

# "Integrating Cultural Frameworks in Language Education: Strategies and Implications"

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## ABSTRACT

The general objective of this research is to explore how cultural frameworks shape language education, emphasizing the integration of cultural content in curricula, pedagogical strategies, and its impact on learners' intercultural competence and identity formation. Utilizing a systematic review methodology aligned with PRISMA 2009 guidelines, peer-reviewed journal articles from ERIC, Taylor & Francis, and ScienceDirect databases published between 2020-2024 were analyzed. The research addresses two key problems: firstly, determining effective pedagogical strategies to integrate cultural content into language curricula to enhance learners' intercultural competence while respecting cultural sensitivities, and secondly, understanding how integrating cultural frameworks influences learners' identity formation, language proficiency, and intercultural awareness. The findings indicate that culturally responsive teaching significantly enhances student engagement, intercultural competence, and identity formation, despite challenges such as limited teacher training and potential reinforcement of stereotypes. The study concludes that integrating culturally inclusive frameworks in language education curricula is vital for developing learners' intercultural competence, necessitating continuous educator training and carefully designed culturally inclusive materials.

**Keywords:** Intercultural competence, cultural frameworks, language education, identity formation, culturally responsive pedagogy.

## INTRODUCTION

The interplay between language and culture is foundational to understanding the dynamics of language education. Culture, a multifaceted and deeply ingrained component of societal identity, shapes how individuals communicate, interpret, and internalize language. Language classrooms serve as spaces where cultural values are negotiated and transmitted. However, integrating cultural content into language education presents significant challenges, particularly in contexts where societal norms and sensitivities influence pedagogical decisions. For instance, El-Sakran and El-Sakran (2024) highlight how teachers in the United Arab Emirates often avoid culturally sensitive topics to align with societal expectations and prevent potential conflict, limiting opportunities for fostering intercultural competence. The challenges of representation extend to the materials used in language instruction. Riadini and Cahyono (2021) underscore that many language textbooks exhibit an imbalance in the portrayal of target, source, and international cultures. Such discrepancies hinder the development of students' intercultural awareness, as seen in their analysis of an Indonesian English textbook where source culture dominated over international and intercultural elements. This imbalance underscores the critical need for designing culturally inclusive materials.

Furthermore, language learning has profound implications for identity formation. Studies in international school contexts by Alasgarova, Rzayev, and Bakhadirov (2024) reveal how prolonged exposure to a second language (L2) can lead to first language (L1) attrition and shifts in cultural identity, raising concerns about preserving linguistic diversity. Similarly, Kasai and Lin (2023) illustrate how the inclusion of Southeast Asian languages in Taiwan's curriculum fosters identity negotiation and multiculturalism, reflecting the potential of language education as a tool for promoting cultural inclusion. In Canada, efforts to revitalize Indigenous

languages have gained momentum in recent years. The Heiltsuk Nation's Híłzaqv language, which faced near extinction, has seen community-driven efforts such as immersion programs and the use of social media to preserve and promote the language (The Guardian, 2025). Additionally, the Squamish Nation has developed immersion programs for adults, infants, and toddlers, complemented by online language courses, leading to an increase in the number of speakers of Skwxwú7mesh sníchim (The Guardian, 2025). These initiatives emphasize the role of innovative educational approaches in cultural and linguistic preservation.

To effectively integrate culture into language curricula, educators must undergo specialized training. Programs such as the Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) framework, which emphasizes understanding students' cultural backgrounds, can significantly enhance teaching effectiveness (Gay, 2018). Additionally, the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) model provides structured support for integrating language and cultural content (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2017). These training models help teachers develop strategies to create inclusive classrooms that respect and reflect diverse cultures. In addition, the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTBMLE) policy has been a key initiative since 2012. According to Nakamura et al. (2024), while MTBMLE aimed to strengthen students' foundational skills by using their native languages as the medium of instruction, it also posed challenges. Their study found that students exposed to MTBMLE showed diminished reading skills in Filipino and English, as well as weaker math competencies (Nakamura et al., 2024). Similarly, the Indigenous Peoples' Education (IPEd) policy has sought to incorporate indigenous knowledge systems into formal education. Miole (2024) highlighted that while the policy has shifted away from assimilationist approaches, continuous dialogue between Indigenous communities and the state remains necessary for meaningful cultural inclusion. Further, research by Tamana and Pagaddut (2024) found that while both teachers and students recognize the value of cultural integration in Social Studies curricula, teachers tend to underestimate the extent of its application compared to students, underscoring the need for enhanced teacher training and resources.

Moreover, Educators are increasingly adopting innovative pedagogies to embed culture into language learning. Inquiry-based learning encourages students to explore cultural themes through research and discussion (Freeman & Johnson, 2020). Project-based learning (PBL) enables students to collaborate on cultural projects, such as digital storytelling or ethnographic studies, to deepen their understanding of diverse traditions (Larmer, Mergendoller, & Boss, 2015). Gamification, through culturally themed language games, also enhances engagement and retention (Gee, 2013). These approaches allow students to experience culture interactively rather than passively receiving information. However, understanding the effectiveness of cultural integration requires considering student perspectives. Surveys and interviews with learners reveal that culturally inclusive curricula enhance motivation and connection to the language being learned (Cummins, 2014). In a study conducted in multicultural classrooms, students reported feeling more valued when their cultural backgrounds were represented in lessons (Nieto, 2017). Additionally, integrating student feedback into curriculum design ensures that cultural elements remain relevant and meaningful to learners.

Cultural integration in language education is a dynamic and evolving process that requires teacher preparedness, innovative pedagogical methods, and student involvement. By incorporating teacher training programs, case studies, interactive learning strategies, and student feedback, educators can create more inclusive and effective language learning environments that celebrate cultural diversity. Despite increasing awareness of these issues, there remains a gap in identifying effective strategies for integrating cultural content while addressing sensitivities in diverse educational settings. This study aims to explore how cultural frameworks shape language education, focusing on curriculum design, pedagogical practices, and learner outcomes. By addressing these gaps, it seeks to contribute to more inclusive and culturally responsive approaches in language teaching.

To explore the influence of cultural frameworks on language education, focusing on how cultural content is integrated into curricula, teaching practices, and learning outcomes, and to examine the implications for intercultural competence, identity formation, and the development of culturally responsive educational materials. The following research problem were put forward:

1. What pedagogical strategies effectively integrate cultural content in language curricula to enhance learners' intercultural competence while addressing potential cultural sensitivities?

2. How does the integration of cultural frameworks in language education influence learners' identity formation, language proficiency, and intercultural awareness?

Table I Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Full text article	Only include articles that provide access to the full text.	Exclude articles that are not available in their entirety.
Type of article	Only research article	Review article, editorial, abstract, article, commentary, introduction, reports
Publication year	2020-2024	All articles not included before the publication year of 2020
Education level	Secondary education and tertiary level	All other education level
Description	Language pragmatic competence, instructional methods, teacher perspective or cross-cultural pragmatics.	All content not related to pragmatic competence, instructional methods, teacher perspective or cross cultural pragmatics.

## METHODOLOGY

The Methods section follows the PRISMA 2009 guidelines and includes details on the protocol and registration, eligibility criteria, information sources, search strategy, study selection, data collection, and analysis procedures used in this systematic review. The systematic review was conducted in accordance with the PRISMA 2009 guidelines (Moher et al., 2009). The protocol was not registered on any public database, but the review adhered strictly to established PRISMA standards for transparency and reproducibility.

The inclusion and exclusion criteria for this review were designed to ensure the relevance, quality, and focus of the selected studies. Only peer-reviewed journal articles were included if they met the following conditions: full-text access was available; they were research articles rather than opinion pieces, editorials, or reviews; published within the timeframe of 2020–2024; and focused on topics related to the impact of culture in language learning and language education, strategies in teaching language, and integration of culture in language learning. Articles were excluded if they did not directly address impact of culture to language education or lacked access to full content. This rigorous approach helped ensure the studies were both relevant and reliable for synthesis.

### Data Sources and Search Strategy

To ensure the inclusion of high-quality and peer-reviewed literature, data were gathered from three academic databases: ERIC (eric.ed.gov), Taylor & Francis, and ScienceDirect. These databases were selected for their comprehensive coverage of educational research, particularly in language education, linguistics, and cultural studies. A systematic search was conducted using Boolean operators and a combination of key terms, including "cultural integration" AND "language education" AND "intercultural competence," as well as "culturally responsive pedagogy" OR "multicultural language teaching." Additional search strings, such as "identity formation" AND "language learning" OR "linguistic acculturation," were also employed to refine the scope of the review.

### Data Extraction and Coding Framework

To analyze the selected studies systematically, a deductive thematic coding framework was applied, aligning with the research objectives. Data extraction involved organizing key details, including author(s), publication year, study context, methodology, key findings, and conclusions. Thematic analysis was conducted by categorizing studies into four primary themes: (1) Cultural Content in Language Curricula, which explores strategies for integrating cultural elements into teaching materials and classroom practices; (2) Educator Strategies for Cultural Sensitivity, examining how teachers navigate sociocultural challenges in multilingual and multicultural classrooms; (3) Impact on Learners' Identity and Intercultural Awareness, assessing how cultural frameworks influence language proficiency, identity formation, and cross-cultural understanding; and

(4) Challenges and Limitations, identifying barriers that hinder the implementation of cultural frameworks in language education. To ensure intercoder reliability, a secondary reviewer independently coded 20% of the studies. Any discrepancies were discussed and resolved to maintain consistency and reduce potential bias in theme classification.

### **Data Synthesis**

For data synthesis, a narrative approach was employed, combining descriptive statistics—such as the distribution of studies across themes and methodologies—with qualitative thematic insights highlighting trends, gaps, and pedagogical implications. This approach allowed for an in-depth examination of patterns in cultural integration within language education.

### **Ethical Consideration**

Given that this research is a systematic review, no human participants were involved, eliminating the need for ethical approval. However, the study adhered to ethical guidelines for literature synthesis, ensuring proper citation of sources and objective representation of findings. The integration of a structured methodological approach under PRISMA 2009 enhances the transparency and rigor of this study, contributing to a well-founded analysis of cultural frameworks in language education.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Results**

#### **Enhanced Engagement and Motivation**

Cultural content in language education can enhance student engagement and motivation. A study by Tharp and Gallimore (1988) suggests that when students see their own culture represented, they feel more connected and engaged in the learning process. Moreover, integrating culture can help in contextualizing language, making lessons more relevant.

#### **Development of Intercultural Competence**

Integrating culture into language education promotes intercultural competence, a vital skill in today's globalized world. Intercultural competence refers to the ability to understand, communicate and engage effectively with people from different cultures, demonstrating awareness, understanding and adaptability. Intercultural competence can also refer to openness to different ways of thinking, especially in approaches to evaluation and the design of learning programmes, and to privileging multiple perspectives in the choice of content, reading materials and learning activities (Deardorff, 2011). Christian Puren (2021d), a French language and culture specialist, explains that intercultural competence is the result of collaboration between language and culture educators.

Byram (1997) emphasizes that understanding cultural contexts enables students to engage with different perspectives and reduces cultural prejudices. The study highlights that students who learn about cultural practices, values, and beliefs tend to develop empathy and open-mindedness. He emphasizes the importance including cultural components in language learning to foster a deeper understanding of context. Authentic materials help students see the practical application of language within a cultural framework (Kramsch, 1993). Incorporate reflective practices where learners analyze their cultural assumptions and biases. This aligns with the transformative learning theory by Mezirow (1991), which emphasizes self-reflection for personal growth and understanding. Develop assessment tasks that evaluate students' intercultural competence alongside language proficiency. Methods such as portfolios can capture students' growth in intercultural understanding (Matsumoto & Hwang, 2013).

#### **The Strategies employed by educators to navigate cultural sensitivities and societal norms**

Navigating cultural sensitivities and societal norms while promoting inclusive and effective language teaching



requires a multifaceted approach. Educators can employ several strategies to foster an inclusive environment that respects diverse backgrounds while enhancing language acquisition. Ladson-Billings (1994) highlights the importance of culturally relevant pedagogy in helping students to feel valued and understood, which can improve engagement and learning outcomes. Gay (2010) emphasizes the importance of culturally responsive teaching by stating that it enables teachers to connect with students' cultural experiences, which fosters engagement and academic achievement. Encourage students to share their cultures and experiences. This can involve projects, discussions, or presentations where students can express their cultural identities. Banks (2006) emphasizes the importance of a curriculum that reflects a multicultural perspective to help all students feel a sense of belonging and respect. Educators can develop their linguistic and cultural competence through training and professional development, which can enhance their ability to teach language effectively while respecting cultural sensitivities. Nieto (2010) advocates for teachers to build their cultural competence as a necessary skill for addressing the diverse needs of their students. Design a curriculum that reflects linguistic diversity and incorporates different dialects or languages, which can validate students' identities and linguistic backgrounds.

### **The Integration of cultural frameworks into language education**

The integration of cultural frameworks into language education has profound implications for learners in terms of identity formation, language proficiency, and intercultural awareness. Language is closely tied to identity; as learners acquire a new language, they often navigate shifts in their identity. Cultural frameworks enable learners to connect language with their own cultural backgrounds, thus fostering a more integrated personal identity. The study by Kramsch (1993) demonstrates that cultural competence aids in language proficiency as learners gain skills to navigate and interpret cultural references within the language, thereby enhancing pragmatic competence. Integrating cultural frameworks promotes intercultural awareness, enabling learners to understand and appreciate cultural differences and similarities. This understanding fosters empathy, reduces stereotypes, and prepares learners for global citizenship. Tharp and Gallimore (1988) found that culturally relevant pedagogy leads to increased student engagement and a greater awareness of cultural contexts, facilitating a richer understanding of both the language and culture. Language is also inherently tied to culture. According to Bourdieu (1991), language operates within a field of social relations and cultural practices. This perspective encourages educators to explore how cultural norms and values influence language use and learning.

### **Challenges in Implementation**

Despite the benefits, there are challenges in implementing cultural integration in language education. Teachers may lack adequate training in intercultural competence and may not be familiar with the cultural backgrounds of their students. Additionally, cultural stereotypes and biases can inadvertently be transferred during lessons, leading to misconceptions and reinforcing prejudices (Gao, 2011).

## **DISCUSSION**

The integration of culture into language education is vital for effective learning. It not only enhances language skills and fosters engagement but also helps develop students' intercultural competencies. Nevertheless, educators must approach cultural topics thoughtfully to avoid reinforcing stereotypes. Cultural awareness involves recognizing one's own cultural biases, understanding others' cultural backgrounds, and acknowledging the impact of culture on behavior and perspectives. It is fundamental in reducing stereotypes, enhancing communication, and fostering inclusivity. Language learning is not just about grammar and vocabulary; it also involves understanding the cultural contexts in which the language is used. Educators have emphasized the need for a curriculum that incorporates cultural elements, promoting cultural awareness as a way to enhance communicative competence (Byram, 1997).

Research has explored the role of intercultural communication skills in language education. These skills are necessary for effective cross-cultural interactions and can be developed through targeted instructional practices (Deardorff, 2006). The concept of culturally relevant pedagogy calls for teaching strategies that are responsive to students' cultural backgrounds, enhancing engagement and motivation in language learning (Ladson-

Billings, 1994). This includes integrating cultural references and practices into language instruction.

### **Practical Implication of the study**

The findings of this study offer significant practical implications for educators, curriculum designers, and policymakers involved in language education. First, integrating cultural content into language curricula can greatly enhance students' intercultural competence, engagement, and motivation (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988; Byram, 1997). Practically, this suggests that educators should prioritize culturally inclusive curricula and ensure the representation of diverse cultures, including source, target, and international cultures, to foster a balanced intercultural understanding among learners (Riadini & Cahyono, 2021).

Additionally, educators must adopt culturally responsive pedagogies that respect and navigate cultural sensitivities within diverse classroom contexts. Culturally responsive teaching, as advocated by Gay (2010) and Ladson-Billings (1994), provides educators with strategies to validate and incorporate students' cultural identities, leading to improved learner outcomes. For effective implementation, teachers should receive continuous professional development to enhance their intercultural awareness and teaching practices, addressing the potential barriers arising from inadequate training (Nieto, 2010). Furthermore, creating reflective activities and assessments focused on intercultural competence can help students critically engage with their own cultural assumptions and biases, promoting deeper understanding and empathy (Matsumoto & Hwang, 2013; Mezirow, 1991).

Furthermore, policymakers and educational institutions must recognize the importance of embedding cultural inclusivity in educational resources and materials. Textbooks and supplementary materials should be systematically reviewed and adapted to represent diverse cultural perspectives accurately, addressing current imbalances identified by Riadini and Cahyono (2021). Lastly, the integration of cultural frameworks can positively affect students' identity formation and language proficiency, as learners navigate linguistic and cultural shifts more effectively when they see their backgrounds represented and valued within educational contexts (Kramsch, 1993; Kasai & Lin, 2023). Thus, the practical recommendation involves promoting policy changes that support multilingualism, multicultural awareness, and inclusive curriculum design to ensure that language education adequately prepares students for a culturally diverse global environment.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Research in culture and language education underscores the critical role that cultural understanding plays in effective language learning. By integrating cultural awareness into language curricula, educators can better equip students with the skills necessary for intercultural communication in an increasingly globalized world. Ongoing research and practice in this domain will continue to evolve, shaping the future of language education

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

The heading of the Acknowledgment section and the References section must not be numbered.

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