INTERACTIVE ARTICLE COVER

Enhancing College Students' Intercultural Competence through International Electronic-Service-Learning

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Enhancing College Students' Intercultural Competence through International Electronic-Service-Learning

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Abstract
International Electronic-Service-Learning (eSL) is regarded as a pedagogical innovation, yet very few research studies focus on it. During COVID-19, seventeen Taiwanese student volunteers joined an international eSL program, taking turns teaching English online for one semester to one year to primary school students in a remote village in Cambodia. This study employed a qualitative case study research design. It analyzed how an eSL program impacted Taiwanese students regarding intercultural communicative competence development. Research data included in-depth interviews, student reflection journals, bi-weekly meeting minutes, voice recordings of final presentations, and teacher's field journals. Byram's intercultural communicative competence framework was adopted to code the data and establish learning outcomes. Results found that the college student-volunteers enhanced their intercultural competence; this ranged from understanding real-life situations in Cambodia to empathizing with others, making cultural comparisons, and developing better interaction and communication. Most importantly, it showed that it had the potential to transform the student volunteers into intercultural citizens who began to question the taken-for-granted convention in their own life experiences critically. They became more willing to take responsibility for their own lives and those of the global community.

Keywords*:* international electronic-service-learning (eSL), intercultural competence, intercultural citizenship, service-learning (SL), international volunteers

1. Introduction

Over the past 25 years, numerous studies on service learning (SL) have demonstrated the potential of creating higher learning impacts for students. For example, in Perren and Wurr's (2015) book "Learning the Language of Global Citizenship: Strengthening Service-Learning in TESOL", various studies have examined the value of incorporating SL components into English courses and programs that educate language learners to become global citizens. Whereas most SL research focuses on domestic programs, Bringle et al. (2011) promoted international SL more than domestic SL as "a new pedagogy with the potential to improve students' academic attainment, contribute to their personal growth, and develop global-civic outcomes" (p. 22). However, despite the advantages of international SL programs, only some students have had the opportunities to participate in such programs due to expensive air travel, time, geographic constraints, and other complications, such as global pandemics like COVID-19. Therefore, international e-Service-Learning (eSL) is a phenomenon that has emerged, particularly in higher education, and is expected to overcome many of the previously mentioned limitations while still providing

numerous learning opportunities. E-service-learning (eSL) combines online learning and service-learning (SL), potentially promoting engagement and developing students' in-depth knowledge by transferring learning from "high touch" to "high-tech" (Albanesi et al., 2020; Waldner et al., 2012). However, it is still being determined if online service programs could replace global service learning. This methodology creates new opportunities for students to participate in cross-border service in cyberspace. There have been a few studies on native speakers' participation in online SL programs when teaching English and other foreign languages with nonprofit organizations (Yulita, 2018) and inter-organizational dialogues between non-native speakers regarding global issues without a service component (Rauschert & Byram, 2018). Yet, eSL is still under researched in higher education (Marcus et al., 2020); particularly, research on eSL to provide online English tutoring by non-native speakers for other EFL learners still needs to be conducted. Therefore, this paper analyses how the effects enhanced college students' intercultural communication and aimed to gain a deeper understanding of the impacts of a global eSL on a group of Taiwanese student-volunteers that provided online English lessons for another group of young EFL learners in a remote Cambodian village. Research questions were: What intercultural communicative competence did these Taiwanese student-volunteers gain through the Cambodian eSL program, and to what extent?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Service-Learning (SL) and international Electronic-Service-Learning (eSL)

Service-learning (SL) has been recognized as a "high-impact education practice" (Kuh, 2008), and the aim is to link class content with community social issues, facilitate socially responsive knowledge, and increase civic engagement (Altman, 1996; Bringle & Duffy, 1998). Previous studies supported SL's potential to develop civic learning (Celio et al., 2011; Conway et al., 2009; Hasbun et al., 2016; Marcus et al., 2019).

However, international eSL, like most traditional SL, connects course content with emphasizing community-based or experiential learning and is student-centered (García-Gutierrez et al., 2017). According to Waldner et al. (2012), there are four types of Hybrid eSL.

(1)   Hybrid Type I conducts onsite service with teaching fully online.

(2)   Hybrid Type II provides online service with teaching fully onsite.

(3)   Hybrid Type III provides teaching and service partially online and onsite.

(4)   Extreme eSL means teaching and service are 100% online.

Among these four modes, Hybrid Type II is the least employed and researched (Stefaniak, 2020). When integrating service into an online platform for SL courses, the major concern was a disconnection between the participants and the community (Gasper-Hulvat, 2018; Guthrie & McCracken, 2010; Hinck, 2014; Mironesco, 2014).

SL as an online learning medium has been growing significantly in the last decade (Salam et al., 2019). Still, research on International eSL in higher education needs more analysis, especially since there needs to be more focus on the students' learning outcomes (Marcus et al., 2020). The main theme of other literature was learning effects and general skills gained from eSL (Marcus et

al., 2019; Yusof et al., 2019). Faulconer's (2021) analysis of Type II and Type IV in fourteen eSL journals in the last decade revealed that course design and implementation strategies were major themes in online research. She concluded that the major eSL pedagogical values for students included empathy and critical thinking, professional opportunities, academic improvement, and self-efficacy.

Previous studies supported the potential of using SL in developing civic learning (Celio et al., 2011; Conway et al., 2009; Hasbun et al., 2016; Marcus et al., 2019). While most of the studies were based on traditional SL models, Marcus et al. (2019) reported on a Type III eSL program at a local university in Malaysia. They determined that global citizenship was the highest skill reflected in both high and lower performers. Another study by García-Gutierrez et al. (2017) investigated a virtual service-learning case between Spanish and African college students. They identified four learning outcomes: (1) different educational cultures, (2) development of global citizenship and intercultural dialogue, (3) development of communicative competence, and (4) technological competence.

Harris's (2017) study analyzed an Australian college students' communication campaign for an Indian non-government organization. The campaign was found to have positive effects including intercultural dialogue, global citizen awareness, and improving skills in using online technology and media within a social justice framework. She suggested that online communication exchange programs should move from superficial social interactions to social action in a virtual space.

Yet, research on international eSL with an online service component has not been extensively studied and evaluated, especially in an Asian context where English is the global medium. This study can fill the research gap in the efficacy of international eSL in facilitating civic learning when EFL learners cannot immerse themselves in a foreign community in person.

2.2 Intercultural Competence and Intercultural Citizenship

There is no single definition for intercultural competence within the literature. Some researchers stress global knowledge, some emphasize sensitivity, and others focus on certain skills individuals should possess. After an extensive literature review, Fantini (2005) defines it as "abilities needed to perform effectively and appropriately when interacting with others who are linguistically and culturally different from oneself" (p.1), which comprises four dimensions, including knowledge, attitudes/affect, skills, and critical awareness.

Byram and Wagner (2018) found that dealing with international and national challenges could enhance language competence by integrating language and culture, intercultural competence, and citizenship education. Therefore, language educators should use language teaching to increase learners' civic engagement, social justice, and "intercultural citizenship". In Byram's (2008) study, the concept of intercultural citizenship consists of five dimensions: (1) knowledge, (2) attitudes, (3) interpreting skills, relating, and discovering, (4) communicating and interacting skills, and (5) critical cultural awareness and dispositions to act (as Figure 1). He emphasizes the key role of critical cultural awareness and regards intercultural competence as the most important. Foreign language educators should teach students to apply essential judgment and intercultural competency when dealing with important social issues. Rauschert and Byram

(2018) propose International Service-Learning (ISL), a pedagogical approach combining service, intercultural learning, and foreign language teaching. It is an approach that increases language learning and intercultural citizenship. International Service-Learning (ISL) offers language learners the chance to apply their skills in real-world situations by engaging directly with other communities. This action-oriented approach enables learners to integrate their language abilities to provide necessary services to the international community and gain valuable learning experiences.
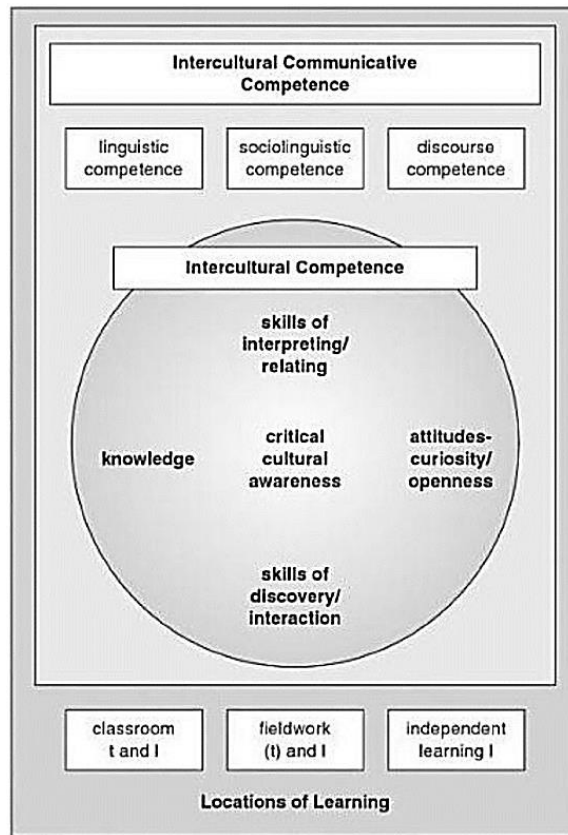

Figure 1: Byram's (2008) model of intercultural competence

This study uses Byram's framework to analyze an international eSL program to develop Taiwanese college students' intercultural communication competence while providing an online English teaching service for children in Cambodia.

3. Description of the Project

In 2016, Taiwan's Ministry of Education initiated "University Social Responsibility (USR)" projects in higher education, encouraging college teachers to nurture students to become socially responsible citizens. Unlike traditional volunteering programs, USR emphasizes linking classroom learning with the community and creating opportunities for students to use professional expertise and skills to solve social problems for local and international communities. Following this direction, a university in southern Taiwan proposed an online international eSL program designed to improve Taiwanese college students' intercultural competence by using English to teach healthcare knowledge to primary school students in a remote village in Cambodia. It is a hybrid

Type II (Waldner et al., 2012) in which the instruction was conducted onsite, and the service occurred online. Adapting Roehlkepartain's (2009) IPARDCS model, the course included six stages: Investigate, Prepare, Act, Reflect, Demonstrate and Celebrate, and Sustain. The following describes how these were carried out:

1. Investigation stage: The project leader began by discussing with the Cambodian school founder and administrators to identify the services and requirements needed. The Taiwanese student volunteers decided to teach the pupils English for 50 minutes each week about healthcare and culture through a GoogleMeet online platform. The teachers from both institutions would monitor the interactions and assist where necessary. Each Taiwanese student volunteer would take turns teaching beginner-level English to 4-5 Cambodian school pupils aged 9-12.

2. Preparation stage: The teacher explained situations relating to the host country's social, health, and education problems. Student volunteers also learned how to say a Cambodian greeting, pronounce the Cambodian school children's names, write the course design, and develop online teaching methods. They also produced customized teaching materials, such as PPT slides and worksheets.

3. Act stage: Students applied their newly acquired instructional skills to teach the Cambodian pupils English lessons. Meanwhile, teachers from both institutions monitored the program, while technology staff from the university were available to deal with technical issues. All sessions were recorded. After each session, volunteers wrote and uploaded a teaching reflection log to report their teaching experience. They noted special teaching experiences and reminders about what they could do to improve students' understanding. These were then shared with the other volunteers and teachers. Students were told their participation in the project was not to "help" the Cambodian children, as no one had asked for their help. The focus was on collaboration, companionship, and support. The teacher held a bi-weekly meeting to improve cooperation and teamwork, where all student volunteers shared their experiences and discussed any issues. Teams established LINE groups through which the students, faculty members, and project staff could communicate, share ideas, provide suggestions, and give feedback.

4. Reflection stage: This was an important part of the project, which included formative and reflective summaries in teaching journals, discussions in bi-weekly gatherings, and a final reflection presentation. An expert was invited to conduct a workshop to teach students to develop better in-depth reflections.

5. Demonstrating and Celebrating stage: Due to COVID, the final celebration at the end of the semester was carried out online. The students shared with other students and teachers that had participated in the USR project their experiences using power point slides and a video. The leader of the Cambodian school sent a short message of appreciation for the volunteers' and teachers' devotion. Out of all the university's projects, the "Cambodian project" was awarded first prize and was featured on the USR group's Facebook, Instagram, and website.

6. Sustain stage: The project invited Cambodian teachers and the director of a nonprofit organization on Cambodian healthcare communication to assist as consultants. The feedback

from students and teachers served as input for the Investigative and Planning Stage for the next semester and incorporated more emphasis on enhancing cultural awareness. Another benchmark in project sustainability was that after completing the e-service-learning course, some student volunteers expressed an interest in continuing the English teaching online project for the pupils in Cambodia, even during their winter and summer vacations.

4. Research Method

The study employed a qualitative case study research design, which is best suited for identifying the inductive and phenomenological research. According to Maxwell (2008), qualitative methods are more effective for understanding meaning, exploring a particular context, identifying unexpected outcomes and effects, understanding processes, and developing causal relationships. Perren and Wurr (2015) also noted the advantages of qualitative research in describing service-learning experiences. Yin (2003) explained that case studies could best meet research needs when analyzing complex social phenomena. A qualitative case study, yielding deeper and thicker data, was determined to be the best way to accomplish goals such as understanding, analyzing, and interpreting learning experiences (Miles et al., 2018). Therefore, this methodology was adopted in the Taiwanese college student international e-service-learning program and assisted in filling the current gap in the relevant literature. Data triangulation included in-depth interviews and student reflection reports and logs, analysis of bi-weekly meeting minutes, and observations at the end-of-semester celebration, which better substantiated data findings and increased research reliability and validity.

4.1 Participants

The participants were 17 Taiwanese college students who participated in the eSL program teaching a group of primary students in a small Cambodian village in 2020-2021. They had different majors, including English, Foreign Language Instruction, Applied Chinese Language, Spanish, French, and International Affairs. Their ages ranged from 19-22, with fourteen females and three males. According to the Common European Framework of Reference (Council of Europe, 2001), they possessed B1/C1 levels of English. These students participated in a four-credit SL course, which had adopted an online service teaching English to Cambodian students aged 10 to 12. The researcher distributed written consent forms and informed them about the study, which they signed when they became international volunteers.

4.2 Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection included focus groups of 3-5 participants in each session and face-to-face and online interviews conducted in Mandarin. Six focus groups were conducted in May and December of 2020 and 2021 and lasted between 60 and 90 minutes each. Participants' reflection logs were collected, and bi-weekly recorded gatherings were used in triangulating research data. Another important data source was a group presentation, which included a six-minute sharing with power point slides and a one-minute video reflecting on what they had learned. The data was digitally recorded, transcribed, and coded using NVivo 12 and Byram's (2008) five orientations. The transcripts and texts were analyzed to highlight keywords and phrases that were systematically

coded and identified recurrent perceptions, ideas, and experiences. The researcher was the project's co-principal investigator and was responsible for monitoring most of the online service sessions. The researcher also participated in bi-weekly meetings and final reflection presentations, which also helped with data analysis and interpretation. Two coders enhanced data coding reliability. The researcher coded the data, and the other coder (research assistant) cross-checked the coded themes. The coders would discuss any discrepancies and determine amicable interpretations. Approximately 132 codes were created, with the data being translated into English for analysis (Table 1).

Table 1. Codes in Cultural Competence Dimension

Competence Dimension	Number of codes
Knowledge	65
Attitudes	21
Skills	24
Critical Cultural Awareness	22
Total	132

5. Results and Discussion

Participants' intercultural communicative learning was analyzed according to Byram's (2008) intercultural communicative competencies framework and has been recorded below.

5.1 Knowledge

Although participants only interacted with the Cambodian pupils through an online teaching platform for 50 minutes each week, this online teaching experience still presented the opportunity to observe the Cambodian children and their living environment without the time and expense involved in traveling abroad. Several students mentioned that they better understood Cambodia, the local people, and their life in the village. For example, S1 was surprised by the Cambodian students' learning environment, which they could see in the background on their computer screens:

> The first and most obvious thing I noticed was the dim lighting. [...] I was unsure if it was the children's school or a place where they could go and study after class. I felt their study environment differed from what it should be. (S1's reflection, researcher's translation)

Although Taiwan and Cambodia are both Asian countries, most Taiwanese student volunteers did not know much about Cambodia before joining the project. After working with the Cambodian pupils online, Taiwanese students realized that they should not use their own experiences or previous perspectives to make assumptions about others. S2 explained that before the service, she never thought it was necessary to teach Cambodian pupils about hygiene, like washing hands

or brushing their teeth. The online teaching experience with the Cambodian students gave her a greater understanding of ethnocentrism and allowed them to interpret things from different perspectives:

> Because we have been taught these things since childhood, I would never have thought we would have to put these topics into the curriculum and teach them as knowledge. [...] I could not imagine that there were people who did not know how to wash their hands after going to the toilet or brushing their teeth after meals. These are common everyday things. (S2's reflection, researcher's translation)

For S2, the online teaching experience made her gain a deeper understanding of the environmental problems in Cambodia. She learned not to judge other cultures simply from personal assumptions without sufficient real contact. Although the service was online, the student-volunteers realized how the poor economy had negatively influenced education in Cambodia, and the reality only exceeded what they had previously thought.

S1 and S2 exemplify the reflection and sharing in Byram's (2008) framework, from which they improved their cognitive competence in understanding the environmental issues and social aspects of knowledge, such as poor hygiene or lack of learning resources. It also extends Larsen's (2016) premise of inspiring students to gain a new understanding of the community through international SL. This research also confirmed that international eSL could help students learn about other cultures without traveling abroad.

5.2 Attitudes: Sensitivity / Openness /Affection

Participants' cultural respect and sensitivity increased after discovering that some Cambodian students were young monks. The volunteers developed cultural sensitivity by paying additional attention to the appropriateness of their attire and the materials they used, which they worried would make them feel embarrassed. As a result, S4 expressed her concern when teaching the vocabulary about the human body:

> Because they are monks, as I mentioned earlier, as a basic consideration, we would wear clothes that were less revealing to accommodate them as much as possible. When preparing teaching materials, I focused on selecting the right pictures for the lesson on the body. I was worried whether certain parts or photos were too provocative, and they may find it offensive, which made it more challenging. (S4's interview, 2022/5/31, researcher's translation)

Similarly, while teaching the Cambodian students, S5 explained the importance of valuing different accents. Despite the children's strong Cambodian accents when speaking English, she believed Cambodian English would be the right choice for them:

> We should not force them to imitate our accents when learning from us. They can learn from our accents, digest them, and mix them with their own accents. There will still be an accent, but it is optional to mimic ours. (S5's interview, 2021/5/5, researcher's translation)

Another attitudinal change was that the student volunteers felt the service meaningful and gradually developed an interpersonal bond with the Cambodian children. First, the participants were surprised at how much their weekly teaching impacted the children. One volunteer stated,

"They made me feel they were not learning for a grade, but to increase their worldview" (S7's interview, 2021/5/5). In other words, the student volunteers found the international online teaching experiences more meaningful because they positively influenced the children. Moreover, according to their feedback, it was reciprocal, affecting the students they were serving and the volunteers who offered the service. S8 recounted a teaching experience that had touched her heart:

> After the last class, I casually said, 'Love you' and showed them a gesture of love. I didn't think much about it, but they responded to me and gave me a gesture of love, saying, 'Love you.' At first, I thought it might just be an online teaching thing because there had been no physical meetings, so I assumed the emotional connection was shallow. But, when they also felt my intention and responded to me, I was quite moved. Although a screen separated us, I could feel the warmth in their 'thank you' and their gestures. (S12-2021/5/12, researcher's translation)

According to Gordon et al. (2022), participation in an SL leads to students reporting increased empathy. The current study confirmed SL benefits on cultural attitudes by revealing that participation in eSL could enhance college students' intercultural sensitivity, openness, and affection for different cultures and other people. Almost every participant was eager to visit the pupils in Cambodia after COVID. For example, S12 stated firmly in the interview, "I want to go to Cambodia." The strong intention to visit the pupils indicated an international eSL's potential to develop learners' positive attitudes towards a different culture.

5.3 Interpreting and relating competence

A monk had established the program that assisted the Cambodian school, which had previously had limited educational resources and no English teachers. The Cambodian school recruited students from the community's poorest families, and the program provided the students with meals and education. However, the Cambodian pupils were eager to learn even though it was online, and their active learning attitudes made the student volunteers feel surprised, needed, and grateful. It made them compare the Cambodian students' learning attitudes with their Taiwanese counterparts. After teaching the Cambodian students online, student volunteers recognized differences in learning perspectives between Cambodia and Taiwan. They attributed this to a need for more learning resources in Cambodia, whereas it was easier for Taiwanese students to learn anything they wanted. S3's reflection offers evidence of this:

> In service-learning, I can enhance my teaching experience. I am also very grateful to the children for their active learning because, in the past, I taught online courses for some elementary schools in Taiwan. Their reactions were completely different, and the children in Taiwan had a much better learning environment. In contrast, Cambodian children only have one mobile phone; sometimes, 2 to 3 students need to share one mobile phone. They cherished and seized every opportunity to learn, and I felt the Cambodian children's eagerness. They need more resources. (S2's reflection report, researcher's translation)

> Another example was the realization that there were differences in word interpretations between the cultures. For example, S4 was surprised to learn that when teaching the Cambodian students to play a game, they did not understand why they were being asked to 'tell a lie.' During

the post-project interview, S4 explained, "Although the [Cambodian] teacher translated the word, they did not know what a 'lying game' was. It was not that they didn't understand what a lie was; they didn't understand why they were being asked to tell lies" (S4-2021.6.6). It made S4 realize it was not a translation problem but a difference in perception and life experience. She also expressed concern about how these honest, innocent children would deal with the complexities of the outside world.

In ISL, scholars stress the importance of "place" in providing an immersed experience of crossing borders into a new culture (Bringle et al., 2011). This study proves that international service and mediated technology could enhance intercultural interpreting and relating skills. The participants noticed the Cambodian students' insufficient learning resources through a virtual learning space, including the dim light and the rooster's crowing in the background. At the same time, the pupils tried their best to learn with a sincere learning attitude and smile, which is rare in Taiwan. In comparison, although the learning resources were abundant and easy to get in Taiwan, most Taiwanese students' attitudes were only halfhearted. This ironic discrepancy made the participants redefine "happiness" or "abundance" in life. As S5 stated in the interview, "They live happily in a happy country. They have nothing but smiles on their faces all the time. […] So we need to be more optimistic to live well" (S2's reflection report researcher's translation).

From the happy faces of the Cambodian students, the Taiwanese participants learned that inner positive attitudes towards life could bring real happiness despite the poor economic conditions.

5.4 Communicative and interactive skills

Another communication challenge was that the Cambodian students knew very limited English, and the Taiwanese student volunteers did not speak Cambodian. This challenge became a positive driving force. Since the student volunteers worked with an online instructional medium, they were forced to find creative ways to improve their communication and interactive skills, which started with building internal confidence and self-efficacy, as S3 illustrates below:

> Well, it is a psychological change. As I mentioned, I needed to be more confident. Initially, I didn't believe I could do it very well. This Cambodia's online teaching was more difficult than other online tutoring jobs. But when I accumulated more teaching experience, including different online English teaching experiences at a Taiwanese elementary school, the Cambodia service became easier than I initially thought. At least, it was something that I could deal with. (S3-2021/5/12, researcher's translation)

Most tried exaggerating facial expressions, hand gestures, body movements, intonations, and showing their mouth and tongue to attract the children's attention. As one of the student volunteers noted:

> Distance learning is online, and that felt like another challenge. In comparison, if it was face-to-face, you could, for example, knock on their desk and say: 'Hey! Pay attention'. But what can you do if you need to attract their attention when teaching online? It was a challenge initially, but I gained much more from this experience after getting better at it. (S10-2021/5/12, researcher's translation)

This online teaching service project allowed Taiwanese student volunteers to redefine the role of English as a vehicle in communication, and they learned how to speak English with other non-native speakers:

> I have not had many opportunities to speak with others in English, and now I am communicating with a group who can't speak Chinese at all, so nervousness was inevitable for me. It helped when I thought of many different ways to deal with this group of children in a class, which proved helpful. After each session, I would think about what I lacked and what could be improved. (S11-2021/5/12, researcher's translation)

The excerpt illustrated that since English was the only medium the Taiwanese participants could use to communicate with their pupils in Cambodia, this challenge turned out to be a positive force that increased their confidence in using the language. They understood that English was the only tool they could use to communicate with their Cambodian counterparts who also spoke a different language, so they felt they did not have to speak perfect English to interact with them. In addition to English speaking confidence, they also realized the importance of para-language and body language for effective intercultural interactions. Through various intercultural types of contact, positive student feedback, and teaching reflections, the Taiwanese participants' communication and interactive skills gradually improved when interacting with their Cambodian pupils through online platforms.

5.5 Critical cultural awareness

In Byram's (2008) intercultural communication model, critical cultural awareness is crucial in nurturing intercultural speakers. This study found that Taiwanese students had successfully developed critical cultural understanding while providing a cross-cultural service through synchronous online classes. For example, S7 described that when preparing the teaching materials for Cambodian students, she became aware of the problem of using pictures of seated toilets, which did not exist in the students' village in Cambodia. These cultural differences increased her critical evaluation in developing teaching materials and helped her carefully evaluate the life experience between herself and those of her Cambodian students. This critical cultural awareness made her take on a new cultural perspective, which entailed deeper reflection on what caused poverty in that country and what could be done to improve the situation:

> One day, we were doing a PPT about washing hands after using the toilet. We suddenly realized we couldn't select the 'toilet with a seat' picture because they didn't have those kinds of toilets. Yes, we had to change it to another kind of toilet, like a 'squat toilet' or a hole in the ground. This situation led me to wonder about the big gap between us. Although we all live on the same planet, in the same century, why was there so much difference? It made me want to do something more for them in terms of education. (S7, 2021/5/5, researcher's translation)

S8 had a similar experience while teaching vocabulary online. S8 recalled that it took her a long time to explain class objects such as colored clay and folders because her pupils had never seen such things before. This unique situation inspired her ways to make things better. After discussing the situation with her teacher and the other project participants, she held a charity campaign to collect and send stationary and other miscellaneous school items to their Cambodian students.

The campaign was successful; almost all volunteers were involved and assisted with her initiative. Civic actions like this indicated how the international eSL had transformed the learners into becoming intercultural citizens, especially since the eSL program allowed them to confront real-life social issues in local settings. The teachers guided the students to reflect on the situation and realize their responsibility as global citizens.

Another example happened when S12 taught a lesson about balanced diets. The feedback from the children made her realize the problem of food shortage rather than balanced diets. This incident increased S12's strong compassion for the children, which motivated her to take action on her social media and advocate for a reduction in food waste:

> It was the feedback from the children that struck me. They said they understood this sentence but had very little food. Later that day, I posted a message on IG, telling my friends that I was quite sad about this situation. I also told everyone that we need to reduce food waste. Here, we enjoy an abundance but don't realize it. It is a very different case on the other side of the world. (S12, 2021/5/12, researcher's translation)

Previous studies were conservative about the positive outcomes of online SL programs, especially Hybrid Type II and Extremely eSLs, arguing it had a potential pitfall of lacking connection with the community, hence making the participants feel isolated (Gasper-Hulvat, 2018; Guthrie & McCracken, 2010; Hinck, 2014; Mironesco, 2014). Yet, with onsite instruction and service online, this eSL Hybrid Type II program avoided these drawbacks. It could still develop participants' intercultural learning and promote global citizenship. When teaching Cambodian children English online, Taiwanese college students had an opportunity to face real social issues in another country, such as food shortages, poverty, and poor infrastructure. The real-life issues increased both the participants' empathy and critical cultural awareness. They began to reframe local problems in a broader context and critically think about how they might be related to the external world and what action they could take, such as donating and advocating.

6. Conclusion and Implications

This study responds to Byram's (2018) call for more ISL research in the foreign-language teaching field. The result evidences that participation in international eSL, such as teaching Cambodian pupils basic health in English, potentially enhances Byram's (2008) intercultural communicative competence theory in college students. These Taiwanese college students became service providers that learned to interpret, compare, relate, and analyze their interactions and observations while teaching Cambodian students online. This service developed their English communication skills and intercultural competence in knowledge, attitudes, skills, and critically cultural awareness.

These eSL experiences helped the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) volunteer participants understand the role of English as a communication medium in intercultural contact. They did not consider it as just another university course or credits they had to gain to graduate. The eSL program increased their confidence and made them think of innovative ways of using the language to communicate with the pupils in Cambodia. The most important thing was that the participants were not only cognitively aware that English was a tool for communication, but they also practiced this golden principle in many ways to ensure their EFL counterparts understood

what they were teaching. In Taiwan, although many college students understand that English is an important international language, they do not have confidence when speaking in cross-cultural situations. Students fear their grammar may need to be corrected, and the other person may not be able to understand their accent, which might cause communication problems and the fear of judgment about their language performance. Therefore, integrating an eSL element into English courses and connecting with non-native English learners who are also EFL students is an effective strategy that brings linguistic gain for both sides.

Moreover, regarding intercultural learning, through the eSL course, the volunteer participants got a chance to examine the discrepancy between their previous assumptions and real situations in Cambodia observed in the virtual world. Although it was online, the international context allowed them to discover how their personal life experience could block them from making correct assumptions about another culture. They had a chance to confront some common social issues in Cambodia, which forced them to examine and compare the situations in Cambodia with their own experiences. The discrepancy elicited empathy and compassion for people living in another country. With appropriate guidance, this new awakening enlightened through online service experiences could arouse the learners to go beyond the surface of the problems, think about causes, and seek solutions. Although international eSL cannot offer a comprehensive immersion experience for the participants, this study proves that it can enhance learners' intercultural competence if the program is designed and implemented properly.

As implied in the study, EFL teachers or instructors should try to integrate international eSL as a new pedagogical approach by combining the SL component, global education, and online learning in language education. It allows non-native speakers to learn how to use both English and body language to interact with people who only speak limited English. International eSL can also teach students to understand a new culture better, become more sensitive about cross-cultural contact, and develop communication skills with people from culturally different backgrounds. Most of all, it has the potential to transfer them into intercultural citizens who understand the relationship between a global issue and their personal life and learn how to take action to modify or improve the status quo.

When integrating eSL into English classrooms, EFL teachers should remember that there is immense preparation in engaging and assisting the participants. Issues may include redesigning the curriculum, finding suitable organizations abroad, ensuring cooperation and input from program administrators, and providing psychological support, technical solutions, and guidance for the learners. But considering its positive impacts on learners, participation in eSL opens a new channel for meeting the goal of English education. More participants may benefit from the learning experience by doing it online. Furthermore, according to the student's responses, in the future, they hope to visit Cambodia in person. A hybrid model combining online service and onsite visits has the potential to deepen and sustain their intercultural learning and create a synergy.

The main limitations of this study were the small number of participants and that it was only a single qualitative case study. Although data triangulation was employed and measured from multiple data sources, they were mainly self-reported. Future research could improve data validity by exploring learners' intercultural learning through other eSL programs in different social contexts and other Asian regions.

Declaration of Conflict of Interests

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest.

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