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The Implementation of Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) Approach to Improve Learning Outcomes and Learning Motivation of Grade XI.3 Students at SMA Negeri 1 Palembang

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Abstract

This study aims to improve students' learning outcomes and learning motivation in the subject of Pancasila Education through the implementation of the Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) approach. CRT is a teaching approach that integrates students' cultural backgrounds into the learning material, making the learning process more relevant and inclusive. This research is a type of Classroom Action Research (CAR) conducted in two cycles. Each cycle consists of four stages: planning, implementation, observation, and reflection. The subjects of the research were 38 students from class XI of SMA Negeri 1 Palembang in the 2025/2026 academic year. Data were collected through observation and tests. The results of the study showed an improvement in students' learning outcomes: in Cycle 1, the average score was 79.05 with a classical completeness of 65%, while in Cycle 2, the average score increased to 96.36 with a classical completeness of 94%. Regarding learning motivation, in Cycle 1 the average was 73%, categorized as high, whereas in Cycle 2 it increased to 95%, categorized as very high. These results indicate that the implementation of the Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) approach can enhance students.

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INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a country that stretches from Sabang to Merauke and is known for its vast diversity. This diversity includes ethnicity, religion, customs, language, and more. Such diversity impacts all sectors, including the field of education. The diversity among students requires teachers to ensure that there is no discrimination or inequality within the school environment (R. Maulana et al., 2023). Teachers must create a a learning

environment that is safe, comfortable, and student-centered. As the primary actors in the education process, teachers must understand that each student has unique differences in talents, interests, abilities, cultural backgrounds, and learning needs. Therefore, teachers must prioritise the diverse characteristics of students to uphold the concept of equal rights and provide equal opportunities for personal development and fulfilling learning needs (Dianti et al., 2025).

These individual differences among students pose challenges for teachers in the teaching and learning process. Furthermore, 21st-century education emphasises meaningful understanding, which students are expected to achieve and apply in their daily lives. This century demands that students develop what are known as the 4C skills. The Indonesian education system, particularly the government, has taken various steps to respond to these global challenges. One of the responses is the implementation of student-centred learning through the "Merdeka Curriculum" (Khalisah et al., 2023).

The government's introduction of the Merdeka Curriculum holds great expectations for character development based on Pancasila values, empowering students to incorporate these values into their daily lives. Most schools in Indonesia have adopted the Merdeka Curriculum. A major reason for this implementation is to respond to global developments, particularly for Generation Z, the first generation to grow up alongside smartphones and social media, making them susceptible to negative global influences. This reality underpins the application of the Merdeka Curriculum, which aims to build character based on Pancasila values (Fadillah & Listiawan, 2024).

The Merdeka Curriculum is an effort by the Ministry of Education to address the diverse cultural backgrounds of students in Indonesia. In reality, cultural backgrounds often create challenges for teachers in the learning process. Each student brings different cultural values, experiences, and perspectives, which may lead to conflicts during learning and make it difficult to accommodate all differences. Consequently, these issues affect students' learning outcomes and motivation. According to Rahmawati (in Shaputra & Fahmi, 2025), conventional teaching approaches often fail to accommodate such diversity optimally.

There are several character-related issues among students that do not reflect their local culture, such as a lack of respect for peers and teachers. Some students show apathy and become addicted to games, ignoring lessons and becoming unmotivated to complete assignments. These are critical issues that must be addressed promptly (Fadillah & Listiawan, 2024). To meet students' learning needs in alignment with their unique characteristics, the Ministry of Education and Culture offers various learning options under the Merdeka Curriculum, including the CRT (Culturally Responsive Teaching) approach. CRT emphasises the integration of students' cultural references into the learning process, ensuring that education focuses on academic achievement and supports cultural identity (Fadillah & Listiawan, 2024).

The CRT approach promotes critical thinking and socio-emotional development (Khalisah et al., 2023). It allows students to learn about their peers' cultural This includes understanding various backgrounds and environments to foster an

appreciation for diversity. CRT stresses the importance of respecting and incorporating students' cultures into learning. Educators are expected to create a culturally responsive learning environment (Saiful Whatoni et al., 2024). Learning gaps must be addressed through various solutions, including CRT, a pedagogical approach that values, acknowledges, and integrates students' cultural backgrounds into the learning process (Shaputra & Fahmi, 2025).

CRT plays a crucial role in enhancing education quality in multicultural countries like Indonesia (Rofiah et al., 2024). This approach aims to bridge culture and lived experiences using students' habits, experiences, characteristics, and perspectives. Given students' diverse needs, teacher-student interactions and mutual understanding are essential, and CRT can meet those specific needs. CRT also helps teachers identify students' strengths and weaknesses and equips them to teach effectively in culturally diverse settings, improving both understanding and student skills (Dianti et al., 2025). By integrating students' cultural backgrounds, CRT ensures that learning materials serve to create inclusive environments that accommodate all learning needs. Specifically, it helps students feel accepted, respected, and actively engaged in learning (Andelia et al., 2024). CRT includes five components: (1) self-identification, (2) cultural understanding, (3) collaboration, (4) critical reflection, and (5) transformative construction (Asmaliyah et al., 2025). Implementing CRT is expected to positively impact learning outcomes, which are influenced by factors such as classroom management and the fulfilment of students' needs (Wahyuningsih et al., 2023).

Learning outcomes reflect students' abilities after experiencing instruction. They indicate behavioural changes resulting from learning and instruction (Bahtiar Girsang, 2024). Good learning outcomes demonstrate that learning objectives have been achieved (Maulana et al., n.d., 2024). Studies show that CRT can help students improve learning outcomes by addressing low motivation and participation, thus increasing academic success (Sya'bana et al., 2024). Motivation is a major factor affecting student achievement. When students are motivated, their learning outcomes improve. According to Slameto (in Asmaliyah et al., 2025), learning outcomes are influenced by internal factors (such as health, interest, talent, and motivation) and external factors (such as family, school, and community). Therefore, it can be concluded that CRT significantly impacts both motivation and academic performance, fostering a supportive learning environment that accommodates cultural diversity.

The issue of diversity is also evident in class XI.3 at SMA Negeri 1 Palembang, where students differ in ethnicity, culture, interests, talents, knowledge, skills, learning styles, backgrounds, and more. These differences were identified through initial cognitive and non-cognitive diagnostic assessments. The assessments revealed generally low academic performance and inadequate motivation at the beginning of the learning process. One contributing factor is the perception that Pancasila Education is boring. Based on this analysis, CRT is proposed as a solution to enhance both learning outcomes and student motivation.

This research focuses on the implementation of the CRT approach in the Pancasila Education subject. A review of the literature reveals limited research on CRT in this subject, as most studies focus on science subjects such as chemistry and mathematics. Furthermore, few studies address CRT at the senior high school level, as most are conducted at the junior high level. Therefore, this study focuses on CRT implementation in senior high schools, particularly in the Pancasila Education subject.

METHOD

The research to be conducted is Classroom Action Research (CAR). CAR is a type of research that involves reflection on teaching and learning problems in the classroom. In other words, CAR can also be defined as a process in which the teacher takes action in the classroom to address or solve existing problems, followed by an analysis of the effects of those actions. This research utilises the CAR method with the aim of improving and enhancing students' learning outcomes and motivation through the application of the Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) approach in Pancasila Education. This research is conducted during the even semester of the 2025/2026 academic year at SMA Negeri 1 Palembang. The subjects of this study are students from class XI.3, consisting of 38 students. We chose this class as the research subject because many of the students had not yet met the minimum mastery criteria for it.

We conduct the research in two cycles, each comprising four stages: planning, implementation, observation, and reflection. Based on the initial assessment, which included both non-cognitive and cognitive diagnostic assessments, the students' prior knowledge in Pancasila Education was found to have an average score of 72.6. The results of interviews and direct classroom observations showed that the majority of students were categorised as having a moderate level of learning motivation, with an average score of 2 on a scale of 4. These data served as the basis for planning a learning approach to observe its impact.

The implementation of the CRT approach is based on the results of the non-cognitive diagnostic assessment, which aimed to identify students' ethnic backgrounds and interests in cultural elements around them, such as food, clothing, customs, language, dance, and local wisdom. These results were then corroborated through interviews with the classroom teacher to ensure cultural relevance. The selected cultural content had to match students' learning needs, and to ensure this, a participatory approach was used by allowing students to vote on local cultures presented by the researcher and the teacher. The results of the vote were used as a reference for developing materials and designing learning activities.

Data collection was conducted through observations to determine students' learning motivation during the learning process. The observation sheets were developed by the researcher, with validation conducted by one education expert and one subject teacher. The observation instrument was developed based on the ARCS theory (Attention, Relevance, Confidence, Satisfaction). In each research cycle, a written test was also administered to measure students' learning outcomes. The written test consisted of five essay questions (20% easy, 40% medium, and 40% difficult).

Based on the initial trial conducted with 38 students, two questions were categorised as straightforward, two as medium, and one as difficult. The discrimination index analysis showed that one question (Question 1) had a low discrimination index (D < 0.20), indicating it was too easy and therefore discarded. In the meantime, we retained three questions with excellent discrimination indices (D > 0.30) and one with an adequate index. Based on these results, four questions were considered appropriate and retained, while one question was discarded and needed to be revised or replaced.

Students' learning outcomes were obtained from written tests and then used to calculate the percentage of classical mastery. Observations were also carried out using prediction activity sheets during the learning process. Indicators of students' learning motivation were measured using a Likert-type scale with the following criteria: Always = 4, Often = 3, Rarely = 2, and Never = 1, based on Sugiyono (2016) in (Asmaliyah et al., 2025). The success of the actions implemented in this study can be measured based on two criteria, as shown in the Table below.

Table 1. Learning Criteria

No	**Aspect**	**Criteria for Success of the Action**
1	Learning Outcomes	A learning outcome percentage of ≥80% indicates that more than 80% of students achieved a score of ≥75.
2	Learning Motivation	The analysis results showing a student learning motivation percentage of ≥80% indicate that this criterion is at a very high level.

Based on Table 2, the success of the actions taken using this classroom research method is determined by the improvement in learning outcomes across cycles. If 80% or more of the students achieve scores above the minimum criteria in either Cycle 1 or Cycle 2, it is considered successful, and the intervention is concluded. However, if the target is not met, the next cycle will be carried out until the implementation of the Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) approach meets the established success criteria.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study are presented in the form of student learning mastery data from Cycle I and Cycle II. The table below shows a comparison between the average scores, the number of students who achieved the Minimum Mastery Criteria (KKTP), and the percentage of classical mastery in each cycle.

Table 2. Percentage of Mastery in Learning Outcomes

Category	**Average Score**	**Number of Students**		**Classical Mastery Percentage**
		Mastery	**Not Mastery**	
Cycle 1	79,053	25	13	65%
Cycle 2	96,368	36	2	94%

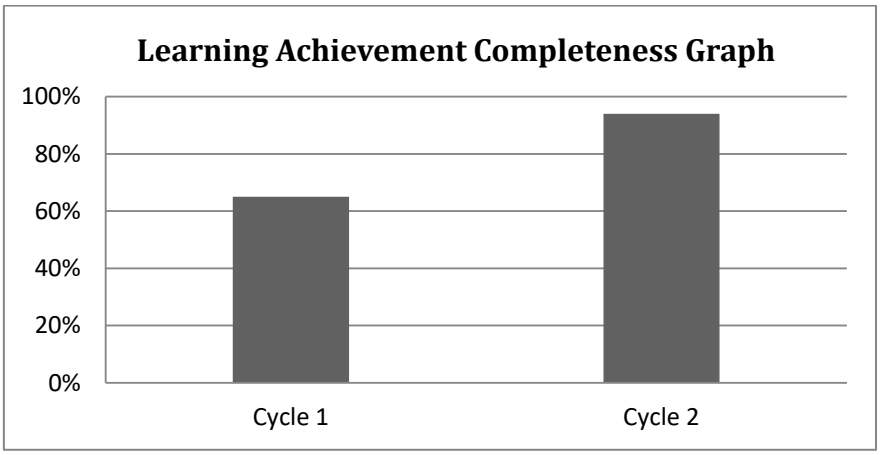

Table 3. Percentage of Learning Motivation in Cycle I and Cycle II

Learning Motivation Indicator	Cycle I		Cycle II	
	Motivation (%)	Criteria	Motivation (%)	Criteria
Actively participates in the learning process	73.68	High	95.39	Very High
Shares tasks and fairly takes responsibility in group work	73.36	High	94.73	Very High
Demonstrates good communication	75.00	High	95.39	Very High
Strives to improve knowledge	73.02	High	96.71	Very High
Average	73%	High	95%	Very High

CYCLE I

The implementation of actions in Cycle 1 was carried out in four stages: planning, execution, observation, and reflection. In the planning stage, a learning activity module was developed, integrating the Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) approach and the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) model to improve student learning outcomes and motivation. The second stage was implementation, which involved applying the planned activities. The learning process proceeded as planned, although some obstacles were encountered, which became topics for discussion during the reflection stage. Cycle 1 was implemented by applying the CRT approach integrated with the PBL model. The teaching process followed the CRT syntax integrated into PBL, starting from the introduction and core activities-including (1) student self-identity, (2) cultural understanding, (3) collaboration, (4) critical thinking and reflection, and (5) transformative construction-and ending with closing activities. At the end of the cycle, students were given an evaluation test to assess learning outcomes and an observation sheet to measure learning motivation.

Based on Table 3, the percentage of students achieving mastery in Cycle 1 had an average score of 79.05 with a classical completeness of 65%. These results did not meet the target of 80% set for this classroom action research, indicating a need for improvement in the subsequent learning cycle. Referring to Table 4, student motivation

in Cycle 1 was 73%, which shows that student motivation did not reach the success criteria. Efforts to improve motivation were the same as those aimed at improving learning outcomes. These results were derived from data processed through observation sheets.

Several aspects needed improvement in the next cycle, particularly the fact that students were not fully actively involved in the learning process. This was due to insufficient preparation before learning activities began. Although Cycle 1's implementation of CRT, which included cultural elements in the learning process, showed positive results, it was still below expectations. Based on reflections, one problem was that the cultural material presented focused on only one cultural element. Furthermore, the cultural understanding stage did not significantly emphasise cultural content. Observations indicated that students were genuinely interested in the cultural material when it was presented in contexts close to their daily lives. Based on these reflections, improvements would be made in Cycle 2 to achieve the desired goals.

CYCLE II

The implementation of Cycle 2, as shown in the tables and graphs, demonstrated a significant increase in student learning outcomes, with the average student score rising to 96.36. The classical completeness percentage reached 94%, meeting the target that at least 80% of students must achieve a score of 75 or higher. Meanwhile, Table 4 shows that learning motivation increased to 95%, classified as very high. This means the success criteria for applying the CRT approach had been met, with more than 80% of students reaching the predetermined goals.

According to Table 3, student motivation increased significantly from 73% to 95%, indicating that the CRT approach successfully engaged students' active participation, fostering interest and attention. This substantial rise suggests that incorporating local culture into the learning process effectively boosts student motivation. However, to ensure this increase was uniform across all students, further analysis was needed. Among 38 students, 2 did not show significant improvement, and 3 remained in the moderate motivation category. These differences appeared in classroom learning due to individual variations in response during CRT implementation.

This increase reflects the effectiveness of the CRT approach in Pancasila Education, where students could better understand material related to harmony in diversity. In Cycle 2, the teacher planned based on Cycle 1 reflections and prepared thoroughly to achieve the desired outcomes. The teacher also presented various cultural examples from the students' surroundings and delivered learning materials via Google Sites integrates information technology and aligns with 21st-century learning trends. The CRT approach combined with the PBL model in Cycle 2 significantly improved group participation, with students actively engaging in discussions during lessons.

These improvements resulted from reflections and adjustments after Cycle 1. The teacher focused on using cultural examples relevant to students' backgrounds and

provided more intensive support and preparation for students struggling to learn. Small-group discussions and contextual assignments were highlighted to help students relate the learning material to their daily lives. The implementation of CRT in class XI.3 at SMA Negeri 1 Palembang effectively increased average student scores from 79.05 in Cycle 1 to 96.36 in Cycle 2. This evidence shows the approach's effectiveness when culturally relevant material is integrated. Classical completeness also rose from 65% in Cycle 1 to 94% in Cycle 2.

The integration of culture in learning aligns with constructivist approaches that emphasize knowledge built on experiences relevant to students' lives (Piaget, 1970). Culture serves as a bridge connecting students to learning material. Vygotsky (1978) stated that learning becomes more meaningful when linked to cultural and social contexts, making it easier for students to grasp concepts related to their environment. According to Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), integrating local culture satisfies students' basic psychological needs, particularly relatedness, the sense of connection to their identity and experiences. Involving culture in learning fosters mutual respect and emotional and cognitive engagement, which strengthens intrinsic motivation and enhances learning outcomes. Meaningful learning encourages active involvement by stimulating both cognitive and affective processes, ultimately improving academic achievement, understanding, and engagement (Sidoarjo, 2024).

This evidence shows that the teaching methods in Cycle 2 successfully met the targets. Field observations revealed that CRT implementation significantly improved student participation in discussions, Q&A sessions, and group presentations, reflecting increased motivation and better learning outcomes. After reflecting on Cycle 1, improvements in Cycle 2 included using culturally relevant examples such as local food, clothing, traditions, and customs, making learning more engaging and meaningful. Students were motivated to participate actively. The researcher also ensured maximum preparation by encouraging both teachers and students to wear traditional attire during CRT lessons, which attracted attention and boosted motivation.

The researcher provided guidance and motivation to students who struggled in Cycle 1, specifically those who didn't meet the success criteria, to help them improve in Cycle 2. Interviews revealed these students lacked confidence during lessons, so the researcher fostered a supportive learning environment with peer assistance. The researcher enhanced the interest of group assignments by emphasizing diverse cultural examples, motivating students to scrutinize local cultures and gain knowledge from their peers' presentations. Crucially, strict supervision ensured proper use of smartphones during lessons, which enhanced focus. These efforts increased group participation and involvement in learning activities. In Cycle 2, 11 struggling students showed improvement, while 2 students continued to perform at moderate levels because of personal external factors.

This study aligns with findings by Ainun Ropiah (Rofiah et al., 2024), showing CRT significantly enhances cognitive learning outcomes. The rise in learning outcomes and motivation, with motivation reaching 95% (very high), demonstrates that CRT

effectively increases student motivation, positively impacting learning results. The 94% completeness rate in Cycle 2 confirms CRT's effectiveness in improving understanding and achievement, especially in culturally relevant subjects like Pancasila Education.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study, the implementation of the Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) approach proved to be effective in improving learning outcomes and motivation in the Pancasila Education subject for class XI.3 at SMA Negeri 1 Palembang. During the learning process, the teacher provided culturally relevant examples related to the learning material, making the lessons more captivating and motivating students to participate actively. The percentage of classical mastery increased from 65% to 94%, while student motivation rose from 73% to 95%. This study indicates that the application of CRT significantly enhances both student learning outcomes and motivation. The CRT approach, which respects cultural diversity, allows students to engage actively in relevant and inclusive learning by delivering meaningful instruction and involving students inclusively, thereby increasing motivation and positively impacting learning achievement.

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