Context of Peacebuilding Education in the Philippines: A Literature Review on Communication Skills, Critical Consciousness, and Intercultural Competencies of Teachers and Students

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ABSTRACT

Peacebuilding is a human-rights and sustainable-development concern, including under United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 16. This paper explores the potential of English language education to promote peaceful and inclusive school environments through the lens of education policies in the Philippines. This critical interpretive review explored how communication skills, critical consciousness and intercultural competence are discussed in Philippine English language education and what insights the existing literature can offer in relation to their links to peacebuilding. From April to July 2026, searches were conducted through Consensus AI and Google Scholar. Generative AI (Claude, Anthropic, 2024) was used in accordance with academic disclosure norms and APA 7th guidelines during the preparation of the manuscript, to aid with initial title/abstract screening, quality appraisal coding, and data extraction, however the authors retained full responsibility and human supervision for all final inclusion decisions, quality judgments, and synthesis interpretations. Of 331 records gathered, 72 met the review criteria. The analysis used 25 dimensions to compare the literature through Freire's critical pedagogy, Byram's Intercultural Communicative Competence model, and Karthika's peace-integrated constructive communication framework. The findings were grouped into four arguments about recognizing difference, examining exclusion and unequal power, supporting dialogue across difference, and developing the ability to communicate across difference. The literature more often described curriculum content, classroom activities, awareness, and teacher adaptation than lasting changes in learner skills or direct peacebuilding outcomes. The review identifies a need for research that follows learner development over time and separates classroom implications from national-level effects.

Keywords: peacebuilding education, English language education, intercultural competence, critical consciousness, communication skills

INTRODUCTION

Background and Literature

Peacebuilding is a human-rights and sustainable-development concern. Goal 16 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals seeks to promote peaceful and inclusive societies. In the Philippines, relevant education policies include Department of Education Order No. 32, s. 2019, or the National Policy Framework on Learners and Schools as Zones of Peace, and Commission on Higher Education Memorandum Orders No. 1, s. 2019 and No. 42, s. 2021, which address the integration of peace studies into higher education curricula (United Nations, 2015; Department of Education, 2019; Commission on Higher Education, 2019, 2021). These policies provide an institutional context for examining the relationship between education and peacebuilding, but their existence does not establish that peacebuilding practices are consistently implemented or produce measurable outcomes.

Bullying in Philippine schools has also been raised as an educational concern by the Philippine Institute for Development Studies and the Second Congressional Commission on Education (Philippine Institute for Development Studies [PIDS], 2025; Second Congressional Commission on Education, 2024). These concerns support examining how schools may foster respectful relationships and inclusive learning environments. They do not, by themselves, establish that English language education reduces bullying or produces wider social cohesion.

Fu (2021) discussed peacebuilding in English language education in relation to constructive communication and teacher–student relationships. McVeigh (2023) connected communication in English-language classrooms with peacebuilding, while Hussein and Khammash (2025) and Valdez (2020) discussed critical pedagogy in relation to power and oppressive discourses. Balume (2024) also considered language in relation to social cohesion. These sources provide contextual and conceptual grounds for the review; they are not treated as direct evidence that English instruction produces national peacebuilding outcomes.

Theoretical Lenses

The review draws on three theoretical lenses. Freire's critical pedagogy provides concepts related to dialogue, problem-posing education, praxis, and critical consciousness. Byram's Intercultural Communicative Competence model addresses attitudes, cultural knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, and critical cultural awareness. Karthika's peace-integrated constructive communication framework addresses self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, social skills, conflict resolution, relationship development, and reflective practice (Freire, 1970; Byram, 1997; Karthika, 2025). Integration of these lenses directs attention to three related but distinct questions: how difference is represented, how power and exclusion are examined, and what learners are able to do when communicating across difference. The lenses also shaped the analytical dimensions, so the review considered the possibility that they foregrounded concepts already represented in the frameworks. The dimensions were therefore revised when the included literature raised distinctions that the initial questions did not adequately capture.

Research Gap and Objective

The literature points to a need to examine intercultural competence, critical pedagogy, and communication skills together because these areas are often addressed separately in language education research. There is also a need to distinguish policy intentions and classroom practices from evidence of learner development and system-level effects. The review contributes by comparing how Philippine-focused literature addresses these connected but different areas and by showing where the evidence supports claims about teaching practices, learner capacities, or wider peacebuilding outcomes. It does not propose or validate a new model. Instead, it examines what the available evidence can establish and where further research is needed.

The review addresses five research questions: (1) how intercultural and critical pedagogies are incorporated into English language education in relation to peacebuilding; (2) what gaps concern the development of intercultural competence, critical consciousness, and communication skills; (3) what practices may inform curriculum and teacher-training development; (4) what implications the literature suggests for the Philippine education system, while distinguishing classroom implications from demonstrated national-level effects; and (5) how theoretical and empirical literature supports the relevance of intercultural and critical pedagogies to peace and social cohesion.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design and Search Strategy

The review followed a critical interpretive review (CIR) approach informed by Goñi (2025). A CIR interprets relevant literature across different kinds of sources rather than aiming to count every available study. McDougall (2015) informed the approach to quality appraisal. Searches were conducted through Consensus AI, an AI-powered academic search engine, and Google Scholar from April through July 2026. Generative AI (Claude, Anthropic, 2024) was used in accordance with academic disclosure norms and APA

7th guidelines during the preparation of the manuscript to aid with initial title/abstract screening, quality appraisal coding, and data extraction; however, the authors retained full responsibility and human supervision for all final inclusion decisions, quality judgments, and synthesis interpretations. Google Scholar searches used terms from the 55-term keyword bank in Table 1, combined with Boolean operators. The accompanying online supplementary materials provide the available prompt templates for literature retrieval, screening, quality appraisal, data extraction, and grouping key ideas. Seventeen of the 72 appraisal records are marked "prompt based" because those publications were retrieved through Consensus AI; a separate article-specific search string was therefore not recorded for them. The records do not contain a complete, timestamped log of every query or search session, and the exact date of each search session was not recorded. Records already identified through Consensus AI were not counted again when found through Google Scholar. Titles, author names, and DOI information were compared to identify duplicates. The search and duplicate-checking process yielded 331 records. Because a CIR aims to interpret relevant evidence rather than claim exhaustive coverage, selection was guided by relevance to the research questions. The supplementary materials document the search strategy and the records that were retained, but not every individual search session.

Table 1. Keywords used for literature retrieval

Search concept	Keywords
English Language Education	"English language teaching" OR "English education" OR "English language" OR "English language learning" OR "English language instruction" OR "ELT" OR "ESL" OR "ESL teaching" OR "ESL learning" OR "English as a second language learning" OR "English as a second language teaching"
Intercultural Competence	"Intercultural communicative competence" OR "intercultural competence" OR "intercultural" OR "ICC"
Critical Pedagogy & Critical Consciousness	"critical pedagogy" OR "critical consciousness" OR "problem-posing education" OR "Freire" OR "Freirean" OR "problem posing" OR "social justice"
Peace Education & Peacebuilding	"peace education" OR "peacebuilding" OR "peace pedagogy" OR "communicative peace" OR "peace linguistics" OR "peace communication" OR "conflict resolution education"
Communication & Interaction	"communication skills" OR "communicative skills" OR "communicative competence" OR "communication strategies" OR "communicative interaction" OR "interaction" OR "dialogue" OR "dialogic communication" OR "communicative activity" OR "communicative language teaching" OR "CLT"
Teacher Development	"teacher development" OR "teacher training" OR "professional development"
Learner Development	"learner perspective" OR "student" OR "students" OR "learners"
Philippine Context	"Philippines" OR "Filipino" OR "Philippine education" OR "Mindanao" OR "BARMM"
Curriculum & Pedagogy	"curriculum" OR "pedagogy" OR "classroom"

Eligibility and Screening

Eligible records were dated 2020–2025, written in English, and focused on Philippine basic education,

higher education, or teacher education with a clear link to English language education and at least one focal area: critical consciousness or critical pedagogy, intercultural communicative competence, or peace-integrated constructive communication. Empirical and theoretical sources were eligible, including qualitative and quantitative work. Although the initial retrieval prompt also mentioned policy documents, the final review corpus comprised 70 journal articles, one conference paper, and one thesis; policy documents cited for background were not counted among the 72 included publications. Two reviewers independently screened the titles and abstracts against the inclusion criteria. The research team then assessed the full texts that could be retrieved against the stated eligibility criteria. No numerical inter-rater agreement score or formal consensus statistic was calculated. Of the 331 records gathered, one non-English record was removed before title-and-abstract screening. The remaining 330 records entered screening. The screening sequence was as follows: 177 records were excluded in the first title-and-abstract pass; 36 records initially lacked a retrievable full text; a second check of these 36 records identified 22 that did not concern the Philippine context and five that did not focus on English language education. These 27 were added to the title-and-abstract exclusions, bringing that total to 204 and leaving 126 records for full-text retrieval. Nine full texts remained unavailable after searches through Philippine E-Journals, the Animo Repository, Ateneo Scholar Repository, ERIC, Scopus, and JSTOR. The 117 full texts obtained were assessed for inclusion and exclusion, and 45 were excluded because they did not address a qualifying lens or topic. The nine unavailable records were excluded because eligibility could not be confirmed without the full texts, not because their findings had been judged irrelevant. The included set comprised 4 papers from 2020, 9 from 2021, 6 from 2022, 7 from 2023, 18 from 2024, and 28 from 2025; it included 70 journal articles, one conference paper, and one thesis, a total of 72 papers.

Contextual, policy, and theoretical references used to frame the review were kept distinct from the included dataset. United Nations, DepEd (Department of Education), and CHED (Commission on Higher Education) documents and conceptual sources cited in the Introduction and Theoretical Lenses sections establish the policy and theoretical context; they were not counted among the 72 included. The 72-paper dataset was used for the Results and Discussion synthesis.

Table 2. Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Criterion	Inclusion	Exclusion
Publication period	Dated 2020–2025	Dated before 2020 or after 2025
Language	Written in English	Not written in English
Educational context	Philippine K–12, higher education, or teacher education	Not situated in a relevant Philippine educational context
English-language education focus	Specifically related to English language education	Not focused on English language education
Topical relevance	Engaged with at least one area: critical consciousness/critical pedagogy, intercultural communicative competence, or peace-integrated constructive communication	Did not address any of the three focal areas or did not meet the Philippine educational-context and English-language-education criteria. Records whose full texts remained unavailable after alternative retrieval attempts were excluded because eligibility could not be confirmed and are reported as an access limitation.

Figure 1 summarizes the selection counts.

Figure 1. Summary of the literature inclusion and exclusion process



Analytical Dimensions and Iterative Synthesis

To compare sources consistently, the team developed 25 analytical dimensions. Dimensions 1–17 drew on the three theoretical lenses, while dimensions 18–25 recorded study details such as setting, participants, design, sampling, data collection, analysis, duration, and stated limitations. The ten-paper set in Moment 1 was selected from the 72-paper corpus to test and refine the dimensions; it was not an additional set. Claude assisted with data extraction, and the research team double-checked the quality-appraisal judgments. For extraction checking, the 37 records from Moment 2 and the 35 records from Moment 3 were divided among five reviewers, who checked their assigned records for accuracy and completeness, including omissions or inaccurate extraction. When an extracted detail, publication year, study design, or claim was unclear, the team returned to the original publication and checked whether the extracted information and interpretation were supported. The authors retained responsibility for inclusion decisions, quality judgments, interpretation, and final wording. The supplementary materials provide the study characteristics and extraction records used in the analysis.

Analysis proceeded in three moments. Moment 1 tested and refined the analytical dimensions using the ten-paper pilot. Moment 2 used 37 papers to develop initial key ideas, subthemes, and themes. Moment 3 examined the remaining 35 papers alongside earlier records to check whether the initial ideas still fit. Together, Moments 2 and 3 covered the 72-paper corpus. Differences in interpretation were discussed by the research team. Relevant source passages were reread and compared with the dimension definitions and written notes before interpretations were retained or revised. No numerical inter-rater agreement score or formal consensus statistic was calculated. The team considered the analysis sufficiently developed when later papers mainly supported existing patterns or added distinctions rather than requiring substantially new analytical arguments. This was a practical interpretive judgment, not a formal test of saturation. The initial 19 themes were reviewed for overlap across the research questions and consolidated into four analytical

arguments. The supplementary materials include the extraction and theme records for the three moments, allowing readers to follow how the analysis developed.

Table 3. Final analytical dimensions

Freire's Critical Pedagogy (AD1–AD5)	**Byram's Intercultural Communicative Competence (AD6–AD10)**	**Karthika's Peace-Integrated Constructive Communication (AD11–AD17)**	**Study Characteristics (AD18–AD25)**
AD1: How does the literature show students or teachers noticing and naming unfair treatment or unequal power, including bullying or harsh feedback?	AD6: How does the literature address openness, curiosity, empathy, or respect toward cultural differences or other social identities (e.g., gender)?	AD11: How does the literature address noticing one's own feelings, values, and behavior during communication?	AD18: Education level or context (basic or higher education)
AD2: How does the literature describe classroom dialogue in which teachers and students build meaning together?	AD7: How does the literature address knowledge of social groups, cultural practices, or institutions?	AD12: How does the literature address managing emotions and reactions during disagreement or conflict?	AD19: Participants and setting
AD3: How does the literature show learners connecting questions or classroom discussion to their own lives, or using problem-based questions to examine an issue?	AD8: How does the literature show people interpreting cultural events or texts and relating them to their own culture?	AD13: How does the literature address listening to and understanding other people's perspectives, feelings, or struggles?	AD20: Sampling strategy
AD4: Does the literature show any action or change after critical reflection?	AD9: How does the literature show people learning about culture during real interactions?	AD14: How does the literature address working with others, negotiating, taking turns, and sharing tasks fairly?	AD21: Study design
AD5: How does English language teaching maintain or challenge unfair social conditions?	AD10: How does the literature show teachers or students critically examining their own and others' cultures?	AD15: How does the literature address handling disagreement without aggression, silence, or withdrawal?	AD22: Data collection tools
		AD16: How does the literature address building and maintaining relationships across social, language, or cultural differences?	AD23: Data analysis methods
		AD17: How does the literature address regular reflection on communication over time and making changes based on that reflection, rather than reflecting on one event only?	AD24: Study duration
			AD25: Reported limitations

Quality, Ethics, and Transparency

A quality appraisal adapted from Dixon-Woods et al. (2006) considered five questions: whether each source stated its aims, used a suitable design, explained how findings were produced, presented enough evidence for its conclusions, and described its analysis clearly. Four papers received at least one "No": Cabling et al. (2020), Cuyos (2025), Espino et al. (2021), and Rachman et al. (2021). The appraisal records and supporting notes for all 72 included publications are provided in the quality-appraisal records. Cuyos (2025) received "No" judgments for design, process, and data sufficiency because it is a conceptual proposal based on existing literature, not an empirical study with participants or an original dataset. Espino et al. (2021) received "No" judgments for design, process, data sufficiency, and analysis because it is a critical discussion of multilingual English language teaching rather than an original empirical study. Cabling et al. (2020) received "No" judgments for design, process, data sufficiency, and analysis: the article uses a roundtable discussion, author reflections, policy critique, and cited literature but does not specify a formal empirical design or systematic analysis. Rachman et al. (2021) received a "No" for analysis because the authors describe their reflective analysis as relying mainly on intuition and personal judgment, without a defined coding scheme or analytic framework.

The "No" judgments did not automatically exclude a source. The five questions were used to record how clearly each publication reported its aims, design, procedures, supporting evidence, and analysis; they were not treated as an automatic exclusion rule or as a claim that every publication type must provide the same empirical dataset. Cabling et al. (2020), Cuyos (2025), and Espino et al. (2021) were retained because their conceptual, theoretical, or policy-related discussions were relevant to the review's focus. However, they were used to interpret concepts and educational issues, not as direct evidence of measured learner outcomes. Rachman et al. (2021) was retained because it provided classroom observations and interview material relevant to the review, although its analytical procedure was weakly specified. Its findings were interpreted cautiously, with this limitation considered when assessing the strength of the claims. Studies reporting participants, procedures, data, and a defined analysis provided a stronger basis for claims about reported learner or teacher outcomes. Thus, the appraisal informed how each source was used and how much confidence was placed in its findings, rather than treating all sources as equivalent. To distinguish the review corpus from background and theoretical sources, the 72 included publications are identified in the quality-appraisal records and in the Moment 2 and Moment 3 study-characteristics records. Other sources cited for context, policy, or theory are not counted among the 72 unless they appear in those study records.

Table 4. Quality appraisal questions

No.	Quality appraisal question
QA1	Are the aims and objectives clearly stated?
QA2	Is the research design appropriate for those aims?
QA3	Is the process used to produce the findings clearly described?
QA4	Is enough data presented to support the interpretations?
QA5	Is the method of analysis appropriate and adequately explained?

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 5. Review profile and selection summary

Review feature	Summary
Records gathered	331
Records excluded	259, including one non-English record removed before title-and-abstract screening
Publications included	72
Publication years	2020–2025
Included by year	2020: 4; 2021: 9; 2022: 6; 2023: 7; 2024: 18; 2025: 28
Access limitation	36 full texts were initially unavailable; secondary screening reclassified 22 as outside

Review feature	Summary
	the Philippine context and 5 as outside English language education; 9 potentially relevant full texts remained unavailable after alternative searches.
Quality appraisal	Cabling et al. (2020), Cuyos (2025), and Espino et al. (2021) received multiple "No" judgments because their conceptual or theoretical designs did not provide the empirical procedures or datasets asked about by the checklist. Rachman et al. (2021) received "No" for reporting the analysis method clearly. These judgments limited how the sources were used; they did not automatically exclude them.
Analytical process	The review used 25 analytical dimensions. Moment 1 tested and refined them with a ten-paper pilot. Moment 2 examined 37 papers, and Moment 3 examined the remaining 35. The pilot papers are part of the 72-publication set. The initial 19 themes were consolidated into four analytical arguments.

The 72 included publications were interpreted through four consolidated analytical arguments that cut across the five research questions. The synthesis compares empirical, conceptual, and policy-oriented evidence and distinguishes direct findings about classroom practices or learner capacities from interpretations about their possible relevance to peacebuilding.

Table 6. Research questions and consolidated analytical arguments

Research question	Consolidated analytical arguments informing the response
RQ1. Incorporation of intercultural and critical pedagogies	Arguments 1–3: difference as a basis for understanding and belonging; making the power behind difference visible; dialogue across difference.
RQ2. Gaps in learner development	Arguments 2–4: the evidence gap between awareness and action; the difference between classroom participation and demonstrated communication skills; the limited evidence on the joint development of the three capacities.
RQ3. Curriculum and teacher-training practices	Arguments 1–4: locally grounded and linguistically inclusive materials, critical inquiry, structured and relationally safe dialogue, and deliberate development of intercultural and communication capacities.
RQ4. Implications for the Philippine education system	Arguments 1, 2, and 4 inform curriculum and teacher-development implications. The reviewed evidence does not establish national-level impact or causal system change.
RQ5. Relevance to peace and social cohesion	All four arguments indicate plausible links to peacebuilding, while the evidence remains stronger for educational practices and proximal outcomes than for sustained social-cohesion outcomes.

Consolidated findings across the five research questions

The backward review showed that several of the original 19 themes overlapped across the research questions. The revised synthesis therefore uses four analytical arguments rather than repeating similar theme labels under each question. The arguments distinguish how difference is represented, how exclusion and unequal power are examined, how people interact across difference, and what learners are able to do. They are not presented as a fixed sequence. The evidence does not show that inclusion automatically leads to critical consciousness, that dialogue necessarily becomes constructive, or that classroom activities produce lasting peacebuilding outcomes.

In this synthesis, direct evidence about peacebuilding refers to findings from sources that explicitly examine peacebuilding, peace education, peace linguistics, or conflict-related communication in an educational context. Studies of general English language teaching are used as evidence about particular teaching practices, representations, attitudes, or learner capacities. Their possible contribution to peacebuilding is treated as an interpretation unless the study directly examines peacebuilding-related outcomes. This distinction is applied in the four arguments below.

Repositioning Difference as a Basis for Understanding and Belonging

The first argument concerns whose languages, cultures, identities, and experiences are recognized in English education. Studies of culturally responsive materials and local learning contexts describe ways of making English lessons more relevant to learners' lives (Arañas & Blancaflor, 2023; Salgado et al., 2024; Poquita & Opeña, 2025; Sonza & Protacio, 2025). Work on Philippine English and World Englishes questions the treatment of one dominant variety as the only legitimate norm (Bernardo, 2022; Merza, 2025; Pontillas, 2024). These studies provide evidence about representation, language norms, and teaching contexts. They do not directly establish that these practices reduce conflict or improve social cohesion.

The distinction becomes clearer when studies assess intercultural learning or skills more directly. Ayunon and Haloc (2021) examined the use of intercultural language-learning principles in Philippine ESL classrooms. Semilla and Jalos (2024) assessed cultural communicative competence and reported uneven results across skills, including weaker performance in appropriate social interaction. Nurazizah et al. (2021) examined intercultural learning among pre-service English teachers in the SEA Teacher Project. These studies do not measure the same outcomes, and their findings should not be read as direct evidence of peacebuilding unless peacebuilding outcomes were examined. They show why inclusive content and teaching activities should not be treated as proof of competence.

Making the Power Behind Difference Visible

The second argument concerns how English education can help learners examine language hierarchies, stereotypes, colonial assumptions, and unequal conditions. Bernardo (2022) analyzed claims, assumptions, and silences in the K–12 English curriculum, while Mangurun (2025) examined representations of Muslim identities in literature and textbooks. Rosos et al. (2022) studied teachers' critical literacy beliefs and lesson plans, and Raton et al. (2024) analyzed teachers' lesson plans for social-justice teaching. The methods differ: curriculum and text analyses show how groups and issues are represented, while teacher-focused studies show what teachers report or plan to do. These findings can inform interpretations about how English education might address exclusion, but they do not by themselves show that learners developed lasting critical awareness, changed their behavior, or contributed to peacebuilding.

The quality appraisal further affects how this argument is interpreted. Cabling et al. (2020) offer a decolonial critique of foreign-language policy and pedagogy, but their article does not report a formal empirical design, systematic data-collection procedure, original dataset, or explicated analytic method. It is therefore used to interpret policy and language ideology, not as direct evidence of learner change or peacebuilding effects. Likewise, Espino et al. (2021) provide a critical discussion of multilingual English language teaching rather than original empirical findings. Their conceptual contribution is relevant to the review, but conclusions about what learners can do must rest on studies that report learner data. A theoretical argument about exclusion is not proof that critical consciousness has developed or that peacebuilding outcomes have occurred.

Turning Dialogue into a Practice of Social Cohesion

The third argument concerns who gets to participate in classroom interaction and how differences are handled. Salayo et al. (2024) examined the use of learners' first language in discussion during the pre-writing stage, including discussion of community issues. Tan et al. (2020) examined small-group discussion in relation to Filipino ESL learners' oral communication self-efficacy. Quileste et al. (2025) studied a group-based flipped classroom for Grade 11 learners in online oral communication, including learners' accounts of peer support and participation. These studies address different outcomes: discussion around community issues, confidence in speaking, and experiences of group learning. They provide evidence about classroom interaction and related learner experiences, not necessarily about peacebuilding itself. None of these outcomes is the same as the ability to manage disagreement constructively, and none alone establishes wider social-cohesion effects.

Rachman et al. (2021) describe a community-of-inquiry approach to English learning and learner autonomy, but the appraisal found that the analysis relied mainly on intuition and personal judgment. The study can help describe a classroom approach, but it provides a weaker basis for claims that depend on a clearly explained analysis. Mabuan (2024) reports English teachers' views of ChatGPT use in English language teaching, including possible support for language practice and concerns about reliability and context. This study provides context about technology-supported teaching, not direct evidence of peacebuilding or demonstrated learner outcomes. Across these studies, the design of interaction matters, but group work or technology alone does not ensure respectful disagreement, fair participation, or social cohesion.

Developing the Capacity to Live and Communicate Across Difference

The fourth argument distinguishes exposure to culture from the development of intercultural competence, critical consciousness, and communication skills. Garcia (2022) examined how intercultural communicative competence was included in English courses in higher education. Ildefonso and Ramos (2025) reported English teachers' self-ratings of their intercultural competence, while Jung and Choe (2024) used interviews with four Filipino English teachers working with international students to explore professional identity. These studies offer evidence about course content, teachers' views, and work experiences, but they do not all measure the same skills or show change over time. Semilla and Jalos (2024) assessed selected cultural communicative skills, while Nurazizah et al. (2021) described intercultural learning among pre-service teachers. These findings provide varying levels of evidence about intercultural learning and skills; they should not be treated as direct proof that peacebuilding capacities have developed unless those outcomes were assessed.

Across the corpus, learner development was more often inferred from cultural content, positive attitudes, reflection, or classroom activities than measured through repeated assessment. Evidence was especially limited on whether learners can maintain constructive communication during conflict, reconsider their views after hearing other perspectives, or use these skills in different settings over time. Few studies examined how all three capacities develop together. The main gap is therefore not simply the absence of peacebuilding-related activities, but the limited evidence of what learners become able to do and whether those abilities last. When a study did not assess peacebuilding directly, its findings were treated as relevant background for interpretation rather than proof of peacebuilding effects.

Curriculum and teacher-development implications across the four arguments

Across RQ1–RQ3, the findings point to several possible directions for curriculum and teacher development: use local and multilingual resources, examine how people and social issues are represented, and plan discussions so learners can question, listen, negotiate, and respond to different views. Teacher development can address how to guide these activities, share speaking opportunities, and handle feedback or disagreement. Reflection may help teachers review their practice, but completing a reflection activity does not by itself show that critical consciousness or teaching practice has changed. These are implications drawn from the reviewed literature, not proof that one curriculum design has already produced peacebuilding outcomes.

RQ4. Implications for the Philippine education system: what the evidence can establish

The fourth research question asks what the literature may imply for the Philippine education system, rather than assuming that national impact has been demonstrated. The reviewed studies raise concerns about whose English varieties and cultural identities appear in learning materials, how Indigenous and multilingual learners are supported, and whether teacher preparation, resources, assessment, and institutional support allow inclusive teaching (Bernardo, 2022; Sonza & Protacio, 2025; Poquita & Opeña, 2025; Ravago et al., 2025; Tarrayo et al., 2021). These sources can inform discussion of curriculum, materials, teacher education, and policy. However, they are not national evaluations of peacebuilding. The review found no national causal evaluation showing that particular English-language practices have changed the Philippine education system or produced measurable changes in peace, conflict, or social cohesion. Possible classroom and policy implications must therefore be kept separate from demonstrated national impact.

RQ5. Relevance to peace and social cohesion

The four arguments suggest ways English education may support conditions associated with peace and social cohesion: recognizing difference, examining exclusion, making dialogue more equitable, and developing intercultural and communication skills. However, the reviewed literature more often describes teaching practices, attitudes, or immediate classroom participation than sustained responses to conflict or social-cohesion outcomes beyond the classroom. Where studies explicitly discuss peacebuilding or peace linguistics, they provide a more direct basis for examining the connection; studies of general English teaching contribute evidence about related practices or capacities, whose peacebuilding value remains an interpretation unless directly assessed. The findings support the relevance of these practices, not proof of their wider impact. Inclusive texts do not guarantee critical reflection, discussion does not guarantee respectful disagreement, and reflection does not necessarily lead to action.

From Related Activities to Connected Capacities

The three lenses help explain how representation, power, and interaction are connected but not interchangeable. Byram's model focuses on the knowledge, attitudes, and skills involved in engaging with cultural difference. Freire's critical pedagogy directs attention to dialogue and the examination of unequal conditions. Karthika's framework focuses on communication practices for managing emotions, relationships, and disagreement. Together, the lenses help distinguish recognizing difference, examining why some differences become grounds for exclusion, and responding constructively. The extraction records also show a limit: many sources address one of these areas, while fewer examine how they work together or change over time. The supporting extraction and analysis records are available in the accompanying online supplementary materials.

The strength of the evidence also varied. Studies that clearly describe participants, procedures, data, and analysis provide a stronger basis for claims about reported outcomes than conceptual discussions or policy critiques. Even empirical studies measure different things: attitudes, confidence, classroom participation, and intercultural skills are not interchangeable. The review therefore did not treat them as equal signs of peacebuilding. The four sources with negative appraisal judgments were retained for the interpretive value they offered but were not used as direct proof of learner change. More generally, findings from studies of English teaching were used to identify practices or capacities that may be relevant to peacebuilding, not as proof of peacebuilding effects when those effects were not assessed. The quality-appraisal records and the study-characteristics tables are available in the accompanying online supplementary materials.

The findings point to several priorities for future research. Studies could assess how learners interpret unfamiliar perspectives, manage disagreement, reconsider their views after discussion, and use communication strategies across settings and over time. Reports should describe participants, data collection, analysis, and limitations clearly. Research that follows learners beyond one lesson or course could help distinguish immediate participation from lasting development and examine whether the three capacities are related in practice.

Review Limitations and Researcher Reflexivity

Several limitations affect how the findings should be read. First, nine potentially relevant full texts remained unavailable after searches through alternative repositories and databases. These records may contain relevant evidence that could not be assessed. Second, the search was limited to English-language material from 2020–2025 and to the platforms and repositories accessed by the team. Relevant work may have been missed, especially material in other languages, work in sources not indexed by the platforms used, or studies behind subscription access. The supplementary materials preserve the prompts and retrieval terms that were available, but the team did not retain a complete, timestamped log of every search query or the exact dates of individual search sessions. The documented materials therefore show the overall search approach, but not every search step in full detail. The review is an interpretation of the located literature and does not claim to cover every study on peacebuilding education.

Third, the 25 analytical dimensions were shaped by Freire's critical pedagogy, Byram's intercultural communicative competence model, and Karthika's peace-integrated constructive communication framework. These lenses helped organize the review, but they may also have directed attention toward ideas already present in the frameworks. The dimensions were revised during Moment 1, and later papers were read alongside earlier records to check whether important distinctions had been merged. The four final arguments are the authors' interpretation of the included literature; they were not tested as a separate model. Quality appraisal helped identify differences in reporting and method, but it could not make the evidence equally strong across all source types. This matters especially for conceptual sources and studies whose methods were not clearly explained.

The researchers' backgrounds also shaped the review. As undergraduate researchers interested in English language education and peacebuilding, the team paid particular attention to language, inclusion, and classroom participation. This focus may also have made peacebuilding-related interpretations more noticeable than other possible readings. To limit overstatement, the team checked source passages, kept written notes, compared studies with different designs, and distinguished teaching practices from learner outcomes and wider social effects. Generative AI (Claude, Anthropic, 2024) was used in accordance with academic disclosure norms and APA 7th guidelines during the preparation of the manuscript to aid with initial title/abstract screening, quality appraisal coding, and data extraction; however, the authors retained full responsibility and human supervision for all final inclusion decisions, quality judgments, and synthesis interpretations. The authors remain responsible for the final interpretations and claims.

CONCLUSION

The review suggests that English education may support peacebuilding by recognizing learners' languages, cultures, identities, and experiences; examining social inequalities and representation; and creating opportunities for constructive communication across differences. The four analytical arguments bring these concerns together while keeping their outcomes distinct. The reviewed literature provides stronger evidence about teaching approaches and classroom experiences than about lasting changes in learners' intercultural competence, critical consciousness, or communication during conflict. Evidence of long-term peacebuilding outcomes and national-level system impact remains insufficient. Findings from general English language teaching research suggest possible links to peacebuilding, but do not establish peacebuilding effects when those effects were not directly examined. Future research should assess learner development over time and distinguish classroom implications from demonstrated effects on wider educational and social conditions.

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Ethical Approval Statement

Ethical approval was not applicable because the study reviewed published literature and did not recruit human participants or involve animals.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no known conflict of interest.

Data Availability Statement

The supplementary materials for this review are openly available through Zenodo at https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.23445763. The repository contains 16 supplementary materials. These include the prompts used to support literature retrieval, screening, quality appraisal, data extraction, and the grouping of key ideas; the quality-appraisal records for the 72 included publications; the study-characteristics tables; the extraction records for the three analysis moments; and the records showing the development of key ideas, themes, and subthemes. The ten-paper pilot is part of the 72 included publications

and is not an additional group. These materials document the appraisal and analysis, but they are not a complete, timestamped search log and do not replace the original publications. The included-publication records should be used to distinguish the 72 items in the review corpus from sources cited only for background, policy, or theory.

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