation for Novice Researchers. *The Qualitative Report*, 13(4), 544-559. Retrieved from <http://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol13/iss4/2>

34. Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1984). Qualitative data analysis: A sourcebook of new methods. In *Qualitative data analysis: a sourcebook of new methods*. Sage publications.
35. Stake, R. E. (1995). The art of case study research. Sage.
36. Pearse, N. (2019, June). An illustration of deductive analysis in qualitative research. In 18th European Conference on Research Methodology for Business and Management Studies (p. 264).
37. Jabeen, R. (2019). Multicultural Diverse Classroom Addressing the Instructional Challenges and Reflections, from a Teacher's Perspective. *Arab World English Journal (AWEJ) Special Issue: The Dynamics of EFL in Saudi Arabia*, 127-136. <https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/efl1.10>
38. Jacquart, M., Scott, R., Hermsberg, K., & Bloch-Schulman, S. (2019). Diversity Is Not Enough: The Importance of Inclusive Pedagogy. *Teaching Philosophy*, 42(2), 107-139.
39. Chinh, N. D. (2013). Cultural Diversity in English Language Teaching: Learners' Voices. *English Language Teaching*, 6(4), 1-7.
40. Brenick, A., Schachner, M. K., Carvalheiro, D., & Karr, E. (2019). (No) Space for Prejudice! Varied Forms of Negative Outgroup Attitudes and Ethnic Discrimination and How They Develop or Can Be Prevented in the Classroom. *Handbook of Children and Prejudice* (pp. 315-330). Springer, Cham.
41. Kirk, D. J., & Durant, R. (2010). Crossing the line: Framing appropriate responses in the diversity classroom. *Journal of Management Education*, 34(6), 823-847.
42. Civitillo, S., Schachner, M., Juang, L., van de Vijver, F. J., Handrick, A., & Noack, P. (2017). Towards a better understanding of cultural diversity approaches at school: A multi-informant and mixed-methods study. *Learning, Culture and Social Interaction*, 12, 1-14.
43. Gillborn, D. (2019). Hiding in Plain Sight: Understanding and Addressing Whiteness and Color-Blind Ideology in Education. *Kappa Delta Pi Record*, 55(3), 112-117.
44. McDonald, J. D. (2008). Measuring personality constructs: The advantages and disadvantages of self-reports, informant reports and behavioral assessments. *Enquire*, 1(1), 1-19.