

Research Article

The Concept Of English As A Foreign Language (Efl) In The Perspective Of Language Education: A Literature Review On Learning Orientation, Classroom Practices, And AI Technology Integration In Indonesia

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Abstract. This study aims to map the conceptual developments and key issues in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning from a language education perspective, particularly in the Indonesian context, which is increasingly influenced by the dynamics of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), bilingual language practices in the classroom, demands for strengthening 21st-century competencies, and the accelerated use of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies such as ChatGPT. The research uses a qualitative approach with a literature study design through content analysis and thematic synthesis of selected literature from the period 2022–2025. The synthesis results show five main themes: (1)

reorientation of EFL objectives towards cross-variety communication and ELF awareness; (2) negotiation of the medium of instruction and use of L1 in EFL classrooms; (3) dimensions of values and character in teaching materials; (4) the quality of academic interaction through linguistic politeness; and (5) the integration of multimodal media and AI (including ChatGPT), which presents opportunities for personalized learning as well as ethical and pedagogical risks. The findings confirm that a contextual understanding of EFL must be supported by micro-pedagogical policies in the classroom, the strengthening of digital literacy and AI, and learning designs that continue to place communicative goals, critical thinking, and character building as core outcomes. This study contributes to providing a conceptual map that can be used as a reference for curriculum development, teacher training, and the EFL research agenda in Indonesia.

Keywords: EFL, ELF, Bilingual Classroom, Character; Politeness, Multimodal.

INTRODUCTION

English in Indonesia is generally positioned as English as a Foreign Language (EFL), which is a language learned primarily through educational institutions with limited exposure outside the classroom. In this context, the learning process depends on the quality of pedagogical design, teacher competence, teaching materials, and a learning ecosystem that can provide adequate language input. However, the contemporary EFL landscape can no longer be understood solely as the mastery of “standard language” for academic purposes. Global developments have encouraged a shift in orientation from native speaker norms towards cross-variety communication practices, which are widely discussed in the perspective of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF). In the Indonesian context, the ELF discourse is growing stronger in response to realistic international communication needs, while challenging overly normative teaching paradigms (Ardiansyah et al., 2024).

At the classroom level, the reality of EFL is also colored by negotiations over the use of the medium of instruction. On the one hand, the use of English as the language of instruction is considered to enrich exposure and build communicative habits; on the other hand, the use of Indonesian (L1) still often appears as a strategy for clarification, classroom management, and affective support. This phenomenon is not necessarily synonymous with the failure of EFL, but can be interpreted as a pedagogical practice that requires clear boundaries and objectives so as not to erode opportunities for target language practice (Falah et al., 2025; Kusumaningsih et al., 2024).

Beyond linguistic aspects, EFL learning is increasingly required to incorporate dimensions of values, character, and 21st-century competencies. Teaching materials such as textbooks are not merely language tools but also vehicles for value construction through the representation of educational character (Andi Sadapotto et al., 2022). Classroom interactions also become a social space, so the quality of language politeness of lecturers and students also determines the academic climate of EFL learning (Arisandi et al., 2024). On the other hand, digital transformation

presents multimodal learning media that enriches the meaning and learning experience (Yana & Abbas, 2022). Finally, the emergence of generative AI such as ChatGPT expands the possibilities for learning personalization, language feedback, and task design, but at the same time raises issues of reliability, academic ethics, and pedagogical readiness (Balci, 2024; Dai & Liu, 2024; Mohamed, 2024).

Based on these dynamics, this article poses the research question: how does the current literature map the concept of EFL from a language education perspective, particularly in relation to learning orientation, classroom practices, and AI technology integration? The purpose of this article is to present a thematic synthesis of the 2022–2025 literature to strengthen the conceptual foundation and practical implications of EFL learning, especially for prospective teachers and the development of micro-learning policies in Indonesia.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a library research design. The research data consists of scientific documents (journal articles and scholarly papers) from 2022 to 2025 that are relevant to the themes of EFL, the Indonesian context, classroom practices, and learning technology. Data collection was conducted through careful reading of documents, recording key ideas, and extracting thematic information. Analysis used content analysis with the following steps: (1) coding central concepts and issues; (2) grouping codes into categories; (3) compiling major themes; and (4) thematic synthesis to explain the relationship between themes and language education implications. The validity of the synthesis was ensured through category consistency and cross-referencing between sources (conceptual triangulation across literature).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Concept and Definition of English as a Foreign Language (EFL)

Conceptually, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) refers to the learning of English in a social context where English is not used as the primary language of everyday communication, so that the process of acquiring and developing language competence is highly dependent on the formal education ecosystem and classroom learning design. In the framework of language education, EFL places the classroom as the main source of exposure, practice, and feedback for learners, especially when authentic English interaction outside the classroom is relatively limited (Dai & Liu, 2024; Mohamed, 2024). Thus, EFL is not merely a language status label, but rather a marker of pedagogical conditions that require planned strategies to provide input, encourage output, and build a supportive learning environment.

The main characteristics of EFL learning are evident in the need to strengthen structured input, manage language anxiety, and optimize opportunities for communicative practice, which are often “rare” outside the classroom. In practice,

EFL classes tend to face variations in ability, limited exposure time, and the need to use scaffolding strategies so that learners can still understand the material while being encouraged to produce language. Therefore, EFL learning requires task design that maximizes meaningful interaction, the use of rich learning resources, and the presence of teachers as facilitators who balance accuracy and fluency (Balci, 2024; Falah et al., 2025).

The Context of EFL Learning in Language Education

The context of EFL learning generally takes place in a non-native speaker environment, where English is not the primary medium of social activity at home, in the community, or in institutions. This condition makes English language learning more "institutionalized": learning success is greatly influenced by the quality of teaching, classroom culture, and the availability of opportunities to practice in situations that resemble real communication. In the Indonesian context, this dynamic can be seen in the way schools and universities strive to use English as the language of instruction, while also negotiating it with the reality of students' abilities and the demands of understanding the material (Falah et al., 2025).

Limited language input outside the classroom is one of the most prominent characteristics of the EFL context. When natural exposure is low, learners tend to rely on the classroom as a source of "valid" and "structured" input, but the classroom is also prone to becoming a space dominated by Indonesian if learning strategies are not designed to encourage the use of the target language. Findings on the reasons teachers use Indonesian in English classes show that L1 is often present as a strategy for clarification and classroom management, which on the one hand helps understanding, but on the other hand has the potential to reduce opportunities to practice English if not managed proportionally (Kusumaningsih et al., 2024).

Therefore, input enrichment can be strengthened through multimodal media that provide context, meaning, and visual-audio support so that learners obtain richer and easier-to-process input, especially when sources of input outside the classroom are limited (Yana & Abbas, 2022).

The Purpose and Orientation of English Language Learning in the Context of EFL

From a language education perspective, the main objective of EFL learning is to develop communicative competence that enables learners to use English to understand, express ideas, and negotiate meaning in a variety of situations. This orientation becomes increasingly relevant when English is practiced as a cross-variety global communication tool, so that successful communication is determined not only by adherence to certain norms, but also by comprehensibility, interaction strategies, and pragmatic sensitivity. The discourse of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) in learning in Indonesia reinforces the need to set realistic communicative

goals, without neglecting academic standards, but balancing them with the social function of English as a lingua franca (Ardiansyah et al., 2024).

The balance between linguistic and communicative aspects is a core requirement in the EFL context. Grammatical accuracy, vocabulary, and pronunciation remain important as the foundation of academic literacy, but these achievements need to be combined with the ability to use language for communicative purposes, including argumentation and critical thinking skills. Findings from a systematic review of EFL teachers' involvement in critical thinking development show that critical thinking is considered important, but its implementation requires adequate pedagogical understanding and consistent activity design (Yuan et al., 2022).

In addition, the quality of communication in the classroom cannot be separated from pragmatic competence, such as politeness in language that supports the climate of academic interaction, courage to participate, and the quality of discussion in EFL learning (Arisandi et al., 2024).

Implications of the EFL Concept on the Learning Process

The conceptual implications of EFL on the learning process lie in the need to select approaches and methods that can compensate for the limitations of input outside the classroom, while encouraging meaningful output in the classroom. Learning that focuses too much on language form exercises risks producing passive competence, while learning that is only communicative without a linguistic foundation can hinder accuracy and academic literacy development. Therefore, learning approaches need to be designed to bring together rich input, guided interaction, and authentic language production activities through collaborative tasks, text-based discussions, and the use of multimodal media to strengthen understanding and retention (Yana & Abbas, 2022).

On the other hand, the character dimension is also part of the pedagogical implications because EFL teaching materials (e.g., textbooks) carry representations of values that can be processed into reflective and dialogical activities, so that language learning also supports broader educational goals (Andi Sadapotto et al., 2022).

The roles of teachers and learners in EFL classrooms require a shift from transmission to active learning facilitation. Teachers act as designers of the learning environment, regulating the intensity of English use, providing appropriate scaffolding, and fostering a safe and polite interaction climate so that learners dare to try and are not afraid of making mistakes. In this framework, linguistic politeness and pragmatic practices function as the "social infrastructure" of EFL learning: without a supportive communication climate, communicative learning is difficult to optimize (Arisandi et al., 2024). Furthermore, the integration of AI technology, including ChatGPT, opens up opportunities for personalized exercises, feedback, and

language exploration, but requires AI literacy and academic ethics rules so that AI becomes a learning support, not a substitute for learners' thinking and language production processes (Balci, 2024; Dai & Liu, 2024; Mohamed, 2024).

The Relevance of the EFL Concept for FKIP Students

For FKIP English Education students, understanding EFL is directly relevant to strengthening the pedagogical competencies of prospective teachers, especially in their ability to diagnose learning needs, select teaching strategies appropriate to the context, and design activities that increase language exposure and practice in the classroom. The Indonesian context, which has begun to discuss ELF extensively, suggests that prospective teachers need to have an adaptive goal orientation: maintaining academic literacy standards while also preparing learners for diverse global communication. This awareness helps prospective teachers develop a more realistic perspective on “fluency” and “acceptability” in English communication, so that assessment and feedback are not solely oriented towards formal errors, but also towards successful communication and interaction strategies (Ardiansyah et al., 2024).

Adjusting learning strategies to the local Indonesian context also requires prospective teachers to understand the dynamics of L1 use in EFL classrooms. Findings on the use of English as instruction and the reasons for using Indonesian show that bilingual practices often emerge as a pedagogical response to differences in ability, clarification needs, and limitations of input outside the classroom (Falah et al., 2025; Kusumaningsih et al., 2024).

In this case, FKIP students need to be equipped with the ability to design micro policies in the classroom regarding when L1 is used and when English is maximized, as well as developing learning tools that encourage active participation, critical thinking, and academic integrity. This readiness is even more important when AI/ChatGPT begins to be adopted in learning; prospective teachers must be able to manage AI as a source of practice and reflection with clear guidelines so as not to reduce authentic language use or the quality of learners' thinking (Balci, 2024; Mohamed, 2024; Yuan et al., 2022).

CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion of the five sub-topics, it can be concluded that English as a Foreign Language (EFL) is a pedagogical concept that places English language learning in social conditions that do not support the natural use of English outside the classroom. In this context, EFL is not only understood as a language status but as an educational framework that requires conscious, systematic, and contextual learning design. The classroom functions as the main space for providing language input, practice, and interaction, so that the quality of learning design and the role of

the teacher become determining factors in the success of English language acquisition.

The context of EFL learning in language education, especially in Indonesia, is characterized by a non-native speaker environment and limited exposure to English outside the classroom. These conditions necessitate pedagogical strategies that can compensate for limited input, whether through proportional management of the medium of instruction, utilization of multimodal media, or creation of a classroom climate that encourages active and meaningful use of English.

The objectives and orientation of English language learning in the EFL context are geared toward developing communicative competence balanced with mastery of linguistic aspects. Learning no longer focuses solely on the accuracy of language structures, but also on the ability to use English to communicate effectively, ethically, and critically in various situations. This balance is important so that learners are not only able to understand the rules of the language, but also able to participate in academic and social interactions with confidence and responsibility.

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