

Culturally Explicit Pedagogy and the Development of English Language Speaking Proficiency Amongst the French Speaking Student-Teachers in Bilingual Teacher Training Colleges in Cameroon

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Abstract: English language classrooms in Teacher Training Colleges in Cameroon are increasingly multi sociocultural. There is a growing need of incorporating multicultural pedagogy into the learning process to impact the development of English language speaking proficiency of student-teachers. This study therefore, sets out to investigate the extent to which multicultural pedagogy could impact the development of English language speaking proficiency amongst the French speaking student-teachers in some Bilingual Teacher Training Colleges in Cameroon. This research work is anchored on the theories of; Second Language Acquisition, Social Constructivism and the theory of critical pedagogy. Survey research design was used to collect data from a sample population of 260 drawn from a target population of 725. Two working hypotheses were emitted and data collected from the respondents using a carefully design questionnaire. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse the data. The findings related to all the two research hypotheses indicated that: culturally diverse materials can significantly inspire student-teachers from diverse sociocultural backgrounds to actively participate in English language lessons in developing their English language speaking proficiency. Findings also showed that culturally responsive assessment can significantly provide a safe laboratory for students to sharpen their speaking skills. The study recommends that: culturally responsive assessment techniques should be used to enable student teachers articulate proficiently using appropriate grammatical structures and real life situations. Culturally diverse instructional materials should be used in English language lessons to enable learners improve on their pronunciation, fluency and to stimulate learners' interest in speaking activities in general.

Keywords: Multicultural pedagogy, culturally diverse materials, culturally responsive assessment, English language. speaking proficiency.



INTRODUCTION

The notion of multicultural pedagogy, which is characterized by diversity and a rich sociocultural exchange, has gained increasing importance in today's globalized world. Writing on explicit pedagogy Kapukaya (2020), points out that, of late, national and international boundaries have been disappearing into global social networks and communication technologies, propelled by wireless communications, electronic commerce, popular cultures and international travels. As a result, more multicultural environments have continued to characterise English language classrooms not only in urban areas but also in non-urbanised and non-global societies. In the field of foreign language teaching (FLT), the exploitation of culturally explicit pedagogy has become an essential tool to promote a better understanding of sociocultural differences in learners, foster empathy, and encourage the acquisition of new linguistic skills. In the views of Sipra (2007), cultural, linguistic and intellectual capital of many societies can dramatically increase when language teachers stop seeing culturally and linguistically diverse learners as a problem to be solved but rather take advantage of the linguistic, cultural, and intellectual resources they bring from their homes to the classroom.

Chumbow (1980) reports that, Cameroon, like elsewhere in the world, has witnessed the movement of people from one geographic region of the country to the other, for several reasons including the search for better living conditions, the search for more peaceful dwellings and or redeployment for different reasons. Accordingly, this has resulted in the emergence of multiple and overlapping identities of learners in English language teaching (ELT) classrooms in Cameroon. In such classrooms, learners from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds may be expected to disassociate themselves from their norms and learn according to the dominant group's expectations. Gay (2018) attests that requiring such acquiescence from learners, participating in academic activities while functioning in unfamiliar contexts placed on them, can be a stressful predicament.

Dealing with diverse students linguistically, socially, and culturally creates a number of difficulties in teaching English as a foreign or Second language. As pointed out by Gorgorió & Planas (2001), the gravity of a problem is generally defined by the number of people who are at risk of being affected by that factor. Considering the fact that, Cameroon is highly a multicultural country, there is a strong need for language teachers in Cameroonian Teacher Training Colleges (TTC) to render teaching and learning of English socio-culturally and linguistically relevant. Kramsch (2014) posits that, language is part of culture and culture is part of language. The two are intricately interwoven so that, one cannot separate them without losing the significance of either language or culture. Perhaps, it is in this connection that, Abdullah & Mirza (2020) observes that learners' poor performance in school can be experienced in many multicultural classrooms because various media and methods, which diverse traditional communities have used for the teaching and learning, are sometimes ignored. Hollins (1999) agrees with Abdullah & Mirza (2020) and further argues that many ethnically diverse students do not find foreign language classes exciting because most of what is taught does not reflect their sociocultural environment.

Snow & McAdam (2000) on their part, point out that very few language teachers are adequately equipped and or understand the inherent challenges students from diverse cultural backgrounds face in language classes, yet, teachers are expected to successfully teach the students. Perhaps, it was in this connection that Beeman & Urow (2013) argue that multicultural pedagogy is a fairer system of pedagogy because it is more tolerant to cultural diversity and allows students to truly express who they are in language classrooms. It cuts across cultural values, language barriers, socio cultural skills, behaviour, discipline and academic performance. These views are equally

shared by Gay (2018) who observes that; 'students learn best when they are engaged in their environments and with the information to be learned. This engagement happens when students feel validated as members of the learning community.' Gay (2002) suggests that multicultural pedagogy can be a response to language needs of students by connecting new information to their background knowledge, and presenting it in ways that respond to their natural ways of learning.

Although several multicultural classroom issues have been addressed in Cameroon, since the 1960's, the solutions advanced by several studies have sometimes been of little help in teaching oral skills. In a narrower context, the use of multicultural pedagogy in ELT classroom in Teacher Training Colleges in Cameroon has witnessed very little attention. It is in this respect, that, it is believed that the use of multicultural pedagogy will ensure respect of the cultural and linguistic forms that students bring into language classrooms and cannot only enhance their speaking proficiencies but can equally increase their awareness of other Cameroonian cultures.

Awah (2021) reports that, four major cultural zones have been demarcated in Cameroon. The following constitute the major sociocultural ecological zones: The Grassfield sociocultural ecological zone comprising the North West and the South West Regions; the Fang-Beti cultural zone is comprising the Centre, East and South Regions; the Sawa cultural zone comprising the Littoral and South West Regions and the Sudano-Sahelian cultural zone which comprises Adamawa, North and Far North Regions. The criteria of classification into sociocultural zones are based on the different aspects of Cameroon national cultures (dances, folk tales proverbs, songs, habits, customs and traditions amongst others); the different ways of adaptation of the populations in their environment; life styles of the indigenous population (traditional family, society and economy, health care, rights and duties of individuals, traditional strategies to ensure security of people, media and traditional communication tools amongst others); social interactions that make sense for Cameroon as well as per the historical, cultural archaeological and geographical backgrounds of the people.

This study set out to investigate the possibility of using culturally explicit pedagogy to enhance the development of English language speaking proficiency amongst French speaking student teachers in Bilingual Teacher Training Colleges in Cameroon.

Statement of the Problem

According to the 2014 revised syllabuses for teacher training colleges in Cameroon, student teachers upon graduation should be able to exercise four functions, namely ; teaching, communication, education, analyse and regulation. Analysing the said syllabuses for Anglais and English Didactics, one may be tempted to believe that upon graduation, student teachers would effectively and comfortably teach the English language in primary and Nursery schools. Yet, as surprising as it may be, it is not always the case. As Nkwetisama (2012) argues, the teaching of Anglais and English Didactics in a majority of our colleges seems to have been reduced to enabling students pass the different written examinations, a situation that does not permit learners to effectively use what they acquire in school in real life situations. This is perhaps why Tosam (2016) is of the opinion that majority of language teachers in Cameroon are only interested in filling students' heads with grammatical paradigms and syntactic rules which do not permit students to effectively express themselves orally in English language. Tosam (2016) reports that, while supervising student teachers on internship in the field, it was discovered that over 85% of certified practicing primary and nursery school teachers were not able to teach English language in their various classes. Their speaking skills were generally imbedded with problems of intelligibility. This was suggestive to the fact that, majority of them had not been adequately trained to teach English language in the primary and nursery schools.

These aforementioned views were also recognisable in the performance of Francophone candidates on Anglais in the 2014 through 2016 CAPIEMP examinations school year as indicated in the mark sheets for the CAPIEMP examination in MINESEC. Analyses of the results of Francophone candidates on Anglais during these years show a percentage passed in the CAPIEMP exams of 71.18% for 2014, 74.80% for 2015 and 83.15% for 2016 school years. Following these brilliant performances, one would expect graduates to teach English language effectively in the primary and nursery schools but it is observably not the case.

Although much has been written on the teaching and learning of English as a Second Official language to French Speaking Cameroonians in the primary and secondary schools, very little has been written on the teaching of English language in teacher training colleges from a cultural perspective. Perhaps, the limited availability of research in the teaching of English language in teacher training colleges could also account for the inabilities of majority of certified French speaking primary and nursery school teachers to effectively teach English language in their classrooms. The deplorable situation in the performance of student-teachers on English language inspired the need to carry out research on multicultural pedagogy and the development of English language speaking proficiency of student-teachers in Cameroonian teacher training colleges.

Conceptual Review of Literature

According to Sushama (2011), multicultural pedagogy is a teaching strategy characterized by cultural experiences and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits which allow learners to engage in with new materials in a way that suits individual learning styles. To Gay (2000), multicultural pedagogy means using cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant and effective for students. Gay further notes that, culturally explicit pedagogy is any type of teaching/ learning strategies, which a teacher uses to enable students to improve on their performance. Gay (2000) focuses on representation of students' experiences and cultures in curriculum and using students' cultural styles in learning. She encourages teachers to go beyond mere inclusion of ethnic content into curricula and make radical changes in instructional processes. Gay goes on and points out that, culturally responsive strategy can equally enable teachers to transform learning experiences to be more enjoyable and practical as well as make them take a more active role in the teaching and learning process.

In the same vein, Hammond (2015) views culturally multicultural pedagogy as a teaching strategy that, recognizes and values students' cultural identities and leverages them to enhance learning outcomes. In other words, it is a pedagogy that acknowledges and embraces students' cultures, languages and experiences and relates them to classroom learning. Gay (2000) further points out that, culturally responsive teachers are actively aware of the various cultural backgrounds present in their classrooms, and act as a facilitator of lessons that can resonate with each. Creating this learning environment requires not only a high level of cultural competence, but also an intentional effort to learn about students' cultural backgrounds. Teachers deliver course material in ways that keep students engaged and practicing different skill sets and that, the more culturally responsive instructional strategy a teacher has in their tool kit, the more they are able to reach all of their students. The strategy is equally used to help students become independent, strategic learners. Nieto (2013) shares similar views and goes further and points out that, culturally responsive teaching helps to create a more inclusive and welcoming classroom environment for students from diverse backgrounds given that the cultural dimension of the instructional strategies can help to increase student participation and engagement.

Dias (2019) inspired by history of America, in which immigrants had been integrated into society from diverse cultural backgrounds, carried out a research study on effects of multicultural education on English language learners in California, aimed at determining the extent to which

multicultural education affect English language learners, psychologically, socially, and academically. The findings indicated that, multicultural pedagogy is necessary for the academic success, psychological well-being, and social competency of language students. Thus, when multicultural pedagogy is employed during ELT lessons, students are more willing to participate actively during speaking activities. Rodriguez et al. (2023) also carried out a research work on pedagogical multicultural communities in teacher preparation in South African and the US classrooms aimed at highlighting the challenges school teachers face in diverse linguistic classrooms and to show how multiculturalism can be used to enhance learning in such classrooms. Accordingly, these researchers, found out that, culture integration into language learning helps the students to have an understanding and appreciation of how the language is used within in a particular language community. Patak et al. (2022) also carried a research study on the implementation of multicultural-based English language teaching in a language institution in Indonesia and found out that, multicultural pedagogy exists when teachers modify their teaching in ways that can facilitate the academic achievement of students from diverse racial, cultural, and social-class group. The results of study also indicated that, the use of multicultural materials in teaching broadens the knowledge of the learners and help them to master additional vocabulary.

Yuliantari & Huda (2023) investigated on the integration of culturally-responsive teaching (CRT) in English Learning aimed and concluded that by infusing CRT principles into the classroom discussions and teaching materials, students are allowed to explore literature and language from a more inclusive and nuanced perspectives. Based on the results, Yuliantari & Huda (2023) recommended that, language teaching should be integrated with local cultural learning to improve students' intercultural communicative ability.

Culturally Responsive Assessment

Culturally responsive assessment is defined by Evans (2021) as one that evaluates students' knowledge, skills, and understandings in a way that takes into account their unique cultural identities. It incorporates flexibility and choice so that students can leverage their own cultural perspectives to demonstrate their mastery of a given subject area. Culturally responsive assessment is defined by Evans (2021) as one that evaluates students' knowledge, skills, and understandings in a way that takes into account their unique cultural identities. It incorporates flexibility and choice so that students can leverage their own cultural perspectives to demonstrate their mastery of a given subject area. Other researchers like Montenegro & Jankowski (2017) view culturally responsive assessment as assessment that is sensitive to student populations the institution serves, using language that is appropriate for all students when developing learning outcomes, acknowledging students' differences in the planning phases of an assessment effort, developing and/or using assessment tools that are appropriate for different students, and being intentional in using assessment results to improve learning for all students. Such an assessment is not only student-focused, but calls for student involvement throughout the entire assessment process including the development of learning outcome statements, assessment tool selection/development process, data collection and interpretation, and use of results.

Writing on the nature of culturally responsive assessment, Stemberge (2020) points out that, it is a flexible and adaptive assessment strategy that provides students from diverse cultural backgrounds, the opportunity to bring their own cultural references and influences into English language classrooms. It includes students as part of the design process, and a demonstration of students' heritage and community cultural practices. Carroll (2008) shares similar views and further explains that, cultural responsive assessment does not only inform the language teacher on how well students have acquired knowledge, but, equally indicates whether the instructional strategies, pace and intensity should be adjusted or not in order to help all students learn. To Gallagher (2012) culturally responsive assessment must effectively align with the learning

outcomes/competencies, assessment techniques, content and instructional strategies to attain learning objectives as stated in the curricular. Understandably, it is conducted for various purposes such as checking placement or aptitude levels and or students' proficiency.

Culturally responsive assessment therefore, broadly refers to assessment that incorporates cultures of students from the four cultural backgrounds of Cameroon and beyond. It is used by the English language teachers in describing the degree to which they want the student from diverse cultural backgrounds to demonstrate particular skills, sense of values, attitudes and interest in the use of language.

Nortvedt et al. (2020) investigated on culturally responsive assessment in schools in a globalising world to address challenges face by migrant students. These researchers after the study recommended the use of assessment strategies that are more culturally fair or culturally responsive to students from diverse cultural backgrounds. First, performance-based assessment should be used to accommodate both individually and collectively oriented students and to create more equitable assessment practices.

Culturally Diverse Materials

According to Ogalde and Bardavid (2003), culturally diverse materials are learner-centred tools used in a classroom that is culturally diverse. Such materials help to engage students to actively participate during the learning and teaching process. Ogalde and Bardavid (2003) further notes that, culturally diverse instructional materials are used to facilitate the teaching-learning process within a global and systematic educational context to stimulate the senses of learners in the acquisition of concepts, abilities and skills, as well as the formation of attitudes and values. Such materials are learner-centred used for the primary benefit of the learners and not necessarily the teacher.

As pointed out by Gay (2018), incorporating culturally relevant materials, promotes positive social interactions as well as creates a supportive learning environment that values and respects students' cultural identities and experiences. Everything that serves as instructional material serve as the most appropriate way, the teacher can have to create an appropriate teaching and learning environment. Instructional material facilitates the learning process, establishes connections between the teacher and the students and allows the teacher to have a structure with organized content so that progress can be experienced. Writing on the use of culturally diverse materials Bishop (1990) observes that, these materials can serve as mirrors in which learners see a reflection of their identity and daily live experiences. Learners in second or foreign language classes, learn better when the physical environment has cultural differences highlighted by pictures, posters, art, books, maps, flags, amongst others. On the contrary, when students do not see themselves in the instructional materials used during language lessons, they are demotivated to learn.

According to Harmar (2007), culturally diverse materials that reflect the cultural diversity of the classroom include literature, music, games, giant maps, sports items such as rings or balls, models, work books, index cards, colours pen and all materials used to carry out work in the classroom to support the learning process. Electronic materials for the teacher include all the resources that are linked to electronic devices consisting of files, documents, images, slides, videos, audios, films, documentaries and more on socio cultural activities. Such diverse instructional materials fulfill the three primary reasons in the classroom namely: Catch the attention of the learners focus; Expose the learner to the main idea of the topic; and help the learner to have a hands-on experience. Hasanah et al. (2021) on her part argues that, digital teaching materials oriented to multicultural pedagogy enables students become familiar with multicultural values packaged in the form of messages from simple stories. To Chaika (2023), the use of authentic materials and tasks that reflect the diversity of cultures and experiences of

learners encourage collaboration and interaction among learners from diverse cultural backgrounds, a situation that provides opportunities for learners to reflect on their own cultural background and values, as well as those of others.

Speaking Proficiency

Speaking proficiency according to Cloud et al. (2000), refers to *the ability to communicate orally and comprehend using language accurately and appropriately in its oral and written forms in a variety of settings*. These researchers go on to say that, a student who is proficient in a particular language can use the language in both written and oral form appropriately in real-life interactions, which are spontaneous and not rehearsed. Students who are good at speaking English are described as fluent, universal, disarming, wise, privileged, and hardworking. They are able to fulfill the demands of speaking tasks with sustained, coherent discourse, and a demonstration of an effective use of grammar and vocabulary. Students who speak English fluently have a well-paced flow of speech that is clear and intelligible, with minor lapses in areas such as; grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation or intonation patterns. They exhibit a fairly high degree of automaticity and control of basic and complex structures, with some minor errors that do not obscure meaning. Cloud et al. (2000) share similar views as they point out that, speaking proficiency presupposes *the ability to use language accurately and appropriately in its oral form in a variety of settings*.

Characteristics of Speaking Proficiency

There are several factors that make speaking effective such as; grammar, accuracy, fluency and comprehension. One of these factors is grammar because learning the right structure to convey the intended meaning is what grammar aims at. According to Harmer (2001), being grammatically accurate refers to the appropriate use of the right grammatical structuring; this latter includes the length and the complexity of the sentences and the ability to use the subordinating clauses. Crystal (2005) on her part describes grammar as the business of taking language to pieces to see how it works. In relation to this study, student teachers can be able to speak effectively if they master the grammatical structures of English language. Without a mastery of grammar of a language, learners may find it difficult to maintain proper tenses when they are speaking. For instance, the use of wrong tenses can lead to the inappropriate meaning. Abbaspour (2016) shares similar views and goes further to reiterate that, he who talks about grammar equally talks about grammatical competence which includes increasing expertise in grammar, vocabulary, and sounds of letters and syllables, pronunciation of words, intonation and stress. To understand meaning, learners need to have enough knowledge of words and sentences as well as figure out how words are segmented into various sounds, how sentences are stressed in particular ways and how to use sentences correctly in conversation. Grammatical competence therefore, helps speakers to understand, use English language structures accurately. In a grammar instruction classroom, the teacher can prepare and give a brief lesson or segment that uses examples to clarify a grammatical rule such as tenses, subject-verb agreement, embedded clauses, and so on. This allows for concentrated practice in breaking complicated topics down into steps, offering clear explanations, developing examples, and assessing comprehension.

Second, speaking proficiency is also seen in the use of vocabulary when speaking. According to Schmitt (2010), vocabulary has long been recognized as a vital component and a good indicator of second language (L2) performance and proficiency. To researchers like August and Snow (2007), vocabulary occupies an important position in learning to listen, speak, read and write because vocabulary is mapped onto the oral vocabulary. From different angles, vocabulary depends on the suitable selection and use of words during speaking. Also writing on the importance of vocabulary, Nation (1990) notes that, vocabulary can increase learners' language use with a strong base for the development of the four language skills. She further observes that, vocabulary is both passive and active in nature. Passive vocabulary on the one hand, refers to the ability to recognize

a word and recall its meaning when it is encountered. On the other hand, productive vocabulary, also referred to as active vocabulary is the ability to retrieve the needed vocabulary from memory by using them at appropriate time and in appropriate situations.

Other researchers such as Kormos (2006) contend that speaking process consists of three main stages of speech production: conceptualization, formulation, and articulation. During the first stage, conceptualisation, speakers form pre-verbal messages. In the next stage, formulation, speakers search for and retrieve necessary vocabulary from the mental lexicon, which contain information related to vocabulary and syntactic structures, in order to produce utterances with syntactic and phonological information. In the final stage, articulation, speakers utter the speech that they have formulated.

Another characteristic of speaking proficiency is pronunciation. As it stands, learners are expected to practice pronunciation repetitively to ease the flow of speech, including segmental articulation, rhythm, phrasing and intonation, in addition to paralinguistic for instant gestures, body language, and eye contact. So, pronunciation is a central ingredient of oral communication, which also includes grammar, vocabulary choice and so on. Learners are also expected to be aware of the sound and their features, where words should be stressed, when to use raising intonations and when using falling ones in order to achieve clear, understood spoken English. A problematic pronunciation area, such as silent letters, vowel sounds, minimal pairs, and so on, is chosen by the teacher, and a 5-minute drill employing tongue twisters, minimum pairs, and phonetic alphabet introduction is created. It allows for the improvement of drill facilitation, precise modelling, feedback on mispronunciation, and making exercises more exciting.

Furthermore, speaking proficiency is also characterised by fluency. According Hedge (1993), fluency refers to the ability to express oneself in an understandable, accurate and reasonable way without too much hesitation, otherwise the communication will break down because listeners will lose their interest. It is natural language use occurring when a speaker engages in meaningful interaction and maintains comprehensible and on-going communication despite limitations in his or her communicative competence. Hedge further explains that, fluency relates to the production and it is normally reserved for speech. It is the ability to link units of speech together with facility and without strain or undue hesitation. To Thornbury, (2005) echoes Hedge and further explains that, fluency in a language classroom can be developed by creating classroom activities in which students must negotiate meaning, use communicative strategies, correct misunderstandings, and work to avoid communication breakdowns. Achieving the learners goal of becoming fluent in terms of speaking production, the teachers can train them to use the language freely in order to express their own ideas and then to avoid imitations of a model of some kind. Activities focusing on fluency includes; natural use of language, focus on achieving communication, meaningful use of language, use of communication strategies, production of language that may not be predictable; link language use to context.

Speaking proficiency is equally characterised by accuracy which in simple terms refers to the ability to produce grammatically correct sentences. According to Abbaspour (2016) accuracy refers to the ability to speak with a good command of intonation, vocabulary, and grammar, the ability to communicate ideas effectively and the ability to produce continuous speech without causing comprehension difficulties or a breakdown of communication. Accuracy therefore, requires that, learners focus on a number of things in their production of the spoken language, such as the grammatical structure, vocabulary and pronunciation. Without structuring accurate speech, speakers may be ambiguous and the listeners may lose interest if they perform incorrect utterances during communication. Activities that focus on accuracy include; classroom use of language, formation of correct examples of language, practice language, practice out of context and practice with small samples of language that do not require meaningful communication

control choice of language. Fluency and accuracy are related because accuracy is the basis of fluency, while fluency is a further improvement of a person's linguistic competence. Accuracy emphasises on formal instruction, language acquisition and grammar competence, while fluency relates to a level of proficiency in communication and emphasize to procedural skill, expression proficiency, lexical phrase, social interaction, necessary topic and discourse.

Theoretical Background

First of all, the Vygotskian's social constructivist theory to language learning is used in the study because it emphasizes the importance of culture and context in the process of knowledge construction and accumulation. According to Vygotsky, (1981) cited in Kibinkiri & Tieme (2022) social constructivism focuses on the development of cognitive skills and patterns of thinking in learners as products of activities practiced in a socio-cultural environment in which the individual grows up.

The second theory used in the study is Krashen's second language acquisition theory which consists of five hypotheses. According to Krashen (1988) second Language Acquisition is very similar to the process children acquire their first language. It requires meaningful interaction and communication in the new language during which speakers are concerned with the messages they are conveying and understanding and not only with the grammatical form of the language. Krashen believes that social communication, in a natural setting is the optimal way to learn a second language and that the ideal situation for teaching, according to the acquisition-learning hypothesis, is to put students in situations that are as authentic as possible to enable them acquire language naturally instead of learning a language through grammar rules or repeating sentences

The Critical Pedagogy by Freire (1998) which represents both a philosophy of education and a social movement combining education with critical theory was also used in the study. It rejects claims that knowledge is politically neutral and posits education and teaching as political acts. It seeks to awaken students to the social, cultural, political, and economic milieu in which dominant forms of knowledge are constructed and through which power functions and to enable them understand the way injustice manifests and is reproduced in order to engage in praxis critical reflection and action toward societal transformation.

General Research Hypothesis of the Study

The use of explicit pedagogy in an ELT classroom contributes to the development of English language speaking proficiency amongst French speaking student teachers in government teacher training colleges in Cameroon.

The above research questions were transformed into hypotheses.

Specific Research Hypotheses

In order to operationalise the general hypothesis, it was transformed into specific research hypotheses.

1. The use of culturally diverse materials contributes to the development of English language speaking proficiency amongst French speaking student teachers in teacher training colleges in Cameroon.
2. The use of culturally responsive assessment contributes to the development of English language speaking proficiency amongst the French speaking student teachers in teacher training colleges in the country.

Methodology of the study

An exploratory research design was used to collect quantitative data. This study was carried out in the four major sociocultural ecological zones in Cameroon, namely: the Grass field cultural zone, the Sudano-Sahelien cultural zone, the Sawa cultural zone and the Fang Beti cultural zone. The population of this study comprised French speaking student teachers for the 2023-2024 school year in Teacher training Colleges in Cameroon. The target population for this study consisted of the 1351 Francophone student teacher of examination classes in the eleven Bilingual Teacher Training Colleges in the four major cultural zones in Cameroon for the school year 2023-2024. The following GBTTTCs constituted the target population. . The choice of these teacher training colleges was inspired by the fact that, Regional head-quarters are characterised by influx of people from diverse cultural backgrounds in search of better living conditions, jobs or displaced by socio political crises as stated earlier. The choice of the final year student teachers was inspired by the fact that the syllabus for English language is expected to be completely covered in the final year classes.

The sample population for this study consisted of 260 Francophone student teachers of the examination classes drawn from a target population of 725 Francophone student teachers, namely; GBTTTC Bafoussam, GBTTTC Yaoundé, GBTTTC and GBTTTC Maroua.

The questionnaire addressed to student teachers comprised closed ended questions, intended to collect factual information and to investigate the use of multicultural pedagogy and the development of English language speaking proficiency of French speaking student teachers in Teacher Training Colleges in Cameroon. The questionnaire was addressed only to those in the examination classes. The choice of examination classes was inspired by the fact that the syllabus for English language is expected to be completely covered in the examination classes.

The first part of the questionnaire sought to survey the students' academic and professional qualifications and their opinion on the subject under study. The second part sought to investigate the extent to which culturally diverse materials could contribute to the development of English language speaking proficiency amongst French speaking student teachers. The third part sought to investigate the extent to which culturally responsive assessment contributes to the development of English language speaking proficiency amongst French speaking student teachers. The last part sought to investigate the opinion of student teachers on the development of speaking proficiency.

Table 01: Questionnaires to student-teachers

Distributed	Returned	Returned rate	Incomplete	Complete	Adjusted return Rate
260	260	100	00	260	100

Presentations of Data Analysis on Culturally Diverse Materials

From the results, we observed that student-teachers attach value to the use of culturally diverse kinesthetic activities such as dramatization of traditional weddings during ELT lessons that enables them to improve on their pronunciation ($M=2,47$). Also, the use of cultural audio-visual materials such as videos of traditional ceremonies during ELT lessons enables them to use new words more accurately and confidently when speaking ($M=2, 30$). Likewise, the use of culturally oriented digital technologies such as; online cultural exchange, enables them to use figures of speech such as verbs and adjectives more accurately when speaking ($M=2, 21$). Similarly, the use of diverse cultural auditory materials such as traditional songs in English related to diverse cultural backgrounds during ELT lessons enables them to improve on my speaking skills ($M=2,20$). Based on the experiences of student-teachers, the use of cultural visual materials such as drums, traditional dresses during ELT lessons enables them to use new words contextually when speaking ($M=2,26$).

Table 02: Distribution of Respondents' Opinions on Culturally Diverse Materials

	Mean	Std. Deviation
The use of cultural visual materials such as drums, traditional dresses during ELT lessons enables me to use new words contextually when speaking.	2.26	1.20
The use of cultural auditory materials such as traditional songs in English related to diverse cultural backgrounds during ELT lessons enables me to improve on my speaking skills.	2.20	1.18
The use of cultural audio-visual materials such as videos of traditional ceremonies during ELT lessons enables me to use new words more accurately and confidently when speaking.	2.30	1.14
The use of cultural kinaesthetic activities such as dramatization of traditional weddings during ELT lessons enables me to improve on my pronunciation.	2.47	1.17
The use of culturally oriented digital technologies such as; on line cultural exchange, enables me to use figures of speech such as verbs and adjectives more accurately when speaking.	2.21	1.12
Multicultural instructional materials	2.29	.78
N = 286		

Distribution of Respondents' Opinions on Culturally Responsive Assessment

Table 03 presents the distribution of the opinions of the respondents on culturally responsive assessment. From the results in the table, we observe that when assessment requires student-teachers to compare diverse cultures during ELT lessons, they are motivated to engage more in speaking activities (M=2, 39). Also, when the teacher uses cultural content for assessment, they are inspired to unconsciously use new words when speaking (M=2, 36). Likewise, when the teacher uses assessment that requires them to describe how cultural ceremonies are carried out in their culture, it enables them to use adjectives and adverbs more accurately when speaking (M=2, 22). Similarly, when the teacher assesses the student-teachers' proficiency in speaking skills using their cultural experiences, it enables them to express themselves better in English language (M=2, 17). In that line, when the teacher introduces assessment items using culturally diverse materials such as pictures, it enables the student-teachers to actively take part in speaking activities (M=2, 07).

Table 03: Distribution of Respondents' Opinions on Culturally Responsive Assessment

	Mean	Std. Deviation
When my teacher assesses my competence in speaking skills using my cultural experiences, it enables me to express myself better in English language	2.17	1.25
When my teacher introduces assessment items using culturally diverse materials such as pictures, it enables me to actively take part in speaking activities.	2.07	1.19
When my teacher uses assessment that requires me to describe how cultural ceremonies are carried out in my culture, it enables me to use adjectives and adverbs more accurately when speaking.	2.22	1.21
When my teacher uses cultural content for assessment, I am inspired to unconsciously use new words when speaking.	2.36	1.12
When assessment requires me to compare diverse cultures during	2.39	1.10

ELT lessons, I am motivated to engage more in speaking activities.		
Culturally responsive assessment	2.24	.79
Valid N (list wise)		

Distribution of the Respondents' Opinions on the Development of English Language Speaking Proficiency

Table 04 provides the distribution of the respondents' opinions on students' critical thinking skills development. The results on the table reveal that student-teachers can speak English fluently while applying grammatical rules ($M = 2.63$). This signifies that they can use English words contextually with respect to various cultures ($M=2.49$). In that same line, many respondents agreed that they can practice to be fluent by reading texts aloud ($M = 2.30$). This signifies that many respondents declare that they can use parts of speech such as verbs, adjectives, adverbs accurately, when they speak during lessons ($M = 2.24$). Also, when they don't remember a word, they can replace it with another word from either French or their mother tongue ($M = 2.24$). Likewise, the student-teachers are usually excited when the teacher asks students to figure out grammatical rules from a discussion with classmates ($M = 2.23$). Similarly, they can practice using new words/expressions while speaking ($M = 2.17$). Equally, the student-teachers can improve on their pronunciation when corrected by their teacher or more proficient classmates ($M = 2.02$). That is why, they can also use the English dictionary to improve their pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary ($M = 3.23$); and they can use their cultural background knowledge to develop their vocabulary when speaking ($M = 3.23$).

Table 05: Distribution of the Respondent's Opinions on Critical Thinking Skills' Development

	Mean	Std. Deviation
I can use my cultural background knowledge to develop my vocabulary when speaking.	2.14	1.21
When I don't remember a word, I replace it with another word from either French or my mother tongue.	2.24	1.25
I can practice using new words/expressions while speaking.	2.17	1.11
I can use English words contextually with respect to various cultures.	2.49	1.20
I can improve on my pronunciation when corrected by my teacher or more proficient classmates.	2.02	1.24
I can use the English dictionary to improve my pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary.	1.91	1.18
I can use parts of speech such as verbs, adjectives, adverbs accurately, when I speak during lessons.	2.24	1.14
I am excited when the teacher asks students to figure out grammatical rules from a discussion with classmates.	2.23	1.15
I can speak English fluently while applying grammatical rules.	2.63	1.28
I can practice to be fluent by reading texts aloud.	2.30	1.30
The Development of English Language Speaking Proficiency	2.24	.76
Valid N (listwise)		

Verification of Research Hypotheses

In this section, we are going to verify our research hypotheses. As a statistical tool, the Pearson correlation coefficient will be used to test our research hypotheses. Also, we will use multiple regressions to assess the predictive nature of multicultural pedagogy on the development of

English language speaking proficiency of student-teachers. The statistical processing of the data was done through the SPSS software (SPSS 28.0 for Windows).

Culturally Diverse Materials and the Development of English Language Speaking Proficiency (RH1)

Culturally diverse materials (CDM) play a key role in the development of English language speaking proficiency of student-teachers (DELSP). That is why the third research hypothesis (RH1) claims that, there is a significant relationship between culturally diverse materials (CDM) and the development of English language speaking proficiency of student-teachers (DELSP). The shape of scatter plot in figure 01 displays the direction of the relationship between culturally diverse materials (CDM) and the development of English language speaking proficiency of student-teachers (DELSP).

Figure 01: Direction of the Relationship between Culturally Diverse Materials (CDM)

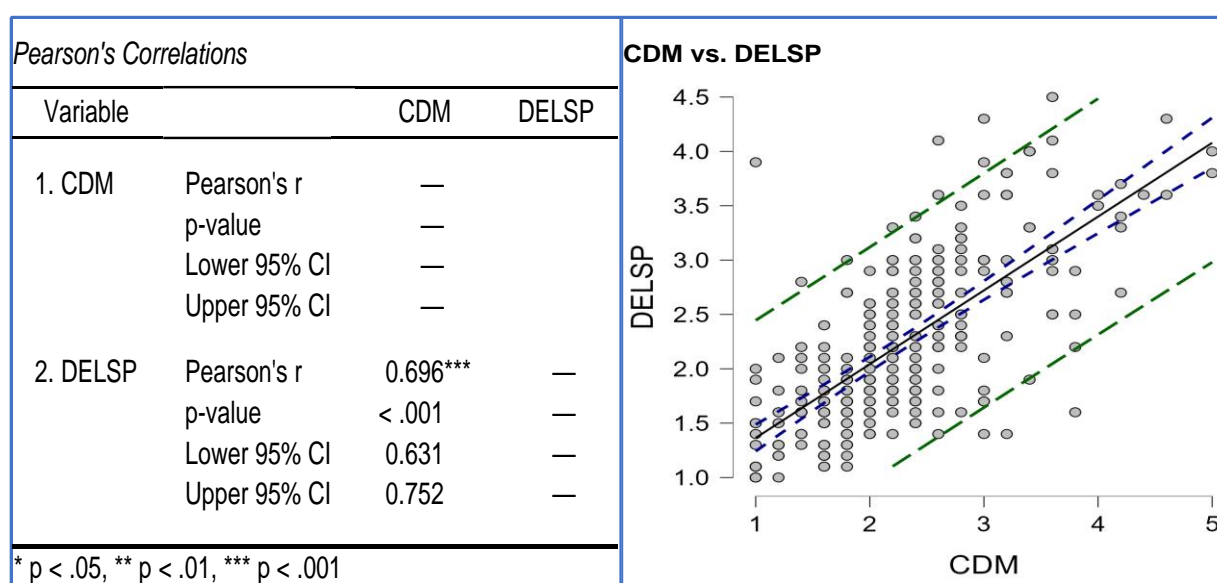


Figure 01: Coefficient of correlation and scatter plot showing the correlation between culturally diverse materials (CDM) and the development of English language speaking proficiency of student-teachers (DELSP)

The results based on bias corrected and accelerated bootstrap 95% CIs have shown that there was a significant positive correlation between culturally diverse materials (CDM) and the development of English language speaking proficiency of student-teachers (DELSP), $r(284) = .696$ [0.631, 0.752] ($p < .001$). From these results, we can conclude that culturally diverse materials (CDM) significantly influence the development of English language speaking proficiency of student-teachers (DELSP). This test-value gives a coefficient of determination of 0.4844, meaning that 48.44% of the variability of the development of English language speaking proficiency of student-teachers (DELSP) is explained by culturally diverse materials (CDM).

Reflecting on the connection between culturally diverse instructional resources and the development of speaking skills, it seems that these materials can be integrated into language courses. For the student-teachers, culturally diverse resources note that:

In assessing the relationship between the use of culturally diverse instructional materials during lessons and the development speaking proficiency of student teachers, the later declared that:

These results underscore the importance of purposefully incorporating culturally diverse didactic materials into English language instruction. They illustrate the beneficial effects these resources

have on both student-teachers and teachers by encouraging inclusivity, enhancing language learning, and nurturing a greater appreciation of diverse world.

Culturally Responsive Assessment (CRA) and the Development of English Language Speaking Proficiency (RH2)

Culturally responsive assessment (CRA) plays a key role in the development of English language speaking proficiency of student-teachers (DELSP). That is why the second research hypothesis (RH2) claims that there is a significant relationship between culturally responsive assessment (CRA) and the development of English language speaking proficiency of student-teachers (DELSP). The shape of scatter plot in figure 02 displays the direction of the relationship between culturally responsive assessment (CRA) and the development of English language speaking proficiency of student-teachers (DELSP).

Figure 02: Direction of the Relationship between Culturally Responsive Assessment (CRA)

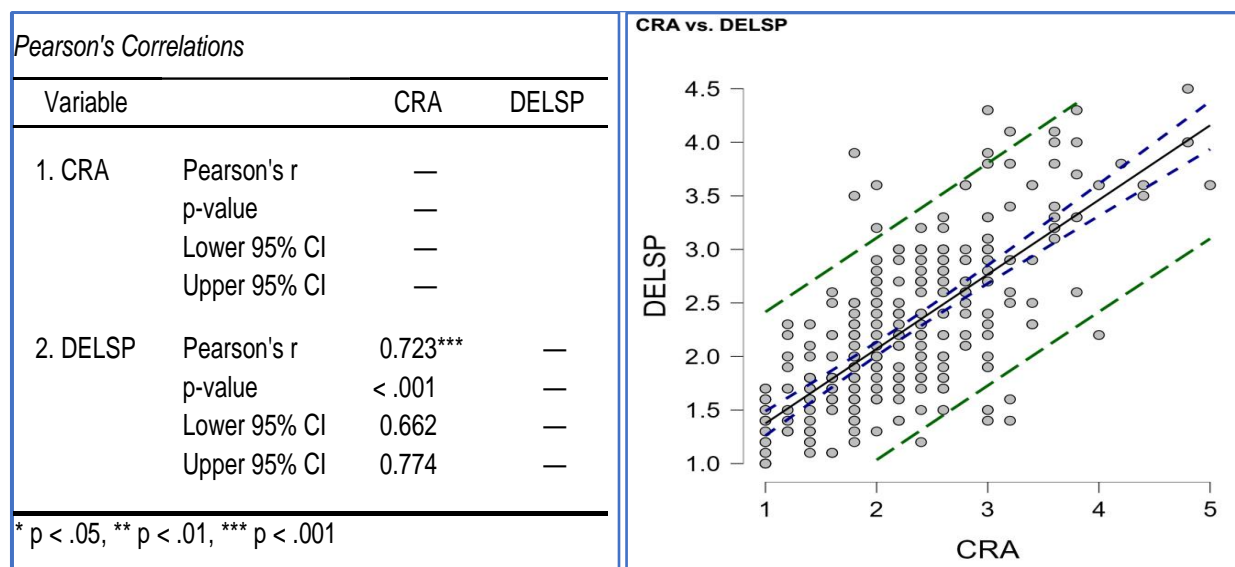


Figure 02: Coefficient of correlation and scatter plot showing the correlation between culturally responsive assessment (CRA) and the development of English language speaking proficiency of student-teachers (DELSP)

The results based on bias corrected and accelerated bootstrap 95% CIs have shown that there was a significant positive correlation between culturally responsive assessment (CRA) and the development of English language speaking proficiency of student-teachers (DELSP), $r(284) = .723$ [0.662, 0.774] ($p < .001$). From this result we can conclude that culturally responsive assessment (CRA) significantly influences the development of English language speaking proficiency of student-teachers (DELSP). This test-value gives a coefficient of determination of 0.5227 meaning that 52.27% of the variability of the development of English language speaking proficiency of student-teachers (DELSP) is explained by culturally responsive assessment (CRA).

Analysing the connection between culturally responsive assessment and the enhancement of speaking proficiency, confirm the manner in which teachers administer assessment could influence learners' performance. According to the views of student-teachers, culturally responsive assessment is understood as for example

In assessing the connection between culturally responsive assessment and the enhancement of fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar accuracy, student-teachers indicated that:

The results also indicated that aligning culturally responsive assessment with learning outcomes can significantly motivate students to engage actively in speaking activities. In summary, culturally responsive assessment plays a vital role in effective English language instruction. It necessitates a transformation in viewpoint from uniform, standardized methods to a more personalized and culturally awareness approach that appreciates diversity.

Figure 03:

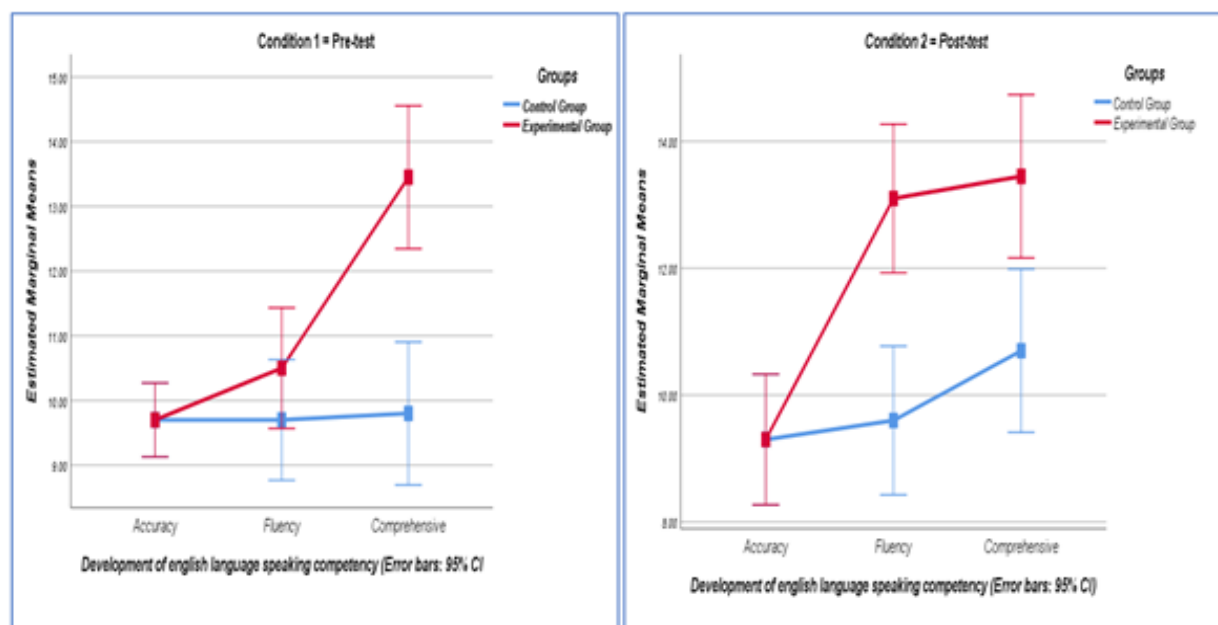


Table 05: Summary of findings

Hypotheses	Analysis' tools	Results	Decision	Observations
Research hypotheses				
RH1	Pearson's correlation	$r(284) = .696$ [0.631, 0.752] ($p < .001$)	$r^2 = 0.4844$	It means that 48.44% of the variability of the development of English language speaking proficiency of student-teachers (DELSP) is explained by culturally diverse materials (CDM)
RH2	Pearson's correlation	$r(284) = .723$ [0.662, 0.774] ($p < .001$)	$r^2 = 0.5227$	It means that 52.27% of the variability of the development of English language speaking proficiency of student-teachers (DELSP) is explained by culturally responsive assessment (CRA)

Presentations of Data Analyses and Discussion of Findings on the use of culturally diverse materials

The results of the findings indicated that, the use of culturally diverse materials in ELT classrooms can significantly contribute to the development their speaking proficiency amongst French speaking student teachers. Using well-crafted visual, audio, audio-visual and or kinaesthetic representations to appeal to the diverse culturally learning styles of student teachers can increase their engagement in speaking activities. Furthermore, language teachers can use culturally diverse instructional materials to transform the ELT classroom into a space where every student feels valued and respected for who they are, and where cultural and linguistic differences are not just acknowledged but recognized as strengths. Language teachers could tasked students

during ELT lessons to create visual, audio and kinaesthetic sociocultural representations for specific contents to trigger curiosity and collaborative skills and to encourage students to subconsciously pronounce words correctly when speaking.

These findings are congruent with earlier research carried out Kiss & Weninger (2017) who demonstrated that, the use of culturally diverse materials such as visual aids in a diverse classroom, improves oral proficiency of language learners given that, visual aids stimulate and motivate students' interest especially learners to actively take part in speaking activities. The findings are also in line with those of Chaika (2023) who carried out a research study on multicultural education in foreign language teaching and revealed that, the use of culturally diverse video-based instructional materials during ELT lessons can considerably improve students' speaking abilities.

The findings are equally consistent with those of Gay (2018) who demonstrated that, the use of culturally diverse materials in an ELT classroom can improve students' motivation, promote positive social interactions, create a supportive learning environment that values and respects students' cultural identities and experiences as well as enable students to use language in real life situations. The findings are equally harmonious with those of Bishop (1990) observed that, culturally diverse materials serve as mirrors in which students see a reflection of their identities and daily life experiences and that, if on the contrary, students do not see themselves in the instructional materials used during language lessons, they are demotivated to take part in the lesson especially in speaking activities. The findings are equally in line with those Agirdag (2014) who demonstrated that, second or foreign language learners learn better when the didactic materials have cultural differences highlighted by pictures, posters, art, books, maps, flags, amongst others. An emotionally positive classroom climate enables learners to feel cared for, relaxed and focused on learning despite cultural differences.

These findings are also backed by Vygotsky's concept of the zone of proximal development, established techniques of testing to determine the actual level of development at the expense of the potential ability of the learner. Dynamic Assessment (DA) within the context of ZDP aims at culturally assessing individual's actual learning potential of English language in a bid to assist the learner attain his full potentials, that of speaking English in real life situations.

These findings are wedged on Krashen's input hypothesis which relates to how the learners naturally develop language as soon as he or she receives interesting and fun information. Accordingly, the learner improves and progresses along the natural order when he/she receives second language input that is one step beyond his/her current stage of linguistic competence. Student teachers who identify themselves with culturally diverse materials used by the teacher during ELT classroom are more likely to participate actively in speaking activities (Schmidt, 2001).

Presentations of Data Analyses and Discussion of Findings on the use of culturally responsive assessment

The findings also indicated that, culturally responsive assessment can positively impact the development of English language speaking proficiency amongst French speaking student teachers. To ensure that assessments are culturally responsive, the language teacher can present problem situations that connect to and value the sociocultural identities of the student teachers to enable them express themselves orally on what they master and can do in familiar situations. Furthermore language teachers can use assessments that are culturally responsive to instill high self-esteem in the student teachers and to enable them speak fluently in English language. Additionally, language teachers, can face to face interactions since there is no other way to learn speaking English than to speak it per se.

These findings also concur with previous research studies carried out by Cummins and Swain (1986) on assessment of second language learners and found out that, questions items most of the time is cognitively demanding to second/foreign language learners. This is particularly true to a Francophone student teacher who is learning English as a second official language. More so, because, English language assessment questions on oral skills may produce inaccurate results if the linguistic and sociocultural backgrounds of the student teachers are not factored into the test.

These findings fortify assertions previously elucidated by Brown, (2022) who investigated on culturally responsive classroom based assessment and found out that, test items for a multicultural classroom must of necessity always be screened for appropriate language to reflect the diversity of students in class. A typical multicultural classroom in Teacher Training College in Cameroon has student teachers who come from the four major cultural backgrounds of the country.

The findings are also compatible with those of Nunan (1999) who found out that, carrying out culturally responsive assessment of grammar in oral production helps speakers to escape further grammatical inaccurate speech production and that checking vocabulary range and precision indicates how proficient a test taker is. The findings are equally confirms those of Bennett (2011) who demonstrated that, an understanding of the purpose of culturally responsive assessment enables the language teacher to assess diverse students in relationship to their learning outcomes in order to ensure that, students understand not just how the assessment fits into their learning but, equally, on how all the practices and content they engage with, assists them in achieving success in the course and by extension the development of the speaking proficiency.

The findings are anchored on the theory of critical pedagogy which highlights how, language learners should question and challenge the beliefs and practices that dominate in the classroom. Cognitively, within the tenets of critical pedagogy, culturally responsive assessment is manifested through rigor which is about the mental processes taking place in the mind of the learner. When an assessment task is cognitively rigorous, students are actively engaged in demonstrating, producing, and/or performing language activities, a situation that enables them to improve on their speaking proficiency. Behaviourally, in the perspective of critical pedagogy, culturally responsive assessment can be manifested through collaborative activities or hands-on investigations. As Carla (2021) demonstrated, teachers can increase students' engagement by allowing them to have more ownership over what learning they demonstrate, and when and how they do so. Carla (2021) further notes that, student-led assessment can be more meaningful to them if they have control over their learning.

Conclusion and Recommendation

From the findings, it is clear that, multicultural pedagogy, far from being a mere addendum, is the very foundation upon which authentic English language speaking proficiency can be built.

It is therefore, recommended that, English language teachers should use culturally sensitive visual, audio and kinaesthetic materials which by their nature, serve as mirrors in which learners see a reflection of their identities and daily live experiences, thereby constitute a significant tools that propel their 'interest in taking part in oral activities during ELT lessons. Conversely, when students do not see themselves in the didactic materials used during language lessons, they are more likely to be demotivated in participating in oral activities during ELT lessons.

At the level of culturally responsive assessment, it is recommended that, English language teachers should design assessments that are culturally responsive to engage student teachers; behaviourally through collaborative activities, affectively through their emotional connection to the content of the assessment and cognitively through rigor and intellectual challenges to stimulate participation in oral activities during ELT lessons. Student teachers assessed based on real life

settings in a non-threatening environment, provides them with greater engagement opportunities to develop their speaking proficiency.

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