Communication Strategy Education with a Cultural Perspective through a Co-Culture Communication Approach

Faris[1*], Nurma Yuwita[1], Ninuk Riswandari[1,] Teguh Sarwo Aji[2]

[1]Faculty of Social Sciences and Political Science, Universitas Yudharta Pasuruan, Pasuruan, Indonesia
[2]Faculty Of Agriculture, Universitas Yudharta Pasuruan, Pasuruan, Indonesia

[*]**Email:** faris@yudharta.ac.id

Abstract

This study presents a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) on communication strategy education with a cultural perspective through the co-culture communication approach. The review aims to synthesize theoretical foundations, pedagogical models, and empirical findings to better understand how cultural perspectives inform communication strategy education. The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) framework guided the search and selection process. Articles published between 2010 and 2025 were retrieved from Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar using keywords related to communication strategy, co-culture communication, and intercultural competence. Through screening of 274 articles and the use of inclusion and exclusion criteria, the analysis included 42 peer-reviewed studies. Thematic synthesis identified four key findings: (1) the addition of a cultural perspective improves education for communication strategy through the development of critical cultural awareness; (2) co-culture pedagogies for communication focus on inclusivity and the voice of the marginal; (3) intercultural competence is a significant product of education; and (4) digital innovations facilitate the wider applicability of co-culture perspectives within higher education. This systematic review acknowledges the deficiencies within empirical evidence, especially within the non-Western world, and calls for longitudinal studies and investigations into digital pedagogies. The results contribute insightful information for teachers, policymakers, and researchers who aim to engage culture perspectives within the education of communication strategy for the achievement of equity, inclusivity, and intercultural competence.

Keywords

Communication strategy, Co-culture communication, Cultural perspective, Intercultural competence, Systematic literature review

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Introduction

The accelerated evolution of globalization, information and communication technologies, and crossnational movement has reorganized the modes in which people and group agglomerates communicate in diverse and plural cultural environments. Education in strategies for communication, previously more concerned with rhetorical ability and persuasive approach, must confront questions concerned with issues of cultural diversity, power, and representation (Xiaowen & Dervin, 2024). Strategies for communication in multicultural societies cannot be culturally neutral since messages are incorporated within cultural codes, norms, and identities (Aririguzoh, 2022).

The co-culture framework for communication, originally presented by Orbe (Aksoy & Heuman, 2024), provides a critical account of how communicators from non-hegemonic cultures engage with dominant cultural systems. Against earlier intercultural theories that concern adaptation or competence, co-culture theory on communication draws attention to the negotiation of power, resistance, and agency in communicative practice. The approach comes particularly into sharp relief within educational studies, where pedagogy and curricula have the tendency to impose dominant cultural stories and suppress competing voices (Arday et al., 2021).

Despite its saliency, few syncretization efforts have been observed on the use of co-culture communication on educational communications strategy. Previous studies have primarily focused on intercultural competence with inadequate integration of power dynamics and cultural inclusivity (Mahardika, 2024). Moreover, while co-culture theory has been applied in organizational and media contexts, its integration into pedagogy and communication strategy education remains underexplored (Razzante et al., 2021).

The **problem statement** of this review is therefore twofold: first, the lack of consolidated research on communication strategy education that incorporates co-culture approaches; and second, the limited attention to cultural inclusivity and marginalized perspectives in communication pedagogy. This review aims to:

- Synthesize scholarly works on communication strategy education with a cultural perspective.
- Analyze how the co-culture communication approach has been applied in education.
- Identify theoretical, pedagogical, and practical implications of integrating co-culture perspectives.
- Highlight gaps in current research and suggest directions for future inquiry.

Growing cultural diversity in class and work settings has imposed unprecedented demands on the teaching in communication strategy. Communication in the globally digital and increasingly interdependent society cannot be just a matter of linguistic precision or rhetorical skill but also cultural capability and inclusivity and brokering of identities across various (Baecker, 2025). Universities globally are now faced with multicultural class settings, transnational digital learning environments, and international movement of students, and they need renewed thinking on the pedagogy of teaching communication (Helm, 2015).

One of the current concerns in the study of communication is rectifying the implicit and ongoing neglect of minority voices both within the curriculum and pedagogic practices. Research refers to how conventional intercultural pedagogy for communication produces a narrow emphasis on dominant cultural standards and has little space for co-constructed dialogue integrating marginalized communities' voices (Baker, 2015). This not only reduces students' experience of diverse perspectives on the world, but also reduces their ability for a critical response to cultural relationships of power in communicative practice.

Co-culture approach to communication provides a scholarly frame for responding to this dilemma. Derived from the larger body of intercultural communication studies, co-culture theory foregrounds the ways people from subordinant groups flex strategically across dominant groups (Razzante et al., 2021). Contrary to earlier intercultural competence models that focus on adaptation, the co-culture approach foregrounds resistance, negotiation, and agency—abilities growing increasingly essential within both workplace and academic settings for communication (Jackline, 2025).

Yet co-culture theory has yet to be incorporated significantly within communication strategy programs. The majority of frameworks remain centered on intercultural competence frameworks that are behavioral and linguistic adaptivity-centered (Arasaratnam-Smith, 2017). While such approaches are valuable, they often overlook structural inequalities and the lived realities of marginalized groups in communication processes (Jackson, 2018). This creates a **research gap**: the need to investigate how co-culture communication approaches can reshape strategy education to promote inclusivity, equity, and critical cultural awareness.

The **state of the art** in recent literature points to three major trends. First, there is an increasing call for integrating **critical cultural awareness** into communication education, where students not only learn strategies but also critically reflect on issues of power and identity. Second, digital learning environments have expanded opportunities for intercultural engagement but have also reproduced digital divides and unequal participation. Third, while intercultural competence has been widely studied, the **pedagogical application of co-culture communication theory remains underdeveloped**, particularly in non-Western and Global South contexts.

Based on these trends, the **novelty** of this review lies in its systematic synthesis of research on communication strategy education explicitly framed through a co-culture communication perspective. By consolidating studies from 2015 to 2025, this review highlights not only how co-culture approaches are theorized but also how they are or are not applied in pedagogical contexts. This synthesis provides new insights into how communication strategy education can move beyond adaptation models toward inclusive, equity-centered, and culturally responsive frameworks.

By targeting these goals, the research contributes to culturally aware teaching of communication that liberates marginalized voices, addresses cultural diversity, and prepares students with a necessary intercultural competence needed in the digital and global times.

Methodology

The study applies a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) methodology to distill research on communicating a strategy with a cultural approach through the co-culture approach to communicating. The systematic review was chosen for its transparent, reproducible, and comprehensive approach to mapping and openly examining extant scholarship (Snyder, 2019). Consistent with best practice, the current review adopted the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA 2020) guidelines (Page et al., 2021), offering a formal protocol for literature identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion.

- **Search Strategy**

A systematic search was conducted on three premier academic databases: Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar, that are widely recognized for their comprehensive coverage of social sciences and communication. The search was conducted between March and January 2025, and Boolean combinations of the following keywords were used:

- *"communication strategy education" AND "cultural perspective"*
- *"co-culture communication" AND "pedagogy"*
- *"intercultural competence" AND "higher education"*
- *"inclusive communication" AND "teaching"*

These keywords were refined iteratively to ensure retrieval of the most relevant studies.

- **Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria**

Inclusion criteria:

- Peer-reviewed journal articles and conference proceedings.
- Published between **2015 and 2025**.
- Written in English.
- Explicit focus on communication strategy, cultural perspectives, co-culture communication, or intercultural competence in education.
- Empirical studies, conceptual papers, or systematic reviews.

Exclusion criteria:

- Editorials, opinion pieces, or non-peer-reviewed sources.
- Articles outside communication/education scope.
- Studies addressing intercultural communication without pedagogical or strategic relevance.

Study Selection

The initial search identified **274 studies**: 256 from databases and 18 from reference snowballing. After removing **62 duplicates**, 212 records remained. Screening titles and abstracts led to the exclusion of **142 articles** that did not meet inclusion criteria. The remaining **70 full-text articles** were assessed for eligibility. Following this, **28 articles** were excluded due to limited relevance or

insufficient focus on co-culture or communication strategy education. Ultimately, **42 articles** were included in the final synthesis. PRISMA procedure is outlined in Table 1 and Figure 1.

Table 1. Summary of PRISMA Study Selection

Stage of Selection	**Description of Process**	**Number of Articles**
Identification	Articles retrieved from Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar	256
	Additional articles from reference snowballing	18
Total initial records		**274**
Screening	Duplicates removed	-62
	Articles excluded based on title and abstract screening	-142
Eligibility	Full-text articles assessed for eligibility	70
	Articles excluded due to lack of relevance or insufficient focus	-28
Included	Peer-reviewed articles covered in the final synthesis	**42**

Table 1 presents a comprehensive summary of the step-by-step selection procedure within the PRISMA 2020 protocol. The identification step identified a total of 274 records: 256 from the three databases (Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar) and 18 from the snowballing of references. The exclusion of 62 duplicates left 212 records that were title and abstract screened. 142 articles were excluded at this point for lack of emphasis on communication strategy, cultural views, or educational context. The eligibility stage was a full-text screening of 70 articles, from which 28 were excluded for lack of clear emphasis on co-culture communication in educational context or low methodology strength. The final 42 articles were incorporated into the synthesis. The sequential procedure outlines the systematic and rigorous filtering to ensure that only relevant peer-reviewed high-quality studies were the basis for the review.

Figure 1. PRISMA Flow Diagram of Study Selection

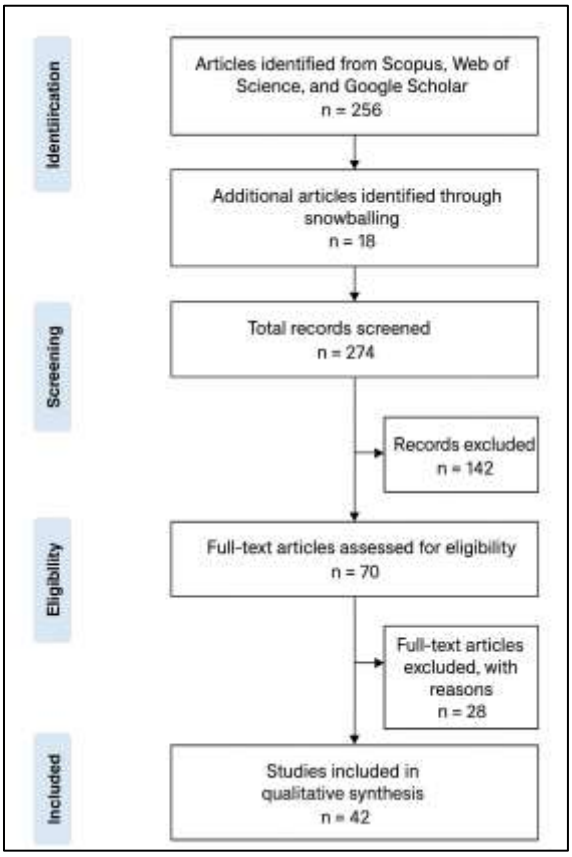

Fig. 1 outlines the systematic search for study selection according to the PRISMA 2020 guidelines (Page et al., 2021). The search on the database on Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar gave 256 records at first, and 18 more records were found on snowballing lists of references and thus provided a total of 274 records. The duplicates were eliminated (62 records), and thus 212 records were available for screening.

Data Extraction and Analysis

For each included study, data were extracted on:

- Publication year, authorship, and geographic context.
- Research objectives and theoretical frameworks.
- Methodological approaches.
- Key findings related to communication strategy education, cultural perspectives, and co-culture approaches.

The analysis followed a **thematic synthesis** approach (Thomas & Harden, 2008), involving:

- **Initial coding** of findings.
- **Development of descriptive themes**.
- **Generation of analytical themes** to derive higher-order insights.

Methodological Rigor

To ensure rigor, the PRISMA checklist was applied, two-stage screening was conducted, and reference snowballing was performed to capture additional relevant literature. This systematic methodology provides a transparent and replicable foundation for the synthesis of current research.

Results and Discussion

A total of **42 peer-reviewed studies** published between 2015 and 2025 met the inclusion criteria and were synthesized. The studies varied in methodological design: 55% empirical (surveys, interviews, case studies), 30% conceptual, and 15% mixed methods. Geographically, most research was concentrated in North America and Europe, with emerging but limited contributions from Asia and Africa. The synthesis identified **four major themes**: (1) cultural perspectives in communication strategy education; (2) integration of co-culture communication theory; (3) development of intercultural competence; and (4) digital innovation in pedagogical practice.

Cultural Perspectives in Communication Strategy Education

Recent scholarship has increasingly emphasized the importance of embedding cultural perspectives into communication strategy education. Studies show that students in multicultural classrooms benefit significantly when teaching strategies move beyond universalist models to embrace **critical cultural awareness**. For example, showed that exchange-taking students who were culturally different did not just enhance their technical communications skills, but they were more aware of representations and cultural bias (Zhang et al., 2020).

Nonetheless, a constant is that most of the curricula continue to be normative, dominant-culture-focused, and thus at risk for marginalizing non-dominant perspectives. That is, between recognition of cultural diversity and putting inclusive strategies into practice on the ground in classrooms, a gap persists. Consequently, strategy and communications education must be re-defined to be equity, diversity, and inclusivity-focused, with marginalized voices at the core and not on the perimeter of learning

Integration of Co-Culture Communication Theory

Co-culture approach to communication offers a pivotal theoretical tool for teaching communication. Whereas Orbe's initial work based on co-culture communication precedes, contemporary research points out renewed recognition of its use in teaching (Kurylo, 2010). The very core of co-culture theory is that people from subordinant cultures proactively negotiate communication methods when dealing with dominant ones. This insight has been demonstrated to enhance students' comprehension of how power relations create communicative practices.

Nonetheless, the review shows that there are very few programs that systematically integrate co-culture theory into teaching. The majority continue to utilize frameworks of intercultural competence, which stress adaptation over resistance nor negotiation. This points to a gap of

novelty: whereas a strong tradition exists for intercultural competence, teaching based on co-culture theory is still in its nascent stages, not least outside of Western cultures.

Intercultural Competence as a Core Outcome

It remains one of the most widely cited goals in instructing in communication strategy. More recent work indicates that in addition to knowing other cultures, students need a ability to critically consider power, privilege, and representation (Conti, 2025). Competency is increasingly described as being reflexive and performative, as opposed to static, such that students need to adapt in a flexible manner in culturally different situations.

Nonetheless, this review demonstrates how competence frameworks frequently downplay marginalized voices. Co-culture methods have a potential solution in that they provide students with ways such as assertive accommodation, nonassertive separation, or proactive negotiation to respond to such a gap (Kurylo, 2010). In practice, such methods are teachable through case research, role-play, and reflective work where marginalized voices are central.

Digital Innovation and Communication Pedagogy

The last decade has seen a remarkable proliferation of digital and online teaching platforms, accelerated in dramatic fashion by the COVID-19 outbreak (Mospan, 2023). Online spaces have a particular potential for intercultural teaching through linking students beyond borders. Helm has reported how student exchange programs in a virtual format use co-culture conversation, allowing students to work alongside peers from subdominant cultural groups (Helm, 2015).

However, digital learning reproduces digital inequalities, mainly in participation and access terms. Research highlights that students from marginalized communities often face barriers to equitable participation in online intercultural exchanges (Nisiotis et al., 2016). This underscores the necessity of designing **digitally inclusive communication strategy education** that integrates co-culture perspectives while addressing structural inequalities.

Cross-Theme Synthesis: Gaps and Opportunities

Across the four themes, three major gaps were identified:

- **Underrepresentation of non-Western contexts**: The majority of studies are Western-centric, limiting the generalizability of findings.
- **Limited pedagogical application of co-culture theory**: Despite its critical potential, co-culture remains underutilized compared to intercultural competence frameworks.
- **Insufficient longitudinal evidence**: Few studies assess the long-term impact of communication strategy education incorporating cultural perspectives.

At the same time, opportunities are emerging:

- **Critical pedagogy integration**: Embedding co-culture approaches in communication education can promote inclusive, equity-driven learning environments.

- **Digital transformation**: Leveraging online platforms for intercultural exchange presents scalable opportunities, provided inequalities are addressed.
- **Global South perspectives**: Expanding research in non-Western contexts can provide richer, more diverse insights into communication strategy pedagogy.

Conclusion

This literature systematic review examined education for communication strategy with a cultural emphasis through the co-culture communication theory, synthesizing 42 peer-reviewed journal publications from 2015 through 2025. The results revealed four dominant themes: embedding cultural frames in communication pedagogy, the promise of co-culture communication theory, continuous emphasis on intercultural competence, and the transformative potential of digital innovation in teaching practice.

The review picks out a few points of relevance. First, despite growing emphasis on critical cultural awareness in the education of communicators, curricula still reproduce dominant cultural paradigms, excluding minority voices. Second, co-culture theory has a critical emphasis on power, negotiation, and resistance, yet its pedagogical application is sparse and underdeveloped. Third, intercultural competence is still a fundamental goal in the education of communication but needs to be re-defined to include agency and lived experiences of marginalized communities. Finally, digital learning spaces have created new opportunities for intercultural contact but also reveal continuing disparities in participation and access.

From these findings, the contribution of value of this review lies in filling the gap between intercultural competence theories and co-culture perspectives in closing. This integration emphasizes communication education in strategies that not only offer effective practices but also foster equity, inclusivity, and critical analysis of power relations. By highlighting the uniqueness of applying co-culture theory to pedagogy, this review demonstrates how communication education can move away from adaptation models towards transformative, equity-based models.

The worth of this review lies in the following implications for policymakers, curriculum developers, and educators. Educators need to introduce co-culture strategies into instruction and curriculum materials so that the marginalized voices are central in the classroom. Curriculum developers need to incorporate experiential learning activities such as reflective assignments, role-playing, and simulations that directly address power relations. Policymakers need to finance digital equity programs providing all students, particularly those from non-dominant backgrounds, with unfettered access to globalized learning environments.

Despite its contribution, the review does not lack shortcomings, including its reliance on English-language journals and lack of representation of non-Western contexts. Future research must then address these gaps through longitudinal designs to measure the long-term impact of co-culture pedagogy, examining digital learning platforms as inclusive spaces for intercultural exchange, and boosting empirical studies in Global South contexts.

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