

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter displayed all of the research findings and related discussion that were gained from the in-depth interview as the primary data for answering the two research questions and direct observation as the supporting data. Both used to know the practice in teaching and learning activity that correlates to students' diverse cultural backgrounds regarding their sense of belonging and inclusion in the classroom, and also to know how the students perceive the impact of culturally competent teaching practices on their academic engagement and overall progress.

These findings were examined using the Thematic Analysis technique, which involves analyzing in detail by having the data analyzed in general and then specific themes to perceived participants' recurring patterns correlating to the two research problems. The findings and discussions are methodically organized to ensure the representativeness of the data as follows:

A. Findings

The researcher found some findings and described the results of the practice in teaching and learning activity that correlates to students' diverse cultural backgrounds regarding their sense of belonging and inclusion in the classroom, and

also how the students perceive the impact of culturally competent teaching practices on their academic engagement and overall progress. Presenting the findings, the researcher noted the most important themes that were obtained from recurring patterns in the answers by the participants during the data collection phase. The findings presented are organized into four major themes that emerged from the thematic analysis to answer the two research questions. These categories have been labelled as:

Table 1. 4.1 Thematic Categories of the Findings

1	<p>1) The practice in teaching and learning activity that correlates to students' diverse cultural backgrounds regarding their sense of belonging and inclusion in the classroom.</p> <p>a) Teachers and students recognize diversity</p> <p>b) Inclusivity by teachers happens academically, not culturally</p>
2	<p>2) How the students perceive the impact of culturally competent teaching practices on their academic engagement and overall progress.</p> <p>a) Students socialize equally, yet group themselves academically</p>

	b) Teaching style strongly influences engagement in the classroom
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1. The practices in teaching and learning activity that correlates to students' diverse cultural backgrounds regarding their sense of belonging and inclusion in the classroom

a. Teachers and Students Recognize Diversity

This theme is defined by how teachers and students are aware of the diversity of their cultural backgrounds present in the classroom. Stated by participant 4, who is a student:

“I’ve been asked about my background by teachers and friends before, but only during introductions. After that, everyone was just welcoming.”

Translated further, P4 thinks that while interacting with peers and teachers in class, they didn’t think much about the aspect of having a diverse background. The other 9 student participants agreed that the topic of backgrounds doesn’t come up every time. It’s sometimes used only as a conversation topic to get to know each other better. Usually came out on the first day of class, when everyone is still not familiar with each other.

Teachers also acknowledged that they are aware of their students’ differences in their background, yet they do not consider it as an aspect that

should be included in teaching and learning activities. As stated by participant 2:

“From my teaching experience, students’ backgrounds don’t really have much influence on my class, especially the subject I teach.”

This statement is then supported by participant 1:

“I think it’s not necessary to map students based on their backgrounds because it does not have much influence. So, there are no levels based on that. I focus on what they can do in class and in class only.”

Additional interview feedback from students supported the findings above. When asked whether their teachers ever included cultural aspects in their learning materials, such as recounting traditions or linking lessons to the cultural backgrounds of students, all 10 participants stated that it hadn’t been done. Participant 8 stated:

“I guess, no or not yet. The teacher didn’t include any cultural aspects in our learning materials.”

This statement was then supported by participant 7:

“When we were given assignments, it was just like in more general things? Like, there are no cultural or other aspects in it.”

These remarks suggest that while teachers may treat students with fairness and equality, they didn’t incorporate or emphasize cultural

distinctions in their instructional content. Lessons continue to concentrate on general academic subjects, with cultural viewpoints missing from both assignments and classroom dialogues. This further substantiates the conclusion that diversity is acknowledged but not actively valued or integrated into teaching and learning processes.

Observation findings also show that there was no noticeable acknowledgement of differences in students' backgrounds while in teaching and learning sessions, as the teachers and the students mainly interact in an academic sense, with no biased treatment. It shows that there is no acknowledgment or appreciation of various cultural viewpoints, either in speech or practice, by both the students and the teacher.

b. Inclusivity by Teachers Happens Academically, not Culturally

This theme illustrates that although teachers recognize that their students come from diverse cultural backgrounds, inclusivity in the classroom comes primarily through academic differences rather than through culturally responsive practices.

Material brought by Participant 1 is a Narrative Text. Students are given clear instructions by the teacher to listen first to how the teacher reads out loud the text, providing clear pronunciation of some new vocabulary words in the text. Students were then tasked to read the text out loud one at a time, where the reading order was picked by the teacher. The teacher listened and provided feedback and support regarding the student's pronunciation of

some new vocabulary words, patiently waiting or giving extra time to students who are visibly struggling with reading new vocabulary words. The teacher then gave instructions to the students to individually answer the five questions regarding the text they had just read.

Participant 2 was continuing the material last week on recognizing and identifying present and past tenses. The teacher gave examples of how to change a present-tense sentence into a past-tense sentence. The students were then given a little practice in changing 5 present-tense sentences into the past tense. The teacher had an ongoing routine in which the students checked their progress with them. Each student received different feedback, whether a job well done, or a little support by dropping hints about the material. Feedbacks given are: ‘Just a little bit more! Do you know which one is the verb here?’, ‘Good job!’, ‘Oh, I know why you’re stumped. The verb 2 for this word is...?’, etc. Participant 2 was teaching with an open body language, slipped with humor, and a warm vocal tone. Solidifying students’ confidence to learn and making them more engaged in the learning activity.

Though cultural inclusion was absent, academic inclusion was strongly present. The teachers prioritize students’ academic performance and adapt their instruction based on individual learning progress. The participants’ statement doesn’t hinder the fact that even without incorporating students’

varied backgrounds, the teachers still treated students equally in the classroom. Followed by the statement from participant 1:

“I treat every student the same. I don’t differentiate between them because that feels fairer.”

Teachers agree that they have received training on the subject of teaching that has helped them in the process of handling the classroom. Not forgetting that their experiences played a big factor in it too. Followed by the statement from participant 2:

“My approach is to adjust to each student. Everyone should receive the same treatment in the sense that I check whether they understand or not. I’m not the type of teacher who gives the exact same task to every student. Each student should have their own challenge. They can also verify their answers with me directly, whether they’re right or wrong. So, I can see who is still struggling, who is not yet there, and who already understands.”

The student participants are aware of being treated fairly by their teachers in the classroom. This is supported by statements from participant 3 when asked, “Do you think your teacher is fair to all students, no matter where they come from?”

“Yes, they are fair. When some of us are a little behind, the teacher guides and waits for us.”

This is supported by participant 5, who stated:

“When we students make mistakes, the teachers won’t just dismiss us. They guided us and explained the correct steps.”

The other 8 student participants agreed that the teachers are fair to them academically. Having the assurance that they won’t be left behind by receiving direct guidance from the teachers themselves gave them proof that they are seen and included in the teaching and learning activities.

The findings demonstrate a strong presence of academic inclusivity. Teachers consistently emphasized equal access to learning by adapting instruction to students’ individual academic needs. Rather than differentiating based on cultural background, teachers differentiated based on students’ levels of understanding, pace of learning, and academic performance. The teachers provided clear explanations, constructive feedback, and patient support, particularly to those students who required more time. Students seemed motivated and confident to interact in the classroom, as they were able to approach the teacher directly to verify their answers or request clarification.

2. How students perceive the impact of culturally competent teaching practices on their academic engagement and overall progress.
 - a. Students Socialize Equally, yet Group Themselves Academically

This theme describes how students recognize social and cultural differences among their peers but do not use these differences as a basis for exclusion or social division. Instead, peer interactions, especially group

formation during assignments from the students, are influenced primarily by academic ability rather than by background identity.

All 10 student participants stated that cultural and personal backgrounds do not determine who they interact with or work with. Students explained that background differences were acknowledged briefly, sometimes for a conversation topic, but they did not impact their classroom relationships.

Participant 11 noted:

“Sometimes a friend’s background is just a casual conversation topic. After that, we don’t really think about it when we become friends.”

However, when discussing how groups are formed in class, students admitted that academic competence becomes the main factor. Some students are unintentionally left out, not because of cultural reasons, but because peers are unsure how to engage with those who are passive or less active during academic tasks.

Participant 4 explained:

“It has happened before, *Kak*. Not exactly excluded, but someone ended up not being involved. During the discussion, this person wasn’t very active. So, because they were quiet, we weren’t sure what to do or how to include them.”

This was further supported by Participant 10:

These statements indicate that exclusion in this classroom, whether intentionally or unintentionally, is academic, not cultural. During group activities, it was observed that students clustered naturally with peers who responded quickly, appeared confident, or demonstrated stronger comprehension of the lesson.

b. Teaching Style Strongly Influences Engagement in the Classroom

This theme highlights how teaching methods shape students' interest, motivation, and attentiveness during learning activities. Students consistently reported that their level of engagement depends on whether the teacher uses interactive strategies or relies heavily on lecture-based instruction.

Several students expressed that when teachers use a "*ceramah*" or lecture-only approach, they struggle to maintain interest and comprehension. Participant 12 explained:

"Some teachers only explain the material or just read it. Sometimes we don't really understand. It gets boring, and we start feeling sleepy. It's much better when we can practice it directly."

Further translated, it emphasizes that students expressed a clear preference for lessons that involve interaction, opportunities to answer questions, direct feedback, and hands-on practice. They reported that these methods not only make the class more engaging but also help them

understand the material more easily. Participant 4 added a similar perspective, emphasizing that passive, lecture-style teaching does not match the needs of school students:

“In my opinion, teachers should teach in a more interactive manner, not in a flat, lecture-like style as I have seen at a university. There is a clear difference between school students and university students, so if teachers use the same approach as lecturers, it may not be effective for us.”

Teachers themselves described similar intentions. From the teacher’s perspective, student engagement is achieved through differentiated instruction rather than uniform tasks. Participant 2 explained that equal treatment does not mean giving identical tasks to all students, but ensuring that each student receives an equal opportunity to understand and succeed.

As stated by Participant 2:

“I believe every student should have the same opportunity to understand the lesson. Some students are fast students, while others need more time. If I use the same system for everyone, only a few students succeed. That’s why I give different tasks to each student, so they each have their own challenge. They don’t copy from others; they work on their own problems. If they make mistakes, they come to me, we fix it, and they try again. In that way, everyone is included and experiences the

excitement of learning. For me, an engaging class is not about games, but about the ‘*aha!*’ moment.”

Observation findings confirmed that the interactive teaching practices generated higher engagement. When the teacher asked questions, checked students’ understanding individually, and responded to mistakes with constructive feedback, students became noticeably more active. They raised their hands, approached the teacher to confirm their answers, received individual feedback, went back to their seats, and then held a discussion with their seatmates regarding the questions and the feedback they received from their teacher.

B. Discussion

This chapter discusses the findings presented in the previous section by interpreting them in relation to the research questions and relevant theories of cultural competence, inclusion, and student engagement. The discussion aims to explain how the identified themes reflect the current practices of teaching and learning in a culturally diverse classroom and how these practices influence students’ sense of belonging, inclusion, and academic engagement.

1. The practices in teaching and learning activity that correlates to students’ diverse cultural backgrounds regarding their sense of belonging and inclusion in the classroom.

a. Teachers and Students Recognize Diversity

1) The Culturally-Neutral Instruction

The participants' experiences demonstrate interaction with the visible parts of the cultural iceberg. Participant 4's comment that backgrounds are only mentioned during "introductions" and subsequently treated as a "conversation topic to get to know each other" gives the notion that culture is regarded as a collection of observable, external facts, closely aligning with the "Surface Culture" concept outlined in Edward T. Hall's Cultural Iceberg Theory. Within Hall's framework, these surface components, such as language, attire, or origin narratives, are readily noticeable but do not encapsulate the essence of an individual's cultural identity. Hall stated that culture comprises both visible and invisible layers, and the data indicate that in this particular educational environment, cultural awareness rarely goes beyond the "waterline" of the iceberg.

The most notable connection with Hall's theory is evident in the teachers' perception that students' backgrounds "do not significantly impact" the classroom or the subject matter (Participant 2). This indicates a disregard for Deep Culture, the unseen 90% of the iceberg that encompasses internal thought processes, values, non-verbal communication, and cognitive styles.

While Participant 1 highlights a concentration on "what they can accomplish in class and solely in class," Hall's theory asserts that "what a student can achieve" is frequently influenced by their profound cultural framework. By overlooking these fundamental aspects, teachers adopt a "color-blind" stance, which, although aimed at promoting fairness and equality, neglects the culturally embedded methods through which students interpret information or interact with authority. Research indicates that when teachers overlook the "profound culture" of their students, they forfeit chances for "identity affirmation" and "critical consciousness," both of which are vital for genuinely inclusive teaching practices (Nayak, 2026)

The observation that students and teachers move beyond these subjects once the "familiarization" phase concludes implies that culture is perceived as a static introductory detail rather than a dynamic element that shapes the learning experience. As highlighted in the literature, surface culture is frequently objective and relatively simple to modify or acknowledge without changing fundamental behaviors (Irawan & Daud, 2021). By confining cultural discussions to the initial day of class, the interactions within the classroom remain at this sensory, observable level.

The insights from Participants 7 and 8 concerning the absence of cultural elements in assignments further substantiate the conclusion

that instruction exists within a culturally neutral framework. In light of the Iceberg Theory, the curriculum continues to emphasize "general" academic subjects, which are frequently implicitly founded on the norms of the dominant culture while disregarding the varied "cultural capital" that students contribute to the classroom.

The remark that there was "no biased treatment" suggests a significant level of superficial harmony and "welcoming" conduct. However, from Hall's theoretical perspective, a lack of bias does not equate to the proactive incorporation of profound culture. Without recognizing the unseen layers, such as how a student's background influences their understanding of time, competition, or logic, the classroom remains a realm of "passive inclusion" rather than "culturally responsive" interaction.

b. Inclusivity by Teachers Happens Academically, Not Culturally

1) Procedural Scaffolding

When teachers "guide and wait" for students who are "a little behind," they are simplifying the task structure so the student can concentrate on the academic material. The results from the Narrative Text lesson illustrate how instruction functions as essential procedural scaffolds. By guiding students to listen to accurate pronunciation prior to attempting to read aloud, the teacher offers a procedural framework that alleviates the cognitive burden necessary to grasp the task's

expectations. This enables students to concentrate their mental efforts on language acquisition instead of being perplexed by the structure of the activity. Additionally, selected reading sequences and the considerate allocation of extra time for struggling readers serve as procedural connectors, ensuring that the mechanics of the lesson promote rather than obstruct the journey toward internalization (Dewi & Oktapiani, 2024). The observed "ongoing routine" in the grammar lessons, where students directly check their progress with the teacher, signifies another important type of procedural scaffolding.

2) Strategic Scaffolding

The researcher identified that the teachers offer extensive personalized assistance while maintaining cultural neutrality. This discovery underlines a transition from Equality, treating all individuals identically, to Equity, offering support customized to meet individual requirements (Kaufman & Killen, 2022).

The teacher presented multiple methods and gave differentiated instructions to ensure that each student could identify a way that aligns with their own cognitive preferences. This approach is an example of the practical application of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which is Strategic scaffolding. By "tailoring to each student," the teacher acts as a More Knowledgeable Other or MKO (Dewi & Oktapiani, 2024), recognizing the disparity between a student's

independent capabilities and what they can accomplish with support. The incorporation of "varied tasks" and "consistent yet kind guidance" directly caters to the varying learning paces present in the classroom.

3) Verbal Immediacy

Verbal Immediacy refers to the particular linguistic selections and oral exchanges a teacher employs to diminish psychological distance. In the results, this is defined by individualized feedback, the incorporation of humor, and motivational prompts such as "Just a little bit more!" or "Good job!" These verbal actions extend beyond mere positive reinforcement; they embody a type of pedagogical responsiveness that caters to the student's immediate academic requirements. By adopting a warm vocal tone and providing strategic hints, teachers reduce the students' "affective filter," transforming the classroom into a communicative environment where students feel empowered to engage with the teacher directly. This verbal accessibility guarantees that inclusivity is perceived as a continuous, supportive dialogue that assists students in moving from confusion to independent self-regulation (Dewi & Oktapiani, 2024; Zakiyah & Mulyani, 2024).

Teachers minimize the psychological gap through tailored academic assistance with Instructor immediacy, which refers to communication methods that reduce the distance between teachers and students (Juma et al., 2022). The findings indicate that teachers

accomplish this sense of "closeness" by modifying their teaching to align with each student's progress.

The verbal immediacy demonstrated through the teachers' "clear explanations" and "patient support" likely served as a catalyst that fostered student participation. The data collected from observations revealed that students experienced a sense of "motivation and confidence to engage" and were willing to "approach the teacher directly." This finding is consistent with the research conducted by Hu & Wang (2023), which suggests that the immediacy behaviors exhibited by teachers are significant predictors of students' willingness to communicate (WTC) and their academic involvement. In particular, by directly addressing the comprehension levels of students, teachers effectively encouraged the "active engagement" noted by Wang (2021) as a crucial result of immediate communication within the classroom.

4) Non-verbal Immediacy

Non-Verbal Immediacy refers to the physical and behavioral cues that convey warmth and availability without verbal communication. The research emphasizes "academic patience" as a key non-verbal framework, especially when teachers "patiently wait" or allocate additional time for students who are grappling with new vocabulary. This intentional application of wait-time, along with open body language and a nurturing presence, indicates to students that their

unique learning pace is honored. In contrast to verbal signals that offer direct guidance, non-verbal immediacy fosters the foundational psychological safety within the classroom. Student participants recognized this unspoken support, that is the sensation of being "acknowledged and guided" instead of overlooked, as evidence of fair treatment. Therefore, while verbal immediacy steers the educational process, non-verbal immediacy nurtures the feeling of belonging, demonstrating that inclusivity is a comprehensive experience grounded in the teacher's overall pedagogical presence (Zakiyah & Mulyani, 2024; Dewi & Oktapiani, 2024).

Participant 2's strategy, adapting to every student, offering personalized challenges, and confirming responses, illustrates a practical application of Mehrabian's (1969) notion of "directness and intensity of interaction" (as cited in Liu, 2021). By ensuring that no student is "left behind," teachers foster the supportive environment characterized by Liu (2021), where equity is viewed as the fair allocation of academic focus and support.

When teachers "guide and wait" for students, they exhibit a form of "academic patience" that indicates the classroom is a "safe and welcoming environment," as highlighted in the framework of non-verbal immediacy.

5) Supportive Feedback

A significant aspect of inclusivity identified in this research was the implementation of supportive feedback. Participant 5 remarked that teachers "do not merely overlook" errors but rather "elaborate the correct procedures." This method directly reinforces the theoretical foundation that inclusive teachers perceive feedback as a motivational tool rather than just a means of correction. Such an approach validates student efforts and nurtures the perseverance required for students who may face challenges with academic self-esteem (Wang, 2021).

The form of inclusivity from Instructor Immediacy aligns with the principles of differentiated instruction, in which equity is achieved through responsiveness to students' needs rather than uniformity. However, the findings also suggest that academic inclusivity alone does not fully address cultural inclusion. While students felt academically supported, their cultural identities remained largely invisible in instructional practices.

A significant finding of this research is the disconnection between academic and cultural inclusion. Faulkner et al. (2021) stated that immediacy is essential for fostering knowledge in culturally diverse settings. Nevertheless, the participants in this research appeared to perceive "fairness" as the lack of differentiation based on background.

This indicates that in this scenario, teachers' immediacy serves as a replacement for culturally responsive teaching. The "academic inclusion" noted, characterized by individualized support and constructive feedback, offered students the "reassurance that they would not be left behind." While the cultural identities of the students were secondary to their roles as students, the high level of instructional immediacy ensured that they felt "acknowledged and included" in the learning processes. This underscores a particular form of inclusivity: one where the "psychological gap" is bridged by a mutual emphasis on academic success and instructor accessibility, even in the absence of profound cultural integration.

2. The way students perceive the impact of culturally competent teaching practices on their academic engagement and overall progress

The findings seen from how students view their learning environment provide a significant understanding: in a classroom where teachers used a culturally neutral approach, students do not feel a lack of inclusion. Rather, they actively direct their involvement through the academic frameworks and relational avenues established by the teacher. To comprehend how students assess the effects of these culturally neutral methods, especially procedural scaffolding, strategic scaffolding, verbal immediacy, non-verbal immediacy, and constructive feedback, their experiences were examined through the multi-faceted concept of student engagement, which encompasses its behavioral,

affective, and cognitive aspects (Wang, 2021), the Vygotskian process of internalization (Amirian et al., 2014), and the interactive principles of Social Exchange Theory (Homans, 1958).

a. Students Socialize Equally, yet Group Themselves Academically

1) Students' Cognitive Engagement and Rational Search for Academic Profit

A significant finding of this research is that although students engage socially in a balanced manner and uphold superficial harmony across cultural differences, the formation of their classroom groups was mainly influenced by academic competence. When faced with collaborative tasks, students intentionally gather around peers who respond quickly, show confidence, or show superior understanding. This behavior is a particular form of cognitive engagement, where students are not only focused on completing assignments but are also strategically aiming to enhance their academic performance (Wang, 2021). This noticeable cognitive engagement can be thoroughly explained through the principles of Social Exchange Theory (SET), which states that social interactions are a continuous exchange process designed to attain an academic 'profit' where the rewards exceed the costs (Homans, 1958). In this context, students act as 'rational actors' who prioritize academic competence over cultural identity during classroom activities (Ahmad et al., 2023). The 'reward' in this scenario

is identified as academic achievement and the reciprocal sharing of knowledge (Homans, 1958). From a sociocultural standpoint, students perceive academic competence as the essential currency of social exchange, actively pursuing peers who can serve as a More Knowledgeable Other (MKO) to assist them in navigating their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Dewi & Oktapiani, 2024). Since cultural diversity does not seem to be seen as notable 'costs' or to modify the 'benefits' related to the specific goal of academic success in this context, it remains a culturally-neutral characteristic that does not serve as a basis for exclusion (Cook & Rice, 2003). Cultural backgrounds are regarded merely as topics for casual conversation, rendering culture neutral the instant a task-oriented environment is established.

In contrast, this logical pursuit of profit leads to a type of academic exclusion instead of cultural exclusion, primarily stemming from a lack of reciprocity. As per Social Exchange Theory (SET), a stable relationship necessitates a fair exchange in which both parties contribute functional value to the group (Kumar & Shailaja, 2024). When a student remains silent or passive, they do not provide the anticipated cognitive "return" or contribution to their classmates. As Participant 4 observed, being "unsure what to do" with a passive peer underscores the psychological burden and increased effort needed to support a non-participating individual. From the perspective of social

exchange, working with a passive student results in an unbalanced, low-yield interaction where the "cost" of the workload is inequitably shared (Ahmad et al., 2023). Therefore, even when students like Participant 10 try to foster an exchange by soliciting input, the absence of a response triggers a swift social assessment. To avoid the unnecessary costs, time penalties, and psychological strain associated with managing a less engaged peer, students instinctively withdraw (Kumar & Shailaja, 2024), leaving passive learners to be assigned randomly by the teacher. This illustrates that social division within the classroom arises from academic responsiveness and participation rather than ethnic or regional backgrounds.

b. Teaching Style Strongly Influences Engagement in the Classroom

1) Differentiated Instruction and Scaffolding as the Catalysts for Behavioral and Affective Engagement

The findings indicate an increase in student engagement influenced by various teaching styles, demonstrating how external instructional decisions impact students' internal cost-benefit evaluations. Traditional, lecture-based instruction (*ceramah*) leads to immediate behavioral and emotional disengagement, resulting in students feeling drowsy, uninterested, and disconnected. In a monotonous, lecturer-dominated setting, the "cost" of sustaining attention offers minimal academic "reward" or understanding for the

student. In contrast, culturally neutral practices rooted in procedural and strategic scaffolding serve as key facilitators of active student involvement by systematically reducing the cognitive and psychological burdens of learning (Dewi & Oktapiani, 2024).

When teachers implement procedural scaffolding, such as the continuous progress-verification routines seen in grammar lessons, they reduce the "procedural uncertainty" that frequently leads diverse learners to withdraw. By breaking down intricate tasks into manageable, easy-to-understand steps where students can directly assess their work, the teacher offers a navigational framework (Dewi & Oktapiani, 2024). This structural transparency significantly lessens the cognitive "cost" or mental strain necessary to grasp the task's guidelines, enabling students to concentrate their limited cognitive resources solely on the learning material (Amirian et al., 2014).

At the same time, strategic scaffolding through differentiated instruction guarantees that equity replaces uniform equality (Kaufman & Killen, 2022). As Participant 2 stated, customizing tasks and instructions so that each student faces their own distinct challenge prevents advanced learners from having the burden of boredom and shields struggling students from the overwhelming frustration. Students view this tailored instruction as a direct investment in their development, thereby maximizing their anticipated benefits. The

immediate outcome is a notable increase in behavioral engagement: students can be seen raising their hands, proactively approaching the teacher's desk to confirm answers, and returning to their seats to engage in collaborative discussions with their peers. By offering clear pathways and manageable steps, scaffolding converts the classroom into a high-yield learning environment where every student can experience the thrill of an "aha!" moment (Dewi & Oktapiani, 2024; Zakiyah & Mulyani, 2024).

2) Verbal and Non-Verbal Immediacy as Foundations for Students' Psychological Safety

While scaffolding establishes the structural framework that modifies the cost-benefit analysis, verbal and non-verbal immediacy provide the emotional validation essential for students to undertake academic risks. In any social interaction, revealing one's lack of knowledge or committing an error incurs a significant psychological cost, frequently leading to academic shame or diminished self-esteem (Kumar & Shailaja, 2024). Students view the immediate communication styles of their instructors as a crucial mechanism that reduce these psychological costs, replacing fear with a sense of security.

Verbal Immediacy, which is experienced through personalized feedback, humor, and specific prompts (e.g., "Just a little bit more!" or "Do you know which one is the verb here?"), directly enhances affective

engagement. These verbal strategies modify the emotional atmosphere of the classroom by considerably reducing the students' "affective filter" (Zakiyah & Mulyani, 2024). Since the teacher's spoken communication is regarded as warm, approachable, and non-threatening, the psychological burden of asking a question or making a mistake is reduced. Verbal immediacy transforms the instructor from a distant authoritative figure into an approachable facilitator, thereby directly boosting the students' willingness to communicate (WTC) and participate in public academic discussions (Hu & Wang, 2023).

In addition to this, non-verbal immediacy, expressed through "academic patience," open body language, and a warm vocal tone, establishes the essential foundation of psychological safety. When an educator patiently waits or provides additional time for a student who is struggling instead of dismissing them, they convey a significant non-verbal message that the student's presence and development are appreciated. Students interpret this silent availability as a protective shield. Although explicit and implicit cultural materials may be lacking in the lessons, the high level of instructional immediacy fulfills the students' emotional need for belonging. They feel "acknowledged and supported," demonstrating that affective engagement does not require cultural integration; instead, it thrives through the visible, physical

presence and responsiveness of the teacher, which reassures them that they will not be left behind (Wang, 2021; Zakiyah & Mulyani, 2024).

3) Supportive Feedback and the Process of Internalization

Ultimately, students perceive their overall development through the framework of Internalization, a Vygotskian concept where social interactions mediated by teachers are converted into internal cognitive frameworks (Amirian et al., 2014; Shahraki et al., 2015). The framework that enables this transformation is supportive feedback, which serves as the ultimate "reward" within the social exchange network of the classroom. Participant 5 specifically remarked that when students make mistakes, teachers do not disregard them; rather, they guide them through the correct processes step by step. This teaching method fundamentally alters the student's perception of errors. Instead of interpreting a mistake as an indication of failure, which would cause high psychological cost, the supportive feedback from the teacher treats it as an opportunity for meaningful mediation and growth. When a student receives personalized feedback, returns to their seat, and engages in discussion with a peer, they are actively participating in an external, social dialogue (Fahmi et al., 2020).

Over time, through consistent exposure to clear explanations, strategic hints, and collaborative peer validation, this external feedback, mediated by teachers, experiences a qualitative transformation. It

evolves into the student's own "inner-speech" and self-regulation processes (Fahmi et al., 2020; Amirian et al., 2014). The student learns to assess their own comprehension, correct their grammatical mistakes, and independently navigate narrative or structural assignments. The mediation that evolves to "inner-speech", where students employ the teachers' prior guidance as an internal tool for problem solving. (Zakiyah & Mulyani, 2024). The observation that students characterize an engaging class not by games, but by the enlightening "aha!" moment of sudden understanding, indicates that they monitor their own development through their path toward intellectual independence and signifies the apex of academic advancement within the Zone of Proximal Development (Dewi & Oktapiani, 2024). In this culturally neutral setting, the accessibility of instruction and supportive feedback effectively facilitated the entire cycle of engagement and Internalization, demonstrating that academic equity is realized when steps to success are made clear, collaborative, and reciprocal (Amirian et al., 2014).