



The Effect of Global Digital Citizenship Education on Intercultural Communicative Competence and Learners' Perceptions

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Abstract

Misuse of technology and lack of enough skill and knowledge about using technological devices may lead to several complications; thus, it could appear mandatory to offer citizenship education and digital knowledge. Hence, individuals are expected to gain the knowledge about their position in the world as global citizens and be able to understand intercultural issues. The aim of the current study is to inspect the effect of global digital citizenship on EFL learner's intercultural communicative competence and examine their perceptions toward the applicability of global digital citizenship. The participants of the quantitative phase comprised 60 female EFL learners classified randomly into one experimental group and one control group. For the qualitative phase, 20 learners were interviewed. The instruments included the Oxford Quick Placement Test to ensure the homogeneity, Intercultural Communicative Competence questionnaire, and a researcher-made questionnaire to provide qualitative data. Cronbach's alpha was used to ensure the reliability. The validity of the questionnaires was ensured through content validity. The quantitative data was analyzed through MANCOVA test. The results revealed that global digital citizenship has significant effect on EFL learner's intercultural communicative competence. The results of semi-structured interview revealed five main themes including the most important qualities of global digital citizenship, the general advantages and disadvantages of global digital citizenship, the benefits and shortcomings of digital literacy, strategies to stay safe in social media environments, and the popular applications used for learning English. The findings have significant theoretical and practical significance for teachers, teacher educators, curriculum designers and researchers.

Keywords: global digital citizenship education, intercultural communicative competence, perceptions

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Introduction

As the generally used language universally and an obligation to the acquisition of a wealth of information and knowledge, English has developed as an essential theme in the educational organizations of countries across the world. The English-speaking population has constantly augmented all through the globe, and the quantity of non-native fluent EFL talkers has passed the quantity of native speakers (Graddol, 2006). Recently, the process of language learning is not restricted to the coursebooks and computer technology has been included in the teaching/learning process that can develop the quality of education and foreign language learning. The emergence of Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) empowered the teachers to encounter traditional teaching/learning approaches and incorporate computer technology in the language/teaching procedure (Hasan & Hoon, 2013).

In a globalized society with a wealth of multicultural perspectives, it is essential to develop both communication and intercultural competence and apply them in the learning process through a process of recognizing, enquiring, and evaluating our deeply-held assumptions. In the new world of the digital age, intercultural communicative competence (ICC) and intercultural skills have become crucial and necessary aspects for effective learning, living, and communication. Many digital citizenship empirical studies revealed the necessity of digital citizenship and its role in language learning process (e.g., Cates, 2022; Lutge & Merse, 2022; Alazemi, Sa'di & Al-Jamal, 2019; Oxley, 2010; Winn, 2012). Several studies on ICC development ways have been directed in professional settings for vocational aims (e.g., Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009), and the effect of ICC in language development (Rezaei & Naghibian, 2018; Lee, Ho & Chen, 2023; Ghasemi Mighani, Yazdani Moghaddam & Mohseni, 2020; Sevimeh-Sahin, 2020). However, review of the related literature showed lack of research that have examined the effect of global digital citizenship on developing learners' intercultural communicative competence and assess their perceptions; thus, to fill this gap the present study attempts to inspect the effect of global digital citizenship on EFL learner's intercultural communicative competence.

The foremost problem of the present study lies in the point that despite the prominence of intercultural competence in our technological world, there are learners who are dependent on their teachers at different points in their learning process in terms of linguistic, structural and communicative elements. It is an undeniable fact that despite spending several years in language learning courses, most of the learners are unable to analyze, identify, and deeply comprehend the linguistic and cultural content provided to them. They are also incapable of applying the learnt material in real contexts and dealing with cultural misunderstandings. For that reason, learners may not possess the required level of intercultural skills in their learning and their accomplishments as digital citizens. Moreover, as declared by Mudra (2020), lack of digital awareness may hinder learners' consciousness about technological advances and their prominence in their lives. In the main, learners with deficiency in digital education and intercultural competence will be unable to realize their own opinions,

performances, and emotions along with occurrences, concerns, and cultural variations in their private and social lives.

In this regard, Balistreri, Di Giacomo, Noisette, and Ptak (2012) stated that reports showed that many students, who go in workplace or the university deprived of an adequate amount of understanding about global matters, need supplementary trainings. Regardless of these concerns and studies, certain phases have been taken to advance the objectives of global citizenship education and the associated study fields. Johnson, Boyer, and Brown (2011) claimed that curricula that integrate global citizenship education could assist learners appreciate and understand varied outlooks, along with stay competitive in a global marketplace.

Based on the above-mentioned points it can be asserted that global citizenship is an important concept for both EFL teachers and learners and they are expected to improve their knowledge of global digital citizenship to deal with learning the foreign language being used worldwide. Moreover, they are required to recognize the linguistic and cultural differences and use their digital knowledge in managing learning and coping with complications. As stated earlier, previous research has provided ample evidence on the role of global digital citizenship education and intercultural communicative competence in EFL context, separately. However, reviewing the related literature exposed the scarcity of studies that examine these concepts in relation to each other and assess learners' perceptions.

Thus, it can be maintained that the positive role of digital citizenship education has primarily remained at the level of speculation; motivated by the paucity of research in this area the present research attempts to explore the effect of global digital citizenship education on intercultural communicative competence. That is to say, there is a large probability that the development of intercultural communicative competence, in general, is not given enough focus in the reviewed literature, especially the studies conducted in Iran, which may indicate less awareness of the importance of these issues in the current society. The issues or concerns raised due to global digital citizenship and technological complexities indicate the need for more detailed, comprehensive, and holistic approaches and methodologies to conceptualize and examine global digital citizenship across different communities of practice. Here, examining the perceptions of the learners toward the use of digital knowledge and particular application to learn language is of great importance. Thus, the primary aim of the current research is to inspect the effect of global digital citizenship on EFL learner's intercultural communicative competence and examine the learners' perceptions toward the applicability of global digital citizenship in EFL contexts through a mixed-method survey. For this end, the learners' ideas toward global digital citizenship in education are examined through a semi-structured interview. Accordingly, the following research questions are framed for this study:

RQ1. Does global digital citizenship affect EFL learner's intercultural communicative competence?

RQ2: What are EFL learners' perceptions toward the efficiency of global digital citizenship education?

Literature Review

Historical Review of the Global Digital Citizenship

To increase interconnection and intercommunication, Internet can be a practical medium that has directed us to contemplate on different procedures of connecting to each other in society. The phenomenon of Internet is intensively connected to the cultural characteristics of the civilizations since the mid-20th century, stimulating demands for the significance of contemplating on, regarding and reinforcing the application of digital citizenship in diverse business, educational and social situations (Sancho, Hernandez & Rivera, 2016). Many authors have perceived digital citizenship differently (viz. critically, traditionally, and conceptually). Conventionally, the term digital citizenship denotes the civil fundamentals, which encompass an individual's rights including justice and freedom (Banks, 2008). According to Gollob, Krapf, and Weidinger (2010), being a 'good' citizen means having privileges (e.g., economic, social, civil, ...etc.) and responsibilities (paying taxes, conformism toward the law, etc.) all together. Conversely, the main standpoint of digital citizenship highpoints the distinctiveness of a certain society as regarding cultural, ethnic or language variances leading to globalized realm (Pike, 2000; Subedi, 2010). However, as claimed by Abu El-Haj (2007) and Dower (2003), the conceptual outlook of digital citizenship is related to stimulating citizens as containing performance and discourse.

As stated by Peach and Clare (2017), fascinatingly, even though no distinct notion of global citizenship subsists and the variety of viewpoints is enormous, the major emphasis of global citizenship is directed on the moral aspect that highlights a commitment to civilization, sense of responsibility in addition to obligation to others, and human rights. As mentioned by Clifford and Montgomery (2014), "global citizenship discussions are predicated on an agreement on universal ideals like equity and social justice, at the same time as honoring difference" (p. 30). Similarly, Rhoads and Szelenyi (2011) thought a main organizing norm supporting concepts of global citizenship is related to moral and ethical accountability "informed by global considerations and oriented toward the collective good" (p. 26).

Alazemi, Sa'di and Al-Jamal (2019) asserted that fostering digital citizens is a crucial role of educational departments as learners' moods of respect, pledges, obligations and the accountability to society are promoted. Currently, language instructors are able to integrate international subjects in EFL classes to stimulate learners to share their apprehensions online. The UNESCO office, formed in 1974 acknowledged language teachers' accountability to stimulate citizenship standards in language programs.

Regarding the importance of global citizenship education in EFL contexts, Chirciu (2020) claimed that the themes and notions associated with global citizenship education have been progressively finding their way into the EFL classrooms and programs, recently. According to Lourenco and Simoes (2021), EFL/ESL is an optimal space for global citizenship education. There are numerous motives why investigators depend on the EFL/ESL classroom as a place for applying global

citizenship education subjects and purposes. Sumaryono and Ortiz (2004) mentioned that the leading reason is that global citizenship education aids learners to improve global identity. Through recognizing themselves as global citizens, EFL learners begin to regard English as a way to communicate with corresponding citizens in the global setting instead of a means to contact the English-speaking world or partake in western culture. Lourenco and Simoes (2021) added that another reason for the success of global citizenship education in the EFL/ESL contexts is that the English language curriculum frequently embraces various themes associated with global citizenship education. For example, respecting culture and diversity, technology and innovation connected to sustainability, and pursuing to understand and consider global concerns. Lastly, looking at global citizenship education from a teacher's viewpoint, English language teachers frequently have extra opportunities and resources for global training.

The Prominence of Intercultural Competence in Language Learning

Globalization, regardless of its advantages and difficulties, has brought various cultures into more deep contact. Owing to growing international contact globally, the field of intercultural communication has gained multi-disciplinary consideration since the late 20th and the early 21st century from EFL teachers, linguists and scholars emphasizing diverse features of the issue (e.g., Byram, 1997; Deardorff, 2006; Gudykunst & Kim, 2003). In EFL contexts, the prominence of language teaching is directed towards improving intercultural communicative competence (ICC) among EFL learners (Byram, 2008). Generally, ICC is defined as “a complex of abilities needed to perform effectively and appropriately when interacting with others who are linguistically and culturally different from oneself” (Fantini & Tirmizi, 2006, p. 12). Concerning EFL contexts, Byram (1997) proposed a comprehensive model, emphasizing the definite components of ICC and interpreting its teaching and assessment computable. Byram’s (1977) model of ICC includes the following components: Skills, Attitude, Knowledge, and Education. Through Byram’s model EFL teachers help learners acquire competences in all five *savoirs*.

Figure 1

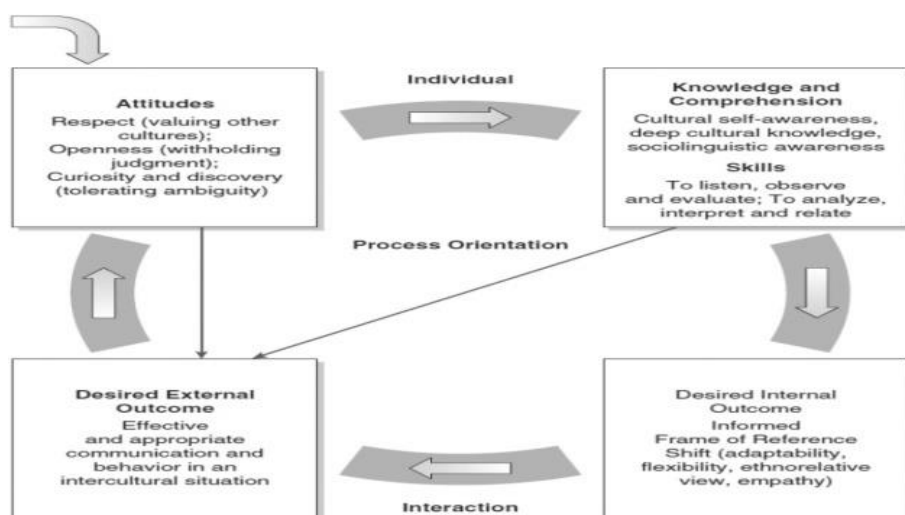
Byram’s (1977) Model of ICC

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| | Skills interpret and relate <i>(savoir comprendre)</i> | |
| Knowledge of self and other; of interaction; individual and societal <i>(savoir être)</i> | Education political education critical cultural awareness <i>(savoir s’engager)</i> | Attitudes relativising self valuing other <i>(savoir être)</i> |
| | Skills discover and/or interact <i>(savoir apprendre/faire)</i> | |

Deardorff (2006) also developed an ICC model under internationalization to highlight its position in higher education. According to her framework, intercultural competence is made of three elements: Skills, Knowledge, and Attitudes. These three elements bring about Internal Outcomes, where one has an internal shift from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism. Accordingly, this shift is externalised through observable behaviors that she defined as External Outcomes. Deardorff also heavily stressed on the idea that IC is an enduring procedure, implying a necessity for IC awareness once evolving new teaching material and training new staff. Both models highlighted the development of ICC in the language classroom. According to Deardorff (2006), this competence needs to be systematically taught, consciously nurtured, and progressively internalized by language learners.

Figure 2

Deardorff's (2006) IC Model



The issue of teaching foreign language culture in EFL contexts has been a cause of disagreement. Some scholars believed that L2 culture is an inseparable element in language teaching (Jiang, 2009; Lazaraton, 2003) and offered several reasons like its role in increasing intercultural communicative competence (Byram, 1997; Piasecka, 2011; Scarino, 2010), motivation (Gence & Bada, 2005), knowledge of home culture (McKay, 2003), and general knowledge (Gence & Bada, 2005). Contrary to them, some warned about the consequences of culture teaching in English classes (Byram & Grundy, 2003; Modiano, 2001) through expounding on issues related to globalization of English, and the development of English language as an international language (Volkmann, 2011, as cited in Ghaffari, et al., 2022). Not unlike other contexts, the status of culture in English language teaching and its impacts on language teachers and learners have been investigated widely in the Iranian EFL contexts. For instance, Pishghadam and Sadeghi (2011) investigated the relationship

between English teachers' cultural attachment and gender, age, teaching experience, marital status, and being multilingual by using the HCAS questionnaire. The result showed that participants with different age ranges, or with different languages, and different marital statuses, were significantly different in their cultural attachment. Hassanzadeh and Alizadeh (2018) also reported that teachers' exposure to the English language affects their cultural identity.

Method

Participants

The population of the present study included 250 Iranian EFL learners whose mother tongue was Turkish and who were learners of intermediate proficiency level. Out of 250 learners, 90 learners were selected through convenience sampling. The participants were female EFL learners ranging in age from 16 to 18 years old in "Al-Zahra" high school (for female students), in Osku, East Azerbaijan province. It is worth noting that due to lack of access to male learners and the limitation of the study only female learners were selected. Founded on the results of the Oxford Placement Test that was administered to check the homogeneity of the learners, 60 learners whose scores ranged from one standard deviation above and below the mean of the test were selected to participate in this study. After that, they were randomly classified into two groups including one experimental group and one control group; each group consisted of 30 participants. Additionally, 20 of the participants in the experimental group were requested to take part in the qualitative part of the study that was administered by the researcher in the form of a semi-structured interview.

Instruments and Materials

Global Digital Citizenship

In the present study, Global Digital Citizenship is defined in terms of the materials provided as the treatment for the learners during eight sessions that included podcasts with the content of global digital citizenship. The podcasts used in the current study were selected from the Google Podcasts (<https://podcasts.google.com/search/digital%20citizenship>). The content of the podcasts was selected based on each concept of the Digital Citizenship Model developed by Ribble (2011) including nine elements of digital etiquette, digital access, digital law, digital communication, digital literacy, digital commerce, digital rights and responsibilities, digital health and wellness, and digital safety and security. They were 5-10-minute audio files selected by the researchers based on the proficiency level of the learners. The learners were allowed to take notes while listening and the teacher taught the unknown words and structures. After listening to the podcast, the teacher posed some comprehension questions about the file and the learners were asked to provide the oral or written summary of each file for the following session.

Oxford Placement Test (OPT)

The Oxford Quick Placement Test (OOPT) was developed by the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate in cooperation with Oxford University Press to define the proficiency level of the learners. With the Oxford English Qualifying Test (OQPT), teachers can be able to find out their students' level of English language proficiency through a timesaving and reliable technique for finding out the level of proficiency that they possess.

This test involves two sections (Questions 1-40) and (Questions 41-60) including 60 items. The items are related to vocabulary, grammar, and cloze tests, with 30-minute allotted time. According to the scoring standards of OQPT, marks ranging from zero to 17 represent the beginner level, scores from 18 to 29 show the elementary level, ratings from 30 to 39 point out the lower-intermediate level, and ratings between forty and forty-seven belong to the upper-intermediate level. Moreover, scores ranging from 48 to 54 and scores from 55 to 60 are taken to be at advanced and very advanced proficiency levels, respectively. Founded on these standards, students with the scores of 40 to 47 were designated as upper-intermediate EFL learners in the current study. Students scored 1 point for each correct answer.

ICC Questionnaire

In the current study, intercultural communicative competence is assessed based on a questionnaire developed by Sharif bad, Fazilatfar, and Yazdanimoghaddam (2021). The original questionnaire included 22 items, however, in the present study the questionnaire was reduced into 13 questions. The validity of the questionnaire was ensured through content validity by consulting teachers and experts in TEFL and accordingly the number of the items was reduced due to lack of relevance in terms of the content regarding the aim and the participants of the study and to make it more manageable in terms of the required time for completing the questionnaire. The questionnaire contained three sections. Part 1 is related to the demographic questions asking the participants' gender, age and English proficiency. The second and third parts included 13 items designed based on a five-point Likert Scale (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree). The 13 items were distributed consistent with the three-dimensional model including knowledge (3 items), skills (5 items), and attitudes (5 items). The reliability of the questionnaire was estimated by Cronbach's Alpha; based on the results, the overall questionnaire of ICC enjoyed a reliability index of .830 and the reliability of the ICC's components of knowledge, skill and attitude were .721, .798, and .845, respectively.

Interview

The interview used in the current study is a semi-structured interview mainly including five open-ended questions to provide qualitative data for the study. To accomplish this aim, the interview questions were established based on the purposes of the research concentrating on the efficiency of global digital citizenship. To

establish the content validity of the questions, a group of three experts of TEFL conducted evaluation and their opinions and comments were received and considered. The students' interview questions concentrated on topics such as their digital literacy knowledge and understanding, its importance in developing language skills and learning English, strategies to promote their safe digital literacy, and the advantages and disadvantages of global digital literacy and citizenship in general and in language learning.

Procedure

Among the population of 250 students, 90 students were selected through convenience sampling from the Alzahra high school in Osku. The homogeneity of the participants regarding their general proficiency was checked by using the Oxford Placement Test. Among the 90 students, 60 students were selected as a sample group and regarded as homogenous at an intermediate proficiency level. They were designated as the final participants of the study. Then these final participants were allocated to one experimental group and one control group. Each group consisted of 30 female high school students.

During the pre-test phase, the learners in both experimental group and the control group were asked to fill out the intercultural competence questionnaire within 10 minutes. After the pre-test, the participants received treatment for 8 sessions. During the treatment, the participants were exposed to podcasts related to the topic of global digital citizenship. They took almost 15 minutes of the class time and the teacher provided feedback, explanation and comments whenever required. The participants in the experimental group were given time to discuss the issues related to global citizenship at the end of the class and provide the summary of the podcasts for the following session. On the other hand, the participants in the control group received no treatment and the teacher followed the syllabus and methodology determined by the school. The treatment lasted for 8 sessions. After completion of the treatment, the post-test phase was run and the participants in experimental and control groups were requested to answer the same questionnaire related to intercultural communicative competence.

Finally, 20 of the participants in the experimental group were requested to take part in the qualitative part of the study that was administered by the researcher in the form of a semi-structured interview. The interview took 20 minutes and the participants answered the questions about global digital citizenship and its effect on education and language learning.

Data Analysis

A Multivariate Analysis of Covariance (MANCOVA) was run to compare the experimental and control groups' means on posttests of knowledge, skill and attitude components related to ICC after controlling for the effect of pretests in order to probe the second hypothesis.

The data related to qualitative phase was analyzed based on Content Analysis. Accordingly, the researchers analyzed the participants' answers one by one based on the stages proposed by Bengtsson (2016) including the decontextualisation, the recontextualisation, the categorization, and the compilation stages.

Results

The following section provides the results of data analysis.

RQ1: Does global digital citizenship affect EFL learner's intercultural communicative competence?

A Multivariate Analysis of Covariance (MANCOVA) was administered to compare the experimental and control groups' means on posttests of knowledge, skill and attitude after controlling for the effect of pretests in order to probe the hypothesis. The assumption of normality was reported to be lower than ± 1.96 , thus, it was concluded that the normality assumption was retained. Moreover, MANCOVA has four more specific assumptions; i.e. homogeneity of variances of groups, linearity of relationships between pretests and posttests, homogeneity of regression slopes; and finally, homogeneity of covariance matrices. These assumptions will be discussed below. Table 1 shows the outcomes of the Levene's test of homogeneity of variances.

Table 1

Levene's Test of Homogeneity of Variances Posttests of Intercultural Communicative Competence

| | F | df1 | df2 | Sig. |
|---------------|--------|-----|-----|------|
| PostKnowledge | 4.133 | 1 | 58 | .047 |
| PostSkill | 11.617 | 1 | 58 | .001 |
| PostAttitude | 8.839 | 1 | 58 | .004 |

The findings specified that the assumption of homogeneity of variances was not reserved on posttests of knowledge ($F(1, 58) = 4.13, p < .05$), skill ($F(1, 58) = 11.61, p < .05$), and attitude ($F(1, 58) = 8.83, p < .05$). Since the groups enjoyed equal sample sizes, there was no necessity to consider the violation of this assumption. Table 2, Table 3, and Table 4 check the assumption of linearity of relationships between pretests and posttests of knowledge, skill, and attitude.

Table 2

Linearity Testing of the Relationship between the Pretest and the Posttest of Knowledge

| | | | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square F | Sig. |
|---------------------------------|----------------|--------------------------|----------------|----|---------------|------------|
| (Combined) | | | 9.966 | 8 | 1.246 | 1.040 .419 |
| PostKnowledge * PreKnowledge | Between Groups | Linearity | 5.455 | 1 | 5.455 | 4.552 .038 |
| | | Deviation from Linearity | 4.511 | 7 | .644 | .538 .802 |
| | Within Groups | | 61.115 | 51 | 1.198 | |
| Total | | | 71.081 | 59 | | |
| Eta Squared | | | | | | .140 |

The significant outcomes of the linearity test ($F(1, 51) = 4.55, p < .05, \eta^2 = .140$ representing a large effect size) indicated that the statistical null-hypothesis that the relationship between posttest and pretest of knowledge was not linear was rejected. That is, there was a linear relationship between pretest and posttest of knowledge.

Table 3

Linearity Testing of the Relationship between the Pretest and the Posttest of Skill

| | | | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|-------------------------|----------------|--------------------------|----------------|----|-------------|--------|------|
| (Combined) | | | 19.229 | 10 | 1.923 | 3.086 | .004 |
| PostSkill * PreSkill | Between Groups | Linearity | 11.136 | 1 | 11.136 | 17.875 | .000 |
| | | Deviation from Linearity | 8.093 | 9 | .899 | 1.443 | .196 |
| | Within Groups | | 30.528 | 49 | .623 | | |
| Total | | | 49.757 | 59 | | | |
| Eta Squared | | | | | | .386 | |

The significant results of the linearity test ($F(1, 49) = 17.87, p < .05, \eta^2 = .386$ representing a large effect size) (Table 4.28) indicated that the statistical null-hypothesis that the relationship between posttest and pretest of skill was not linear was rejected. In other words, there was a linear relationship between pretest and posttest of skill.

Table 4

Linearity Testing of the Relationship between the Pretest and the Posttest of Attitude

| | | | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|-----------------------------|---|--------------------------|----------------|----|-------------|-------|------|
| (Combined) | | | 17.400 | 11 | 1.582 | 1.364 | .221 |
| PostAttitude PreAttitude | * | Between Groups | | | | | |
| | | Linearity | 7.652 | 1 | 7.652 | 6.597 | .013 |
| | | Deviation from Linearity | 9.748 | 10 | .975 | .840 | .593 |
| Within Groups | | | 55.678 | 48 | 1.160 | | |
| Total | | | 73.077 | 59 | | | |
| Eta Squared | | | | | .238 | | |

The significant outcomes of the linearity test ($F(1, 48) = 6.59, p < .05, \eta^2 = .238$ representing a large effect size) (Table 4.29) indicated that the statistical null-hypothesis that the relationship between posttest and pretest of attitude was not linear was rejected. In other words, there was a linear relationship between pretest and posttest of attitude.

Table 5

Test of Homogeneity of the Regression Slopes of the Posttests of Knowledge, Skill, and Attitude with Pretests

| Effect | | Value | F | Hypothesis df | Error df | Sig. | Partial Eta Squared |
|--|--------------------|-------|-------|---------------|----------|------|---------------------|
| Pillai's Trace | | .130 | 1.135 | 6 | 98 | .348 | .065 |
| Group PreKnowledge PreSkill PreAttitude | *Wilks' Lambda | .872 | 1.137 | 6 | 98 | .347 | .066 |
| | *Hotelling's Trace | .145 | 1.138 | 6 | 98 | .347 | .068 |
| | Roy's Largest Root | .131 | 2.136 | 6 | 98 | .108 | .116 |

Multivariate Analysis of Covariance also requires that the linear associations between the pretests and the posttests of knowledge, skill, and attitude be roughly equal across the two groups; i.e. homogeneity of regression slopes. The non-

significant interaction (Table 5) between the covariates (the pretests) and the independent variable (forms of the treatment); i.e. ($F(6, 98) = 1.13, p > .05, \text{Partial } \eta^2 = .065$ representing a moderate effect size) indicated that the statistical null-hypothesis that the associations between the pretests and the posttests of intercultural communicative competence were non-linear across groups was rejected. That is to say, there were linear relationships between pretest and posttest of knowledge, skill, and attitude across the two groups.

Finally, Table 6 exhibits the fallouts of the Box’s M test of homogeneity of covariance matrices.

Table 6

Box's Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices Posttests of Intercultural Communicative Competence by Groups with Pretests

| | |
|---------|-----------|
| Box's M | 27.638 |
| F | 4.347 |
| df1 | 6 |
| df2 | 24373.132 |
| Sig. | .000 |

It should be noted that MANCOVA requires that the correlations between any two pair of variables that are dependent; here, knowledge, skill, and attitude, be approximately equal through the two groups. The non-significant outcomes of the Box’s test (Box’s M = 27.63, $p < .001$) specified that the homogeneity assumption of covariance matrices was not reserved.

If the assumption of homogeneity of covariance matrices is violated, one can report the robust results of the Pillai’s Trace Test (Table 6).

After debating the assumptions related to MANCOVA, the main results will be reported below. Table 4.32 shows the results of MANCOVA. The significant results of the MANCOVA ($F(3, 53) = 9.96, p < .05, \text{Partial } \eta^2 = .361$ representing a large effect size) designated that there are significant differences between the experimental and control groups’ means on the posttests of intercultural communicative competence of knowledge, skill, and attitude after controlling for the effects of the pretests. Thus, the second null-hypothesis as “Global digital citizenship

did not have any significant effect on EFL learner’s intercultural communicative competence” was rejected.

Table 7

Multivariate Analysis of Covance Posttests of Intercultural Communicative Competence by Groups with Pretests

| Effect | | Value | F | Hypothesis | df | Error df | Sig. | Partial Eta Squared |
|--------------|--------------------|-------|-------|------------|----|----------|------|---------------------------|
| Intercept | Pillai's Trace | .025 | .456 | 3 | | 53 | .714 | .025 |
| | Wilks' Lambda | .975 | .456 | 3 | | 53 | .714 | .025 |
| | Hotelling's Trace | .026 | .456 | 3 | | 53 | .714 | .025 |
| | Roy's Largest Root | .026 | .456 | 3 | | 53 | .714 | .025 |
| PreKnowledge | Pillai's Trace | .054 | 1.004 | 3 | | 53 | .398 | .054 |
| | Wilks' Lambda | .946 | 1.004 | 3 | | 53 | .398 | .054 |
| | Hotelling's Trace | .057 | 1.004 | 3 | | 53 | .398 | .054 |
| | Roy's Largest Root | .057 | 1.004 | 3 | | 53 | .398 | .054 |
| PreSkill | Pillai's Trace | .205 | 4.568 | 3 | | 53 | .006 | .205 |
| | Wilks' Lambda | .795 | 4.568 | 3 | | 53 | .006 | .205 |
| | Hotelling's Trace | .259 | 4.568 | 3 | | 53 | .006 | .205 |
| | Roy's Largest Root | .259 | 4.568 | 3 | | 53 | .006 | .205 |
| PreAttitude | Pillai's Trace | .172 | 3.676 | 3 | | 53 | .018 | .172 |
| | Wilks' Lambda | .828 | 3.676 | 3 | | 53 | .018 | .172 |
| | Hotelling's Trace | .208 | 3.676 | 3 | | 53 | .018 | .172 |
| | Roy's Largest Root | .208 | 3.676 | 3 | | 53 | .018 | .172 |
| Group | Pillai's Trace | .361 | 9.962 | 3 | | 53 | .000 | .361 |
| | Wilks' Lambda | .639 | 9.962 | 3 | | 53 | .000 | .361 |
| | Hotelling's Trace | .564 | 9.962 | 3 | | 53 | .000 | .361 |
| | Roy's Largest Root | .564 | 9.962 | 3 | | 53 | .000 | .361 |

Table 8 shows the experimental and control groups' means on posttests of sub-sections of intercultural communicative competence after controlling for the effects of pretests.

Table 8

Descriptive Statistics Posttests of Intercultural communicative competence by Groups with Pretests

| Dependent Variable | Group | Mean | Std. Error | 95% Confidence Interval | |
|--------------------|--------------|--------------------|------------|-------------------------|-------------|
| | | | | Lower Bound | Upper Bound |
| PostKnowledge | Experimental | 3.114 ^a | .160 | 2.795 | 3.434 |
| | Control | 2.263 ^a | .160 | 1.944 | 2.583 |
| PostSkill | Experimental | 3.065 ^a | .138 | 2.789 | 3.342 |
| | Control | 2.388 ^a | .138 | 2.111 | 2.664 |
| PostAttitude | Experimental | 3.400 ^a | .152 | 3.095 | 3.705 |
| | Control | 2.254 ^a | .152 | 1.949 | 2.558 |

a. Covariates appearing in the model are evaluated at the following values: PreKnowledge = 1.94, PreSkill = 1.92, PreAttitude = 1.90.

The results showed that the experimental group had higher means than the control group on posttests of sub-sections of intercultural communicative competence after controlling for the effects of pretests. These results will be debated fully while recording the fallouts of the Between-Subject Effects (Table 10).

Since MANCOVA compares the groups' means on posttests after controlling for the effect of pretests, there is no more to report the groups' means on pretests. However, Table 9 shows the two groups' means on pretests, posttest of knowledge, skill and attitude; and the two groups' means on posttests after controlling for the effect of pretests. That is why the means on posttest after controlling for the effect of pretest are slightly different from the means on posttest without controlling for pretest.

Table 9

Descriptive Statistics Pretest and Posttests of Intercultural communicative competence by Groups, and after controlling for Pretests

| Group | | Pretest | | Posttest | | Posttest after controlling for Pretest | |
|--------------|-----------|-----------|------------|-----------|------------|--|------------|
| | | Statistic | Std. Error | Statistic | Std. Error | Statistic | Std. Error |
| Experimental | Knowledge | 1.87 | .115 | 3.02 | .238 | 3.114 | .160 |
| | Skill | 1.87 | .097 | 3.00 | .198 | 3.065 | .138 |
| | Attitude | 1.84 | .106 | 3.31 | .231 | 3.400 | .152 |

| | | | | | | | |
|---------|-----------|------|------|------|------|-------|------|
| Control | Knowledge | 2.02 | .111 | 2.36 | .132 | 2.263 | .160 |
| | Skill | 1.97 | .079 | 2.45 | .114 | 2.388 | .138 |
| | Attitude | 1.95 | .092 | 2.34 | .119 | 2.254 | .152 |

As shown in Table 9 both groups showed improvement in their means on pretests to posttests; moreover, their means on posttests after controlling for the effect of pretests were slightly different from the posttests without controlling for the effect of pretest. Table 10 shows the results of Between-Subject Effects.

Table 10

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects Intercultural Communicative Competence by Groups with Pretests

| Source | Dependent Variable | Type III Squares | Sum of df | Mean Square | F | Sig. | Partial Eta Squared |
|--------------|--------------------|------------------|-----------|-------------|--------|------|---------------------|
| PreKnowledge | PostKnowledge | 2.017 | 1 | 2.017 | 2.674 | .108 | .046 |
| | PostSkill | .326 | 1 | .326 | .578 | .450 | .010 |
| | PostAttitude | 1.461 | 1 | 1.461 | 2.131 | .150 | .037 |
| PreSkill | PostKnowledge | 2.266 | 1 | 2.266 | 3.004 | .089 | .052 |
| | PostSkill | 6.225 | 1 | 6.225 | 11.036 | .002 | .167 |
| | PostAttitude | 5.943 | 1 | 5.943 | 8.667 | .005 | .136 |
| PreAttitude | PostKnowledge | 8.363 | 1 | 8.363 | 11.084 | .002 | .168 |
| | PostSkill | 1.124 | 1 | 1.124 | 1.994 | .164 | .035 |
| | PostAttitude | 3.117 | 1 | 3.117 | 4.547 | .037 | .076 |
| Group | PostKnowledge | 10.598 | 1 | 10.598 | 14.047 | .000 | .203 |
| | PostSkill | 6.714 | 1 | 6.714 | 11.904 | .001 | .178 |
| | PostAttitude | 19.220 | 1 | 19.220 | 28.033 | .000 | .338 |
| Error | PostKnowledge | 41.495 | 55 | .754 | | | |
| | PostSkill | 31.022 | 55 | .564 | | | |
| | PostAttitude | 37.710 | 55 | .686 | | | |
| Total | PostKnowledge | 504.889 | 60 | | | | |
| | PostSkill | 495.840 | 60 | | | | |
| | PostAttitude | 552.480 | 60 | | | | |

Based on these results and the descriptive statistics it can be concluded that:

A: The experimental group (M = 3.11) significantly outperformed the control group (M = 2.26) on posttest of knowledge after controlling for the effect of pretest (F (1, 55) = 14.04, p < .05, Partial η^2 = .203 representing a large effect size).

B: The experimental group (M = 3.06) significantly outperformed the control group (M = 2.38) on posttest of skill after controlling for the effect of pretest (F (1, 55) = 11.90, p < .05, Partial η^2 = .178 representing a large effect size).

C: The experimental group (M = 3.40) significantly outperformed the control group (M = 2.25) on posttest of attitude after controlling for the effect of pretest (F (1, 55) = 28.03, p < .05, Partial η^2 = .338 representing a large effect size).

RQ2: What are EFL learners’ perceptions toward the efficiency of global digital citizenship education?

The results of the second research question are extracted from the semi-structured interview conducted among 20 EFL learners regarding the efficacy of global digital citizenship education; the findings were analyzed through Content Analysis method based on four stages proposed by Bengtsson (2016) including the decontextualisation, the recontextualisation, the categorization, and the compilation stages. The obtained results related to the main and secondary themes are illustrated in the following table.

Table 11

Results of Content Analysis

| Main Themes | Secondary Themes |
|--|--|
| Important qualities of global digital citizenship | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Using smart phones and computers for personal, educational, and professional reasons *Using an online search engine to find the answer to a question in different domains *Using online search and content to complete a research project *Creating online accounts and profiles on different social media platform to get connected with other people *Being required to learn and improve practical technical and communicational skills *Learning about cultural alterations |

| | |
|---|---|
| General advantages and disadvantages of global digital citizenship | <p>Advantages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">*Making new friends and communicating or connecting with old friends and family*Protecting and promoting human rights through online channels, such as economic crisis, freedom, and security*Creating inclusive work environment in the form of websites, engagement of people in dissimilar parts of the world for different purposes. <p>Disadvantages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">*Hacking accounts and profiles and misusing personal information*Spreading rumors and fake reports*Distracting individuals' concentration and mindfulness in terms of personal and professional domains*Facilitating cheating and robbery, Increasing health and mental problems,*Causing psychological problems such as feelings of loneliness, depression and alienation |
| Benefits and shortcomings of digital literacy | <p>Benefits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">*Improving learners' writing and speaking by making use of words and structures in the internet*Understanding vocabularies and knowing about formal and informal ways of language use*Knowing about new and interesting topics*Checking accurate pronunciation and correcting mistakes, easily*Having self-confidence during writing and speaking*Providing reliable resources for learning. <p>Shortcomings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">*Reducing students' creativity in educational domains and developing academic projects*Causing isolation for the students since they cannot have face-to-face communications*Having high stress and tension due to internet malfunctions*Getting used to have access to online articles and school projects and just copy them*Making cheating easier for students*Trusting unreliable website for submitting articles and downloading information*Using a private and safe Internet connection |
| Strategies to stay safe in social media environments | <ul style="list-style-type: none">*Reporting and blocking harassment or inappropriate content*Not answering unknown numbers and ignoring suspicious links*Setting complex passwords in your personal devices and accounts*Ignoring requests for money*Searching everything deeply |

| | |
|---|--------------------------------|
| Applications used for learning English | *Instagram |
| | *Channels on YouTube |
| | *Online dictionaries |
| | *Online websites |
| | *Google Translate |
| | *Digital and online flashcards |
| | *Online games |

| | |
|--|--------------------------|
| | *Audiobooks and podcasts |
|--|--------------------------|

Discussion

The current study attempted to investigate the effect of global digital citizenship on EFL students' intercultural communicative competence. The obtained results of the first research question revealed that global digital citizenship has significant effect on learner's intercultural communicative competence.

The findings revealed the influential role of global digital citizenship on developing learners' intercultural competence. Learning a foreign language includes mastery of linguistic, structural and cultural elements. However, learners may experience biased outlooks toward the foreign language that are mostly rooted in cultural principles, familial customs, socially built norms, and educational experiences. Therefore, effective educational systems are needed to guide students in applying cultural consideration in their language learning and use. In this regard, reflecting on cultural differences can foster language learning and communication. Teachers trying to improve the skills and capabilities that accompany increasing open-mindedness are invigorated to construct cross-cultural learning occasions for themselves and their learners.

Founded on the obtained results it can be argued that with the quickening speed of technological augmentations like smartphones, high-speed web facilities, digital applications, and social networking websites, the ability to use technology appropriately is a crucial requisite. Students in different fields and levels use digital technologies and the Internet for educational, professional, and personal reasons. Nevertheless, there are occasions in which students lack enough skill and capability in using technology accurately to have operative and productive online collaborations and be at less jeopardy. Correspondingly, by recognizing the effective role of technology in developing learning and teaching process, teachers have started to include technology and the Internet in numerous features of their professional accomplishments.

To the extent that second/foreign language education is concerned, an enormous number of internet tools provide exceptional possibilities to expand learning. This requires more consciousness about the appropriate use of technology among EFL learners and teachers. An essential goal of foreign language learning is evolving thorough linguistic and communicative competence that can be practical in

several contexts. In this regard, the concept of global digital citizenship can help the users in having more operative, proper, and protected communications to gain academic and societal advantages. Generally, language learning is habitually allied with academic settings that necessitate a good command of language and intercultural skills. Thus, providing global digital citizenship training courses for both teachers and learners can advocate safe and legal use of technology and digital information based on ethical considerations.

Furthermore, with the growing flow of communication and information among individuals with different cultural backgrounds, EFL learners need to move further than gaining basic and elementary language skills in educational settings. Reasonably, they are expected to interact with others as real social members with particular systems of thoughts and culture. Here, Brookfield (1995) asserted that permeating digital citizenship involves language teachers' attention to up-to-date themes connected to plentiful societal ethos and beliefs. By having a better understanding of social and cultural realities, learners can integrate in a process of recognizing, questioning, and evaluating deeply-held norms and assumptions.

The findings of the study support the importance of global digital citizenship in educational settings, especially EFL contexts, which is in line with the study of Alavijeh and Abdollahi (2021) and Alazemi, Sa'di and Al-Jamal (2019).

The second research question is related to the qualitative phases of the study. The results of this research question are obtained from the semi-structured interview. The questions discussed the most important qualities of global digital citizenship, the general advantages and disadvantages of global digital citizenship, the benefits and shortcomings of digital literacy in education and language learning, strategies to stay safe in social media environments, and applications used for learning English.

Based on the findings, the participants thought that Using smart phones and computers for personal, educational, and professional reasons, Using an online search engine to find the answer to a question in different domains, Using online search and content to complete a research project, Creating online accounts and profiles on different social media platform to get connected with other people, Being required to learn and improve practical technical and communicational skills, and Learning about cultural alterations are among the most important qualities of digital literacy and global digital citizenship.

Considering the general advantages of global digital citizenship, the results revealed the following responses. Making new friends and communicating or connecting with old friends and family, Protecting and promoting human rights through online channels, such as economic crisis, freedom, and security, Creating inclusive work environment in the form of websites, engagement of people in dissimilar parts of the world for different purposes. The disadvantages of global digital citizenship include Hacking accounts and profiles and misusing personal information, Spreading rumors and fake reports, Distracting individuals' concentration and

mindfulness in terms of personal and professional domains, Facilitating cheating and robbery, Increasing health and mental problems, and Causing psychological problems such as feelings of loneliness, depression and alienation.

The benefits and shortcomings of digital literacy in education and improving language skills include Improve learners' writing and speaking by making use of words and structures in the internet, Understanding vocabulary and knowing about formal and informal ways of language use, Knowing about new and interesting topics, Checking accurate pronunciation and correcting mistakes, easily, Having self-confidence during writing and speaking and Providing reliable resources for learning. The shortcomings of digital literacy in education and improving language skills include Reducing students creativity in educational domains and developing academic projects, Causing isolation for the students since they cannot have face-to-face communications, Having high stress and tension due to internet malfunctions, Getting used to have access to online articles and school projects and just copy them, Making cheating easier for students, and Trusting unreliable website for submitting articles and downloading information.

The strategies that can keep individuals safe in social media environments include Use a private and safe Internet connection, Report and block harassment or inappropriate content, Don't answer unknown numbers and ignore suspicious links, Set complex passwords in your personal devices and accounts, Ignore requests for money, that are sometimes sent from friends who have just added you from a new account, and Search everything deeply before clicking on links and sharing information and pictures.

Finally, the applications and digital platforms used for learning English and the purposes for such use are mentioned by the participants in the form of the following responses. Several language teaching accounts on the Instagram since they are accessible, Channels on YouTube since they provide professional content, Online dictionaries that are easy to use for checking meaning and pronunciation, Online websites that provide interesting and perfect content, Google Translate is easy to use, Watching Ted Talk videos, they have encouraging personal account of people from different countries and offer listeners with various accents and cultures, Digital and online flashcards that have clear images to be used by children and adults, Playing online games, they provide interaction with people worldwide and informal language, and Listening to native audiobooks and podcasts since students can acquire a better appreciation of native speakers and world of literature and the styles of different authors.

The themes obtained from the qualitative part of the study, additionally emphasized the role of global digital citizenship in educational setting, specifically, in EFL contexts. This finding is somehow in contrary with the study of Alavijeh and Abdollahi (2021), which revealed that regardless of the importance of digital citizenship in the extremely digitalized world of the day, and recurrent use of social

networking for educational purposes, Iranian EFL learners and teachers lack the required skills for proper and effective attendance in technology-enhanced situations.

In all, our findings particularly those attained from the interviews support the effect of global citizenship education on developing ICC and its importance and applicability in EFL contexts. In other words, our learners have the expected awareness toward the use of global citizenship education to promote both their linguistic and communicative skills. So far, as social media is concerned, particular investigators reported that using social networking websites for educational purposes significantly impacts EFL teachers' perceptions toward global citizenship (Choi, 2015), which is the case with our learner participants. In total, the current study corroborates with previous studies (e.g., Berson & Berson, 2003; Famer, 2011; Mattson, 2016) in highlighting the need for including digital citizenship education in schools and language institutes right from early years of education. Since EFL learners are extremely exposed with international domains and they are expected to be able to deal with technological issues and intercultural conflictions to improve their linguistic and communicative abilities. Thus, trying to be a global citizen and familiarity with digital matters would augment correct and effective use of technology, which will ultimately prevent potential risks of online environments like hacking, cyberbullying, and phishing.

Conclusion

As mentioned earlier, the current study examined the effect global digital citizenship on intercultural communicative competence of female EFL learners at intermediate proficiency level. The obtained results revealed the effect of global digital citizenship on EFL learner's intercultural communicative competence and its components (knowledge, skill, and attitude).

Based on the findings it can be concluded that the participants in the current study appeared to be aware of the effect and importance of global digital citizenship in promoting intercultural communicative competence in EFL classrooms. Global citizenship education helps learners to be informed, accountable, and culturally sensitive individuals. Once teaching for global citizenship, teachers would provide learners with opportunities to select issues that interest them and encourage them to think critically. The competencies learners cultivate by working and reflecting on their association with multifarious global issues increase their intercultural awareness and facilitate their progressive change and development in educational domains.

The results of the qualitative phase of the study in the form of interview argued the most important qualities of global digital citizenship, the benefits and shortcomings of digital literacy in education and language learning, the general advantages and disadvantages of global digital citizenship, strategies to stay safe in social media environments, and applications used for learning English. Accordingly, it can be concluded that the participants are mostly aware of the merits and demerits

of global digital citizenship in general and in education, specifically, language learning. They also offer certain ways to stay safe in digital world and make the best use of technology in developing personal and educational domains. The names of the most useful platforms are also mentioned along with their purposes to use them.

Based on the outcomes of this study some valuable pedagogical implications can be yield. The conclusions of the current study verified the prominence and applicability of global digital citizenship in language classes. The outcomes of the present study offer some pedagogical implications that could be beneficial for both EFL learners and teachers. When it comes to the use of technology as a tool to learn a foreign language, it can be claimed that it helps learners reinforce their English skills and the ability to solve language problems, which can ultimately be effective in developing their intercultural awareness.

Considering the limitations of the study, it can be contended that in this study the participants were designated centered on the available sampling, thus a degree of randomization and ultimately generalizability cannot be employed due to restricted number of the participants. Generally, the main limitations of this study include limited time and resources that restricted the process of data collection. In addition, although the number of EFL learners at different proficiency levels is too many, only limited number of them was selected.

The use of global digital citizenship can be investigated in relation to different language skills and subskills. The knowledge of global digital citizenship can be studied and compared between EFL teachers and learners. Moreover, the role of age and gender can be included in this investigation.

Teachers can make use of their global digital citizenship ability in their teaching process; the efficiency of this can be scrutinized in future studies. Additionally, the proficiency level of the learners can be an essential and determining factor in the language classes; this can be investigated, as well.

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