

CROSS-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING: A COMPARATIVE CASE STUDY OF JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOLS IN INDONESIA AND THE PHILIPPINES

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ABSTRACT: English Language Teaching (ELT) in Southeast Asia is situated at the intersection of global communication demands, curriculum reform, and culturally embedded pedagogical practices. Differences in language status and educational environments shape how communicative curricula are enacted. This study examines how cultural orientations influence ELT implementation in two junior high schools: SMPN 1 Lamongan in Indonesia and SLSU Laboratory Junior High School in Tomas Oppus, Philippines. Using a qualitative comparative case study design, data were collected through document analysis, semi-structured interviews with four English teachers, and classroom observations involving 70 students. Thematic analysis was conducted using Hofstede's cultural dimensions, Byram's intercultural communicative competence framework, and Tyler's curriculum alignment model. Findings indicate that the interaction of language exposure, participation norms, and pedagogical structures shapes communicative practices. In the Indonesian classroom, communicative activities are implemented through teacher-guided scaffolding and collaborative tasks, reflecting hierarchical interaction patterns and limited English exposure. In contrast, the Philippine classroom demonstrates more sustained communicative interaction supported by extensive use of English and facilitative teaching practices. This study provides a context-sensitive account of how cultural orientations mediate communicative ELT practices and highlights the relationship between macro-cultural values and classroom-level pedagogy in Southeast Asia.

Keywords: English Language Teaching; Cross-Cultural Perspectives; Curriculum Comparison; Indonesia; Philippines

INTRODUCTION

English Language Teaching (ELT) in Southeast Asia develops at the intersection of global communication demands, national education policies, and local cultural contexts. As English functions as a global lingua franca, educational systems must balance communicative competence with the preservation of national identity and cultural values (Irmayani et al., 2025). Indonesia and the Philippines represent distinct ELT environments shaped by different sociolinguistic histories, where English operates as a foreign language in Indonesia and as a second and official language in the Philippines (Kirkpatrick, 2020). These differences shape how English curricula are conceptualized, and implemented across both countries (Tupas & Sercombe, 2014).

Beyond instructional techniques, ELT practices are embedded in broader ideological and cultural orientations that shape classroom authority, learner participation, and educational expectations. Cultural values influence how teachers and students perceive communication, power relations, and learning goals (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2023). Contemporary ELT scholarship emphasizes the importance of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC), advocating language learning as both linguistic development and intercultural socialization (Hoff, 2020). Viewing ELT through a cross-cultural lens enables a deeper understanding of how educational systems negotiate cultural identities in multilingual and postcolonial contexts such as Indonesia and the Philippines (Bernardo, 2022).

Comparative ELT studies in Southeast Asia increasingly examine curriculum policy, pedagogy, and cultural representation. Rahmawati et al. (2021) found that while Indonesia and the Philippines share similar learning objectives, they differ in instructional materials, technology integration, and classroom practices, highlighting the role of contextual factors in

curriculum implementation. At the policy level, Asyifa et al. (2025) reported that Indonesia's 2013 Curriculum prioritizes character education and moral values, whereas the Philippine K–12 Curriculum emphasizes pragmatic language use and workforce readiness, although both systems have shifted toward communicative language teaching. Complementing this policy analysis, Muhsinin et al. (2025) demonstrated that Indonesian ELT textbooks foreground national identity and moral values, while Philippine materials adopt a more balanced integration of local, global, and intercultural perspectives, aligning with Byram's (1997) ICC framework.

At a broader regional level, Catahan et al., (2025) emphasized the importance of cross-cultural collaboration in curriculum development across ASEAN countries, noting a shift in ELT research from policy-oriented analyses toward culturally responsive and context-sensitive approaches. Collectively, these studies suggest that culture plays a decisive role in shaping ELT curricula and practices across Southeast Asia. Despite the growing body of comparative ELT research in Southeast Asia, a significant analytical gap remains. Existing studies predominantly examine curriculum policy, textbook representation, and structural reform, yet rarely provide empirical application of macro-cultural dimensions within classroom-level interaction. In particular, there is limited integration of Hofstede's (1986) macro-cultural constructs with Byram's (1997) framework for analyzing how cultural orientations are enacted in real pedagogical practice. This missing link between macro-cultural theory and micro-classroom implementation constrains a deeper understanding of how communicative sociocultural conditions in ASEAN ELT contexts mediate curriculum goals.

These gaps indicate the need for a more context-sensitive comparative investigation that explores how cultural orientations such as collectivism, authority relations, and social hierarchy manifest in ELT curriculum design and classroom practice (Nuha, 2025). Such an approach is particularly relevant in Indonesia, where ongoing curriculum reforms aim to balance language proficiency, character education, and national identity amid challenges in intercultural integration and teacher professional development (Rahmawati et al., 2021). In contrast, the Philippines' bilingual education policy supports sustained English exposure across subjects, fostering communicative competence, critical thinking, and learner confidence (Valenzona et al., 2026).

This study examines how cross-cultural values influence the design and classroom-level implementation of ELT curricula in two junior high school contexts in Indonesia and the Philippines. It compares curriculum structure, pedagogical practices, and underlying cultural orientations, while exploring how these are reflected in classroom interaction. By integrating cross-cultural and curriculum theories within a comparative framework, the study contributes to a more context-sensitive understanding of ELT in Southeast Asia, with implications for curriculum development, teacher education, and policy.

This study is designed as an institutional-level comparative case study rather than a nationally representative analysis. The findings, therefore, reflect context-bound interpretations derived from two selected schools and should not be generalized to the entire Indonesian or Philippine ELT systems.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Macro-Cultural Orientations and ELT Classroom Practice: Hofstede's Framework

English Language Teaching (ELT) is embedded within broader sociocultural systems that shape classroom interaction, authority structures, and communicative expectations. From a macro-cultural perspective, Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions theory provides a useful analytical lens for understanding how societal values influence educational practices. Dimensions such as power distance, individualism–collectivism, and uncertainty avoidance

help explain variations in teacher–student relationships, patterns of participation, and tolerance for communicative risk-taking across different contexts (Żemojtel-Piotrowska, 2010).

In educational environments characterized by higher power distance, hierarchical relations between teachers and students tend to be more pronounced, often resulting in structured interaction and cautious learner participation. Conversely, lower power distance contexts may encourage dialogic engagement and more symmetrical classroom discourse. Similarly, collectivist orientations may promote group collaboration while simultaneously regulating individual expression in public settings. These cultural orientations shape not only pedagogical style but also the extent to which communicative language teaching can be enacted authentically. Thus, Hofstede's framework serves as a macro-analytic foundation for interpreting how communicative pedagogy is culturally mediated within specific institutional settings.

Intercultural Communicative Competence in Classroom Enactment: Byram's Model

While Hofstede's model explains the macro-cultural environment in which ELT operates, Byram's Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) framework offers a micro-level perspective on how culture is pedagogically enacted in language classrooms. Byram conceptualizes ICC as comprising attitudes (curiosity and openness), knowledge (cultural understanding), skills (interpreting and relating), and critical cultural awareness. Within this framework, language learning extends beyond linguistic proficiency toward the development of intercultural agency and reflective engagement (Hoff, 2020).

In classroom practice, ICC is not merely embedded in curriculum documents but realized through interactional patterns, discussion formats, cultural comparison tasks, and opportunities for learner voice. The enactment of ICC, therefore, depends on how teachers facilitate dialogue, negotiate cultural meaning, and encourage students to express perspectives across cultural boundaries. Importantly, the development of ICC is socially constructed within culturally regulated classroom norms. Thus, differences in communicative openness, participation structures, and language exposure may significantly affect how intercultural competence is operationalized in practice.

By integrating Byram's framework with macro-cultural analysis, ELT research can move beyond abstract curriculum goals to examine how intercultural objectives are either enabled or constrained within particular classroom ecologies.

Curriculum Alignment and Comparative Perspective: Tyler, Bray, and Thomas

To analyze how cultural orientations intersect with curriculum implementation, Tyler's curriculum model provides a structural lens for examining alignment between intended objectives, learning experiences, instructional organization, and evaluation (Tyler, 1949). Tyler emphasizes that curriculum effectiveness depends on coherence among these components. In the context of communicative ELT, this alignment becomes particularly relevant when intended communicative goals are moderated by classroom norms, institutional expectations, or sociocultural constraints. Thus, Tyler's framework supports the analysis of potential gaps between curriculum design and enacted pedagogy.

Complementing this structural perspective, Bray and Thomas's comparative framework situates curriculum analysis within multilevel educational contexts, ranging from national systems to institutional and classroom levels (Bray, 1995). Rather than treating curriculum documents as isolated policy artifacts, this framework encourages examination of how educational practices are shaped by socio-cultural and institutional environments. Applied to ELT, it provides methodological justification for institutional-level comparative case analysis, allowing culturally situated interpretation without resorting to national generalization.

Together, Hofstede's macro-cultural orientation, Byram's intercultural classroom framework, Tyler's curriculum alignment theory, and Bray and Thomas's comparative approach establish an integrated analytical foundation. This layered framework enables

examination of how cultural values mediate communicative pedagogy, how intercultural competence is enacted in classroom interaction, and how curriculum objectives align or fail to align with sociocultural classroom realities.

RESEARCH METHODS

Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative comparative case study design focusing on two institutional settings. Rather than aiming for national representativeness, the research explores how ELT curricula are enacted within context-specific environments (Park, 2025). The comparative dimension is informed by Bray and Thomas's multilevel framework, with analysis situated at the institutional and classroom levels.

Contextual Profile of Research Setting

This study was conducted in two junior high school institutions located in Indonesia and the Philippines, representing distinct sociolinguistic environments of English language teaching in Southeast Asia. The selected sites were SMPN 1 Lamongan in East Java, Indonesia, and SLSU Laboratory Junior High School in Tomas Oppus, Southern Leyte, Philippines. Both institutions were purposively selected to provide contrasting yet comparable educational contexts in which English language curricula are implemented at the lower secondary level. The selection was guided by the intention to explore how cultural orientations and language environments influence curriculum enactment within bounded institutional settings rather than to produce nationally representative findings.

SMPN 1 Lamongan is a public junior high school located in Lamongan Regency, East Java, Indonesia, serving students from predominantly middle socio-economic backgrounds within a semi-urban community. The school currently implements the Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasizes communicative competence, learner autonomy, and character education aligned with the Pancasila Student Profile. Within the Indonesian educational context, English functions primarily as a foreign language, and its use is largely restricted to formal instructional settings. Consequently, opportunities for authentic English interaction outside the classroom remain relatively limited. Previous research has noted that learners in many Indonesian EFL environments often experience restricted exposure to English in daily communication, which may influence their confidence and willingness to participate in classroom interaction (Parmadi et al., 2025). Such conditions make Indonesian classrooms particularly relevant for examining how communicative curriculum goals are negotiated within sociocultural contexts characterized by hierarchical classroom norms and limited linguistic exposure.

In contrast, SLSU Laboratory Junior High School in Tomas Oppus operates within a different linguistic ecology. As a laboratory school affiliated with Southern Leyte State University, the institution functions both as a regular secondary education provider and as a practicum site for teacher education programs. The school implements the national Philippine K–12 Curriculum, which places strong emphasis on communicative competence, critical thinking, and global readiness. Unlike Indonesia, the Philippines recognizes English as an official and widely used second language, and it is commonly employed as a medium of instruction across several academic subjects. As a result, students are generally exposed to English not only during language classes but also in broader academic and social interactions within the school environment. Studies of English education in the Philippines indicate that sustained exposure to English in academic contexts contributes to learners' communicative confidence and participation in classroom discourse (Sitoy et al., 2024).

The contrast between these two institutions, therefore, reflects broader differences in language status, exposure, and pedagogical ecology across Southeast Asian ELT contexts. While Indonesian classrooms often operate within an English-as-a-foreign-language environment where exposure remains largely instructional, Philippine classrooms tend to function within an English-as-a-second-language context characterized by more frequent communicative use. This contrast provides an analytically meaningful basis for exploring how cultural values, curriculum frameworks, and language environments interact in shaping English language teaching practices at the institutional level. By focusing on these two bounded educational settings, the study aims to generate context-sensitive insights into cross-cultural curriculum implementation while avoiding claims of national representativeness.

Table 1. Contextual Characteristics of Research Sites

Aspect	SMPN 1 Lamongan	SLSU Laboratory Junior High School
Country	Indonesia	Philippines
School type	Public Junior High School	Laboratory Junior High School
Location	Semi-urban	Municipal
Curriculum	Merdeka Curriculum	K–12 Curriculum
English status	Foreign Language	Second Language
Language exposure	Limited outside the classroom	Extensive

Research Site and Participants

The study was conducted in two institutional settings: a public junior high school in Lamongan, Indonesia (SMPN 1 Lamongan), which implements the Merdeka Curriculum, and a public laboratory junior high school in Tomas Oppus, Southern Leyte, Philippines (SLSU Laboratory Junior High School), which follows the national K–12 Curriculum Guide. These sites were purposively selected to allow an in-depth institutional comparison of curriculum enactment within two distinct educational environments. The selection does not aim to represent national systems as a whole; rather, it provides context-bound insight into how current curriculum reforms are interpreted and implemented within specific school settings shaped by differing sociocultural and linguistic conditions.

Table 2. Summary of Interviewed Informants and Observed Classes

Country	Institution	English Teachers Interviewed	Classes Observed	Students Observed
Indonesia	SMPN 1 Lamongan	2 teachers	1 class (Grade VIII)	35 Students
Philippines	SLSU Laboratory Junior High School Tomas Oppus	2 teachers	1 class (Grade 8)	35 Students
Total		4 teachers	2 classes	70 students

Table 3. Research Participants and Selection Criteria

Participant Code	Position	Gender	Minimum Teaching Experience (≥5 Years)	Professional Certification	Institutional Context
T1-ID	English Teacher	Female	Yes	Certified	Indonesian Public Junior High School
T2-ID	English Teacher	Male	Yes	Certified	Indonesian Public Junior High School
T1-PH	English Teacher	Female	Yes	Certified	Philippine Laboratory Junior High School
T2-PH	English Teacher	Male	Yes	Certified	Philippine Laboratory Junior High School
Total		4 teachers	2 classes		

Table 4. Participant Selection Criteria and Rationale

Participant Category	Inclusion Criteria	Rationale
English Teachers	Currently teaching English at the selected institution	To ensure direct engagement with curriculum implementation
	Minimum of five years teaching experience	To capture pedagogical stability and sustained exposure to curriculum reform
	Possession of a professional teaching certification	To ensure institutional qualification standards
	Gender representation (one male, one female per site)	To minimize gender bias in pedagogical perspectives
Students	Enrolled in the selected Grade VIII classroom	To observe naturally occurring instructional interaction
Institutional Site	Actively implementing the current national curriculum reform	To examine curriculum enactment within updated policy frameworks

Participants were selected through purposive sampling to ensure depth and contextual relevance within each institutional setting (Ishtiaq, 2019). The inclusion criteria were designed to capture experienced educators directly involved in curriculum enactment, thereby strengthening the study’s analytical credibility. Gender representation was intentionally considered to avoid a single-perspective interpretation of pedagogical practice. Rather than aiming for statistical representativeness, participant selection prioritized theoretical relevance and contextual depth consistent with a qualitative comparative case study design.

This criterion was applied to capture diverse pedagogical perspectives and minimize gender bias in instructional viewpoints. Classroom observations involved one junior high school class in each country, with all students in the selected classes included as observation participants to capture authentic classroom interactions and learning dynamics. All participants were informed of the purpose of the study and provided informed consent prior to participation. Ethical principles, including confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation, were strictly maintained throughout the research process.

One Grade VIII class was purposively selected in each institution to allow sustained and repeated observation of classroom interaction. The selected classes were considered pedagogically typical within their respective institutional contexts. This bounded selection enabled in-depth analysis of curriculum enactment without extending claims beyond the observed institutional environments.

Table 5. Duration and Frequency of Classroom Observations

Country	Institution	Classes Observed	Observation Period	Number of Lessons Observed	Estimated Duration per Lesson
Indonesia	SMPN 1 Lamongan	1 class	2–3 weeks	3–4 lessons per class	80–90 minutes
Philippines	SLSU Laboratory Junior High School Tomas Oppus	1 class	2–3 weeks	3–4 lessons per class	80–90 minutes
Total		2 classes		12–16 lessons	

Data Collection

Data were collected through document analysis, semi-structured interviews, and classroom observations to enable triangulation, which enhances credibility and analytical depth (Sutarsih et al., 2025). This approach supports an in-depth understanding of culturally mediated communicative practices that cannot be captured through quantitative measures alone (Harida, 2025). The primary data source in this study was curriculum-related documents, including: The

Indonesian *Merdeka* Curriculum for the English curriculum framework, The Philippine K–12 Curriculum Guide for English, Lesson plans prepared by participating teachers, and Teaching materials such as textbooks, worksheets, presentation slides, and digital resources used during classroom instruction.

Document analysis enables researchers to systematically examine written and digital records in order to interpret educational policies, instructional design, and pedagogical orientation embedded within institutional practices (Bowen, 2009). The document analysis focused on identifying curriculum objectives and competency standards, communicative learning activities and instructional design, integration of cultural and intercultural content, and alignment between curriculum goals and classroom materials.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with four English teachers to gain deeper insights into curriculum interpretation and classroom implementation. An interview protocol consisting of open-ended questions was developed to explore three thematic areas: curriculum goals and instructional orientation, implementation of lesson plans and classroom strategies and integration of intercultural perspectives in ELT. The interview guide was reviewed by two scholars in English language education to ensure content validity and clarity of the questions before the data collection process.

Classroom observations were conducted in two junior high school classes (one class in each institution). A structured observation checklist was used as the observation instrument to record: teacher–student interaction patterns, language use during instruction, communicative activities and classroom participation, and the use of instructional materials and digital media. The observations were conducted over two to three weeks, covering 12–16 lessons, with each lesson lasting approximately 80–90 minutes. In total, approximately 35 students in Indonesia and 35 students in the Philippines were involved in the observed classes. To ensure instrument reliability, the observation checklist was piloted in one preliminary classroom session prior to the formal observation period, allowing refinement of indicators and ensuring consistent interpretation during data recording.

Data Analysis

Data analysis followed a qualitative thematic analysis integrating document analysis and classroom data. The primary analytical focus was placed on curriculum documents, lesson plans, and teaching materials, while interview and classroom observation data were used to contextualize how these curricular elements were implemented in practice (Kushnir, 2025).

Thematic analysis is widely applied in educational research to identify patterns of meaning within qualitative data and to interpret how pedagogical processes operate within specific educational contexts (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Through this approach, the study examined how curriculum frameworks were translated into instructional practices in the two observed school settings.

To ensure systematic analysis of curriculum-related documents, an analytical framework was developed by integrating three theoretical perspectives: Hofstede’s cultural dimensions, Byram’s intercultural communicative competence (ICC), and Tyler’s curriculum alignment model. This framework guided the examination of curriculum documents, lesson plans, and teaching materials in order to identify how cultural orientations, communicative pedagogy, and intercultural learning were reflected in classroom practices.

Table 6. Analytical Framework for Curriculum and Instructional Document Analysis

Theoretical Lens	Analytical Dimension	Indicators	Data Source
Hofstede – Cultural Dimensions	Cultural orientation in classroom interaction	power distance, collectivism–individualism, student participation patterns	lesson plans, classroom observation

Byram – Intercultural Communicative Competence	Language exposure and classroom authority	teacher dominance, student autonomy, language used in instruction	lesson plans, observation
	Cultural knowledge	representation of local, regional, and global culture	teaching materials
	Intercultural skills	cultural comparison activities, discussion tasks	lesson plans
	Intercultural attitudes	openness toward cultural diversity in learning activities	lesson plans, teaching materials
Tyler – Curriculum Alignment Model	Curriculum objectives	communicative competence goals, learning outcomes	curriculum documents
	Instructional experiences	communicative tasks, speaking activities	lesson plans
	Instructional materials	integration of authentic language use and cultural content	teaching materials
	Curriculum alignment	coherence between objectives, activities, and materials	curriculum documents & lesson plans

Based on this analytical framework, the analysis was conducted in three stages: curriculum document analysis, lesson plan analysis, and teaching material analysis. Each stage examined how curriculum objectives were translated into instructional activities and learning resources within the observed classroom contexts.

Curriculum Document Analysis

First, curriculum documents from both countries were systematically examined to identify the orientation of English language education, including: learning objectives and competency standards, communicative learning principles, and integration of cultural and intercultural content. Particular attention was given to how communicative competence and intercultural awareness were articulated within the Indonesian Merdeka Curriculum and the Philippine K–12 English Curriculum Guide.

Lesson Plan Analysis

Second, teacher lesson plans were analyzed to examine how curriculum objectives were translated into classroom instruction. The analysis focused on: the structure of learning activities, communicative tasks and speaking opportunities, interaction patterns designed in classroom instruction, and integration of cultural themes within learning activities. This stage enabled the study to evaluate the degree of alignment between curriculum objectives and classroom teaching practices.

Teaching Material Analysis

Third, teaching materials used during instruction were analyzed to examine the representation of cultural and intercultural perspectives. The analysis focused on: the balance between local, regional, and global cultural representation, the inclusion of intercultural learning tasks, and the use of authentic communication contexts in instructional materials. Intercultural elements in teaching materials were interpreted using Byram’s intercultural communicative competence (ICC) framework, which emphasizes knowledge, attitudes, and skills required for effective intercultural communication in language education (Hoff, 2020).

Coding Procedure

To synthesize the findings, interview transcripts and observation notes were analyzed using three stages of qualitative coding; open coding (initial codes were generated from interview transcripts and observation notes to identify meaningful units related to classroom

interaction, curriculum implementation, and language exposure), axial coding (related codes were grouped into broader analytical categories such as participation patterns, communicative pedagogy, and intercultural learning practices), and thematic coding (the categories were then synthesized into overarching themes that addressed the research questions and guided the cross-case comparison between the two institutional contexts). Open and axial coding procedures are commonly applied in qualitative educational research to systematically organize raw qualitative data into meaningful analytical categories (Mohajan & Mohajan, 2022).

Table 7. Example of the Coding Process

Raw Data Excerpt	Open Code	Axial Category	Theme
Students hesitate to speak individually	speaking hesitation	participation constraint	Cultural mediation of communicative pedagogy
English is used most of the time in class	high English exposure	language environment	ICC enactment differences

The coding process produced 47 initial codes, which were condensed into 12 axial categories and subsequently synthesized into three analytical themes guiding the comparative interpretation. The interpretation of the themes was guided by three theoretical perspectives: Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions, to analyze macro-cultural orientations shaping classroom interaction; Byram's Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC), to examine intercultural learning practices in ELT, and Tyler's Curriculum Model, to evaluate alignment between curriculum objectives, instructional activities, and classroom implementation.

Trustworthiness and Research Rigor

This study adopted several strategies to ensure the trustworthiness of qualitative findings (; Younas, 2025). Credibility was enhanced through data triangulation across three sources: curriculum documents, classroom observations, and semi-structured interviews. Convergence of evidence across these sources enabled cross-verification of emerging themes. In addition, prolonged engagement in each research site (two to three weeks of classroom observation) allowed the researcher to develop contextual familiarity with classroom interaction patterns. To support dependability, a systematic coding procedure was applied, progressing from open coding to axial and thematic coding. Coding decisions were documented throughout the analysis process to ensure transparency. Although the study was conducted by a single researcher, coding consistency was maintained through iterative comparison of data segments and categories. Confirmability was addressed by grounding interpretations in empirical data, including direct excerpts from classroom interaction and teacher interviews. Analytical claims were derived from observable patterns rather than preconceived assumptions. Reflexivity was also considered, with the researcher acknowledging their position as an external observer in both institutional contexts, which may influence interpretation of classroom practices.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

This section presents the empirical findings derived from classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with English teachers, and document analysis conducted at SMPN 1 Lamongan and SLSU Laboratory Junior High School in Tomas Oppus. To avoid national generalization, the findings are presented through two institutional cases that illustrate how English language teaching curricula are enacted within specific school contexts. The results highlight patterns related to classroom interaction, language exposure, pedagogical practices, and cultural representation in instructional materials.

ELT Classroom Practices at SMPN 1 Lamongan

The findings from classroom observations and teacher interviews conducted at SMPN 1 Lamongan reveal that the implementation of English language teaching reflects the interaction between communicative curriculum objectives and culturally mediated classroom interaction patterns.

Observation data indicate that English was used in approximately 20–40% of classroom interaction, while Bahasa Indonesia was frequently employed to clarify instructions, explain vocabulary, and support comprehension during learning activities. Teachers explained that this distribution of language use was necessary because students’ exposure to English outside the classroom remained limited. One teacher explained that: “English is used mainly for practice, but Indonesian is still needed to explain instructions and concepts clearly so that students understand the lesson”.

This pattern of language use influenced classroom participation. Students were more active in collaborative tasks than in individual speaking activities, suggesting that group interaction provides a more supportive environment for participation. Teachers reported that many students felt hesitant to speak independently in English due to concerns about making mistakes, fear of peer judgment, and lack of confidence in their language ability. As one teacher noted: “Students are usually more confident when working in groups, but they hesitate to speak individually due to fear of making mistakes and limited confidence.”

Classroom observations further indicate that instructional interaction remained largely teacher-guided, although elements of student-centered learning were gradually introduced through communicative activities such as role plays, group discussions, and collaborative problem-solving tasks. Teachers often provided scaffolding by modeling language use, guiding discussion, and encouraging students to participate in structured speaking activities.

Instructional materials used in the classroom consisted of government-issued textbooks aligned with the Merdeka Curriculum, teacher-modified worksheets, presentation slides, and multimedia resources such as short videos. Cultural content embedded in these materials strongly emphasized Indonesian cultural contexts, including local traditions, everyday social situations, and moral values aligned with the Pancasila Student Profile. This emphasis on local cultural representation reflects broader curriculum priorities that integrate character education and contextual learning within English instruction.

Table 8. Cultural Influences on ELT Classroom Practices at SMPN 1 Lamongan

Aspect	Findings
Student participation	More active in collaborative activities such as group discussions
Cultural norms influencing participation	Respect for authority and concern about peer evaluation
Teacher–student interaction	Teacher-guided interaction with gradual encouragement of autonomy
Dominant cultural values observed	Collectivism, harmony, hierarchical classroom relations
Language use in the classroom	20–40% English, Indonesian is frequently used for clarification

Overall, the findings suggest that communicative ELT practices at SMPN 1 Lamongan operate within a classroom ecology shaped by limited English exposure, culturally mediated participation norms, and structured teacher guidance.

ELT Classroom Practices at SLSU Laboratory Junior High School

Findings from classroom observations and interviews conducted at SLSU Laboratory Junior High School in Tomas Oppus reveal a classroom environment characterized by extensive English exposure and highly interactive communicative practices.

Observation data indicate that English was used in approximately 85–95% of classroom interaction, with the local language employed only occasionally to clarify complex instructions. Teachers explained that English functions as the primary medium of instruction in many

subjects within the school, which naturally encourages students to use English in classroom communication. One teacher explained: “English is the main language of instruction, and students are encouraged to speak even if their English is not perfect because mistakes are part of learning.”

This learning environment appears to support students’ communicative confidence. Students actively participated in both individual speaking tasks and collaborative activities, including class discussions, presentations, and group problem-solving tasks. Classroom interaction patterns reflected a student-centered pedagogical approach, where teachers primarily acted as facilitators who guided discussion and encouraged learners to express ideas and opinions.

Instructional materials used in the classroom included teacher-developed resources, digital learning materials, presentation slides, and online learning platforms. Cultural content integrated into classroom instruction represented Filipino cultural narratives, regional Southeast Asian perspectives, and global cultural themes. Cultural topics were often explored through discussion-based activities that encouraged students to compare cultural experiences and perspectives.

Table 9. Cultural Influences on ELT Classroom Practices at SLSU Laboratory Junior High School

Aspect	Findings
Student participation	Active participation in both individual and group communication
Cultural norms influencing participation	Respect for authority combined with communicative openness
Teacher–student interaction	Student-centered interaction with facilitative teaching
Dominant cultural values observed	Collaborative interaction and open communication
Language use in the classroom	85–95% English, minimal use of mother tongue

These patterns suggest that the classroom environment at SLSU Laboratory Junior High School provides sustained opportunities for communicative language use and student participation.

Cross-Institutional Comparison of ELT Practices

The comparison between the two institutional contexts reveals several notable differences in the enactment of English language teaching practices.

First, the level of English language exposure differs substantially between the two classrooms. English interaction remains relatively limited in SMPN 1 Lamongan, while English serves as the dominant medium of classroom communication in SLSU Laboratory Junior High School.

Second, differences appear in classroom participation patterns. Students in SMPN 1 Lamongan demonstrate stronger participation during collaborative tasks, while participation in individual speaking activities remains relatively limited. In contrast, students at SLSU Laboratory Junior High School actively participate in both individual and group communication activities.

Third, pedagogical interaction structures also differ between the two institutions. Teaching practices at SMPN 1 Lamongan remain primarily teacher-guided, whereas the classroom observed at SLSU Laboratory Junior High School demonstrates a more consistently student-centered instructional approach.

Table 10: Cross-Institutional Comparison of ELT Classroom Practices

Dimension	SMPN 1 Lamongan	SLSU Laboratory Junior High School
Language exposure	Limited English exposure (20-40% English)	Extensive English exposure (85-95% English)
Participation pattern	Strong group interaction, limited individual interaction	Both individual and group active speaking interaction
Pedagogical orientation	Teacher-guided communicative learning	Student-centered communicative learning

Student autonomy	Gradually developing	Strongly established
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These differences illustrate how institutional environments and language exposure shape the enactment of communicative ELT practices within specific classroom contexts.

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that communicative language teaching is shaped by the interaction of cultural orientations, language exposure, and classroom practices. Differences between the two institutions highlight how participation norms and instructional structures mediate the enactment of communicative pedagogy.

Cultural Mediation of Communicative Pedagogy

The classroom interaction patterns observed at SMPN 1 Lamongan demonstrate how communicative pedagogy is mediated by cultural expectations embedded within classroom relationships and participation norms. Students in the observed classroom showed stronger engagement during collaborative tasks than in individual speaking activities. This pattern suggests that group interaction provides a socially supportive environment where learners feel more comfortable expressing ideas in English. These findings are consistent with studies suggesting that sustained exposure to English within academic environments contributes to higher levels of communicative participation among learners (Sitoy et al., 2024).

From Hofstede's cultural dimensions perspective, such participation patterns can be interpreted through the interaction of collectivist orientation and relatively higher power distance, where classroom interaction tends to be structured and teacher-guided (Žemojtel-Piotrowska, 2010). In such contexts, learners often prioritize maintaining social harmony and avoiding situations that may lead to embarrassment or public error. As a result, students may demonstrate caution when participating in spontaneous individual speaking tasks.

The teacher-guided instructional structure observed in SMPN 1 Lamongan also reflects this cultural orientation. Teachers frequently scaffold communicative activities by modeling language use, structuring interaction patterns, and gradually encouraging student participation. Rather than representing a lack of communicative pedagogy, this pattern illustrates how communicative teaching strategies are adapted to culturally mediated classroom norms.

In contrast, the classroom observed at SLSU Laboratory Junior High School demonstrates a communicative environment where collaborative interaction coexists with more open individual participation. Students in this classroom appeared comfortable expressing opinions, responding to questions, and engaging in spontaneous discussion. Although respect for teachers remained evident, classroom discourse allowed for greater learner voice and communicative risk-taking.

A key factor contributing to this interaction pattern is the high level of English exposure within the institutional environment. English functions not only as the medium of instruction in language classes but also as a common language used across various academic subjects. This environment creates opportunities for students to practice English regularly, which contributes to their confidence in using the language for communication.

From a macro-cultural perspective, these interaction patterns can be cautiously interpreted through collectivist orientations, where maintaining group harmony and avoiding public error are socially valued. However, rather than attributing behavior directly to cultural dimensions, the findings suggest that these orientations are mediated through classroom practices such as peer evaluation, teacher feedback style, and task design. Thus, cultural influence should be understood as contextually enacted rather than deterministically imposed, aligning with critiques that caution against essentializing Hofstede's dimensions in educational settings.

These findings reinforce the argument that communicative language teaching cannot be fully understood without considering the cultural context in which classroom interaction occurs. Cultural orientations influence not only classroom authority structures but also students' willingness to communicate and the pedagogical strategies used by teachers to facilitate participation.

Intercultural Communicative Competence in Classroom Practice

The findings also reveal differences in how intercultural communicative competence (ICC) is enacted in the two observed classrooms. While both institutions incorporate cultural elements into English instruction, the pedagogical approach through which cultural learning is facilitated differs.

In the classroom observed at SMPN 1 Lamongan, cultural content is often introduced through teacher-guided explanations and structured learning activities that emphasize local cultural contexts. Instructional materials frequently incorporate Indonesian traditions, social values, and everyday life situations, allowing students to connect language learning with familiar cultural experiences. Such practices emphasize the development of intercultural knowledge, which is one of the key dimensions of Byram's intercultural communicative competence framework (Hoff, 2020).

However, intercultural learning in this classroom tends to be mediated through teacher explanation rather than extended classroom dialogue. Cultural comparison activities are usually structured and guided, enabling students to reflect on differences between local and global cultural contexts while maintaining a supportive classroom environment. Previous studies have also highlighted that Indonesian ELT materials frequently foreground national identity and moral values in language learning activities (Muhsinin et al., 2025).

In contrast, classroom practices at SLSU Laboratory Junior High School demonstrate a more dialogic approach to intercultural learning. Cultural themes are frequently explored through discussion-based activities, collaborative tasks, and student presentations. These activities encourage students to exchange perspectives and interpret cultural meaning through interaction.

Such interactional practices align closely with Byram's conceptualization of intercultural communicative competence, which emphasizes not only cultural knowledge but also intercultural attitudes, interpretative skills, and communicative engagement (Hoff, 2020). By allowing students to actively participate in cultural discussions, the classroom environment supports the development of intercultural awareness and communicative agency.

The contrast between the two classrooms suggests that language exposure alone does not fully account for differences in communicative participation. Rather, exposure interacts with pedagogical norms and classroom expectations. In the Philippine context, sustained English use is accompanied by facilitative teaching practices that normalize error and encourage learner voice. In the Indonesian classroom, limited exposure is further shaped by interactional norms that prioritize accuracy and social harmony, resulting in more cautious participation.

Curriculum Alignment and Classroom Implementation

The findings also provide insights into the relationship between curriculum design and classroom implementation within the two institutional contexts. Both SMPN 1 Lamongan and SLSU Laboratory Junior High School implement curricula that formally emphasize communicative competence and student-centered learning.

However, the enactment of these curriculum objectives differs depending on the classroom environment and instructional practices. In the classroom observed at SMPN 1 Lamongan, communicative activities are implemented through a gradual and scaffolded

approach. Teachers frequently structure interaction patterns, guide classroom discussion, and encourage students to participate in collaborative tasks before engaging in more independent communication. Similar findings have been reported in previous studies showing that teachers often adapt communicative teaching strategies gradually in response to contextual classroom constraints and curriculum implementation challenges (Ni & Shoimah, 2024).

This pedagogical strategy reflects an adaptive approach to communicative language teaching in a context where students' English exposure remains limited and classroom participation norms are strongly influenced by cultural expectations. In such environments, teachers play a crucial role in facilitating the transition from teacher-centered instruction toward more interactive learning practices.

By contrast, classroom practices observed at SLSU Laboratory Junior High School demonstrate stronger alignment between curriculum objectives and classroom interaction patterns. Communicative activities such as discussions, presentations, and collaborative projects are consistently integrated into daily instruction. Teachers function primarily as facilitators who guide student interaction rather than controlling classroom discourse.

From Tyler's curriculum alignment perspective, effective curriculum implementation requires coherence between learning objectives, instructional experiences, and classroom interaction processes (Tyler, 1949). The findings therefore suggest that curriculum implementation is influenced not only by policy design but also by institutional learning environments, language exposure, and classroom pedagogical practices.

These results highlight that communicative curriculum goals may be enacted differently across institutional contexts even when the formal curriculum emphasizes similar principles. Consequently, understanding ELT implementation requires examining how curriculum objectives interact with classroom culture, language environments, and institutional practices. These misalignments suggest teacher training should target culturally adaptive scaffolding. Taken together, these findings suggest that communicative curriculum goals cannot be fully understood without considering the cultural and institutional environments in which classroom interaction occurs. By integrating macro-cultural theory, intercultural competence, and curriculum alignment perspectives, this study offers a more context-sensitive understanding of how ELT curricula are enacted in Southeast Asian educational contexts.

CONCLUSION

This study examined how cross-cultural perspectives influence the implementation of English language teaching curricula within two institutional contexts: SMPN 1 Lamongan in Indonesia and SLSU Laboratory Junior High School in Tomas Oppus, Philippines. By analyzing curriculum documents, classroom interaction, and teacher perspectives, the study explored how cultural orientations, language environments, and pedagogical practices shape the enactment of communicative language teaching in junior high school classrooms. The findings indicate that communicative ELT practices are mediated by institutional learning environments and culturally embedded participation norms. In the classroom observed at SMPN 1 Lamongan, communicative activities were implemented through structured scaffolding and collaborative tasks, reflecting hierarchical relations and collectivist participation patterns. In contrast, the classroom observed at SLSU Laboratory Junior High School demonstrated a more consistently interactive communicative environment supported by extensive English exposure and facilitative teaching practices.

The study shows that communicative language teaching (CLT) is shaped by the cultural and linguistic context of the classroom. Even with similar curricular goals, differences in language exposure, institutional culture, and classroom interaction lead to varied teaching practices. Theoretically, it contributes to cross-cultural ELT by combining cultural, intercultural, and curriculum alignment frameworks to analyze how culture influences both

participation and pedagogy. Practically, it emphasizes the need for ELT curricula and teacher training to adapt to local environments, encouraging flexible strategies that support student participation while respecting existing norms. Overall, CLT is not universally applicable but must be adapted to specific contexts, and communicative competence should be seen as culturally situated. Future research should use broader, multi-institutional and longitudinal approaches to better understand how curriculum, teaching, and learning evolve across Southeast Asia.

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