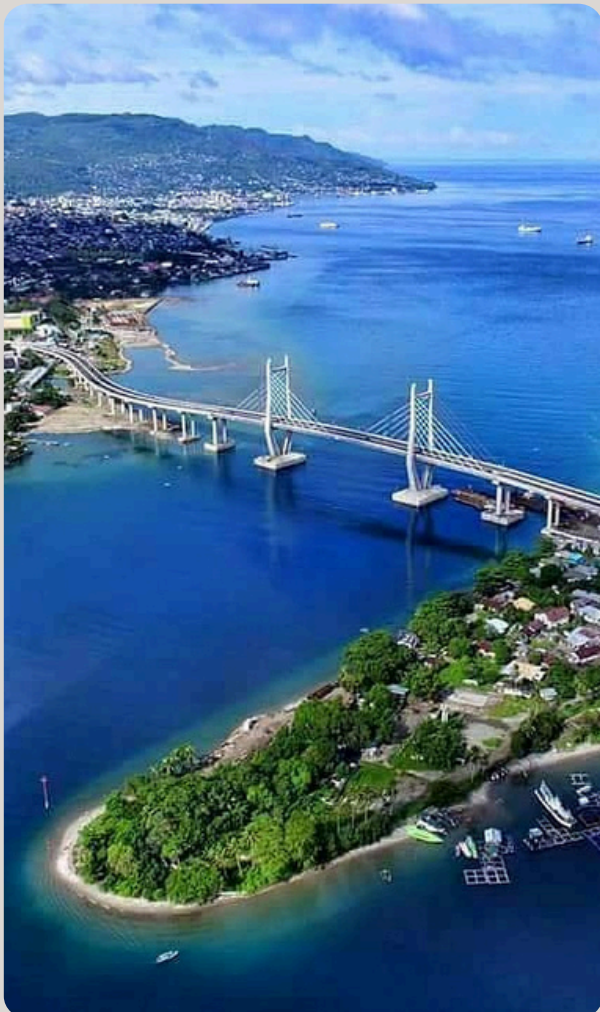


From Local Contexts to Global Communication: Advancing Culturally Responsive English Teaching in Vocational Education

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Vocational education is experiencing significant transformation such as globalization, digitalization, and artificial intelligence (AI) to reshape the competencies expected of graduates.

Today vocational high school (VHS) students are no longer prepared solely for local employment; they are expected to communicate effectively across cultures, collaborate in multilingual workplaces, and adapt to rapidly changing industrial environments. Consequently, English has evolved from being merely a school subject into an essential employability skill that enables graduates to participate in the global workforce (OECD, 2024; UNESCO, 2021). Recent scholarship in English language teaching (ELT) also argues that the purpose of learning English has shifted from imitating native-speaker norms to developing the ability to communicate successfully in diverse international contexts (Rose et al., 2021).



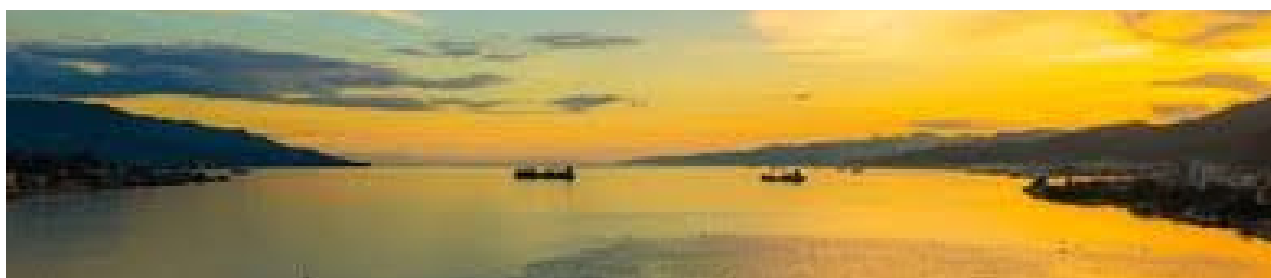
Why Culturally Responsive Pedagogy Matters

Despite these changing expectations, English instruction in many vocational schools continues to prioritize textbook-based learning, grammatical accuracy, and examination performance. Such practices often overlook learners' cultural identities, local knowledge, and vocational aspirations. Classroom materials frequently present cultural content from English-speaking countries while providing limited opportunities for students to discuss their own communities, local industries, traditions, and professional experiences in English. As a result, students may acquire linguistic knowledge without developing the confidence to communicate their own cultural identities in authentic intercultural settings.

This gap is particularly problematic because vocational education is inherently contextual. Whether students specialize in hospitality, culinary arts, engineering, business, or health services, they are expected to interact with clients, colleagues, and partners from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Therefore, effective English teaching should not merely prepare learners to understand global cultures but also empower them to represent their own local cultures and professional expertise in international communication. As Global Englishes scholars emphasize, English today belongs to all its users and should be taught as a resource for intercultural communication rather than as a language tied exclusively to native-speaker cultures (Rose et al., 2021; 2022).



"From Local Contexts to Global Communication."





From Local Contexts to Global Communication

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP) offers a compelling framework for transforming English language teaching in vocational education. Rather than treating students' cultural backgrounds as peripheral to learning, CRP recognizes them as valuable assets that enrich classroom interaction and deepen learning experiences (Gay, 2018). This perspective aligns with constructivist views of learning, which emphasizes that new knowledge is most effectively acquired when connected to learners' prior experiences, identities, and social contexts. In vocational education, where learning is expected to mirror authentic workplace situations, culturally responsive teaching enables students to see English not simply as an academic subject but as a practical means of communicating ideas rooted in their own communities and professional fields.

Research has consistently shown that culturally responsive teaching enhances students' engagement, motivation, academic achievement, and sense of belonging by making learning relevant to students' lived experiences (Hammond, 2021). In English language classrooms, this means shifting from teaching culture as static information about English-speaking countries to viewing culture as a dynamic resource that learners bring into the classroom. Students should therefore be encouraged to use English to discuss their local traditions, cultural values, indigenous knowledge, and vocational expertise. Such learning experiences foster not only linguistic competence but also intercultural communicative competence – the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately with people from diverse cultural backgrounds while maintaining respect for one's own cultural identity (Byram, 2021).

The phrase "From Local Contexts to Global Communication" reflects a fundamental shift in how English should be taught in vocational education. Global competence does not require learners to abandon their local identities;

instead, it begins with understanding and valuing those identities before engaging with others across cultures. English serves as a bridge that enables vocational students to communicate local knowledge to international audiences, transforming cultural diversity into a professional advantage rather than a classroom constraint.

This perspective is increasingly important in the era of artificial intelligence (AI). While AI-powered tools can assist students with grammar correction, pronunciation practice, translation, and personalized language learning, they cannot replicate the cultural understanding, empathy, ethical judgement, and interpersonal sensitivity that characterize meaningful human communication. As UNESCO (2023) emphasizes, the integration of AI into education should strengthen the human dimensions of teaching and learning. Consequently, English teachers play an indispensable role in designing culturally meaningful learning experiences that encourage students to think critically, communicate authentically, and appreciate cultural diversity.



ENGLISH FOR TOURISM



Advancing culturally responsive English teaching therefore requires more than revising classroom materials; it calls for a shift in educational mindset. Teachers should move beyond textbook-centered instruction by incorporating local stories, community issues, regional industries,

and vocational practices into language learning activities. Project-based learning, digital storytelling, collaboration with local industries, and intercultural exchange projects can provide authentic opportunities for students to use English while engaging with issues that matter to their communities.

*ambassadors of your local cultures in
global professional settings*

Through these experiences, learners develop confidence not only as English users but also as ambassadors of their local cultures in global professional settings.

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