

Challenges and Strategies in Addressing Cultural Stereotypes and Bias in Indonesian Tertiary ELT/EFL Classrooms

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the complexities surrounding cultural stereotypes and bias within the Indonesian tertiary English Language Teaching/English as a Foreign Language (ELT/EFL) classrooms. Recognizing culture as a dynamic amalgamation of beliefs, values, and practices, it underscores its pivotal role in language acquisition. Employing a descriptive qualitative approach, the research utilizes semi-structured questionnaires and in-depth interviews to capture educators' and students' lived experiences, perceptions, and attitudes. The findings illuminate a shared acknowledgment of the significance of divulging personal information to counter cultural stereotypes, albeit with divergent viewpoints. Despite encountering obstacles, participants have tangible awareness regarding cultural biases within the educational setting, with the integration of diverse materials emerging as a perceived effective strategy. The study underscores the acknowledged difficulty in tackling cultural stereotypes but underscores the confidence in educators' abilities to actively implement strategies. Moreover, teacher responsiveness to student feedback on cultural inclusivity is viewed as constructive. It duly recognizes the impact of cultural stereotypes on the learning environment and advocates for inclusive and culturally sensitive educational approaches. In conclusion, the research advocates for proactive measures to address cultural biases, promoting inclusivity and sensitivity within Indonesian tertiary ELT/EFL classrooms.

INTRODUCTION

Culture encompasses the collective beliefs, values, practices, customs, and expressions that distinguish a particular group or society. This includes a wide array of elements such as beliefs, norms, language, social institutions, arts, and material culture. Its transmission from one generation to another highlights its dynamic nature, subject to change influenced by various factors over time. In our increasingly globalized world, appreciating and comprehending cultural diversity is paramount for fostering effective communication and collaboration. Scholars like Johnson & Chang (2012) define culture as membership within a discourse community sharing a common social space, history, and standards for perception, belief, evaluation, and action. Kramersch (2013) proposes a perspective portraying culture as a learning process wherein practices are passed from one group to another. Gee's (2010) view emphasizes the acquisition of both cultural processes and language by newcomers to a group, encapsulating culture as the mechanism through which learners gain community membership by internalizing cultural meanings embedded in language. Understanding culture's multifaceted nature is essential for facilitating effective interaction and integration within diverse communities.

In the realm of language education, culture is subtly embedded within language choices and grammar structures, conveyed through instructional methods and materials. This implicit transmission of cultural norms and values is often manifested through a curriculum,

whether overtly recognized or subtly concealed (Horvat & Nilsson, 2018). English as a Second Language (ESL) students, comprising individuals learning English as a non-native language, hail from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Engaged in the pursuit of English proficiency for various purposes such as communication, education, and integration into English-speaking communities, these learners span a spectrum of proficiency levels, from novices to advanced practitioners (Griffin, 2013).

Navigating the complexities of cultural and gender considerations poses a formidable challenge for ESL educators in heterogeneous classrooms. Drawing upon their pedagogical expertise and personal commitment, instructors strive to integrate these factors into their teaching methodologies (Sullivan, 2016). However, the task extends beyond mere cultural and gender inclusivity; it encompasses a multifaceted understanding of diversity. Griffin (2013) underscores this notion, highlighting the myriad factors contributing to student heterogeneity, including academic aptitude, cognitive styles, learning preferences, attitudes, socioeconomic backgrounds, home languages, and developmental readiness.

Central to the language acquisition process is the acquisition of vocabulary, which poses unique challenges for ESL students. Wirza (2018) elucidates the nuanced nature of vocabulary acquisition, emphasizing its contextual variability. Unlike monolithic dictionary definitions, words assume diverse meanings contingent upon the situational context. Thus, ESL learners must not

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only memorize static definitions but also comprehend the contextual nuances underlying word usage to effectively navigate real-world communication scenarios.

Incorporating cultural and gender considerations into ESL instruction requires sensitivity to the diverse cultural backgrounds and identities represented within the classroom. Moreover, educators must acknowledge and accommodate the various learning styles and cognitive preferences of their students. By embracing this holistic perspective on diversity, ESL instructors can create inclusive learning environments conducive to the holistic development of their students' linguistic and cultural competencies.

Embarking on a distinctive educational journey, English as a Second Language (ESL) students encounter a myriad of hurdles, including the pervasive influence of stereotypes and biases. Within the diverse and dynamic landscape of language learning, these learners often confront preconceived notions that impact their academic endeavors and social integration. Addressing these challenges is paramount for cultivating an inclusive and nurturing educational milieu.

Cultural stereotypes, characterized by oversimplified and generalized beliefs about particular cultural groups, pervade the educational realm. Rooted in limited or erroneous information, these stereotypes perpetuate biased perceptions and interactions among individuals. While some generalizations may stem from shared cultural traits, reliance on stereotypes risks fostering misunderstandings, discrimination, and the reinforcement of biased viewpoints. Recognizing the intricacies and diversity inherent within cultures is imperative, alongside acknowledging the detrimental effects of stereotypes. By doing so, educators can promote a deeper understanding and appreciation of human diversity, fostering an environment conducive to mutual respect and acceptance. Navigating these challenges necessitates a concerted effort to dismantle stereotypes and foster a culture of inclusivity within ESL education. By promoting critical thinking and cultural competence among students and educators alike, institutions can create spaces where diverse perspectives are valued and celebrated. Moreover, fostering empathy and open dialogue can mitigate the impact of stereotypes, fostering an environment where individuals feel affirmed and supported in their educational pursuits.

In contemporary English Language Teaching (ELT) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms, educators grapple with the task of addressing cultural stereotypes and biases while striving to create inclusive learning environments. Several studies have investigated the challenges and strategies associated with this endeavor, shedding light on the complexities inherent in teaching language and culture.

One such study, featured in the journal "Balancing Act: Addressing Culture and Gender in ESL Classrooms" by K. E. Johnson (2016), underscores the diverse student demographics encountered by ESL educators. The literature review within this study highlights the

experiences of teachers employing culturally responsive teaching strategies. These findings reveal recurring themes related to instructional strategies and the hurdles faced when navigating cultural and gender dynamics in the classroom.

Another significant contribution to this discourse comes from the study published in the journal "Humanities and Social Science: Teaching Culture in EFL: Implications, Challenges, and Strategies" by Murshed Haider Choudhury. This study elucidates the intrinsic link between language and culture, emphasizing the importance of understanding cultural contexts in language learning. Choudhury warns against the production of "fluent fools," individuals proficient in language but lacking insight into its cultural nuances. With the advent of globalization, technology, immigration, and mass media, there is an increasing demand for EFL teachers to equip students with intercultural communicative skills.

The literature review reveals a gap in understanding the specific difficulties encountered by EFL teachers when instructing in the target culture. It advocates for the integration of culture into EFL instruction, highlighting the inadequacy of teaching language devoid of cultural context. The study strongly recommends incorporating cultural aspects into language lessons to provide students with a comprehensive understanding of language use in diverse contexts.

Building upon these findings, it is evident that addressing cultural stereotypes and biases in ELT/EFL classrooms requires a multifaceted approach. Educators must not only recognize the diverse backgrounds of their students but also integrate cultural content into language instruction effectively. By doing so, they can empower learners to navigate cultural complexities and foster intercultural understanding. As such, the studies reviewed offer valuable insights into the challenges posed by cultural stereotypes and biases in ELT/EFL settings, as well as strategies to address them. These findings underscore the importance of embracing cultural diversity and equipping educators with the necessary tools to create inclusive learning environments in which all students can thrive.

The synthesis endeavors to offer actionable recommendations for educators, promoting an inclusive educational framework that celebrates diversity. Central to this goal is the empowerment of ESL students with the requisite skills for adept communication and collaboration in today's globalized society. Emphasizing the significance of comprehending, acknowledging, and mitigating cultural nuances within educational environments lies at the heart of this endeavor. Through proactive measures, educators can foster an atmosphere that not only respects but also celebrates the richness of cultural diversity present among students. By integrating cultural content into language instruction and providing opportunities for meaningful cross-cultural interactions, educators can equip ESL learners with the tools needed to navigate diverse societal contexts with confidence and sensitivity. Moreover, fostering a climate of openness,

empathy, and mutual respect within the classroom cultivates an environment conducive to holistic student development. Ultimately, by prioritizing inclusive education practices that embrace cultural diversity, educators play a pivotal role in preparing ESL students to thrive in an interconnected and interdependent global community.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Various Perspectives on Culture

Culture, as elucidated by Kramsch & Hua (2016), is a multifaceted and intricate phenomenon. Their definition portrays culture as more than just a set of behavioral norms within a society; rather, it encapsulates the notion of membership in a discourse community characterized by shared social spaces, histories, and imaginings. This perspective underscores the dynamic nature of culture, emphasizing its continual evolution through interactions among community members. Kramsch's conceptualization highlights the interactive dimensions inherent in cultural dynamics, suggesting that culture is actively co-created through dialogue and shared interpretations. Furthermore, the inclusion of "shared imagination" emphasizes the collective representations of values, beliefs, and worldviews within a cultural community, encompassing myths, stories, and symbols that contribute to cultural identity formation.

Similarly, Gal for Salia (2018) offers a comprehensive definition of culture, portraying it as a complex system comprising various elements such as concepts, attitudes, values, beliefs, conventions, behaviors, practices, rituals, lifestyles, artifacts, and institutions. This expansive definition recognizes culture as extending beyond purely mental and behavioral aspects to encompass physical products and social structures created by the community. It acknowledges culture as a multifaceted and interconnected phenomenon, wherein various dimensions interact to shape the collective identity and practices of a cultural group.

Together, these perspectives present a nuanced understanding of culture as a multifaceted construct. They emphasize the dynamic and interactive nature of cultural dynamics, highlighting the continual co-creation of meaning and identity within cultural communities. By recognizing culture as encompassing both internal and external dimensions, these definitions provide a holistic framework for understanding the complexities of cultural phenomena. Moreover, they underscore the interconnectedness of various cultural elements, emphasizing the importance of considering the broader socio-cultural context in analyzing cultural dynamics.

In summary, the definitions offered by Kramsch & Hua (2016) and Gal for Salia (2018) provide complementary insights into the multifaceted nature of culture. They highlight the dynamic, interactive, and comprehensive aspects of cultural phenomena, emphasizing the continual co-creation of meaning and identity within cultural communities. By considering both internal and

external dimensions of culture, these perspectives offer a rich framework for understanding the complexities of cultural dynamics and their implications for societal practices and identities.

Various scholars offer diverse perspectives on the concept of culture, enriching our understanding of its multifaceted nature. Kasule (2013) defines culture as "membership in a discourse community that shares a common social space and history, and a common system of standards for perceiving, believing, evaluating, and acting." This definition underscores the notion of belonging to a community characterized by shared perceptions, beliefs, judgments, and actions. It highlights the interconnectedness of individuals within a cultural framework, emphasizing the collective nature of cultural identity formation.

In contrast, Gee (2010) presents culture as a learning process, wherein cultural practices are transmitted from one group to another. Within this framework, newcomers to a group are tasked with learning both the cultural processes and the language. Gee's perspective underscores the importance of cultural learning through active participation in a community, wherein cultural and linguistic aspects are integrated as essential components of the learning process.

Building upon these perspectives, M. A. Johnson & Chang (2012) define culture as the process through which learners gain membership into a community through instruction, providing context for the development of literacy and language skills. They highlight the role of teaching strategies and materials in facilitating cultural integration within the classroom. For instance, utilizing tools like cameras can enhance language development by supplementing activities such as creating biographies and autobiographies. This approach emphasizes the reciprocal relationship between culture and learning, advocating for the incorporation of cultural elements into educational practices to enrich students' learning experiences.

By implementing teaching strategies that encourage students to introduce their culture into the classroom, educators can foster discussions and provide opportunities for cultural integration within the learning process. This approach creates a dynamic classroom environment that supports interaction between culture and learning, enabling students to engage with diverse perspectives and incorporate cultural aspects into their educational journey. In doing so, educators play a crucial role in nurturing students' cultural awareness and fostering a sense of belonging within the learning community.

Concerning on Cultural Stereotypes

The literature on stereotypes underscores the contentious nature of these cognitive constructs, examining them from both theoretical and practical perspectives. Theoretical perspectives offer contrasting views on the naturalness of stereotypes. On one hand, stereotypes are considered natural cognitive products arising from the categorization process. From this standpoint, they

serve a positive function by preparing individuals for intercultural interactions and mitigating culture shock. Moreover, proponents argue that stereotypes align with the cognitive effort economy principle, as outlined by Wright (2016). This principle posits that stereotypes streamline the perception of other cultures by providing a simplified framework, thereby reducing cognitive load and facilitating comprehension of cultural differences. Despite being criticized for their oversimplified nature, stereotypes are recognized as efficient cognitive tools for processing information and navigating cross-cultural encounters.

Conversely, stereotypes are deemed unnatural due to their foundation in overgeneralization and simplification, often resulting in conflicts (Lebedko, 2010). This perspective underscores that stereotypes, characterized by their oversimplified nature, fail to capture the true diversity and intricacies of a culture or group. Consequently, relying on stereotypes as a basis for understanding can lead to misunderstandings, biases, and conflicts, as they overlook individual differences within cultural communities.

Lebedko (2010) further warns that certain categories, such as race, ethnicity, and gender, can be particularly harmful when used for discriminatory purposes. This observation underscores the potential negative repercussions of categorizing individuals based on specific characteristics, which may perpetuate unfair treatment, inequality, and marginalization. Pinker suggests that in some instances, these categories are exploited to justify unequal treatment and oppression, emphasizing the need for awareness of their implications in social and policy contexts.

Therefore, it is essential to acknowledge the potential dangers associated with the use of such categories and to implement measures to prevent and address discrimination. Heightened awareness of these issues is crucial for fostering equality and justice in society, ensuring that individuals are treated fairly and respectfully, irrespective of their background or characteristics.

Scholars widely concur that stereotypes are oversimplified and standardized images, conceptions, or opinions of individuals or entire cultures or groups (Houghton *et al.*, 2014). This characterization underscores the tendency for stereotypes to manifest as overly simplistic and generalized representations, often disregarding the diversity and intricacy inherent within individuals or groups. Recognizing stereotypes as standardized portrayals is pivotal, as it lays the groundwork for inaccurate or unjust perceptions of specific individuals or communities. Therefore, fostering awareness of the nature of stereotypes and actively striving to avoid excessive generalizations are imperative in cultivating a fair and inclusive perspective toward diverse cultures and individuals.

In an effort to combat stereotypes, scholars have undertaken initiatives to eradicate ethnic stereotypes from public consciousness. Lebedko (2010) notes attempts to remove ethnic stereotypes, including ethnonyms, proverbs, sayings, and slurs, from dictionaries, with the

exception of the term “gypsy.” This endeavor reflects an acknowledgment of the detrimental impact of ethnic stereotypes and a commitment to purging language sources of representations that may be derogatory. By purging ethnic stereotypes from dictionaries, scholars aim to mitigate negative perceptions and foster a more inclusive view of ethnic groups.

Moreover, Mechkovskaya (2010) highlights similar endeavors aimed at eliminating stereotypes from people’s minds. Scholars have sought to remove ethnic stereotypes represented through various linguistic expressions, recognizing their potential to perpetuate prejudice and discrimination. These efforts signify a broader commitment to challenging ingrained biases and fostering a more equitable and respectful societal discourse.

The endeavor to eradicate stereotypes extends beyond linguistic representations to encompass broader societal norms and attitudes. By promoting understanding and addressing prejudice, these initiatives contribute to the creation of an environment free from stereotypes and characterized by fair and inclusive representations. Such efforts align with a broader strategy to promote social cohesion and foster a more harmonious and equitable society. Thus, efforts to eliminate stereotypes from public discourse and consciousness are essential for fostering inclusive and respectful societal norms. By challenging ingrained biases and promoting understanding, scholars play a pivotal role in creating a more equitable and inclusive environment for all individuals and communities. These initiatives represent a crucial step toward building a society characterized by mutual respect, understanding, and acceptance.

The Challenges on Cultural Bias

Bias in testing refers to the presence of certain characteristics within test items that result in unequal performances among individuals of equal abilities but from diverse backgrounds, such as ethnicity, age, gender, academic, cultural, or religious affiliations (Smith, 2018). Essentially, bias indicates that specific questions or components of a test may confer advantages or disadvantages to individuals based on factors unrelated to their actual knowledge or skills. This bias can arise from various sources, including cultural or linguistic nuances, inadvertent favoritism toward particular groups, or inadequacies in test design that fail to account for diversity (Brown & Rodriguez, 2009). Recognizing and addressing bias in testing is paramount for ensuring equitable and accurate assessments, as it reinforces principles of fairness and fosters an inclusive educational environment that values the diverse backgrounds and experiences of all test-takers.

Evenmore, bias in testing is often attributed to construct-irrelevant dimensions, which are aspects not directly related to the intended construct being measured but still impact the test scores of different groups of examinees disproportionately (American Educational Research Association, 2014). These dimensions introduce a

source of unfairness by influencing the performance of certain demographic groups, such as those based on ethnicity, gender, age, or cultural background, in varying ways. Construct-irrelevant dimensions may encompass language or cultural references that create disparities in accessibility and comprehension among diverse test-takers (Lee & Zumbo, 2019). Identifying and mitigating such biases is essential for maintaining the integrity of assessments, ensuring that tests accurately measure what they intend to measure without extraneous factors that could unfairly benefit or hinder specific groups.

Addressing these dimensions of bias is pivotal in promoting equitable evaluation processes that respect the diverse backgrounds and experiences of all individuals undergoing assessment. By implementing measures to minimize bias, such as reviewing test items for cultural sensitivity, providing accommodations for diverse linguistic backgrounds, and ensuring inclusive test design, educators and test developers can uphold the principles of fairness and inclusivity in educational assessment (Brown & Rodriguez, 2009). Through these efforts, the educational system can strive toward fostering equal opportunities for all learners, regardless of their background or demographic characteristics.

In addition to the biases present in testing, the biased representation of females and males in educational materials can significantly influence students' perceptions of gender norms in society. Research conducted by Scheffer (2014) reveals that gender bias is a pervasive factor affecting the recall of material among ESL students. Essentially, the content of textbooks can reinforce gender as a social division and perpetuate inequalities between men and women. Addressing biases in educational materials is crucial for promoting equality and challenging stereotypes.

Textbooks play a pivotal role in shaping students' perceptions and attitudes towards gender roles and identities. They should strive to present a balanced and inclusive representation of both genders, reflecting the diversity of experiences and contributions of individuals, regardless of their gender (Scheffer, 2014). By presenting a more equitable portrayal of genders, textbooks can foster a more inclusive learning environment that empowers students to critically engage with the complexities of the world around them.

Moreover, gender-biased language in textbooks can have detrimental effects on students. Parajuli (2023) highlights that such language contributes to the creation of an oppressive learning environment for students. This biased language is often unjustified and unfair, reinforcing stereotypes and perpetuating societal inequalities. It can marginalize students and undermine their sense of belonging and worth in the educational setting.

Efforts to mitigate gender bias in educational materials are essential for promoting equality and fostering a supportive learning environment for all students. Educators and curriculum developers must be vigilant in scrutinizing textbooks and learning materials to

ensure that they are free from biased language and representations. By promoting gender equality in educational materials, educators can empower students to challenge stereotypes and discrimination, fostering a more inclusive and equitable learning environment. Ultimately, addressing gender bias in educational materials is integral to promoting social justice and creating a learning environment where all students feel valued and respected. The perpetuation of biased language and unjust representations in educational materials not only reinforces stereotypes but also hinders personal and academic growth for students. These unwarranted gender stereotypes can significantly influence students' self-perceptions, impeding their development and success. As unjustified gender stereotypes persist in educational materials, they contribute to an atmosphere that marginalizes individuals based on their gender, eroding inclusivity and amplifying the voices and experiences of certain groups unfairly (Gharbavi & Mousavi, 2012).

Research conducted by Gharbavi and Mousavi (2012) underscores the detrimental effects of gender bias and stereotypes in written text and images on female students. When educational materials perpetuate biased language and imagery, they reinforce societal expectations and limitations associated with gender roles. This reinforcement can have adverse effects on how female students perceive their own abilities and potential.

Exposure to biased representations can lead to a negative impact on academic performance, self-esteem, and aspirations for female students. It is crucial to recognize the importance of creating inclusive and unbiased educational content that fosters an environment where all students, regardless of gender, can thrive and reach their full potential. By challenging stereotypes and promoting gender equality in educational materials, educators can create a learning environment that empowers students to overcome societal limitations and pursue their aspirations without the constraints of stereotypical expectations. Consequently, addressing gender bias in educational materials is essential for promoting equality and fostering an environment where all students can flourish. By eliminating biased language and imagery, educators can create a more inclusive learning environment that empowers students to achieve their academic and personal goals, free from the constraints of stereotypes and societal expectations.

Relationship between Stereotypes and Bias in EFL/ELT Classroom

In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) or English Language Teaching (ELT) classrooms, stereotypes play a significant role in shaping the presence of bias, which can profoundly impact the learning environment (Banks, 2015). These stereotypes, often rooted in cultural perceptions and societal norms, have the potential to influence expectations and interactions among both students and educators. The consequences of stereotypes can be far-reaching, affecting students' self-perception,

participation levels, academic performance, and even educators' teaching approaches.

It is essential to recognize and address these dynamics to foster an inclusive and equitable learning atmosphere in EFL and ELT classrooms. By doing so, language education can be liberated from the constraints of biased expectations and promote a fair and supportive environment for all students (Banks, 2015). Educators must be vigilant in identifying and challenging stereotypes, ensuring that they do not inadvertently reinforce discriminatory attitudes or behaviors.

Moreover, stereotypes are not limited to cultural aspects but can also extend to linguistic biases (Han & Lee, 2022). Educators should be mindful not to favor certain linguistic varieties over others, instead promoting an inclusive approach that values the diverse forms of English spoken worldwide. This recognition acknowledges the validity of various linguistic expressions and helps prevent linguistic discrimination in the classroom.

By embracing linguistic diversity in the classroom, educators can create an environment where all students feel valued and included, regardless of their familiarity with specific forms of English (Han & Lee, 2022). This inclusive approach fosters a sense of belonging among students and encourages them to engage actively in the language learning process. It also helps combat linguistic prejudice and promotes respect for different linguistic backgrounds and experiences. Thus, addressing stereotypes and linguistic biases in EFL and ELT classrooms is essential for creating a supportive and inclusive learning environment. Educators play a crucial role in challenging biased attitudes and behaviors, promoting fairness and equality for all students. By embracing diversity and promoting linguistic inclusivity, educators can create a learning environment where every student feels empowered to succeed.

Culturally responsive teaching is a pedagogical approach that prioritizes equal respect for the backgrounds and contemporary circumstances of all learners, thereby eliminating bias and stereotypes (Pourdavood & Yan, 2020). This approach aims to create an inclusive classroom environment where each student's cultural identity is acknowledged and valued. By removing biases and stereotypes from teaching practices, educators ensure that learning experiences are sensitive to the diverse backgrounds and experiences of students. This fosters a learning environment that promotes equal opportunities for learning and mutual respect among all learners.

To address bias stemming from stereotypes, educators should adopt inclusive pedagogical approaches (Cuccurullo & Cinganotto, 2020). This involves recognizing and challenging stereotypes, promoting cultural awareness, and creating an environment that celebrates diversity. Educators play a crucial role in acknowledging and actively challenging stereotypes in the classroom. They can achieve this by fostering cultural awareness among students, encouraging an understanding of diverse perspectives, and cultivating

an environment that genuinely values the richness of different backgrounds.

Inclusive pedagogy emphasizes the creation of learning spaces where students feel seen, heard, and respected, regardless of cultural or societal stereotypes. By adopting inclusive approaches, educators contribute to a more equitable and supportive learning environment that encourages critical thinking and embraces the diversity of experiences within the classroom. In doing so, educators empower students to navigate and challenge stereotypes, fostering a deeper understanding of themselves and others. So that, culturally responsive teaching and inclusive pedagogical approaches are essential for addressing bias and stereotypes in the classroom. By prioritizing cultural awareness and valuing diversity, educators create learning environments that promote equal opportunities for all students to thrive. This fosters a sense of belonging and respect among students, ultimately contributing to a more inclusive and equitable society.

Students can internalize stereotypes, which can significantly impact their self-perception and interactions with peers, ultimately hindering effective language learning (Zhang, 2019). When students internalize stereotypes, it can lead to divisions among them, making it challenging for everyone to learn a new language together. Bias can obstruct collaboration and open communication, impeding the learning process. To facilitate effective language learning, educators must be cognizant of these stereotypes and strive to create a classroom environment where everyone feels respected and can collaborate without limitations.

Furthermore, educators may consciously or unconsciously harbor biases that align with stereotypes, impacting various aspects of the educational experience (Morgan & Clarke, 2011). These biases can manifest in grading, classroom interactions, and opportunities afforded to students, ultimately influencing their academic progress and success. When educators hold biased views, it perpetuates inequality and unfairness within the educational system. Unjust grading practices or unequal opportunities can impede students' learning and hinder their overall educational journey.

Recognizing and addressing these biases is paramount in creating a learning environment that is fair, inclusive, and supportive for all students (Morgan & Clarke, 2011). By acknowledging and actively working to eliminate biases, educators can promote equal opportunities for all students to thrive academically. This involves implementing fair grading practices, fostering equitable classroom interactions, and providing equal access to educational opportunities. Additionally, educators should undergo continuous training and reflection to identify and challenge their own biases, ensuring a commitment to fairness and inclusivity in their teaching practices.

As such, both students and educators can be influenced by stereotypes and biases, which can detrimentally affect the learning environment and educational experience. By acknowledging and addressing these biases, educators

can create a more equitable and supportive learning environment, enabling all students to reach their full potential academically. Through proactive measures to combat stereotypes and biases, educators play a crucial role in fostering a culture of fairness, inclusivity, and respect within the classroom.

One prevalent stereotype concerning students from Asia is the assumption that they are reluctant to actively participate in class discussions due to their cultural disposition (Morgan & Clarke, 2011). This stereotype suggests a generalized behavioral tendency based on their cultural background. However, it is essential to recognize that such sweeping generalizations oversimplify the diversity of individuals from Asia, encompassing a wide range of cultures and communication styles. While cultural factors may indeed influence students' preferences for participation, assuming a uniform behavior for all Asian students disregards the uniqueness and individuality within this diverse group.

Educators must adopt an approach that respects and appreciates the individual perspectives and communication preferences of each student (Morgan & Clarke, 2011). Instead of relying on broad stereotypes, educators should engage with students on an individual basis, acknowledging and valuing their distinct backgrounds and experiences. By doing so, educators can create a classroom environment that encourages active participation and meaningful engagement from all students, regardless of their cultural background. Moreover, fostering an inclusive and supportive learning environment involves recognizing and challenging stereotypes that may limit students' engagement in class discussions (Morgan & Clarke, 2011). Educators play a crucial role in debunking stereotypes and promoting a culture of respect and understanding. By acknowledging the diverse perspectives and communication styles of students from Asia, educators can create opportunities for meaningful dialogue and collaboration, enriching the learning experience for everyone involved.

Thus, it is imperative for educators to move beyond stereotypes and approach students from Asia as individuals with unique backgrounds and communication preferences. By embracing diversity and fostering inclusivity in the classroom, educators can create an environment where all students feel valued and empowered to actively participate in class discussions, contributing to a richer and more dynamic learning experience.

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted using a descriptive qualitative research approach to gather data from several related literatures, document observation, and informal interviews with relevant stakeholders. According to Suryani & Daulay, (2022), qualitative research is a scientific research method for collecting specific information about values, opinions, social context, and behaviors. In the qualitative research approach, researchers use methods

such as interviews or questionnaires to collect rich and in-depth data. This allows for a nuanced understanding of the challenges and the effectiveness of strategies used in responding to cultural stereotypes and bias in the tertiary ELT/EFL classroom. The study will explore the lived experiences, perceptions, and attitudes of both educators and students, providing a comprehensive view of cultural dynamics in the educational context. With the aim of uncovering the complexity and nuances of cultural issues involved, as well as contributing to a deeper analysis and informed recommendations to address these challenges. The importance of this research lies in gaining a better understanding of how cultural stereotypes and bias affect the learning environment, as well as the strategies that can be implemented to respond to them. The results of the study are expected to provide valuable insights for educators and other stakeholders in enhancing diversity and inclusivity in the higher education context.

The object of this research is cultural stereotypes and bias in the tertiary-level English language teaching classroom. The study aims to understand and address challenges arising from cultural stereotypes and bias in the educational context. Suryani & Daulay, (2022) claims that studying culture, besides already mentioned benefits, "gives students liking for the people of that culture", "helps avoid the stereotypes" and is part of general education. The focus is on identifying cultural stereotypes and bias, as well as developing effective strategies to mitigate their impact on the learning environment. The object of this research encompasses the dynamic interaction between cultural stereotypes and bias, with the ultimate goal of creating an educational environment that is more inclusive and culturally sensitive.

The subject of this research is cultural stereotypes and bias present in the tertiary English Language Teaching/English as a Foreign Language (ELT/EFL) classroom. Therefore, English language teaching textbooks are needed to address different cultural perspectives and cultural voices that enable the learners to figure out different cultural perspectives and values Shin *et al.*, (2011). The study focuses on understanding the challenges posed by cultural stereotypes and bias within the educational context, specifically in tertiary-level English language instruction. The subject of the study is the dynamic interaction between cultural stereotypes and bias within the tertiary ELT/EFL classroom, with the aim of proposing practical and informed strategies for fostering a more inclusive and culturally sensitive educational environment.

In investigating the challenges and strategies surrounding cultural stereotypes and bias in the tertiary ELT/EFL classroom through a qualitative lens, the data collection procedure will commence with the development of a semi-structured questionnaire. A questionnaire is defined as a document containing questions and other types of items designed to solicit information appropriate to analysis Putri, (2022). This questionnaire, comprised of open-ended questions, aims to solicit detailed responses

from participants regarding their personal experiences and perceptions of cultural stereotypes and bias in the educational context.

A pilot test will ensure the questionnaire's clarity and relevance based on participant feedback. Subsequently, a purposive sampling approach will guide the selection of participants for in-depth interviews conducted with a semi-structured guide. These interviews will provide a platform for participants to share nuanced narratives, elaborate on their experiences, and express emotions associated with cultural stereotypes. Thematic analysis of both questionnaire and interview data will be employed, facilitating a comprehensive exploration of the challenges and effective strategies for mitigating cultural stereotypes and bias in the tertiary ELT/EFL classroom, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of this complex phenomenon.

In tackling the challenges of cultural stereotypes and bias in the tertiary ELT/EFL classroom through a qualitative lens, the data collection procedure will involve the creation of a semi-structured questionnaire, incorporating open-ended questions to delve into participants' nuanced experiences and perceptions. Following a pilot test to refine the questionnaire, purposive sampling will guide the selection of participants for in-depth interviews. According to Alshenqeti, (2014) an interview is "a conversation, whose purpose is to gather descriptions of the [life-world] of the interviewee" with respect to interpretation of the meanings of the 'described phenomena'. These interviews, conducted with a semi-structured guide, will provide a platform for participants to share detailed narratives, elaborate on experiences, and express emotions tied to cultural stereotypes. Thematic analysis of both the questionnaire and interview data will be applied to uncover patterns and insights, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and effective strategies for addressing cultural stereotypes and bias in the tertiary ELT/EFL classroom.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reflect the analysis of questionnaire data, presenting insights into respondents' perspectives on various aspects related to cultural stereotypes. Each main question and corresponding responses are presented quantitatively, followed by an interpretation of the results.

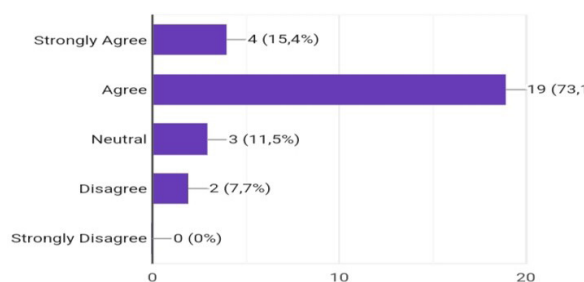


Figure 1: I believe that provide personal information is essential for understanding the context of cultural stereotypes

Regarding the importance of providing personal information to understand cultural stereotypes, the data suggests that a significant majority of respondents express either strong agreement or agreement with this notion. However, it's noteworthy that a portion of respondents falls within the neutral, disagree, or strongly disagree categories, indicating a diversity of opinions on this issue.

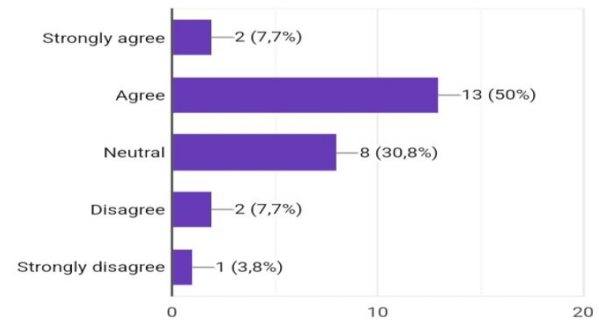


Figure 2: I have observed instances of cultural stereotypes in my classroom

According to the data analysis, a substantial proportion of respondents (50%) acknowledge having observed instances of cultural stereotypes within their classroom environment. Although there exists a range of opinions, with a considerable portion expressing neutrality, the prevailing trend suggests a noteworthy level of awareness or recognition of cultural stereotypes within the classroom context.

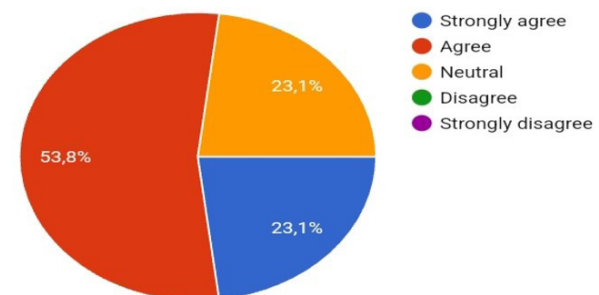


Figure 3: Teachers integrating culturally diverse materials has been an effective approach in classroom experience

A predominant portion of respondents (53.8%) express strong agreement regarding the effectiveness of integrating culturally diverse materials in their classroom experience. Additionally, 23.1% of respondents agree with this sentiment, indicating an overall positive perception towards the incorporation of diverse materials within the educational context. A smaller but notable percentage (23.1%) remains neutral on the topic, signifying some variability in opinions regarding the efficacy of this approach.

A significant majority of respondents (61.5%) express strong agreement regarding the challenging nature of addressing cultural stereotypes in the tertiary ELT/EFL (English Language Teaching/English as a

Foreign Language) classroom. Furthermore, 23.1% of respondents agree with this viewpoint, while a smaller proportion (7.7%) remain neutral on the matter. These findings underscore a widespread recognition among respondents of the inherent difficulty associated with confronting cultural stereotypes within the specified educational context.

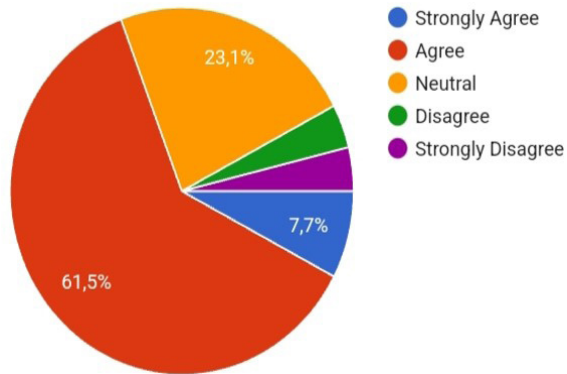


Figure 4: Addressing cultural stereotypes in the tertiary ELT/EFL classroom is a challenging task

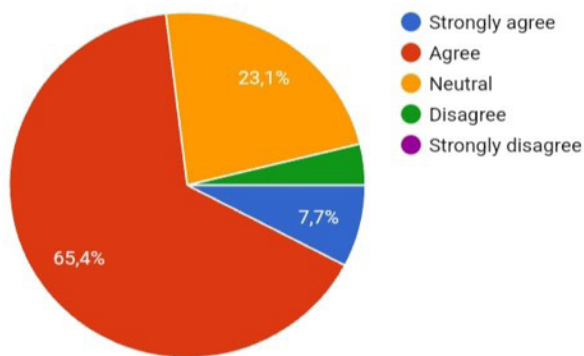


Figure 5: Teacher actively employ strategies to mitigate cultural stereotypes in classroom

The findings reveal a substantial consensus among respondents, with 65.4% expressing strong agreement that teachers actively implement strategies to mitigate cultural stereotypes in the classroom. Additionally, 23.1% of respondents agree with this assertion, indicating a prevailing positive sentiment towards the proactive efforts of teachers in addressing and diminishing cultural stereotypes. However, a smaller percentage (7.7%) adopt a neutral stance on the matter, suggesting some variability in opinions regarding the extent of teachers' strategies in this regard.

According to the data, a significant proportion of respondents (42.3%) strongly agree that teachers consistently seek feedback from students regarding cultural inclusivity in their teaching practices. Furthermore, 26.9% express agreement with this statement, indicating a generally positive inclination towards the regular solicitation of student input on cultural inclusivity. Similarly, 26.9% of respondents adopt a neutral stance on this issue, suggesting some diversity in opinions regarding the frequency with which teachers seek such feedback.

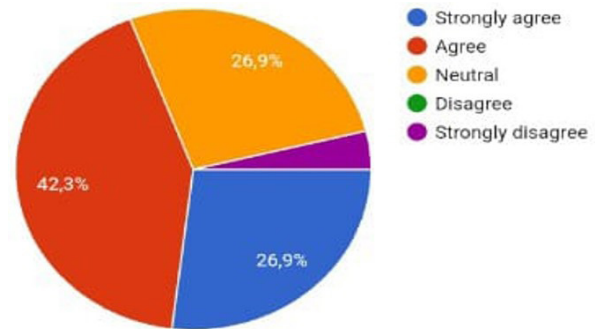


Figure 6: Teachers regularly seek feedback from students regarding cultural inclusivity in teaching

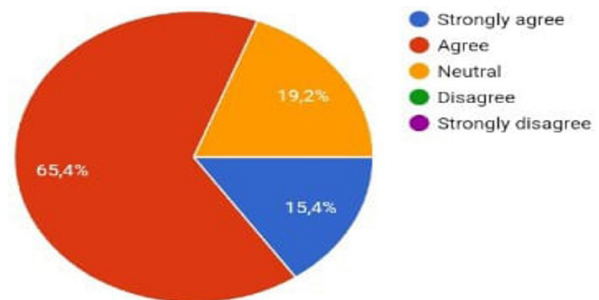


Figure 7: Teachers respond constructively to student concerns about cultural bias

The findings reveal that a considerable majority of respondents (65.4%) strongly agree that teachers respond constructively to student concerns regarding cultural bias. Moreover, 15.4% of respondents express agreement with this assertion, indicating a pervasive positive perception of teachers' ability to address such concerns effectively. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that a substantial minority (19.2%) adopt a neutral stance on this matter, underscoring the variability in opinions regarding the efficacy of teachers in handling student concerns about cultural bias.

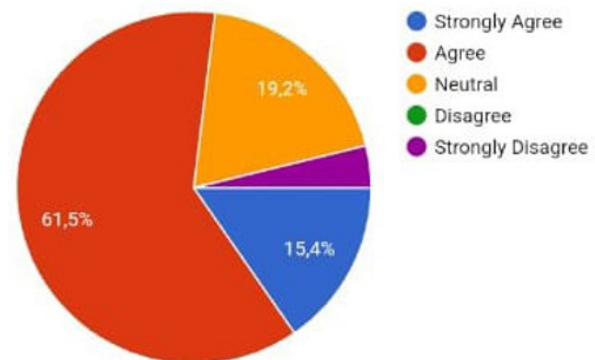


Figure 8: The impact of these challenges on the learning environment is significant

The findings indicate that a considerable majority of respondents (61.5%) agree on the significant impact of challenges associated with cultural stereotypes on the learning environment. Additionally, 15.4% of respondents remain neutral on this matter, while 19.2%

disagree or strongly disagree. This suggests a prevalent acknowledgment among respondents regarding the substantial influence of these challenges on the learning environment, albeit with a portion expressing divergent opinions or uncertainties.

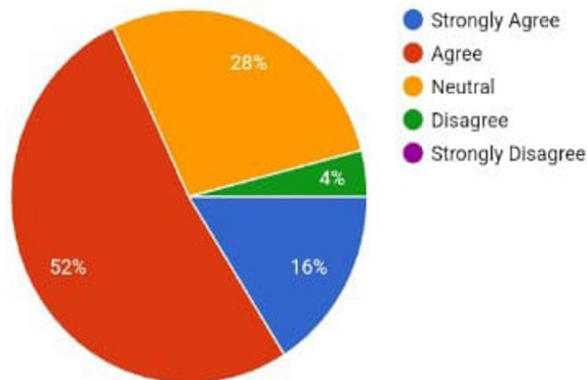


Figure 9: Teachers consistently promote inclusivity in my classroom

A significant majority of respondents (52%) strongly agree that teachers consistently promote inclusivity in their classrooms. Additionally, 28% express agreement with this statement, demonstrating an overall positive perception of teachers actively fostering inclusivity. However, a smaller percentage (16%) adopt a neutral stance, suggesting some diversity in opinions regarding the consistency of inclusivity promotion by teacher.

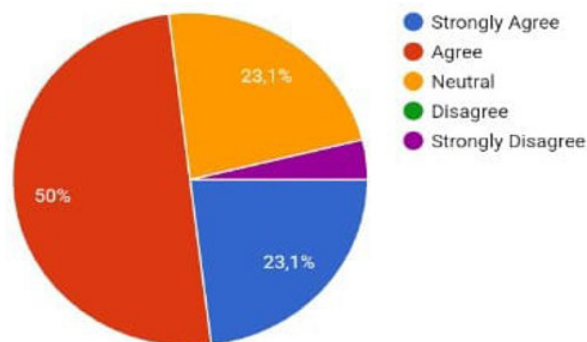


Figure 10: Teachers actively collaborate with colleagues and Students to address cultural stereotypes collectively

The data suggests that a considerable proportion of respondents (50%) strongly agree that teachers actively collaborate with colleagues and students to collectively address cultural stereotypes. Additionally, 23.1% agree with this statement, indicating a positive perception of collaborative efforts in tackling cultural stereotypes. However, a notable portion (23.1%) falls into the neutral category, suggesting some variability in opinions regarding the extent of collaboration in addressing these issues.

The research findings underscore the consensus among respondents regarding the importance of providing personal information for comprehending cultural stereotypes, despite some diversity in opinions (Zhang, 2019). This acknowledgment reflects a nuanced

understanding of the significance of context in addressing cultural biases within ESL classrooms. It suggests a growing awareness among educators of the need to consider individual backgrounds and experiences in navigating cultural dynamics within educational settings (Suryani & Daulay, 2022). This recognition of the value of personal context in understanding cultural stereotypes lays a foundation for fostering inclusivity and sensitivity in ESL classrooms.

Moreover, the research highlights a significant level of awareness and acknowledgment of cultural stereotypes within ESL classrooms, with half of the respondents reporting instances of such observations. This finding underscores the pervasive nature of cultural stereotypes and their impact on educational environments (Morgan & Clarke, 2011). It suggests that educators and students alike are increasingly attuned to the presence of stereotypes and their potential influence on interactions and learning experiences (Banks, 2015). By acknowledging the existence of cultural stereotypes, educators can begin to address them more effectively, paving the way for a more inclusive and supportive learning environment.

Furthermore, the majority of respondents perceive the integration of culturally diverse materials by teachers as effective, although opinions vary within the neutral category. This finding highlights the potential of culturally diverse materials to enhance learning experiences and foster greater cultural understanding (Shin *et al.*, 2011). However, the presence of neutral opinions suggests that there may be room for improvement in the selection and implementation of such materials. Educators may need to further tailor their approaches to ensure that cultural diversity is adequately represented and integrated into the curriculum (Putri, 2022). This underscores the importance of ongoing efforts to enhance cultural inclusivity in ESL classrooms.

The research also underscores the widely acknowledged challenge of addressing cultural stereotypes in tertiary ELT/EFL classrooms, emphasizing the need for comprehensive strategies (Suryani & Daulay, 2022). This recognition of the complexity of addressing cultural biases within educational settings highlights the importance of ongoing professional development and training for educators (Alshenqeeti, 2014). By equipping educators with the tools and strategies needed to effectively navigate cultural dynamics, institutions can better support the creation of inclusive learning environments.

Overall, the study provides a foundation for understanding and developing more effective strategies to foster an inclusive and stereotype-free educational environment (Zhang, 2019). By highlighting the importance of context, awareness, and effective pedagogy in addressing cultural stereotypes, the research contributes to ongoing efforts to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion within ESL classrooms (Morgan & Clarke, 2011). Through continued research and collaboration, educators can work towards creating learning environments that celebrate cultural diversity and empower all students to thrive.

CONCLUSION

This study underscores the imperative of combatting cultural stereotypes and biases within English Language Teaching (ELT) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. It reveals a pervasive awareness of these stereotypes among educators and students, emphasizing the necessity for proactive measures to foster inclusivity and sensitivity in educational environments. While integrating culturally diverse materials has shown promise in enriching learning experiences, challenges persist in addressing cultural biases within tertiary ELT/EFL settings. However, the study acknowledges its limitations, primarily relying on self-reported data which may introduce bias, and its sample size may constrain the generalizability of findings. Future research should aim for more diverse and representative samples, utilizing varied data collection methods for enhanced reliability. Moving forward, recommendations for further investigation include exploring the efficacy of specific strategies to mitigate cultural stereotypes and biases, such as cultural competency training for educators and curriculum adaptations. Longitudinal studies are proposed to assess the enduring effects of these interventions on student outcomes and classroom dynamics. Thus, addressing cultural stereotypes and biases in ELT/EFL classrooms is crucial for fostering inclusive and equitable learning environments. While this study offers valuable insights, further research is imperative to develop evidence-based interventions and policies that champion diversity, equity, and inclusion in educational settings. By acknowledging and building upon the limitations of this study, researchers can contribute meaningfully to ongoing efforts toward creating more culturally responsive ELT/EFL classrooms.

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