

Culture-laden Extensive Reading through Team-based Mobile Learning: Effects on Intercultural Communicative Competence and Reading Motivation

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ABSTRACT

With the advent of technology, cultural diversities encouraged language teachers in higher education to push the current pedagogical boundaries to seek the best fits for cultural learning. This study engaged with the pursuit of such pedagogies by experimenting with the integration of team-based mobile learning (TBML) in extensive reading classes mediated by a mobile instant messaging, Telegram. The research findings have statistically acknowledged that TBML can develop EFL readers' intercultural knowledge and understanding. The technological and socio-constructivist affordances of TBML also elevate reading motivation as the springboard for developing Intercultural communicative competence (ICC). Research implications and limitations are also discussed.

With the increasing demands of the professional world for better skills in engaging with the multicultural setting, language classes in higher education can no longer tap upon the instruction of language competence as this will simply generate graduates with, expectedly, satisfactory language proficiency, yet lacking the ability to value and grow multicultural awareness and understanding. As language class is always intertwined with culture, it bears a substantial role in helping university students to grow as social agents with decent awareness and understanding of cultural diversity and, more crucially, to use these properties to better engage in communication within a multicultural setting (Minami & Ovando, 2004). Teachers need to be sensitive to culture and make students aware of the cultural context that influences communication (Edwards and Klinger, 2006). In the same wavelength, intercultural communication competence takes a significant role in language acquisition and language skill development (Minami & Ovando, 2004; Tomlinson, 2005). This becomes increasingly crucial for teacher candidates inasmuch as they need to gain the utmost values of cultural diversity to enrich their language instruction.

One of the avenues of teaching cultures in a language class is through reading instruction. This notion has gained its traction in numerous research as cultural learning may take place in diverse pedagogical settings (Byram, 1997), one of which is through cultural reading. In the same wavelength, extensive reading offers abundant cultural learning potential and covers various dimensions of cultures. Previous works on extensive reading have documented decent outcomes essential for cultural learning. They have reported significant gains in literary skills (Grabe, 2001; Horst, 2005; Pigada and Schmitt, 2006; and Yang, 2001) and critical as well as creative thinking (Ferdiansyah et al., 2020; Widodo, 2016). Notwithstanding, the current literature tends to overlook the potential of extensive reading as the springboard to developing learners' intercultural communicative competence (ICC).

Generally, ICC is viewed as the by-product of extensive reading, which plays down its value in language class. To some extent, this results from the overemphasis on reading comprehension as the ultimate objective in reading instruction. The lack of students-centered learning even deemphasizes the potential of cultural learning. To this end, teachers can resort to a widely adopted approach for cultural learning, intercultural communicative competence, which focuses on the inseparability of culture and language and stresses the need to prepare learners to communicate within a multicultural society (Piątkowska, 2015). The ultimate objective of this approach is to evoke cultural awareness in learners and encourage them to apply it in multicultural contexts. Marczak (2010) contends that intercultural communicative competence is experiential learning. It draws students' attention not only to other cultures but also to their own, instilling them to gain cross-cultural awareness and flexibility.

Projected to support ICC through extensive reading, mobile technology can offer the flexibility by which teachers can engage students in deep learning and myriads learning resources as the fuel for critical discussion and reflection on cultural diversity (Kukulka-Hulme & Viberg, 2017). According to Crompton and Traxler (2018), mobile learning has the potential to revolutionize higher education. Most of today's English classrooms make use of digital technologies in their teaching and learning

process to improve cooperative learning independence in the classroom. This experience stimulates learners to develop their own learning process at their own speed and gain communication skills for their future goals. Students can use the learning system in the authentic learning context to answer questions and interact with others. Teachers can post online learning resources and questions on either mobile devices or teaching platforms thanks to the development and popularity of mobile and wireless communication technologies (Kearney et al., 2012; Park et al., 2015). The vast internet gives an excellent opportunity for individuals all over the world to communicate with one another regardless of physical distance. Imamyartha et al., (2022) claim that mobile phones offer more flexibility and versatility in developing meaningful language learning. In addition, mobile devices help students to develop their learning autonomy and enable the rise of serendipitous learning without temporal or spatial limitations (Vavoula & Sharples, 2008). In the current literature on educational technology, reading instruction has been given substantial emphasis in the quest for technology-enhanced learning strategies, one of which is through mobile instant messaging (MIM).

One of the most popular MIMs, Telegram, is known as a user-friendly platform and offers multiple pedagogical potentials. Ammade et al., (2022) mentioned that Telegram can aid both teachers and students to develop better communication and collaboration. Shirinbakhsh & Saeidi (2018) have reported that Telegram can be seamlessly integrated into language instruction. Besides, Telegram can provide numerous features, such as sending text and multimedia, running video conferences, and organizing diverse functions through the integration of Telegram bots, supporting more students-centric learning (Sajad et al., 2019). Research on the use of Telegram on reading comprehension by Naderi and Akrami (2018) points out that the Telegram groups in focus can provide a significant effect on students' reading comprehension. Another line of inquiry also highlights the power of Telegram to aid collaborative mobile learning to increase students' reading comprehension and achievement (Shirinbakhsh & Saeidi, 2018; Sulistyanto & Prellani, 2020). Finally, Ammade et al. (2022) document that Telegram can serve as an effective instructional medium because it can engage students in deep learning and help the distribution of learning artifacts more easily.

Despite the reports on the values of Telegram in a language class, little has been documented on how it can be harnessed to support extensive reading with the orientation to cultural learning. Although existent, scholarships for collaborative mobile learning and cultural learning through reading instruction tend to be initiated in relative isolation. This gaping void becomes even more crucial given the quest for the instructional strategy to support online language learning in a resource-constrained setting, as commonly discovered in the Indonesian EFL setting. In this scenario, this study attempts an experiment on collaborative mobile learning guided by the following framework.

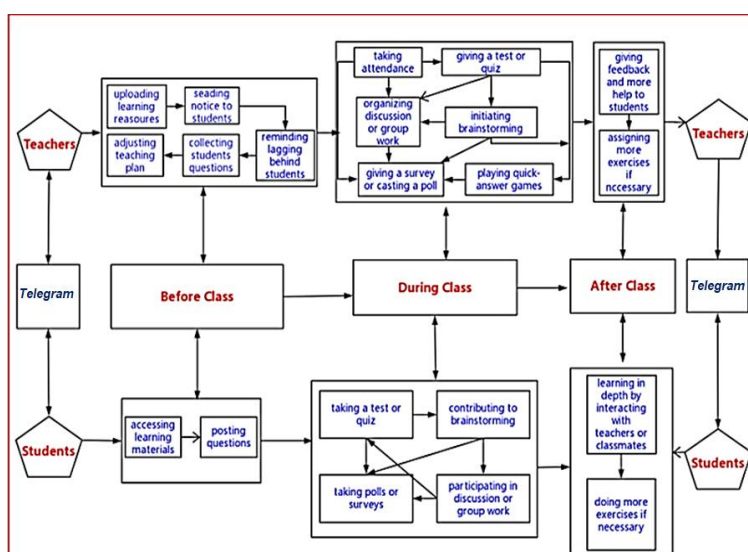


Figure 1. Learning Activities in Telegram-aided TBML (Imamyartha et al., 2021)

Based on Figure 1, MIM is used to aid learning at different phases, while ensuring intense student engagement. Telegram with its potential for delivering multimodal media and its resemblance to a learning management system in storing learning artifacts can be a perfect fit for student-centric learning. MIM serves as a social and cultural artifact that aids in stimulating multitudes of cognitive and metacognitive processing within a communicative setting (Resnik & Schallmoser, 2019). To that end, MIM catalyzes linguistic and cognitive processing. Consequently, it leads to the co-construction and negotiation of meaning among learners (Kukulaska-Hulme & Viberg, 2017). In harmony, the creation of smaller group chat rooms enables more self-expression and self-disclosure through which student can freely vent their hardships and resultant cognitive, motivational, and emotional dynamics (Rambe & Mkono, 2019).

Following Byram (1997), this study employed TBML as an instructional platform to develop ICC through extensive reading instruction. Byram identifies five components that contribute to intercultural communicative competence, which include *Savoirs* (knowledge), *Savoir-être* (openness and curiosity), *Savoir-faire* (discovery skills and interaction), *Savoir-comprendre* (interpreting and relating skills), and *Savoir s'engager* (critical cultural awareness). He contends that intercultural competence, coupled with socio-cultural competence, linguistic competence, and discourse competence, is included in more general competence known as intercultural communicative competence. According to Byram's framework, intercultural communicative competence initially stems from intercultural awareness (Porto, 2013). This component sets the cornerstone for developing the other *savoirs*. In a similar vein, Deardorff (2006) contends that openness, attitude, and curiosity are crucial to developing ICC. Following Piątkowska (2015), this framework fits the ICC approach in that both appreciate learners' autonomy, shared meaning-making, and the transfer of knowledge and abilities. To address the abovementioned gap, the study formulates the following research questions: (1) Does the integration of TBML in extensive reading significantly increase college learners' intercultural communicative competence? (2) Does the integration of TBML in extensive reading significantly increase college learners' reading motivation? and (3) Is there any significant correlation between ICC and reading motivation?

The following hypotheses were defined to address the research questions respectively: (1) The integration of TBML in extensive reading significantly increases EFL learners' intercultural communicative competence at $p < .05$; (2) The integration of TBML in extensive reading significantly increases EFL learners' reading motivation at $p < .05$. and (3) There is a significant correlation between intercultural communicative competence and reading motivation at $p < .05$.

These hypotheses were grounded in the potency of technology to support intercultural learning, such as digital photograph tasks (Kusumaningputri & Widodo, 2018), computer-mediated intercultural exchange (Torres & Smith, 2018), and online intercultural projects (Porto, 2015). As an avenue for literature circles *per se*, TBML can stimulate shared reflexive and critical understanding of one's own and others' cultural properties (Mccall, 2010; Thein et al., 2011). In addition, integrating technology and collaborative reading has been acknowledged to develop comprehension, literacy skills, and engagement (Bromley et al., 2014).

METHOD

Research Setting and Participants

This research applied experimental research with pre-test and post-test design to test the pre-determined hypotheses on the potency of TBML in developing ICC and reading motivation. Out of three extensive reading classes, two classes were recruited. The experimental class was taught using collaborative mobile learning via Telegram, while the control one was taught using a university-endorsed learning management system mediated by the computer.


The research respondents were students in the two classes of Extensive Reading courses, totaling 76 students, with ages ranging from 18-19 years. These were divided into 40 students in the experimental class, and 36 students in the control class. The overall research sample consisted of 60 female students and 16 male students. These respondents were selected by purposive sampling because the researchers already had the access to the class. They had no previous encounter with people from foreign cultures, nor did they have any prior learning experience overseas. They came from different cultural backgrounds, including Javanese, Madurese, and Osingese, and generally spoke these vernaculars quite well, in addition to Bahasa Indonesia and English.

Instructional Procedure

The extensive reading class was geared toward developing a positive reading attitude, reading fluency, and cultural repertoires across countries. The latter was not merely bound to countries where English was spoken as the first language, but also to countries where it was spoken as a second and additional language. This was intended to make the students aware of the overarching roles of English beyond the dichotomy of EFL and ESL (Kusumaningputri & Widodo, 2018). The class was run for 100 minutes in a 16-week term. The instructional approach in both classes involved in this study applied a student-centric approach, with diverse forms of collaborative projects throughout the term. Both experimental and control classes used the same material and employed student-centered learning through videoconferencing where students were involved in group discussion. The learning material served as both an input for their reading and the direction to guide students' discussion. As shown in Figure 2, one sample learning material assigned students to engage in a literature circle with a set of pre-determined roles for each group member.

Unit 7

A Glimpse of American Culture




May 10th, 2021

OBJECTIVES

Culture not only represents social entity in large scale, such as community or a group of residents in a city. Community manifests unique cultural entity with diverse characteristics across different parts of the globe. In this unit, we will start the **Intercultural Circles** by doing an analysis and research on American Culture, with the following objectives:

- a. Initiating critical inquiry on a sample text on American culture
- b. Conducting online research to enrich discussion on the culture
- c. Doing comparative reflection on the target culture
- d. Drawing conclusion on the intercultural reading on the target culture



PROCEDURE

1. With your group, share the roles to guide the work and progress of each group member. You need to share the following roles:
 - a) **Discussion Leader** – this is the person who makes a probing question to guide the group discussion
 - b) **Connector** – this role requires the ability identify the similarities and differences between the foreign culture and our (home) culture
 - c) **Investigator** – you are responsible for identifying any unclear part of the text and finding online resource to complete the information from the original text.
 - d) **Summarizer** - your job is to summarize all the responses from all group members

Figure 2. Sample Material

The whole video conferencing in one meeting usually lasted for 40-50 minutes, and this was followed up with independent study, which was generally extended beyond class hours. During these periods of independent study, the experimental class was supported with MIM as the platform powering TBML, while the control group was assisted by an asynchronous discussion forum in the university LMS where they were required to post discussion results. The learning assessment varied across units, with specific emphasis on the tasks or roles assigned in reading across genres and enriched with the use of photographs and videos pertinent to the readings.

Data collection and analysis

Quantitative data were collected using the ICC questionnaire developed by Mirzaei & Forouzandeh (2013). This questionnaire involved 22 items distributed across three domains including intercultural awareness (e.g., *When I am uncertain about cultural differences, I take a tolerant attitude.*), intercultural knowledge (e.g., *I am eager to read articles on foreign cultures*), and skills of intercultural communication (e.g., *I can easily deal with ambiguities during the communication in foreign language*). The study employed 12 items for assessing reading motivation (e.g., *reading helps make my life meaningful*). The trial results of 32 Indonesian versions of all survey items documented exemplary internal validity ($p < .05$) and α 0.854. Both questionnaires were distributed in meeting one and meeting sixteen, which constituted pre-test and post-test respectively. Collected data were analyzed using Paired sample t-test to examine the effectiveness of using TBML in learning extensive reading to improve ICC and reading motivation in comparison to the regular instructional activities mediated by LMS. A correlational analysis was subsequently administered to further investigate the relationship between ICC and reading motivation.

RESULT

Significant Gains in ICC Only

Our first paired samples t-test discovered significant gains in the experimental class over the control class by comparing the difference between the pre-test and post-test in both groups.

Table 1. Results of paired samples t-test

Comparison between post-test and pre-test	<i>M</i>		<i>N</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>
	Experimental class	Control class				
ICC	.2412	.0025	36	.45834	.07639	.004*
Intercultural awareness	.3715	-.0139	36	.45648	.07608	.000*
Intercultural skills	.2444	.0333	36	.82107	.13685	.132
Intercultural knowledge	.1235	.0000	36	.50099	.08350	.148
Reading motivation	.0394	.0764	36	.45923	.07654	.631

*. Gain is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 1 showed significant differences in the gains between groups as indicated by $p < .05$. This has therefore approved the first hypothesis of our research: there is a significant increase in ICC as a result of extensive reading mediated by TBML. The data also demonstrates that the experimental class also outperforms the control class concerning intercultural awareness. Concerning the second research question, no other significant gains are identified at this juncture, including in the area of reading motivation ($p .631$). Thus, the second hypothesis, presuming significant gains in reading motivation subsequent to the engagement in extensive reading mediated by TBML, is turned down.

Significant correlation between ICC and reading motivation in TBML setting

The second analysis aimed at identifying the correlation between ICC and reading motivation after the instruction. This was intended to examine whether the correlation was dependent on the learning platforms, i.e., MIM and LMS. As seen in Table 2, a significant correlation ($p .002$) is evident between ICC and the reading motivation of the experimental class. The magnitude of the correlation is also fairly robust as indicated by a positive correlation coefficient of 0.477.

Table 2. Results of bivariate correlation analysis based on post-test data

		ICC of experimental class	ICC of control class	Reading motivation of control class	Reading motivation of experimental class
ICC of experimental class	Pearson Correlation	1	.138	.273	.477**
	<i>p</i>		.421	.107	.002
ICC of control class	Pearson Correlation	.138	1	.275	-.090
	<i>p</i>	.421		.105	.601
Reading motivation of control class	Pearson Correlation	.273	.275	1	.186
	<i>P</i>	.107	.105		.278
Reading motivation of experimental class	Pearson Correlation	.477**	-.090	.186	1
	<i>p</i>	.002	.601	.278	

***. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

Extensive reading mediated by TBML can therefore generate significant intertwinement between learners' ICC and their reading motivation. This pedagogical approach to collaborative reading has been proven influential to support the dual objectives of growing ICC and reading motivation. By implication, the interaction between the two denotes a viable strategy for developing ICC as a focal concern in reading instruction, rather than treating it as an added value to reading instruction.

DISCUSSION

The present study has discovered the potency of TBML as a decent fit for extensive reading and intercultural learning. Our statistical analysis has demonstrated the value of MIM to power online collaborative reading in elevating students' ICC. Despite the absence of positive impacts on reading motivation in the TBML setting, the findings offer valuable insight into the robust interlink between ICC and reading motivation grounded within the TBML environment. The discussion is divided into three different sections corresponding to the research questions.

The insignificant gains in reading motivation between classes have shed light on the comparison between MIM and university-endorsed LMS aided by a computer. Despite the general presumption of increased reading motivation stemming from mobile technology, our study has acknowledged the equal affordance of both platforms for online reading in linkage to reading motivation. This is coherent with the study conducted by Stakhnevich (2002), reporting that reading comprehension using the online setting outperforms print reading. As extensive reading is associated with reading copious texts within a prolonged period, mobile phones and laptops as mobile technology give similar technological affordances as students can use both technologies to do online research as the resources for their readings. It is in line with the fundamental of unleashing students' free will for reading by affording what they want to read (Day and Bamford, 2004). In addition, the development of instructional and social networking platforms for mobile phones and Windows PC have given rise to diverse applications to help language learners manage their learning. For example, Telegram and Moodle have been available for both Android and Windows PC. By implication, with the same applications, students can have similar learning experiences across platforms. Simply put, regardless of the technology students use to support their extensive reading, teachers can help students to develop their reading motivation through collaborative reading. One concern, however, needs to be taken into account when designing activities for extensive reading. Teachers need to establish an ambient environment where students can freely share their ideas and knowledge from reading while ensuring that students are engaged in graded and meaningful reading as a socio-constructivist process. The value of this ambient environment is equally crucial for cultural learning as students need to be given the liberty and comfort for making their views, thoughts, and attitudes to cultural diversity explicit (Byram et al., 1997).

Our initial proposition on the values of TBML to aid intercultural learning as a focal emphasis in extensive reading has demonstrated how MIM can be harnessed to initiate and sustain online collaborative reading. Referring to the notion of ICC, it is clear that shared reading mediated by mobile technology has exceeded the regular aim of reading comprehension. This is made possible by the presence of shared reflection and discussion within each group as they contributed ideas and online resources for cultural learning. The atmosphere of EFL learning in our study implies the absence of direct encounters with the target cultures. To some extent, this signifies the lack of intercultural knowledge and awareness among the students. As such, students may have apriori stereotypes and judgments towards certain cultures. Mobile technology with its unlimited access helps to address these presumptions by granting abundant resources to develop and reshape their intercultural repertoires. The fact that the experimental class showcased significant gains in ICC affirms the power of MIM to sustain the convergence of newly learned knowledge as the precursor to critical reflection and the refashioning of intercultural awareness and attitude. Opportunistic learning within the TBML framework affords extensive opportunities for students to engage in critical discussion at their disposal. These values of MIM for intercultural learning are in harmony with the ICC approach which emphasizes student-centric learning. TBML can stimulate collaborative reflection and critical understanding of students' own and the target cultures (Mccall, 2010; Thein et al., 2011). Integrating MIM and extensive reading supports the increment of students' engagement and comprehension as the springboard for developing ICC (Bromley et al., 2014).

Finally, the findings demonstrate the worthy correlation between ICC and reading motivation in the TBML setting, compared to an insignificant correlation in computer-mediated extensive reading. To large extent, this contributes to our understanding of how teachers can best develop students' ICC and reading motivation through the integration of MIM. Following Piątkowska (2015), the findings demonstrate the socio-constructivist affordance of TBML for intercultural learning by enabling collaborative reflection and critical discussion on target cultures. As students hold different intercultural awareness, knowledge, and skills, the engagement in TBML provides ample opportunities for sharing and retrieving their learning artifacts, which are essential for the refashioning of their thoughts and attitudes to cultural diversity. In this direction, MIM has been proven valuable for sustaining opportunistic learning as students can access their learning at anytime and anywhere while allowing the consolidation and concretization of knowledge (Imamyartha et al., 2022). To reach critical reflection through which students refine their intercultural knowledge and understanding, they need to gain ample opportunities for discussion and rich resources at their disposal, representing two valuable potentials of the mobile device (Kukulska-Hulme, 2020). Kukulska-Hulme & Viberg (2017) highlight the technological affordances of mobile learning, such as prolonged use, flexibility, timely feedback, socialization, personalization, active engagement, and self-evaluation. Again, these properties manifest perfect fit for the ICC approach in that both emphasize social constructivism. Mobile learning also contributes to the negotiation of meaning and sharing feedback. These enterprises are fundamental for intercultural learning to prevail (Kusumaningputri & Widodo, 2018).

CONCLUSION

This study has proven that cultural-based extensive reading through TBML has a significant impact on EFL learners' ICC. TBML has been a valuable framework to direct and enrich extensive reading geared to cultural learning. The engagement in TBML allows students to initiate and sustain critical discussion and reflection on cultural diversity through extended use of MIM. This is initially important as the catalyst for the consolidation of cultural knowledge, prior to sharing, rechecking, and refashioning thoughts toward foreign cultures. In this direction, MIM has outperformed the use of university-endorsed LMS as corroborated by significant gains in ICC associated with TBML. Given the opportunistic learning via MIM, the extended concretization and consolidation of cultural learning represent pivotal trajectories for the students to develop their intercultural awareness as the precursor for developing ICC. Notwithstanding, the fact that both groups demonstrate equal gains in reading motivation should not overemphasize the potency of MIM while downplaying the power of computer-mediated LMS. Both platforms remain viable options if teachers are tasked with stimulating reading motivation because of their equal affordances for extensive reading. Our final finding can shed light on how teachers and students should harness MIM to fuel their extensive reading and intercultural learning. The findings affirm that different settings, i.e., TBML and computer-mediated LMS, result in a different magnitude of association between the aforementioned domains. One limitation of this study lies in its small-scale sample. In addition, the use of a questionnaire to measure ICC is, to some extent, subjective in that participants self-assess themselves based on their own presumptions. Future studies are advised to investigate the value of MIM for culture-laden extensive reading by employing qualitative research to gain a more in-depth understanding of possible increment in ICC and reading motivation therefrom. In addition, examining what strategies students use during their engagement in TBML can help teachers better understand how this framework operates in reading instruction while allowing the opportunity to push the pedagogical boundaries of MIM for intercultural learning.

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