

**STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES IN USING GPT AI FOR INTERCULTURAL
COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE (ICC) COURSE
AT UNIVERSITAS LANCANG KUNING**

A THESIS

**Submitted to Fulfill
One of the Requirements
to Obtain a Degree of *Sarjana Pendidikan* (S.Pd)**



**RASHIPA AMNAH
NIM. 2288203035**

**ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION PROGRAM
FACULTY OF EDUCATION AND VOCATIONAL STUDIES
UNIVERSITAS LANCANG KUNING
PEKANBARU
APRIL 2026**

ABSTRACT

Rashipa Amnah, 2026 : Students' Experiences in Using GPT AI for Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) Course at Universitas Lancang Kuning

The integration of GPT-based artificial intelligence in higher education has raised important questions about how this technology influences students' intercultural learning, particularly in developing Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC). Although the use of GPT-AI in language learning continues to grow, research exploring students' lived experiences in the Indonesian higher education context remains limited. Therefore, this study aimed to explore students' experiences in using GPT-AI as a learning partner in the Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) course at Universitas Lancang Kuning. This research employed a qualitative descriptive approach. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with five students enrolled in the ICC course. Thematic analysis was conducted following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework, guided by Byram's (1997; 2021) Intercultural Communicative Competence theory and the Technology-Enhanced Learning and Educational AI framework. The findings revealed that students perceived GPT-AI not merely as a technological tool, but as a reflective and collaborative learning partner that supported intercultural understanding. Five key themes emerged: patterns of GPT-AI use in cultural learning, comfort and positive engagement, openness and empathy toward cultural diversity, critical thinking and digital cultural awareness, and GPT-AI as a collaborative learning partner. Among these, the most dominant theme was GPT-AI as a collaborative learning partner, as students consistently described the AI as a dialogic companion that facilitated idea development, intercultural reflection, and autonomous learning. The results indicate that GPT-AI contributed to students' ICC development across cognitive, emotional, and reflective dimensions by fostering empathy, critical cultural awareness, and learner autonomy. In conclusion, when used critically and responsibly, the integration of GPT-AI into ICC learning has the potential to transform intercultural education in higher education into a more reflective, ethical, and human-centered practice.

Keywords : GPT-AI, Intercultural Communicative Competence, Student Experiences, Collaborative Learning Partner, Technology-Enhanced Learning, Intercultural Reflection.

ABSTRAK

Rashipa Amnah, 2026 : Pengalaman Mahasiswa dalam Menggunakan GPT-AI pada Mata Kuliah *Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC)* di Universitas Lancang Kuning

Penerapan kecerdasan buatan berbasis GPT dalam pendidikan tinggi menimbulkan perhatian terhadap bagaimana teknologi ini memengaruhi pembelajaran lintas budaya mahasiswa, khususnya dalam pengembangan *Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC)*. Meskipun penggunaan GPT-AI dalam pembelajaran bahasa semakin meningkat, penelitian yang mengkaji pengalaman langsung mahasiswa masih terbatas, terutama dalam konteks pendidikan tinggi di Indonesia. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi pengalaman mahasiswa dalam menggunakan GPT-AI sebagai mitra pembelajaran pada mata kuliah *Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC)* di Universitas Lancang Kuning. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan pengumpulan data melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur terhadap lima mahasiswa yang mengikuti mata kuliah *ICC*. Analisis data dilakukan secara tematik berdasarkan enam tahapan yang dikemukakan oleh Braun dan Clarke (2006), dengan landasan teori *Intercultural Communicative Competence* dari Byram (1997; 2021) serta kerangka *Technology-Enhanced Learning* dan *Educational AI*. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa mahasiswa memandang GPT-AI bukan sekadar sebagai alat teknologi, melainkan sebagai mitra pembelajaran yang reflektif dan kolaboratif yang mendukung pemahaman lintas budaya. Lima tema utama muncul, yaitu: pola penggunaan GPT-AI dalam pembelajaran budaya, kenyamanan dan partisipasi positif, keterbukaan dan empati terhadap keberagaman budaya, kemampuan berpikir kritis dan kesadaran budaya digital, serta GPT-AI sebagai mitra pembelajaran kolaboratif. Di antara kelima tema tersebut, tema yang paling dominan adalah GPT-AI sebagai mitra pembelajaran kolaboratif, karena mahasiswa secara konsisten menggambarkan GPT-AI sebagai rekan dialog yang membantu pengembangan ide, refleksi lintas budaya, serta kemandirian belajar. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa GPT-AI berkontribusi dalam pengembangan *ICC* mahasiswa pada ranah kognitif, emosional, dan reflektif melalui peningkatan empati, kesadaran budaya kritis, dan otonomi belajar. Sebagai simpulan, penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa pemanfaatan GPT-AI dalam pembelajaran *ICC* berpotensi mentransformasi pendidikan lintas budaya di pendidikan tinggi agar menjadi lebih reflektif, etis, dan berpusat pada manusia, apabila digunakan secara kritis dan bertanggung jawab.

Kata kunci: GPT-AI, Kompetensi Komunikasi Antarbudaya, Pengalaman Mahasiswa, Mitra Pembelajaran Kolaboratif, Pembelajaran Berbasis Teknologi, Refleksi Antarbudaya

LEMBAR PENGESAHAN

Judul : Pengalaman Mahasiswa dalam Menggunakan GPT-
AI pada Mata Kuliah *Intercultural Communicative
Competence (ICC)* di Universitas Lancang Kuning

Nama : Rashipa Amnah

Nim : 2288203035

Program Studi : Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris

Disetujui

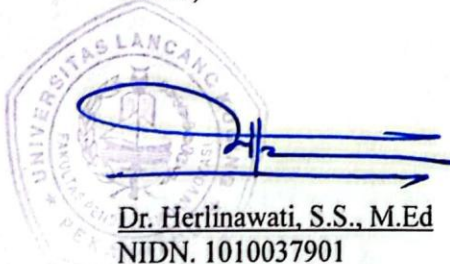
Pembimbing



Refika Andriani, S.Pd.I., M.Pd
NIDN. 1008088603

Diketahui,

Dekan,



Dr. Herlinawati, S.S., M.Ed
NIDN. 1010037901

Ketua Program Studi,



Refika Andriani, S.Pd.I., M.Pd
NIDN. 1008088603

EXAMINERS' APPROVAL

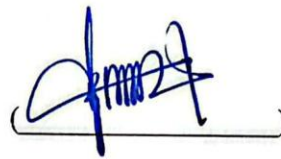
A Thesis entitled :

Students' Experiences in Using GPT AI for Intercultural Communicative
Competence (ICC) Course at Universitas Lancang Kuning

Has been examined on February 11th, 2026

Approved by,

Advisor : Refika Andriani, S.Pd.I., M.Pd



Examiner 1 : Dr. Herdi, S.Pd., M.Pd



Examiner 2 : Destina Kasriyati, S.Pd., M.Pd



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Dengan ini saya menyatakan bahwa:

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Pekanbaru, 11 February 2026

Saya Yang Menyatakan,



Kashifa Amnah
NIM. 2288203035

ACKNOWLEDEMENT

First of all, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Allah SWT, the Most Gracious and the Most Merciful, for His blessings, guidance, health, and strength that enabled me to complete this thesis. Without His mercy and permission, this research would not have been possible. This thesis was written as one of the requirements to obtain the Bachelor Degree (S.Pd) at the English Education Department, Faculty of Education and Vocational, Universitas Lancang Kuning, Pekanbaru, Riau.

This thesis entitled *“Students’ Experiences in Using GPT-AI for Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) Course at Universitas Lancang Kuning”* was completed with the support, guidance, encouragement, and assistance from many individuals and institutions. Therefore, the researcher would like to express sincere appreciation and gratitude to the following:

1. My deepest appreciation and heartfelt gratitude go to my respectful and supportive advisor, Ma’am Refika Andriani, S.Pd.I., M.Pd Thank you for your patience, sincerity, and dedication in guiding me throughout this research. Your encouragement, thoughtful guidance, constructive feedback, and belief in my ability gave me strength during moments of doubt. Your guidance was not only academic but also motivational, and it became an important part of my growth as a student and as a person.
2. Dr. Herdi, S.Pd., M.Pd., as the examiners I, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my first examiner for the valuable feedback, constructive criticism, and insightful suggestions. The thoughtful comments and detailed evaluations have greatly contributed to the improvement of this thesis. I deeply appreciate the time, attention, and academic guidance given, which have helped me refine my work and strengthen the quality of this research.
3. Destina Kasriyati, M.Pd., as the examiners II, I would also like to extend my sincere appreciation to my second examiner for the meaningful

suggestions, critical insights, and encouragement throughout the examination process. The recommendations and reflections offered have provided important perspectives that enhanced the clarity and depth of this study. I am truly grateful for the support and academic input that have helped me develop this thesis further.

4. Refika Andriani, S,Pd.I., M.Pd as the Head of the English Education Department, Faculty of Education and Vocational, Universitas Lancang Kuning, for her guidance and support during my academic journey.
5. Dr. Herlinawati, SS. M.Ed. as the Dean of the Faculty of Education and Vocational, Universitas Lancang Kuning, for her leadership and support in the academic process.
6. Prof. Dr. Junaidi, S.S., M.Hum., Ph.D. as the Rector of Universitas Lancang Kuning, for providing academic facilities and a supportive educational environment throughout my study.
7. I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to the Government of Indonesia through the Kartu Indonesia Pintar (KIP) Scholarship Program. My deepest appreciation goes to President Joko Widodo for initiating and granting me this scholarship when I was still in senior high school, which became the foundation of my educational journey. I would also like to extend my gratitude to President Prabowo Subianto for continuing this program, enabling me to pursue and complete my higher education through the KIP Kuliah scholarship. This scholarship program has been one of the main reasons I was able to persist and remain committed to completing my university studies. Although the financial support provided may not fully cover all educational needs, it has significantly helped me in sustaining my academic journey. Being a recipient of this scholarship is a great honor and responsibility for me, and I deeply value the trust and opportunity given. I sincerely hope that I may continue to receive similar educational opportunities and scholarships for my future academic pursuits.

8. To my beloved father, who has always been my role model, my deepest gratitude for every prayer, drop of sweat, guidance, support, and motivation you have given, especially when I lost my way in difficult times. Your strength and encouragement enabled me to keep moving forward, step by step, in pursuing my dreams for the future. My greatest and most heartfelt gratitude is especially devoted to my beloved mother, the gateway to my heaven. She is not only a mother, but also a friend, a teacher, and a guiding light in every step of my life. From her gentle hands, I learned the meaning of sincerity. From her tears, I understood the true essence of struggle. And from her endless prayers, I came to know unconditional love in its purest form. To describe my mother, one thesis would never be enough even a thousand pages could not fully capture her greatness. Without her, I would be nothing. Thank you for your boundless love that never fades with time, and for your patience and sacrifices that have always accompanied every step of my journey. Although she did not have the opportunity to pursue higher education, through her strong determination, hard work, and unceasing prayers, she was able to guide her child to become a university graduate. Through every word and action, I learned invaluable lessons that were not always taught in classrooms. She is an extraordinary teacher of life, who with sincerity and selflessness has shaped me into a strong, devoted, and grateful individual.
9. To my younger siblings, thank you for being a source of strength and motivation in every step of my journey. Even though we may not always get along, one of the reasons I continued to strive wholeheartedly in pursuing my education was so that one day you could enjoy a better life, without having to struggle from the beginning in building your future and career. May everything your sister has fought for today become a strong foundation for a brighter and better future for you.
10. I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to my beloved partner throughout the thesis journey for the patience, understanding, and emotional

support provided during the completion of this study. The consistent encouragement and presence offered meaningful motivation and strength for the author in overcoming various challenges throughout the research process.

11. My sincere thanks also go to my beloved classmates, Class 7.2 members, for the togetherness, cooperation, and unforgettable moments throughout our study.
12. All participants who were willing to take part in this research. Thank you very much for your cooperation, openness, and valuable contributions to this study.
13. My sincere thanks to all friends from “SEPERBIMBINGAN”, thank you for sharing the struggle, encouragement, and motivation throughout the research process.
14. This thesis is dedicated to myself, Rashipa Amnah, as a form of appreciation for all the struggles, patience, and faith that have accompanied every step of this journey. This path was not merely an academic process, but also an inner journey filled with challenges, pressure, disappointment, and even moments of wanting to give up. Yet, amid all limitations, I chose to rise and keep moving forward, holding firmly to the principle that *indeed, with hardship comes ease*. Every tear, prayer, and silent effort became valuable witnesses to this process. Thank you to myself for enduring, even when not everyone understood the path I chose to take. Now, upon reaching this beautiful point of achievement and hope within my prayers, I feel proud not solely because of the result, but because I did not surrender in the face of adversity. This journey is not finished; there will be more challenges ahead. However, as long as I remain steadfast in truth and continue to strive, God willing, success will follow. May Allah always grant His blessing and approval upon every step that has been taken and those that lie ahead.

Finally, I realize that this thesis still has limitations. Therefore, any constructive criticism and suggestions are highly appreciated for future improvement. Hopefully, this thesis will be useful for readers and future researchers.

Pekanbaru, 11 February 2026



Rashipa Amnah
NIM. 2288203035

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CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Problem

By changing how students engage with information, teachers, and cultures, artificial intelligence (AI), especially GPT-based models like ChatGPT, has revolutionized higher education in recent years. AI is now seen as a learning partner that helps students develop ideas, engage in critical thinking, and replicate human-like conversation, rather than only as a technological instrument Kasneci et al., (2023). The integration of AI in the field of English Language Education has opened up new avenues for improving intercultural understanding, critical thinking, and self-reflection, all of which are essential elements of 21st-century education Huang & Li, (2024).

The Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) course, which focuses on students' capacity to comprehend, value, and engage successfully across cultural divides, is one of the most pertinent environments for the use of AI in language learning. Byram, (1997) and Byram, (2021a) states that ICC encompasses not only linguistic competence but also open-mindedness, cultural understanding, interpretation, interaction, and critical cultural awareness. By allowing students to participate in simulated intercultural conversations, analyze cultural variations, and consider their own cultural views in a safe, flexible digital environment, the use of GPT AI enhances these aspects W. Peng et al., (2024).

But prior studies have emphasized the potential benefits and drawbacks of intercultural learning facilitated by AI. According to studies by W. Peng et al., (2024), AI can promote intercultural learning by fostering empathy in simulations and engaging in reflective conversations, both of which help students become more culturally aware. Additionally, W. Holmes & Gee, (2023) found that AI systems like GPT have the potential to promote intercultural reflection and emotional connection through interactive discussions. However, Deng & Lin, (2023) warn that GPT-generated material may include cultural prejudices or stereotypes that can skew students' understanding of cultural authenticity.

Furthermore, Zawacki-Richter et al., (2023). emphasize that, while AI customizes learning experiences, it may not completely capture the emotional and ethical aspects of actual intercultural interaction. However, studies examining students' experiences with GPT AI in intercultural learning are still few in the Indonesian context. The majority of current studies are focused on Western educational settings, where digital literacy and cultural dynamics are very different from Indonesia Huang & Li, (2024). As a result, it is still unclear how Indonesian students view and engage with GPT-mediated intercultural learning whether it truly improves their intercultural competence or merely replicates superficial linguistic interactions.

The novelty of this study is in viewing GPT AI as an intercultural mediator a digital partner that promotes empathy, reflection, and meaning-making in intercultural learning, as opposed to just being a language instrument. This research aims to investigate how students at Universitas Lancang Kuning perceive GPT AI's function in fostering intercultural comprehension and reflective thought in the Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) course.

The researcher interviewed students and ICC professors and made preliminary observations to ensure that the research reflects a real educational setting. These verified that GPT AI technologies like ChatGPT had been used extensively for ICC-related conversations, intercultural simulations, and reflective tasks. As a result, this study is based on a genuine educational environment and seeks to address the research gap by looking at students' lived experiences with GPT AI as a learning partner in the development of intercultural communication competence.

B. Identification of the Problem

- a. In the Indonesian higher education setting, there has not been sufficient study of how students see the integration of GPT AI into ICC courses.
- b. It's still unclear how GPT AI affects students' intercultural communicative awareness and critical thought.
- c. The pedagogical effects of utilizing GPT AI in ICC are yet unknown in terms of its potential opportunities and drawbacks.

C. Limitation of the Problem

The focus of this study is on investigating students' experiences with GPT AI in the Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) course at Universitas Lancang Kuning. The study's primary sources are students, as it seeks to understand their lived experiences, opinions, and interpretations, even if a preliminary interview with the course lecturer was held to verify the integration of GPT AI into classroom activities. Without any quantitative measurement or comparison between universities, the study is limited to qualitative investigation inside a single institutional setting.

D. Formulation of the Problem

How do students experience the use of GPT AI in learning Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC)?

E. Purpose of the Research

To explore students' experiences and reflections on using GPT AI as a learning partner in the ICC course.

F. Significance of the Research

a. Theoretical Significance

Theoretically, this work adds to the expanding literature on the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in higher education, with a focus on fostering Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC). This study expands on prior research on linguistic correctness, content creation and writing improvement (Kohnke & Moorhouse, 2023) and (Kasneci et al., 2023) by considering GPT AI as a potential cultural mediator - a tool that facilitates language acquisition but also promotes empathy, perspective-taking, and intercultural understanding. By qualitatively examining students' views, this study seeks to address a conceptual lacuna in our knowledge of how AI-mediated learning affects the affective and cognitive aspects of intercultural competence. By presenting a perspective based on the Indonesian higher education system, which is an underrepresented but culturally varied context, the results are anticipated to add to current theories of ICC (Byram,

2021b) and AI-based pedagogy (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2023). By doing so, the research offers a local theoretical framework for analyzing how global AI technologies interact with local cultural and educational norms.

b. Practical Importance

The findings of this research have practical implications for a variety of educational stakeholders. The conclusions can aid instructors in creating cutting-edge instructional strategies that successfully incorporate GPT AI into the ICC course to foster intercultural talks, reflective conversation, and cross-cultural simulations. The research may help students become more conscious of how GPT AI can be used responsibly and critically to improve intercultural understanding rather than just as a means of finishing assignments. This study could serve as an evaluative foundation for educational institutions, notably Universitas Lancang Kuning, to implement AI-assisted learning in other courses. Policymakers and curriculum designers may use the findings to determine the possibilities and risks of employing GPT AI to promote global-minded students. Moreover, the study's consequences may go beyond language and communication initiatives, fostering more general advancements in AI-integrated pedagogy that emphasizes intercultural sensitivity, human interaction, and essential digital literacy.

In the end, this study aims to reconcile technological progress and intercultural education, fostering a balance between AI-driven efficiency and human-centered learning, which is in line with the changing objectives of international higher education.

G. Definition of the Key Terms

To ensure conceptual clarity and coherence throughout this research, several key terms are defined as follows:

a. Students' Experiences

Students' experiences pertain to their immediate and thoughtful interactions with GPT AI throughout the Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) course. This idea includes the interpersonal relationships, emotional reactions, thoughts, and sense-making processes that students experience when interacting with GPT AI as part of their learning. According to Dörnyei, (2019), the way in

which students engage with their learning environment, internalize feedback, and create understanding shapes their learning experiences, which in turn affects their motivation, participation, and reflective learning practices. The focus of this research is on students' perceptions, interpretations, and comprehension of GPT AI as a learning companion in the development of intercultural communication skills.

b. GPT AI (Generative Pre-trained Transformer Artificial Intelligence)

The term "GPT AI" describes a generative language model created by OpenAI that generates text that resembles human speech depending on the context and user input (OpenAI, 2023). In this study, GPT AI functions as a digital learning aid that helps students complete language-related assignments, participate in intercultural discussions, and consider cultural viewpoints. The goal of this research is to examine how students see and employ GPT AI as a tool in intercultural learning settings, rather than the technical details of the technology.

c. Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) Course

The capacity to interact successfully and appropriately with people from various cultural backgrounds via the use of awareness, respect, and flexibility is known as Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) (Byram, 2021b). It includes learning about cultural standards, accepting diversity, having empathy, and having effective communication abilities that cross cultural divides.

The phrase also applies to the ICC Course at Universitas Lancang Kuning, which seeks to improve students' intercultural knowledge and communication abilities via theoretical learning and real-world application. The course focuses on reflective communication, tolerance, and cultural awareness. In this environment, GPT AI is integrated as a supplemental tool to improve intercultural learning experiences by offering engaging examples, promoting reflective conversation, and helping students cultivate intercultural sensitivity.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

A. Conclusion

In the Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) course, this study looked at how students actually lived when using GPT-AI as a learning partner. The research indicates that students saw GPT-AI as a reflective and helpful partner that helped them with their intercultural learning process, not simply as a technological instrument. They discovered that GPT-AI helped them broaden their intercultural understanding, especially in comprehending the cultural norms, values, and communication strategies covered in the course.

Furthermore, students said that interacting with GPT-AI made them feel more at ease and open when talking about intercultural subjects. They discussed how they had become more empathetic and thoughtful about cultural differences, as well as how they had learned to critically assess AI-generated material by analyzing and cross-referencing it. According to these experiences, GPT-AI was thought to have aided with both the cognitive and emotional aspects of intercultural proficiency.

The most significant discovery is that students saw GPT-AI as a collaborative learning companion that promoted independent study, idea creation, and dialogue exchange. When implemented within a guided and reflective pedagogical framework, the study finds that the integration of GPT-AI in ICC learning is generally experienced by students as a multidimensional and co-constructive process that promotes intercultural development.

B. Suggestion

Based on the results and conclusions of this study, a number of recommendations are made to instructors, students, schools, and prospective researchers. The integration of GPT-AI in intercultural education should be guided by a thoughtful and pedagogical framework for instructors. Instead of portraying AI as just a source of information, instructors should encourage students to engage in critical, dialogic, and moral interaction since they see GPT-AI as a collaborative learning companion. Students can use GPT-AI as a reflective companion to foster

empathy, intercultural understanding, and independent thought. When interacting with AI-generated material, however, students should maintain a critical and evaluative perspective. To ensure responsible and meaningful use, AI implementation in educational institutions should be supported by clear rules, training, and human-centered policies. In conclusion, more study should be done to investigate students' experiences in a larger context and the long-term consequences of GPT-AI on the growth of intercultural communication skills.

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