



P-ISSN 2355-2794
E-ISSN 2461-0275

Developing Pre-service Teachers' Intercultural Communication Competence: Learning through Extracurricular Informal Digital Learning of English

Nur Arifah Drajati^{*1}
Lynde Tan²
Surya Agung Wijaya¹
Agustina Tyarakanita¹

¹Department of English Education, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Sebelas Maret, Surakarta 57126, INDONESIA

²Department of Primary Education, Primary Literacy Curriculum and Pedagogy, Western Sydney University, Sydney, New South Wales 2000, AUSTRALIA

Abstract

Intercultural communication and language proficiency have become increasingly essential in preparing Indonesian EFL pre-service teachers (PSTs) for cultural diversity. Indonesian EFL PSTs only communicated English to people with the same majors or educational background. This study explores the implication of developing PSTs' intercultural communication competence (ICC) at one of the universities in Indonesia that designed and implemented informal digital learning of English (IDLE) as an extracurricular program. Thirty-seven university PSTs from various multicultural backgrounds with insufficient overseas experiences (such as exchange programs or internship programs) participated in this study. We conducted the study –for one semester during the pandemic, where the PSTs mainly communicated in online environments. Combining the analysis from observations, artifacts, diaries, and interviews, this study reports that engaging in extracurricular IDLE potentially unlocked PSTs to 1) become aware of the value of their own cultural background and biases in developing their perception of other cultures and 2) evaluate their English language choices that potentially affected on how they addressed some topics and interpretation with overseas friends (OFs). Furthermore, this study provides insight into the benefits of implementing ICC for PSTs,

* Corresponding author, email: nurarifah_drajati@staff.uns.ac.id

Citation in APA style: Drajati, N. A., Tan, L., Wijaya, S. A., & Tyarakanita, A. (2024). Developing pre-service teachers' intercultural communication competence: Learning through extracurricular informal digital learning of English. *Studies in English Language and Education*, 11(2), 855-872.

Received October 16, 2023; Revised February 1, 2024; Accepted April 15, 2024; Published Online May 31, 2024

<https://doi.org/10.24815/siele.v11i2.34775>

especially in language development, and how they perceived this as a motivation for designing their future classroom practices.

Keywords: Critical cultural awareness, extracurricular informal digital learning of English, intercultural communicative competence (ICC), intercultural task, social media.

1. INTRODUCTION

Informal digital learning of English (IDLE) plays a role in promoting PSTs' cross-cultural understanding of English as an International Language (EIL) (Lee, 2019b; Lee & Lee, 2018; Lee & Sylvén, 2021). Integrating IDLE in classroom practice has been shown to have a powerful effect on mitigating historical and linguistic barriers to English learners as it brings PSTs into activities of collaboration and exchange (Dressman & Lee, 2021). Engaging in IDLE activities can expose the learners to cultural differences in communicative practice and the broad range of language discourse options with the partners they trust (Avgousti, 2018). To support PSTs who engage in foreign language and intercultural communication, IDLE has two designs, extramural and extracurricular (Benson, 2011). In extramural, learning focuses on PSTs' decisions over IDLE activities. On the other hand, extramural IDLE allows lecturers to intervene in the learning focus from out-of-class digital activities (Lee et al., 2021; Lee & Sylvén, 2021). Lecturers can introduce IDLE activities and acknowledge PSTs to the concept and framework of intercultural communication competence (ICC) in the classroom. Therefore, the tasks provided are based on PSTs' out-of-class digital activities. Such activities provide opportunities for PSTs to learn about the culture and linguistic norms without leaving the supportive context of foreign language learning. Moreover, PSTs' independent learning can potentially support them in having intercultural attitudes, knowledge, skills, and critical awareness.

Byram's (1997) and his followers' works have inspired the current study to open a theoretical-driven discussion between Benson's (2011) conceptual extracurricular IDLE and Byram's (1997) ICC model. The alignment of this study arises because of the lack of discussion in both areas. We positioned our study using Benson's (2011) works as a point of departure to conceptualize extracurricular IDLE activities as allowing students to develop self-directed and self-instructed learning for language development by having out-of-class activities, but it is semi-structured and certified. Moreover, the semi-structured model of extracurricular IDLE allows us to put Byram's (1997) ICC model to promote several stages in out-of-class activities and English language learning. We consider extracurricular IDLE activities because affective filters were low during the learning process of authentic language use. Although it was reported as challenging to replicate in the classrooms, it can still construct the learning objective, unlike extramural IDLE.

To our knowledge, IDLE and ICC have been discussed per se. It has been indicated in a systematic review of ICC and online exchanges (see Avgousti, 2018) and a scoping review on IDLE (see Soyoo et al., 2021). IDLE is under the umbrella terms of computer-assisted language learning (CALL) (Lee, 2017, 2021), especially naturalistic CALL. IDLE discussions were driven by the willingness to communicate (WTC) as the output of the program based on the naturalistic process of IDLE (see

Lee, 2019a; Lee & Drajati, 2019; Lee et al., 2021) and Spolsky's language policy (Wijaya et al., 2021). On the other hand, various studies (e.g., Alghasab & Alvares-Ayure, 2023; Chen, 2017; Özdemir, 2017; Valencia & Benavides, 2018; Wu & Miller, 2019) which implemented Byram's (1997) ICC model with non-naturalistic CALL have not interwoven Benson's (2011) conceptual theory of extracurricular IDLE. Therefore, this initial study opened discussion by interweaving two conceptual models between extracurricular IDLE and ICC into teaching and learning practices. We draw attention to two research questions, as follows:

1. What kinds of ICC elements are implemented in their conversation with online overseas friends?
2. How were dimensions of ICC and English communications developed through extracurricular IDLE?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Roles of IDLE as an Extracurricular Program in Promoting Intercultural Communication Competence

IDLE offers self-directed learning environments that can be freely accessed for 24 hours per week (Lee, 2021). IDLE encourages PSTs to meet other PSTs from other countries where English becomes a valuable asset in communication (Lee, 2017, 2019a, 2019b; Lee & Dressman, 2017; Lee & Lee, 2018). PSTs are willing to communicate in English from IDLE environments because they provide low affective filters. IDLE and intercultural communication are closely related because they support learners to communicate in English with people from different cultural backgrounds. However, language learning and intercultural culture are interconnected but can be distinguished in various aspects. For example, some literature indicates that having friends from various cultural backgrounds in online spaces could enhance intercultural knowledge, attitude, and skills (Chen, 2017; Özdemir, 2017; Valencia & Benavides, 2018; Wu & Miller, 2019). This concept is anchored in Byram's (1997) and Byram and Risager's (2000) intercultural communication competence (ICC) model, where his model advanced Hymes' (1972) work on communication competence (CC) for English as a second and foreign language learning (see Table 1).

Table 1. Byram's (1997) intercultural communication competence framework.

Parameters	Descriptions
Knowledge	of social groups and their cultural beliefs, practices, and artifacts in one's own and one's interlocutor's country at societal and individual levels.
Attitudes	respect, willingness, curiosity, openness, interest, self-awareness, and readiness to suspend misbeliefs about other cultures and beliefs about one's own culture.
Skills of interpreting and relating	refer to the ability to make sense of a cultural document/event from another culture to expound it and connect it with documents/events from one's own.
Skills of discovery and interaction	refer to the ability to navigate and explore cultural beings (people), perspectives/knowledge, practices, and artifacts and the capability of translating cultural knowledge, attitudes, and skills into authentic communication and interaction.

Table 1 continued...

Critical cultural awareness	is the capacity to critically cultural perspective, practice, and artifacts in one's own and other countries.
-----------------------------	---

By operating Byram's ICC model, current body literature on ICC and IDLE indicates PSTs potentially develop ICC by comparing cultures to create a landscape representing their own native culture and overseas cultures facilitated by WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, WeChat, Facebook groups, and Livemocha (Chen, 2017; Wu & Miller, 2019). Moreover, a systematic review of ICC and online spaces indicated that online spaces were limited to e-mail, Skype, blogs, and Wikis, and six studies used Facebook and Twitter (see Avgousti, 2018). Therefore, to respond to previous studies, we expanded to potential specific apps (e.g. Tandem, Bottled, Ablo, and Speaky) with explicit and implicit policies to promote intercultural communication. PSTs also manage additional platforms based on their interests.

In contrast, enrolling PSTs in IDLE spaces does not mean they will automatically have intercultural and critical cultural awareness regarding potential learning disruption (Valencia & Benavides, 2018). Therefore, Lee (2021) proposed a three-stage continuum model of IDLE integration from in-class, extracurricular, and extramural CALL. Moreover, in line with Byram (1997), Lee distinguished three locations of ICC development, including classroom, fieldwork, and independent learning, where the degree of teachers' intervention was different.

Therefore, this study interweaves Byram's (1997) ICC model and extracurricular IDLE. Extracurricular IDLE means "self-directed, self-instructed, digital learning of English in semi-structured, out-of-class environments that are still linked to a formal language program" (Lee, 2019c, p. 115). Therefore, the teacher's role becomes a potential asset to support learning focus from the extracurricular IDLE model. The scaffolding of lesson plans, in-class and out-of-class learning activities, and assessments based on Byram's ICC model can be managed (Özdemir, 2017). These recommendations are our points of departure in generating extracurricular IDLE, while the referenced works could still be potentially expanded with various virtual environments.

2.2 Two Modes of Extracurricular IDLE

There are two modes of extracurricular IDLE: in-class and out-of-class learning activities for building ICC and English, although it emphasizes out-of-class activities more. First, in-class activities introduce and acknowledge PSTs with ICC concepts (Aguilar, 2008) and introduce various IDLE spaces as capacity support (Lee, 2017). This in-class activity is provided regarding the context of this study. Indonesian in-class activities to promote intercultural communication competence are limited by having interactions between local and international students (Abduh & Rosmaladewi, 2018) or replacing the absence of interlocutors with tasks related to culture (Kusumaningputri & Widodo, 2018). However, not all universities in this study context have international collaborators, experts, lecturers, or students who study in their universities every year. Therefore, this present study is oriented to building PSTs' intercultural knowledge and attitude by encouraging "1) understanding how others perceive their cultures; 2) developing respect and tolerance; and 3) preventing manifestations of prejudice, discrimination, and hate" (Alghasab & Alvares-Ayure,

2023, p. 22) with other classroom members. In-class learning activities could also provide explicit feedback on PSTs' English language skills by sharing their knowledge, arguing various norms, and justifying information from their out-of-class activities.

To interweave in-class and out-of-class activities, teacher roles can be focused on designing key learning areas, learning objectives, ICT resources (e.g. hardware and software), and rationale (e.g. less anxiety, more interaction, more willingness to communicate, etc.), e-learning activities, and evaluation (Lee, 2021). Furthermore, the second phase can be focused on pre-service teacher-OFs activities in IDLE spaces. Mimicking extramural IDLE, out-of-class activities are designed to give PSTs more freedom to build their intercultural skills by allowing PSTs to choose and design their own IDLE spaces (e.g. Tandem, Bottled, Ablo, Speak, Facebook, WhatsApp, Pinterest, Snapchat, Instagram, Messenger, Twitter, LinkedIn, video game community), and to look for overseas friends (OFs). By having IDLE spaces, PSTs indicated building cooperative and collaborative English learning (Scholz, 2017; Wijaya et al., 2021), cross-cultural understanding (Lee, 2019b), and perceptions of English as an international language (Lee & Lee, 2018). Compared with only in-class activities, IDLE out-of-class activities can fully take advantage of PSTs' motivation and self-confidence to use English (Godwin-Jones, 2019; Lee, 2019a; Lee & Drajati, 2019; Shafirova & Cassany, 2019). EFL PSTs are mostly shy to use English with local PSTs, and EFL classrooms rarely have international teachers or PSTs while learning English. Therefore, having OFs who communicated in English from IDLE spaces opened potential learning to build ICC skills that limited access to EFL learners in the classroom (Chen, 2017; Özdemir, 2017; Valencia & Benavides, 2018; Wu & Miller, 2019). We hope PSTs build theoretical knowledge, practical experiences, and reflection by employing extracurricular IDLE.

3. METHOD

3.1 Research Context

This research was conducted from January to June 2020 during the early pandemic case in an ICC course in ELT studies at an urban university in Indonesia. There are 37 Indonesian undergraduate EFL PSTs enrolled in the course (9 males and 28 females, 19-20 years old, studying in the English Education department). The participants could withdraw from the research at any time, which did not affect their academic performances. All the participants were invited to participate in the research and consented. This study was not intended to elicit sensitive data. However, the collected data from out-of-class data, which mainly occurs on some social media platforms, has a high potential for bias. Thus, all private information between PSTs and OFs was checked to be validated and protected. Moreover, the participants' recruitment occurred after the authors' University Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed and approved the study.

The lecturer and PSTs did not expect the learning process to change to online learning after the first case of the pandemic in Indonesia appeared. Therefore, the ICC course in ELT studies was implemented in two sessions, 25% face-to-face and 75% online sessions on the Moodle platform. In the need analysis process, PSTs were asked

whether they had friends from other countries or had the experience of travelling overseas. None of the PSTs had any experience of traveling overseas, but a few had some online overseas friends from social media. Therefore, the researchers built a research design.

3.2 Research Design

The research design of this present study is a qualitative case study that describes recent actions (Yin, 2018). Three phases in that ICC course in ELT studies were grounded in theoretical knowledge, practical experiences, and reflection.

In the first phase, we conducted four offline and two online meetings. PSTs learned and discussed ICC and IDLE concepts and roles, and they analysed intercultural practices from various videos and books (e.g. foodways including offering and refusing food and changing food habits; holidays including Ramadan, Thanksgiving, Halloween, New Year's Offerings; luck and supernatural forces including eclipse, numbers, black magic; male/female relations, and gender issues). They reported in Moodle and discussed with their friends, giving their opinions on various topics to build PSTs' curiosity and openness. The online classroom in Moodle was used for a micro sociocultural reality from IDLE spaces before they experienced and interacted with intercultural speakers. Moreover, PSTs were also introduced to social media applications facilitating online interaction with overseas friends. They also learned about potential learning and risks from social media applications to be fully aware of their practices in IDLE spaces. It was aimed to make the PSTs use them wisely because the lecturer would not be involved during the out-of-class process. PSTs could choose the application (see Table 2).

Table 2. The name of social media applications used by pre-service teachers.

No.	Social Media Apps	Participant's Codes	Total
1.	Tandem	PST 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 22, 28, 31, 33, 35, 36, 37, 27	18
2.	WhatsApp	PST 1, 4, 7, 8, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 22, 23, 24, 31, 34, 36	16
3.	Bottled	PST 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 10, 12, 13, 19, 22, 25, 26, 29, 30, 31, 27	16
4.	Instagram	PST 2, 6, 7, 13, 20, 24, 27, 35, 36, 37	10
5.	Twitter	PST 6, 22, 27, 32, 33, 34	6
6.	Ablo	PST 7, 8, 9, 10, 28, 30	6
7.	Speaky	PST 1, 4, 20, 21	4
8.	Facebook	PST 32, 35	2
9.	Line	PST 4	1
10.	Discord	PST 12	1

In the second phase, in around five weeks, PSTs independently needed to find OFs or interlocutors from out-of-class activities. The PSTs introduced themselves to their new friends and discussed the topics previously learned in the first phase of the social media application. They would seek information about target cultures and share their cultures with their interlocutors. During this phase, PSTs potentially discussed similarities and differences between their cultures and the target ones. During this phase, PSTs might encounter unpredictable situations; for example, they face unpleasant situations and new languages and learn how to address sensitive issues (e.g. male/female relations and gender issues). Therefore, they would rely on their

intercultural skills to encounter those situations and to maintain their friendship. PSTs conducted auto ethnography during this phase, collecting and drafting diaries.

In the final phase, in around five meetings, nine topics of diaries should be written, with a minimum of 100 words per topic. PSTs wrote diaries about classroom activities, including what I understand about ICC, what I understand about IDLE, what I learned from another culture, and what my friends think about my opinion about other cultures. Moreover, PSTs also reported their experiences communicating with new OFs, including how to start their conversation; how PSTs address foodways, health practices, and holidays; how PSTs encounter topics about luck and supernatural forces, male/female relations, gender issues; how PSTs face barriers in terms of English expression; and how PSTs tackle miscommunication. Furthermore, PSTs shared their experiences with their classmates and teachers through a Moodle platform and gave responses or comments on their classmates' stories to seek friends' feedback.

3.3 Data Collection and Analysis

We employed [Braun and Clarke's \(2008\)](#) thematic analysis. Drawing from various sources, the researchers extracted artifacts, for instance, pictures, into texts. Various data texts were repeatedly read and highlighted to see the similarities and differences across the data, and then we emerged ICC from key and extracurricular IDLE concepts. We carried out coding, although the categorization was discussed and agreed upon by all researchers. The coded data were sorted based on [Byram's \(1997\)](#) ICC theories and two research questions to see how each coded data was related. We drew into three themes: stage 1: building PSTs' attitudes and knowledge, stage 2: practicing intercultural skills in IDLE spaces, and stage 3: reflecting on intercultural experience. To determine our data, we turned to lexical resource analysis. For instance, "I am so excited to learn...; I feel amazed and more respectful of foreign cultures." It was shown that the PSTs lacked experience with the target culture but were open to new situations.

Table 3. Data sources.

Data Sources	Criteria	Definition
Classroom observation	In-class data	In the forums provided by Moodle, the pre-service teachers discussed various topics and activities (e.g. sharing and reflecting on videos, reading cultural books, and discussions).
Pre-service teachers' diaries	Out-of-class data	The pre-service teachers were sharing screenshots of their communication with OFs. They also shared their stories in the document (file uploaded on Moodle).
Written interviews	In-class data Out-of-class data	At the end of the course, open-ended and closed-item questions were used to collect the pre-service teachers' opinions about ICC and IDLE. The following are the sample questions. (e.g. What is your opinion about getting knowledge about other cultures from reading articles and watching videos and from your overseas friends? What are the differences in your attitude before and after you know your overseas friends' cultures? How do you act about other cultures before and after communicating with your friends? Does it decline your identity as Indonesian? Will you continue the communication between you and your overseas friends?) including prompts and probes.

4. RESULTS

There are three stages of this study. The first stage is conceptualized based on Byram (1997), who acknowledges that the first stage of developing ICC is an intercultural attitude followed by knowledge. As intercultural attitude development and change contribute to intercultural knowledge, this study integrated both terms as fundamental aspects for PSTs before they practice in IDLE. The second stage is PSTs' skills of interpreting and relating and skills of discovery and interaction, where they need to implement their intercultural knowledge and attitude in authentic communication. The third stage purposely acknowledges that based on PSTs' reflection to explicitly present their critical cultural awareness because prior studies (e.g. Valencia & Benavides, 2018) reported it as the most difficult part to achieve on ICC.

4.1 Stage 1: Building Pre-service Teachers' Attitude and Knowledge

The lecturer in this study encouraged PSTs to have an intercultural attitude and knowledge from in-class activities. PSTs developed their curiosity and openness toward other cultures by reading e-books about manners and intercultural communication, watching videos (e.g. table manners in various countries, local celebrations), finding other sources to supply them with knowledge about cultures worldwide, and empowering by classroom discussion about those topics. These activities aimed to engage PSTs in internal and individual processes of learning about similarities and differences in cultural topics. Moreover, this also helped raise PSTs' respect, willingness, curiosity, openness, interest, self-awareness, and readiness to suspend misbeliefs and beliefs about one's culture, as shown in the following excerpts:

- (1) I am so excited to learn how people live in other parts of the world. Their various customs and cultural identities make me want to know more about them. There are many things and interesting facts that I never knew. (PST 16's written interview)
- (2) I feel amazed and respect foreign' cultures. It makes me want to travel around countries and experience the culture for myself. (PST 19's written interview)

The discussion activity after watching videos related to topics of ICC (e.g. foodways, health practices, and holidays) in the course helped PSTs interpret, summarise, and share new knowledge from different target cultures with their friends. This process also helped develop PSTs' critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Sharing such information within-group friends enabled the acquisition of new knowledge from friends' perspectives and vice versa, as shown in the following statement:

- (3) I got new insight from a Holi festival video. I only know about Holi, a festival of colours, and I just found out the story behind this festival. We discussed what we would watch before watching this video with my classmates. One of my friends has some background knowledge about this festival as she loves to watch Indian dramas and movies. She stated that the video would talk about a demon named "Holika". (PST 14's reflective diary)

Therefore, PSTs learned to understand another person's perspectives without losing their own during in-class activities to confront cultural conflicts. They also

learned to interact appropriately and effectively with others from different cultural backgrounds (see the following extract).

- (4) I enjoyed this ICC course. It is because I can reflect on my culture and understand others. I watch various cultural videos and can share interesting ones with other class friends. This activity helps me to understand the important facts of other cultures and how I should engage with people from other cultures. But, when I am chatting on the apps with people from other countries and cultures, I feel nervous or even angry with them because some do not read my greetings or reply to my chats. But I finally met a friend who enjoyed talking with me, especially when I discussed traditional food, which he also worked in the culinary industry in Thailand. (PST 18's reflective diary)

As shown from the PSTs' written interviews, watching the video about cultures worldwide on YouTube made them realize that another culture is unique. PSTs found surprising facts about other cultures and compared them to their own (see PST 3's written interview). These activities encouraged them to develop discovery, interpreting skills, and critical cultural awareness. Moreover, these activities also motivated them to learn a language.

- (5) We watch YouTube videos from several vloggers about holidays in the world. Although the vlogger was from Asia, they spoke English and provided captions to help catch some new words, such as the place's name, "Buñol", a town in Spain. They also talked about an unusual holiday called "La Tomatina". They have the same culture as festival colours in India, but Spanish people tend to use tomatoes instead of colourful powder. But it is quite a waste, and there aren't any similar holidays like them here. However, I imagine that if I were there, it would be so much fun because I love tomato juice. (PST 3's written interview)

There is a pedagogical benefit of watching vloggers or videos on YouTube. It contains educational resources to learn language and culture that are easy-to-access sources. Moreover, PSTs also realized the importance of learning global English. Like Indonesian people, people from most countries use English as their foreign language, and they have various accents. PSTs show their attitude toward respecting the varieties of English and English users presented in the following extract.

- (6) Actually, I love Korean culture so much. I usually watch the channel Korean English Man or Jolly as they mostly talk about Korean food, and sometimes they invite famous people from South Korea. Moreover, I also watch Mykoreandic, where he usually shares short comedies about Korean culture on TikTok. I think they roasted their own culture, but it is fun. Watching their videos, now makes me easily understand when Koreans speak English. (PST 24's written interview)
- (7) Haiyaa!!! That is my favourite punchline from my favourite YouTuber. Uncle Roger is a YouTube character created by Nigel Ng. Uncle Roger used a Chinese accent when roasting people who cooked *nasi* or rice wrongly and much more traditional food. Our group chose to discuss how to cook rice, and we found out that each country has its own way of cooking rice. I think I also learned new words when watching his video, such as translucent, colander, etc. (PST 17's written interview)

4.2 Stage 2: Practicing Intercultural Skills in IDLE Spaces

During this process, PSTs conducted independent out-of-class learning that challenged their intercultural skills, especially skills of interpreting and relating and skills of discovery and interaction. PSTs met OFs from 45 countries where English

was considered as a first language (e.g. America and Australia), a second language (e.g. Malaysia and Philippines), or a foreign language (e.g. Lebanon and Japan).

- (8) OF_Urdu: In Urdu, we mostly use “Allah Hafiz” instead of goodbye. You know that is why I ask 😊😊

OF_Urdu: This means you are saying goodbye like “Allah Hafiz.”

PST 22: Am I saying goodbye to you on Twitter?

PST 22: Sorry

OF_Urdu: Yup

OF_Urdu: Mostly, we can use in the sense of goodbye.

Miscommunication often arises among PSTs during chat sessions, particularly when they need to pay more attention to the fact that they are in different time zones, which can significantly impact the context of their conversations. PSTs' interest in learning language thereby prompts them to discern the similarities and dissimilarities in meaning within the framework of their culture and the target cultures they were studying (read: PST 22 diary below).

- (9) I am facing a miscommunication with my friend. One day, I asked him some expressions in Urdu. He answered that Pakistani usually do not say goodbye, but they replaced it with “Allah Hafiz”. It means May Allah protect you. And after that, I replied to him on Twitter by saying Allah Hafiz in the wrong context. I said it in the morning when his time was earlier than mine, around 2 hours. Then, I used the private chat to clarify it. I learned that I need to consider time during the conversations. I forgot that my friends lived in different time zones, and my words might have different meanings. Next time, it is better for me to use it at night before we go to bed. (PST 22's diary)

PSTs also explained that they met OFs who wanted to learn English from them. Therefore, PSTs were not only the ones who learned English. With OFs, PSTs discussed OFs' first language vocabulary. PSTs encountered an additional hurdle, but they could effectively manage conflicts arising within their communication. Discussing the problems became the source of learning for PSTs to understand the circumstances in the communication, including time, context, promptness, brevity, and clarity. Furthermore, PSTs visually interpreted and analysed diverse cultural information, including in the form of pictures, to discern the shared attributes and divergences between their and OFs' culture. Consequently, this study yielded the noteworthy finding that the utilization of multimodal texts, encompassing an array of elements such as pictures, audio, texts, emojis, videos, stickers, and others, assumed a vital and instrumental role in alleviating misunderstandings for PSTs and their OFs (see PST 37 diary below).

- (10) According to my [OF's name], corn is the most popular food ingredient in Mexico. It is usually processed into tortillas as flatbread and corn soup, usually called Pozole. Then, she sent me the link to a video of the Pozole recipe. I think it is similar to beef stew in Indonesia (*semur daging*). In addition, popular fruits and vegetables are tomatoes, sweet potatoes, avocados, mangoes, pineapples, papaya, and nopales. As she sent some voice notes, and it is unclear, I asked her to send me a picture of Nopales. (PST 37's diary)

In order to understand other things and foods, instead of searching for them on the internet, PSTs gain new information from real people who are close to the culture. Moreover, the opportunities for ICC and IDLE activities supported the PSTs in sending and receiving messages to negotiate meaning. Discussing with OFs, PSTs

enhanced their language proficiency, especially related to vocabulary gain and confidence in communication. They also used different modes of communication (video, picture, and audio) to investigate and explain the product or the perspectives of culture.

4.3 Stage 3: Reflecting on Intercultural Experience

To shape PSTs' critical cultural awareness after having out-of-class activities, PSTs required to discuss with classmates about intercultural dimensions and language use through Moodle and to write reflective diaries to reflect their knowledge, attitude, and skills.

In Moodle, PSTs faced one of their most sensitive issues, talking about religion. All PSTs grew up in religious families and societies where the government required them to have one religion among six religions (e.g. Islam, Christian, Catholic, Hindu, Buddhist, and Confucian) under government policy. They mentioned in written interviews that they never talked about their religions with their family members or classmates because it was too sensitive and difficult topic for them to address. For instance, PST 27 openly discussed on Moodle what she faced when she faced supernatural forces with OFs on Moodle. She showed her openness toward her OFs and classmates' opinions. She critically reflected on what happened in her own culture and her OF's cultures.

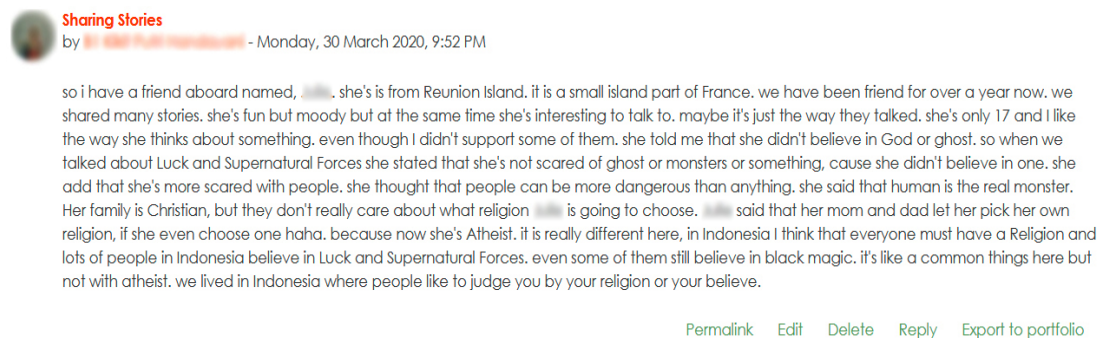


Figure 1. PST 27 talks about religion and human life with her friends.

This culture is different from their OFs. Their OFs are given the full right to choose their beliefs from their parents. Therefore, PSTs 27, 33, and 36 exhibited a sense of curiosity regarding the dynamic and complex system of the topic at hand. Specifically, these PSTs actively raised inquiries about the processes involved in shaping, portraying, and regulating culture. They wanted to explore and scrutinize how cultural systems are constructed, depicted, and governed.

Those discussions employed PSTs to engage with religious knowledge, attitude, and skill to address sensitive issues for them. Moreover, PSTs even elaborated on their understanding and beliefs through reflective diaries. PST 27 provided additional insights and her personal perspective in her reflective diary. According to her account, encountering another friend from the same country exposed her to a distinct viewpoint concerning supernatural beliefs. In this encounter, PST 27 was a mediator, navigating between cultural norms within her host country's culture and the situation at hand. Her

experience highlighted the complexity of reconciling and interpreting various cultural perspectives in a multicultural context.

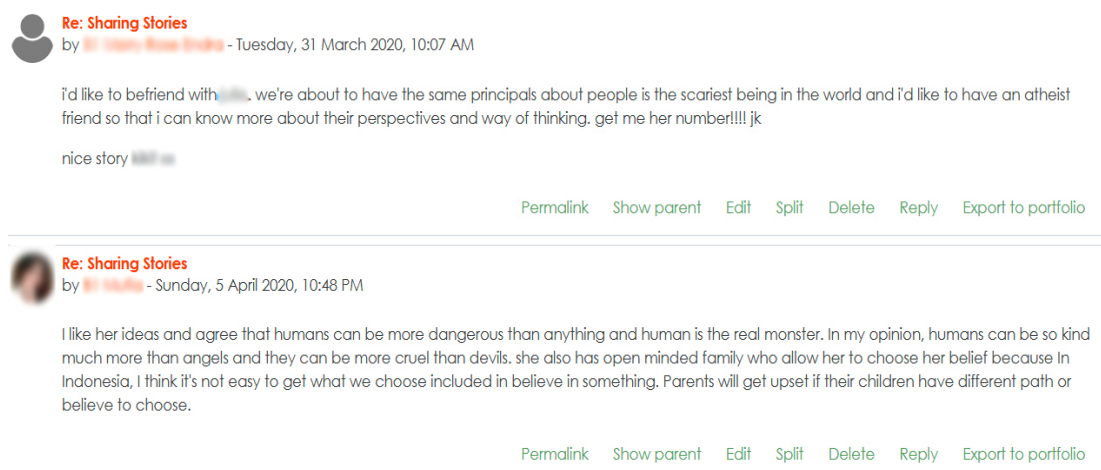


Figure 2. PSTs 33 and 36 share their opinions about atheism.

- (11) OF-France 2 is one of my friends who believes in luck and supernatural forces. He thought that his parents gave him luck in his life. He always believes that luck is always on his side. His statement is the opposite of my other friend OF-France 2. Both of them were from France. But both of them also have a different path. It shows that we can't prejudice people by their nationality. They might come from the same country, but they can still have different backgrounds, cultures, and points of view on something. That is why we need to be open-minded to understand them and not make assumptions easily. (PST 27's reflective diary)

Furthermore, she critically evaluated her language use in the conversation and recognized the importance of being mindful of her word choices. She was aware that using strong language could potentially hinder effective intercultural communication. Moreover, she acknowledged the significance of her proficiency in the English language, as it played a vital role in facilitating communication across various cultures. Being conscious of this, she actively evaluated her selection of words, considered their impact and appropriateness within the conversation, and made more informative and effective language choices.

- (12) I also learned some strategies for communication addressing sensitive topics. I met my friends on Tandem and Bottled to discuss religious topics. I asked their permission, "Is it ok if I want to talk about religion?" to ensure that I did not cross the line. I would talk first and share from my side to lower the tension. Then, I tried to listen to my friend's opinion and responded that did not use strong words. For instance, when I want to show disagreement, I would not use "I disagree with you", but I prefer to use "In my country, we are usually ..." to address different facts. Then, I let my friends judge from their perspectives. (PST 27's reflective diary)

Employing PSTs to seek feedback through classroom discussion and to write reflective diaries allowed PSTs to explicit external and internal feedback about intercultural awareness because their critical cultural awareness is shaped by reflecting on what happens around them (e.g. local context, international context, family context, and their perspective). PSTs engaged in planning, decision-making on cultural perspective and practice, and language communication.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 Discussion

For a six-month study, PSTs' engagement in extracurricular IDLE activities successfully shaped their "emphatic and self-awareness perceptions and attitudes" from the target and their own cultures (Byram, 1997), where PSTs can break down cultural stereotypes; their capabilities in analysing and comparing similarities in culture, understand the represented world based not only on their own lens and what they previously knew (Kusumaningputri & Widodo, 2018); and ability to communicate and interact across cultural boundaries (Byram, 1997).

PSTs face a complex cultural communication system within their own culture. PSTs are expected to build "the national memory of one's interlocutor's country and the perspective on them from one's own country" (Byram, 1997, p. 59). In Indonesian social practices, PSTs frequently find themselves in situations where norms and culture exhibit significant variations due to the country's extensive linguistic and ethnic landscape. Indonesia boasts immense cultural and linguistic diversity, with an estimated 707 indigenous languages, 1,100 dialects, and over 600 ethnicities spread across 17,504 islands (Zein, 2020). As a result, PSTs need to possess various skills, including knowledge, values, ethics, empathy, respect, and communication proficiency. This is because underlying factors and considerations extend beyond PSTs' everyday experiences.

Within other cultures, what PSTs write on social media today becomes more powerful, requiring their responsibility for that power. PSTs expected "the national memory of one's own country and how its events are related to and seen from the perspective of other countries" (Byram, 1997, p. 59). Chatting with various OFs indicated that PSTs gain new insight into how individuals and groups perceive their own culture, gain acceptance of various values, and learn to avoid expressing hate (Alghasab & Alvares-Ayure, 2023). They evaluated themselves through their dairies that it can facilitate PSTs to build their capacity to evaluate explicit and implicit values at global and national levels to their OFs' historical culture from past to present (Chen, 2017; Özdemir, 2017; Valencia & Benavides, 2018).

Furthermore, learning native and other cultures are attached to language and languages belonging to the cultures themselves (Valencia & Benavides, 2018; Wu & Miller, 2019). Employing PSTs in extracurricular IDLE opened learning opportunities for authentic English communication and language strategies. PSTs may face various language barriers during the conversation, and their language choices became important in addressing the issues. The conversation may become misinterpreted, challenging PSTs to "mediate between the conflicting interpretation of phenomena" (Byram, 1997, p. 52). Furthermore, our participants indicated enjoyment during this program, which made them want to use English more to maintain their friendships in line with prior studies (Lee, 2019a; Lee & Drajiati, 2019; Lee et al., 2021) that PSTs build willingness to communicate. Moreover, through this extracurricular IDLE in PSTs' dairies, we witnessed that they were not the sole participants who learned English. However, some of their OFs from EFL countries also learned English from them. Unexpectedly, they were challenged to teach English to their friends. Therefore, this extracurricular IDLE potentially gives PSTs opportunities to learn and teach.

However, further research is required to see how PSTs employ their pedagogical and content knowledge to teach English during IDLE activities.

5.2 Reflections

Based on the results and the discussion of this study, our reflections on this study recommend the following:

5.2.1 Stage 1: Acknowledges cognitive development

- Designing determining ICC criteria: the lecturer can collaborate with PSTs to construct determining ICC criteria (e.g. rubric, teacher's guideline) because involving PSTs in this process potentially makes them more familiar with the theory of ICC, and they know what they should practice and achieve. Practicing using the ICC task rubric is required for PSTs before the implementation, especially for PSTs with a lack of experience using a rubric.
- Conducting debate: when in-class discussion does not explicitly show PSTs' arguments on their knowledge and attitude, debate might be recommended because it persuades PSTs to critically and immediately argue and evaluate during debate situations.
- Building knowledge: because PSTs may focus on seeking knowledge on other cultures, learning diverse ancestor cultures that younger generations may not already know about may be required because PSTs have a lot to encounter in explaining their culture to interlocutors.
- Providing vocabulary input: introducing basic vocabulary in conversation may help PSTs who are not confident with their English. They can practice with classmates before communicating with interlocutors.
- Awareness of politeness in communication: when PSTs build their critical thinking through debate, it may affect their communication styles, which can ruin their friendships. Therefore, PSTs' awareness of politeness in conversation should also be trained to maintain friendships.

5.2.2 Stage 2: Focuses on action development

- Preparing multimodal literacy: PSTs encounter a lot of text miscommunication, and they solve their problems by communicating using pictures, audio, emojis, videos, stickers, and others. When PSTs have background knowledge, different modes may affect communication, so they are more willing to problem-solve communication with various modes of communication (see [Drajati et al., 2023](#)).
- Empowering to seek feedback about similarities and differences clusters: a deep discussion on one topic requires to be experienced for PSTs, for example, gender issues in education, gender issues in politics, gender issues in economics, etc.
- Encouraging PSTs to discover various interlocutors from different countries: PSTs get various perceptions from the same topic(s).
- Giving feedback, motivation support, and reinforcement to maintain PSTs' out-of-class activities: PSTs may suffer from finding online friends who may respect them, so the lecturer should encourage them and seek feedback from classmates on how to find online friends.

5.2.3 Stage 3: Means of evaluative development

- Prompting pre-service teachers to write reflecting diaries: writing diaries may result in differences from one PST to others, especially for participants who have no experience in writing reflective diaries. Therefore, the lecturer provides prompts to provide frames in diaries that could help them focus on what they should achieve and reflect on (e.g., intercultural, language, and technology aspects).
- Encouraging the maintenance of their friendships: PSTs can continue their friendships with overseas friends as extramural IDLE activities after the program ends. However, this requires three instructional supports (e.g. emotional support, cognitive and meta-cognitive resources, and behaviour support) (see [Lee, 2019a](#); [Lee & Drajati, 2019](#)).
- Maintaining friendships in IDLE activities is essential to increase the PSTs' familiarity with interlocutors. It benefits PSTs' vocabulary and language outcomes. Intercultural strategies are shaped when PSTs engage more in multilingual environments (e.g. having friends from India, Thailand, Malaysia, America, Australia, and Tajikistan). Moreover, faced with diverse English varieties, PSTs develop open attitudes and train intercultural strategies. Therefore, Indonesian PSTs know how to voice their cultures as a part of world heritage. On the other hand, the lecturer's role is also essential to maintain the PSTs engaged in extracurricular IDLE. The lecturer needs to acknowledge the value of consistency in supporting the PSTs' friendships after the programs for English supplementation, which may have long-term effects.

6. CONCLUSION

This study investigates the phenomenon of PSTs participating in an ICC course in ELT studies employing extracurricular IDLE activities. By interweaving two conceptual theories of [Byram's \(1997\)](#) and [Benson's \(2011\)](#) intercultural communication competence implemented in extracurricular IDLE, this study focuses on how teachers prepare and design teaching materials and activities to achieve critical intercultural awareness. In addition, this study further complemented some stages in designing and assessing in-class and out-of-class activities. Further reflections on this study recommend acknowledging cognitive development, focusing on action development, and encouraging evaluative development.

As a point of departure for the extracurricular IDLE program, there is an indication of a potential discussion about the pre-service teacher's plurilingual productive IDLE. It indicates how PSTs operated various language practices instead of English to have mutual intelligibility. When some friends had limited English and had a miscommunication, the PSTs decided to use their friends' native language. However, this study is not free from limitations. As the participants were limited to PSTs of the same country or nationality and had positive attitudes toward the English language, they had different indigenous languages, and the situation may be different for countries whose background cultures have less openness toward English. Future studies can elaborate with participants that they have PSTs with other languages and nationalities where English is the national language or lingua franca.

REFERENCES

- Abduh, A., & Rosmaladewi, R. (2018). Promoting intercultural competence in bilingual programs in Indonesia. *SAGE Open*, 8(3). <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244018788616>
- Aguilar, M. J. C. (2008). Dealing with intercultural communicative competence in the foreign language classroom. In E. A. Soler & M. S. Jordà (Eds.), *Intercultural language use and language learning* (pp. 59-78). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4020-5639-0_4
- Alghasab, M., & Alvarez-Ayure, C. P. (2023). Towards the promotion of intercultural competencies: Telecollaborative conversations between Kuwaiti and Colombian English as foreign language university students. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 36(4), 555-583. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09588221.2021.1934483>
- Avgousti, M. I. (2018). Intercultural communicative competence and online exchanges: A systematic review. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 31(8), 819-853. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09588221.2018.1455713>
- Benson, P. (2011). Language learning and teaching beyond the classroom: An introduction to the field. In P. Benson & H. Reinders (Eds.), *Beyond the language classroom: The theory and practice of informed language learning and teaching* (pp. 7-16). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230306790_2
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2008). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Byram, M. (1997). *Teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence*. Multilingual Matters.
- Byram, M., & Risager, K. (2000). Evaluering af interkulturel kompetence [Evaluation of intercultural competence]. *Sprogforum*, 18(6), 8-13. <https://doi.org/10.7146/spr.v6i18.116742>
- Chen, H. I. (2017). Intercultural communication in online social networking discourse. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, 17(2), 166-189. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14708477.2016.1211137>
- Drajati, N. A., Tan, L., Tyarakanita, A., & Wijaya, S. A. (2023). Digital storytelling projects in developing Indonesian EFL pre-service teachers' metasemiotic awareness and professional competence. *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 13(2), 392-406. <https://doi.org/10.17509/ijal.v13i2.63084>
- Dressman, M., & Lee, J. S. (2021). IDLE in the classroom: Learner-driven strategies for English language learning. *The Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas*, 94(4), 181-187. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00098655.2021.1929802>
- Godwin-Jones, R. (2019). Riding the digital wilds: Learner autonomy and informal language learning. *Language Learning & Technology*, 23(1), 8-25. <https://doi.org/10.125/44667>
- Hymes, D. (1972). On communicative competence. In J. B. Pride & J. Holmes (Eds.), *Sociolinguistics: Selected readings* (pp. 269-293). Harmondsworth.
- Kusumaningputri, R., & Widodo, H. P. (2018). Promoting Indonesian university students' critical intercultural awareness in tertiary EAL classrooms: The use of

- digital photograph-mediated intercultural tasks. *System*, 72, 49-61. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2017.10.003>
- Lee, J. S. (2017). Informal digital learning of English and second language vocabulary outcomes: Can quantity conquer quality? *British Journal of Education Technology*, 50(2), 767-778. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjet.12599>
- Lee, J. S. (2019a). EFL students' views of willingness to communicate in the extramural digital context. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 32(7), 692-712. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09588221.2018.1535509>
- Lee, J. S. (2019b). Informal digital learning of English and strategic competence for cross-cultural communication: Perception of varieties of English as a mediator. *ReCALL*, 32(1), 47-62. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0958344019000181>
- Lee, J. S. (2019c). Quantity and diversity of informal digital learning of English. *Language Learning & Technology*, 23(1), 114-126. <https://doi.org/10.125/44675>
- Lee, J. S. (2021). *Informal digital learning of English: Research to practice*. Routledge.
- Lee, J. S., & Drajiati, N. A. (2019). Affective variables and informal digital learning of English: Keys to willingness to communicate in a second language. *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology*, 35(5), 168-182. <https://doi.org/10.14742/ajet.5177>
- Lee, J. S., & Dressman, M. (2017). When IDLE hands make an English workshop: Informal digital learning of English and language proficiency. *TESOL Quarterly*, 52(2), 435-445. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.422>
- Lee, J. S., & Lee, K. (2018). Informal digital learning of English and English as an international language: The path less traveled. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 50(3), 1447-1461. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjet.12652>
- Lee, J. S., & Sylvén, L. K. (2021). The role of informal digital learning of English in Korean and Swedish EFL learners' communication behaviour. *British Journal of Education Technology*, 52(3), 1279-1296. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjet.13082>
- Lee, J. S., Xie, Q., & Lee, K. (2021). Informal digital learning of English and L2 willingness to communicate: Roles of emotions, gender, and educational stage. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 45(2), 596-612. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2021.1918699>
- Özdemir, E. (2017). Promoting EFL learners' intercultural communication effectiveness: A focus on Facebook. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 30(6), 510-528. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09588221.2017.1325907>
- Scholz, K. (2017). Encouraging free play: Extramural digital game-based language learning as a complex adaptive system. *Calico Journal*, 34(1), 39-57. <https://doi.org/10.1558/cj.29527>
- Shafirova, L., & Cassany, D. (2019). Bronies learning English in the digital wild. *Language Learning & Technology*, 23(1), 127-144. <https://doi.org/10.125/44676>
- Soyoof, A., Reynolds, B. L., Vazquez-Calvo, B., & Mclay, K. (2021). Informal digital learning of English (IDLE): A scoping review of what has been done and a look towards what is to come. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 36(4), 608-640. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09588221.2021.1936562>
- Valencia, J. A. A., & Benavides, A. F. (2018). Using social networking sites for language learning to develop intercultural competence in language education programs. *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication*, 12(1), 23-42. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17513057.2018.1503318>

- Wijaya, S. A., Asib, A., & Suparno, S. (2021). Portraying informal digital learning of English from management, beliefs, and practices. *Register Journal*, 14(2), 157-184. <https://doi.org/10.18326/rgt.v14i2.157-184>
- Wu, J. G., & Miller, L. (2019). Raising native cultural awareness through WeChat: A case study with Chinese EFL students. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 34(4), 552-582. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09588221.2019.1629962>
- Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case study research and applications* (6th ed). Sage Publication.
- Zein, S. (2020). *Language policy in superdiverse Indonesia*. Routledge.