

Original Paper

CRT-Oriented English Writing Instruction in Rural Primary Schools: A Case Study in Jinsha, Guizhou

Yue Li¹

¹ China University of Mining and Technology, Xuzhou, Jiangsu, China

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Abstract

In the current background of rural revitalization, improving the quality of rural basic education is an important task to promote educational equity and regional development. English writing, an important indicator of comprehensive language ability, faces many challenges in rural primary schools in multi-ethnic areas, such as students' limited language ability, insufficient utilization of cultural resources, and outdated teaching methods. This study takes the third to sixth grade students of a multi-ethnic rural primary school in Jinsha County, Bijie City, Guizhou Province as the research object, and uses the case study method, supported by classroom observation and student writing analysis, based on the theory of Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT). The study found that students' writing ability is not enough, the cultural resources are not used to the maximum, and there is no diversity of teaching practice. Based on CRT theory, this study puts forward the strategies to promote cultural integration and teaching improvement, including: using local ethnic cultural resources to design writing situations suitable for students' life experience; adopting multimodal teaching to expand the ways of expression; optimizing the process-oriented diversified evaluation system; and strengthening teacher-student interaction and collaborative learning. The suggestions are to provide effective guidance for teaching English writing in rural primary schools.

Keywords

Rural revitalization, Culturally Responsive Teaching, multiethnic rural primary schools, English writing instruction

1. Introduction

With the continuous advancement of the rural revitalization strategy in China, improving the quality and fairness of rural basic education has become an important issue in the field of education. English writing is an important part of language competence, which plays an important role in cultivating

students' communicative competence and critical thinking ability. However, in the rural multi-ethnic primary schools, the teaching of English writing is still constrained by the shortage of educational resources, the lack of teaching support, the complex dialect environment, and the weak language foundation of the students. Students are not motivated to write, and they have a bad ability to express themselves.

In this regard, Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) is a perspective available for re-examining rural English writing teaching. CRT stresses the importance of bringing students' cultural backgrounds into the classroom and views cultural diversity as a teaching resource. In multi-ethnic rural areas with a rich local cultural tradition, CRT is theoretically relevant and practically valuable due to the fact that it strengthens the connection between language learning and students' life experience.

The study was conducted in a rural multi-ethnic primary school in Jinsha County, Bijie City, Guizhou Province. The qualitative case study method is used in this study to study the present situation of writing teaching through classroom teaching observation and student writing analysis. In view of the problems in the existing teaching, this paper proposes some teaching strategies based on culture-related theories, such as the integration of local cultural resources, the design of situational writing tasks, the use of multimodal teaching, and the improvement of process-oriented assessment and classroom interaction.

This study puts CRT into the field of rural English education, extends the application of the theory beyond the context of traditional multicultural education, and highlights the role of cultural experience in language learning. The research is based on real classroom practice, which is of practical significance to improve English writing teaching in rural primary schools with scarce resources.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Research on Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT)

Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) originated from the multicultural education movement, closely linked to the American civil rights movement in the 1970s. The research of early scholars (such as James A. Banks) focused on content integration and knowledge construction to deal with cultural diversity in education, which laid the foundation for later CRT research. Based on this, Gloria Ladson-Billings put forward the concept of "culturally relevant pedagogy," arguing that teaching should meet students' cultural references to promote academic achievement, cultural literacy, and critical social awareness (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Later, Geneva Gay systematically developed this theory and formally defined CRT as a teaching method that uses students' cultural knowledge, prior experience, and performance style to make learning more relevant and effective (Gay, 2000).

CRT sees students' family culture as a bridge of learning, not a barrier. It promotes the creation of a culturally relevant learning environment by recognizing the personal experience and cultural identity of students (Gay & Wang, 2017). CRT is of important educational value to the teaching of language and writing. In the field of foreign language education, the theory concerns the connection between

language learning and the language and cultural background of the students and applies cultural experience as a scaffolding to understand abstract knowledge (Wang, 2018). In writing instruction, techniques such as cultural modelling translate students' informal cultural capital (including oral rhetorical practice) into academic writing ability, thus improving marginalized learners' meaning construction ability (Gay & Wang, 2017). Therefore, the culturally responsive teaching method has changed from a specific teaching method to a broader educational framework, including curriculum design, classroom interaction, communication, and teacher care (Zhang & Qian, 2015).

In recent years, Chinese scholars have paid more attention to the localization of culturally responsive teaching (CRT) in ethnic education and rural education. Studies have previously highlighted the cultural mismatch between standardized textbooks and the lived experience of ethnic minority students (Jin, Pei, & Dong, 2020). Furthermore, scholars suggest that the culturally responsive teaching method of China should take the multi-ethnic social background as the foundation, and build a culturally suitable teaching model to promote educational equity and enhance the common national identity (Bi, 2025). This shift from a "defect perspective" to a "cultural perspective" is indicative of a broader trend in ethnic education research, that is, a movement from superficial curriculum adjustment to a deeper cultural and psychological fit. (Wang & Zhai, 2022).

2.2 Research on English Writing Instruction in Rural Primary Schools

Research on English writing teaching in rural primary schools is increasing, mainly in the aspects of teaching challenges, teaching innovation, and evaluation reform. The majority of early studies focused on causes of students' poor writing ability, believing that the main obstacles to writing development include limited vocabulary, insufficient grammar, interference of the mother tongue, and lack of family or educational support (Qiu, 2012). However, the "result-oriented" teaching approach that emphasizes grammatical accuracy has been criticized by scholars for neglecting the writing process and the construction of meaning (Dong, 2011).

Later work was on instructional intervention and pedagogical design. Some studies were based on memetics theory and proposed progressive writing models focused on imitation and language internalization by means of comprehension, practice, application, and extension stages (Bian, 2018). Others embraced task-based language teaching and promoted real-life communicative tasks to increase student participation, promote collaborative learning, and encourage practical language use with fewer grammatical errors. In addition, researchers have explored diversified assessment methods, such as self-assessment and peer evaluation, to address the limitations of teacher-dominated evaluation systems (Zhao, 2025).

The development of digital technology has also led to the exploration of the integration of multimodal resources and online teaching in rural English writing teaching in recent years. Such methods can help access educational resources, but researchers argue that multimodal teaching in rural areas is often fragmented, with poor integration of online and offline teaching and limited impact on students' writing abilities (Wang & Meng, 2024).

2.3 Research on the Application of CRT in English Teaching

Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) has been widely used in English teaching research. Intercultural competence has been paid more and more attention in foreign language education. The existing research mainly focuses on teacher development and classroom practice. Some experts have suggested that English teachers should increase their cultural awareness and develop the ability to adapt their teaching to the cultural background and learning experience of students (Wang & Jiang, 2020). Moreover, research indicates that it is essential to integrate multi-modal and digital resources to foster the integration of language and culture in classroom teaching (Zhang, 2019).

In terms of teaching methods, English teaching based on CRT advocates the combination of the target culture and students' own cultural experience to improve their language ability and cross-cultural awareness. Researchers believe that situational teaching, classroom interactive dialogue, and teaching content rooted in culture are important strategies to enhance students' participation and learning relevance (Zhang, 2019). In addition, multi-modal resources such as video, audio materials, and online platforms are increasingly incorporated into culturally responsive teaching practice to enhance cultural input and diversify classroom expression.

As for English education, CRT has turned from a theoretical introduction into teaching practice. Recent research opens up avenues for future research into teachers' ability, situational teaching, and multimodal resources. But in some teaching situations, especially in teaching writing in primary schools, the application of CRT is still insufficient.

2.4 Research Gaps and the Focus of the Present Study

There is a growing concern about Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) and its application in rural English education; however, there are still some research gaps in this field. At present, the research on CRT methods in English education often stays at the conceptual level, and it is not closely combined with writing teaching. In addition, most studies have been conducted in urban or ordinary rural environments, and little attention has been paid to the impact of the interaction between culture, language, and learning in multi-ethnic rural primary schools. The research on CRT methods also pays more attention to oral and general language ability, rather than writing as a form of cultural intermediary expression.

In order to fill these gaps, this study adopts the CRT as the analytical framework, and takes the students from grade three to grade six in a multi-ethnic rural primary school in Jinsha County, Guizhou Province as the research object to explore their English writing teaching. Through classroom observation and students' writing analysis, this study examines how to integrate local cultural resources into writing teaching, so as to construct a teaching strategy that is both in line with the situation and feasible for teaching.

3. Research Design

3.1 Research Framework

This research is based on the Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) theory. The model used in this research contains four stages: current situation analysis, problem analysis, strategy development, and teaching implications. The study looks at the major issues in English writing instruction in a multiethnic rural primary school from cultural, linguistic, and pedagogical perspectives, using classroom observation and students' writing samples.

This study further explores context-relative teaching strategies, such as using local cultural resources, experience-based writing tasks, multimodal instructions, and process-based assessment, based on the CRT theory. The long-term goal of this study is to explore feasible ways for improving the teaching of English writing in multiethnic rural primary schools and to promote students' language ability and cultural awareness. The complete frame is shown in Figure 1.

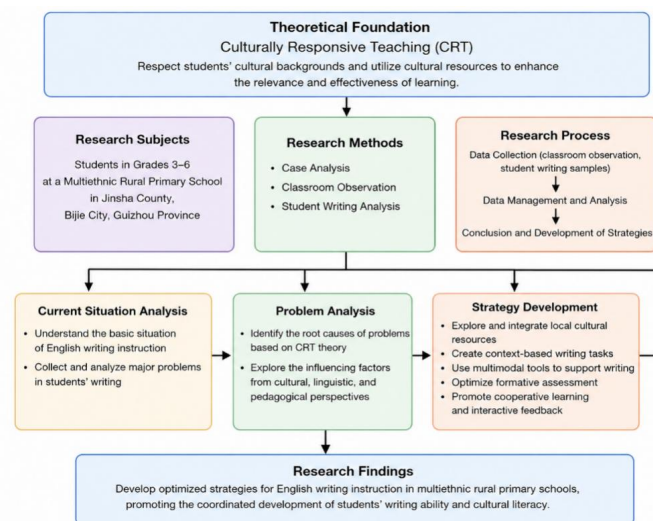


Figure.1 Research Framework

3.2 Research Participants

This study was carried out in a multi-ethnic rural primary school in Jinsha County, Bijie City, Guizhou Province. The core data were authentic English writing samples produced by 242 students in grades three through six in actual classrooms. The collected texts were descriptive, narrative, and simple argumentative writing from classroom activities, unit assignments, and periodic assessments.

The common features of writing samples are as follows: poor vocabulary, many grammatical errors, simple sentence patterns, poor discourse organization, and dialect interference in English expression. In addition, the writing of students is also characterized by the insufficient integration of local cultural experience and ethnic cultural elements. We chose grades three to six because this is a critical period for developing English writing skills. The rural, multiethnic background provides us with an opportunity to understand the challenges of rural English writing instruction.

3.3 Research Methods

This study employs a qualitative case study approach that combines classroom observation with analysis of students' writing. We observed the classroom in a real teaching situation to know the

teaching design, the teacher's feedback, and the students' participation in the classroom. We also systematically analyzed samples of students' writing to know about their abilities in vocabulary use, syntactic structure, discourse organization, and cultural expression.

3.4 Research Process

This study was developed on the basis of a three-week rural teaching practicum in Jinsha County, Guizhou Province. It was conducted from July to August 2025 and organized by China University of Mining and Technology. During the practicum, the researcher taught English to students in grades three to six at a multiethnic rural primary school. At the beginning, classroom observations indicated that many students had difficulties with English writing. Students had limited vocabulary, repeated sentence patterns, weak organization, and low participation in writing activities.

To explore these issues, systematic classroom observation records, students' writing samples, and informal student feedback were collected during the course of instruction. The teaching has been adapted to encourage the students' expression and participation, for example, by using pictures, tips for situations, and topics of everyday life. These strategies do have some effect on students' participation in the classroom, but students' writing content is still not linked to their local cultural experience. All observation records and writing samples were collected and analyzed after the internship, which provided an empirical basis for the subsequent discussion based on CRT.

4. Case Analysis of English Writing in a Multiethnic Rural Primary School

4.1 Analysis of Students' Writing Problems

Case 1: My Village

My village is in the moutain area. It is very small but beautiful. There are many green moutains and a small river near it. The water is clean and clear.

People in my village are farmer. They get up early every day and work on the farm. They plant corns, rice and vegetebles. In summer, everything is green and looks nice. In winter, it is very cold but quite.

I like my village because it is peace and I have many friends here. I think my village is a good place to live.

This writing sample shows several problems with vocabulary usage and grammatical accuracy. There are frequent misspelling problems, such as "moutain", "moutains" and "vegetebles", showing that the student's acquisition of vocabulary and spelling are not stable. There are also some errors, such as "farmer" instead of "farmers", and "corns" as a countable noun, also reflecting weak knowledge of plural forms and uncountable nouns. Furthermore, problems of word discrimination and basic collocations are shown, for example, confusing "quiet" with "quite" and using "peace" directly as an adjective.

The text contains basic grammatical errors of subject-predicate agreement and sentence structure. For example, in the sentence "People in my village are farmer", the complement is not in agreement with the plural subject. The student can communicate basic meaning, but with frequent use of short, simple

sentences and limited use of cohesive or complex structures. The discourse is therefore lacking in logical development and structural richness.

From a CRT perspective, this case is an example of the lack of cultural expression and the limitations of the ability of language. The student is from a multi-ethnic rural background. But the content of his writing is mostly a copy of the expressions of standard textbooks, rather than a real-life experience. It reflects that the present writing instruction fails to activate students' cultural resources properly and results in the disjuncture between language output and life experience.

Case 2: Introduce Myself

My name is xxx. I am a student in grade five. I am twelve year old. I come from a small village in Guizhou. My family have four people, my father, my mother, my sister and me.

I like English very much, but it is not easy for me. I often study English in school and at home. My teacher is very kind and she teach us good. I like play football and read book after class.

I get up at 7 o'clock every morning. Then I go to school by bus or by walk. My school is not big but very beautiful. I have many class in a day, like English, math and Chinese. In my free time, I sometimes help my mother do housework, like cook rice and wash clothes. I also like watch TV and play games with my friends.

I think I am a happy student. I want to be a teacher in the future because teacher is very important job. I will study hardly and make my dream come true.

This writing sample contains several basic lexical and grammatical errors, particularly in spelling, word formation, and noun usage. For example, "twelve year old" lacks the plural form "years," "My family have four people" demonstrates incorrect subject-verb agreement, and "teacher is very important job" omits the article "a." Errors in verb forms are also evident, such as "she teach us good," where the third-person singular form is missing, and "like cook rice and wash clothes," where gerund forms are not used appropriately. These problems suggest instability in students' command of basic grammar and syntactic patterns.

The composition is mainly structured with simple sentences, and there is little cohesion between ideas. The student describes daily routines in lists of activities such as getting up, going to school, and attending classes, but without linking devices, it is a fragmented linear structure of discourse. The absence of connectors expressing time, manner, or causality also makes the textual coherence and organization weaker.

From the CRT perspective, the composition is about self-introduction, but the cultural expression is shallow, mainly about the standardized description of school and family life. The student's multiethnic rural setting includes cultural characteristics such as local festivals, family labor, or ethnic traditions that are missing in the writing. This leads to a model of self-description based on a textbook rather than an authentic self-expression based on the lived cultural experience of the student.

Case 3: My Weekend

Last Saturday, I go to my grandparents' home. They live in another village, so we went there by car. It

take about one hour.

In the morning, I helped my grandfather feed chicken and water vegetabled. It was a little tired but interesting. My grandmother cook lunch for us. The food was very deliciously.

In the afternoon, I play with my cousins. We run in the field and climb a small hill. We was very happy.

On Sunday, we go back home. I feel tired but I had a good weekend.

This writing sample exhibits several systematic lexical and grammatical problems, particularly in tense inconsistency, misuse of plural forms, and confusion of word classes. For example, sentences such as “go to my grandparents’ home”, “It take about one hour”, and “I play with my cousins” show that students have weak control of tense shifts in narrative writing and often mix present and past forms. Also, “vegetabled” is a mistake combining spelling and word formation. “The food was very deliciously” is an example of the confusion between adjectives and adverbs.

Structurally, although the composition tries to arrange the events in a chronological order, there are many grammatical mistakes in the sentences, for example, “we was very happy” and “It was a little tired but interesting” which are subject-verb disagreement and inappropriate collocation. The sentences are simple in the text. Cohesive devices and complex structures are absent. Thus, even with a clear temporal order, the composition is weakly connected and reads more like a list of events than a coherent narrative.

From the CRT perspective, this composition is a direct reflection of the students’ life experience in the rural areas with strong cultural influence, which is rare in urban writing tasks. Yet these experiences have not been transferred into major cultural expressions of their English writing. Agriculture is discussed in terms of the daily routines and actions, not in terms of deeper cultural implications like family collaboration and the culture of rural labor. Such a presentation will probably lead to superficial language and shallow cultural understanding.

Case 4: Why I Like English

I like English very much. English is an important subject in school. We can use English to talk with people from other countries.

English class is interesting. My teacher often lets us read, speak and play games. But sometimes I think English is difficult because there are many new words.

I know I am not very good at English now, but I will try to learn it better. I want to speak English more fluently in the future.

I think English is useful for my study and my life.

The structure of this composition is more complete than the previous samples, the expression is clearer, and the coherence is stronger, with a much lower number of basic language errors. The student is able to perform the combined task of explanation and simple argumentation. Statements like “I like English very much. English is an important subject in school.” are grammatically correct and relatively fluent, suggesting a more stable command of basic sentence patterns.

The text is relatively free of lexical and grammatical errors, but some expressions are too simple or

slightly unnatural. For example, “We can use English to talk with people from other countries” is grammatically correct but lacks lexical diversity. Similarly, “learn it better” is a more natural way to say “improve my English”. Expressions such as “speak English more fluently” are correct, but the language remains formulaic, leaving little space for more advanced use.

This composition builds a clear structural development from the reasons for learning English, to the experience in the classroom, to the difficulties in learning, and finally to the attitude of study and evaluation. But cohesion is largely based on elementary connectors such as “and” and “but” and leads to shallow textuality and rhetorical monotony.

From the point of view of CRT, the composition has relatively little cultural expression despite the fact that it is focused on English learning. The content is mainly focused on individual learning experiences and classroom activities, but the influence of the student's multiethnic rural context is missing. The text does not take into account such factors as limited educational resources and limited language exposure in rural areas. The composition appears to be a standardized account of learning rather than a culturally situated narrative.

4.2 Analysis of Underlying Causes from a CRT Perspective

From the perspective of Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT), the common language errors, lack of cultural depth, and superficial content of English writing in rural primary schools cannot be blamed on the lack of language ability. On the contrary, these phenomena are the result of the interaction of culture, teaching, and environmental factors. The structural disconnection between the process of language learning and the real cultural experience of the students is exposed.

Students from rural areas have rich cultural experiences in their local and ethnic cultures, but those resources are rarely integrated effectively into classroom teaching or writing tasks. Topics like “My Village” or “My Weekend” seem to be related closely to student life, but the way they are designed often leads students to use general and textbook-based expressions, not expressions specific to culture. Thus, students often rely on “beautiful villages”, “delicious food,” and “happy life”. The stories they write are about things we know about, but have no associations with culture. From a CRT perspective, this means that cultural resources could not be converted into meaningful language output.

The teaching of writing in rural primary schools is still output-oriented, focusing on the accuracy of grammar and the imitation of sentences. Teachers often use model essays and mechanical exercises, and students passively copy language forms with little opportunity to express their experiences. This may increase accuracy in the short term, but it limits students’ chances to write in culturally meaningful and relevant ways.

Writing teaching seldom involves students’ cultural identity and local experience. CRT considers learners as “cultural existences”, but most classroom writing tasks do not reflect students’ ethnic backgrounds, rural life experiences, or local knowledge. Thus, students prefer to use safe, standardized expressions rather than those that have cultural characteristics.

The development of writing ability in the rural areas is also limited by the lack of language resources

and limited access to a real English context. Learners depend too much on classroom input. This leads to monotonous sentence patterns, a lack of expressiveness, and flexibility. Besides, the great difference between English and students' daily dialect or native language environment often causes grammatical transfer and structural confusion, which leads to the repeated banning of basic writing errors.

4.3 CRT-Oriented Instructional Strategies

Based on the core concepts of Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT), the paper proposes some teaching strategies to solve the problems of a lack of cultural connotation, simple expression, and limited language development in rural primary school English writing.

Rural students have rich cultural experiences related to their localities and their ethnicities, but these resources are seldom well integrated into classroom instruction and writing assignments. The topics My Village and My Weekend seem to be close to students' lives and experiences, but in their design, they often result in a generalized, textbook-like rather than a culturally specific expression. Therefore, students use some set phrases such as "beautiful village", "nice food", and "happy life" that produce writing full of familiar experiences but lacking in cultural meaning. This is the failure to convert linguistic output into meaning from cultural resources, from a CRT perspective.

Writing instruction has to include contextualized and culturally responsive tasks. Teachers should not restrict themselves to abstract topics in textbooks or model essays but should provide students with familiar communication situations through pictures, videos, physical objects, or situational activities. As for the topics about village changes, daily housework, or ethnic festivals, these situations can be used as a bridge to connect the life experience, reduce the cognitive difficulty, and improve the participation and authenticity of language output in writing.

We need to use multimodal teaching methods to enrich students' expression resources. In order to overcome the limitations of a limited vocabulary and the repetition of sentences, visual auxiliary materials, oral discussion, mind mapping, and keyword prompts should be integrated into writing teaching to help students develop ideas and organize language. Oral expression and written output can help to overcome the difficulties of writing, thus encouraging more flexible meaning construction.

Building a diversified and process-oriented evaluation system is needed for writing instructions. The emphasis of the evaluation should be more on the development of the students' thinking, cultural expression, and writing process, rather than simply judging the final written products. Peer review and self-reflection can also be used as a way of increasing students' understanding of the importance of cultural expression in writing.

More attention should be paid to teacher-student interaction and collaborative learning. Through group discussion, collaborative writing, and classroom sharing, students can share their cultural experiences and local knowledge with each other, thus enriching the diversity of writing content. This collaboration redefines writing as a collective cultural rather than individual linguistic practice.

5. Conclusion

This study investigated the teaching of English writing in a multi-ethnic rural primary school from the perspective of Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT). The students' weak language ability, simple cultural expression, and low writing participation are found to be closely related to the insufficient language input, the influence of dialects, and the lack of integration of local cultural resources in classroom teaching. Though rural students have rich cultural and life experiences, in the traditional output-oriented teaching mode, these experiences are seldom transformed into meaningful English writing content. To address these issues, this study puts forward a series of context-sensitive strategies such as incorporating local cultural resources into writing tasks, designing experience-based multimodal activities, hierarchical teaching, and process-based and culturally responsive assessment practices. The above strategies show the importance of CRT in practice, which is closely associated with the life experience of rural students in language learning. But the study is limited by the small sample size, short teaching cycle, and limited data sources. Future research can expand the breadth of comparative research of rural areas, explore the use of emerging technologies such as AI-assisted writing tools, and use long-term action research methods to further explore and develop culturally responsive writing teaching for rural primary education.

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