

## **Telecollaboration to promote intercultural communicative competence: Insights from Indonesian EFL teachers**

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Informed about the significance of incorporating intercultural communicative competence (ICC) in EFL classrooms, the reported research on promoting ICC through telecollaboration from the teachers' side has gained limited attention. The present study addresses this gap by exploring teachers' perceptions of telecollaboration and illustrating how telecollaboration promotes EFL teachers' ICC. The telecollaboration project we report here brought together teachers from Indonesia and other countries in the outer and expanding circle for EFL. Based on an intercultural teacher training framework proposed by Lallana and Salamaca (2020), this project involved three Indonesian EFL teachers at state-owned and private schools, along with tandem teacher partners from Belarus, Japan, and Myanmar. As a qualitative interpretative study focusing on the Indonesian participants, a dataset was collected from observations, post-session reflections, and video-recorded interviews. The findings suggest that the participating teachers formed positive views about telecollaboration, wherein they shared transforming beliefs and attitudes towards interculturality in EFL teaching and learning. Further, they embraced the principles of ICC in their current teaching and intended to continue it in their future praxis. Some practical implications of infusing ICC in EFL teaching and learning are presented.

### **Introduction**

Technological advances, international mobility, and globalisation have opened up and pushed intercultural communication across geographical spaces. As a result, the shift in teaching English has transformed, gradually, suiting the demands of the times and influencing changes in the roles of EFL teachers. Apart from assisting students to be proficient in English, Dimitrov and Haque, (2016) and Kidwell, (2021) suggested that EFL teachers need to perform vital roles as cultural mediators and facilitators who equip their students for functioning in multicultural societies (Byram, 1997). Despite the urgency for EFL teachers to incorporate intercultural communicative competence (ICC) in their instruction, studies have revealed that teachers struggle with putting ICC into practice. Teachers have insufficient expertise in integrating ICC into their day-to-day instruction (Bon, 2022; Jumpakate & Hieu, 2019) and lack training in the concept of ICC and how to incorporate it in real classroom settings (Safa & Tofighi, 2021).

Although the importance of teaching ICC has been well documented in the literature, empirical studies on teacher professional development (TPD) that focuses on how to enhance teachers' ICC are quite limited, indicating a gap for further research (Lallana & Salamanca, 2020). Within limits, the existing literature has documented how to promote teachers' ICC through TPD under themes such as bilingual programs in Indonesia (Abduh & Rosmaladewi, 2018) and study groups in Columbia (Cuartas Álvarez, 2020). In

addition to bilingual programs and study groups, telecollaboration has emerged as a new way in improving teachers' ICC. Helm and Guth (2010) argued that telecollaboration promotes pre-service teachers' linguistic and cultural competencies. In a similar note, Üzümlü et al., (2020) investigated 26 Turkish teacher trainees' interculturality in partnering with 22 USA teacher trainees for discussion of various topics mediated on *Edmodo*. They concluded that telecollaboration is a viable way to promote ICC as reflected in the participants' cultural diversity awareness, cultural critical awareness, and interest in other cultures. Our current study is akin to Üzümlü et al., (2020), though offering novelty in two aspects: it equips the participants with the postulation of culture and interculturality and showcases how to integrate interculturality in their classroom activities. In addition, it supplies opportunities for teachers to organise collaborative instruction with partners from abroad and exposes them to first-hand cultural encounters with people from local cultures and from outer and expanding circle countries: Algeria, Croatia, India, Japan, Poland and the Philippines. Furthermore, investigation of TPD grounded in telecollaboration through the eyes of Indonesian EFL teachers remains underexplored, despite the findings from similar studies in other countries. Hence, this qualitative interpretative study nested in the EFL milieu aims to gain insights into implementing TPD grounded in ICC.

## **Theoretical underpinnings**

### **A framework for TPD in ICC**

Harris (2001) believed that professional development referred to capacity building by providing teachers with opportunities and experiences for empowerment, shared learning, and collaboration. Furthermore, experts (eg, Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Guskey, 2000; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012,) pointed out that professional development is intended to develop teachers' skills, knowledge, and attitude and improve students' learning.

In this study, TPD training is based on the framework postulated by Lalana and Salamaca (2020). They proposed intercultural L2 teacher training areas under three main topic areas, "cultural and intercultural knowledge, classroom management and curriculum design (teaching competencies), and general professional competencies "which are complimentary and interconnected" (p.7).

In the first area, they stated that "theoretical input for the training is provided in cultural and intercultural knowledge, which is divided into three main fields: (i) language and pragmatics, the link between language and interculturality; (ii) cultural and intercultural knowledge (such as culture-specific and culture-general knowledge); and (iii) human communication and metacommunicative skills" (p.7). In the second area, it included how theoretical information from the previously described topic is applied to a specific learning setting. It covers lesson preparation and course design, as well as classroom administration. In the last part, the non-teaching professional area, teachers develop their professional activity in the institution beyond their classroom routines, such as joining a team or department, and lifetime learning and continuing professional development.

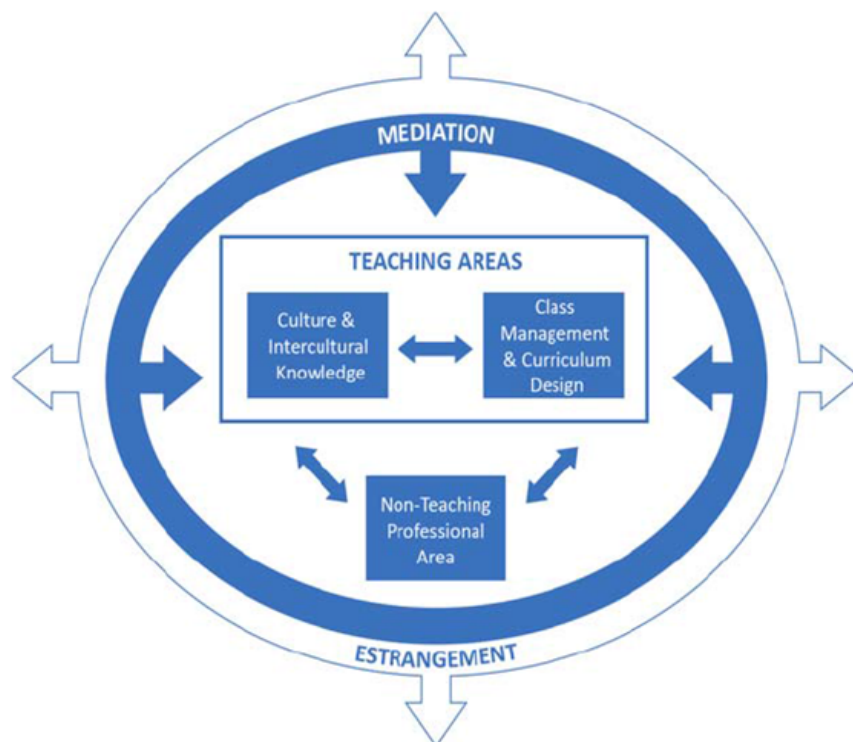


Figure 1: Intercultural L2 teacher training areas (Lallana & Salamaca, 2020)

We organised our training program to accommodate these three main areas. The first area is cultural and intercultural knowledge, which we develop through the topics of cultures and interculturality, and cultural elements from native people in local cultures and outer and expanding circle countries. The second area is curriculum design and class management, based on materials that showcase how to integrate interculturality in lesson plans, how to use technological tools to facilitate instruction, and how to enact collaborative teaching with teachers from abroad. The last area is non-teaching professionals. We link the teacher participants to teachers' forums and teachers from abroad.

### **Intercultural communicative competence (ICC)**

The postulation of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) was built upon the conception of communicative competence. Communicative competence emerged as a response to Chomsky's competence and performance notion (Bagarić & Djigunović, 2007). Hymes (1972), one of the proponents of communicative competence, believed that linguistic competence alone is not enough, but English speakers need the ability to use the grammar rules in the given communicative contexts. ICC has been brought into life to address a limitation that communicative competence could not accommodate: the development of English as a *lingua franca*, a mode of communication that both native and

non-native English speakers employ (Alptekin, 2002). In addition, rapid globalisation and economic growth, massive migration, and advanced technology give rise to the need for intercultural communication involving speakers from different linguistic and socio-cultural contexts. These speakers should be "conscious" of both their own and other people's "cultures" in order to engage and communicate effectively across cultural barriers (Byram et al., 2013; Zheng, 2014). This situation leads those speakers to experience a "cultural turn" where they make an effort to understand different cultures and gain intercultural competence as the precursor to effective intercultural communication (Byram et al., 2013).

ICC is the capacity to participate in appropriate and effective cross-cultural communication. (Byram, 1997; Deardorff, 2004). Byram et al. (2002) categorised ICC under five aspects: "knowledge, attitudes, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, and critical cultural awareness" (p.12). Possessing ICC will facilitate cultural relativism as suggested by Rosado (1999), referring to having a positive attitude towards other cultures like "inclusive, open mind, and culturally sensitive" (p. 4). Furthermore, promoting ICC in the EFL classrooms is firmly established due to the inescapable demand for English teachers and educators to expose their students to different cultures from inner, outer, and expanding circle countries (Tajeddin & Pakzadia, 2020). This exposure serves as a springboard to broaden and diversify students' cultural repertoire to function in intercultural communication effectively.

## **Telecollaboration**

Telecollaboration has been given different various names such as tandem learning, network-based language teaching, and computer-mediated communication (Thorne, 2006), telecollaboration (Belz, 2002) and virtual exchange (O'Dowd et al., 2019). Telecollaboration is defined as connecting students from different geographically separate locations (Belz, 2002; Helm & Guth, 2010; O'Dowd et al., 2019) to conduct collaborative work and intercultural communication on a sustaining basis (O'Dowd et al., 2019). For this study, we refer to telecollaboration as linking EFL teachers to interactions with local and foreign people from outer and expanding circle countries to experience first-hand cross-cultural communication. Telecollaboration has used many Internet technologies, for instance, text based-via email (Al-Khatib, 2021), global chatting websites and *WhatsApp* (Pasand et al., 2021), blogs (Fuchs, 2016; García-Sánchez & Rojas-Lizana, 2012), video conferencing (Üzüm et al., 2019), *Skype* (Hsu & Beasley, 2019), and *Zoom* (Freiermuth & Huang, 2021). Thorne (2006) argued that telecollaboration had become one of the key instruments for fostering intercultural awareness in language education. It has been documented to positively contribute to students' ICC in different levels of education, for instance, increasing Greek kindergarten students' consciousness of linguistic and cultural diversity (Magos et al., 2013) and developing Japanese elementary students' interest in learning English and intercultural awareness (Okumura, 2020).

In tertiary education, Loranc-Paszyk (et. al. 2021) investigated a telecollaboration involving two groups of pre-service students from USA and Poland lasting for 6 weeks mediated by *Zoom*. They reported that telecollaboration helped these participants to become more reflective as shown from their expanding perspectives upon their teaching

practices. Eren (2023) employed critical tasks with many collaborators across Europe by using both asynchronous (*Edmodo*) and synchronous (*Zoom*) tools to raise pre-service teachers' critical cultural awareness. Results showed that telecollaboration significantly influenced their critical intercultural growth by helping them to eliminate bias and preconceptions.

Whilst showing the benefits that telecollaboration offers, the literature also uncovers some factors that hinder telecollaboration, such as technological problems (Avgousti, 2018), different time zones (Yang, 2020), and different levels of language proficiency (Ciftci & Savas, 2018).

Overall, the studies outlined above have focused mainly on student perspectives, with less investigation of teacher perspectives. This study contributes to filling this gap by investigating the research questions:

1. How do teachers perceive TPD training grounded in telecollaboration?
2. To what extent does TPD grounded in telecollaboration promote Indonesian EFL teachers' intercultural communicative competence?

## Method

### Research design

This study used a qualitative interpretative inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) following the research method of Üzümlü et al. (2020). Situated in the eastern part of Indonesia, our study portrays how Indonesian EFL teachers' intercultural encounters, collaborative teaching, and training contributed to their ICC and how they perceived the telecollaboration experience.

### Research site and research participants

A teacher professional development (TPD) webinar series under the theme "*Incorporating Culture and Interculturality in EFL instruction*" was offered free of charge for English teachers in North Sulawesi province, Indonesia, held from July to August 2022. An invitation to participate was distributed through *Facebook* and *WhatsApp*, and the researchers went to schools to distribute the poster and introduce the program directly to the headmaster and English teachers. Out of forty teachers participating, six were willing to participate in the present study, although three did not follow up due to job responsibilities and personal challenges. The three continuing teachers (males) from a private and state-run high school situated in North Sulawesi province had a personal and professional relationship with the first researcher. A good rapport between the researcher and participants enabled an easier negotiation of a consent form, and assisted with producing meaningful and rich data collection. The consent form that participants signed indicated their understanding of the purpose of data collection, what data were required for the study, what sort of information would be asked for, what the risks and benefits of taking part in the research would be, and how their confidentiality would be ensured (Patton, 2002).

The participants' participation was strictly voluntary and pseudonyms were used to preserve anonymity (Table 1).

Table 1: Participant demographics

Pseudonym	Type of school	School location	Education background	Teaching experience
Juan	State-run school	Sangihe	BA graduate	13 years
Eben	Hindu-based school	Kotamobagu	BA graduate	8 years
Ricky	Catholic-based school	Tomohon	BA graduate	13 years

The participants had varying extents of experience in TPD. Juan is a senior English teacher who has served as the head of *MGMP* (a professional community involving teachers in a similar subject) since 2013 with thirteen years of teaching experience and independently reads materials related to teaching English. Eben, who has been teaching English for eight years, acknowledged that after graduating from university, he was not deeply engaged with TPD and relied on the textbooks endorsed by the curriculum and the government. Ricky, previously working in a private company with thirteen years of teaching experience, joined *MGMP* and attended some webinars. Currently, he is appointed as one of guru *penggerak* (catalyst teacher) who performs as an agent of change functioning to create freedom in learning, promote a learning community and ecological well-being in his sphere of influence, and equip students to demonstrate *Profil Pelajar Pancasila* (student's profile grounded in Pancasila philosophy).

#### TPD instructional overview

The program was implemented collaboratively by involving 14 speakers from some established universities in Indonesia and native people from local and global cultures. It adopts an intercultural training for teachers' framework introduced by Lalana and Salamaca (2020). The discussed topics were pertinent to post-modernism in EFL, TPD, integrating culture and interculturality in EFL instruction, technological tools to support online learning telecollaborative exchange to facilitate students' ICC, and particular cultural elements from local and global cultures. This webinar series aimed to expand the English teachers' understanding of culture, interculturality and ICC, and showcase to these teachers how to develop task-based activities and assessments grounded in ICC. The participants experienced first-hand cultural encounters with native people hailing from local cultures (Minahasa and Sangihe) and global cultures (Algeria, Croatia, India, Japan, Poland, and the Philippines). Moreover, these teachers engaged themselves in telecollaborative exchange by organising and hosting virtual meetings in collaboration with teachers from abroad. The webinar schedule is presented in Table 2.

After attending a five-week webinar, the participating teachers organised a telecollaborative exchange with teachers from abroad under two main activities: a guest teacher program and *PowerPoint*/ video joint-meeting presentation (Table 3).

Table 2: Teacher professional development webinar series timeline, topics, speakers, and goals

Day/week	Topics	Speakers	Goals
Day1, Week 1	Post-modernism in education	Teacher educator from Indonesia (doctorate grad.)	To explore the concept of post-modernism and its impact and connection to EFL instruction
Day 2, Week 1	TPD: Policies, practices, and need analysis	Teacher educator from Indonesia (doctorate grad.)	To explore the implementation of TPD in Indonesia's context
	What qualities make up the Philippines	English teacher from the Philippines (masters grad.)	To present some qualities that describe the Philippines
	Ditch the paper and go digital	English teacher from Croatia (masters grad.)	To present some technological tools to support online learning and provide examples of how they are used in the teaching and learning process along with their products (students' samples of works)
Day 3, Week 2	Designing tasks promoting EFL students' intercultural awareness	Teacher educator from Indonesia (doctorate grad.)	To present some theoretical outlooks about cultures and interculturality and showcase how to design tasks grounded in interculturality
Day 4, Week 2	Incorporating culture and interculturality in EFL instruction	Teacher educator from Indonesia (masters grad.)	To present some concepts about culture and interculturality, analyse the cultural content in EFL textbooks, and adjust/develop materials to introduce interculturality through EFL instruction
Day 5, Week 3	<i>Gunde</i> dance	English teacher from Indonesia (BA grad)	To present one cultural element ( <i>Gunde</i> dance) from local culture ( <i>Sangihe</i> )
	Telecollaborative exchange to facilitate students' intercultural communicative competence (ICC)	Teacher educator from Indonesia (ongoing PhD student)	To present about telecollaboration and showcase how telecollaboration could facilitate students' ICC
Day 6, Week 4	Japanese culture	English teacher and coach from Japan (masters grad)	To present some Japanese language expressions and values
	Culture of <i>Malesung</i> ( <i>Minabasa</i> )	English teacher from Indonesia (BA grad)	To present <i>Malesung</i> ( <i>Minabasa</i> ) mythology and history and customs, beliefs, rituals, symbols, and ancestors' wisdom
Day 7, Week 5	Technological tools to support online learning	English teacher from Indonesia (ongoing PhD student)	To present some frameworks to integrate technological tools to support online learning and showcase how to use them in a workshop

Day 8, Week 5	Incorporating culture and inter-culturality in EFL instruction	Education consultant from Indonesia (masters graduate)	To present some concepts about culture, language, and interculturality and showcase how to incorporate these concepts in EFL instruction
Day 9, Week 5	Indian culture	Working in a corporate (BA grad.)	To present several festivals and their connection to Indian tradition and values
	Poland - stereotype vs reality	Working in a corporate (masters graduate)	To present the concept of stereotype and its manifestation in reality
	The culture of Algeria	An English teacher from Algeria (BA graduate)	To present the art and cuisine of Algerian culture

Table 3: Telecollaboration agenda

Day/Week	Topics	Activities	Tandem partner
Day 1, Week 1	Indonesia's landscape	Serving as a guest teacher	Japanese teacher and students
Day 2, Week 1	All about Belarus	Hosting a guest teacher program	Belarusian teacher
Day 3, Week 2	Traditional musical instrument	Facilitating a meeting on a <i>PowerPoint</i> presentation about a traditional musical instrument	Myanmarese teacher and students

### Data collection and analysis

As the data collection was carried out during July to August 2022, when the Covid-19 pandemic was beginning to subside, the impact of pandemic measures on the study was minimal. Moreover, the TPD was conducted online, allowing participants to attend from the safety and comfort of their own space. The sessions were held in the afternoons and evenings, providing flexibility for participants after their work hours. Garnering the data took about seven weeks with three research instruments: observations (conducted in each session), post-session reflections (distributed after the session), and video-recorded interviews (before and after TPD training). After each session on TPD webinar, the participating teachers were asked to complete the reflection sheets to ascertain their understanding and reflection on the presented materials and how they would implement these conceptualisations, skills, and practices in their teaching praxis in their contexts. The researchers also used an observation sheet to document how the participants engaged in the meetings (TPD webinar series and telecollaborative exchange program) grounded in Byram's (1997, 2002) ICC framework (attitude, knowledge, skills, and awareness).

The interviews generated about 180 minutes of video recording and were geared to capture respondents' involvement in TPD and their perception of the TPD training, their experience, and its impact on their beliefs, attitude, and teaching praxis. We gave a freedom to the participants to use Indonesia or English that they felt comfortable that would not hinder them having difficulties to express their thoughts and sharing their



experiences. Three of them spoke in mixed Indonesian and English. The dataset was analysed using a thematic analysis technique (Braun & Clarke, 2006; 2012) which involved data identification, analysis, and interpretation. Upon the completion of the dataset, the interviews and observations were transcribed. We first did a repeated reading from all the transcribed data (observation, post-session reflections, and video-recorded interviews). We translated all of the data into English and then analysed by coding for emerging patterns. In order to ensure the validity of the information, we employed a member checking process where we asked the respondents to review the transcribed text, including the translated results.

## Results

The dataset sourced from observations, post-session reflections, and video-recorded interviews suggested that these participating teachers perceived TPD training grounded in telecollaboration positively, as they hoped to engage in a more long-term program. In addition, the TPD training promoted their ICC as reflected in their beliefs, attitudes, and teaching praxis.

### Positive perception towards TPD grounded in telecollaboration

The participating teachers voiced that taking part in the training was a precious, amazing, and memorable experience for them. It was the first time they were exposed to training grounded in ICC. One of the teachers believed that attending the training to integrate interculturality in his instruction and exchanging information about cultures helps him to reflect on his current teaching practice. Juan shared his experience:

After attending several meetings, I got intrigued with the presented materials because I have observed that most teachers, including me, rarely discuss cultures and interculturality. We mainly focus on language features and social functions, and local wisdom/cultures are overlooked (Juan's story 1).

Similarly, Eben mentioned that a 7-week TPD training raised his awareness of the importance of ongoing TPD training and what was lacking and needed improvement in his teaching praxis. He highlighted the values of his engagement in the training for expanding his pedagogical skills in operating new technological tools learned from speakers and other teachers from abroad. Ricky was thankful that this training could expand his insight and enrich his experience of communicating with people from abroad.

These positive perceptions are in line with observations of their engagement and performed roles during the program's enactment. These participants attended all the sessions and actively engaged during six weeks of TPD training. They were cognitively involved in the training as they raised questions and comments during the sessions: performing the ability to integrate ideas, compare and contrast, and link the materials to their actual situation in their workplaces. As demonstrated by Eben, on day 9, during a meeting with natives from Algeria, India and Poland, he compared and contrasted India and Indonesia in terms of beliefs, language and habits. In another session presented by the

first author about promoting students' ICC through telecollaboration, Eben raised his concern about how to motivate and engage his low-ability students in telecollaboration. They worked hand in hand to design the lesson plan delivered in telecollaboration sessions with students and teachers from Myanmar, deciding who would be in charge in the three stages of learning. They showed their respect and understanding to each other, for example, in reaching the best time for simulation that suited the service quality of everyone's Internet connection.

### **Challenging long-held beliefs about a good model of English**

Our seven week TPD training has challenged the teachers' long-held beliefs about a good model of English. Some sessions brought in the concept of *World Englishes*, and these teachers had their first-hand cultural encounter meeting natives with different accents from outer and expanding-circle countries. Before attending the webinar, they believed that native speakers of English were always the best models for them and their students to emulate. The novel insights gained from this cultural encounter transformed their beliefs and gave them more ownership and confidence in their teaching praxis, as confessed by Ricky.

Communicating with people from different geographical spaces made me listen to people who speak English with their accents; for instance, when I listen to a speaker from the Philippines, he uses the Philippines accent, and so do people from Myanmar and other countries, which is different from native speakers of English. It was a unique experience and made me confident. I always thought I should speak in a perfect way like native speakers of English but listening to these speakers, I realised that English no longer belongs to native speakers of English. I should not be embarrassed if I speak English with my Indonesian accent (Ricky's story 3).

Having had an opportunity to be a guest teacher for students in Japan, Eben pointed out his challenges in understanding Japanese accents and eventually perceived accent as an inseparable part of our identity. He furthermore highlighted that the most important aspect in communication was intelligibility, and this conceptualisation freed students to express themselves without being afraid of making mistakes.

.... the explanation of post-modernism helps me to understand that in this era, we do not need to be native speakers. The fact that we learn English doesn't mean we have to be them. The point is the message is being understood by the listeners. By that issue, the students will feel free to express their thoughts through their language without being afraid of making mistakes. I thought that when we talk about the concept of post-modernism, it would be suitable to be applied to improve students' speaking skills. In this matter, we are emphasising how the students will speak up just like how they exactly are or not trying to be such a native. (Eben's reflection sheet 1).

Eben, furthermore, narrated that in his upcoming teaching praxis, he would expose his students to various English accents from speakers in outer and expanding circles.

### **Instilling and strengthening values that support ICC**

Juan in his interview explained some changes in his attitude, as the TPD training encouraged him to be humble, open-minded, and respectful. He stated:

I have observed a major change in the way I perceive interculturality. I might have had a very narrow-minded viewpoint about our cultures and I am not open-minded towards other cultures. This webinar made me aware that I know little about cultures: I realise that the more we know about something, the more we do not know about anything. Speaking about cultures is a complex thing. We need to open our insight that learning cultures made us aware of humans' works and we need to respect these works (Juan's story 5)

Juan also foregrounded the need to learn interculturality to better understand people from diverse cultural backgrounds. He said, "... this helped me to realise that we need to learn from other people and cultures to help us in communication: helping me understanding which one is appropriate and which one is inappropriate".

Eben's sense of diversity was heightened as he admitted that he had already understood diversity: "we are indeed different from one another". According to him, being respectful of our own and other cultures is pivotal. In his own words, "...*being confident with what we have and our accent*" reassured him in speaking English and sharing his ideas and thoughts with others. Likewise, Ricky's respect towards other cultures was intensified after listening to cultural presentations delivered by natives from Algeria, India, Poland, and the Philippines and meeting students and teachers from Belarus, Japan and Myanmar. He concluded that no matter where we reside, our ethnicity and religion, or skin colors, we share one thing in common: universal values and people never forget about their roots. In addition to being respectful, Ricky's curiosity was aroused after listening to a presentation delivered by a speaker from the Philippines, and he raised a question about one particular word because this word also existed in his ethnicity, *Minahasa*. To satisfy his curiosity, he addressed his questions to the speaker from Japan, asking about *Manga* cartoon characters, and the speaker from Poland questioned the meaning behind Poland's flag color.

### **Embracing ICC in teaching praxis**

The materials presented, first-hand cultural encounters, and discussion transformed how these teachers perceived English teaching, which eventually will create new directions in their teaching praxis. Juan demonstrated his in-depth reflection on the training by implementing the lessons learnt in his teaching practices. For instance, he compared how teachers from Indonesia and abroad selected materials. He observed that teachers from Myanmar, for example, took simple but interesting topics from real-life experiences for the student. On the other hand, teachers from Indonesia took indigestible materials beyond students' reach and were out of students' interest. In addition, as the head of MGMP, he has urged his colleagues to discuss more cultures, as endorsed in the new curriculum, *Merdeka Belajar*. This curriculum endows teachers with the freedom and autonomy to design learning materials. More importantly, he is running an ongoing project for seventh graders incorporating cultures. The students will learn how to play

traditional music, sing traditional songs, and perform one traditional ritual (cutting *Tamo* cake), video recorded with their English presentations. Cutting *Tamo* cake is an annual tradition held every January, and these students would learn how to cut the cake properly using good Sangirese language, the do's and don'ts in this tradition, and the philosophical values behind that ritual. All these video recorded materials would be uploaded to the school's *YouTube* channel. The students could watch the videos, and other teachers could also use these materials as their learning source. Juan felt that participating in the webinar opened insights into how to design up-to-date projects that helped students and teachers to think globally and act locally.

In a similar vein, Ricky, connected interculturality to Indonesia's education hero or father of education *Ki Hadjar Devantara*, as a means to encourage his students to think globally and act locally by using English to introduce local pearls of wisdom to people worldwide. His instruction has shifted from teacher-centred to student-centred learning by empowering the students to take ownership of their learning by sharing their thoughts and ideas in class and through social media. In addition, Ricky motivated his students to speak English with their accents at school, and he would never require his students to speak like native English speakers. In Eben's case, he would pay heed to students' interests, apply appropriate methods, and include interculturality in his instruction. He would enrich his instructional resources with materials from outer and expanding circles countries, such as *K-Pop* as this is popular among his students.

As observed throughout the 6-week TPD training, the teachers performed their roles as intercultural mediators when they prepared their students for the meetings and moderated the meetings by leading pre-activity, main activity, and post-activity in telecollaborative exchange. For instance, in the meeting with students and a teacher from Myanmar, a travelling time game was played to break the ice. Then, it was followed by a presentation and discussion about traditional music from Indonesia and Myanmar. Ultimately, each student should share their takeaway after participating in the virtual intercultural exchange meeting. Yet, these participating teachers need more scaffolding for designing more diverse projects and building international networking. From their point of view, they suggested some ideas to ponder for sustaining TPD training grounded in telecollaboration, such as expanding the discussion with people from non-Anglophone countries to cover deep cultures about norms, values, and perspectives and highlighting the differences between pronunciation and dialect.

## **Discussion**

Nested in a qualitative interpretative study, the purpose of the current study was to examine how participating teachers perceived the TPD training grounded in telecollaboration and how their engagement with intercultural encounters, collaborative teaching, and culturally-embedded training contributed to their ICC. The dataset from observations, post-session reflections, and video-recorded interviews disclosed that the participating teachers perceived TPD training positively as they actively engaged during the trainings by attending all the sessions and raising questions, organised intercultural exchange meetings hand in hand, and delivered the instruction responsibly. TPD training

has transformed their beliefs, teaching praxis, and positive attitude towards interculturality as shown in their awareness of Englishes and their endeavour to explore and incorporate host cultures in the instruction and place students as the centre of the instruction and to perform more tolerance towards different accents, more respect to cultural diversity, and communicating appropriately in diverse cultural settings.

Telecollaboration is perceived positively by the participating teachers because it facilitates participating teachers to reflect, to think and process the newly obtained information in depth. They recalled and reviewed their teaching praxis, constructed their understanding of the presented interculturality postulation and its integration in day-to-day teaching practice, and reconstructed their teaching praxis. This finding is in line with Loranc-Paszylk et. al. (2021), indicating the importance of doing reflection to expand teachers' perspectives in connection to their teaching praxis as suggested by a number of scholars (Anderson, 2020; Ayoobiyani & Rashidi, 2021; Cirocki & Farrell, 2019; Derinalp, 2022; Farrell & Kennedy, 2019) to ensure effective teaching. Furthermore, this study expands the empiric that reflection not only expands the participants' perspective but also assists them in drawing up plans and developing strategies for change in their teaching praxis. This process engages teachers in problem-solving (Derinalp, 2022) and leads them not only to observe what happens in the classroom but also to be aware of the causes, how to solve them, and the negative implications if they are not well-addressed (McKnight, 2002).

The second reason that explains why telecollaboration gains positive perceptions because the presented topics delivered by experts and academicians have accommodated participating teachers' needs, as informed by the pilot study on the need analysis and investigation of a sample of teachers' current perception and teaching praxis towards interculturality (Batunan et al., 2023). Through the interviews with the participating teachers, it could be observed that culturally-embedded instruction is not yet fully embraced in their teaching praxis, due to teachers' lack of exposure to cultural diversity and insufficient support for culturally-incorporated instruction in the form of teaching materials, training, and resources. It also gives them opportunities to experience first-hand encounters with fellow non-native English teachers and non-native English speakers from abroad. Third, the training grounded in telecollaboration is based on a workable and valid intercultural training framework. The framework includes paramount elements needed by teachers to equip the teachers with postulation, provide an example of how to integrate ICC in their practice, and supply opportunities to adopt the newly learned concepts and practice in collaboration with teachers from abroad.

The teachers showed their transformed beliefs in a good model of English as they are no longer ingrained in native speakerism. Instead, they now focus more on building students' intelligibility and confidence and demonstrating more tolerance towards English varieties. More tolerance towards different English varieties is vital because teachers must be aware of the current English landscape. Evidence from the literature suggests that majority of the students showed a preference towards native-like accents (Fang, 2016; Kang-Young & Green, 2016). In addition to this native speakerism stance, schools adopted learning instruction deeply ingrained in native-speakerism (Snodin & Young, 2015) and students' formed negative perceptions towards local accents (Ishikawa, 2017; Wang, 2015). The

native-speakerism postulate is no longer relevant in EFL instruction due to the existence of English as a *lingua franca* that pushed the emergence of more varieties of English. Even more, the number of non-native speakers of English in outer and expanding circles is greater than those of speakers in the inner circle (Fang, 2016). It suggests a need to expose teachers to English varieties (Kusumaningputri, 2020) to equip them with preparing their students to use English in real life across cultural boundaries (Iswandari & Ardi, 2022), to engage in global communication. Teachers' belief and understanding about what English varieties should students be exposed to is crucial in EFL instruction, because, as suggested by Zhang and Hu (2008), students showed their more favourable sentiments toward the English varieties they have been exposed to.

Telecollaboration promotes participating teachers' ICC as they acknowledged by forming positive attitudes towards interculturality, embracing Englishes postulates and starting to integrate interculturality in their day-to-day teaching praxis. Participating teachers acknowledged more positive attitudes towards interculturality, by being more respectful, curious, and open-minded. This finding reiterates what was uncovered in previous studies that demonstrated how telecollaborative exchange facilitated teacher trainees to form positive attitudes, such as curiosity and willingness to learn from other cultures (Üzüm, et. al. 2020) and assisting pre-service students to eliminate bias and preconceptions towards otherness (Eren, 2023). In addition, it is suggested that teachers will be more prepared and better in handling emerging socio-cultural challenges in the classroom if the teachers have adequate ICC (Imamyartha et al., 2023). The present study indicates that telecollaboration serves as a viable venue to expose cultural diversity through first-hand engagement with people from different cultural backgrounds, and engagement with the presented theories and teaching praxis that helps to diversify cultural repertoires. In addition, it serves as a fruitful learning ground to foster ICC (Thorne, 2006) and to nurture ethno-relativism postulation. Possessing ethno-relativism helps people not to use their values, beliefs, and perspectives to judge others as it would lead people achieve mutual understanding and respect and build a good rapport across cultural boundaries (Rosado, 1994). Furthermore, Rosado (1994) contended that cultural relativism is a lens through which one can perceive multicultural society as part of global citizenship.

The findings also highlight the importance of TPD training as a continuing professional development to build up teachers' capacity (Harris, 2001) by giving them opportunities to reflect on their ongoing teaching praxis to amplify their knowledge, skills and attitudes (Guskey, 2000). The participating teachers have integrated interculturality into their day-to-day teaching praxis such as by designing projects grounded in interculturality, empowering students through student-centered learning, expanding learning sources from the three cultural circles suggested by (Tajeddin & Pakzadian, 2020), and applying appropriate instructional methods supportive to intercultural learning. This research finding has addressed the obstacles faced by teachers in incorporating interculturality, like the lack of expertise in integrating ICC (Jumpakate & Hieu, 2019) and the lack of training on how to put the concept of interculturality to real use (Safa & Tofighi, 2021). These gains in addressing the current enigma of intercultural learning have underscored the importance of TPD to transform teachers' beliefs in the long run, as what teachers believe tends to dictate their professional decision-making (Pajares, 1992).

Three implications could be drawn from the above discussion to improve TPD to promote ICC. Firstly, TPD training should also equip teachers with more strategies/approaches on how to actuate interculturality in varied contexts through appealing activities and building up networking with international teachers' forums/associations. Secondly, more critical inspection of interculturality should be accommodated in the instruction through telecollaboration: going beyond 4F (food, folklore, festival, and fashion). Thirdly, pre- and in-service training institutions should bring in the concept of interculturality and support students teachers to integrate it in content courses.

## Conclusion

Addressing the lack of research on ICC instruction in non-Anglophone settings, the present study has garnered evidence concerning how TPD training grounded in telecollaboration can support EFL teachers to teach ICC in Indonesian secondary education. The findings have concluded that training grounded in telecollaboration can serve as an essential learning trajectory for teachers' sustainable professional development, and help them develop their knowledge, skills, and teaching praxis on how to integrate interculturality into regular English instruction. In addition, telecollaboration functions as an avenue for teachers to experience cross-cultural encounters with people from diverse cultural settings. Sufficient knowledge, skills, and experience are pivotal to supporting teachers in performing their roles as cultural mediators/ facilitators in this multilingual/multicultural society, inasmuch as they shoulder a responsibility for preparing their students to function as global citizens.

This study has shown how the training encourages teachers to transform their beliefs and teaching practice while strengthening their attitudes towards interculturality. These transformed beliefs and attitudes are essential stepping stones for them to put their intercultural learning into their teaching praxis in a way that keeps up with their students' needs. This study contributes to how to organise TPD to promote EFL teachers' ICC. Since this study recruited only a small number of participants, further studies could involve participants from wider cultural and/or educational contexts to obtain more widely generalisable findings. Similar studies employing other approaches such as action research are also very desirable for enriching our understanding of the processes and lessons learned from a longer series of training activities.

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