

Teaching English through Games in the Era of Global Englishes: Effects on Intercultural Communicative Competence

Catur Kepirianto

Universitas Diponegoro

caturkepirianto@lecturer.undip.ac.id

1. INTRODUCTION

English is now seen as a global lingua franca utilized by people from many linguistic and cultural backgrounds rather than as a language exclusively owned by native speakers in the age of globalization and digital communication. The idea of Global Englishes, which stresses linguistic diversity, intercultural communication, and the significance of equipping students to speak well in global environments, reflects this viewpoint (Jenkins, 2020; Rose, H., & Galloway, 2022; Rose, H., et al, 2021). As a result, methods that support intercultural communicative competency (ICC), teamwork, and genuine communication are replacing native-speaker-oriented paradigms in English language teaching (ELT) in higher education. Game-Based Learning (GBL) is one cutting-edge strategy that helps achieve these objectives.

The incorporation of games and game features into educational activities to improve students' motivation, engagement, and interaction is known as "game-based learning." Games give students in ELT settings valuable chances to utilize

English in conversational and problem-solving scenarios. (Lee & Sylven, 2021; Mariam et al, 2022; Tang & Taguchi, 2021) asserts that digital games establish contextual learning settings where students actively develop knowledge via critical thinking, interaction, and teamwork. Additionally, in EFL contexts where students frequently have little exposure to real-world English communication, game-based activities help students interact more confidently and lessen language anxiety. By exposing students to a variety of viewpoints, cultures, and communication styles, GBL can also aid in the development of intercultural communicative competence in the context of Global Englishes.

Through collaborative digital platforms, virtual role-playing, and multiplayer online games, students can communicate with people from many cultural backgrounds in English. Through these exchanges, students gain empathy, negotiation skills, cultural knowledge, and tolerance for linguistic difference. Digital learning settings can improve students' intercultural comprehension and linguistic flexibility in global circumstances, according to research (Shadiey, R., & Sintawati, 2020; Hidayat, D, H; et al, 2022; Liu, G. L., et al, 2024). As a result, including game-based learning into ELT offers a great chance of fostering international communicative competence and preparing students for communication in the multilingual and multicultural world of global Englishes.

2. DISCUSSION

Game-based learning (GBL) has emerged as a cutting-edge pedagogical approach in English language teaching (ELT). This is particularly true in higher education, when instructors strive to enhance students' involvement, motivation, and communication abilities. GBL is the use of games and game-related elements to support learning objectives and significant learning experiences. Unlike traditional teacher-centred approaches, GBL promotes participation, communication, teamwork, and problem-solving, allowing students to acquire language skills in enjoyable and practical contexts (Li, R., & Hafner, 2022; Özdemir, 2025). In ELT,

games are increasingly being utilized to teach vocabulary, grammar, speaking exercises, reading comprehension, and writing tasks.

2.1 Game-Based Learning in English Language Teaching

Constructivist learning theory, which emphasizes that students actively construct knowledge via interaction and experience, is closely linked to the theoretical underpinnings of GBL. According to (Tan, H., et al, 2022; Tang, X., & Taguchi, 2021; Xie, 2022) digital games establish contextual learning settings where students participate in worthwhile tasks, get instant feedback, and hone their critical thinking abilities. Instead of being passive consumers of information, students become active participants through games. This is consistent with communicative language teaching (CLT), which emphasizes student involvement and meaningful communication in language acquisition. In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) setting, where students frequently have little opportunities to use English authentically, games also lessen learners' anxiety and dread of making mistakes.

Through digital platforms like Kahoot! Quizizz, Duolingo, Minecraft, and Wordwall, recent technology advancements have broadened the use of GBL (Fajaria et al., 2026). To increase students' motivation, these platforms use gamification components like points, badges, prizes, leader boards, and competition. Gamification is the use of game design features in non-gaming setting to boost participation and engagement. This is in line with (Deterding, 2020; Xie, 2022). Gamified learning environments have a favourable impact on students' attitudes toward learning English and their learning outcomes. Gamification boosts student engagement and perseverance when learning objectives are well-defined (Astawa et al., 2026).

Due to university students' familiarity with digital technology and interactive media, GBL has been widely accepted in higher education. Research shows that GBL improves classroom involvement, speaking fluency, listening

comprehension, and vocabulary development (Chen, C. M., & Hsu, 2020; Tang, X., & Taguchi, 2021; Yang, 2021). Peer connection and communication, which are crucial elements of learning a second language, are also supported by cooperative assignments and multiplayer online games. Learners negotiate meaning, exchange knowledge, and improve English in real-time conversation through cooperative and problem-solving exercises.

But academics also stress that teacher preparedness and pedagogical planning are necessary for GBL to be implemented successfully. Games with poor design have the potential to divert students from learning objectives and place an undue emphasis on enjoyment rather than educational value. To successfully include games into ELT, teachers must possess digital literacy, classroom management abilities, and pedagogical competence (Hasbi et al., 2025a). Additionally, there are still issues with internet connectivity and technological accessibility in some educational settings, especially in underdeveloped nations.

2.2. Global Englishes in ELT

By questioning conventional native-speaker standards and acknowledging English as an international language spoken by multilingual speakers worldwide, the idea of Global Englishes has had a considerable impact on modern ELT. English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), World Englishes, and English as an International Language (EIL) are only a few of the viewpoints that are included in global Englishes. These viewpoints place a strong emphasis on intercultural communication, linguistic diversity, and the validity of many English dialects used in various international contexts (Galloway, N., et al, 2022; Rose, H., et al, 2021).

Conventional ELT methods frequently emphasize native-speaker proficiency and British or American English standards as ideal language models. However, English is now a universal language used by speakers of various linguistic and cultural backgrounds due to globalization and international contact. English speakers nowadays are more willing to engage with non-native speakers than native speakers (Jenkins, 2020). Therefore,

rather than only mimicking native-speaker pronunciation and cultural norms, ELT should equip students to communicate successfully in multilingual and multicultural contexts.

Global Englishes promote respect for linguistic diversity, international understanding, and adaptability in communication. In English communication, learners are urged to comprehend different accents, communication methods, and cultural viewpoints. Global English language instruction, according to (Rose, H., et al, 2020) strives to improve students' capacity to successfully negotiate meaning and communicate across cultural boundaries. Teachers must also embrace more inclusive teaching strategies and resources that reflect a variety of English speakers and cross-cultural interactions as part of this change.

Due to internationalization, student mobility, and digital communication, Global Englishes have grown in importance in higher education. English is widely used by university students in multicultural relationships, online forums, and foreign academic resources. Therefore, the development of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) should take precedence over grammatical correctness and native-speaker standards in English training. These goals can be supported by incorporating digital media, team initiatives, and real-world communication activities. Global Englishes implementation in ELT is still difficult, nonetheless. Standardized tests and curricula focused on native speakers are still prevalent in many educational institutions. Additionally, teachers might not know enough about intercultural education and the principles of Global English. In order to foster Global Englishes-oriented teaching practices, academics stress the significance of curricular reform and teacher professional development.

2.3 Intercultural Communicative Competence

The ability to successfully and appropriately communicate with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds is known as Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC), a crucial notion in language instruction. ICC is the set of attitudes, knowledge,

abilities, and critical cultural awareness required for effective cross-cultural communication. In addition to language proficiency, ICC requires empathy, transparency, respect, and the capacity to negotiate meaning across cultural divides.

Since English is extensively utilized as a worldwide lingua franca, ICC has grown in significance in the context of ELT. Instead of only speaking with native speakers, learners must interact with people from a variety of cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Because speakers must adjust to different cultural norms, communication styles, and language practices, contends that intercultural awareness is crucial in ELF communication. As a result, ELT should train students to become intercultural speakers capable of meaningful communication in international settings.

A number of ICC models place a strong emphasis on communication flexibility and cultural sensitivity. Five elements make up (Fathi, J., et al, 2025; Lin, Y. T., 2024; Tan, H., et al, 2022) model: critical cultural awareness, knowledge, skills of interpretation and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, and attitudes. These elements support students' understanding of cultural diversity, critical reflection on their own presumptions, and polite interpersonal communication (Hasbi et al., 2025b). ICC is especially important in higher education since university students frequently engage in online communication, academic exchange, and international collaboration.

The growth of ICC is also greatly aided by digital technologies and online learning setting. Learners can communicate in English as a common language with people from other nations and cultures through internet platforms. Intercultural engagement and genuine conversation are made possible through virtual exchanges, online gaming communities, and cooperative digital initiatives. These encounters help students grow in empathy, tolerance, and cross-cultural comprehension.

2.4. The Relationship between Game-Based Learning and Intercultural Communicative Competence

According to recent research, GBL can aid in the growth of ICC in ELT settings. Games frequently require players from various cultural backgrounds to cooperate, negotiate, role-play, and engage. In particular, multiplayer online games offer real-world settings where students can communicate and work together to solve problems using English as a lingua franca. By exposing students to a variety of accents, viewpoints, and communication styles, these interactions promote intercultural awareness and communicative flexibility.

Lee & Sylven (2021) and Lee (2023) discovered that in EFL classrooms, digital game-based learning decreased language anxiety and boosted students' readiness to communicate. Students gained increased confidence and spontaneity in their English practice through gaming activities. Similarly, Peterson, M., 2020 and Tan et al, 2022 contend that social engagement chances provided by online games aid in language acquisition and cross-cultural communication. Students work together, negotiate meaning, and form social bonds with participants from around the world. Because GBL prioritizes communication effectiveness over native-speaker correctness, it also conforms to Global Englishes ideals. Instead of being a subject that is only concerned with grammatical accuracy, English serves as a useful instrument for accomplishing common objectives in online gaming. As a result, learners engage in real multilingual communication where linguistic variety is respected and accepted.

Additionally, game-based settings promote cultural discovery and hands-on learning. By exposing students to various cultural situations and viewpoints, role-playing games and simulation exercises foster empathy and intercultural awareness. Because university students are preparing for global academic and professional situations, these experiences are especially useful in higher education. Despite these advantages, there are still difficulties in successfully merging GBL and ICC. Instead of encouraging surface-level competitiveness, educators can provide

activities that foster meaningful cross-cultural connection. It is also necessary to take into account ethical concerns including responsible communication, digital citizenship, and online safety. Participation in digital game-based activities may also be restricted by unequal access to technology.

The literature shows how Global Englishes, Intercultural Communicative Competence, and Game-Based Learning are related ideas that greatly influence modern ELT. Through interesting and real-world learning situations, GBL improves motivation, interaction, and communication skills. Global Englishes, on the other hand, stress linguistic diversity and intercultural communication while challenging conventional native-speaker standards. Because students must be able to communicate effectively in multilingual and multicultural settings, ICC has emerged as a critical goal in language instruction. By giving students real-world chances for cross-cultural engagement, cooperation, and communication, GBL integration into Global Englishes-oriented ELT can promote the growth of ICC. Therefore, more investigation is required to determine how game-based strategies might successfully foster intercultural communication skills in ELT environments in higher education.

3. RECOMMENDATION

A number of suggestions for educators, higher education institutions, and upcoming academics can be made in light of the expanding significance of Game-Based Learning (GBL) and Global Englishes in English Language Teaching (ELT). In order to create engaging, student-centred, and meaningful learning experiences, teachers and language instructors should first include game-based activities into ELT classrooms. Students can be encouraged to actively communicate in English while honing their problem-solving and teamwork abilities through digital games, role-playing exercises, simulations, and cooperative online platforms. Games offer contextual learning environments that encourage active participation and genuine conversation, claims (Shadiev, R., & Sintawati, 2020; Tang, X., & Taguchi, 2021). As a result, teachers

should carefully choose games that support both intercultural learning outcomes and instructional objectives.

Second, by offering internet connectivity, technology infrastructure, and teacher professional development programs, higher education institutions should facilitate the use of GBL. Digital literacy and the pedagogical incorporation of technology continue to be obstacles for many instructors. Therefore, courses on game design, gamification techniques, and pedagogy focused on Global Englishes should be part of teacher training programs. Instead of concentrating only on native-speaker norms, Rose and Galloway (2019) stress that English instruction should prepare students for communication in multilingual and multicultural environments. As a result, students should be exposed to a variety of English dialects, accents, and cross-cultural communication situations through game-based activities.

Third, game-based English training should incorporate intercultural communicative competency (ICC). Students can engage with people from many cultural backgrounds using English as a common language through virtual collaborative projects and multiplayer online games. These encounters could promote intercultural understanding, empathy, and openness (Fathi, J., et al, 2025; Lin, Y. T., 2024; Permatasari, I., & Andriyanti, 2021). In order to assist students in critically analysing cultural perspectives and communication techniques, teachers are also encouraged to lead reflective conversations following gaming activities. Lastly, to investigate the long-term effects of GBL on intercultural communicative competence, learner autonomy, communication willingness, and English proficiency, future researchers should carry out longitudinal and mixed-method studies. Additional research may look into the ways that online gaming communities and Informal Digital Learning of English (IDLE) support intercultural communication and global English awareness in higher education settings.

Author



Dr. Catur Kepirianto, M.Hum is a lecturer, researcher, and trainer in the Linguistics Department, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Diponegoro. His research interest are psycholinguistics, socio pragmatics, and applied linguistics. His email is caturkepirianto@lecturer.undip.ac.id, Orcid ID: 0000-0003-1768-6005, Scopus ID:

57208009994, Sinta ID: 6028750, and Google Scholar.

References

- Astawa, N. L. P. N. S. P., Hasbi, M., Islamiah, N., Hamid, S. F., Male, H., Kurniati, Khairatunnisa. (2026). *Teaching English for Specific Purposes*. Rizquna.
- Chen, C. M., & Hsu, S. H. (2020). Personalized intelligent mobile learning system for supporting effective English learning. *Educational Technology & Society*, 23(2), 38–52. <https://doi.org/10.2307/26921136>
- Deterding, S. (2020). Gamification in educational contexts: Research trends and future directions. *Simulation & Gaming*, 51(6), 779–795. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1046878120959950>
- Fajaria, N. H., Maknun, L., Hasbi, M., Islamiah, N., Male, H., Harida, E. S., Kusmaningrum, M. (2026). *AI in English Language Teaching and Research*. Rizquna.
- Fathi, J., Zou, D., & Zhaleh, K. (2025). Promoting Intercultural Communicative Competence and Willingness to Communicate in EFL Learners through Virtual Reality: A Mixed-Methods Examination. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09588221.2025.2496827>
- Hasbi, M., Perdana, M. T., Madkur, A., Sari, E. D. P., Nor, H. (2025). *Powerful Vocabulary and Grammar Classroom Activities*. Rizquna. <http://e->

repository.perpus.iainsalatiga.ac.id/23749/

- Hasbi, M., Nor, H., Madkur, A., Sulisty, T., Mulyani, Y. S. (2025). *Local-Based English Language Teaching Across Indonesia*. Rizquna.
- Hidayat, D, H; Lee, J.Y; Mason, J; Khaerudin, T. (2022). Digital Technology Supporting English Learning Among Indonesian University Students. *Research and Practice in Technology Enhanced Learning*, 17(23). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41039-022-00198-8>
- Jenkins, J. (2020). ELF and Global Englishes. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 40, 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0267190520000071>
- Lee, J.S., & Sylven, L. K. (2021). The Role of Informal Digital Learning of English in Korean and Swedish EFL Learners' Communication Behaviour. *British Journal of Education Technology*, 52(3), 1279–1296. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjet.13082>
- Lee, J. S. (2023). Digital game-based learning and learner interaction in EFL classrooms. *System*, 114. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2023.103004>
- Li, R., & Hafner, C. A. (2022). Mobile-assisted vocabulary learning with digital games in EFL contexts. *ReCALL*, 34(2), 201–218. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0958344021000248>
- Lin, Y. T., et al. (2024). Oral Translanguaging in Telecollaboration: Effects on EFL Learner Intercultural Awareness, Learning and Communicative Competence. *System*, 124, 10335. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2024.103357>
- Liu, G. L., Darvin, R., & Mac, C. (2024). Exploring AI-Mediated Informal Digital Learning of English (AI-IDLE). *Computer Assisted Language Learning*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09588221.2024.2310288>
- Mariam, S., Kepirianto, C., Fadhillah, M., & Mardhiana, N. (2022). Utilizing Quipper School for Improving Reading Comprehension of Recount Text. *Indonesian EFL Journal (IEFLJ)*, 8(1). <https://doi.org/10.25134/ieflj.v8il.5660>

- Özdemir, O. (2025). Kahoot! Game-based digital learning platform: A comprehensive meta-analysis. *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning*, 41(1). <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcal.13084>
- Permatasari, I., & Andriyanti, E. (2021). Developing Students' Intercultural Communicative Competence through Cultural Text-based Teaching. *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 11(1), 72–82. <https://doi.org/10.17509/ijal.v11i1.34611>
- Peterson, M., et al. (2020). A review of research on the application of digital games in foreign language education. *IGI Global*. <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-7998-2591-3.ch004>
- Rose, H., & Galloway, N. (2022). Global Englishes Pedagogy. *Language Teaching*, 55(2), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444820000244>
- Rose, H., McKinley, J., Galloway, N. (2021). Global Englishes and Language Teaching: A Review of Pedagogical Research. *Language Teaching*, 54(2), 157–189. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444820000518>
- Shadiev, R., & Sintawati, W. (2020). A Review of Research on intercultural learning supported by technology. *Educational Research Review*, 31. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.edurev.2020.100338>
- Tan, H., Zhao, K., & Dervin, F. (2022). Experiences of and Preparedness for Intercultural Teacherhood in Higher Education. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, 22(1), 68–84. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14708477.2021.1988631>
- Tang, X., & Taguchi, N. (2021). Digital game-assisted language learning and vocabulary acquisition. *Language Learning & Technology*, 25(3), 88–105. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0958344021000121>
- Xie, Y. (2022). Digital game-based learning in second language acquisition. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09588221.2022.2033784>

Yang, Y. F. (2021). Gamification and EFL learners' motivation in speaking classrooms. *Interactive Learning Environments*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10494820.2021.1875004>