GLOBAL EXPERT
JURNAL BAHASA DAN SASTRA
ISSN PRINT : 2303-5328 II ISSN ONLINE : 2477-3794
UIGM

GENAI TOOLS FOR CROSS-CULTURAL DIALOGUE AND MEANING-MAKING: THE CASE OF INDONESIAN ENGLISH EDUCATION STUDENTS IN ONLINE SPACES

DHANIELLA RATTU INTANI[1], DELLA TERESIA ORENZAH[2], FAUZIAH IBRAYANI[3], FELIZA KURNIA[4], PUJA CAHYANTIE[5], PUTRI ISABELA[6], PUTRI MAISAROH LASTARI[7], SOFIYA ROMADLON[8], MELISA NOVIANTY[9], HARTINI AGUSTIAWATI[10]

Universitas Palembang

dhaniellarattu06@gmail.com[1], lalakorenzah@gmai.com[2], ciiziahhh@gmail.com[3], felizakurnia76@gmail.com[4], pujacahyantie@gmail.com[5], isabelaputri722@gmail.com[6], putrimaisarohlastari214@gmail.com[7], romadlonsofiya4@gmail.com[8], melisanovianty25@gmail.com[9], hartiniagustiawati@yahoo.co.id[10]

First Received: April 1, 2026 Final Proof Received: July 2, 2026

Abstract

In academic and social contexts, generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) tools are increasingly common and are often promoted as aids for classroom learning. However, limited research has explored how Indonesian English education students use GenAI to support cross-cultural dialogue and meaning-making in everyday online interactions beyond formal classroom settings. This study employed a qualitative approach involving eight English Education students from the University of Palembang. Using semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis, the study explored how students use GenAI tools in cross-cultural meaning-making, their perceptions of the benefits of these tools, and the challenges they encounter when using GenAI for cross-cultural communication. The findings indicate that students use GenAI to clarify messages, refine their language to sound more natural and culturally appropriate, and obtain real-time support during cross-cultural online interactions. Participants also perceived GenAI as helpful in supporting their cross-cultural communication and language development. At the same time, they reported challenges including inaccurate or culturally insensitive outputs, increased dependence on the tool, and unintended changes in tone that sometimes led to misunderstandings.

Keywords: Cross-cultural communication, meaning-making, Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI), Indonesian EFL students, intercultural dialogue

INTRODUCTION

In academic and social contexts, Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) tools are increasingly common and are often promoted as aids for classroom learning. However, limited research has explored how Indonesian English education students use GenAI to support cross-cultural dialogue and meaning-making in everyday online interactions beyond formal classroom settings. This study employed a qualitative approach involving eight English Education students from the University of Palembang. Using semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis, the study explored how students use GenAI tools in cross-cultural meaning-making, their perceptions of the benefits of these tools, and the challenges they encounter when using GenAI for cross-cultural communication. The findings indicate that students use GenAI to clarify messages, refine their language to sound more natural and culturally appropriate, and obtain real-time support during cross-cultural online interactions. Participants also perceived GenAI as helpful in supporting their cross-cultural communication and language development. At the same time, they reported challenges including inaccurate or culturally insensitive outputs, increased dependence on the tool, and unintended changes in tone that sometimes led to misunderstandings.

In academic and social contexts, Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) tools are increasingly common and are often promoted as aids for classroom learning. However, limited research has explored how Indonesian English education students use GenAI to support cross-cultural dialogue and meaning-making in everyday online interactions beyond formal classroom settings. This study employed a qualitative approach involving eight English Education students from the University of Palembang. Using semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis, the study explored how students use GenAI tools in cross-cultural meaning-making, their perceptions of the benefits of these tools, and the challenges they encounter when using GenAI for cross-cultural communication. The findings indicate that students use GenAI to clarify messages, refine their language to sound more natural and culturally appropriate, and obtain real-time support during cross-cultural online interactions. Participants also perceived GenAI as helpful in supporting their cross-cultural communication and language development. At the

How to cite this article: Intani, D. R., Orenzah, D. T., Ibrayani, F., Kurnia, F., Cahyantie, P., Isabela, P., Lastari, P. M., Romadlon, S., Novianty, M., & Agustiawati, H. (2026). GenAI tools for cross-cultural dialogue and meaning-making: The case of Indonesian English education students in online spaces. *Global Expert: Jurnal Bahasa dan Sastra*, *14*(1), 33-44.

same time, they reported challenges including inaccurate or culturally insensitive outputs, increased dependence on the tool, and unintended changes in tone that sometimes led to misunderstandings.

Within the Indonesian context, existing studies have primarily examined GenAI from a pedagogical perspective, focusing on its role in classroom learning rather than everyday communication (Rosyada & Taopa, 2025; Apoko, 2025). Previous research has shown that Indonesian EFL learners commonly use GenAI to improve vocabulary, pronunciation, and writing skills, while personalised feedback contributes to greater learning confidence (Rosyada & Taopa, 2025). Teachers have also perceived GenAI as a valuable tool for lesson preparation and classroom instruction, although challenges such as limited infrastructure and restricted access to premium features remain (Apoko, 2025). While these findings demonstrate the educational benefits of GenAI, they provide little insight into how Indonesian English Education students use GenAI to interpret cultural meanings, negotiate cultural differences, and communicate with people from diverse backgrounds beyond formal classroom settings.

To address this gap, the present study investigates how Indonesian English Education students use GenAI tools during online cross-cultural interactions. Rather than viewing GenAI solely as a language learning aid, this study explores how students use these tools to interpret meaning, negotiate cultural differences, and communicate with individuals from different sociolinguistic backgrounds in everyday online spaces. It also examines students' perceptions of the benefits of GenAI and the challenges they encounter while using these tools for cross-cultural dialogue and meaning-making. By focusing on students' lived communication experiences, this study provides insight into the role of GenAI in mediating intercultural interaction beyond formal educational contexts.

By examining these experiences, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how GenAI supports cross-cultural dialogue and meaning-making among Indonesian English Education students. The findings are expected to contribute to discussions on culturally responsive AI practices and the development of more context-sensitive approaches to AI-assisted communication. Therefore, this study addresses the following research questions:

1. How do students use GenAI tools for cross-cultural dialogue and meaning-making?
2. How do students perceive the benefits of using GenAI tools for cross-cultural dialogue?
3. What challenges do students experience when using GenAI tools for cross-cultural meaning-making?

GenAI Tools in Cross-Cultural

The rapid development of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) has transformed the ways individuals communicate, learn, and interact across cultural boundaries. Unlike traditional language technologies that primarily focus on translation and grammatical correction, GenAI systems such as ChatGPT, Gemini, and other large language models are capable of generating context-sensitive responses, adapting communication styles, and providing explanations that reflect different communicative situations. These capabilities have attracted increasing attention from researchers interested in cross-cultural communication because successful intercultural interaction requires more than linguistic accuracy; it also involves the ability to recognize cultural norms, interpret contextual meanings, and negotiate differences in communication styles.

Cross-cultural dialogue refers to communicative exchanges between individuals from different cultural, linguistic, and social backgrounds. Such interactions require participants to navigate differences in values, beliefs, communication conventions, and sociocultural expectations. According to intercultural communication scholars, effective cross-cultural dialogue involves not only transmitting information but also constructing mutual understanding through continuous negotiation of meaning (O'Dowd, 2023). In digital environments where non-verbal cues are often limited, the challenges of achieving mutual understanding become even greater. Consequently, digital communication tools that can support cultural interpretation and contextual understanding are increasingly viewed as important mediators in intercultural interactions.

Recent studies have highlighted the growing role of GenAI in facilitating cross-cultural communication. Sun et al. (2024) argue that AI-mediated communication systems can assist users in adapting language choices to culturally appropriate norms, particularly in multilingual and multicultural contexts. Similarly, Zhang et al. (2025) found that GenAI helps users adjust levels of formality, politeness, and interpersonal expressions according to different cultural expectations. Through these capabilities, GenAI can reduce communication barriers that frequently emerge when individuals interact with people from unfamiliar linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Rather than serving solely as a translation tool, GenAI functions as a communication mediator that supports users in interpreting and producing culturally appropriate discourse.

In educational contexts, researchers have also emphasized the potential of GenAI to support intercultural competence development. Lee and Drajati (2024) suggest that AI-mediated interactions can expose learners to diverse cultural perspectives while encouraging reflection on cultural differences. Likewise, Hwang and Chen (2024) found that human-AI collaborative learning environments contribute to learners' awareness of global communication practices and intercultural sensitivity. These findings indicate that GenAI may play an important

role not only in language learning but also in helping learners develop the knowledge, attitudes, and skills required for effective intercultural communication.

The contribution of GenAI to cross-cultural dialogue can also be explained through sociocultural perspectives on learning and communication. Sociocultural theory views communication as a mediated process in which tools shape how individuals interact, interpret meanings, and construct understanding. From this perspective, GenAI can be regarded as a mediational tool that supports users in navigating linguistic and cultural differences during communication. By providing explanations, alternative expressions, and contextualized feedback, GenAI enables users to participate more confidently in intercultural exchanges while simultaneously reflecting on cultural meanings embedded within language (Lai & Li, 2024).

Despite these potential benefits, critical scholars caution against viewing GenAI as a neutral or universally reliable communication tool. One major concern involves the cultural biases embedded within AI training datasets. Warschauer and Xu (2024) argue that AI systems are often trained on data that disproportionately represent dominant linguistic and cultural perspectives. As a result, AI-generated outputs may unintentionally reinforce stereotypes, oversimplify cultural identities, or marginalize alternative viewpoints. Cirucci et al. (2025) further emphasize that AI-generated cultural explanations may appear authoritative despite lacking cultural nuance and contextual accuracy. Such limitations raise important questions regarding the reliability of GenAI as a source of intercultural knowledge.

Another concern relates to users' dependence on AI-generated suggestions during communication. While GenAI can facilitate interaction, excessive reliance on AI may reduce opportunities for users to develop independent intercultural communication skills and critical cultural awareness. Scholars therefore emphasize the importance of critical AI literacy, which involves the ability to evaluate, question, and contextualize AI-generated information rather than accepting it uncritically (Dwivedi et al., 2024; Kohnke et al., 2024). Effective use of GenAI in cross-cultural contexts requires users to recognize both the strengths and limitations of AI-generated outputs and to remain actively involved in interpreting cultural meanings.

Although previous studies have provided valuable insights into the role of GenAI in language learning and intercultural education, most have focused on formal educational settings such as classrooms, virtual exchange programs, or structured learning activities. Comparatively little attention has been given to how students employ GenAI during everyday online interactions on social media platforms and other informal digital spaces. Furthermore, limited research has explored how Indonesian English Education students use GenAI to support cross-cultural dialogue and navigate intercultural communication challenges in their daily lives. Addressing this gap is important because informal online interactions represent a significant context in which intercultural communication increasingly occurs. Therefore, the present study investigates how Indonesian English Education students use GenAI to facilitate cross-cultural dialogue, the benefits they perceive from using these tools, and the challenges they encounter during AI-mediated intercultural communication.

GenAI and Meaning-Making Processes

Meaning-making is a fundamental concept in communication, learning, and intercultural interaction. Broadly defined, meaning-making refers to the process through which individuals interpret information, construct understanding, and negotiate meanings based on their experiences, social contexts, and interactions with others. Rather than passively receiving information, individuals actively engage in interpreting messages and connecting new information with existing knowledge structures. In intercultural communication, meaning-making becomes particularly significant because participants frequently encounter unfamiliar linguistic expressions, cultural references, and communication norms that require interpretation and negotiation.

From a sociocultural perspective, meaning-making is understood as a socially mediated process. Vygotskian theory suggests that human understanding develops through interaction with others and through the use of mediational tools that support cognitive activity. Language, technology, and social interaction all function as mediating resources that shape how individuals interpret experiences and construct knowledge. In contemporary digital environments, GenAI can be viewed as a new form of mediational tool that influences how individuals process information, understand cultural meanings, and engage in communication with others.

Recent developments in artificial intelligence have expanded the role of technology in supporting meaning-making processes. Unlike conventional digital tools that primarily provide information retrieval functions, GenAI systems can generate explanations, offer contextualized examples, and respond dynamically to users' questions. Through these interactive capabilities, GenAI allows users to engage in iterative dialogue that may support deeper understanding and reflection. Kasneci et al. (2023) argue that large language models can function as cognitive scaffolds by helping learners clarify concepts, organize ideas, and refine their interpretations of complex information. Consequently, meaning-making becomes an active process supported by continuous interaction between users and AI systems.

Within educational contexts, several studies have demonstrated that AI-supported learning environments can promote deeper conceptual understanding. Jauhiainen and Garagorry Guerra (2024) found that personalized AI-generated content helps learners connect new information with their existing knowledge and experiences. Similarly, Makransky et al. (2025) argue that GenAI can encourage generative sense-making by prompting learners to explain ideas, evaluate alternative perspectives, and engage in reflective thinking. These findings suggest that AI technologies can contribute to meaning-making not merely by delivering information but by supporting learners' cognitive engagement with that information.

The relationship between GenAI and meaning-making becomes even more significant in intercultural communication contexts. Cross-cultural interactions often involve ambiguity because individuals interpret messages through different cultural frameworks and communicative norms. In such situations, GenAI may assist users in understanding unfamiliar expressions, interpreting cultural references, and considering alternative ways of expressing meaning. Through AI-generated explanations and suggestions, users can explore different interpretations of a message and make more informed communication decisions. Therefore, GenAI has the potential to function as an intermediary that supports the negotiation of meaning across cultural boundaries.

However, meaning-making is not solely a cognitive process; it is also shaped by social interaction and dialogue. Sharples (2023) argues that social generative AI can facilitate collaborative knowledge construction by engaging users in conversational exchanges that encourage reflection and exploration. Rather than providing fixed answers, AI systems can support ongoing dialogue through which users refine their understanding over time. In this sense, meaning-making emerges from the interaction between human interpretation and AI-generated responses. The quality of understanding that develops depends not only on the information provided by AI but also on the user's capacity to critically engage with that information.

Despite its potential benefits, the role of GenAI in meaning-making remains complex and contested. AI-generated responses are not always accurate, culturally appropriate, or contextually relevant. Because large language models generate outputs based on probabilistic predictions rather than genuine understanding, they may produce misleading explanations, incomplete interpretations, or culturally insensitive suggestions. If users accept such outputs without critical evaluation, the meaning-making process may be distorted rather than enhanced. Therefore, scholars increasingly emphasize the importance of AI literacy as a prerequisite for effective engagement with AI-supported learning and communication environments (Bozkurt et al., 2024).

AI literacy involves the ability to critically evaluate AI-generated information, recognize potential biases, and understand the limitations of AI systems. Learners who possess higher levels of AI literacy are more likely to question AI-generated responses, compare information from multiple sources, and make informed judgments regarding the reliability of AI outputs. Consequently, meaning-making in AI-mediated environments should be understood as a collaborative and reflective process in which human agency remains central. AI can provide support, suggestions, and alternative perspectives, but users ultimately bear responsibility for interpreting and validating the meanings they construct.

Although existing research has examined the relationship between GenAI and learning processes, relatively little attention has been devoted to understanding how meaning-making occurs during AI-supported cross-cultural communication in informal online environments. Most previous studies have focused on classroom learning, assessment activities, or structured educational interventions. Less is known about how students use GenAI to interpret cultural meanings, negotiate intercultural understanding, and make communication decisions in everyday digital interactions. Therefore, this study seeks to explore how Indonesian English Education students utilize GenAI during online cross-cultural communication and how these interactions shape their meaning-making processes. By focusing on students lived experiences, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of the role of GenAI as a mediator of intercultural meaning-making in contemporary digital communication environments.

METHOD

This study used a qualitative descriptive method to look into how students in the English Education Program at Universitas Palembang used Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) when communicating online with people from different cultural backgrounds. A qualitative method was chosen because it helped the researcher better understand students' experiences, views, and how they communicate when using AI tools. This study paid more attention to how communication happened rather than focusing on the results that can be measured. The study looked at how GenAI helped with communication, changed how students understood cultural differences, and impacted their choices when interacting online with people from different cultures.

Data were gathered by talking with participants in interviews that had some set questions but also allowed for more flexible conversation. All the interviews were recorded so that the information collected would be accurate. During the interviews, participants talked about their experiences using GenAI tools in simulated intercultural communication activities that took place on social media platforms like Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, and WhatsApp. These platforms were chosen because they show the online spaces that students usually

use for talking to each other every day. With this method, the researcher looked into how students understood their communication experiences, how they talked about the part GenAI played in helping them interact, and the difficulties they faced when communicating with people from different cultures. The study also looked at what participants thought about the benefits and drawbacks of using GenAI in online communication between different cultures.

Context and Participant

This study was done in the English Education Program at Universitas Palembang, Indonesia, during the 2024/2025 school year. The people taking part had already used tools like ChatGPT and other AI-based language support applications for academic and communication purposes. Participants were chosen based on how often they use GenAI for language-related activities and how much they use social media. They use AI to write messages, understand cultural references, and interact online, so they were the perfect people to study how GenAI can help with communication between different cultures.

Table 1. Participants' Profiles

Participants	Year level	Age	Gender	Course
Participant 1	1,5	22	Female	Phonology
Participant 2	1,5	20	Female	Phonology
Participant 3	1,5	18	Male	Phonology
Participant 4	1,5	20	Female	Prose
Participant 5	1,5	22	Female	Prose
Participant 6	1,5	26	Female	Prose
Participant 7	1,5	34	Male	Prose
Participant 8	1,5	32	Female	Phonology

Data Collection Description

Information was collected through interviews and audio recordings. These were used to document what the participants did and how they used GenAI tools. This was done during real and simulated cross-cultural interactions. These interactions mostly happened on well-known social media sites like Instagram direct messages, TikTok comment sections, Facebook posts and WhatsApp chat groups. These places were like real-life meeting points where people from different cultures could chat.

This approach allowed the research to gain valuable insights into how students use GenAI in their everyday online communication. It allowed us to look at how people used AI to understand cultural meanings, deal with language problems and make smart choices when talking to people from other cultures online.

Tools

The study used AI tools like ChatGPT and other mobile-based language apps. These tools supported interaction, translation and communication between different cultures. We spoke to people to find out about what they had been through, and we recorded the conversations to save them for later.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analysed using thematic analysis, following the six-phase framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006): (1) Get to know the data, (2) start coding it, (3) look for themes, (4) check these themes, (5) decide on the names of the themes, and (6) explain the results. The transcripts and audio recordings from the interviews were carefully checked to see if there were any patterns that showed how students use generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) when talking about different cultures and understanding what they mean.

The results show that GenAI helped with language-related problems in communication between different cultures. Participants said it was hard to translate expressions accurately and interpret culturally specific meanings. Sometimes, words that seem right in one culture can be seen differently in another. When students used GenAI to improve their messages, they said they felt more confident and less anxious when interacting.

GenAI also helped students to express themselves more clearly by helping them to choose the best words and organise their ideas in the right way. This meant that people could carry on talking, avoid misunderstandings, and make it clear what they meant in messages online.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study explores how English Education students use GenAI tools to support cross-cultural dialogue and meaning-making in online spaces. The thematic analysis identified nine interconnected themes that illustrate participants' experiences of using GenAI in cross-cultural communication. Overall, the findings indicate that participants used GenAI to facilitate communication across linguistic and cultural differences, while also perceiving benefits for language development and communication support. At the same time, they reported several challenges, including culturally inappropriate responses, increased reliance on AI, and occasional misunderstandings caused by AI-generated language. The following sections present these themes, supported by excerpts from the interview data to illustrate participants' experiences and perspectives.

Theme 1. GenAI as a Tool for Enhancing Message Clarity Across Cultures

Based on the interviews, participants often rely on GenAI to express themselves more clearly when interacting with others from diverse linguistic or cultural backgrounds. They often rely on GenAI to express their ideas more clearly when communicating with people from different linguistic or cultural backgrounds. Many participants explained that GenAI helps them improve the clarity of their messages. They commonly use it to translate sentences, check grammar, or adjust word choices when they are unsure how their message might be understood. In interactions where language and cultural differences are present, this support helps them reduce confusion and communicate their ideas more clearly.

> "I usually use GenAI tools to translate text, check grammar for clarity, and find ideas for creating relevant content or comments." (Participant 5, from Prose Class)

Rather than functioning solely as a translation or grammar-checking tool, GenAI appears to support participants' communicative decision-making before interaction takes place. Participants described using AI to evaluate vocabulary, sentence structure, and expressions while considering how their messages might be interpreted by people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. This suggests that message clarity was understood not merely as linguistic correctness but as a process of negotiating meaning across cultures. By reviewing and refining their messages before sending them, participants demonstrated an awareness that effective intercultural communication requires sensitivity to both language and cultural context. In this sense, GenAI acted as a mediating tool that supported participants in constructing meaning and reducing the possibility of misunderstanding during online interactions.

Theme 2. GenAI for Polishing Language and Expression

Participants also use GenAI to improve the way their messages sound when communicating with others. They explained that GenAI is not only useful for checking grammar but also for adjusting word choice and tone. This becomes particularly important when they interact with peers from different regions or cultural backgrounds. By revising their messages through GenAI, participants try to make sure that their expressions sound polite, friendly, and suitable for the situation. This helps them avoid sounding too direct or unintentionally rude in online conversations.

> "I usually use ChatGPT to adjust my language style so that it sounds more natural and friendly when talking with friends from other cities, like Medan. I often ask AI for help to make sure that my expressions don't sound rude or offensive." (Participant 3, Phonology Class)

The findings suggest that participants were not simply attempting to produce grammatically correct English. Instead, they actively considered how tone, politeness, and interpersonal relationships might vary across cultural contexts. Their use of GenAI therefore reflects a process of adapting language choices to achieve culturally appropriate communication rather than merely improving linguistic accuracy.

Theme 3. GenAI as a Support Tool for Real-Time Cross-Cultural Interaction

Some participants shared that they use GenAI during real-time online interactions, such as livestreams, group chats, or social media conversations. In these situations, GenAI helps them quickly translate comments or check the meaning of messages. This allows them to respond more easily even when the conversation moves quickly. With this help, participants feel more confident to continue the interaction without confusion.

> "Once, I was on a live TikTok… someone commented in English… I immediately copied and pasted it into Google Translate… Turns out they were complimenting me!" (Participant 6, Prose Class)

These accounts indicate that participants used GenAI as a real-time communication mediator rather than a post-writing assistant. The immediacy of AI support enabled them to sustain interaction despite linguistic uncertainty, allowing them to remain engaged in multilingual conversations without interrupting the flow of communication.

Theme 4. GenAI Supports Clearer and More Effective Intercultural Communication

Participants generally viewed GenAI as a helpful tool for improving the effectiveness of their cross-cultural communication. They reported gaining a better understanding of cultural norms in writing, a clearer understanding of how people from different cultures express themselves, and fewer misunderstandings when interacting online. This increased their confidence when participating in intercultural dialogue.

> "In my opinion, GenAI can make me more aware and understanding of cultural differences, especially in the way people write and express themselves." (Participant 2, Phonology Class)

Participants' reflections indicate that the perceived value of GenAI extended beyond improving message quality. They described becoming more aware of differences in communication styles, politeness strategies, and cultural expectations, suggesting that GenAI also functioned as a source of intercultural awareness rather than simply a language-support tool.

Theme 5. GenAI Enhances Language Skills and Cross-Cultural Communication

Participants emphasized that GenAI enhanced their understanding of cultural contexts while also improving their English skills, including grammar, vocabulary, and communication styles. GenAI taught them how individuals from other cultures think, react, and use language in real-world contexts by providing examples of formal and informal communication methods.

> "The benefits are numerous. I can learn the language and culture of other countries at the same time. For example, ChatGPT can provide examples of both formal and informal conversations. So, I don't just learn English, but also how people from other cultures think and react" (Participant 3, Phonology Class)

Rather than viewing language learning and cultural learning as separate processes, participants described both as developing simultaneously through their interactions with GenAI. This finding suggests that linguistic competence and intercultural understanding were constructed together during AI-supported communication.

Theme 6. GenAI as a Practical Learning and Assistance Tool

Participants describe GenAI as a flexible personal assistant that helps them learn in areas beyond communication. They use it to search for information, translate text, proofread their writing, practice speaking, and understand foreigners. Thanks to this useful feature, they can communicate across cultural boundaries more easily and without worrying about misunderstandings.

> "Oh, there are so many! For students like me, GenAI is like a personal assistant. It can help find materials, check writing, or practice speaking. It's also great for cross-cultural communication, so there are no more mistranslations" (Participant 6, Prose Class)

This theme demonstrates that participants recognize GenAI's potential as a versatile tool for a variety of applications, including communication and academic assignments. Through these different uses, participants gradually become more familiar with how language and cultural meanings work in communication. Several participants explained that this support helps them feel more confident when interacting with people from different cultural backgrounds. As a result, GenAI becomes a practical aid that supports participants when navigating cross-cultural communication.

Theme 7. Inaccurate or Culturally Inappropriate AI Output

Although participants find GenAI helpful in many situations, some of them also mentioned several limitations. During the interviews, a few participants explained that AI sometimes produces translations or suggestions that are not completely accurate. In certain cases, the responses may sound unclear or less appropriate in a specific

cultural context. For that reason, participants sometimes need to review the results carefully before using them in communication.

> "The challenge is that AI's answers are not always correct or accurate. We still need to check everything ourselves." (Participant 1, Phonology Class)

Participants' responses suggest that they are aware that GenAI does not always provide fully reliable answers. Even though the tool can support their communication, they understand that the results still need to be reviewed carefully. Some participants mentioned that AI suggestions sometimes do not fully match the intended cultural meaning or tone, which can potentially lead to misunderstanding if they are used without checking. Because of that, participants usually read the AI output again and make small adjustments before sending their messages. Through these experiences, they realize that while GenAI can be helpful in intercultural communication, it cannot completely replace human judgment and cultural awareness.

Theme 8. Over-dependence on AI Reduces Independent Learning Skills

Some participants also expressed concern about becoming too dependent on GenAI tools. While they recognize the benefits, they worry that frequent reliance on AI may gradually lower their ability to think critically, write independently, and solve problems on their own. If this pattern continues, it could affect the development of important long-term skills.

> "The challenge is that we can become too dependent on AI. Once we get used to it, it becomes difficult for us to learn independently" (Participant 4, Prose Class)

Participants' responses in this theme show that they are aware of the possible risks of relying too much on AI. Although GenAI can make many tasks easier, some participants feel that using it too often might reduce their effort to think and write on their own. A few participants mentioned that when AI is always available, it can be tempting to depend on it instead of practicing their own skills. For this reason, they believe it is still important to stay actively involved in the learning process and not rely on AI for every task.

Theme 9. GenAI may alter tone and lead to miscommunication

Besides the challenges mentioned earlier, several participants pointed out that GenAI can sometimes change the tone of the message they want to send. The response generated by AI may sound more formal, more direct, or slightly different from what the student originally intended. In intercultural communication, where tone often shapes how a message is interpreted, these differences can sometimes create confusion or misunderstanding.

> "Once, I used an AI translator to reply to a message from a friend in Medan. The result sounded too formal, and my friend thought I was angry or being cold." (Participant 3, Phonology Class)

Participants' experiences suggest that tone plays an important role in communication and can be sensitive in intercultural contexts. Although GenAI can help improve sentence structure and make messages clearer, it does not always capture the emotional nuance, politeness, or level of formality that the user intends. Even small wording changes may influence how the message is received by others. That is why, participants often review the AI-generated response and make small adjustments before sending it, especially when communicating with people from different cultural backgrounds.

This study suggests that GenAI plays a broader role in cross-cultural communication than merely functioning as a tool for grammar correction or translation. Participants described using GenAI as part of their communicative decision-making, carefully evaluating language, tone, and cultural appropriateness before interacting with people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. These findings indicate that GenAI supported not only linguistic accuracy but also the process of intercultural meaning-making, as participants actively anticipated how their messages might be interpreted by others. While this finding is consistent with previous research highlighting GenAI's contribution to reducing linguistic barriers in multilingual communication (Moon et al., 2024), the present study extends this discussion by demonstrating how Indonesian English Education students use GenAI to negotiate meaning in everyday online interactions beyond formal educational settings.

The findings further suggest that participants viewed message clarity as an essential component of successful intercultural communication rather than simply a matter of grammatical accuracy. Before sending messages, participants described using GenAI to evaluate vocabulary, sentence structure, and expressions in anticipation of how their communication might be interpreted by interlocutors from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

This pattern reflects a process of negotiating meaning, in which participants actively considered both linguistic choices and cultural expectations before interaction occurred. While Moon et al. (2024) demonstrated that GenAI can reduce linguistic barriers by producing clearer and more organised language, the present study extends this perspective by showing that students also employ GenAI to mediate intercultural meaning-making during informal online interactions, particularly on social media platforms where communication is spontaneous and culturally diverse.

Beyond improving message clarity, the findings suggest that participants used GenAI to negotiate culturally appropriate ways of expressing themselves. Rather than focusing solely on grammatical correctness, they considered how tone, politeness, and emotional expression might be interpreted by people from different cultural backgrounds before sending their messages. This highlights that intercultural meaning-making involves more than producing accurate language; it also requires sensitivity to the social and cultural expectations embedded in communication. For Indonesian participants, whose communication practices often emphasise harmony, respect, and indirectness, GenAI functioned as a resource for adapting language in ways that aligned with these cultural values while remaining appropriate for intercultural interaction. This finding supports earlier research suggesting that GenAI can facilitate intercultural understanding by helping users adapt their language to different communicative expectations (Allehyani et al., 2024). However, the present study further demonstrates that this adaptation is not merely linguistic but also reflects participants' active efforts to negotiate culturally appropriate meanings during everyday online communication.

In addition to supporting message preparation, the findings indicate that participants also integrated GenAI into real-time online interactions, such as live streaming and instant messaging, to sustain communication across linguistic and cultural differences. Rather than serving only as a translation tool, GenAI functioned as an immediate communication mediator that enabled participants to interpret messages and formulate responses without interrupting the flow of interaction. This supports previous research showing that AI can facilitate intercultural communication by providing instant feedback (Dai et al., 2024). However, the present study further suggests that the speed of AI-assisted communication should be balanced with critical reflection, as participants recognised that relying solely on rapid AI-generated responses may reduce opportunities to consider cultural nuances and contextual meanings during communication.

Beyond facilitating communication, participants perceived GenAI as contributing to both language development and intercultural learning. Exposure to different writing styles, levels of formality, and culturally appropriate expressions helped participants understand that language use is closely connected to cultural norms and communicative expectations. These findings reinforce Cheng's (2025) argument that language learning and intercultural competence develop simultaneously through technology-supported interaction. More importantly, the present study suggests that GenAI supported participants' meaning-making by enabling them to interpret not only linguistic forms but also the cultural meanings embedded in everyday online communication.

Participants also described GenAI as a practical resource that supported a wide range of academic and communication activities, including proofreading, speaking practice, and understanding unfamiliar expressions. These findings reflect the growing role of GenAI in promoting self-directed learning through accessible AI technologies (Allehyani et al., 2024). Nevertheless, participants' experiences also indicate that learner autonomy should be accompanied by critical evaluation and cultural awareness. Rather than accepting AI-generated responses uncritically, participants recognised the importance of reviewing, adapting, and interpreting AI outputs according to the communicative context, supporting Cheng's (2025) emphasis on critical engagement with AI-assisted learning.

Despite these benefits, the findings also highlight important challenges associated with using GenAI in intercultural communication. Participants reported that AI occasionally generated inaccurate translations or culturally inappropriate suggestions, particularly when cultural meanings or contextual nuances were involved. These experiences are consistent with Moon et al. (2024), who argued that AI systems continue to face limitations when processing culturally diverse language use. However, the present findings also demonstrate that participants did not simply accept AI-generated responses but actively evaluated and modified them before communication, reinforcing the idea that effective intercultural meaning-making continues to depend on human judgment and cultural awareness.

Another challenge concerned participants' awareness of becoming overly dependent on GenAI. Although AI simplified communication and language-related tasks, participants recognised that excessive reliance could reduce opportunities to develop independent thinking, problem-solving abilities, and language competence. Similar concerns have been raised by Allehyani et al. (2024), who warned that over-reliance on AI may weaken learner autonomy. The present study further suggests that maintaining a balance between AI assistance and independent reflection is particularly important in intercultural communication, where users are required to interpret meanings rather than simply generate linguistically correct responses.

Participants also noted that AI-generated responses sometimes altered the intended emotional tone of their messages, making them sound more formal or less personal than intended. This finding highlights that successful

intercultural communication depends not only on linguistic accuracy but also on the ability to convey interpersonal meanings, emotions, and culturally appropriate levels of politeness. Consistent with Dai et al. (2024), AI-generated language may not always capture these subtle interpersonal dimensions. Consequently, participants frequently reviewed and adjusted AI-generated responses to ensure that their intended meanings and emotional nuances were preserved before communicating with others.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that GenAI functions not merely as a language-support tool but as a mediator of intercultural meaning-making in everyday online communication. While participants perceived substantial benefits in supporting language development, intercultural awareness, and communication confidence, they also recognised that AI cannot replace human interpretation, cultural sensitivity, and critical judgment. These findings extend previous research (Moon et al., 2024; Dai et al., 2024; Cheng, 2025) by showing that the value of GenAI lies not only in improving linguistic performance but also in supporting users as they negotiate meaning across diverse cultural contexts. Therefore, the responsible use of GenAI should encourage reflective, culturally sensitive, and critically informed communication rather than dependence on AI-generated responses alone.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals that Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) plays an important role in supporting Indonesian EFL students' cross-cultural dialogue and meaning-making in online environments. The findings indicate that students use GenAI to clarify messages, improve language expression, adjust tone, and facilitate real-time communication with people from different cultural backgrounds. In addition, participants perceived GenAI as beneficial for enhancing their English proficiency, increasing intercultural awareness, and boosting their confidence during online interactions.

However, the study also identified several challenges, including inaccurate or culturally inappropriate AI outputs, excessive reliance on AI tools, and unintended changes in message tone that may lead to misunderstandings. These findings suggest that although GenAI offers significant benefits for intercultural communication, it should be used critically and responsibly rather than replacing human judgment and cultural sensitivity.

Therefore, English language education should incorporate critical AI literacy to help students evaluate AI-generated content, recognize cultural nuances, and maintain independent thinking skills. Teachers are also encouraged to design learning activities that integrate GenAI in meaningful and supervised ways, such as collaborative projects, intercultural simulations, and reflective writing tasks. Future research may involve larger and more diverse participants and examine the long-term effects of GenAI on intercultural competence and language development among EFL learners.

REFERENCES

Zhang, W., Li, A., & Wu, C. (2025). University students' perceptions of using generative AI in translation practices. *Instructional Science*, 53, 633–655. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11251-025-09705-y

Rosyada, A., & Taopa, L. L. (2025). Using AI in English language learning: Perspectives of Indonesian EFL learners. *Salus Cultura: Jurnal Pembangunan Manusia dan Kebudayaan*, 5(1), 46–53. https://doi.org/10.55480/saluscultura.v5i1.384

Apoko, T. W. (2025). Generative artificial intelligence in English instruction: Indonesian EFL vocational high school teachers' perspectives. *JOLLT Journal of Languages and Language Teaching*, 13(3), 1432–1444. https://doi.org/10.33394/jollt.v13i3.14190

Özyurt, S. (2024). AI-assisted English language learning for cross-cultural medical education in multilingual settings. *Experimental and Applied Medical Science*, 5(2). https://doi.org/10.46871/eams.1464830

Alhalangy, A. G. I., & AbdAlgane, M. (2023). Exploring the impact of AI on the EFL context: A case study of Saudi universities. *Journal of Intercultural Communication*, 23(2), 41–49. https://doi.org/10.36923/jicc.v23i2.125

Moon, H., Chung, Y., & Randolph, A. W. (2025). Teaching and learning languages with ChatGPT: Challenges and opportunities in multilingual classrooms in higher education. *Indonesian Journal of English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics*, 10(1), 207–223. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1467949

Cheng, H. (2025). Research on strategies for cultivating intercultural communication competence in AI-assisted English teaching. *Advances in Educational Technology and Psychology*, 9, 101–107. https://doi.org/10.23977/aetp.2025.090113

Allehyani, F. S., Albedah, F., Jamshed, M., & Warda, W. U. (2025). Exploring Saudi EFL learners' engagement with AI generative tools in educational settings: Perceptions, practices, and pedagogical outcomes. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 15(6), 1959–1966. https://doi.org/10.17507/tpls.1506.24

Dai, D. W., Suzuki, S., & Chen, G. (2024). Generative AI for professional communication training in intercultural contexts: Where are we now and where are we heading? *Applied Linguistics Review*, 16(2), 763–774. https://doi.org/10.1515/applirev-2024-0184

Ma, H. (2025). Exploring the role of generative AI in international students' sociocultural adaptation. *Frontiers in Artificial Intelligence*. https://doi.org/10.3389/frai.2025.1615113

Sun, Y., Steinkrauss, R., & Wieling, M. (2024). AI-mediated communication and intercultural pragmatics in digital environments. *Computers & Education: Artificial Intelligence*, 5, 100165. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.caeai.2023.100165

Zhang, Y., Park, J., & Lee, J. (2025). Generative AI tools in cross-cultural communication: Implications for global education. *Computers & Education: Artificial Intelligence*, 6, 100198. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.caeai.2024.100198

Ulla, M. B., Advincula, M. J. C., Mombay, C. D. S., Mercullo, H. M. A., Nacionales, J. P., & Entino-Señorita, A. D. (2024). How can GenAI foster an inclusive language classroom? A critical language pedagogy perspective from Philippine university teachers. *Computers & Education: Artificial Intelligence,* 7, 100314. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.caeai.2024.100314

Lee, J., & Drajati, N. A. (2024). Artificial intelligence–mediated communication and intercultural competence in EFL contexts. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 45(6), 987–1002. https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2023.2278914

Hwang, G. J., & Chen, N. S. (2024). Human–AI collaboration in language learning: Impacts on intercultural communication and global competence. *Educational Technology & Society*, 27(3), 15–28.

Lai, C., & Li, G. (2024). Artificial intelligence and intercultural language learning: A critical perspective. *Language Learning & Technology*, 28(1), 1–18.

Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2016). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Sage Publications.

O'Dowd, R. (2023). Virtual exchange and intercultural communication in the age of artificial intelligence. *System*, 115, 102998. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2023.102998

Kim, H., & Park, J. (2025). Generative AI as a cultural mediator in intercultural digital communication. *Computers & Education: Artificial Intelligence*, 7, 100226. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.caeai.2024.100226

Warschauer, M., & Xu, Y. (2024). The promise and peril of artificial intelligence for intercultural communication. *Educational Technology & Society*, 27(2), 1–12.

Cirucci, A. M., Marwick, A. E., & boyd, d. (2025). Culturally responsive communication in generative artificial intelligence. *AI & Society*, 40, 1–14. https://doi.org/10.1007/s00146-024-02141-5

Dwivedi, Y. K., Hughes, L., Ismagilova, E., Aarts, G., Coombs, C., Crick, T., … Williams, M. D. (2024). So what if ChatGPT wrote it? Multidisciplinary perspectives on opportunities, challenges, and implications of generative conversational AI for research, practice, and policy. *International Journal of Information Management*, 71, 102642. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2023.102642

Kohnke, L., Zou, D., & Zhang, R. (2024). Generative artificial intelligence and language education: Opportunities, challenges, and pedagogical implications. *ReCALL*, 36(2), 123–138. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0958344023000285

Gruenhagen, J. H., Sinclair, P. M., Carroll, J.-A., Baker, P. R. A., Wilson, A., & Demant, D. (2024). The rapid rise of generative artificial intelligence and its implications for academic integrity: Students' perceptions and use of chatbots for assistance with assessments. *Computers & Education: Artificial Intelligence*, 5, 100273. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.caeai.2024.100273

Bozkurt, A., Koseoglu, S., Singh, L., & Xiao, J. (2024). Why generative AI literacy matters: Educational perspectives and implications. *Open Praxis*, 16(3), 319–336. https://doi.org/10.55982/openpraxis.16.3.739

Jauhiainen, J. S., & Garagorry Guerra, A. (2024). Generative AI and education: Dynamic personalization of learning materials. *Frontiers in Education*, 9, 1288723. https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2024.1288723

Kasneci, E., Sessler, K., Küchemann, S., Bannert, M., Dementieva, D., Fischer, F., Gasser, U., Groh, G., Günnemann, S., Hüllermeier, E., Krusche, S., Kübler, T. C., Langenbucher, K., Lundberg, S. M., Miller, T., Müller, K.-R., Schmidt, A., Seidel, T., Spinner, C., … Kasneci, G. (2023). ChatGPT for good? On opportunities and challenges of large language models for education. *Learning and Individual Differences*, 103, 102274. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lindif.2023.102274

Makransky, G., Shiwalia, S., Herlau, J. K., & Blurton, S. P. (2025). Beyond the wow factor: Using generative AI for increasing generative sense-making in learning. *Educational Psychology Review*. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-025-10039-x

Sharples, M. (2023). Towards social generative artificial intelligence for education. *Learning: Research and Practice*. https://doi.org/10.1080/23735082.2023.2261131

Matsiola, M., Lappas, G., & Yannacopoulou, A. (2024). Generative artificial intelligence in education: Assessing usability, ethical implications, and communication effectiveness. *Societies*, 14(12), 267. https://doi.org/10.3390/soc14120267