

### Research Article

## Dynamic Interplay of Culture and Language in the Digital Age: Revisiting Sharifian's Framework

Hossein Heidari Tabrizi <sup>1\*</sup>, Azizeh Chalak <sup>2</sup>

1,2. Professor of Applied Linguistics, Department of English, Isfahan (Khorasgan) Branch, Islamic Azad University, Isfahan, Iran/ Visiting Scholar at English Department, Albert Ludwig University of Freiburg, Freiburg im Breisgau, Germany.

1\*. (Corresponding Author) [heidaritabrizi@iau.ac.ir](mailto:heidaritabrizi@iau.ac.ir)

2. [azizeh.chalak@iau.ac.ir](mailto:azizeh.chalak@iau.ac.ir)

#### ARTICLE INFO

##### Submission History

Received: 2025-05-10

Accepted: 2025-06-15

##### Keywords

Cultural Conceptualizations  
Cultural Linguistics  
Digital revolution  
English as an International Language  
Inter/meta-cultural competence  
Language studies

#### ABSTRACT

The intricate relationship between language and culture has long been a focal point of scholarly inquiry, necessitating robust theoretical frameworks and systematic methodologies to unravel its complexities. In recent years, Cultural Linguistics (CL), as pioneered by Sharifian, has emerged as a groundbreaking interdisciplinary framework that systematically examines how Cultural Conceptualizations (CCs) permeate and shape linguistic structures, practices, and interpretations, particularly within the context of English as an International Language (EIL) and intercultural communication. This paper critically reviews the applications of CL in language-related studies, emphasizing its evolving role in the era of digital transformation. By examining CL's theoretical underpinnings, analytical tools, and practical implementations, the study highlights its contributions to language education, intercultural competence, and the analysis of CCs. While addressing its theoretical and methodological challenges, the paper also offers future directions for CL, advocating for its expanded use in digital communication, multilingual contexts, and AI-driven language learning. By integrating interdisciplinary perspectives and highlighting its potential to address contemporary issues in language education, World Englishes, and digital communication, this paper underscores CL's potential to bridge cultural and linguistic divides and its role in fostering cross-cultural understanding and adapting to the dynamic landscapes of globalized language use in an increasingly interconnected and technologically mediated world.



## Introduction

In contemporary academia, the field of language education and research has undergone a profound transformation across linguistic, cognitive, and cultural dimensions, driven by the incorporation of innovative theoretical frameworks. This shift has been significantly influenced by the rise of paradigms such as English as an International Language (EIL) (Sharifian, 2009, 2014, 2017c), English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) (House, 2024; Mair, 2024), and World Englishes (Mair, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2020, 2021, 2023; Sharifian, 2015b; Sadeghpour & Sharifian, 2019; Sharifian & Sadeghpour, 2020, 2021). The former paradigm emphasizes English as the predominant medium for intercultural communication in an increasingly interconnected world, a phenomenon often termed globalization. The forces of globalization, particularly the "three M-s"—migration, media, and mobility—have reshaped global language dynamics over the past thirty years (Mair, 2017). As Mair (2021) asserts, any meaningful analysis of global English must account for the multilingual environments in which it operates. Conversely, the World Englishes paradigm highlights the rich diversity of localized English varieties shaped by so-called 'non-native' speakers. This duality reflects the adage "Think globally, act locally," capturing the simultaneous processes of globalization and localization. Sharifian (2018a) encapsulates this interplay as 'glocalization,' a concept that underscores the adaptation of global linguistic practices to local cultural contexts. According to him, the process of glocalization involves interacting with the "modification of a global product to meet local needs and norms" (p. 1).

The transition from traditional English as a Foreign or Second Language (EFL/ESL) to

the EIL paradigm has necessitated a reevaluation of culture's role in language learning and research. Mair (2021) notes that debates about English often center on its use as a lingua franca: "most heated language-ideological debates revolve around lingua-franca uses of English" (p. 28). With cross-cultural interactions becoming more frequent due to global mobility, Sharifian (2013c, 2013d, 2018b, 2018c) argues that intercultural competence has emerged as a central goal in language education. This competence equips learners to navigate multilingual settings effectively, functioning as adept users of English in diverse communicative contexts (Xu, 2017). However, this shift has also sparked discussions about balancing globalized and localized English in teaching, raising questions about the interplay between home and foreign cultures (Chen & Le, 2018).

The 21st century has also seen a significant shift in language and translation studies, moving from text-centric approaches to those emphasizing social and cultural dimensions—a transition known as the 'cultural turn' where "one does not translate languages but cultures" (House, 2015, p. 6). This shift underscores the inseparability of language and culture, particularly in intercultural communication. The rise of social networks has further interconnected global communities, fostering what Noam Chomsky describes as 'international integration.' Advances in communication technology have enabled unprecedented interactions across linguistic and cultural boundaries, transforming language from a bridge into a potential barrier in the 'global village.' In this digital age, effective intercultural communication is essential to overcoming these barriers, especially in contexts marked by migration and transnationalism. As Chalak and Heidari

Tabrizi (in press) observe, the proliferation of Social Networking Services (SNS) has introduced a virtual dimension to human interactions, blending face-to-face and digital exchanges and thus further complicating intra- and intercultural communication.

Within the EIL paradigm, numerous cultural models have been developed to integrate culture into language teaching, often tailored to specific educational contexts. Two influential frameworks are those proposed by Michael Byram in the UK and Claire Kramsch in the US, both of which emphasize cultural diversity and intercultural competence (Chen & Le, 2018). These models adapt English instruction to learners' diverse needs, drawing on varied cultural perspectives. To address these evolving demands, modern methodologies are required to explore the language-culture relationship, accounting for new concepts and contexts. Digital technologies have introduced additional layers of complexity to language-culture studies. Social media platforms, virtual collaboration tools, and AI-mediated communication systems have created new contexts for intercultural interaction that blend features of face-to-face and digitally-mediated communication (Chalak & Heidari Tabrizi, in press). These developments call for analytical frameworks capable of tracking how conceptualizations of cultural elements are constructed, negotiated, and transformed across diverse digital and non-digital communication channels. One such approach is Cultural Linguistics (CL), an interdisciplinary field pioneered by Sharifian (2011, 2015a, b, 2017a, 2017d). Over the past decade, CL has proven to be a robust theoretical and analytical tool for examining the dynamic interplay between language and

culture (for a detailed review, see Heidari Tabrizi & Chalak, 2023).

This paper presents a comprehensive examination of CL's contributions in language-related studies, revisiting the role of culture in language education and research amid the (post)digital revolution. The discussion proceeds through five main sections: (a) an in-depth analysis of CL's theoretical foundations; (b) detailed explication of its analytical frameworks; (c) the state-of-the-art applications of CL across language-related disciplines; (d) critical assessment of methodological and theoretical limitations; and (e) proposed directions for future research directions for this interdisciplinary field.

## **Cultural Linguistics (CL): Core Tenets**

The exploration of the interdependent relationship between language and culture, alongside the demand for a robust theoretical foundation and systematic research framework, has been a persistent scholarly endeavor. Historically, investigations into the interaction of language and culture—often regarded as key components of "soft power" (Mair, 2021, p. 28)—have encountered significant critiques. A primary challenge lies in the elusive definition of culture, stemming from its complex ontological and epistemological dimensions and the inherently abstract nature of the term. This ambiguity has resulted in diverse interpretations among researchers, complicating both theoretical and practical attempts to delineate the concept.

Such vagueness risks fostering stereotypes, overgeneralizations, and the problematic tendency to "essentialize speakers" (Sharifian, 2017a). Additionally, culture is frequently treated as a monolithic, unchanging entity

uniformly shared by language communities, reinforcing a static analytical perspective. Among early efforts to address these limitations, Palmer's (1996) "theory of cultural linguistics" is particularly notable in exploring this "uncontested duo" (in the words of Kramsch, 2015). His cognitive-oriented approach centers on the notion of "culturally constructed and defined imagery," offering a pathway to transcend these challenges. Today, Palmer is recognized as a foundational figure in the development of the internationally established field of cultural linguistics.

Building on this foundation, Sharifian (2011, 2017a, 2017b, 2017d) expanded the discipline, introducing CL as a distinct and precise area of study. Grounded in the language-thought-culture paradigm, CL examines the interplay between language, culture, and conceptualization (Sharifian & Sadeghpour, 2021). To circumvent the ambiguities associated with the term "culture," Sharifian adopts a dynamic framework centered on Cultural Conceptualizations (CCs), which emphasize meaning construction as an ongoing process. This approach replaces static portrayals of culture with a more flexible analytical model. Within CL, language is understood as deeply rooted in group-level cognition, emerging from the interactions among members of a cultural community (Sharifian, 2013b, p. 1). The subsequent sections elaborate on CL's theoretical and analytical frameworks, followed by critical reflections on its methodological contributions and limitations.

### **CL's Theoretical Foundations: From Culture to CCs**

The theoretical frameworks of CL are primarily anchored in the study of cultural cognition and conceptualizations, which

provide a dynamic lens for understanding the interplay between language and culture. Sharifian (2011, 2017a) emphasizes the concept of CCs as distributed networks of knowledge that emerge from interactions within cultural groups, thereby avoiding the reductive and static portrayals of culture found in earlier models. As discussed by Shahi (2023), traditional approaches to studying language and culture often relied on problematic assumptions about cultural homogeneity and stability. This new perspective aligns with Frank's (2015) assertion that cultural cognition is not an isolated, abstract phenomenon but an emergent system shaped by collective experiences (p. 494). Within this framework, language functions as both a repository of cultural memory and a medium for transmitting and renegotiating cultural cognition (Sharifian, 2017a).

In fact, a cornerstone of CL theory is the concept of cultural cognition - the distributed cognitive systems that develop through sustained interaction within cultural groups (Sharifian, 2013b). This perspective draws on developments in cognitive science that view cognition as extending beyond individual minds to encompass socially distributed systems of knowledge and practice. Language, in this view, serves dual functions: it acts as both a repository of cultural cognition (encoding conceptualizations that have developed over time) and as a medium for transmitting and transforming cultural knowledge (Sharifian, 2015a). This dual character helps explain how CCs can maintain continuity while also evolving in response to changing social and technological circumstances. The cultural cognition perspective also illuminates the cognitive processes underlying intercultural

communication. When individuals from different cultural backgrounds interact, they must navigate between potentially divergent systems of cultural conceptualization.

This conceptual shift carries several important implications: First, it acknowledges the heterogeneous nature of cultural knowledge, recognizing that even members of the same cultural group may have varying degrees of access to and interpretations of shared conceptualizations (Sharifian, 2017b). For instance, research has shown that cultural schemas related to kinship or politeness may be understood and enacted differently across generations, social classes, or regional subgroups within a given society (Sharifian & Tayebi, 2017). Second, the CCs framework captures the emergent quality of cultural meanings. Rather than being fixed or predetermined, conceptualizations are continually negotiated and reshaped through social interaction. As Xu (2017) notes, this perspective is particularly valuable for understanding intercultural communication, where participants must often negotiate meanings across different systems of cultural conceptualization. Third, by focusing on conceptualizations rather than culture as an undifferentiated whole, CL provides a more precise analytical vocabulary for investigating specific domains of cultural-linguistic interaction. Researchers can examine, for example, how particular cultural schemas (like those related to time, space, or social relationships) are linguistically encoded and communicated. Successful communication often depends on participants' ability to recognize these differences and employ strategies for bridging conceptual gaps - a capacity that Sharifian (2018c) terms "metacultural competence."

Another cornerstone of CL's theoretical foundation is metacultural competence, which Sharifian (2018c) defines as the ability to navigate and mediate between multiple cultural conceptual systems. This competence extends beyond mere cultural awareness, encompassing sensitivity, reflexivity, and adaptability—qualities essential for effective intercultural communication. According to Sharifian and Jamarani (2013), metacultural competence develops through sufficient "exposure to different systems of cultural conceptualizations, either explicitly, for example, through training, or implicitly through extended engagement in intercultural communication" (p. 7). Such competence is particularly vital in the context of EIL, where learners must negotiate meaning across varied cultural contexts. This competence is particularly relevant in digital environments, where intercultural interactions are frequent and nuanced. Metacultural competence also aligns with the goals of EIL, equipping learners to navigate multilingual settings. Xu (2017) further elaborates that metacultural competence enables language users to engage in strategic translanguaging, bridging gaps between disparate cultural frameworks.

However, the theoretical underpinnings of CL are not without challenges. One notable issue is the lack of a comprehensive exploration into the origins of CCs and their relationship to cultural values. While Sharifian's work provides a robust framework for analyzing CCs, it does not fully address how these conceptualizations are grounded in the value systems of cultural groups (Shahi, 2023). Additionally, the cognitive focus of CL has been critiqued for potentially overlooking the social dimensions of language and culture. Sharifian (2011) counters this critique by arguing that cultural cognition is inherently

social, emerging from interactions within communities. Nevertheless, further theoretical refinement is needed to fully integrate cognitive and social perspectives in CL research.

### CL's Analytical Frameworks

The analytical frameworks of CL are designed to systematically explore how CCs manifest in language. At the core of these frameworks are three interlocking concepts: cultural schemas, cultural categories, and cultural metaphors. These interwoven tools reveal how language encodes cultural meanings, offering insights into miscommunication and intercultural negotiation. Cultural schemas, as defined by Sharifian (2021), encompass “beliefs, norms, rules, and expectations of behaviour as well as values relating to various aspects and components of experience” (p. 10). These schemas are not uniformly internalized but are instead negotiated and renegotiated through social interactions, reflecting the dynamic nature of cultural cognition. For example, the schema of **FRIENDSHIP** varies significantly across cultures, influencing how individuals perceive and enact interpersonal relationships. Sharifian (2017b) notes that “cultural schemas capture pools of knowledge that provide a basis for a significant portion of semantic and pragmatic meanings in human languages” (p. 480).

Cultural categories, another key analytical tool, refer to the lexically encoded classifications that reflect culturally specific ways of organizing experience (Sharifian, 2011). These categories, such as those related to kinship or food, are not merely labels but are imbued with cultural expectations and norms. For instance, while the word food may denote a universal category, its subcategories

and associated practices—such as what constitutes a meal or a delicacy—are deeply culture-bound. Sharifian (2017b) emphasizes that these categories are not static but evolve through intercultural contact and globalization, challenging researchers to account for hybrid and fluid conceptualizations.

Cultural metaphors, the third pillar of CL's analytical framework, are cross-domain conceptualizations rooted in cultural traditions (Sharifian, 2013a). These metaphors, such as “time is money” or “the heart as the seat of love,” reveal how cultures encode abstract concepts in tangible terms. Unlike universalist approaches to metaphor, CL highlights the culture-specific nature of these conceptual mappings, demonstrating how they shape thought and communication. Chalak (in press) further illustrates this point by examining how taboos, as culturally loaded lexical items, reflect shifting societal norms in an era of globalization.

Despite their utility, these analytical tools are not without limitations. The overlap between cultural schemas, categories, and metaphors can blur distinctions, making it difficult to determine which framework best applies in a given context (Sharifian & Tayebi, 2017). Moreover, the subjective nature of interpreting CCs raises methodological concerns, particularly regarding empirical validation. Future research could benefit from developing more rigorous criteria for identifying and classifying CCs, as well as exploring computational methods to analyze large-scale linguistic data.

### CL Approach and Methodology: Some Critical Considerations

The CL approach provides significant insights into the relationship between language

and culture, highlighting how linguistic meaning is often embedded in cultural contexts rather than being universally applicable. By examining cultural schemas, metaphors, and categories, CL reveals nuanced, culture-specific interpretations that might otherwise remain obscured. However, the methodology is not without controversy and requires careful application. While many scholars have adopted CL in empirical research, and recent advancements have refined its analytical tools, further development is needed. Notably, theoretical progress has stagnated since Sharifian's foundational contributions, particularly following his passing. To address emerging challenges, the CL framework must expand both theoretically and analytically. Below, we outline key concerns that warrant critical examination.

A central tenet of CL is its treatment of culture as a cognitive system deeply intertwined with language. Critics may question whether it is feasible to frame language, culture, and communication—fundamentally social constructs—within a cognitive paradigm. While this critique holds merit, it does not preclude cognitive analysis. CL posits culture not merely as external norms or practices but as an internalized system shaping perception and interaction. This aligns with the idea that language comprehension is rooted in embodied experiences, which are culturally mediated. Admittedly, reducing language and culture solely to cognitive mechanisms risks oversimplification. However, CL seeks to reconcile this by exploring the dynamic interplay between cognition and social structures. Thus, while cognition is emphasized, CL does not neglect the social dimensions of language use; rather, it treats the

two as interdependent. Sharifian (2011) conceptualized cultural cognition as an emergent system arising from "interactions among members of a cultural group across time and space" (p. 21). In essence, CL offers a dual perspective, enriching our understanding of language as both a cognitive and collective cultural phenomenon.

A primary conceptual challenge lies in CCs, the cornerstone of CL. Sharifian's framework inadequately addresses the origins of CCs or their connection to group values. Despite acknowledging that cultural values underpin differences, his work lacks a detailed analysis of how CCs and values interact. Furthermore, the CL analytical framework comprises overlapping mechanisms with intricate subclasses, forming complex networks of CCs. For instance, Sharifian and Tayebi (2017) describe *ADAB* (politeness) as a macro-schema encompassing sub-schemas like *TA'AROF* (ritual politeness), *RUDARBÂYESTI* (modesty), and *ÂBERU* (honor). Yet, the criteria for distinguishing schemas, categories, or metaphors remain unclear. For example, how might *MEHMANNAVAZI* (hospitality) be classified? Without explicit guidelines, identifying and categorizing CCs within a culture becomes challenging.

Methodologically, CL frameworks suffer from insufficient empirical rigor, often relying on subjective interpretations of CCs. Intuitive judgments frequently outweigh empirical evidence due to inconsistent methodologies. To enhance reliability, tools for achieving intersubjective agreement in classifying CCs are needed. Additionally, questions persist regarding data adequacy: how much evidence is required to validate a schema, category, or metaphor as a CC? Should researchers employ bottom-up inductive methods or top-

down deductive approaches? These unresolved issues hinder CL's methodological robustness.

Another contentious issue involves CL's applicability in cross-cultural and globalized contexts. As intercultural exchanges intensify, languages increasingly borrow and adapt concepts, destabilizing culture-specific meanings. For example, cultural metaphors may shift in multilingual settings, complicating CL's ability to delineate distinct cultural frameworks. This raises doubts about whether CL's constructs can accommodate hybrid or evolving meanings. Addressing these challenges demands flexible, context-sensitive approaches that balance shared cultural meanings with individual and cross-cultural variation. Such adaptability is crucial for maintaining CL's relevance in an interconnected world (for further discussion, see Shahi, 2023).

Additionally, the rapid advancement of digital technology presents both opportunities and obstacles for CL. On one hand, computational tools and large-scale data analysis (e.g., corpus linguistics, AI-driven text mining) could enhance the study of CCs by identifying patterns across vast linguistic datasets. On the other hand, the ephemeral, multimodal nature of digital communication—such as emojis, memes, or code-switching—challenges conventional CL methodologies, which were originally designed for spoken or written discourse. Adapting CL to these new mediums will require interdisciplinary collaboration, integrating insights from media studies, sociolinguistics, and cognitive science.

Finally, while CL emphasizes the importance of metacultural competence in intercultural communication, its practical implementation in language education and policy remains underdeveloped. Few studies

have systematically measured the efficacy of CL-based pedagogies or their long-term impact on learners' intercultural skills. Addressing this gap demands closer partnerships between researchers, educators, and curriculum designers to translate theoretical insights into actionable strategies.

### **Applications of CL in Language-Related Research and Practice**

Over the past ten years, CL has emerged as a robust theoretical and analytical framework for examining the intricate relationship between language and CCs across various academic disciplines. Research employing CL has predominantly focused on three central dimensions of CCs: cultural schemas, categories, and metaphors. Sharifian (2015a) argues that CL has "facilitated insightful explorations into the cultural foundations of language in numerous applied domains" (p. 473), bridging gaps between adjacent fields. He further posits that "any scholarly area investigating the interplay between culture and language stands to gain substantially from adopting the CL framework" (p. 488). This assertion is strongly supported by Sharifian's (2017c) seminal edited volume, *Advances in Cultural Linguistics*, which consolidates 30 diverse studies. These studies explore a wide array of topics, ranging from "conceptualizations of life and death to emotions, the body, humor, religion, gender, kinship, aging, marriage, and political discourse" (Sharifian, 2017b, p. 26).

A more recent contribution, *The handbook of Cultural Linguistics* (Korany, 2024), commemorates Professor Farzad Sharifian's legacy by presenting 45 chapters that delve into CL's theoretical foundations and empirical applications, with a particular emphasis on Persian and global contexts. The handbook is

described as "a thorough overview of cultural linguistics, highlighting its unique methodological and theoretical contributions while addressing the potential for future research" (blurb). Similarly, Wolf et al. (2017), in their editorial for a special issue of the *International Journal of Language and Culture*, emphasize that "CL's versatility and methodological richness create a common platform for scholars from diverse theoretical backgrounds" (p. 121). These applied domains encompass areas such as EIL pedagogy, World Englishes, and intercultural communication, among others.

In the realm of intercultural communication, for example, CL provides a meaning-centered interpretive framework, as demonstrated by Sharifian (2013c). The concept of intercultural communication has evolved significantly in the 21st century due to globalization, digital advancements (e.g., social media, virtual collaboration tools), and increased international mobility. Sharifian (2018c) notes that these developments have redefined the "contexts, modes, and substance of intercultural exchanges, rendering them a ubiquitous aspect of daily interaction" (p. 260). In multicultural environments, intercultural competence is no longer optional but essential—a "critical skill for global citizenship" (p. 266). Given these expanded definitions, CCs serve as a foundational element for analyzing how meanings are constructed, interpreted, and negotiated in intercultural exchanges among speakers from diverse backgrounds (Sharifian, 2013c). Misunderstandings often arise due to differing CCs, as illustrated by Schroder's (2021) study on Brazilian Portuguese *Jeitinho* in German-Brazilian interactions.

The versatility of CL is evident in its wide-ranging applications across language-related

disciplines. Lexicography has also benefited from CL's theoretical and methodological insights. Cummings and Wolf (2011) applied CL principles in compiling a dictionary of Hong Kong English, an approach Sharifian (2015a) deems revolutionary because it "reveals the cultural conceptualizations embedded in linguistic expressions, many of which trace back to historical traditions" (p. 848). Similarly, Carls et al. (2017) employed CL to develop a dictionary of Indian English, focusing on word-formation processes unique to this variety.

Despite these advancements, the intersection of language and CCs in English Language Teaching (ELT) curricula—particularly in materials development and evaluation—remains underexplored. While traditional studies have examined culture in ELT textbooks abstractly (e.g., Ghasemi & Chalak, 2017; Gheitasi et al. 2020; Mizbani & Chalak, 2017a, 2017b; Tajeddin & Abolhassani Chime, 2021; Tajeddin & Teimournezhad, 2015; and Torki & Chalak, 2017), recent research has begun leveraging CL to analyze CCs in verbal and visual discourse. In recent years, the analytical frameworks of CL have drawn increasing interest from researchers, including Sharifian, due to their efficacy in examining CCs. These CCs manifest prominently in verbal discourse and the visual elements of ELT materials, offering deeper insights into their cultural underpinnings. Pioneering work by Dinh and Sharifian (2017, 2021) and Dinh (2017) applied a multimodal approach to analyze CCs in locally authored English textbooks from Iranian and Vietnamese high schools. Their research highlighted the potential of CL to inform EIL curricula, pedagogical strategies, and the design and assessment of instructional materials, including textbooks.

The application of CL has since expanded, with scholars investigating various dimensions of ELT curricula, such as textbook evaluation and material development, through this theoretical lens. For instance, Peters and Mundt (2021) showcased innovative uses of the cultural-linguistic paradigm in language pedagogy, offering empirically grounded insights. In the same volume, Schluer (2021) employed a video-based collaborative method to examine the role of L2 metacultural competence in interpreting and negotiating CCs within English reading tasks. Similarly, Alemi and Tajeddin (2025) curated a collection of empirical studies applying CL to ELT curricula and textbooks. Among these, Heidari Tabrizi and Chalak (2025) investigated representations of friendship in the verbal and visual content of Iranian ELT textbooks. Other notable contributions to CL-oriented ELT research include Dabbagh (2025), Dabbagh and Atai (2022), Mohebbi and Rahimi (2019), Sahraee Juybari and Bozorgian (2020), and Xu (2017), each exploring distinct facets of pedagogy and practice.

Concurrently, CL methodologies have begun to influence Translation Studies, demonstrating promise across various subfields (Heidari Tabrizi & House, 2025, in press). Early explorations include Heydon and Kianbakht (2019), who developed a CL-based model for translating humor as a culturally constructed concept, proposing a taxonomy of culturally loaded conceptual structures. Kianbakht (2020) further advanced this discourse by redefining equivalence through the lens of CCs, introducing a 'cultural conceptual model of equivalence' to deconstruct and reconstruct cultural-linguistic nuances between source and target texts. Hrystiv (2020) complemented these efforts by

assessing the utility of metacultural competence in translator training among Ukrainian students. While these studies provide foundational insights, their findings remain preliminary, underscoring the need for further research. Most recently, Heidari Tabrizi and Mair (2025, in press) identified synergies between CL and translation theory, signaling new directions for interdisciplinary inquiry.

## Conclusions

As previously discussed, Sharifian (2015a) asserts that the CL theory and model hold significant and irrefutable value for disciplines examining the intricate relationship between language, cognition, and CCs. Yu (2007) emphasizes that CL "maintains that language is a cultural form and that conceptualizations underlying language and language use are largely formed or informed by cultural systems" (p. 65). This perspective is particularly relevant to contemporary language education and research, which investigates language's role as a mediator of culture in intercultural communication within today's globalized, digital landscape. At a macro level, CL theory can guide policymakers and curriculum designers in integrating metacultural competence into language programs at both undergraduate and graduate levels. Practically, the CL analytical framework equips educators with tools to address diverse challenges in the field. Ultimately, CL offers a cohesive and interdisciplinary model for systematically exploring linguistic issues while recognizing the embedded CCs within language.

Current literature reveals that ELT curricula and instructional materials often lack pluralistic cultural pedagogy, cultural diversity, and dialogic engagement with multiple cultural

perspectives (Heidari Tabrizi & Chalak, 2025). Instead, they tend to perpetuate an Anglophone-dominated cultural monologism, which starkly contradicts the principles of EIL and World Englishes. These paradigms advocate for the inclusion of diverse cultures in ELT materials, portraying English as “a pluricentric entity attached to a multitude of cultures” (Dinh & Sharifian, 2021, p. 13). The absence of such diversity, coupled with learners’ detachment from cultural variations, creates a cultural gap that impedes EIL acquisition and increases the likelihood of misunderstandings in real-world intercultural interactions. Unprepared for these encounters, learners risk misinterpreting contexts or feeling inadequate in expressing their cultural identities (Tajeddin & Teimournezhad, 2015). Sharifian (2017c) further warns that such risks intensify when a shared language obscures divergent conceptualizations, making cultural differences less apparent.

In brief, the study of CL in language-related research, particularly its focus on CCs, highlights the critical role of cultural awareness in language education. Such awareness shapes communication, relationship-building, and social navigation. For EIL curriculum developers, prioritizing inclusive and culturally responsive materials is essential to reflect the diversity of global Englishes. By fostering cross-cultural understanding, language education can bridge divides and enhance global dialogue. In an interconnected world where language mediates cultural exchange and shapes worldviews, culturally informed linguistic studies are indispensable. According to Heidari Tabrizi and Chalak (2024), “In a ‘global village’ where language is strongly instrumental in fostering communication across cultures and shaping perceptions and

worldviews, the importance of culturally informed language studies cannot be overstated” (p. 86). As globalization and technological advancements continue to transform communication and language landscapes, there is a pressing need for innovative frameworks like CL to address emerging challenges in digital and intercultural domains. Moving forward, further research and practical applications will refine the integration of CL into language education, ensuring its efficacy in fostering meaningful connections across cultures.

In sum, CL provides a valuable, transformative lens for examining the symbiotic interplay between language and culture, bridging cultural and digital divides. Its emphasis on metacultural competence and dynamic conceptualizations aligns with the demands of globalized communication. However, addressing its methodological and theoretical limitations will be crucial for its continued relevance. Prioritizing empirical rigor and adaptability to globalized contexts, future interdisciplinary collaborations will further solidify CL’s role in understanding language as a cultural mediator. Future directions include the integration of CL with digital communication technologies, the study of multilingual interactions, and the implications of AI-driven language learning tools and expanding its applications in multilingual and technologically mediated contexts. By doing so, CL can continue to illuminate the complex interplay of language, culture and cognition in language research and education in the 21st century. The paper advocates for interdisciplinary collaboration to enhance CL’s relevance in rapidly evolving contexts. Collectively, these insights aim to enrich theoretical discourse and practical applications within CL and language studies,

reinforcing the paper's contribution to advancing the field.

## References

- Alemi, M., & Tajeddin, Z. (Eds.). (2025). *Cultural Linguistics and ELT curriculum*. Springer.
- Carls, U., Lucko, P., Peter, L., & Polzenhagen, F. (2017). *A dictionary of Indian English with a supplement on word-formation patterns*. Leipziger Universitätsverlag.
- Chalak, A. (in press). Unveiling the speech act of taboo: A critical synthesis and systematic review of Iranian research articles. In Z. Ghane & R. Falahati (Eds.), *Handbook of Persian discourse studies*. Springer.
- Chalak, A., & Heidari Tabrizi, H. (in press). Violation of Gricean maxims in social media context: Exploring Persian vs. English Instagram posts. In Z. Ghane & R. Falahati (Eds.), *Handbook of Persian discourse studies*. Springer.
- Chen, S., & Le, T. T. (2018). *Teaching of culture in English as an international language: An integrated model*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351027182>
- Cummings, P. J., & Wolf, H. G. (2011). *A dictionary of Hong Kong English: Words from the Fragrant Harbor*. Hong Kong University Press.
- Dabbagh, A. (2025). Cultural Linguistics and ELT materials: Exploring religious conceptualizations in Iranian locally developed textbooks. In M. Alemi & Z. Tajeddin (Eds.), *Cultural Linguistics and ELT curriculum* (pp.). Springer.
- Dabbagh, A., & Atai, M. R. (2022). Exploring cultural conceptualizations and metacultural competence in local EAP textbooks: A semiotic approach. *The Journal of Asia TEFL*, 19(1), 141-162. <http://dx.doi.org/10.18823/asiatefl.2022.19.1.9>
- Dinh, T. N. (2017). Cultural Linguistics and ELT curriculum: The case of Vietnamese textbooks. In F. Sharifian (Ed.), *Advances in Cultural Linguistics* (pp. 721-745). Springer. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-4056-6\\_32](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-4056-6_32)
- Dinh, T. N., & Sharifian, F. (2017). Vietnamese cultural conceptualisations in the locally developed English textbook: A case study of 'Lunar New Year'/'Tet'. *Asian Englishes*, 19(2), 148-159. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13488678.2017.1279763>
- Dinh, T. N., & Sharifian, F. (2021). EIL and Cultural Linguistics approach to ESP/EAP/GE textbook analysis: Examples from locally developed English lessons in Iran and Vietnam. In Z. Tajeddin & Z. Abolhassani Chime (Eds.), *Interface between culture and English for academic purposes* (pp. 9-22). SAMT.
- Frank, R. M. (2015). A future agenda for research on language and culture. In F. Sharifian (Ed.), *The Routledge handbook of language and culture* (pp. 493-512). Routledge.
- Ghasemi, B., & Chalak, A. (2017). A critical discourse analysis of four advanced ELT Textbooks based on Fairclough's framework. *Research in Applied Linguistics*, Special Issue, 60-66.
- Gheitasi, M., Aliakbari, M., & Yousofi, N. (2020). Evaluation of culture representation in Vision English textbook series for Iranian secondary public education. *Journal of English Language Teaching and Learning*, 12(26), 145-173.
- Heidari Tabrizi, H., & Chalak, A. (2023). In memory of Professor Farzad Sharifian (1964-2020): A selected bibliography. *Research in English Language Pedagogy*, 11(3), 1-7. <https://doi.org/10.30486/relp.2023.705494>
- Heidari Tabrizi, H., & Chalak, A. (2024). Evolving role of culture in language studies in the (post)digital revolution era: Reviewing applications of Sharifian's cultural linguistics. *Applied Linguistics Inquiry*, 2(2), 75-88. <https://doi.org/10.22077/ali.2025.8773.1071>
- Heidari Tabrizi, H., & Chalak, A. (2025). Cultural conceptualizations of friendship in locally developed English textbooks for Iranian ELT institutes. In M. Alemi & Z. Tajeddin (Eds.), *Cultural Linguistics and ELT curriculum* (pp.). Springer.
- Heidari Tabrizi, H., & House, J. (2025). Moving beyond conventional tests: Performance-based assessment as an alternative for evaluating students' academic translations. *Contrastive Pragmatics*, 6(1). 10.1163/26660393-bja10139
- Heidari Tabrizi, H., & House, J. (in press). Rethinking translation evaluation in academic contexts: Performance-based assessment as an alternative practice. *Journal of Language and Translation*, 15 (1).
- Heidari Tabrizi, H., & Mair, C. (2025). Exploring the potential contributions of Cultural Linguistics to Translation Studies: Bridging concepts and contexts. *Journal of Researches in Linguistics*. 10.22108/JRL.2025.142547.1868
- Heydon, G., & Kianbakht, S. (2020). Applying cultural linguistics to translation studies: A new

- model for humour translation. *International Journal of Comparative Literature and Translation Studies*, 8(3), 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.7575/aiac.ijclts.v.8n.3p.1>
- House, J. (2015). *Translation as communication across languages and cultures*. Routledge.
- House, J. (2024). *Translation: The basics* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Routledge.
- Hrystiv, N. M. (2020). Metacultural competence within ethnolinguistics and translation: Students' viewpoint. *Collection of Scientific Papers "New Philology"*, 8(1), 140-148. <https://doi.org/10.26661/2414-1135-2020-80-1-23>
- Kianbakht, S. (2020). Translation equivalence theory meets cultural linguistics: A cultural conceptual model of equivalence. *Transletters: International Journal of Translation and Interpreting*, 4, 139-159.
- Korangy, A. (Ed.). (2024). *The handbook of Cultural Linguistics*. Springer.
- Kramsch, C. (2015). Language and culture in second language learning. In F. Sharifian (Ed.), *The Routledge handbook of language and culture* (pp. 403-416). Routledge.
- Mair, C. (2016). Englishes beyond and between the three circles: World Englishes research in the age of globalization. In E. Seoane, & C. Suárez-Gómez (Eds.), *World Englishes: New theoretical and methodological considerations* (pp. 17-36). John Benjamins. <https://doi.org/10.1075/veaw.g57.02mai>
- Mair, C. (2017). Crisis of the "Outer Circle"? - Globalisation, the weak nation state, and the need for new taxonomies in World Englishes research. In M. Filppula, J. Klemola, A. Mauranen, & S. Vetchinnikova (Eds.), *Changing English: Global and local perspectives* (pp. 5-24). De Gruyter Mouton. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110429657-002>
- Mair, C. (2018). When all Englishes are everywhere: Media globalisation and its implications for digital corpora and World English Studies. In A. Zwierlein, J. Petzold, K. Boehm, & M. Decker (Eds.), *Anglistentag 2017 Regensburg: Proceedings* (83-90). Wissenschaftlicher Verlag.
- Mair, C. (2020). World Englishes in cyberspace. In D. Schreier, M. Hundt, & E. W. Schneider (Eds.), *The Cambridge handbook of World Englishes* (pp. 360-383). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108349406.016>.
- Mair, C. (2021). From methodological nationalism to a global perspective. In B. Schneider, T. Heyd, & M. Saraceni (Eds.), *Bloomsbury World Englishes, Volume 1: Paradigms* (pp. 27-45). Bloomsbury.
- Mair, C. (2023). The study of World Englishes: Impulses from beyond linguistics. *Arbeiten aus Anglistik und Amerikanistik/Agenda: Advancing Anglophone Studies*, 48(1), 15-35. <https://doi.org/10.24053/AAA-2023-0001>
- Mair, C. (2024). English in Germany as a foreign language and as a lingua franca. *World Englishes*, 43(2), 244-258. <https://doi.org/10.1111/weng.12641>
- Mizbani, M. & Chalak, A. (2017a). Analyzing listening and speaking activities of Iranian EFL textbook Prospect 3 based on Bloom's revised taxonomy. *Advances in Language and Literary Studies*, 8(3), 38-43.
- Mizbani, M. & Chalak, A. (2017b). Analyzing reading and writing activities of Iranian EFL textbook Prospect 3 based on Bloom's revised taxonomy. *Journal of Applied Linguistics and Language Research*, 4(2), 13-27.
- Mohebbi, A., & Rahimi, E. (2019). Situating L1 cultural conceptualizations in reading tasks of domestically designed English textbooks: Linking Cultural Linguistics theories to materials development praxis. *The Reading Matrix: An International Online Journal*, 19(2), 28-47.
- Palmer, G. B. (1996). *Toward a theory of cultural linguistics*. University of Texas Press.
- Peters, A., & Mundt, N. (Eds.). (2021). *Cultural Linguistics applied: Trends, directions and implications*. Peter Lang. <https://doi.org/10.3726/b17907>
- Sadeghpour M., & Sharifian F. (2019) World Englishes in English language teaching. *World Englishes*. 38, 245-258.
- Sahraee Juybari, M., & Bozorgian, H. (2020). Cultural Linguistics and ELT curriculum: The case of 'Prospect' English textbooks in Iran. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 30(3), 479-496. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijal.12301>
- Schluer, J. (2021). Exploring L2 readers' metacultural competence through a video-based cooperative approach. In A. Peters & N. Mundt (Eds.), *Cultural Linguistics applied: Trends, directions and implications* (pp. 205-234). Peter Lang.
- Schroder, U (2021). Jeitinho as a cultural conceptualisation in Brazilian Portuguese: A cultural linguistics' approach to talk-in-interaction. In A. Peters & N. Mundt (Eds.),

- Cultural Linguistics applied: Trends, directions and implications* (pp. 31-59). Peter Lang.
- Shahi, M. (2023). Some reflections on Sharifian's approach to cultural linguistics. *Intercultural Pragmatics*, 20(2), 199-207. <https://doi.org/10.1515/ip-2023-2004>
- Sharifian, F. (2009). Cultural conceptualisations in English as an international language. In F. Sharifian (Ed.), *English as an international language: Perspectives and pedagogical issues* (pp. 242-253). Multilingual Matters.
- Sharifian, F. (2011). *Cultural conceptualisations and language: Theoretical framework and applications*. John Benjamins. <https://doi.org/10.1075/clsc.1>
- Sharifian, F. (2013a). Cultural conceptualisations in learning English as an L2: Examples from Persian-speaking learners. *Iranian Journal of Language Teaching Research*, 1(1), 90-116.
- Sharifian, F. (2013b). Cultural Linguistics. In C. A. Chapelle (Ed.), *The encyclopedia of applied linguistics* (pp. 1-6). Blackwell.
- Sharifian, F. (2013c). Cultural Linguistics and intercultural communication. In F. Sharifian & M. Jamarani (Eds.), *Language and intercultural communication in the new era* (pp. 74-94). Routledge.
- Sharifian, F. (2013d). Globalisation and developing meta-cultural competence in learning English as an international language. *Multilingual Education*, 3, 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.1186/2191-5059-3-7>
- Sharifian, F. (2014). English as an international language: A multilingual and pluricentric perspective. In J. Hajek, & Y. Slaughter (Eds.), *Challenging the monolingual mindset*, (pp. 49-62). Multilingual Matters.
- Sharifian, F. (2015a). Cultural Linguistics. In F. Sharifian (Ed.), *The Routledge handbook of language and culture* (pp. 473-492). Routledge.
- Sharifian, F. (2015b). Cultural Linguistics and world Englishes. *World Englishes*, 34(4), 515-532.
- Sharifian, F. (2017a). *Cultural Linguistics: Cultural conceptualisations and language*. John Benjamins. <https://doi.org/10.1075/clsc.8>
- Sharifian, F. (2017b). Cultural Linguistics: The state of the art. In F. Sharifian (Ed.), *Advances in Cultural Linguistics* (pp. 1-28). Springer. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-4056-6\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-4056-6_1)
- Sharifian, F. (2017c). English as an international language. In Y. Y. Kim & K. L. McKay-Semmler, (Eds.), *The international encyclopedia of intercultural communication* (1-5). Wiley.
- Sharifian, F. (Ed.). (2017d). *Advances in Cultural Linguistics*. Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-4056-6>
- Sharifian, F. (2018a). Glocalization of English. In J. I. Lontos & M. DelliCarpini (Eds.), *The TESOL encyclopedia of English language teaching* (pp.1-12). Wiley.
- Sharifian, F. (2018b). Learning intercultural competence. In A. Burns & J. C. Richards (Eds.), *The Cambridge guide to learning English as a second language* (260-268). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009024761.036>
- Sharifian, F. (2018c). Metacultural competence in English Language Teaching (ELT). In J. I. Lontos & M. DelliCarpini (Eds.), *The TESOL encyclopedia of English language teaching*, (pp.1-6). Wiley.
- Sharifian, F. (2021). Cultural Linguistics and religion. In H. G. Wolf, A. Finzel & D. Latić (Eds.), *Cultural-Linguistic explorations into spirituality, emotionality, and society* (pp. 9-22). John Benjamins. <https://doi.org/10.1075/clsc.14.02sha>
- Sharifian, F., & Jamarani, M. (2013). Language and intercultural communication: From the old era to the new one. In F. Sharifian and M. Jamarani (Eds.), *Language and intercultural communication in the new era*. Routledge.
- Sharifian, F., & Sadeghpour, M. (2020). World Englishes and intercultural communication. In J. Jackson (Ed.), *The Routledge handbook of language and intercultural communication* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., pp. 299-311). Routledge.
- Sharifian, F., & Sadeghpour, M. (2021). Cultural Linguistics and world Englishes: An overview. In M. Sadeghpour & F. Sharifian (Eds.), *Cultural Linguistics and world Englishes* (pp.1-14). Springer. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-4696-9\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-4696-9_1)
- Sharifian, F., & Tayebi, T. (2017). Perceptions of impoliteness from a Cultural Linguistics perspective. In F. Sharifian (Ed.), *Advances in Cultural Linguistics* (pp. 389-409). Springer. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-4056-6\\_18](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-4056-6_18)
- Tajeddin, Z., & Abolhassani Chime, Z. (Eds.). (2021). *Interface between culture and English for academic purpose*. SAMT.
- Tajeddin, Z., & Teimournezhad, S. (2015). Exploring the hidden agenda in the representation of culture in international and localized ELT textbooks. *Language Learning Journal*, 43(2), 1-14. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09571736.2013.869942>

- Torki, F. & Chalak, A. (2017). An evaluation of English textbooks used in Iranian High schools: Teachers' and learners' attitudes. *RELP*, 5(1), 52-60.
- Wolf, H. G., Polzenhagen, F., & Peters, A. (2017). Cultural linguistic contributions to World Englishes: Introduction to the special issue. *International Journal of Language and Culture*, 4(2), 121-126. <https://doi.org/10.1075/ijolc.4w.2.001wol>
- Xu, Z. (2017). Developing meta-cultural competence in teaching English as an international language. In F. Sharifian (Ed.), *Advances in cultural linguistics* (pp. 703-720). Springer. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-4056-6\\_31](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-4056-6_31)
- Yu, N. (2007). The Chinese conceptualization of the heart and its cultural context: Implications for second language learning. In F. Sharifian & G. B. Palmer (Eds.), *Applied cultural linguistics* (pp. 65-85). John Benjamins. <https://doi.org/10.1075/celcr.7.06yu>