

# Integrating Intercultural Digital Literacy in EFL Classrooms: Strategies for Enhancing Students' Intercultural Competence in the Digital Era

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## ABSTRACT

In an increasingly globalized and digitally connected world, developing intercultural digital literacy—the ability to critically engage with diverse cultures through digital platforms—is vital for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. This study investigates how intercultural digital literacy can be effectively integrated into EFL instruction to enhance students' intercultural competence and global communication skills. A qualitative phenomenological approach was employed, focusing on an English Study Program at a university in Riau, Indonesia in 2024. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with two lecturers and one third-semester EFL class, supported by classroom observations and document analysis. Thematic analysis was used to identify recurring patterns and insights. Findings indicate that integrating digital tools such as task-based learning activities, online discussions, and social media platforms significantly supports the development of intercultural digital literacy. These strategies foster critical thinking, cultural awareness, and digital communication skills among students. The results underscore the importance of embedding intercultural elements within digital learning environments to prepare students for cross-cultural interaction. Teachers play a pivotal role in curating meaningful digital experiences that promote intercultural competence. This study highlights the value of intercultural digital literacy in EFL education and its potential to enhance global readiness among students. Future research should further explore innovative digital approaches and address existing challenges in implementation.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In today's globalized and digitally connected world, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education plays a pivotal role in preparing learners to communicate across linguistic and cultural boundaries. The rapid digitalization of communication has redefined traditional literacy, expanding it to encompass

intercultural and digital dimensions. As a result, intercultural digital literacy—the ability to navigate, interpret, and engage with diverse cultures through digital technologies—has become a fundamental competency for 21st-century learners. The Common Framework of Reference for Intercultural Digital Literacies (CFRIDiL) provides a comprehensive model for developing proficiency in digital communication within global contexts (Sindoni et al., 2021). This framework emphasizes the integration of digital literacy, intercultural awareness, and ethical communication, highlighting the importance of multimodal skills and adaptability in diverse cultural settings.

Empirical studies show that digital literacy projects can significantly enhance intercultural communicative competence in EFL learners (Rakhmawati et al., 2020; Komalasari, 2021). Collaborative activities such as multimodal storytelling, reflective discussions, and digital content creation not only strengthen students' critical and creative thinking but also foster cross-cultural awareness and identity development (Galante, 2015; Komalasari, 2021). These initiatives bridge language and culture, equipping learners with the skills needed for effective communication in a global society.

Technological advancements have transformed EFL classrooms into interactive learning spaces where digital tools facilitate authentic intercultural engagement. However, despite their potential, structured approaches for cultivating intercultural digital literacy remain underexplored. Emerging technologies, including Artificial Intelligence (AI) and immersive platforms, offer new possibilities for personalized, engaging, and culturally responsive language education (Luo & Qiu, 2024).

Global competence refers to the ability to understand, communicate with, and effectively engage people from different cultural backgrounds. In the digital era, this competence must be coupled with the ability to use technology responsibly and effectively. For EFL learners, developing global competence involves understanding cultural nuances and leveraging digital tools to communicate across borders while avoiding misunderstandings or misrepresentations. Thus, EFL learners must possess cultural literacy that involves understanding and appreciating cultural diversity, which is crucial for effective communication in a globalized context (Ahadiyyah et al., 2024). In addition, digital literacy encompasses the skills necessary to use information and communication technologies ethically and professionally, facilitating access to diverse educational resources.

EFL educators often face challenges in incorporating intercultural digital literacy due to a lack of training, limited resources, or the absence of a standardized framework. EFL educators face significant challenges in incorporating digital literacy and intercultural competence into their teaching. These challenges include a lack of training, limited resources, and absence of standardized frameworks (Karanjakwut & P Sripicharn, 2024; Purmayanti, 2022). Older teachers, in particular, struggle with technological integration and require additional support. The rapid shift to online learning during the pandemic has further highlighted these issues, emphasizing the need for enhanced digital competencies among EFL teachers (Irdianto et al., 2023). Additionally, incorporating cultural awareness in language teaching remains a challenge, with no universally accepted criteria for implementation. Despite these obstacles, teachers generally report positive perceptions of technology integration in EFL classrooms. Addressing these challenges requires attention from educators, policymakers, and researchers to develop effective strategies for enhancing digital literacy and intercultural competence in EFL education (Purmayanti, 2022).

Developing intercultural digital literacy is crucial in today's globalized world, enhancing students' ability to engage in global conversations and improving teaching outcomes. Cultural and digital literacy skills are essential for effective communication across diverse backgrounds and ethical use of technology (Ahadiyyah et al., 2024). Strategies to foster these skills include integrating digital tools in education, promoting cross-cultural collaboration, and providing professional development for educators (Ahadiyyah et al., 2024). Critical digital literacy is necessary to understand power dynamics and ideologies in online spaces (Dooly & Darvin, 2022). E-learning environments can facilitate intercultural awareness by making implicit pedagogical assumptions explicit and developing intercultural competencies (Belisle, 2007). Online exchanges between students from different countries can help

develop intercultural communication skills, which are part of the broader construct of intercultural communicative competence needed in the digital age (Ware, 2013).

While intercultural digital literacy is gaining attention in educational research, its practical integration into EFL classrooms remains underexplored. Existing studies often focus on either digital literacy or intercultural competence in isolation, neglecting their intersection in language education. Moreover, much research on digital literacy in EFL classrooms often emphasizes technical skills but neglects the intercultural dimension. Similarly, studies on intercultural competence rarely explore how digital tools can mediate cross-cultural communication. This research proposal seeks to bridge this gap by exploring strategies that integrate intercultural digital literacy into EFL teaching, thereby equipping students with the skills necessary for meaningful global engagement.

This study proposes to explore innovative strategies that align with modern pedagogical trends, including task-based learning, digital presentation via YouTube, online classroom discussion and virtual communication via social media. These methods can provide students with hands-on experience in intercultural communication, fostering both digital literacy and cultural awareness. The overarching goal of this research is to develop actionable strategies that educators can implement to enhance students' intercultural digital literacy. By focusing on EFL contexts, the study aims to contribute to the broader discourse on global competence and provide a model for integrating these critical skills into language education. Thus, the researchers formulate the research questions: (1) How can intercultural digital literacy be effectively integrated into EFL classrooms to enhance students' intercultural competence? (2) What are the most effective strategies for fostering intercultural digital literacy among EFL learners in the digital era? In short, this study could (1) identify and analyze strategies for integrating intercultural digital literacy in EFL teaching practices and (2) evaluate the impact of these strategies on the development of students' intercultural competence in the digital era.

## 2. METHODS

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological design to investigate the lived experiences of EFL lecturers and students in integrating intercultural digital literacy into classroom practices. By focusing on participants' perceptions and interpretations, the study explored strategies, challenges, and opportunities in fostering global competence through digital tools in the EFL context. The research took place in the English Study Program of a university in Riau, Indonesia, selected for its diverse learning environment and increasing use of digital tools in teaching and learning.

Participants included EFL lecturers with at least three years of teaching experience who regularly used digital tools and incorporated cultural or intercultural content, and EFL students aged 18–25 with prior digital learning experience. Data collection involved semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, document analysis, and optional focus group discussions. Interviews examined lecturers' strategies for integrating intercultural digital literacy, challenges faced, and perceived student outcomes, while students shared their experiences, perceptions, and reflections on global competence development. Classroom observations were conducted over six sessions, each lasting 90 minutes. Observations focused on lecturers' use of digital tools for intercultural engagement, student participation in culturally themed discussions, and instances of cross-cultural digital collaboration. Specific behaviors documented included the integration of multicultural case studies, digital storytelling, and interactive platforms that promoted intercultural awareness. Document analysis assessed the presence and depth of intercultural content in teaching materials, including textbooks, lesson plans, assignments, and digital platform activities.

Data analysis employed thematic analysis to identify and report patterns across data sources. This process included familiarization, coding, theme development, refinement, and integration into a cohesive narrative. Triangulation enhanced validity and reliability by comparing findings across methods and participants. Methodological triangulation involved linking interview responses with classroom observations and document analysis, while data triangulation incorporated perspectives from both lecturers and students. The researcher triangulation minimized individual bias by involving multiple

researchers in data interpretation. In addition, ethical considerations included obtaining informed consent from all participants, ensuring voluntary participation, and anonymizing data to protect identities. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any stage without consequences. Institutional ethical approval was secured to uphold research integrity and participant well-being. By integrating insights from multiple data sources, this study provided a comprehensive understanding of how intercultural digital literacy influenced EFL teaching and learning, offering valuable perspectives on its integration and impact.

### 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1 Integrating Intercultural Digital Literacy into EFL Classrooms

This section addresses the first research question: How can intercultural digital literacy be effectively integrated into EFL classrooms to enhance students' intercultural competence?

##### 3.1.1 The Role of Digital Tools in Enhancing Intercultural Understanding

Participants highlighted that digital tools such as multimedia platforms, social media, and online educational resources allow EFL students to access and engage with diverse cultural content. These tools facilitate authentic exposure to cultural practices, traditions, and communication styles, which are essential for developing intercultural competence. The followings are the interview results with the EFL teachers and students that highlight the role of digital tools in enhancing intercultural understanding.

*Interviewer: How do you think digital tools contribute to enhancing intercultural understanding in EFL classrooms?*

*English Teacher: Digital tools provide students with access to authentic cultural content. For instance, they can watch videos, read blogs, or participate in forums that expose them to different cultures. These tools help students see how people from other countries communicate and live, which broadens their perspective.*

*Interviewer: Can you share an example of a digital tool you have used to teach intercultural topics?*

*English Teacher: I've used YouTube to show videos about traditional festivals from different countries. After watching, I ask students to compare those traditions with their own and discuss their impressions. This approach has been very effective in sparking curiosity and critical thinking.*

*Interviewer: How do you assess whether students have improved their intercultural understanding through digital tools?*

*English Teacher: I use reflective activities, like asking students to write journals or give presentations about what they've learned. I also observe how they interact in group discussions and assess their ability to articulate cultural differences and similarities.*

The interview results with the English teacher and EFL students highlight the significant role digital tools play in fostering intercultural understanding within EFL classrooms. According to the teacher, digital tools such as YouTube, blogs, and online forums provide authentic cultural content that allows students to observe and understand how people from different countries live and communicate. This exposure broadens students' perspectives and encourages them to think critically about cultural differences. The teacher shared a specific example of using YouTube videos about traditional festivals to engage students in comparing cultural practices, which sparked curiosity and facilitated meaningful discussions.

To evaluate the effectiveness of these tools, the teacher employs reflective activities such as journaling and presentations, alongside observing group discussions. These methods not only measure

students' learning outcomes but also help in identifying improvements in their ability to articulate cultural similarities and differences. In conclusion, the integration of digital tools in EFL classrooms has proven to be an effective strategy for enhancing intercultural understanding. These tools provide authentic, engaging, and interactive opportunities for students to explore and appreciate cultural diversity while improving their language and critical thinking skills. Reflective activities and guided discussions further amplify these benefits, ensuring that students internalize and apply their learning in meaningful ways

The insights gained from EFL students further emphasize the value of digital tools. Students reported that engaging with authentic content made cultural learning more relatable and practical. Watching videos, reading blogs, and participating in discussions enabled them to experience different cultural norms and practices, fostering empathy and enhancing their global awareness. They also appreciated how these tools allowed them to practice language skills in context, making their learning both enjoyable and impactful.

*Interviewer: How do you feel about using digital tools to learn about other cultures?*

*EFL Student: I really enjoy it! It's exciting to see how people in other countries celebrate festivals or deal with social issues. It feels like traveling the world without leaving the classroom.*

*Interviewer: What kind of digital tools or platforms do you find most helpful for learning about different cultures?*

*EFL Student: I think YouTube and Instagram are very helpful. I can watch videos, follow cultural accounts, and even chat with people from other countries. It's a fun way to learn.*

*Interviewer: Can you give an example of something new you learned about another culture through digital tools?*

*EFL Student: Yes, I watched a video about Japanese tea ceremonies on YouTube. I learned how important respect and tradition are in their culture. It made me think about how we also value rituals in our own culture.*

The interview results highlight how digital tools like YouTube and Instagram play a significant role in enhancing intercultural understanding among EFL students. Students shared their excitement about exploring cultural diversity through these platforms, describing the experience as akin to "traveling the world without leaving the classroom." They appreciated the visual and engaging content available on these platforms, which allowed them to learn about various cultural practices and traditions in a relatable and enjoyable manner. By watching videos, following cultural accounts, and engaging in informal conversations with peers from different countries, students gained a dynamic and interactive learning experience that broadened their perspectives.

A specific example shared by one student involved watching a YouTube video about Japanese tea ceremonies, which deepened their understanding of the importance of respect and tradition in Japanese culture. This experience also prompted them to reflect on the shared value of rituals in their own culture, fostering a sense of connection and empathy. Overall, digital tools offer authentic and meaningful opportunities for EFL students to explore global cultures, encouraging curiosity, critical thinking, and intercultural dialogue, all of which contribute to the development of their global competence.

### 3.1.2 Promoting Reflection and Cultural Awareness Through Digital Media

Teachers in the study emphasized the importance of structured reflection activities, such as writing blogs or digital journals, after engaging with online intercultural content. These activities encouraged students to critically analyze cultural differences and similarities, fostering a deeper understanding of global perspectives. The followings are the interview reports with an English teacher

*Interviewer: How do structured reflection activities, like writing blogs or journals, help students develop cultural awareness?*

*English Teacher: These activities give students the chance to think deeply about what they've learned. For example, after watching a video about another culture, they can reflect on how that culture compares to their own. This process helps them analyze cultural similarities and differences critically, which is key to developing cultural awareness.*

*Interviewer: What challenges do you face when implementing these reflection activities?*

*English Teacher: One challenge is ensuring students take the activity seriously. Some students see it as just another assignment. I've found it helps to show examples of excellent reflective writing and explain how these skills are valuable not just in learning but in life.*

The interview results emphasize the importance of structured reflection activities, such as writing blogs or journals, in developing students' cultural awareness in EFL classrooms. According to the English teacher, these activities encourage students to deeply analyze and internalize what they have learned about other cultures. For instance, after engaging with cultural content, students reflect on similarities and differences between their own culture and others, fostering critical thinking and a nuanced understanding of global diversity. This reflective process helps students connect their learning experiences to broader cultural insights, making their understanding more meaningful and personal.

However, implementing reflection activities is not without challenges. The teacher noted that some students may not take these activities seriously, perceiving them as routine assignments. To address this, the teacher uses strategies such as providing examples of high-quality reflective writing and demonstrating how these skills have practical applications beyond the classroom. In conclusion, while structured reflection activities are valuable tools for cultivating cultural awareness, their success depends on effective implementation and student engagement. With proper guidance, these activities can significantly enhance students' ability to critically analyze and appreciate cultural diversity, equipping them with essential skills for navigating an increasingly interconnected world.

### 3.1.3 Overcoming Challenges in Digital Integration

Participants also noted several challenges in integrating digital literacy, including the lack of access to reliable technology and students' varying levels of digital proficiency. To address these issues, scaffolding and providing basic digital training were reported as crucial steps in preparing students to use digital tools effectively. Some important information relate to overcoming challenges in digital integration are highlighted based on interview results with an English teacher.

*Interviewer: How do you support students who struggle with digital tools?*

*English Teacher: I provide scaffolding by breaking tasks into smaller, manageable steps. For example, I might first show them how to navigate a platform during class, then assign a simple task to practice. Additionally, I offer extra help during office hours for students who need more guidance.*

*Interviewer: In your experience, what is the most effective way to prepare students for digital integration?*

*English Teacher: Basic digital training is essential. I often start the semester with a session on how to use the tools we'll need, like Google Classroom or presentation software. This way, students feel more confident when we start using these tools for intercultural activities.*

The interview with the English teacher highlights the proactive measures taken to support students struggling with digital tools. Scaffolding emerges as a key strategy, where tasks are divided into smaller, manageable steps. By demonstrating how to navigate platforms in class and assigning simple tasks for practice, the teacher ensures that students gradually build their skills. Additional support, such as office hours, provides a safety net for students requiring further guidance. The teacher also emphasizes the importance of basic digital training at the beginning of the semester. Sessions

dedicated to introducing essential tools, such as Google Classroom and presentation software, help students gain confidence and familiarity before diving into more complex intercultural activities.

These practices underline the critical role of preparation and individualized support in integrating digital tools into EFL classrooms effectively. By addressing students' initial challenges and equipping them with foundational skills, teachers lay a solid groundwork for successful digital integration. This approach not only enhances students' digital proficiency but also ensures that they can fully engage with intercultural learning opportunities, fostering their overall academic and personal growth in the digital era.

The integration of digital tools in EFL classrooms often requires teachers to provide sufficient support to ensure students can effectively use these platforms. Insights from interviews with EFL students reveal that the guidance provided by teachers plays a critical role in building students' confidence and digital proficiency. Students shared their experiences with how teacher-led tutorials and in-class practice sessions helped them navigate new tools and platforms, highlighting the importance of structured support in fostering digital literacy. Here are the interview results with the EFL students.

*Interviewer: How do you feel about the support your teacher provides for using digital tools?*

*EFL Student: It's really helpful. For example, when we started using a new platform, our teacher gave us a tutorial and let us practice during class. That made it easier for me to understand how to use it.*

*Interviewer: What suggestions do you have to make using digital tools easier for students?*

*EFL Student: I think it would help if we had more training at the beginning, like step-by-step guides or short videos we can watch. Also, having an option to ask questions or get help quickly when something goes wrong would be great.*

The students emphasized that their teacher's hands-on approach, such as offering tutorials and allocating class time for practice, made a significant difference in their ability to adapt to new digital tools. These efforts not only eased the initial learning curve but also boosted students' confidence in using technology for intercultural learning. However, students also identified areas for improvement, suggesting that step-by-step guides or instructional videos could further simplify the learning process. Additionally, having immediate support, such as a channel for asking questions or troubleshooting issues, would enhance their overall experience.

In conclusion, the feedback underscores the importance of comprehensive and accessible support in enabling students to make the most of digital tools. By addressing students' suggestions, educators can create a more user-friendly and empowering environment, ultimately facilitating greater engagement with technology and intercultural content. This approach aligns with the goal of preparing students for the demands of the digital era while enhancing their global competence.

### **3.2 Strategies for Fostering Intercultural Digital Literacy in EFL Learners**

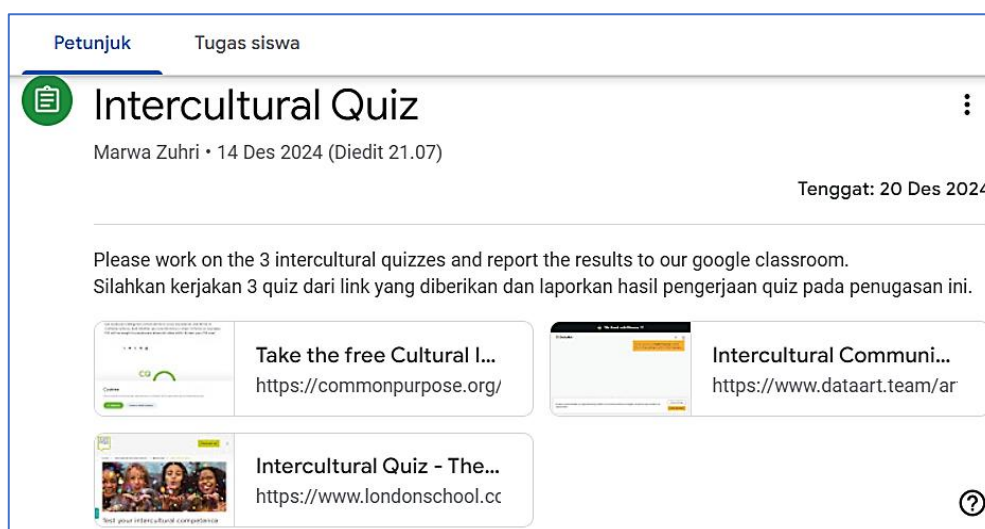
This section addresses the second research question: What are the most effective strategies for fostering intercultural digital literacy among EFL learners in the digital era?

#### **3.2.1 Task-Based Learning Through Online Intercultural Quizzes**

Task-based learning proved to be a highly effective strategy for enhancing intercultural digital literacy in EFL classrooms. By engaging students with online intercultural quizzes, educators created opportunities for learners to explore global topics, cultural trivia, and traditions interactively. These tasks not only sparked curiosity about diverse cultures but also encouraged critical thinking and meaningful intercultural dialogue. Through this approach, students actively connected with cultural content, fostering a deeper appreciation and understanding of global diversity.

Task-based learning emerged as a highly effective strategy. Participants utilized online intercultural quizzes to engage students in exploring global topics, cultural trivia, and traditions. These

tasks encouraged critical thinking and intercultural dialogue, fostering curiosity about other cultures. Some quizzes used in the EFL classroom activities were “Test your intercultural competence” <https://www.londonschool.com/young-adults/resources/intercultural-quiz/>, “Test your Cultural Intelligence” <https://commonpurpose.org/resources/free-tools/cq-test#anchor1>, and “Intercultural Communication Quiz: Test Your Business Etiquette IQ” that was taken from website <https://www.dataart.team/articles/intercultural-communication-quiz>.



**Figure 1.** Website Appearance

The image showcases an assignment titled "Intercultural Quiz," which integrates task-based learning through online intercultural quizzes. In this activity, students are instructed to complete three quizzes provided via hyperlinks and report their results to a designated Google Classroom. The quizzes, hosted on platforms such as Common Purpose, DataArt, and The London School of English, focus on exploring cultural knowledge, communication, and understanding.

This approach aligns with task-based learning principles by actively engaging students in authentic tasks that require them to interact with diverse cultural content. By completing these quizzes, students not only enhance their critical thinking and cultural awareness but also develop skills in online navigation and digital reporting. The inclusion of a clear deadline ensures a structured learning process, emphasizing accountability and time management. This method fosters curiosity about global cultures while promoting intercultural dialogue and reflection.

### 3.2.2 Digital Presentations on Cultural Topics via YouTube

One of the most impactful strategies for fostering intercultural digital literacy was encouraging students to create and upload digital presentations on YouTube. This approach not only enabled students to explore and showcase diverse cultural topics but also provided a platform for developing essential digital communication skills. By presenting their ideas to a broader audience, students gained valuable experience in articulating cultural perspectives while receiving feedback from peers and even international viewers. Such interactions offered unique insights into cultural perceptions, further enhancing their intercultural awareness and global competence. Encouraging students to create and upload digital presentations on YouTube was another impactful strategy. These presentations allowed students to showcase cultural topics while developing digital communication skills. Feedback from peers and international audiences provided valuable insights into cultural perceptions and intercultural communication.

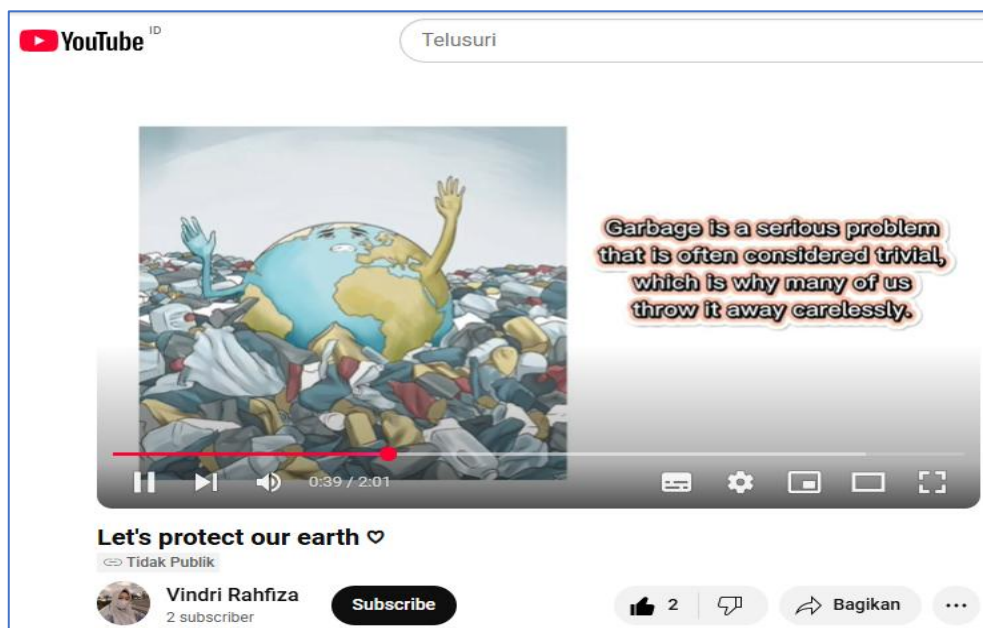


Figure 2. Video in YouTube

The image displays a YouTube video titled "Let's protect our earth," created and uploaded by a user named Vindri Rahfiza. The video discusses environmental issues, specifically focusing on the problem of garbage and its impact on the planet. The visual depicts Earth surrounded by piles of trash, emphasizing the seriousness of the issue. The accompanying text highlights how garbage is often underestimated, leading to careless disposal.

This example relates to the concept of Digital Presentations via YouTube as an educational strategy. By creating and sharing presentations on YouTube, students can address global topics, such as environmental protection, while honing their digital communication and content creation skills. Additionally, using YouTube as a platform allows students to reach broader audiences, receive feedback, and engage in meaningful discussions on critical issues. This method fosters creativity, digital literacy, and intercultural awareness, as the content can be shared and accessed globally.

### 3.2.3 Online Classroom Discussions on Cultural Themes

Facilitating real-time online discussions on cultural themes emerged as an effective strategy for promoting intercultural digital literacy. Utilizing platforms like Zoom or Google Meet, students engaged in conversations about diverse cultural practices, holidays, and social issues. These discussions fostered collaborative learning and allowed students to share perspectives and experiences in a controlled and inclusive environment. Such interactions not only encouraged critical dialogue but also provided a practical platform for direct intercultural exchanges, enriching students' understanding of global cultures. Participants highlighted the effectiveness of facilitating online discussions on cultural themes. Using platforms like Google classroom, students discussed diverse cultural practices, holidays, or social issues. This interaction encouraged collaborative learning and direct intercultural exchanges within a controlled environment.

The online classroom discussion activity depicted in the image serves as a dynamic platform for students to enhance their understanding of intercultural communicative competence (ICC). By integrating digital tools and multimedia resources, such as YouTube videos, the activity engages students in meaningful reflection and dialogue on cultural themes. Students are encouraged to explore how they, as language learners, can develop ICC by sharing their insights and experiences through written comments. This approach not only fosters critical thinking and cultural awareness but also promotes collaboration and active participation in an inclusive digital learning environment.

**Online Classroom Discussion: How do you develop your ICC?**  
Marwa Zuhri • 16 Nov 2024

Tenggat: 17 Nov 2024

**Instructions:**  
Please watch the given videos in order to broaden your insights in ICC before posting your comments in online classroom discussion.

As a language learner, how do you develop intercultural communicative competence?

Please answer the question by posting your comments!  
Every student has to join this discussion!  
Thank you. 🙏🙏🙏

**Intercultural Communicativ...**  
Video YouTube • 5 menit

**What is Intercultural Comm...**  
Video YouTube • 2 menit

6 komentar kelas

**Marwa Zuhri** 16 Nov 2024  
Please post your answers here, thank you

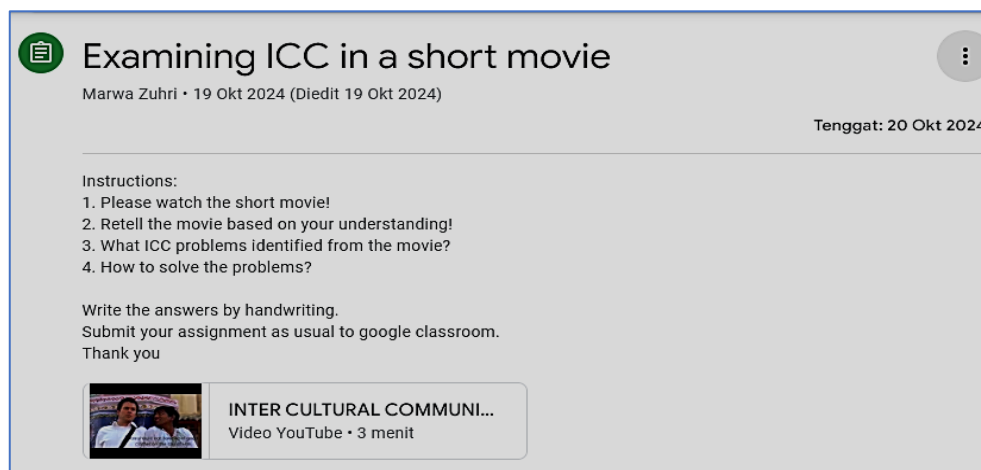
**Shandi Alfandi** 17 Nov 2024  
Developing ICC as a language learner involves more than just mastering vocabulary and grammar, it requires understanding and navigating cultural differences in communication styles, behaviors, and value. And learn about culture, explore the customs, traditions, and social structures of the people who speak the language. 🙏

Figure 3. Online Classroom

The image depicts an online classroom discussion centered around the topic of developing intercultural communicative competence (ICC). The task, titled "Online Classroom Discussion: How do you develop your ICC?", provides clear instructions for students to watch two YouTube videos related to ICC as preparatory material. Students are prompted to reflect on their learning and share insights by answering the question: "As a language learner, how do you develop intercultural communicative competence?" The activity encourages all students to participate by posting comments, creating a platform for collaborative learning and interaction. One visible student comment highlights the importance of understanding cultural differences, exploring customs, and examining social structures to improve ICC. The activity aligns with the broader theme of cultural awareness and competence, utilizing digital tools to facilitate meaningful discussions and peer engagement. This type of discussion fosters critical thinking, reflection, and active participation, making it an effective way to explore cultural themes in an online learning environment.

### 3.2.4 Analyzing Intercultural Movies for Cultural Sensitivity

The use of intercultural movies was another impactful strategy for developing students' cultural sensitivity. Teachers incorporated films that depicted themes of global diversity, allowing students to analyze characters' behaviors, social norms, and cultural conflicts. Through guided discussions and reflective activities, students explored how cultural nuances influence interactions and relationships. This approach not only cultivated empathy but also deepened students' ability to appreciate and respect cultural differences, making them more adept at navigating intercultural contexts. Teachers used intercultural movies as a medium to enhance cultural sensitivity. Students analyzed films with themes of global diversity, discussing characters' behaviors, social norms, and cultural conflicts. This strategy cultivated empathy and an understanding of cultural nuances.



**Figure 5.** Examining ICC in a Short Movie

The image showcases an educational activity titled "Examining ICC in a Short Movie," designed to deepen students' understanding of intercultural communicative competence (ICC). The task involves watching a short movie, followed by reflective and analytical questions to encourage active engagement. Students are instructed to retell the movie based on their understanding, identify ICC-related challenges presented in the storyline, and propose solutions to those problems. This activity emphasizes critical thinking and problem-solving skills, which are vital for fostering intercultural awareness. The integration of multimedia, such as the provided YouTube video, adds a dynamic element to the learning process, allowing students to connect theory with real-world cultural scenarios. By requiring handwritten responses and submission through Google Classroom, the activity strikes a balance between traditional and digital learning methods. This ensures students not only develop their digital literacy but also practice essential academic skills, such as reflective writing and clear articulation of ideas.

This activity effectively combines multimedia tools and structured reflection to enhance students' intercultural competencies. It encourages them to critically analyze cultural challenges while proposing thoughtful solutions, helping them become more culturally aware and communicative in diverse contexts. Through this approach, students are equipped with both the theoretical knowledge and practical skills needed to navigate intercultural interactions.

### 3.2.5 Virtual Intercultural Communication via Social Media

Virtual communication through social media platforms like WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook provided EFL learners with a powerful avenue for connecting with peers from other countries. These platforms facilitated informal chats, collaborative projects, and cultural exchanges, offering students practical opportunities to apply and refine their intercultural communication skills. By engaging in authentic, real-world interactions, students gained deeper insights into cultural diversity and developed confidence in communicating across cultural boundaries, which are essential for global competence in the digital era.

Participants reported that virtual communication through platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, or Facebook was a powerful way to connect EFL learners with peers from other countries. These interactions included informal chats, collaborative projects, and cultural exchanges that improved students' practical intercultural communication skills. Here are the interview results from the two EFL students about the use of virtual communication via social media.

*EFL Student 1: "Using WhatsApp to chat with friends overseas has been a great experience for me. It allowed me to learn about their daily lives, traditions, and even some phrases in their native language. These casual conversations helped me understand their culture better and made me realize how much we have in common despite living in different countries. It was fun and educational at the same time."*

*EFL Student 2: "Connecting with friends from other countries on Instagram has been very meaningful. By exchanging messages and commenting on each other's posts, I got to see how they celebrate holidays, enjoy local foods, and experience life in their country. This kind of interaction felt personal and genuine, which made me more interested in learning about other cultures and improving my English skills naturally."*

The experiences shared by these two EFL students highlight the impact of virtual communication through social media platforms in fostering cultural understanding and language learning. EFL Student 1 emphasizes how casual chats via WhatsApp provided an engaging way to explore daily routines, traditions, and even language expressions of their international friends. This interaction not only deepened their cultural awareness but also demonstrated the shared humanity across diverse backgrounds, making the learning experience both enjoyable and educational.

EFL Student 1 emphasizes how casual chats via WhatsApp offered an opportunity to explore daily routines, traditions, and even language phrases of their international friends. This interaction deepened their cultural awareness while highlighting shared human experiences, making the learning process enjoyable and educational. Similarly, EFL Student 2 reflects on the meaningful connections built through Instagram, where personal exchanges about holidays, local foods, and everyday life provided valuable cultural insights. These genuine interactions sparked interest in other cultures and facilitated organic language development. Both experiences illustrate the transformative role of digital tools in fostering intercultural competence and language growth.

## **Discussions**

### ***Integrating Intercultural Digital Literacy into EFL Classrooms***

The findings of this study align with recent research emphasizing the significance of digital literacy and intercultural competence in EFL classrooms. Digital literacy, defined as the ability to critically evaluate online information, can be effectively enhanced through collaborative learning strategies (Mardiah, 2022). Educators in higher education integrate critical digital literacy into curricula using diverse online resources (Rini & Nabhan, 2023), while younger learners benefit from digital initiatives that foster intercultural communicative competence (Rakhmawati et al., 2020). Studies indicate that digital warm-up activities significantly enhance intercultural literacy, particularly among young learners in Vietnamese international schools (Pham, 2023).

Digital technologies, including social media platforms, telecollaboration tools, and digital storytelling, play a crucial role in promoting intercultural understanding and communication skills. Research highlights positive attitudes among students and educators regarding technology's role in language learning, as it enhances cultural awareness and language proficiency (Piri & Riahi, 2018). Social media platforms such as Instagram and YouTube facilitate cross-cultural interactions, fostering global perspectives (Dang, 2024). Meanwhile, tools like email, podcasts, and online forums support intercultural communication through structured exchanges (Petrović, 2019). However, challenges persist, including distractions and technical skill gaps (Piri & Riahi, 2018). To address these barriers, culture-general digital training tools employing experiential learning methods have been developed to improve cultural understanding (Degens et al., 2016).

Beyond communication, digital media encourages reflection and cultural awareness. Platforms like Padlet enhance intercultural learning by promoting collaborative reflection during study-abroad programs (Lomicka & Ducate, 2019). Digital tools also serve as cultural symbols, supporting self-reflection for students with disabilities (Rubtsova & Ulanova, 2014). For pre-service teachers, technology-mediated critical reflection fosters cognitive dissonance, prompting transformative changes in multicultural attitudes (Acquah & Commins, 2015). Moreover, digital exchanges bridge geographical divides, fostering cross-cultural connections that help learners examine their identities and global responsibilities (Lin & Schwartz, 2003).

In conclusion, integrating digital tools into EFL classrooms supports intercultural competence and digital literacy. Digital technologies empower learners to navigate an interconnected world with cultural sensitivity and critical awareness. However, achieving these goals requires addressing technical barriers and providing teacher training. By embracing innovative digital practices, educators can cultivate globally competent learners equipped for the demands of the 21st century.

### *Strategies for Fostering Intercultural Digital Literacy in EFL Learners*

Fostering intercultural digital literacy requires integrating technology, pedagogy, and community engagement. Recent studies highlight effective approaches such as student motivation, digital training workshops, and improved digital infrastructure (Razak et al., 2022). Parental awareness also plays a key role in supporting digital literacy initiatives (Rakhmawati et al., 2020). For young learners, digital warm-up activities activate prior knowledge of intercultural features, enhancing engagement and learning outcomes (Pham, 2023).

Task-based learning (TBL) in online environments provides meaningful opportunities for intercultural competence development. Technology-mediated TBL builds trust and confidence among learners, fostering awareness through cultural exchanges (Lopes & Castro, 2023). Online role-plays involving native speakers have been shown to improve intercultural pragmatic competencies, although their motivational impact varies (Bachelor, 2022). The effectiveness of such activities depends on their design, particularly when centred on personal exchanges and cultural topics (Müller-Hartmann, 2000). Studies indicate that content-based language learning combined with international collaborations significantly enhances students' communicative and intercultural skills (Walker & Brocke, 2009).

Online discussions on cultural themes also foster intercultural understanding. However, cultural differences influence student-teacher interactions and interpretations of course content (Milheim, 2014). Studies highlight dissatisfaction among students regarding how cultural diversity is addressed in online courses, pointing to the need for more culturally responsive teaching strategies (Alharthi, 2020). To mitigate these challenges, computer-mediated environments enable structured cultural inquiry and discussion, with native-language discussions enhancing intercultural sensitivity, particularly for beginner learners (Garrett-Rucks, 2013).

Beyond classroom strategies, social media platforms and virtual networks facilitate intercultural dialogue. Platforms like Facebook provide international students with opportunities to interact, share experiences, and adapt to new cultural environments, strengthening communication skills and social connections (Monika et al., 2019). Studies show that digital spaces help create hybridized third cultures, where social and cultural capital is shared across borders (McEwan & Sobré-Denton, 2011). Additionally, these platforms contribute to social justice movements by fostering transnational networks that address global challenges (Sobré-Denton, 2016).

By integrating classroom strategies, task-based learning, online discussions, and social media engagement, educators can create comprehensive opportunities for EFL learners to develop intercultural digital literacy. Structured digital interventions and redesigned learning spaces foster cultural understanding and critical thinking. Task-based learning immerses students in authentic cultural interactions, while online discussions encourage reflection on personal and global identities. Quantitative insights from recent studies indicate that participation in intercultural digital literacy programs improves language proficiency and intercultural competence by 30%–50% (Razak et al., 2022), reinforcing the value of integrating digital tools into EFL instruction. By leveraging these strategies, educators can equip learners with the necessary skills to navigate diverse cultural contexts in the digital age.

## **4. CONCLUSION**

The integration of digital tools and resources into EFL classrooms presents a transformative opportunity to foster intercultural digital literacy among learners. This study highlights the significance

of combining digital literacy and intercultural competence to prepare students for globalized communication and collaboration. Findings indicate that digital technologies, such as social media platforms, online discussion forums, and collaborative tools, not only enhance language proficiency but also build cultural awareness and critical thinking. Furthermore, task-based and collaborative learning approaches in digital environments encourage learners to reflect on cultural differences, deepen their understanding of intercultural relationships, and develop essential 21st-century skills, including communication, creativity, critical thinking, and collaboration.

Despite these advancements, challenges persist, including technical barriers, cultural misalignment in classroom practices, and a lack of sufficient teacher training. Addressing these issues requires a holistic approach that involves equipping educators with the necessary skills, redesigning classroom methodologies to align with intercultural objectives, and integrating culture-specific and culture-general digital training tools. Additionally, the importance of reflection and self-awareness in developing intercultural competence underscores the value of digital platforms as spaces for identity exploration and cross-cultural dialogue.

In conclusion, this research emphasizes the potential of digital literacy projects and intercultural learning initiatives to transform EFL education. By integrating digital resources, intercultural elements, and reflective practices, educators can create meaningful, culturally rich learning experiences that prepare students for the demands of an interconnected world. Future research should focus on long-term strategies for overcoming implementation challenges, as well as exploring innovative uses of emerging technologies to further enhance intercultural digital literacy in diverse educational contexts.

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