

# The interplay of culture and language in Indonesian EFL classrooms: Reframing Liddicoat and Scarino's Concept

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## Abstract

The conceptual framework for combining culture and language training proposed by Liddicoat and Scarino (2013) comprising 1) Structural Understandings of Content, 2) Communicative Understanding of Content, 2) Content-Based Language Teaching, 4) Concept-Based Understandings of Content, and 5) Content for Intercultural Language Teaching and Learning is reinterpreted in this paper. It delves into how students' comprehension of the connection between language and culture can be improved via the use of a systematic method for organizing course material. The framework lays the groundwork for successful engagement with both cultural and linguistic components by stressing the methodical presentation of such content. To further emphasize the significance of language forms and their practical use in genuine communication, the authors also present communicative understandings of content. More meaningful language interactions are made possible by this method, which emphasizes the interdependence of cultural knowledge and linguistic abilities. Furthermore, the article delves further into the topic of content-based language training, which uses authentic cultural settings to improve both language learning and cross-cultural competency. It promotes a more in-depth investigation of cultural notions and their influence on language acquisition by integrating concept-based understandings of culture. With an emphasis on helping students become fluent communicators and adept at navigating cultural differences, this article presents the concept of content for intercultural language learning. This paper stresses the need for a pedagogy that welcomes Indonesian EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students of all backgrounds, encourages the growth of language skills and intercultural understanding, and ultimately equips students to participate actively in communities around the world.

**Keywords:** interplay; culture; English; language; Indonesia; Liddicoat and Scarino's Concept

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## INTRODUCTION

The integration of culture and language is essential in EFL instruction in Indonesia, as it enhances communication abilities, promotes cross-cultural comprehension, and engages students by linking education to practical contexts (Nafisah et al., 2024). In this context, English transcends mere syntax and vocabulary; it embodies the values, customs, and behaviors of English-speaking societies (Corbett, 2022; Machan, 2013). By comprehending cultural subtleties, students can prevent misinterpretations, utilize language suitably in various circumstances, and participate more assuredly in international dialogues. Furthermore, exposure to varied cultures enhances their viewpoints, fostering greater open-mindedness and empathy. For Indonesian students, incorporating culture into language education enhances linguistic proficiency and intercultural competency, equipping them for effective interaction in both local and global contexts.

Nonetheless this integration presents some difficulties, including Indonesia's linguistic variety, many students know numerous local languages in addition to Bahasa Indonesia which occasionally complicates English language acquisition. Further hindering effective cultural integration include limited exposure to real English-speaking societies and inadequate intercultural communication

training for teachers. Moreover, students could find cultural materials difficult since they seem irrelevant to their own cultural identities. So, teachers have to adopt cultural approaches, offer real-life cultural experiences, and keep developing their language and culture teaching strategies if they are to overcome these obstacles.

Liddicoat and Scarino (2013) mentioned there are three roles of language: a structural system, communicative system, and social practice. Language, as a structural system, is organized by grammatical, syntactic, and phonological norms, establishing a framework for the construction of meaningful sentences and phrases. It allows individuals to generate and comprehend a wide range of expressions based on common linguistic norms (Fowler, 2022; Tomasello, 2005). Language functions as a communicative system that facilitates the expression of thoughts, emotions, and ideas, enabling humans to connect, share information, and cultivate relationships. It examines how individuals utilize language to communicate meaning in practical contexts, encompassing both oral and written modalities (Horowitz & Samuels, 2023). Ultimately, as a social practice, language is intricately intertwined with cultural norms, values, and power dynamics. It mirrors and molds social identities, affects group dynamics, and organizes relationships throughout society (Sato et al., 2025), frequently adjusting to various circumstances and societies.

However, language is not merely a collection of words; it is an essential component of social existence that links individuals to their cultural and social contexts. It serves as both a communication tool and a conduit for the transmission of cultural values, beliefs, and practices. As English evolves into a global lingua franca, learners must comprehend the cultural contexts of its usage to prevent misunderstandings and facilitate efficient communication across varied cultural barriers (Rose et al., 2021). Integrating culture into English instruction enables students to cultivate intercultural competency, facilitating their appreciation of linguistic diversity, engagement with global issues (Paragae, 2023; Selvi et al., 2023), and establishment of meaningful connections with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. This integration enhances the learning experience, rendering language acquisition more pertinent and pragmatic, while also equipping students to engage confidently in both local and global contexts.

In this case, teachers should know that culture and intercultural are different. In short, culture is the internal framework of a group's identity, while intercultural pertains to the interactions and understanding between people from different cultures (Liu et al., 2023; Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013). Teachers design their teaching to include cultural and intercultural elements by adding varied cultural perspectives into classes, encouraging learners to investigate and respect diversity. They use culturally relevant information, real-life examples, and interactive activities to increase understanding. By facilitating open exchanges, teachers assist students in negotiating cultural nuances and developing intercultural competency, enabling them to interact successfully and sensitively in a globalized world, while also appreciating local cultural identities.

In the context of global education, Villabona and Cenoz (2022) emphasized the integration of culture and language in English instruction is crucial for preparing students to adeptly traverse an increasingly interconnected globe. Furthermore, English holds an important role in Indonesia as a foreign language, widely taught in schools and universities. It serves as a key tool for global communication, business, education, and access to technology, though it is not the native language. Additionally, proficiency in English is indispensable for personal and professional development (Chang, 2025; Gultom & Oktaviani, 2022; Pun et al., 2023), as Indonesia continues to interact with global markets and international networks. Furthermore, proficiency in the English language facilitates participation in global discourse and provides access to higher education opportunities abroad. Consequently, there is a pressing need for English instruction that is both effective and comprehensive, as it not only emphasizes language skills but also incorporates cultural awareness, thereby empowering students to communicate confidently and proficiently in a variety of global contexts.

A previous study by Herda et al. (2024) highlighted that Teaching English in a multicultural setting highlights the importance of culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP). This approach encourages

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diversity by acknowledging how students' diverse backgrounds and experiences shape their identities. Using culturally appropriate materials and teaching strategies can enhance student engagement, develop critical thinking, and improve language acquisition. Their findings showed the need to encourage teachers to use relevant contexts, various views, student-driven material choices, and individualized content to foster an inclusive and engaging learning environment. Existing research is deficient in the efficient integration of cultural and intercultural elements by teachers in English language instruction, especially within heterogeneous classes. However, there is insufficient examination of how these roles converge with practical pedagogical strategies that promote intercultural competence across the four fundamental language skills: listening, reading, speaking, and writing. There is a deficiency of comprehensive frameworks or guidance for teachers on how to reconcile the instruction of language as a collection of grammatical structures with the necessity of preparing learners for effective multicultural communication.

Although teachers may instinctively integrate cultural content into their classes, further research is required to identify successful methodologies for explicitly teaching culture and intercultural communication skills in a manner that connects with students from diverse cultural backgrounds. For example, listening and speaking activities may incorporate culturally diverse content, while reading and writing assignments can foster critical engagement with intercultural perspectives; yet, these links remain insufficiently examined in contemporary instructional frameworks. Furthermore, while existing literature, such as Herda et al. (2024), emphasizes the importance of CRP, it fails to adequately address how teachers can promote cultural awareness and intercultural understanding while developing the four English language skills. While CRP advocates the use of varied, student-driven materials and practices, there is still a lack of knowledge about how these components translate into practical classroom activities that not only teach language but also promote good intercultural communication. A more nuanced approach is needed to bridge this gap, assisting teachers in designing courses that incorporate cultural relevance into listening, speaking, reading, and writing activities, equipping students to interact meaningfully in globalized, multicultural environments. This integrated method would ensure that students not only gain language skills but also build the intercultural competence required for effective communication in a variety of cultural contexts.

This conceptual paper provides some insight into how CRP can be maximized through careful consideration of existing theories and the urgency of relevant pedagogical practice in an Indonesian context. By examining how cultural and intercultural elements can be integrated into English language instruction, the paper emphasizes the importance of adapting teaching strategies to the diverse cultural backgrounds of Indonesian students. Additionally, it highlights the need for teachers to create inclusive learning environments that not only promote language proficiency but also foster intercultural understanding, preparing students to engage confidently in both local and global contexts. Briefly, The purpose of this article is to reinterpret Liddicoat and Scarino's framework for integrating culture and language in EFL teaching and adapt it to the context of Indonesia. This will be achieved by reframing the concept into a proposed framework to be integrated by teachers in the Indonesian context.

## **CONCEPTUALIZING CONTENT FOR LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING: REFRAMING LIDDICOAT AND SCARINO'S**

This section reinterprets Liddicoat and Scarino's Liddicoat and Scarino's conceptual framework by analyzing the integration of culture and language instruction in EFL teaching through diverse components (2013). They begin with structural understandings of content, which emphasize the importance of organizing cultural and linguistic material in a way that allows learners to comprehend and engage with both aspects systematically (Baraldi, 2023; Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013). This structural methodology establishes a basis for imparting knowledge that aids students in comprehending the correlation between cultural contexts and language utilization. The authors enhance this paradigm by incorporating communicative interpretations of content, emphasizing the

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significance of not only linguistic forms and structures but also the operational role of these forms in genuine communication (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013; Liu, 2021). Cultural knowledge is intricately linked with linguistic skills to facilitate more significant and contextually pertinent language interactions.

Therefore, this research delves further into the topic of content-based language instruction, which aims to facilitate language acquisition through the use of authentic, real-world cultural contexts (Figueiredo & Henriques, 2024; Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013). This method helps students develop their language abilities and cultural competency by having them use language to investigate and debate important cultural issues. In addition to discussing surface-level cultural information, the authors promote concept-based understandings of content, which call for a more in-depth investigation of cultural ideas and how they affect language acquisition (Lantolf, 2021; Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013). At last, we present the idea of content for intercultural language learning and teaching, which emphasizes the significance of equipping students to understand and navigate cultural differences through language and creating a setting where both language proficiency and intercultural communication skills can flourish.

**Table 1.** The Map of Conceptualizing Content

<b>Conceptualizing Content</b>	<b>Teachers' Role</b>
Structural Understandings of Content	Organizing Cultural and Linguistic Material Systematically Adapting Content to Learners' Needs and Backgrounds
Communicative Understanding of Content	Fostering Interactive Communication Connecting Cultural Contexts to Communication
Content-Based Language Teaching	Integrating Content and Language Instruction Supporting Language Development through Content Exploration
Concept-Based Understandings of Content	Promoting Transferable Knowledge Integrating Language and Conceptual Learning
Content for Intercultural Language Teaching and Learning	Fostering Awareness of Cultural Differences Promoting Critical Reflection on Culture and Language

Table 1 suggests that putting on Liddicoat and Scarino's approach into English instruction in Indonesia entails a structural perspective combining linguistic and cultural elements. The first approach is to arrange cultural and language resources such that students may methodically interact with both elements, therefore developing an awareness of how cultural settings shape language use. This method enables students to link cultural understanding with language competency, therefore facilitating more relevant and significant interactions. The framework also stresses communicative understandings of content, in which the functional use of language in actual communication takes front stage over simple syntax and vocabulary. Involving cultural information into language instruction helps students not only acquire proper sentence construction but also utilize language appropriately in cultural settings.

In Indonesian classrooms, content-based language instruction teaches language through authentic, actual cultural contexts. This strategy encourages students to investigate and discuss cultural themes, so increasing both linguistic proficiency and cultural awareness. Furthermore, concept-based understandings of content encourage students to investigate deeper cultural notions and their impact on language, which promotes critical thinking. Finally, the framework advocates for intercultural language learning content that provides students with the tools they need to manage cultural differences through language, thereby developing both linguistic abilities and intercultural communication competencies. This comprehensive approach guarantees that students are not only fluent in English, but also culturally competent in a globalized environment. Therefore, the aim of this conception is to make sure students grasp the use of a language inside particular cultural settings in addition to learning its mechanics.

The rereading of the conceptual framework builds on the first structural approaches and emphasizes more the part that communication plays in practical situations. This rereading underlines

the need of arranging language and cultural resources so that students may methodically understand and interact with both aspects. Organizing material helps students to quickly see the link between the language they are learning and the cultural setting in which it is used. This method lets students create significant links between how language performs in various contexts and how cultural quirks affect those performances. Finally, the way Liddicoat and Scarino's theory is reinterpreted emphasizes how closely language and culture are entwined and shows that good language acquisition calls on more than just grammar and vocabulary mastery. Language learning is more relevant and meaningful when one understands how those linguistic tools are applied in culturally particular ways to support communication.

## **Reframing to Acting**

### ***Structural Understandings of Content***

Teachers play an important function in organizing knowledge so that students may readily understand the relationship between cultural settings and language use (Rumeli et al., 2022). In this way, teachers can assist students build links between cultural issues and language skills by systematically structuring lessons. For some reason, they should consider the diverse cultural backgrounds of their students when presenting content. By adapting the curriculum to reflect the students' experiences, teachers ensure that cultural and linguistic material is relevant, meaningful, and engaging (Lubicz-Nawrocka & Bovill, 2023). This encourages active participation and enhances students' understanding of how culture and language influence each other. Teachers are essential in helping students improve their language abilities in speaking, writing, listening, and reading in addition to taking cultural factors into account. Students can enhance their comprehension, fluency, and expression in academic and real-world contexts by receiving effective training in these areas. Teachers promote a balanced approach to language acquisition by employing a variety of instructional techniques that assist students in developing confidence in each skill. This all-encompassing training helps students become effective communicators in a variety of contexts. By offering students opportunity to practice each ability in diverse circumstances, teachers enable them to utilize language in practical situations. Furthermore, promoting student engagement with varied perspectives augments their critical thinking and cultural knowledge. This comprehensive method guarantees that pupils acquire a language while also developing a profound understanding of its cultural importance.

### ***Communicative Understanding of Content***

By highlighting the value of speaking, listening, and negotiating meaning, teachers give their students the chance to engage with their peers in meaningful ways. Teachers assist students in understanding how language is utilized in dynamic (Rashov, 2024), communicative exchanges rather than merely in isolated grammatical structures by promoting teamwork and dialogue. Authentically, teachers may involve designing activities that focus on functional language use, such as role-plays, debates, and discussions, where students practice communicating effectively within cultural and social settings. By assisting students in interacting with real-world cultural contexts, teachers make sure that language instruction is not isolated but rather linked to genuine cultural circumstances. This method aids in the development of students' language skills as well as their understanding of how language functions in various cultural contexts. The next point is teachers play a key role in helping students understand how culture shapes communication styles and language use. Through explicit instruction on cultural norms, values, and communication practices, teachers guide students in recognizing the influence of culture on both language forms and the way language functions in different intercultural settings (Corbett, 2022). Moreover, communicative understanding of material is more than just knowing facts; it also includes being able to share and discuss ideas. Focusing on speech helps students think about what they are learning in a way that lets them say what they mean clearly. This means knowing the goal and setting of the material, which helps students put their ideas in order and present them in a way that makes sense. Teachers can help students understand how to communicate by making classrooms that encourage debate, discussion, and teamwork. Additionally,



communicative understanding helps students develop critical thinking skills by teaching them how to evaluate information and arguments and confidently share their views. This way of teaching lets students connect with and use the material in a meaningful way, not just to memorize it.

### ***Content-Based Language Teaching***

Integrating content with language context is a critical function of content-based language teaching (CBLT). Teachers give students the chance to study the language and the particular content at the same time by utilizing academic or real-world subjects or current viral topics which encourages greater engagement and language retention. By incorporating authentic texts, media, and situations, teachers help students connect language learning to their own lives, fostering both language skills and critical thinking about the content being studied (Zapata, 2022). However, in line with CBLT, teachers help students use language as a tool to go deeper into the material and gain a deeper understanding of it. They ensure that language limitations do not impede students' understanding of the subject matter by offering scaffolding to help them traverse complicated concepts. Students benefit from this support in developing their language skills and material understanding in a comprehensive, integrated way. One of the advantages of CBLT is that it simulates real-world language use, as students employ their language skills in practical scenarios. Teachers facilitate this learning process by offering scaffolding and strategies to assist students in comprehending intricate concepts and acquiring new vocabulary and language structures (Shawaqfeh et al., 2024). Critical thinking is also promoted by CBLT, as students are not only acquiring content but also synthesizing and analyzing information in the target language. Ultimately, Content-Based Language Teaching assists students in the development of their academic expertise and language abilities, thereby preparing them for success in both academic and professional environments.

### ***Concept-Based Understandings of Content***

Teachers play a crucial role in helping students see how the concepts they learn in the classroom can be applied to different contexts. By teaching content through conceptual frameworks, teachers enable students to transfer their understanding of these concepts to new situations, enhancing their ability to use the language meaningfully in diverse real-world scenarios. Teachers utilize concept-based instruction to combine language acquisition with the exploration of abstract topics (Martí, 2021). They help students build linguistic skills while simultaneously expanding their knowledge of complicated ideas. This approach encourages the development of both linguistic proficiency and intellectual engagement, ensuring that students are not merely learning language forms but are also able to utilize language to think critically about concepts and concerns. Students are encouraged to analyze and synthesize information in a concept-based approach (Doueihi & François, 2022), as opposed to merely memorizing details. This approach promotes a more profound comprehension of the subject matter by emphasizing the "why" and "how" of the concepts being taught. To enhance their overall comprehension, students are encouraged to investigate topics from a variety of perspectives by redirecting the focus to concepts. Additionally, Concept-Based Understandings foster a more comprehensive perspective on knowledge by encouraging students to recognize patterns and connections within and across disciplines.

### ***Content for Intercultural Language Teaching and Learning***

Teachers utilize content to combine language acquisition with the exploration of abstract topics. They help students build linguistic skills while simultaneously expanding their knowledge of complicated ideas. This approach encourages the development of both linguistic proficiency and intellectual engagement (Wu, 2024), ensuring that students are not merely learning language forms but are also able to utilize language to think critically about concepts and concerns. Additionally, teachers guide students in critically reflecting on how culture influences language and vice versa (Lau et al., 2023). This reflection helps students question stereotypes, avoid misunderstandings, and develop the ability to adapt their language use in culturally diverse situations. By encouraging students

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to explore their own cultural identities and those of others, teachers promote a deeper, more critical understanding of how language and culture intersect in global communication. This investigation helps students discover the various ways in which culture influences language use, communication styles, and social conventions. Teachers may provide students time to reflect on their own cultural experiences and explain how they influence their language choices. Incorporating cultural knowledge into language study also helps children build empathy as they begin to see the world from new perspectives. This understanding is especially vital in today's interconnected world when effective communication frequently needs cultural sensitivity (Saaïda, 2023). Teachers can use real-world examples, such as media, literature, or case studies, to demonstrate how language works in specific cultural situations. These activities teach students how to confidently handle cross-cultural relationships, which improves their capacity to communicate in a globalized world. Finally, this method not only improves language skills but also prepares students for meaningful interactions with others from all backgrounds.

Combining all these ideas will provide in an English classroom a quite vibrant and efficient learning environment. Combining these components will allow English teachers to give students a thorough and immersive experience that fosters cultural awareness as well as linguistic competency. Along with improving their English, students acquire the cultural fluency required to negotiate real-world, multicultural contacts. Inspired by cultural settings and practical relevance, this combined approach helps students to perceive language as a living, changing tool for communication. The students thus develop not just more competent English speakers but also more conscious, sympathetic, and flexible global citizens ready to boldly participate in cross-cultural interactions. English education goes beyond the classroom and becomes a strong tool for promoting understanding and cooperation between cultures by means of this all-encompassing framework.

## CONCLUSION

Teachers play a vital role in building both language competency and cultural understanding in the English classroom by integrating structural, communicative, and concept-based approaches to the subject. Through structural understandings of content, teachers construct lessons in a methodical way that helps students integrate cultural contexts with language use, making the material more relevant and engaging. By addressing students' different cultural backgrounds, teachers guarantee that lectures are not only meaningful but also inspire active engagement and better awareness of how culture affects language. In communicative understandings, teachers focus on interactive activities that highlight real-world language use, such as discussions and role-plays, developing dynamic communication among students. This method helps students comprehend language not just as isolated structures, but as tools for meaningful engagement across different cultural circumstances. Teachers also educate students in understanding how culture impacts communication patterns, thereby boosting their capacity to utilize language successfully in varied multicultural circumstances. Through content-based language education, teachers mix academic or real-world issues with language instruction, offering students an opportunity to engage with both language and content simultaneously. This strategy stimulates critical thinking and deeper research, allowing students to use language to obtain a greater understanding of complicated subjects. Concept-based instruction further aids this by enabling students to apply abstract concepts in real-world settings, increasing intellectual engagement alongside language growth. Finally, in content for intercultural language education, teachers educate students in understanding the connection between language and culture, enabling them to negotiate cultural differences and communicate successfully across varied cultural contexts. By stimulating reflection on cultural factors, instructors equip students to engage critically in global communication. In essence, teachers' duties in these frameworks ensure that language acquisition is both intellectually enriching and practically relevant in an interconnected society.

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## Limitations and Future Direction

This study covers teachers' duties in integrating culture and language instruction although it has significant limitations. First, theoretical frameworks like structural, communicative, and concept-based content understandings constrain classroom examples. These frameworks are helpful, but they may not address the unique issues teachers confront in diverse classrooms, such as resource restrictions, time constraints, and student skill levels. Second, the paper relies on existing literature and theoretical models rather than empirical research or case studies to demonstrate how these approaches are applied in real-world teaching contexts, particularly in non-Western countries like Indonesia, where cultural and educational structures may differ. Empirical investigations and case examples of these instructional frameworks in varied classrooms could overcome these shortcomings in future studies. There should be research that examines how teachers modify these theoretical approaches to fit the needs of students from different cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Finally, exploring professional development programs that teach teachers how to effectively integrate language and culture into their teaching practices would reveal ways to better support this crucial aspect of language instruction.

## Declarations

There are no conflicts of interest related to this paper.

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