

ABSTRACT

Marshya Hervina Ningrum. 220101030173. *Exploring Cultural Competence in Teaching: A Study of Students' Academic Progress and Classroom Inclusivity.* Thesis. English Language Education Department, Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training, Antasari State Islamic University. Advisor: Hidayah Nor, M.Pd., 2026.

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Diversity in modern classrooms has become an unavoidable reality, requiring teachers to create environments where every student feels a sense of belonging. In an academic context, teachers are expected to manage various student backgrounds and abilities to ensure fair access to knowledge. This research aims to explore how teaching practices at SMKN 3 Banjarbaru correlate with students' diverse backgrounds and how these practices impact student engagement in English Language Teaching (ELT). This research utilizes a qualitative case study design. The participants included 2 teachers and 10 students at SMKN 3 Banjarbaru, with data collected through in-depth interviews and classroom observations to understand the recurring patterns of inclusivity and interaction. Data were then analyzed using thematic analysis by understanding patterns or themes in qualitative data that were collected. The results showed that teachers are culturally neutral in the teaching and learning activities, yet still able to create a highly accessible educational classroom that effectively minimizes the psychological gap between instructor and student by using procedural and strategic scaffolding alongside intense verbal, non-verbal instructor immediacy and supportive feedback. Students perceive the impact of teachers' culturally neutral teaching practices as a highly empowering and fair framework that actively optimizes their behavioral, affective, and cognitive in the classroom.