

The Implementation of Culturally Responsive Teaching in EFL Writing Instruction

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the implementation of Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing classroom at a public university in Pakistan and examined how students' writing performance was reflected in culturally responsive writing activities. The study employed a descriptive qualitative design involving 30 undergraduate students and one EFL writing instructor. Data were collected through classroom observations, interviews, document analysis, and students' writing samples. A 24-item observation checklist based on Gay's (2018) six CRT dimensions was used to analyze classroom practices. Students completed two narrative writing tasks consisting of culturally neutral and culturally familiar prompts, which were assessed using an analytic writing rubric covering content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics. The findings indicated that validating and empowering practices appeared most consistently during classroom instruction, while transformative and emancipatory practices appeared less frequently. Descriptive analysis showed that writing responses to culturally familiar prompts generally demonstrated richer content, clearer organization, more elaborated vocabulary, and stronger contextual detail than responses to culturally neutral prompts. Qualitative findings further revealed that culturally familiar writing tasks encouraged students to draw on personal experiences, family traditions, and community practices in their writing. However, because the study employed a descriptive qualitative design without a control group or inferential statistical analysis, the findings should not be interpreted as evidence of causal instructional effectiveness. Instead, the study suggests that culturally responsive writing activities may support contextualized expression and student engagement in EFL writing classrooms.

Keywords: culturally responsive teaching, EFL writing, culturally responsive pedagogy, writing performance, Pakistani higher education

INTRODUCTION

Teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) in non-English-speaking countries still faces ongoing pedagogical difficulties, especially when it comes to helping students become better writers. Because writing necessitates the integration of several subskills, such as vocabulary use, grammatical precision, rhetorical structure, and critical thinking, it is

commonly acknowledged as one of the most complicated language skills (Hyland, 2019; Zhang & Hyland, 2022). Writing is cognitively difficult even for experienced learners because it needs them to actively compose words and arrange thoughts clearly, unlike receptive abilities like listening and reading. Writing teaching frequently becomes mechanical, examination-oriented, and detached from students' sociocultural experiences in EFL environments like Pakistan, where opportunities to utilise English outside of the classroom are scarce (Lee, 2021; Nassaji, 2021). In English writing classes, Pakistani EFL students often have trouble coming up with ideas, structuring arguments, and successfully expressing their own opinions (Fareed et al., 2016; Haider, 2012).

Numerous studies conducted in Pakistan have brought attention to persistent issues in EFL writing teaching, such as university students' insufficient vocabulary knowledge, grammatical errors, first-language interference, and writing anxiety (Fareed et al., 2016; Haider, 2012). Furthermore, instructor-centered and examination-oriented methods that prioritise memorisation and inflexible rhetorical frameworks over meaningful communication and self-expression are frequently used in English writing schools in Pakistan (Rahman, 2002). Even though culture has a significant influence on how students create meaning and convey ideas, these approaches frequently ignore the cultural backgrounds and real-world experiences of students. As a result, when asked to write about foreign or culturally distant subjects, many students report low motivation and low involvement. These circumstances imply that Pakistani EFL writers have pedagogical and contextual difficulties in addition to linguistic ones.

Scholars have increasingly stressed the significance of culturally responsive pedagogies in language instruction as a solution to this problem. According to Gay (2018), Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) is an educational strategy that makes use of students' cultural knowledge, past experiences, and social realities to enhance the significance and efficacy of learning. CRT views students' identities and cultural backgrounds as important educational resources rather than as a barrier. CRT encourages educators to create writing exercises that relate classroom knowledge to students' own experiences, regional customs, social concerns, and everyday realities (Ladson-Billings, 2021). Students may become more inclined to communicate their thoughts, gain self-assurance in their writing, and engage more fully in class discussions through culturally appropriate writing assignments. Culturally responsive instruction also supports cognitive engagement by connecting learning to students' existing cultural schemas and emotional experiences (Hammond, 2015). As a result, writing serves as a tool for critical thinking and identity expression in addition to being a language exercise (Darvin & Norton, 2023).

Given Pakistan's vast cultural, ethnic, and linguistic variety, CRT is especially pertinent in the country's higher education system. In universities, students from many provinces, languages, and cultural traditions study together, but English writing programs frequently continue to use imported materials and generalised topics that do not accurately reflect students' local reality. The significance of acknowledging students' multilingual and intercultural backgrounds in English language instruction has also been highlighted by Pakistani academics (Mahboob, 2014). However, there is still a lack of research on culturally sensitive teaching methods in Pakistani EFL writing classes, particularly at the university level. Instead of extensively documenting how culturally responsive approaches are used during writing

instruction, the majority of research conducted in Pakistan has focused on instructors' perceptions of pedagogy or students' attitudes toward learning English.

According to research conducted worldwide, culturally sensitive teaching methods can enhance students' involvement and engagement in language acquisition. Similarly, Liao and Li (2023) reported that culturally responsive teaching in EFL classrooms facilitated students' intercultural competence and encouraged more meaningful classroom interaction. For instance, Prilutskaya (2021) discovered that culturally sensitive teaching methods in Turkish EFL classrooms improved student engagement and reinforced the links between students' identities and the course materials. Additionally, Huang and Chalmers (2023) found that multilingual and culturally sensitive methods enhanced students' vocabulary growth and engagement in writing assignments. In a similar vein, Sun (2022) found that writing assignments that were culturally appropriate inspired students to create more coherent and meaningful written works. However, fewer research offered thorough explanations of how CRT strategies are applied in writing classrooms and how students' writing outcomes are reflected across particular writing components. Instead, these studies mostly concentrated on student involvement and classroom interaction.

Geneva Gay's (2018) concept of Culturally Responsive Teaching, in particular its validating, comprehensive, multidimensional, empowering, transformative, and emancipatory qualities, serves as the foundation for this study. These factors direct the examination of teaching strategies in the classroom and the ways in which culturally sensitive writing exercises enhance students' writing abilities. The CRT aspects are operationalised in this study through instructional strategies include incorporating students' cultural experiences into writing assignments, promoting culturally familiar examples, fostering meaningful engagement, and fostering positive classroom relationships. Based on classroom writing assessments, students' performance in five writing components, content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics, is operationally defined as their writing performance. This study descriptively investigates how culturally responsive methods are applied and how students' writing performance is mirrored in culturally related writing tasks, as opposed to investigating causal effectiveness through an experimental or pre-test/post-test approach.

Although there is an increasing interest in culturally responsive pedagogy, little research conducted in Pakistani classrooms has shown how CRT concepts are applied in EFL writing instruction and how students' writing performance is reflected in various writing components. Few studies have looked at classroom teaching strategies in connection to students' actual writing outcomes; most prior research has concentrated on student attitudes or general classroom involvement. Thus, the purpose of this study is to investigate students' writing performance in culturally responsive writing exercises and to give a contextualised account of CRT implementation in an EFL writing classroom at a public university in Pakistan.

The following research issues are addressed in this study (1) How is Culturally Responsive Teaching implemented in EFL writing classrooms at a Pakistani university? (2) How is students' writing performance reflected in culturally responsive writing activities? This study adds to the expanding conversation about culturally responsive pedagogy in EFL higher education by concentrating on classroom practices and students' writing outputs. It also offers insights pertinent to the Pakistani educational setting.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to investigate the implementation of Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) in an EFL writing classroom and to describe students' writing performance within culturally responsive writing activities. This design was selected because it enables researchers to examine educational phenomena in natural classroom settings while capturing the complexity of instructional practices, classroom interaction, and participant perspectives (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Tracy, 2020). The study focused primarily on describing how CRT principles were reflected in classroom practices rather than measuring instructional effectiveness or establishing causal relationships. Descriptive numerical information from students' writing scores was used only to support the qualitative interpretation of students' writing performance across different writing components.

Participants or Data Sources

The participants consisted of 30 undergraduate students enrolled in an EFL writing course at a public university in Pakistan during the 2024/2025 academic year. The students were between 19 and 23 years old and represented diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, including Punjabi, Pashtun, Sindhi, and Balochi. Purposive sampling was employed based on two criteria: (a) enrollment in the selected EFL writing course and (b) willingness to participate voluntarily in the study.

The study also involved one EFL writing instructor with eight years of teaching experience in Pakistani higher education. The instructor had prior interest and experience in culturally responsive pedagogical practices. To minimize researcher bias, classroom observations, writing assessment, and document analysis were conducted systematically using predefined instruments and triangulated across multiple data sources.

Instruments

Four instruments were utilized to ensure data triangulation. First, a structured classroom observation checklist containing 24 items was developed based on Gay's (2018) six CRT dimensions: validating, comprehensive, multidimensional, empowering, transformative, and emancipatory. Each item used a four-point scale ranging from "not observed" to "highly evident" and included a field-note section for descriptive classroom observations. Sample observation items included: "The instructor connects writing topics to students' cultural experiences" and "Students are encouraged to share personal or community perspectives during writing activities." Session means were calculated descriptively by averaging the checklist scores from each observation session to identify the overall presence of CRT practices in classroom instruction. The checklist was completed by the researcher immediately after each classroom observation session based on direct classroom observation and accompanying field notes.

Second, an analytic writing rubric adapted from Weigle (2002) and Hyland (2022) was used to examine students' writing performance across five components: content (30 points), organization (20 points), vocabulary (20 points), grammar (20 points), and mechanics (10 points). The writing tasks consisted of two narrative prompts with comparable genre demands, expected length, and writing difficulty. The first prompt required students to write about a

general daily-life experience, while the second invited students to write about a culturally familiar experience related to local traditions or family practices. The prompts were designed to maintain similar narrative structures while differing in cultural relevance.

Third, a semi-structured interview guide consisting of 12 open-ended questions was used to explore the instructor's perspectives regarding CRT implementation, classroom challenges, and perceived student engagement during writing activities. Fourth, a document analysis checklist was employed to analyze lesson plans, classroom materials, and student assignments for CRT-related features such as cultural representation, contextual relevance, and opportunities for student voice.

Validity Procedure

Several procedures were employed to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the instruments and findings. The writing rubric was reviewed by two experienced EFL writing instructors to improve the clarity and consistency of the scoring descriptors. The interview guide was evaluated by two doctoral researchers in English education to ensure alignment with CRT concepts and the study objectives. The observation checklist underwent pilot observation in two preliminary classroom sessions, resulting in the revision of ambiguous wording and refinement of several observation indicators.

To support scoring consistency, two independent raters assessed the students' writing samples using the analytic rubric. Before scoring, both raters participated in a calibration session to discuss rubric interpretation and sample scoring procedures. The writing scripts were scored independently, and scoring differences were discussed until agreement was reached. The raters were not informed of the specific categorization of the prompts during scoring. Inter-rater reliability analysis indicated strong scoring consistency, with an intraclass correlation coefficient (ICC) of 0.89.

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection was conducted over six weeks. Four classroom observations were carried out, with each session lasting approximately 90 minutes. The researcher assumed a non-participant observer role during all observations. Observation data included checklist scores and detailed field notes documenting classroom interaction, instructional practices, and student participation.

Following the classroom observations, students completed two narrative writing tasks. One task used a culturally neutral topic, while the other employed a culturally familiar topic connected to students' social or cultural experiences. The writing activities were conducted during regular classroom sessions under similar instructional conditions.

After the writing activities, a semi-structured interview was conducted with the instructor. The interview was audio-recorded with permission and transcribed verbatim for analysis. In addition, instructional documents including lesson plans, classroom materials, and student writing samples were collected to support document analysis.

Prior to data collection, participants were informed about the purpose of the study, voluntary participation, confidentiality procedures, and their right to withdraw at any stage of the research. Written consent was obtained from all participants. To maintain anonymity, pseudonyms were used in reporting interview excerpts and classroom observations.

Data Analysis Techniques

Observation data, field notes, interview transcripts, and documents were analyzed thematically using the six-phase framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (2022), including familiarization, coding, theme generation, theme review, theme definition, and reporting. Thematic analysis was used to identify recurring patterns related to the implementation of CRT dimensions in classroom practices.

Students' writing scores were analyzed descriptively to support the qualitative interpretation of writing performance across the five writing components. The analysis focused on describing patterns and tendencies in students' writing rather than testing statistical effectiveness or causal relationships. Writing results were interpreted alongside observation findings, interview responses, and instructional documents to provide contextual understanding of students' writing experiences within culturally responsive writing activities.

Document analysis employed qualitative content analysis to identify CRT-related themes within lesson plans, assignments, and instructional materials. Finally, triangulation across classroom observations, interviews, writing assessments, and documents was conducted to enhance the credibility, dependability, and trustworthiness of the findings (Patton, 2015; Nowell et al., 2017).

RESULTS

The results are organized according to the two research questions: (1) the implementation of Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) in EFL writing classrooms, and (2) students' writing performance reflected in culturally responsive writing activities.

Implementation of Culturally Responsive Teaching

Analysis of classroom observations, interview transcripts, and instructional documents indicated that the instructor implemented CRT practices consistent with Gay's (2018) six dimensions: validating, comprehensive, multidimensional, empowering, transformative, and emancipatory. Scores presented in Table 1 were derived from the 24-item classroom observation checklist. Each CRT dimension was represented by four observation items rated on a four-point scale ranging from 1 ("not observed") to 4 ("consistently observed"). Session scores represent the average ratings across items within each CRT dimension during each observation session.

Table 1
Frequency of Observed CRT Practices

| CRT Principle | Session 1 | Session 2 | Session 3 | Session 4 | Mean |
|------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------|
| Validating | 3.2 | 3.5 | 3.8 | 3.9 | 3.60 |
| Comprehensive | 2.8 | 3.1 | 3.4 | 3.6 | 3.23 |
| Multidimensional | 2.5 | 3.0 | 3.3 | 3.5 | 3.08 |

| CRT Principle | Session 1 | Session 2 | Session 3 | Session 4 | Mean |
|----------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------|
| Empowering | 3.0 | 3.4 | 3.7 | 3.8 | 3.48 |
| Transformative | 2.2 | 2.6 | 3.0 | 3.2 | 2.75 |
| Emancipatory | 2.0 | 2.3 | 2.8 | 3.1 | 2.55 |

Note: Scores based on 4-point scale (1=not observed, 2=rarely observed, 3=sometimes observed, 4=consistently observed)

The observation findings showed that validating and empowering practices appeared more consistently across classroom sessions, while transformative and emancipatory dimensions appeared less frequently but became more visible during later sessions. Observation field notes and interview data further illustrated how these CRT dimensions were reflected in classroom interaction and writing instruction.

Validating Students' Cultural Experiences

The instructor frequently connected classroom activities to students' personal and cultural experiences. During the interview, the instructor explained:

"I realized that many students became more active when the writing topics were related to their own experiences and traditions." (Interview, Lines 45–47)

Field notes from Session 2 documented that the instructor invited students to discuss cultural traditions from their hometowns before beginning a narrative writing activity. Students were encouraged to share examples in both English and Urdu during brainstorming discussions.

Comprehensive and Multidimensional Instruction

Observation data showed that writing instruction extended beyond grammatical exercises and included collaborative discussion, peer interaction, visual prompts, and reflective storytelling activities. In Session 3, the instructor presented photographs of local cultural celebrations and asked students to describe memories associated with those events before drafting their essays. Lesson plans also demonstrated that writing tasks integrated cultural discussion, vocabulary exploration, and idea-sharing activities.

Empowering Classroom Participation

The instructor consistently encouraged student participation and acknowledged multiple perspectives during classroom discussions. Observation notes from Session 4 recorded that students worked collaboratively in small groups to exchange ideas related to family celebrations and community traditions before writing individually. The instructor allowed students to discuss ideas bilingually during pre-writing activities to support idea development and classroom participation.

Transformative and Emancipatory Practices

Transformative and emancipatory dimensions were observed less consistently but became increasingly visible during later sessions. Several writing activities encouraged students to reflect critically on social and cultural issues within their communities. For example, one

lesson required students to compare traditional and modern celebrations in their local environments and discuss how cultural practices had changed over time. Classroom observations indicated that students gradually became more confident in expressing personal opinions and cultural perspectives during writing discussions.

Students' Writing Performance in Culturally Responsive Writing Activities

Analysis of 30 student writing samples revealed noticeable differences between writing produced in response to culturally neutral prompts and culturally familiar prompts. The descriptive results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Descriptive Comparison of Writing Scores by Prompt Type (N = 30)

| Component | Max Score | Neutral Prompt Mean (SD) | CRT Prompt Mean (SD) |
|--------------|-----------|--------------------------|----------------------|
| Content | 30 | 18.4 (3.2) | 23.7 (2.8) |
| Organization | 20 | 12.1 (2.5) | 14.8 (2.1) |
| Vocabulary | 20 | 11.3 (2.7) | 14.1 (2.4) |
| Grammar | 20 | 12.5 (2.9) | 13.9 (2.6) |
| Mechanics | 10 | 6.2 (1.8) | 7.1 (1.5) |
| Total | 100 | 60.5 (8.6) | 73.6 (7.4) |

The descriptive findings indicated that writing responses produced from culturally familiar prompts generally demonstrated stronger performance across all five writing components compared with responses produced from culturally neutral prompts. Differences between the two prompt types appeared more visible in content, vocabulary, and organization, while grammar and mechanics showed relatively smaller differences.

Qualitative analysis of the writing samples also revealed noticeable differences in the depth of ideas, clarity of organization, and richness of cultural detail. Writing produced from culturally familiar prompts tended to contain more elaborated descriptions, personal reflections, and culturally specific examples.

Example 1: Student Writing Excerpt (Neutral Prompt)

The following excerpt is presented as a raw student text with only minor corrections to spelling and punctuation for readability:

"I wake up at 6 o'clock in the morning. I eat breakfast and go to university. In class, I study different subjects with my friends. After coming home, I eat lunch and complete my homework. In the evening, I watch television and then sleep at night."

This response demonstrated simple sentence structures, repetitive patterns, and limited elaboration. The ideas were presented sequentially but lacked detailed explanation and personal reflection.

Example 2: Student Writing Excerpt (Culturally Familiar Prompt)

The following excerpt is presented as a raw student text with only minor corrections to spelling and punctuation for readability:

"Eid is very special for my family because all relatives come together in our village. My mother cooks traditional foods like samosa and sweet dishes for the guests. After prayer, we visit our neighbors and give food to each other. My favorite moment is listening to my grandmother tell stories about how Eid was celebrated when she was young."

Compared with the neutral-prompt response, this writing demonstrated more detailed description, richer vocabulary, stronger emotional connection, and clearer narrative development. The writing also reflected students' familiarity with the topic and ability to connect personal experiences with written expression.

Thematic Patterns in Students' Writing

Thematic analysis of culturally familiar writing responses identified several recurring themes. First, family relationships and intergenerational interaction frequently appeared in students' narratives. Many students described parents, grandparents, or relatives as important parts of cultural celebrations and traditions. Second, community-oriented values were commonly reflected through descriptions of collective celebrations, neighbor visits, and shared meals. Third, students frequently included sensory and contextual details related to food, clothing, music, and local traditions.

In contrast, responses to culturally neutral prompts generally contained shorter descriptions and fewer culturally grounded details. The neutral responses often focused on routine activities and demonstrated less elaboration and personal engagement.

DISCUSSION

This study sought to examine the implementation of Culturally Responsive Teaching in EFL writing courses and how students' writing performance was reflected in culturally responsive writing activities. The results indicated that the instructor employed CRT through six interrelated techniques, albeit with differing levels of consistency. The principles most commonly noticed were validating and empowering, with mean scores of 3.60 and 3.48, respectively, but emancipatory acts were the least evident at 2.55. This pattern can be further interpreted. The frequent occurrence of validating procedures corresponds with Gay's (2018) claim that validation is the fundamental premise of CRT. The instructor regularly recognized students' cultural origins as valid sources of information, fostering psychological comfort and promoting involvement. This finding is also consistent with Hammond's (2015) argument that culturally responsive instruction strengthens students' cognitive engagement and academic confidence by reducing cultural dissonance in classroom learning. This finding supports Ladson-Billings (2021), who contended that validation often precedes more transformative pedagogical efforts. In Pakistan, where English has been linked to colonial authority and social elitism (Ali, 2025), the affirmation of indigenous cultural knowledge serves as a conscious counter-narrative to conventional EFL methodologies that favor Western content and rhetorical structures. The instructor's practice of disclosing her personal language learning challenges reflects what Villegas and Lucas (2018) referred to as "cultural self-examination," which is essential for culturally responsive practice. This instructor adopted the role of a co-learner, contrasting with instructors who uphold professional distance, a strategy identified by Kubota (2020) as particularly beneficial in Asian EFL environments where instructor authority is typically unchallenged.

The robust presence of empowering practices was evident mainly through student autonomy in selecting writing subjects and engaging in collaborative pre-writing activities. This study corroborates Huang and Chalmers (2023), who reported that culturally responsive and

multilingual pedagogical approaches increased student participation and engagement in EFL classrooms. This study expands the finding to Pakistani higher education, illustrating that even proficient EFL learners gain from such empowerment. The observed cooperative learning patterns, characterized by small-group discussions in many languages, exemplify what Rajendram (2023) referred to as "translanguaging spaces," when students utilize their complete linguistic repertoires as cognitive assets, rather than being limited by English-only policies. The infrequent occurrence of emancipatory practices necessitates meticulous examination. The emancipatory dimension of culturally responsive teaching involves encouraging students to critically reflect on social inequalities and dominant cultural assumptions (Gay, 2018). Multiple considerations may elucidate why this principle was not regularly observed. The six-week observation period may have been inadequate for instructors to cultivate confidence in discussing potentially sensitive cultural or political issues. Secondly, Pakistani educational environments frequently inhibit direct criticism of social institutions, especially in English language schools that have historically prioritized linguistic precision above critical discourse (Rahman, 2002). Third, as observed by Sun (2022), educators lacking specific CRT training often participate in superficial cultural inclusion (such as food, festivals, and clothes) instead of fostering profound critical engagement with cultural politics. This conclusion indicates that although CRT can be partially executed without comprehensive training, the full implementation of transformative CRT practices necessitates systematic professional development.

The implementation patterns identified in this study exhibit both similarities and divergences when compared to CRT studies in alternative situations. For example, Liao and Li (2023) found that culturally responsive practices in EFL oral classrooms promoted students' intercultural awareness and classroom participation, which aligns with the increased engagement observed in the present study. Prilutskaya (2021) similarly observed that the implementation of CRT evolved from validation to empowerment over time, necessitating ongoing support for instructors to achieve transformative stages. Sun (2022) indicated that educators faced significant difficulties with the emancipatory dimension due to inflexible curriculum limitations – an issue similarly observed in Pakistan, where centralized examination systems impose considerable control over instructional content. A significant distinction arose when juxtaposing this work with Western CRT studies. In American contexts, CRT frequently overtly confronts racial and ethnic marginalization (Ladson-Billings, 2021). Cultural diversity in Pakistan is expressed through ethnicity, language, and regional identity rather than race. The instructor in this study addressed these discrepancies by emphasizing generally relevant cultural topics (festivals, family rituals, cuisine) that transcended particular ethnic bounds. This conclusion indicates that the operationalization of CRT must be contextually sensitive, adjusting to the local configuration of cultural diversity – a notion highlighted by Paris and Alim (2017) in their advocacy for culturally sustaining pedagogies that respond to local power dynamics.

Descriptive analysis indicated that writing responses to culturally familiar prompts generally showed higher mean scores across writing components than responses to culturally neutral prompts. The findings also indicated that students produced more elaborated and contextually rich written responses. The content component demonstrated the largest descriptive difference in mean scores between the two prompt types. This finding supports

Hyland's (2023) assertion that the quality of written content is significantly influenced by topic familiarity and personal significance. Students demonstrated extensive prior knowledge while composing about Eid holidays, harvest celebrations, or familial traditions, which facilitated elaboration, specificity, and genuine thinking. Conversely, neutral queries regarding daily activities produced vague, superficial depictions. This result aligns with Connor's (2011) intercultural rhetoric paradigm, which asserts that culturally known subjects stimulate enhanced cognitive involvement in writing assignments. The qualitative distinction between the neutral-prompt text ("I wake up at 6 o'clock in the morning...") and the culturally familiar prompt text ("Eid is very special for my family because all relatives come together in our village...") further supports this interpretation. The neutral-prompt response mainly presented routine daily activities with limited elaboration and contextual detail. In contrast, the culturally familiar response included more specific descriptions of family traditions, food, social interaction, and intergenerational experiences. The writing also demonstrated stronger emotional connection and richer contextual expression, which may be associated with students' greater familiarity and personal connection with the topic.

Organization scores also showed descriptively higher mean differences across the two writing tasks. Texts inspired by CRT exhibited enhanced chronological sequencing, logical paragraph divisions, and coherent topic progression. This finding challenges the presumption that culturally recognizable topics could result in disordered "stream of consciousness" writing. Students organized their ideas more clearly when writing about familiar cultural topics utilizing narrative frameworks acquired through oral storytelling traditions. Siregar et al. (2023) observed that numerous EFL students exhibit advanced organizing skills in their native languages that are transferred to English writing when the subject is personally significant. Vocabulary scores also demonstrated relatively larger descriptive differences compared with several other writing components. Analysis of student texts indicated that CRT-influenced writing featured a greater abundance of precise, concrete, and culturally rooted terminology. Students employed terms such as "ancestral," "celebration," "gifts," "neighbors," "traditional," and "grandmother" - language that, while absent from textbook lists, constitutes vital linguistic assets for genuine connection. These findings suggest Rukhsana Ali (2025) assertion that vocabulary acquisition is enhanced when words are encountered and utilized in meaningful, emotionally resonant contexts rather than through decontextualized exercises.

Improvements in grammar and mechanics appeared descriptively smaller than improvements observed in content, vocabulary, and organization. This pattern is expected and corresponds with Hyland (2022), who also discovered that CRT predominantly improves discourse-level attributes (content, organization) rather than sentence-level precision. Grammar constitutes procedural information that necessitates substantial practice and explicit instruction; cultural relevance alone cannot rectify enduring grammatical problems, especially in EFL environments where students possess minimal exposure to English morphosyntax. Nonetheless, the CRT condition yielded nuanced grammatical enhancements. Texts suggested by CRT demonstrated enhanced phrase variety, incorporating complex sentences with subordinate clauses, whereas neutral-prompt texts depended on simple subject-verb-object constructions. This finding indicates that when students are intellectually engaged with material, they may undertake more linguistic risks, attempting more complex structures despite equal error rates. Ferris (2023) posited that fluency and complexity typically precede accuracy in second

language writing. The distribution pattern suggested a possible equity-related tendency. In the neutral condition, scores varied significantly from 42 to 82, with several students achieving scores below 50 in the neutral-prompt condition. Under the CRT condition, no student achieved a score below 50, while more students achieved scores above 80 in the culturally familiar prompt condition. This descriptive pattern suggests that culturally familiar writing activities may provide greater support for students who initially demonstrated lower writing performance. This descriptively aligns with Ladson-Billings' (2021) argument that culturally relevant teaching may support more equitable classroom participation, rather than simply enhancing the experiences of already successful students.

These data enhance CRT theory in multiple aspects. Initially, they broaden the applicability of Gay's (2018) approach beyond mostly Western multicultural situations to Pakistani higher education, illustrating that CRT principles can be effectively adapted across cultural environments when suitably localized. The data indicate a developmental trajectory in CRT implementation: validation and empowerment activities occur initially and most consistently, but transformative and emancipatory practices necessitate ongoing support for development. This contests the notion that CRT can be embraced as a comprehensive framework; instead, educators are likely to advance through various levels of CRT proficiency. Third, the study enhances second language writing theory by illustrating that writing performance is not merely dependent on linguistic knowledge but is profoundly influenced by the cultural alignment between the task and the learner. This finding corroborates sociocultural models of writing development (Hyland, 2022; Manchón, 2023) that underscore the interdependence of cognitive, linguistic, and cultural aspects of writing.

Numerous practical consequences arise for English as a Foreign Language writing education in culturally diverse colleges in Pakistan. Initially, educators ought to do informal cultural inventory at the commencement of courses to comprehend students' origins, traditions, and interests. This process need not be protracted; a straightforward questionnaire or class discussion might provide adequate information to guide task creation. Secondly, writing prompts must provide freedom, enabling students to select culturally pertinent subjects while yet fulfilling mandated learning objectives. The present study's approach of providing two writing prompt options (one neutral and one culturally responsive) demonstrated efficacy. Third, professional development programs ought to incrementally include CRT principles, starting with validation and empowerment tactics prior to engaging with transformative and emancipatory practices. Fourth, grading rubrics must acknowledge cultural expression as a valid element of writing quality, refraining from penalizing culturally distinctive rhetorical patterns that diverge from Western conventions (Connor, 2011). This research possesses multiple limitations. The single-classroom approach restricts generalizability; results may not be applicable to other Pakistani universities with varying student demographics or institutional cultures. The six-week observation period was brief; extended research may uncover varying implementation patterns or enduring impacts. The study lacked a control group, rendering it impossible to conclusively ascribe writing enhancements only to CRT, as opposed to other factors like as maturation or overall teaching quality. The study concentrated on narrative writing; the impact of CRT on other genres (argumentative, expository, descriptive) has not been investigated. Ultimately, student viewpoints were not directly obtained through focus groups or questionnaires, indicating a significant avenue for further research.

CONCLUSION

This study explored the implementation of Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) in an EFL writing classroom at a public university in Pakistan and examined how students' writing performance was reflected in culturally responsive writing activities. The findings indicated that the instructor implemented CRT practices through validating, empowering, comprehensive, multidimensional, transformative, and emancipatory dimensions, although validating and empowering practices appeared more consistently during classroom observations. The study also found that writing responses produced from culturally familiar prompts generally demonstrated richer content, stronger organization, and more detailed contextual expression than responses produced from culturally neutral prompts.

However, these findings should be interpreted cautiously. Since the study employed a descriptive qualitative design without a control group, experimental intervention, or inferential statistical analysis, the results cannot be interpreted as evidence that CRT directly caused improvements in students' writing performance. Instead, the findings suggest that culturally familiar writing prompts and culturally responsive classroom practices may provide students with greater opportunities to connect writing tasks with their personal experiences, cultural knowledge, and social realities.

The study contributes to the discussion of culturally responsive pedagogy in EFL higher education by providing a contextualized description of CRT implementation in a Pakistani university classroom. The findings suggest that culturally responsive writing activities may support student engagement, idea development, and contextualized expression in writing classrooms where students come from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. In addition, the study highlights the importance of considering local sociocultural contexts when implementing culturally responsive practices in EFL instruction.

Several limitations should also be acknowledged. The study was conducted in only one classroom within a single public university, and the six-week observation period provided a limited perspective on classroom practices over time. Furthermore, differences between culturally familiar and culturally neutral writing tasks may also have been influenced by topic familiarity and students' prior experiences with the writing themes. Future studies may explore culturally responsive writing practices across different educational contexts, writing genres, and longer observation periods while also incorporating students' perspectives more directly through interviews or focus group discussions.

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