



## CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING DIGITAL AND INTERCULTURAL PROJECT-BASED LEARNING FOR EFL SUBTITLING

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### ABSTRACT

The infusion of digital literacy and intercultural competence has become increasingly essential in translation and audiovisual subtitling instruction. Despite this urgency, EFL subtitling classrooms continue to rely on conventional teaching practices, limiting students' exposure to real-world, technology-enhanced learning environments. The research aims to identify pedagogical challenges faced by lecturers; explore classroom-level obstacles encountered by students; and analyze adaptive strategies employed to address these issues. This descriptive qualitative study explores how a PjBL designed to infuse both digital literacies and intercultural competencies was operationalized within the context of EFL subtitling classes at Gunadarma. The study found that while group-based subtitling tasks and peer review activities significantly encouraged student involvement and nurtured participatory learning, disparities emerged particularly in terms of unequal access to digital tools and stable internet connectivity. These technological inconsistencies often hindered students from engaging fully in collaborative processes, especially those who relied on limited personal devices or shared infrastructure. In response to these challenges, lecturers implemented several pedagogical modifications aimed at enhancing instructional inclusivity and promoting learner autonomy. The study contributes a practical, context-sensitive framework for EFL subtitling instruction, demonstrating how digital and intercultural literacies can be meaningfully embedded to enhance learner engagement, autonomy, and translational accuracy in diverse classroom settings.

**Keywords:** *Project-Based Learning; EFL Subtitling; Translation Pedagogy; Digital Literacy; Intercultural Competence*

### INTRODUCTION

The increasing demand for translator training in digital (Ng, 2012; Liebech-Lien, 2021) and intercultural contexts (Byram, 1997) necessitates pedagogical innovations that bridge technical skill development and cultural competence (Saavedra & Opfer, 2012; Slavin, 2014). Project-Based Learning (PjBL), when thoughtfully designed to integrate digital tools and intercultural goals, has emerged as a powerful model for equipping students with real-world translation competencies. In EFL movie subtitle translation classrooms, however, implementing such an approach remains complex (Martin & Bolliger, 2018).

Global shifts in language learning objectives, especially under the influence of 21st-century skills frameworks, have reshaped the goals of translation pedagogy from mere linguistic equivalence to broader competencies such as critical thinking, cultural mediation, and technological fluency (Trilling & Fadel, 2009). This instructional shift signifies a transition toward more constructivist and student-driven learning paradigms, where emphasis is placed on meaningful engagement through real-world, task-oriented activities. Within this context, the practice of translation, especially in audiovisual

formats, naturally requires the integration of multimodal literacies, such as textual, visual, and temporal comprehension. Such demands resonate strongly with the principles of Project-Based Learning (PjBL), which encourages experiential, inquiry-based exploration of complex tasks (Kearney, 2012). By leveraging these multimodal dimensions, PjBL provides an effective pedagogical platform for students to not only acquire technical subtitling skills but also to critically engage with cultural and contextual nuances embedded within translated content. Thus, the alignment between audiovisual translation and PjBL is not merely pedagogical, but also epistemological, as it fosters deeper learner agency, collaborative meaning-making, and cross-cultural competence through authentic, performance-based projects.

Although Project-Based Learning (PjBL) offers substantial pedagogical promise in theory, particularly for fostering learner autonomy, collaboration, and contextualized skills, its application within EFL translation classrooms at Indonesian universities remains constrained by a range of practical limitations. These challenges stem not only from institutional rigidity and time constraints but also from gaps in technological readiness, curriculum alignment, and lecturer preparedness to infuse digital and intercultural elements effectively. As a result, the intended benefits of PjBL are often diluted, with many educators struggling to fully implement student-centered learning processes that require dynamic scaffolding and adaptive instructional design. These include a lack of digital infrastructure, limited professional development for instructors in digital pedagogy, and institutional rigidity regarding syllabus adaptation (Rahmah, 2019; Setiawan & Fitria, 2021). Educators often face limitations imposed by rigid academic scheduling, which hinders the ability to engage students in the deeper, iterative processes essential for the effective execution of Project-Based Learning (PjBL). The fixed duration of a semester frequently leaves insufficient time for students to explore complex tasks, revise their work meaningfully, and develop the necessary digital and intercultural competencies at a sustainable pace. As a result, instructors are challenged to balance the intended depth of the learning experience with practical time constraints, sometimes compromising pedagogical intentions. These temporal restrictions can obstruct the full realization of student-centered, inquiry-based learning models such as PjBL, especially when applied in skill-intensive settings like translation and subtitling education.

Infusing movie subtitling into language education presents a multifaceted pedagogical approach that intertwines linguistic precision, cultural sensitivity, and media literacy. Rather than treating subtitling solely as a textual transfer activity, it should be understood as a socially and culturally embedded practice that requires an acute awareness of pragmatic appropriateness, discourse conventions, and audience-specific expectations. This aligns with the view that subtitling operates at the intersection of language use and cultural interpretation. When embedded within a Project-Based Learning (PjBL) framework enriched by digital tools and intercultural elements, subtitling tasks can simulate authentic professional scenarios, fostering critical thinking and collaborative negotiation among learners. As emphasized by Van den Branden (2006), scaffolding is crucial in enabling learners to progress from basic comprehension to more complex production tasks. Therefore, the success of subtitling-based PjBL initiatives hinges not only on the content and tools used but also on the pedagogical strategies that facilitate learner autonomy, contextual engagement, and reflective skill development.



Moreover, the global rise in demand for accessible audiovisual content across digital platforms places increasing pressure on translation educators to prepare students for technologically mediated intercultural communication (Pym, 2010; Gambier, 2013). This pattern is especially evident in linguistically diverse countries such as Indonesia, where disparities in both English language mastery and digital competence are still prominent across different educational institutions and regions (Basuki & Wijaya, 2022). The uneven development of these two skill areas, often influenced by socioeconomic and infrastructural factors, poses a challenge for the equitable implementation of technology-enhanced language instruction. Educational gaps between urban and rural contexts further exacerbate the inconsistency in learners' access to digital tools and qualified language instruction, leading to unequal learning outcomes and limited engagement with global communication practices. Therefore, infusing subtitling into EFL instruction not only responds to evolving market demands but also provides a platform for students to cultivate digital agency, cross-cultural empathy, and collaborative autonomy.

This research centers on the practical enactment of the instructional model within two undergraduate translation classrooms at Universitas Gunadarma. Rather than addressing theoretical constructs in isolation, the study closely examines how the model was operationalized in real-time instructional settings, capturing the nuances, adaptations, and challenges that emerged throughout its classroom-level application. By situating the analysis within these specific courses, the research offers grounded insights into how pedagogical strategies integrating digital and intercultural literacies function under actual teaching and learning conditions in Indonesian higher education contexts. It investigates the practical barriers and strategies encountered by lecturers and students as they engage with digital subtitling tools and culturally rich content within a project-based structure. In doing so, it strengthens the growing body of scholarship advocating for context-sensitive innovation in translator training and EFL curriculum development.

Furthermore, embedding project-based learning with a dual focus on digital literacy and intercultural awareness directly supports global educational priorities, such as those promoted by UNESCO (2015), which stress the importance of equipping learners with future-ready competencies for both global engagement and sustainable development. As the digital landscape continues to evolve, shaping how language, meaning, and culture are mediated across platforms, translation instruction must increasingly prioritize multimodal literacy and cross-cultural sensitivity. These competencies are no longer optional enhancements but are becoming foundational for preparing students to function effectively as global communicators and culturally responsive professionals in the 21st century.

While previous studies have emphasized the benefits of collaborative and student-centered learning (Khan et al., 2017; Slavin, 2014; Prince, 2004), many Indonesian institutions still rely on traditional modes of instruction, making innovation difficult to scale. Research in online learning (Martin & Bolliger, 2018), translation pedagogy (Knight, 2019; Petrilli, 2021; Retnomurti, 2016; Retnomurti et al., 2024), and digital engagement (Liebech-Lien, 2021; Liu et al., 2024) demonstrates that instructional design must promote learner autonomy while addressing infrastructural and contextual constraints. This study explores how a digitally and interculturally enhanced PjBL model is operationalized within Indonesian EFL subtitling classrooms.

Globally, 21st-century education frameworks encourage a shift toward experiential and learner-driven pedagogies, particularly in language education (Saavedra & Opfer, 2012; Richards, 2015). Project-Based Learning (PjBL) supports this by

emphasizing active engagement, collaboration, and critical thinking through authentic problem-solving tasks (Thomas, 2000; Kiraly, 2016). In translation education, Kiraly (2016) frames PjBL as a social constructivist model that fosters learner autonomy through contextualized experiences. However, PjBL remains underutilized in audiovisual translation classes, especially in Indonesian EFL contexts, due to challenges like limited digital infrastructure, insufficient training in subtitling software, and lack of integrated intercultural instruction (Nguyen et al., 2021; Siregar, 2022; Supena et al., 2021).

The theoretical foundation of this study is informed by four key frameworks: Project-Based Learning (Thomas, 2000; Kiraly, 2016), Digital Literacy (Ng, 2012), Intercultural Competence (Byram, 1997), and Subtitling Pedagogy (O'Hagan, 2016; Gambier & Orrego-Carmona, 2019). Project-Based Learning (PjBL) serves as an experiential and learner-centered instructional approach that encourages students to collaboratively navigate real-world challenges, thereby fostering contextualized language use and reflective learning. Within this framework, learners engage in sustained inquiry and cooperative problem-solving that simulate authentic communicative tasks. In the domain of audiovisual translation, particularly subtitling, such an approach is especially relevant, as it mirrors the dynamic and interdisciplinary nature of the professional field. In parallel, digital literacy is no longer limited to operational skills but extends to critical interaction with digital environments and tools. The ability to navigate subtitling software, manage multimodal content, and critically evaluate audiovisual texts is foundational to subtitling competence (see Mellinger & Hanson, 2020; Iskandar et al., 2022). These literacies not only enhance technical proficiency but also support students in making informed linguistic and cultural choices during translation tasks. Thus, embedding PjBL with a strong digital literacy component prepares students for the complex demands of real-world translation scenarios, while promoting deeper engagement, autonomy, and intercultural awareness in the EFL subtitling classroom. Intercultural competence helps students recognize and adapt to sociocultural nuances embedded in translation. Subtitling, as a pedagogical tool, encourages multimodal literacy, linguistic accuracy, and metacognitive awareness (Perego, 2009; Siregar, 2022). Infusing these frameworks within one instructional design enables learners to develop both technical proficiency and cultural sensitivity through guided, hands-on subtitling projects.

Despite these theoretical advantages, implementation challenges persist. Teachers report difficulty aligning PjBL activities with semester calendars, managing student readiness, and fostering equitable participation in group-based translation projects. Despite its growing relevance in the global translation industry, the practice of audiovisual subtitling has not yet been fully embraced within the majority of translation programs in Indonesia. Curricula in many higher education institutions continue to focus predominantly on conventional text types, such as literary, academic, or general-purpose documents, thereby sidelining multimodal translation forms like subtitling (Siregar, 2022). This curricular gap reflects a broader pedagogical trend where the infusion of digital and media-based translation skills is often undervalued. As a result, students are offered limited opportunities to engage with authentic audiovisual materials, which hinders the development of skills essential for navigating real-world translation demands. The lack of structured exposure to subtitling not only restricts learners' practical competencies but also contributes to a theoretical imbalance within the broader translation training framework. Addressing this gap requires a reorientation of pedagogical priorities to incorporate media translation more systematically within EFL



and translation studies programs, particularly as digital communication continues to shape how meaning is constructed and conveyed across cultures. The need for innovative, context-sensitive instruction becomes evident, especially when digital and intercultural competencies are not yet systematically embedded in the curriculum. While a significant body of research in audiovisual translation has explored aspects such as the technical features of subtitling tools and audience reception, there remains a noticeable gap in the literature concerning pedagogical frameworks for teaching subtitling, particularly within English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. As noted by scholars such as Gambier and Orrego-Carmona (2019), the field has traditionally prioritized product-oriented analyses over classroom-oriented inquiries. This tendency overlooks the essential role of instructional design, including the scaffolding strategies that educators must implement to effectively guide students through the complex processes of subtitle creation. Without deliberate pedagogical support, learners, especially those unfamiliar with translation technologies or intercultural nuances, may struggle to engage meaningfully with subtitling tasks. Thus, there is an urgent need to shift attention toward how subtitling can be integrated into EFL instruction in ways that are pedagogically sound, learner-centered, and contextually adaptive.

This study addresses those gaps by focusing on the practical implementation of a digitally and interculturally infused PjBL model in a movie subtitle translation course at Universitas Gunadarma. Specifically, it seeks to (1) identify instructional hurdles in applying the model; (2) examine classroom obstacles during implementation; and (3) explore the adaptive strategies employed by lecturers. These aims are investigated through a descriptive qualitative method that triangulates classroom observations, interviews, and document analysis. Grounded in authentic classroom data, this study repositions subtitling not merely as a technical skill but as an engaging pedagogical tool that promotes collaborative learning, enhances digital competence, and deepens intercultural sensitivity. The results underscore the transformative potential of project-based subtitling activities in bridging theoretical instruction with practical, real-world applications. By aligning instructional design with both local classroom contexts and broader educational goals, this research contributes to a more equitable and pedagogically responsive model for teaching EFL translation in the digital era.

Furthermore, the urgency of this research is underscored by its alignment with global educational agendas. Goal 4 of UNESCO's Sustainable Development Agenda advocates for inclusive, equitable education and lifelong learning that fosters essential competencies for employment and responsible global engagement (UNESCO, 2015). Embedding digital and intercultural literacies within subtitling-based learning tasks directly contributes to this objective by preparing students with transferable skills relevant to 21st-century demands. In Indonesia, where digital transformation is progressing unevenly across regions and institutions, models that embed such literacies into practical, classroom-based activities can serve as scalable innovations for national education policy. Thus, this study not only addresses a pedagogical gap but also contributes to national development goals.

Additionally, this research brings a new perspective to translation pedagogy by emphasizing subtitling as a collaborative, multimodal task rather than a solitary linguistic endeavor. This approach encourages students to become active participants in their learning by engaging with digital technologies and navigating intercultural meanings collaboratively. Rather than treating translation as a static transfer of language, it is reframed as a dynamic process involving contextual interpretation and mediated

interaction. Such a perspective is grounded in constructivist and sociocultural learning theories, which emphasize that knowledge is co-constructed through meaningful social engagement, scaffolded instruction, and real-world tasks (Vygotsky, 1978; Van Lier, 2004). As such, the findings of this study have broader implications for rethinking how translation is taught, assessed, and integrated into broader language curricula.

Finally, this study responds to a critical need in the scholarship of translation studies and foreign language pedagogy: the need for context-sensitive, empirically grounded models that bridge theory and practice. By documenting classroom realities and surfacing practitioner insights, this research creates space for dialogue between theoretical ideals and institutional constraints. It empowers educators to make informed pedagogical choices and offers a replicable framework for similar contexts.

## **METHOD**

This research employed a qualitative descriptive case study design to explore the instructional challenges and adaptations associated with implementing a digitally and interculturally enriched project-based learning (PjBL) model in EFL movie subtitling contexts. The case study approach was selected due to its effectiveness in capturing in-depth, context-sensitive understandings of educational practices within authentic classroom settings (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Obilor, 2023). Focusing on naturally occurring learning activities, this method allowed for a detailed examination of how lecturers navigated real-time constraints, including the integration of digital tools and intercultural content. It also provided space to document their responsive strategies in managing students' diverse needs throughout the subtitling process.

The research took place at the Faculty of English Literature, Universitas Gunadarma, and involved two fifth-semester classes, 5SA01 and 5SA02. Participants were intentionally chosen from two EFL subtitling classes that had integrated Aegisub as a primary tool and involved students in intercultural, digitally mediated learning activities. To capture diverse viewpoints, the study employed maximum variation sampling (Patton, 2015), selecting 12 students, six from each class, who represented varying levels of translation proficiency and digital literacy. In addition, two lecturers with direct instructional roles in these classes were included to provide insights into pedagogical decision-making and instructional challenges. This sampling strategy was designed to reflect a broad spectrum of experiences and ensure a balanced understanding of both learner and instructor perspectives within digitally enriched project-based translation environments.

To gather data, the researchers employed a triangulated method combining semi-structured interviews, six weeks of non-participant classroom observations, and document analysis of student subtitling outputs and reflection logs. The collected data were analyzed thematically through open and axial coding techniques (Saldaña, 2021) to identify recurring themes and pedagogical patterns.

For credibility and confirmability, the study utilized methodological triangulation and member-checking, in line with established qualitative validation strategies (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This study utilized the theoretical lenses of Project-Based Learning, digital literacy, and intercultural competence to guide the analytical process. These frameworks enabled a structured exploration of both the instructional challenges and the corresponding pedagogical responses, ensuring the findings were not only conceptually robust but also applicable to real-world EFL classroom contexts. The method ultimately



seeks to provide a nuanced understanding of how digitally and culturally enriched project-based learning can be realized in Indonesian subtitling classrooms.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Result

To address the three research questions, data were analyzed thematically from classroom observations, interviews, and student focus groups in classes 5SA01 and 5SA02. The findings are presented according to the three main research questions. This part of the study outlines the results drawn from multiple validated data sources and is structured according to the study's three core inquiries: the pedagogical challenges encountered, the classroom-level barriers faced by students, and the strategies adopted to address these issues. The interpretation of findings is further supported by visual aids such as charts and tables, along with relevant academic references to strengthen analytical depth and clarity.

### Pedagogical Challenges in Implementation

Lecturers reported difficulty balancing the integration of digital tools such as Aegisub with intercultural teaching objectives. Students' unfamiliarity with subtitling software required repeated guidance, prolonging the learning curve. Moreover, aligning the PjBL timeline with the academic calendar posed challenges, often disrupting the intended project flow. These findings corroborate Kiraly's (2016) assertion that PjBL in translation requires structured scaffolding to ensure success. Lecturers experienced significant barriers in aligning digital tools such as Aegisub with classroom instruction. A considerable number of students encountered challenges in operating the subtitling software, which necessitated repeated instructional assistance and ultimately impacted the overall efficiency of the teaching process. Additionally, the rigid academic calendar constrained the scope and timing of project-based activities. These challenges reflect the notion that successful implementation of project-based translation instruction demands careful scaffolding and adaptable time management to accommodate learners' needs and classroom realities, as emphasized by Kiraly (2016). Interview data emphasized that students needed more time to develop digital proficiency before engaging in subtitling tasks. In addition, many lecturers encountered challenges in embedding intercultural elements into the learning process in a balanced way, as excessive inclusion risked overwhelming students and reducing their ability to absorb the core subtitling skills effectively.

A real example observed in 5SA01 involved a session where the lecturer introduced Aegisub by walking students through subtitle timing. Despite detailed explanations, many students had difficulty synchronizing subtitles to audio, leading to delays. As a result, the lecturer had to assign an additional session solely for technical troubleshooting. However, this effort proved beneficial as students began producing more accurate and time-aligned subtitles in subsequent weeks. This approach underscores the instructional value of providing flexible time allocation, enabling learners to gradually build both digital subtitling skills and intercultural sensitivity. Such adaptive timing aligns with the principles of project-based learning, where varied student readiness levels necessitate a more responsive and differentiated instructional pace (Kiraly, 2016).

### Classroom Obstacles

Students encountered technical difficulties, such as limited access to digital devices and unstable internet connections, which hindered collaborative work. In addition, limited digital competence among students led to slower progress in meeting

key project targets. Data from focus group discussions indicated that by the fourth week of implementation, less than half of the students, approximately 40% felt adequately prepared to operate the Aegisub software without supervision. Differing language proficiency levels further complicated group dynamics. These findings align with the notion that varying student backgrounds and competencies can significantly influence the overall effectiveness of translation-oriented project-based learning, as emphasized by recent pedagogical research (Marczak, 2021). Students faced a wide range of challenges, including inconsistent access to the internet and digital devices, low familiarity with intercultural subtitling conventions, and group collaboration issues. Focus group discussions revealed that students often struggled to match subtitles with culturally appropriate expressions, especially when translating idioms or humor. Table 1 below presents the progression in students' confidence using Aegisub across six weeks.

In one case, students translating a comedic scene from an Indonesian movie struggled to localize a pun into English. The phrase "ketiban durian runtuh" was initially translated as "hit by falling durians," which confused target viewers during peer review. Following intercultural discussions guided by the lecturer, students revised the subtitle to "luck falls from the sky," preserving the intended meaning. This example illustrates how culturally embedded expressions can pose significant translation challenges, reinforcing the importance of peer feedback and explicit intercultural instruction (Scarpa, 2019).

#### **Strategies Employed by Lecturers**

Lecturers implemented adaptive measures such as tutorial videos, intercultural case discussions, flexible deadlines, and structured peer feedback. These interventions were aimed at boosting metacognitive skills and learner autonomy. These findings are in line with the perspective that effective support mechanisms are essential when integrating digital tools into EFL instruction. As highlighted in prior research, structured assistance and step-by-step guidance can significantly enhance student engagement and success in technology-enhanced language learning environments (Ng, 2012).

For example, in 5SA02, lecturers implemented a reflection activity where students described the cultural challenges they encountered each week. One student noted difficulty interpreting sarcasm in a Hollywood film and how it contrasted with Indonesian expressions of humor. Following collaborative discussions with peers, the student succeeded in adjusting the subtitle to reflect a culturally appropriate expression, thereby improving its clarity and audience relevance. This process of peer-assisted revision not only refined the linguistic output but also nurtured greater intercultural sensitivity. Engaging in reflective commentary on such translation challenges encouraged learners to think more critically and approach problem-solving with a deeper awareness of cultural nuances, aligning with Mezirow's (1991) theory on transformative learning through reflection.

#### **Discussion**

The results reveal a multidimensional interplay between pedagogical, technological, and intercultural elements that condition the implementation of the PjBL model. Kiraly's (2016) experiential learning theory is evident in how reflective and peer-scaffolded practices contributed to improved engagement and task completion. However, challenges like limited digital readiness underscore the need for earlier curricular integration of such skills.

#### **Pedagogical Challenges**

Lecturers experienced significant barriers in aligning digital tools such as Aegisub with classroom instruction. A considerable number of students encountered difficulties



in operating the subtitling software, which necessitated additional instructional support and lengthened the time required for classroom facilitation, thereby reducing overall teaching effectiveness. Additionally, the rigid academic calendar constrained the scope and timing of project-based activities. These challenges reflect the notion put forward by Kiraly (2016), who emphasizes that the successful implementation of project-based learning in translation settings requires well-structured instructional support and adaptable timing to meet students' varied learning needs. Interview data emphasized that students needed more time to develop digital proficiency before engaging in subtitling tasks. In addition, many lecturers encountered challenges in integrating intercultural elements into the coursework in a way that was pedagogically effective yet manageable, as doing so risked overwhelming students who were already grappling with technical subtitling skills. Challenges such as limited digital competence and tight semester schedules demonstrate the critical need for time-efficient instructional design. Kiraly (2016) emphasizes that experiential learning in translation requires flexible, student-centered planning. In this study, lecturers who embedded reflection and peer scaffolding reported higher task completion rates (see Table 1).

### Classroom Obstacles

Students faced a wide range of challenges, including inconsistent access to the internet and digital devices, low familiarity with intercultural subtitling conventions, and group collaboration issues. Focus group discussions revealed that students often struggled to match subtitles with culturally appropriate expressions, especially when translating idioms or humor. Table 1 illustrates the week-by-week development of students' self-assurance in operating Aegisub during the six-week project. The observed difficulties, both technical and intercultural, highlight the importance of embedding digital competencies at earlier stages of the curriculum. Doing so could better prepare learners to navigate the technological and cultural complexities involved in subtitling tasks and ensure a smoother transition into project-based translation activities. Table 1 presents student self-reported competence levels across Weeks 1–6, illustrating gradual improvement after Weeks 3–4. This confirms Ng's (2012) view that digital literacy is an acquired skill, not an innate ability.

**Table 1. Student Confidence Progression Using Aegisub**

Week	Confident Students (%)
1	10%
2	20%
3	35%
4	40%
5	55%
6	60%

Students' responses indicated that their confidence improved after instructors introduced tutorial videos and gave hands-on demonstrations. Additionally, collaboration was hindered by differing language proficiency levels within groups, echoing Marczak's (2021) findings that uneven group dynamics impair PjBL effectiveness.

### Strategies Employed

To navigate various classroom challenges, lecturers adopted several adaptive approaches, including encouraging structured peer assessment, extending project timelines, and integrating reflective learning practices. These methods proved effective

in supporting diverse student needs and promoting sustained engagement. Such efforts reflect the principles of adaptive expertise as highlighted by Fullan (2007), which emphasize responsiveness, innovation, and pedagogical flexibility in addressing the complexities of contemporary educational settings. Notably, students in 5SA02, where reflective journals were required, performed 15% better in cultural accuracy of subtitles compared to 5SA01. Lecturers implemented several strategies to navigate these issues. To support students' learning processes more effectively, instructors introduced several responsive strategies. These encompassed the development of instructional videos to guide the use of subtitling software, incorporation of real-world intercultural scenarios for discussion, adjustment of submission timelines to accommodate diverse learning paces, and structured opportunities for students to engage in reflective peer assessment. Table 2 illustrates how these strategies correlated with students' cultural accuracy in subtitle translations.

**Table 2. Comparison of Cultural Accuracy in Subtitle Projects**

Class	Average Cultural Accuracy Score (%)
5SA01	70%
5SA02	85%

The combined evidence underscores the importance of structured support in digital and intercultural subtitling. While PjBL offers authentic learning potential, it must be calibrated to the learners' technological and cultural starting points. This study confirms the need for a gradual integration model, grounded in real classroom contexts and empirical evidence (Mellinger & Hanson, 2020). Class 5SA02, where reflective journaling and structured peer reviews were emphasized, showed higher cultural accuracy in student outputs. These interventions are consistent with Ng's (2012) recommendation that digital literacy development should be scaffolded through reflective and active learning practices.

The infusion of digital tools and intercultural content in PjBL created opportunities for deep learning but also highlighted persistent instructional gaps. The data suggest that while PjBL can foster learner autonomy and critical thinking, successful implementation requires structured support mechanisms and realistic pacing.

In line with reflective qualitative inquiry, this study underscores the importance of tailoring educational innovations to the specific cultural and institutional realities of a learning environment. Rather than applying generic models, the implementation process benefited from ongoing reflection and adaptive teaching practices that responded to contextual needs. Furthermore, the comparative gains in cultural accuracy suggest that structured reflection and peer collaboration are pivotal in subtitling pedagogy.

The disparity in confidence growth (Table 1) and subtitle quality (Table 2) between classes reinforces the idea that reflective tools such as journals and peer evaluations function not only as assessment instruments but also as scaffolding strategies that build cognitive and intercultural competence. These insights align with Vygotskian perspectives on mediated learning, which emphasize the role of guided interaction in advancing student performance.

Moreover, intercultural subtitling requires not only linguistic competence but also the development of empathy, critical awareness, and sensitivity to audience reception (Cronin, 2013). The current findings underscore how intercultural misalignment, such as the inability to localize jokes or idiomatic phrases, can significantly diminish translation



impact, emphasizing the need for earlier introduction of cultural training in translation curricula.

From a curriculum design perspective, the results suggest that one-time interventions are insufficient. A phased and iterative instructional approach—where elements of digital literacy and intercultural awareness are embedded from the early stages and progressively deepened through increasingly sophisticated tasks—can enhance students’ readiness for the complex nature of audiovisual translation practices (Mellinger & Hanson, 2020).

This study contributes to growing scholarship advocating for a reimagined translation pedagogy that transcends text fidelity and embraces multimodal, project-driven, and socially situated learning. It confirms that the intersection of technology and interculturality in translation education is not merely an enhancement but a necessity for cultivating 21st-century communicative competence.

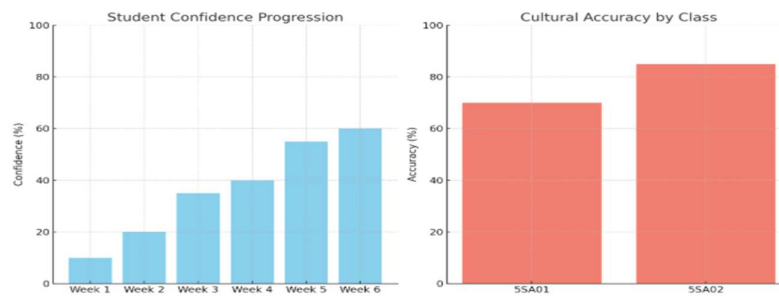
Furthermore, the urgency of redesigning translation instruction becomes more evident when considering the broader national and institutional context. Indonesia’s rapid digital transformation and increasing exposure to global media content demand a workforce proficient in cross-cultural communication and technical localization. By embedding the PjBL model within authentic classroom contexts, this study underscores the importance of aligning instructional innovation with learners’ sociocultural backgrounds. Effective pedagogical reform must consider the lived experiences, access limitations, and cultural dimensions of students to ensure meaningful and sustainable learning outcomes. As echoed by Rahmah (2019), adaptation to these realities is essential for any curriculum reform to be sustainable.

Infusing digital subtitling tasks also helps dismantle the traditional hierarchies between theory and practice in translation training. When students apply linguistic, cultural, and technical knowledge simultaneously, they actively co-construct understanding rather than passively absorb content. This shift is aligned with constructivist paradigms, particularly those advocated by Bruner (1996), who posits that meaningful learning occurs through active participation and problem-solving in authentic contexts.

This research highlights a pedagogical shift in translation education, emphasizing more interactive, reflective, and student-centered approaches in classroom practice. The comparative success of 5SA02, where reflection journals were emphasized, reveals that students benefit from opportunities to evaluate their thought processes and cultural assumptions. Aligned with Mezirow’s (1991) transformative learning theory, reflective activities in subtitling help students reassess prior assumptions and become more aware of cultural, ethical, and audience-related dimensions in translation practice.

Lastly, this study’s findings urge teacher education programs to provide ongoing professional development in digital pedagogy and intercultural teaching. The lecturers involved in this study emphasized the importance of having consistent institutional backing, accessible training opportunities, and supportive professional communities in enhancing their teaching practices. Strengthening these elements at a broader institutional level is essential to effectively implement and replicate similar instructional models across varied Indonesian higher education settings.

The following is Figure 1 in the form of a bar chart that presents and summarizes the results of Tables 1 and 2:



**Figure 1. Synthesis of Research Findings**

The left diagram in Figure 2 shows the progress of students' confidence in using Aegisub from week 1 to week 6. The right diagram shows a comparison of cultural accuracy in the subtitle project between classes 5SA01 and 5SA02, which also shows the impact of using the reflection strategy. This visualization supports the conclusion that a structured and gradual digitally and interculturally infused project-based learning approach can increase technical confidence and more culturally accurate subtitling output, answering the three research problem formulations.

The combined evidence underscores the importance of structured support in digital and intercultural subtitling. While PjBL offers authentic learning potential, it must be calibrated to the learners' technological and cultural starting points. This study confirms the need for a gradual integration model, grounded in real classroom contexts and empirical evidence (Mellinger & Hanson, 2020).

Below is Figure 2 of Students' challenge in implementing digital and intercultural project-based learning in Indonesian EFL Movie Subtitle Translation Classrooms.



**Figure 2. Students' challenge in implementing digital and intercultural project-based learning for EFL subtitling**

Figure 2 illustrates a range of challenges faced by students in implementing a digitally and interculturally infused project-based learning (PjBL) model within EFL movie subtitle translation classrooms. These reflect broader concerns regarding learner preparedness for dual-focused pedagogies and highlight the need for strategic instructional interventions. These issues demonstrate that while the approach theoretically supports more authentic and collaborative learning, its practical application is often hindered by students' readiness to simultaneously navigate both digital tools and intercultural content. Thus, the figure underscores the complexity of this dual-infused approach and reinforces the need for adaptive, context-responsive instructional strategies.

Figure 3 captures students' project presentations as a culminating activity in the implementation of a digitally and interculturally infused PjBL model in EFL subtitle



translation classes. The presentations prompt students to engage with both linguistic and cultural dimensions of audiovisual translation, encouraging critical thinking and digital fluency.



**Figure 3. Project Presentation as Culminating Activity**

This stage allowed learners to demonstrate collaboration, critical thinking, and software mastery, essential 21st-century skills in translation education.

Together, the findings reinforce the importance of guided, adaptive instruction in subtitling-based PjBL, particularly when digital and intercultural literacies are both at play. While the model demonstrates strong potential, its success depends on aligning instructional design with learners' starting points and providing scaffolding to support both technical and cultural learning trajectories.

The use of progressive confidence-building strategies and culturally attuned peer assessment contributed to measurable improvements in students' subtitle production (Tamimy et al., 2023). Notably, the contrasting results observed between the two classes highlight the instructional benefits of incorporating reflective journals and structured group work, particularly in enhancing students' awareness and sensitivity toward intercultural perspectives.

In addition to measurable performance gains, this study highlights the broader implications for educational practice and policy. The infusion of digitally and interculturally infused PjBL fosters learner agency, autonomy, and socio-emotional engagement qualities that are vital in the digital era. The data indicate that when students are placed at the center of the learning process and supported by context-sensitive scaffolding, they are more likely to demonstrate sustained engagement and deeper learning outcomes. This aligns with Mezirow's (1991) concept of transformative learning, which emphasizes how critical reflection on personal experiences can reshape prior assumptions and deepen one's understanding through new perspectives.

Therefore, the improved performance in subtitling tasks, particularly in cultural localization and intercultural appropriateness, demonstrates that students were not only learning how to use digital tools but also how to make ethically informed translation choices. The combined mastery of digital and intercultural literacies equips learners with essential competencies aligned with the evolving demands of globalized professional environments in the 21st century (see OECD, 2018). As such, the findings support earlier arguments by Kiraly (2016) and Cronin (2013) regarding the critical role of pedagogical authenticity and real-world alignment in translation education.

Moreover, these findings suggest that embedding digital tools and intercultural literacy into the PjBL framework provides a rich, authentic environment for language learners to engage deeply with multimodal communication (Munna & Kalam, 2021). The

development of intercultural subtitling competence is not only a linguistic endeavor but also an ethical and empathetic one, demanding an understanding of audience, intent, and cultural nuance. This aligns with Scarpa's (2019) and Petrili's (2021) notion that translator training should incorporate affective as well as cognitive domains to fully prepare students for real-world communicative challenges.

This research also contributes to the conversation about inclusivity in education. Learners entered the project with diverse levels of digital competence, resulting in unequal starting points. To address this, the implementation of peer-assisted learning and flexible scheduling created a more balanced and accessible classroom experience. Such approaches are in line with global educational priorities, including those advocated by UNESCO (2020), which emphasize the importance of inclusive teaching methods that support diverse student needs and promote fairness in learning opportunities.

At an institutional level, the results advocate for the strategic inclusion of project-based, digitally mediated translation modules in English departments across Indonesia and beyond. The success of reflective and adaptive teaching strategies observed in this study underscores the need for institutional investment in teacher training, curriculum redesign, and access to digital infrastructure. When these elements align, as evidenced in Class 5SA02, meaningful learning and competence development are amplified.

In summary, these findings suggest that embedding digital tools and intercultural literacy into the PjBL framework provides a rich, authentic environment for language learners to engage deeply with multimodal communication (Munna & Kalam, 2021). The development of intercultural subtitling competence is not only a linguistic endeavor but also an ethical and empathetic one, demanding an understanding of audience, intent, and cultural nuance. This aligns with Scarpa's (2019) and Petrili's (2021) notion that translator training should incorporate affective as well as cognitive domains to fully prepare students for real-world communicative challenges.

From a broader pedagogical perspective, this study supports the argument that effective subtitling instruction should be holistic, integrating technical skill development with continuous reflective inquiry and collaborative engagement (Kusumaningrum & Riyadi, 2021). Educators should move away from linear, product-based tasks toward iterative, dialogic learning cycles (Khan et al., 2017). Through this approach, learners not only gain practical skills in audiovisual translation but also develop the ability to navigate and interpret cross-cultural meanings critically.

Therefore, it is essential for curriculum developers to design programs that embed repeated, scaffolded practice with subtitling software and intercultural scenarios across different stages of the learning process (Tsfaye & Berhanu, 2015). This cyclical exposure enhances both technical fluency and cultural awareness over time. These infusions, anchored in real-world applications, are essential to ensuring sustainable learning and relevance. The research thus concludes with a call for a paradigm shift in translator education: one that is informed by digital innovation, rooted in cultural responsiveness, and executed through project-based pedagogies grounded in authentic practice (Cronin, 2013).

Therefore, embedding digital and intercultural elements within the PjBL framework is no longer optional; it represents a critical shift in translation pedagogy. This approach equips learners with the adaptive skills and global awareness needed to navigate diverse communicative contexts in today's interconnected era.



## CONCLUSION

This study examined the instructional complexities associated with implementing a digitally and interculturally infused project-based learning approach in Indonesian EFL subtitling courses. This study uncovered three core insights: firstly, lecturers experienced difficulty aligning the integration of digital subtitling tools with intercultural learning goals, largely due to students' uneven digital competencies and inflexible academic timelines. Secondly, learners encountered multiple barriers, including restricted access to devices, unfamiliarity with subtitling software, and difficulties in conveying culturally appropriate translations. Lastly, to address these challenges, instructors implemented various adaptive methods such as scaffolded learning structures, targeted intercultural content, and revised scheduling to support more effective implementation of digitally infused, culturally responsive subtitling instruction.

These findings suggest that while the model enhances learner engagement, intercultural awareness, and digital proficiency, it must be introduced through incremental stages supported by adequate institutional resources. To enhance learner preparedness in future implementations, it is advisable to initiate the process with foundational training on relevant digital platforms and introductory intercultural concepts. Embedding structured reflective practices, such as learning journals, along with peer-based evaluations, can foster critical thinking and collaboration. Furthermore, ensuring fair and consistent access to subtitling software and digital infrastructure should become a key component in instructional planning. Future research should investigate the model's adaptability across varied educational contexts and its long-term effects on translation competence. This study underscores that advancing translation pedagogy demands a strategic integration of students' learning needs, evolving instructional objectives, and the dynamic nature of digital technologies.

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